Shawangunk Review

State University of
New York at New Paltz
New Paltz, New York

Volume XXIV
Spring 2013

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ENGLISH GRADUATE SYMPOSIUM
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Cover art: Jason Cring

The *Shawangunk Review* is the journal of the English Graduate Program at the State University of New York, New Paltz. The *Review* publishes the proceedings of the annual English Graduate Symposium and literary articles by graduate students as well as poetry and book reviews by students and faculty. The views expressed in the *Shawangunk Review* are those of the authors and not necessarily those of the Department of English at SUNY New Paltz. Please address correspondence to *Shawangunk Review,* Department of English, SUNY New Paltz, New Paltz, NY 12561.

Contents

From the Editors

Volume XXIV of the *Shawangunk Review* features the proceedings of the 2012 English Graduate Symposium, "Traditions and Innovations in Postmodern Literature," which was directed by Mary K. Holland. On behalf of the Graduate Program, we want to thank Professor Holland for putting together an excellent program and for editing the proceedings. Six of our MA student read papers at the Symposium, and the distinguished scholar Stephen J. Burn from Northern Michigan University was the respondent and keynote speaker. We are grateful to Professor Burn for his generous permission to publish the keynote address, "A Neural Map of Postmodernism."

The 2014 English Graduate Symposium, entitled "Twice-Told Tales: Literary Adaptation and Appropriation," will be directed by Thomas G. Olsen, who "invites papers from all fields and especially encourages approaches that interrogate underlying questions of authorship and influence, engage with contemporary theories of adaptation and/or aesthetics, or locate literary production within broader cultural patterns; he welcomes papers focused on visual narration (cinema, television, computer games, etc.), popular culture, translation, and educational studies in addition to studies of traditional literary texts." Professor Olsen will send out a call for papers in the fall.

The submission deadline for Volume XXV of the *Review* is December 15, 2013. We welcome poetry, book reviews, and critical essays concerning any area of literary studies. Please see submission guidelines on page 139. Students writing a thesis (ENG590) are encouraged to submit an abstract and to apply for the Russell S. Cleverley Memorial Fellowship (for information see page 138).

Thanks as always to Jason Taylor for typesetting and production supervision.

I Introduction

Traditions and Innovations in Postmodern Literature

Mary K. Holland

On April 11, 2012, the SUNY New Paltz English department hosted the Twenty-Fourth Annual English Graduate Symposium on the topic of "Traditions and Innovations in Postmodern Literature." I directed that symposium, and chose that topic, because I had an agenda: to spotlight the richness, beauty, literary importance, and serious intentions of contemporary fiction and to allow the sophisticated work of six of our own graduate students and a current expert in the field to present publicly a resounding Defense, Shelley-style, of a period of literature that is much and wrongly maligned.

"Postmodernism" is a problem. As a word, it's baggy and often unhelpful: multiply inflected, variously used, often misused, and therefore too often misunderstood. As a period, it's a wonderful conundrum, expanding beyond our grasp even as we work to understand and codify it. Adding to the period's confounding disarray is the by-now undeniable fact that postmodernism, whatever it was, is becoming something new. Right now, an enormous and exciting shift is occurring in contemporary fiction out of the disaffected irony and language games that have so long caused readers to characterize postmodern literature as meaningless, impotent, and uninterested in literature's traditionally humanist goals. Recent fiction looks, reads, and feels profoundly different from early postmodern literature because it conceives of what language is and what it can do very differently. It displays a new faith in language and in fiction's ability to engage in humanist pursuits that have not been clearly seen since poststructuralism shattered both in the middle of the last century. In the past six years, nine books and one special journal issue have begun to explore this shift, which many call the "end of postmodernism." Is the postmodern period over? What was it? What is this new thing happening now, and how does it relate to what came before? The papers and keynote speech of the 2012 Graduate Symposium address these questions by reading productive changes in twenty-first century literature in conjunction with and related to new ways of reading twentieth-century postmodern literature.

We have long been (mis)characterizing postmodern literature—especially fiction that takes as its starting point the language problems described by deconstruction theory—as unable to represent or care about the things that literature has traditionally cared most about: human relationships, emotional interaction with the world, meaning. It is the problem of language,

the thinking goes, that the irreparable rift between signifier and signified—word and meaning—leaves language unable to represent meaningful affect, and literature that interrogates signification unable to care about the literary elements, like narrative arc and character development, that enable texts to construct affect and meaning. Thus, we tend to read postmodern literature as essentially anti-humanistic, and with all the distaste and apathy that such a term implies. To be fair, the second half of the twentieth century produced enough onanistic texts, whose language primarily engages in solipsistic language games, to fairly earn this criticism. But many language-conscious, even self-conscious texts do more than that, employing metafictional devices in the service of pursuing those same questions about meaning, identity, and human connection that pre-postmodern texts more blatantly pose. The three papers on the Symposium's first panel, "Metafictional Problems and Solutions: Writing Writers/Readers/Texts," explore such possibilities of metafiction, discovering frustration and potential in equal measure.

Jeffrey Canino opened the Symposium with his study of a painful intersection of generic convention, readerly expectation, and author innovation. In "Neglected Visions: The Recursive Science Fiction of Barry N. Malzberg," Canino considers the case of a phenomenally prolific SF writer who produced both conventional science fiction and self-reflexive metafiction that encouraged readerly self-reflection—and all of whose fiction is out of print today. Canino argues that Malzberg employed metafiction precisely to force readers to confront the self, not escape it, as traditional SF allows. But, he concludes, such an approach was so counter to the expectations of SF readers and outside the conventions of SF fiction that the genre would not bear his innovations or reward his art. Thus the case of Malzberg points both to metafiction's potential for meaningful use and its difficulty in being read and valued as such. Next, Nicole Hitner considered metafiction in another early postmodern writer in "Coover's Lazy Susan: Irresolution in 'The Magic Poker.'" Echoing every reader's initial frustration when encountering a metafictional text, Hitner pushes beyond the obvious language play of the story to locate Coover's clever enlistment of narrative self-consciousness and structural fragmentation—as described by David Foster Wallace—"in the service of an original vision." Exposing our expectations of texts, and our desire for a closure and knowability that are dangerous to ask from the world, Coover's metafiction ultimately adds to the pleasure of reading, rather than subtracting from it, by giving the reader a new understanding of herself and her interaction with the text and world. (One might say that Hitner gives a reading of Coover that one wishes more of Malzberg's stubborn readers could have mustered for him.) Sarah Hurd's paper points to a continuity over the expanse of the shaggy postmodern period by locating in a story from 2010 metafictional techniques

that operate similarly to those of Malzberg and Coover. In "Rhetorical Illness: Classical Ethos and Postmodern Oratory in Roberto Bolaño's 'Literature + Illness = Illness.'" Hurd reads the repeated traumatic acts perpetrated by the narrative on the reader as exposing a gap between readerly expectations of catharsis, identification, and completion and the limits of what a text can do. Thus in exposing its limitations, the text forces a realistic consideration of the nature of the text and the reader's relationship to it, bringing the reader into conversation with the text, rather than barring her from it.

More recent postmodern fiction, especially that of the twenty-first century, moves from the struggle to make linguistic meaning to success, retaining the conviction that we are born into a linguistically determined and ultimately indeterminate world, while constructing new avenues toward meaningful human connection through signification and mediation themselves, and an appeal to understanding that is particular and multiple rather than universal and singular. Jesse Cersosimo opened the second panel, "Postmodern Humanism," with a paper that nicely captures the spirit of the Symposium topic by comparing one earlier and one later postmodern novel in their very different attitudes toward the problems and opportunities of decentering knowledge. In "Pursuing Productive Postmodernism: From Richard Brautigan's *Trout Fishing in America* to Louise Erdrich's *Tracks*," Cersosimo argues that Brautigan's 1967 novel dispatches with the idea of authenticity without managing to propose anything to replace it, leaving its characters with only the blank apathy that often characterizes early postmodern texts. But he reads Erdrich's 1988 novel as recasting the same blasted American landscape from the point of view of a Nanapush tribe that finds in it space for redefining cultural identity. By destabilizing binaries of history, ethnicity, and character, *Tracks* opens not to meaningless relativism but to faith in community, respect for difference, and care for the other based in the humility of uncertainty rather than in the dogma of logocentrism. Rick Harnden tickled all Wallace fans in the house by taking on one of the notoriously difficult postmodern writer's most convoluted short stories. In "Form and Feeling in David Foster Wallace's 'Mister Squishy,'" Harnden carefully diagrams the fissioning layers of narrative construction and point of view constructed by "Mister Squishy" and exposes the impossible "surrealism" of much of the characters' knowledge and the problem of perfect understanding suggested by that impossibility. He also points out the many ways in which the crushing constrictions on the self imposed by the corporate, capitalistic, consumerist world add to the suffocating feel of the narrative. But he argues that Wallace builds this labyrinthine narrative not to dramatize the loneliness of each of us in her self-built world, but to illustrate the many acts of empathy that occur—that *must* occur, if we are to retain our humanity—despite the risks to community posed by the flaws of

culture and signification. Finally, Ian Hammons brought the student presentation portion of the Symposium to an optimistic conclusion by speaking on a beautiful contemporary novel whose humanist heart is as bold and bare as are its wildly postmodern themes and structures. In "Language and Autonomy in David Mitchell's *Cloud Atlas*," Hammons carefully outlines the many ways in which language is used in the novel again and again, and time after time, as a tool for domination and colonization. He then convincingly demonstrates the many ways in which language in this novel becomes its most potent tool for overcoming domination of all kinds, most impressively in the structure of the novel itself, whose nested nonlinear compilation of multiple narrative voices demonstrates the polyphony required to construct anything like truth. The surprising joy of this aggressively anti-realistic novel is, as Hammons argues, that truth, belief, and our humanitarian responsibility to each other form the unshakeable core of a novel seemingly constituted by fragments and alienation.

Stephen Burn, Associate Professor of American and European literature at Northern Michigan University, author of two monographs (*David Foster Wallace's Infinite Jest: A Reader's Guide*, 2003, and *Jonathan Franzen at the End of Postmodernism*, 2008), and editor of several collections of essays, interviews, and letters (of and about David Foster Wallace and Richard Powers), provided productive context in which to reflect on these papers' various ways of characterizing the slippery postmodern period. In his admiring remarks, he noted how the papers enlarge our sense of the postmodern by examining authors of three nationalities, whose work ranges from the beginning of the period to the present, and some of whom are rarely considered by critics. He also articulated a key continuity between the panels, in that the first three papers examine recursiveness in postmodern texts—how texts bend back upon themselves—while the second examine recursiveness in the period—how literary postmodernism constantly bends back and reflects upon itself. It says a great deal about these students' grasps of the complex postmodern period that Burn pointedly praised the students' precise yet flexible uses of the term "postmodern," a compliment I would hand out only sparingly to published critics in this field.

Burn's keynote address, "A Neural Map of Postmodernism," provides a fresh and fruitful way of understanding not just literary postmodernism, but also the remarkable shift and lingering continuity between early and late postmodernism explored by the student papers. Rather than approach postmodernism through the lens of linguistic problems and solutions, Burn proposes viewing postmodern texts in relation to the science of mind that was being codified alongside literary postmodernism. Pointing out that these two approaches, linguistic and cognitive, share key elements of recursiveness

and reflexivity—cognitive theory asserting that only the mind can consider the mind—Burn presents science of mind as a related but so-far undertreated framework for reading contemporary literature in a critical landscape dominated by poststructuralism. As his model author, Burns primarily uses Don DeLillo, whose novels employ "evolutionary scale" from the start, but begin to bring science of mind to their cores around the same time that cognitive approaches are gaining traction in science. Like the science itself, DeLillo's novels use cognitive models largely to *explain* the nature of subjective experience, creating characters, themes, and even narrative structure according to the neuro-determinism and tripartite mind posited by key neuroscientists like A. R. Luria and Paul MacLean. Burn's attention to cognitive understanding also allows him to characterize the shift occurring between earlier and later postmodern texts. Burn argues that writers from the generation following DeLillo—including Jonathan Franzen, John Lethem, David Foster Wallace, Jennifer Egan, and Nicole Krauss—use cognitive science quite differently than did earlier writers, not to explain the world as we experience it but to *defamiliarize* the everyday, so that we are able to step back from it and consider it anew. They do so by using mental syndromes to represent the disorientation experienced widely at the millennium, in a kind of Freud's "psychopathology of everyday life" for the twenty-first century. In an observation that echoes the findings of our student papers, Burn argues that this approach "favors synthesis over rupture, compromise over raw polarities," intermingling science and the soul in a way that opens up science to mysticism rather than arguing away the soul. In this way, Burn's "map" points forward more than back, predicts future change as much as describing landmasses as we know them, and raises the question of the relationship between the map and what it represents even as it maps out how to raise that question. Like the fiction it describes, Burn's map is both methodology and answer, and illustrates the fecundity, rather than the decimation, in such a confluence.

I won't go so far as to claim that "postmodernists are the unacknowledged legislators of the world." And anyway, one of postmodernism's problems has been the over-acknowledgment of its impacts on literature and culture along with the vast under-acknowledgment of precisely what it is and means. The papers presented in this volume and last year at the Twenty-Fourth English Graduate Symposium, on the other hand, use a variety of lenses—linguistic, historical, and cognitive among them—to characterize what a postmodern text is, the problems it creates, its possibilities for solving those problems, and how these three things change over the course of the past sixty years. In so doing, they demonstrate undeniable continuity between ways of understanding the world posited by the fiction and those used by the world out of which it springs. Their tendency toward meta-ness acknowledges the invigorating

loop thus created: worlds writing texts, which in turn write themselves into the text-producing world. It's a mind-bending, Escherlike view of things, to be sure, but as all the papers here demonstrate so well, the more you look at it, the more amazing stuff you see—of yourself, the world you live in, and the significance of both.

II Keynote Address

A Neural Map of Postmodernism

Stephen J. Burn

The title for the 2012 graduate symposium—"Traditions and Innovations in Postmodernism"—provides my starting point today, in part because it offers such an acute diagnosis of the current state of postmodernism criticism. Since at least 1991, when a seminar in Stuttgart was devoted to "The End of Postmodernism," scholars and writers have explicitly called for some innovation that might allow writers to create their own space beyond the postmodern. Yet this desire to put the movement in the past is qualified by the persistent strength of the postmodern tradition across the last five decades. If we take Samuel Beckett, for example, as the writer whose work marks the transition *into* the postmodern era, we can see (in relatively broad terms) at least one of the ways that the tradition of postmodernism short circuits the desire to put postmodernism in the past. While modernism derived much of its energy from a desire (in Ezra Pound's famous phrase) to "make it new," in a play such as *Endgame*, modernism's forward thinking is subverted by a never-ending invocation of a new end, rather than a new beginning. The play, in fact, opens with a paean to endings: "Finished, it's finished, nearly finished, it must be nearly finished" (1). But just as the dearly sought ending in Beckett's opening line is progressively pushed further away from us as the phrase evolves across the sentence, so postmodernism has found that it must go on, even when critics have announced that it cannot go on. By the time John Barth published his 1996 short story *about* the Stuttgart seminar ("The End: An Introduction"), it seemed reasonable to ask whether a movement that began by thematizing endings so strongly could ever really pronounce its own end without simply repeating its own origin?

In this lecture, however, I want to invoke the title of our symposium not to lament the problem of periodizing a notoriously slippery period, but rather to try to reframe our understanding of postmodernism in its historical context. That is, I want to talk about an innovation in literary scholarship that's gathered momentum over the last decade and explore some of the ways that this development might be applied to the tradition of postmodern criticism.

Let me be more specific. The innovation that I have in mind is a subset of an emerging cluster of critical approaches that are sometimes gathered under the heading of cognitive literary studies. As a total body of methodological approaches, this is currently an ill-defined field that pulls in a number

of different directions, but the particular area I'd like to address has become known as cognitive historicism. In a special issue of *Poetics Today* from 2002, Alan Richardson and Francis Steen glossed cognitive historicism as follows. By merging neuroscience and literature, they argued, this approach produced "cognitively informed interpretive readings of literary texts that at the same time fully acknowledge their historical specificity" (5). Such works, they promised, would "usefully extend the parameter and productively complicate the methodologies of literary and cultural history" (6).

There are certainly precursors to this movement—Sally Shuttleworth's studies of phrenology and the Brontës spring to mind—but in the decade since Richardson and Steen made this claim, the task they outlined has been carried out in disparate ways by writers in different fields: broadly cognitive historicist readings have been produced on Shakespeare (Mary Thomas Crane), British Romanticism (Richardson), and late-nineteenth-century works (notably by Anne Stiles). Without wrestling too much with the period- and nation-specific elements of each study, there are two fairly obvious—but nonetheless useful—conclusions that we can draw from this overview of cognitive historicist work. First of all, such approaches have largely been applied to British, rather than American literature. Second, the historicism practiced in such studies is literally historical: confined to early periods of literary history, barely touching the twentieth century, let alone the twenty-first.

In this lecture I want to consider why cognitive historicist approaches have not been applied to more recent American literature, especially given the extent to which we now seem to live in an increasingly neurocentric culture. Building on this discussion, I then want explore the merits of reversing this trend by asking how we might be able to revise our understanding of postmodernism by reading the movement in relationship to contemporary neuroscientific work. If we see Beckett's *Endgame* as a typical postmodern text, it may not be coincidental, in this context, that its stage setting—shrouded in gray, with two eye-like windows—resembles a model of what William DeMastes calls "the brain/mind works" (59).

I

To some extent our understanding of the relationship between postmodernism and the brain is a question of perspective.

Looking back from the perspective of the millennium, postmodernism seems to be a hybrid affair, with its meaning changing over time as successive generations of critics have pressed the movement in different directions. If we isolate the earliest moment of its canonization, then our current tendency to see postmodernism as completely divorced from neuroscience makes

a great deal of sense. Drawing its early energies from existential philosophy, early maps of the postmodern emphasized its reaction against enlightenment thought, against *reason*. Thus, Hans Bertens explains that a common understanding of one early strand of postmodernism was its fascination with what he calls "the wanton destruction of intellectual property" (9); and so it's not a surprise when we find Harry Levin, writing in 1960, making the claim that postmodernism is characterized by an indifference to "the life of the mind" (273).

While the objective quality of scientific "facts" was subjected to a range of methodological critiques during the same period, the largely empirical procedures of, say, efforts to measure chemical imbalances in the brain seem obviously alien to an antirational postmodern program. Yet, if we zoom out from the early tradition of postmodernism and consider larger trends across the period, then a number of shared elements seem to unite the two fields. At the most basic level of pure chronology, for example, it's notable that neuroscience and postmodern literature's institutional foundations began to harden at around the same time, with both fields sealing a decade of vital experiments by codifying their activity in important ways in 1971. In that year, American scientists marked the emergence of neuroscience as an autonomous (if interdisciplinary) endeavor by holding the first annual meeting of the Society for Neuroscience in Washington, DC. At the same time, Ihab Hassan—who was arguably the literary critic who exerted the most influence on postmodernism's early construction—began using the term *postmodern* in his critical writing that year.

Perhaps more importantly—but still considering the two movements in terms of their historical moment—it's significant that postmodernism emerged in close connection with the counterculture of the 1960s, especially in terms of its experiments with various psychedelic drugs (and their attendant ontological disruptions), both of which provided vivid documentation of the organic-chemical substrate of consciousness that was being explored by contemporary neuroscientists. Shifting our focus away from time and toward the concepts that organize each field's investigations, we find further connections. One of the signature styles of postmodernism, for instance, has been its reliance on metafiction, that is, on works of fiction that dramatize their own process of constructing stories. In early studies of this device (particularly by Robert Scholes) this process was termed *fabulation*, and it offered (in Scholes's words) "one answer to the great question of where fiction could go after the realistic novel" (11). Brain research during the last two decades has similarly been preoccupied with the process of fabulation, of making stories. In a recent book titled *Brain Fiction* (2005), for example, William Hirstein has argued that the brain's working method is fundamentally a "creative process of

confabulation" (239); similarly, the neurophilosopher Daniel Dennett argued in *Consciousness Explained* (1991) that the brain was essentially a scenario-spinning machine.

What we have, then, are a series of loose parallels between two disparate fields. Perhaps these links are simply coincidental, or perhaps these are signs of a larger cultural trend, a zeitgeist pushing different disciplines toward similar activities. But at the very least I'd suggest that the connections are encouraging enough to persuade us to explore the relationship between postmodernism and the brain in more detail. To test this claim, I'm going to apply a cognitive historicist approach to what I think are three enduring problems or issues in postmodern literary criticism. These problems are:

1. *The postmodern conception of character*, specifically the idea that characters in postmodern novels have a purely linguistic existence, divorced from any psychological theory;

2. *Postmodernism's attitude to overarching theories*, since—following Jean Francois Lyotard—we tend to think of the postmodern age as being characterized by the end of grand narratives;

3. *The end of postmodernism*; a number of studies have recently argued that the postmodern age is at an end, and I'd like to consider whether a cognitive historicist reading of postmodernism might help us to differentiate between postmodernism and whatever comes after.

To address the first two points I'm going to concentrate on a single author—Don DeLillo—but I'll broaden my focus to explore the final issue.

II

I've selected DeLillo as my representative postmodernist partly because his work is so widely studied, but also because it's become a critical commonplace to read his fiction as antithetical to *any* kind of psychology. *The Cambridge Companion to Don DeLillo*, for instance, describes his characters as "not fully realized" (Knight 36), a charge that is evidently meant as a compliment. Mark Osteen full-length study of DeLillo's work similarly summarizes DeLillo's project as an attempt to write "stories that dispense with conventions such as . . . psychology" (16).

For all the currency such views currently enjoy, I've come to suspect that these judgments actually stem not from DeLillo's indifference to psychology, but rather from these critics looking for the wrong kind of psychology in

his work. DeLillo's notebooks—which are held at the Harry Ransom Center in Texas—support my contention that his works are often shaped by psychological research. His notebooks for his thirteenth novel, *Cosmopolis* (2003), for instance, reveal that he had researched the so-called Icarus complex, a "syndrome characterized by . . . a desire to be immortal, narcissism and lofty but fragile ambition" (Reber and Reber 336) Similarly, his 9/11 novel, *Falling Man* (2007), is partly built around research into dissociative amnesia. Yet aside from the evidence in DeLillo's archive, neural models also provide a generative grid for both the form and psychological dynamics of DeLillo's fiction, and recognizing this engagement marks a vital step toward constructing a more nuanced critical schema that no longer isolates his novels from questions of psychology.

To outline how neuroscience intersects with Delillo's work, I'm going to attempt a cognitive historicist reading of his third book, *Great Jones Street* (1973). In effect, this means I'm going to try to put the novel back into the context of brain research in the early 1970s, especially as this research was perceived, discussed, and distributed in popular contexts.

III

Great Jones Street is a novel that's explicitly about the brain—in fact, it's based around a mysterious drug that, DeLillo tells us, attacks "the left sector of the brain" removing the drug- taker's ability to speak (255). The novel has been variously read by critics in terms of its treatment of celebrity and its emphasis on the motif of withdrawal, but I'd like to begin my reading of it by observing that the kernel story of the novel most closely resembles a near contemporary work of popular neuroscience—A. R. Luria's 1972 case study, *The Man with the Shattered World*—a volume that explores a Russian soldier's attempt to recover his use of language after suffering an injury to the left hemisphere of his brain.

Luria's short book is probably responsible for pushing the plot of DeLillo's novel in directions he hadn't immediately considered, but DeLillo's notebooks make clear that the real underlying psychology of the book stems from the research of a neurologist named Paul D. MacLean, whom DeLillo came across in a volume by Nigel Calder, titled *The Mind of Man* (1971). Calder's book was a spin-off from a popular TV series about the state of neurology up to the end of the 1960s, and it explained MacLean's theory that the brain is composed of three functionally separate cerebral modules. According to MacLean's theory, the three cerebral modules—which he named *reptilian*, *paleomammalian*, and *neomammalian*—represent three different phases in our evolutionary history, with the first two modules roughly corresponding

to the brain functions "manifest in the lower animals in which they first developed" (Calder 275).

While the neomammalian brain (which is effectively the cerebral cortex) seems to control the special cognitive strengths that distinguish humanity, this sophisticated processing unit is underwritten by "the reptilian brain," which MacLean called "the old crocodile under our skulls" and which controls basic fear reactions, and by the paleomammalian brain, which MacLean termed a "horse-like brain," that's "very much involved in emotional responses" (Calder 275-76). The functional separation between these three modules leads to what MacLean calls a "schizophysiology"—an internal conflict of interests that persuaded one of MacLean's popularizers to conclude that "normal man—is insane" (Arthur Koestler, qtd. in Calder 276).

MacLean's sense that all human consciousness, properly understood, is schizophysiological consciousness works on several levels in DeLillo's fiction. At the level of the novel's imagistic language, the logic of many of DeLillo's metaphoric comparisons to lower animals seems to be derived from MacLean's tripartite system: we read of actions being likened to the "snake brain of early experience" in *Underworld* (1997, 422), and *Falling Man*'s reference to a "snake-brain level of perception" (31). Equally, DeLillo's obsessive references to the continued power of primal terror—such as the "million years of terror stored" in "the limbic system of the brain" that he describes in *Libra* (1988, 292)—can be clarified with reference to MacLean's model. But in *Great Jones Street*, specifically, MacLean's three-part model provides a hidden index that governs and explains character motivation in the novel.

At the start of MacLean's volume *A Triune Concept of Brain and Behavior*, the three-part structure of the brain is likened to a "building to which wings and superstructure have been added" (8), and this metaphor is explicitly taken up in *Great Jones Street* when DeLillo arranges the building where most of the action in the novel takes place so that it reflects the three layers of MacLean's model. Occupying the lowest level of the building is Micklewhite, a boy with a soft skull who mirrors the reptilian brain. Unable "to talk or dress himself or . . . even crawl" (27), the boy lurks downstairs, resembling "some kind of super-crustacean" (162) and uttering only the most primitive pre-linguistic moans that the narrator describes as the most primitive fear response: "a sound so primal. It expressed . . . a fundamental terror inside things that grow" (51). On the top level of the building is Edward B. Fenig, who in the building's triune structure represents the cerebral cortex, the highly-specialized furrowed net of neurons that makes up the outer layer of the brain. Fenig resembles the gray outer-layer of the brain physically (he's synonymous in the novel with the gray-hooded top he always wears). As a representative of cortical sophistication, however, he stands initially for writing and abstract

thought (about art, about economics). In between these two levels is the narrator, the rock star Bucky Wunderlick—like the paleomammalian brain Bucky is described as being "nonverbal" (17), and throughout the book he's buffeted by the conflicting demands of the other two cerebral modules.

In 1979, DeLillo told Tom LeClair that his approach to characterization relied upon taking "psychology out of a character's mind and into the room he occupies" (89), and as *Great Jones Street* unfolds, the characters' behavior can be explained in terms of which room within the structure of the building they're seen in. The dominant movement, however, tends to be downwards, a devolution from cognitive sophistication toward the fear-dominated dictates of the reptilian brain.

To take just one example, Fenig starts the book representing cortical processes, but as the book progresses the cortex seems to be overwhelmed by the competing claims of the reptilian brain, in particular. Late in the novel, Fenig is mostly seen at lower levels of the building, and his early desire to write has been replaced by primitive fantasies of violent power. "I have a terminal fantasy," Fenig says on one of these visits to the lower levels, "It comes to me more and more often, a recurring obsessive thing . . . I prowl this very building. With me, fore and aft, are two vicious German shepherds. I carry a pump-action shotgun snug against my belly" (221-22).

Fenig's descent into an existence dominated by fear and violence is a single instance of an impulse that comes to afflict nearly all the characters in the book: Bucky's career as a musician traces a decline from sophisticated political comment to meaningless babbling (the catchphrase of his late music is "pee-pee maw-maw"). One of Bucky's band mates similarly announces that he is constantly prey to all "kinds of fear" and that it is "hard to pick out a single moment when I'm not afraid" (123). Viewed in this light, the book is not predominantly about celebrity or a Walden-inspired meditation on isolation, but is rather about the failure of the cortex, and the book is evidently made up of a sequence of careful character studies designed to probe the extent to which contemporary human existence is shot through with submerged primal urges that nevertheless intrude into our daily lives.

By juxtaposing DeLillo's novel with its contemporary scientific context, then, I think we're able to prove that his characters are more complex creations than they're generally considered to be, and we can also document the specific psychological grids that underlie character motivation in his work. This helps me to address the first part of my plan in this lecture—addressing my professed goal of reconsidering postmodern characterization—but beyond the mere construction of character, I think that there's more to be drawn out of DeLillo's engagement with neuroscience, and even if we confine ourselves momentarily to MacLean's model, we can help shed light on the

form of DeLillo's fiction.

Great Jones Street is divided into three parts, a fact that we might loosely connect to MacLean's three-part model of the mind, but a more well-known example is available to us in terms of one of DeLillo's most famous novels, *White Noise* (1985). Like *Great Jones Street*, *White Noise* has a drug at its center, and the purpose of the drug gives us one of our first clues that this novel might be considered an extended rewrite of *Great Jones Street*. The narrator of *White Noise*—Jack Gladney—learns in the book that this drug relieves pressure on what DeLillo calls the "fear-of-death part of the brain" (200) and, in fact, we can read the novel as exploring the ways that Jack Gladney's behavior—like the behavior of many characters in *Great Jones Street*—comes to be increasingly controlled by the fear-dominated reptilian brain.

As is typical in DeLillo, one of the ways that a character's neural function is revealed is via DeLillo's choice of metaphors, and in *White Noise* Jack's cognitive decline is reflected in the way that his narration is infected by references to prehuman phases of evolutionary history: his wife emits a "creaturely hum" (15), a colleague resembles "an endangered animal or some phenomenal subhuman" (186), while his own state of mind is a "deep-dwelling crablike consciousness" (155). Having noted these overlaps, we can turn to questions of novelistic form: *White Noise*'s three-part structure mirrors the arrangement of *Great Jones Street*, but the later book's organization seems to be even more closely intertwined than its predecessor's with MacLean's conception of the reptilian brain. MacLean saw the reptilian brain as a "biological computer" whose "instinctually determined functions" ("Alternative" 28) included at the most primal level the binary response to fear stimuli: that is our decision to fight or take flight when faced with danger. Viewed according to this scheme, the arrangement of *White Noise*'s three sections neatly recapitulates our primal responses to terror: the novel's first part serves as an introduction to the psychological dynamics of Jack's life and traces the outlines of his reptilian-brain-dominated syndrome; the second part charts a flight response to a terrifying situation—if you've read the book, you'll recall that this is when the characters evacuate the town, fleeing a toxic cloud; finally, the book's third section flips the binary to trace a fight response as Jack attempts to murder a man who has been carrying on an affair with his wife.

For the sake of clarity in a short space of time, I've concentrated here on the way just one theory operates in some of DeLillo's fiction, but his engagement with neuroscience really unfolds across a broader range of scientific activity—and just to convince you that I'm not artificially highlighting a very narrow segment of DeLillo's work, I'll point to one more example. DeLillo's fourth novel, *Ratner's Star* (1976), is split into two halves that are written in radically different styles—as DeLillo himself acknowledged in an early inter-

view, these styles are meant to reflect the different strengths of each cerebral hemisphere, as they were diagnosed by split-brain studies in the late 60s and early 70s. The findings of such research have been quite broadly assimilated into popular culture: the left brain controls language, is logical, emphasizing rational sequence, and working on discrete parts rather than wholes; the right brain is spatial and intuitive, with a holistic emphasis that processes information all at once. In line with such claims, the first half of *Ratner's Star* is written in the style of the left brain, and it opens in typical fashion:

> Little Billy Twillig stepped aboard a Sony 747 bound for a distant land. This much is known for certain. He boarded the plane. The plane was a Sony 747, labeled as such, and it was scheduled to arrive at a designated point exactly so many hours after takeoff. This much is subject to verification, pebble-rubbed (*khalix, calculus*), real as the number one. (3)

Reflecting the underlying neural grid, we might notice here the short sentences; the left brain functions by breaking things into discrete parts, and placing them in logical sequence, and so the progression here is not one of narrative propulsion, moving us forward into the story. Instead, it's one of analysis, as each successive sentence breaks down the information presented in the first sentence, qualifying what has gone before.

The second half represents right brain function, and it begins as follows:

> Everywhere dense the space between them seemed a series of incremental frames that defined their passion's dark encompassment, man ostensibly engrossed in dressing, woman nude and on her side (a horizontal dune anagrammatized), neither failing to be aware of the sediment of recent links and distances, that variable material suspended in the air, living instants of their time within each other, sweat and re-echoing flesh serving to confirm the urgent nature of their act, the industry involved, the reconnoitering for fit and placement, the fundamental motion, the pursuit of equable rhythm, the readjustment of original position, the effort of returning to oneself, of departing the aggregate, and in the slightly pasty daze in which they now remembered their fatigue, their sense of well-merited weariness, it was possible for each to examine even further the substance of that space between them, so reflective of their labor, the odors transposed, the strand of hair in the mouth, the experience of whole body breathing, the failure (or instinctive disinclination) to produce coherent speech, the bright cries, the settling, the eventual descent to slackness, the momentary near sleep in milkiness and cling, the recapturing of normal breathing tempo, the monosyllables and blocks of words, the raw awareness of the dangers of

> exchange, the oddly apologetic uncoupling, mutual recognition of the human demonology of love. (279)

The style here reflects opposed and complementary processing strengths that can be most clearly mapped by a sequence of contrasts. While the left brain emphasis of part one drew on short sentences, because the right brain processes information all at once, we begin here with a 220-word sentence. While the left brain privileges language, and the right brain intuitive thought, this section begins with the "instinctive disinclination to produce coherent speech." As the right-brain is spatially oriented, so this sentence is overloaded with spatial terminology.

The way neuroscience shapes the form of novels such as *White Noise*, *Great Jones Street*, and *Ratner's Star* represents what we might call a *neural architecture* that adds a further dimension to DeLillo's treatment of character: while each of the characters in these novels has an idiosyncratic personality and history, their existence within the formal structure of a novel modeled around a neuroscientific theory is designed to remind the readers that their own experiences take place within biological constraints: that is, the boundaries of their cerebral hardware. Rather than being indifferent to psychology, as some critical readings would have us believe, DeLillo's novels might rather be considered as examples of what in *Underworld* DeLillo calls a "neural process remapped in the world" (451). They are attempts to link our lived experience to contemporary models of how the mind works.

I would argue that the significance of such a reading does not simply lie in outlining an overlooked aspect of DeLillo's fiction purely with the goal of adding to the aggregate of other critical perspectives, as if criticism was building toward some total reading of his imaginative project. Instead, reconnecting DeLillo's novels with the larger discourse of contemporary theories of the mind is an opportunity to document a representative instance of postmodernism's engagement with its nonliterary context. But it's also a way to articulate how DeLillo's treatment of character intersects with another of the goals that cognitive historicism often explores: that is, the effort (in the words of Alan Richardson and Francis Steen) to "approach [a] subject at the level of the species" rather than limiting ourselves to locally circumscribed conceptions of individuality (3).

Traditionally, fiction works at the level of particularity—its descriptive energies devoted to what Henry James called "solidity of specification" (195)—but while DeLillo's neural narratives build plots around individual characters' specific psychologies, each novel's architecture redescribes the same neurodynamic at a greater level of abstraction, excising the distracting specifics of contextual entanglement to outline a general, species-level, neural model.

A neuroscientific system in DeLillo's work is, then, a polyphonic device, its vectors simultaneously arcing toward the cultural and historical specificity prized by traditional literary study while it also reaches toward the abstraction of "Universal human properties" conceived at "higher levels of explanatory generalization" (Hogan 224, 225). This—to return to my second listed goal—is the kind of overarching analysis that is generally denied to fiction in the postmodern era.

IV

I believe that DeLillo's engagement with the neurosciences of his day is far more extensive than other critics have recognized, but it's questionable how far a similar approach can be applied to other postmodernists. I don't, for instance, see similar interests in Robert Coover or William Gaddis, but there are other writers who would yield an equally rich neural reading. Tom Robbins's *Jitterbug Perfume*, for instance, presents a long evolutionary narrative that concludes with an attempt to ground the novel's structure in MacLean's theory. Similarly, John Barth—whose son is a practicing neuroscientist—has explored Dennett's theories and split brain research in his recent novels. But while this approach may not be universally applicable across all postmodern authors, I do think that it helps us to differentiate between DeLillo's generation and a generation of writers who mostly came to prominence after 1990.

If neuroscience provided a postmodern novelist such as DeLillo with an underlying grid that generated character motivation, local metaphoric clusters, and overarching architecture, then it's notable that in the next generation of writers—a generation that we might call the post-postmodern generation—psychological disorders serve a more amorphous function. Jonathan Lethem has argued that the medicalization of contemporary existence provides writers with "new vocabularies for human perceptual life" (xvi), but beyond enlarging an author's dictionary, the brain often stands in post-postmodern fiction for the larger sense of disorientation that haunts millennial life. In novels built around Capgras syndrome—such as Richard Powers's *The Echo Maker* (2006) or Rivka Galchen's *Atmospheric Disturbances* (2008)—in Mark Haddon's autism-based *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* (2003), and in the recurring trope of the amnesiac, which we find in Nicole Krauss's *Man Walks into a Room* (2002) and Lethem's *Amnesia Moon* (1995), the disordered mind reformulates the complex world so that its basic axioms, rather than its elaborate superstructure, are brought back to the center of the novel's circle of experience. Having made the familiar strange by psychological fiat, such novels are able to return to the traditional subjects of fiction and probe the root conditions of modernity: what is a wife? a job? or

even the meaning of modern experience?

While I think that there are post-postmodern writers who follow DeLillo in creating neuroscientifically inflected novelistic structures—Richard Powers springs to mind—the use of some kind of neural syndrome as an alternative mode of defamiliarization is, I think, a narrative compromise that represents one solution to a signature problem that haunts post-postmodernism: that is, how (in Jonathan Franzen's words) to "open up in some way" the novel's form to allow the "kind of traditional stuff" the postmodernists omitted—implicitly more emotive character studies—to re-enter the genre without completely and naively rejecting the entire postmodern program.

In Nicole Krauss's aesthetically conservative first novel, *Man Walks into a Room*, for example, the amnesiac confusion of her central character—Samson—permits Krauss to generate entire paragraphs that luxuriate over small moments of ordinary, tactile existence. Such moments in Krauss are charged not with narrative significance, but with a purer desire to render anew the cluster of experiential details that add up to the basic feeling of living close to our skins, as when she describes Samson taking a bath:

> he lowered himself an inch at a time into scalding water . . . the water a hot itch, a small punishment to clear the way for comfort. . . . Silver bubbles like mercury formed on his skin, the skin taking on a green hue under the water, making it look rubbery and inhuman . . . he squeezed his eyes shut and slipped his head under, and in the hot, muffled silence he could hear his waterlogged pulse. (127)

Such passages play to Krauss's traditional novelistic strengths—sensitive rendering of detail, heightened attention to ordinary moments—but the return to a largely conventional narrative form in Krauss is connected to a wider argument the novel makes about literature's reaction against neuroscience's growing cultural authority.

Within an intellectual ecology that's increasingly dominated by the neurosciences' vast expansion through the 1990s—a decade that was named the "decade of the brain" by George Bush, Senior—Krauss's novel implies that literature's engagement with neuroscience should reverse postmodern practice. Rather than drawing upon neuroscience's universalizing abstractions, the novel should provide a counternarrative to the imperial march of the sciences of mind. Krauss introduces this argument early in the book, when Samson's neural condition—which is caused by a brain tumor—is glossed by the doctor who explains to Samson's wife, Anna, that the tumor is "*about the size of a cherry, pressing on the temporal lobe of his brain, most likely a juvenile pilocytic astrocytoma*." Anna responds to this diagnosis by imagining "the shiny dark red of a cherry nestled into the gray matter of the brain" (13). If the logic

of DeLillo's metaphors was dictated by reference to neural systems, Krauss's work, I'd suggest, marks the disconnection between language and a specialized neuroscience: the doctor's comparison, here, is drained of metaphoricity and the analogy rests statically in its initial state as a literal cherry on the brain.

Yet Krauss's novel is about more than a procedural opposition between literature and the sciences of mind, and the deeper complexity of her novel becomes clearer if we briefly juxtapose the novel with the work of the philosopher Thomas Nagel. In an influential essay published in 1974, Nagel argued that neuroscience's explanatory power was fundamentally limited because while neuroscience could account for the action of particular physiological elements in the brain, it could not express the subjective flavor of an individual existence. In a vivid illustration of this claim, Nagel insists, for instance, that we might be able to understand how a bat's brain works, but we could never really know how it feels to sense the world through the process of echolocation.

Nagel's position is explored in Krauss's novel through a chain of references to what she calls the difficult "capacity to participate in, or vicariously experience, another's feelings" (42). But while such power is deemed to lie beyond neuroscience's current horizons, Krauss's self-conscious references to the act of storytelling dramatize her claim that literature already acts as a sophisticated container of subjective consciousness. This theory is outlined in capsule form when Samson sees a geriatric's collection of bound volumes and reflects that "it did not seem impossible . . . that somehow everything in Max's brain had been meticulously copied down there in tiny print" (224), yet the practical workings of this connection is more vividly registered in scenes where Krauss dramatizes the relationship between a storyteller and the audience, as when a character named Pip recalls an earlier experience that Samson, as auditor, seamlessly enters: "Pip described how after the meeting she'd driven back on the dark roads. As she talked Samson frantically imagined the scenes, adding details of his own, like her headlights sweeping across the trees" (205).

The logic of this argument provides one explanation for the more conservative formal choices in such second generation syndrome novels as *Man Walks into a Room*: Krauss's treatment of neurology is less about the biological constraints that frame DeLillo's fictions and more about the pure power of storytelling as a counternarrative to the abstraction of species-level theorizing. More subdued formal choices inevitably serve to throw the fundamental act of subjective narration into high relief.

The strategies that we see in *Man Walks into a Room*—that is, the resistance to neuroscience alongside a desire to use an altered state of consciousness to permit a return to conventional narrative forms—are not solely explored in Krauss's work. Neuroscience, in fact, serves a similar function in

Joshua Ferris's *The Unnamed* (2010), in which a pregnant defamiliarization is found in the neural disorder that lies at the center of the novel.

In *The Unnamed*, Tim Farnsworth, a Manhattan lawyer, suffers from an unspecified compulsion to keep walking, and in typical post-postmodern fashion the strains that this condition place upon his daily existence allows Ferris to question the basic foundations of marriage: "Why do you do it?" The narrator asks, "Security, family, companionship. Ideally you do it for love. *There's* something they don't elaborate on. They just say the word and you're supposed to know what it means" (114). In part—as you may have already guessed—exploring what it means to do something for love is exactly the goal that Ferris's novel sets out to reach. But while Ferris's interest in a measured return to traditional subject matter overlaps with Krauss's practice, *The Unnamed* also provides an unusually vivid exploration of the deep metaphysical ache that lies at the heart of post-postmodern fiction. In many novels that have emerged after the great generation of American postmodernists, we typically encounter a yearning to achieve some transcendent spiritual meaning presumed to be absent from the postmodern world.

Although recent criticism has argued for the emergence of the "new atheist novel"—a form that seeks to "affirm . . . the secular pieties of . . . evolutionary biology" (Bradley and Tate 11) over the claims of religion—much post-postmodern fiction seems to yearn for at least a partial return to religion and spirituality. Such a return is anecdotally apparent in the biographies of these writers—David Foster Wallace's several attempts to convert to Catholicism springs to mind—but a distillation of this impulse is also palpable in the heightened resonance the word *soul* carries in much post-postmodern fiction.

Though references to the soul sometimes exist within a satirical matrix in post-postmodern works, the same word carries a more traditional weight with suggestive frequency even in works by the same writer. In George Saunders's short story "Winky," for example, a bowl of oatmeal is parodically offered as a stand-in for "your soul in its pure state" (271). Yet elsewhere in his fiction the passage of the soul out of a tormented body—especially in the scenes at the end of such stories as "CivilWarLand in Bad Decline" and "Commcomm"—provide the climactic metaphysical amplification with which many Saunders stories conclude.

In *The Unnamed*, Farnsworth's syndrome partly serves to explore the shadowy links between brain and body, yet the enigma of this interface shades into spiritual questions as Farnsworth searches for his soul. Early in *The Unnamed*, Farnsworth "thought he had one—a soul . . . He thought his mind was proof of it" (81), and following the onslaught of medical care his "mystical impulse" hardens as he tells a doctor his belief in a soul stems from the conviction that "without God, [doctors] win" (223). Increasingly, his conception

of a soul blurs into other categories—he fumblingly describes a quest for "his mind, his will, his soul" (252)—and amid mounting evidence of his biological foundation, he announces that "there's no soul . . . No God" (300), before shifting positions in the face of his wife's cancer to claim that the "soul was inside her doing the work of angels to repulse the atheistic forces of biology and strict materialism" (304). In open-ended fashion, Farnsworth's cyclical movement through these conflicting positions indicates Ferris's exploration of the novel's dialogic capabilities simultaneously to endorse the authoritative languages of "chemical imbalances and shorting neural circuits" and what the novel calls the more mystical "work of the divine" (214, 305).

This bifurcated vision recalls Andrew Marvell's biologically entangled "A Dialogue between the Soul and Body," where the soul is "hung up, as 'twere, in chains / Of nerves, and arteries, and veins" (103). Yet Ferris's treatment of the soul recurs with suggestive frequency in similarly conflicted contexts in post-postmodern fiction. David Foster Wallace's *Infinite Jest*, for example, carries out a millennial excavation of what the novel calls "the soul's core systems" (692). Similarly, Richard Powers's *Galatea 2.2* conducts a rapid survey of connectionist models of the mind before locating the "immaterial in mortal garb": "Our life was a chest of maps, self-assembling, fused into point-for-point feedback, each slice continuously rewriting itself to match the other layers' rewrites. In that thicket, the soul existed; it *was* the search for attractors where the system might settle" (320). In each of these references, the writers' fascination with the mechanics of identity is marked by the stubborn persistence of the idea of a soul, though the very status of its invocation is compromised—stretched toward two different registers—as it is shot through with the language of modern science, of systems and artificial intelligence. The idea of the soul seems to act as a placeholder for science to merge with a persistent mysticism.

The postmodern novel—when approached in the light of cognitive historicism—seems to ground its map of consciousness in contemporary scientific research in part to incorporate neuroscience's ability to address questions at an explanatory level—of the species or of human history—that postmodern epistemological critiques had denied to other discursive forms. At the same time, we can distinguish the postmodern novel from more recent fictions in terms of their divergent treatment of their neural content. Unlike the postmodern novel, the post-postmodern novel is a site of divided energies, yet its dominant narrative mode favors synthesis over rupture, compromise over raw polarities. Its frequent tendency to filter the specialized languages of contemporary science into the lingering power of spirituality represents a microtradition within the larger aesthetic compromises wrought by post-postmodernism's return to more conventional narrative forms. On one level,

the intermingling of science and the soul indicates a certain resistance to the totalizing claims of contemporary neuroscience; on another level, the post-postmodern novel's dialogic openness to divergent truth claims is actually something that gets us closer to the way that some scientists believe we exist in the modern world. As the neuroscientist Paul Broks has said, in the age of neuroscience:

> One has to be bilingual, switching from the language of neuroscience to the language of experience; from talk of "brain systems" and "pathology" to talk of "hope," "dread," "pain," "joy," "love," "loss," and all the other animals, fierce and tame, in the zoo of human consciousness. (130)

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III Symposium Essays

Neglected Visions: The Recursive Science Fiction of Barry N. Malzberg

Jeffrey Canino

In a career spanning over four decades, Barry N. Malzberg has collected the accolades and ire of his contemporaries in equal measure. He has been labeled by his various critics as a genius and an emblem of everything that is wrong with contemporary science fiction. Excessively prolific, between the years of 1971 and 1976 he published 25 book-length works in the field of science fiction alone. In total, he has published over 75 novels and over 300 short stories. As early as 1974, his publishers were proudly touting that his collected works had sold over 5,000,000 copies; as of 2012, exactly no work bearing solely his name is in print. Perhaps this fact should not come as a total shock. Malzberg spent the better part of his career writing transgressive science fiction in a genre that—while priding itself on always looking towards the future—could not fathom the evolution of form that his fiction's incessant metafictional self-reflection brought to the market. Malzberg's work brazenly probes the borders between fiction and reality. His recursive stories and novels are often as much about the writer's own existential angst at attempting to produce serious literature in a field dominated by commercial pressures and juvenile audiences as they are about intergalactic exploits. Fiction composed with such a focus is bound for one of two fates as time ebbs on: to be rediscovered by a sizeable contingent of supporters with the influence to place the work back into print and provide it critical appreciation, or to disappear entirely, to populate the corners of used book stores and library basements. Works of science fiction, which, as Malzberg writes, have since the genre's inception been "regarded with contempt by the academic-literary nexus and ignored by the vast audience for popular culture" (*Engines of the Night* 60), stand to face an even bleaker fate. Malzberg's collected works have yet to find themselves in a position as fortunate as those of his contemporaries. While the challenging fictions of SF writers like J. G. Ballard, Philip K. Dick, Samuel R. Delany, and Robert Sheckley have been embraced by readers, publishers, and academics for their idiosyncrasies, Malzberg's have fallen into near oblivion. One reason for this might be that the works of Ballard, Dick, Delany, and Sheckley—even at their most experimental—are never less than entertaining, while Malzberg's fictions are often more confrontational, self-conscious, and vulnerable.

His stories open up a direct pathway between writer and audience that cannot help but make us squirm with discomfort and question our aims when passively engaging with fiction.

Harlan Ellison's 1972 anthology, *Again, Dangerous Visions*, features a Malzberg story entitled "Still-Life," originally published under the pseudonym K. M. O'Donnell. The story concerns the personal dysfunction of an astronaut obsessed with the notion of quitting the Space Program mid-operation and intentionally abandoning his fellow astronauts on the moon. While the tale is nominally making a comment about the futility and redundancy of the Space Program from a political, cultural, and even existential viewpoint, Malzberg does not appear content to leave its concerns at that. A radical shift in perspective at the story's conclusion casts away such easy interpretations: the astronaut falls asleep to dream that he is a character being written about in a story by Barry Malzberg. The third-person narration pivots into first-person and the conventional narrative is dropped in favor of a meeting between author and creation. The astronaut cannot understand why the author has chosen him as his subject. By 1972, the Space Program was already dead in the water (Apollo 17, launched at the end of the year, would only confirm this fact), and the astronaut feels that he is only "a damned anachronism" and that his story, having occurred "a long, long time ago," is not even relevant to the present, much less the future. He implores his author to instead "think of Centaurus, think of the moons of Ariel" and extend the narrative in those fanciful directions, as most science fiction would. But the author holds firm; he sees the astronaut as a symbol of "the future and the past intermingled" and argues that "there's no understanding one without the other." The author values above all else the contact provided by him and his creation "touching for a moment in that simulation of motion known as narration" (291-92). The story's conclusion points toward a radical fracture from modern SF into the realms of metafiction that Malzberg's work would continue to widen for the rest of his career. Malzberg would refuse to dwell in the fantastic in order to provide comfort through escapism, but would instead concern himself with the writer's struggle to comprehend the living.

The pertinent question here might be: so why did Malzberg write metafictional science fiction? Competent science fiction wants to lay out important truths about life on Earth but is restricted from doing so by the genre's forced conceits, conventions, stereotypes, clichés, and the expectations of the marketplace. Malzberg's metafictional tendencies are an attempt to resolve this contention through struggle: to force the reader to connect to the writer and vision beyond the conflicted page. We see this struggle throughout his collected works. His nonfiction book, *The Engines of the Night*, stands by turns as an overly hopeful and direly pessimistic postmodern history of science fiction

up until the dawn of the 1980s, blending history, autobiography, analysis, advice, and fiction into an inconclusive yet distinctively Malzbergian portrait of the genre. Malzberg's tone of comingled hope and pessimism in *The Engines of the Night* is perfectly appropriate when examining his views on the literature: science fiction itself is a conflicted, self-contradicting, contentious medium. Malzberg notes that, on the one hand, science fiction can force us to confront whatever humanity remains within us in our increasingly technologically driven existence. On the other, science fiction as literature is cloistered by the escapist worldview of its pulp market origins; it is "junk about people without genitals for kids of all ages who could barely read or bear to think" (25). Science fiction holds both of these titles simultaneously: "It is crazy escapist literature and yet contains the central truth of this slaughterhouse of a century" (88). Ultimately, he finds that in the genre's "damages lies its magnificence" (25), and that, "This genre, this thing, this science fiction, may make us better, it may make us worse. . . . It is intolerably—and finally—merely human (84).

It is the genre's human fragility, its human dissonance that attracts Malzberg. His outré fictions and their reflexive metanarratives attempt to do the impossible by discovering the ecstatic human core in a literature whose own conventions and devices—its stock plots, flat characters, and blatant disregard for human concerns—doom it to be second-rate. He states flatly that science fiction "can *never* aspire to the effects of [first rate literature,] which are to break the reader (and writer) through to new levels of perception, to a reorganization of the materials of his life. It cannot do this because the purposes of science fiction, at the base, must work against this kind of heightening of insight, confrontation of self" (78) by lapsing into fantastic, clichéd, escapist scenarios. And yet, again and again, a confrontation is exactly what his science fiction will attempt. His metafictional confrontations of writer with self, reader with self, writer with reader, and writer with character give the slightest impression of the author slamming his head repeatedly against a typewriter, hoping for some part of himself to sink into the ink on the page and some part of the reader to smudge his glasses.

The most profound of Malzberg's recursive forays into the contentious and contradictory nature of science fiction writing is his 1975 novel *Galaxies*, which bills itself as a set of "notes" for a SF novel that will never be written, but which actually unfolds as a meditation on artistic limitations. The Malzbergian authorial persona in this novel is of a breed with Nabokov's relentlessly playful narrators but stung with a more pronounced bitterness and anxiety over the perceived importance of his written work. The novel's metanarrative concerns a science fiction author, identifying himself only as "M," who attempts to write a very marketable "hard SF" novel based upon a couple essays of scientific theory written by John W. Campbell. Campbell was perhaps the

most influential of the genre's formative editors and the man most responsible for the gung-ho space heroics that have dominated the popular conception of SF ever since. Of course, Malzberg's typical experimental fictions stand in opposition to the blissfully ignorant scientific optimism of Campbell's variety, so much so that when Malzberg's bleak, psychological novel *Beyond Apollo* won the first John W. Campbell Memorial Award in 1973, a large contingent of the SF community cried out in consternation (*Engines of the Night* 71).

Thus, the intentions of *Galaxies*' narrator stand at odds not only with the conventions of popular SF, but also with Malzberg's own intentions for fiction. The novel's narrator wants to write hard SF and produce a commercially viable text, to sell alongside pulpy, pro-technological fare like "*The Rammers of Arcturus* and *Slinking Slowly on the Slime Planet's Sludge*" (*Galaxies* 7). The major problem with this goal is that hard SF is clearly not the sort of fiction that the narrator (or Malzberg) deems as a valuable vehicle through which to speak about the human condition. Still, our narrator tries, regardless of the fact that his every attempt is undermined by his own lack of scientific knowledge, excess of artistic pretensions, and anxiety over reaching the novel's contracted word count. The writer's notes toward his novel attempt to fulfill the very function he is certain they cannot: satisfying the demands of the commercial market without sacrificing artistic vision. Consequently, the novel's narrative reads as self-defeating.

Galaxies emerges from its jumble of intentions as a textual assemblage of metafictional contradictions. The conflict between the narrator and the dual visions of himself as both artist and hack damage the narrative to the extent that nearly every aspect of the text is mirrored by its natural antithesis. The writer is adamant that his novel is only a set of notes, and yet its lengthy, uninterrupted passages of exposition and dialogue would argue otherwise. The writer reassures his reader that "the author is not a character in *Galaxies*" (*Galaxies* 9) before continuing to pop his head around the novel's corners throughout. Early on, he claims the novel to be "essentially cheerful, essentially hopeful" (*Galaxies* 12), while later proclaiming it to be the supreme example of angst in modern literature (*Galaxies* 48). These contradictions intensify when comparing the novel's metanarrative to those strands of "proper" realist narrative. The writer is adamant that there is no room for sex scenes in his novel, considering his belief that "space *is* asepsis; . . . [and] renders sexuality barren" (*Galaxies* 25), a few chapters before including an explicit and extended encounter between his heroine and her lover (*Galaxies* 39-45). The author then claims that his "excess of integrity" prevents him from coloring his cyborg characters with cheap "tricks of speech, habits, mannerisms" (*Galaxies* 93) several chapters after supplying one with a lisp (*Galaxies* 73). Perhaps the greatest expression of the novel's contradictory nature is its physical appear-

ance: the overbearing external pulpiness of its original 1972 Pyramid Books mass market paperback conveys not one hint of its internal experimentation, a fact which the author is openly concerned over in his metanarrative; perhaps after beginning to read *Galaxies*, the reader will discern that "*Slogging Through the Slime Planet* may have been a better investment after all" (*Galaxies* 68).

The aforementioned contradictions are what give the novel its thematic weight: how can the author ever hope to write about the concerns of the living when forced to incorporate essentially dead and lifeless genre conventions? What do FTL drives, mischievous robots, and black galaxies matter to us? How can the writer begin to write about the people of the fortieth century, he asks, when the people of the "middle-class suburb in northern New Jersey" in which he is writing remain a mystery to him (*Galaxies* 15)? As we see through the narrator's refusal to simply escape into the safety of genre stereotype, it is those, the living, whom he wishes to write about and understand. The novel's most telling moment is one in which the author peeps through the cardboard set of his own creation, "sweating behind the canvas, casting a nearsighted, astigmatic eye . . . to see whether the audience is paying attention, how the audience is taking all of this" (*Galaxies* 85). Obviously the author himself is conflicted and hesitant over the effect of his convoluted metafictional narrative, or "his little dumbshow," but at the same time he finds a sense of satisfaction in his attempt: this is the second time in the novel the author thinks aloud the sentiment "take *that* Barth, Barthelme, Roth or Oates!" (*Galaxies* 85), signaling that he feels his confused pocket paperback is, in fact, in the same league as the literary.

Before his direct allusion to John Barth here by name, Malzberg's vision of himself as the author operating the machinery behind the scenes explicitly evokes Barth's *Lost in the Funhouse*. But while Malzberg is clearly working in the milieu established by Barth and the early metafictionists, he is also adamant that his fiction is building off of and surpassing their attempts. His fiction is not simply a playful reconstruction of a myth or fairytale, but he believes the very human existential angst his story expresses, here taken on a galactic scale through its science fiction lens, cannot be surpassed by the aims of conventional literary fiction. While literary fiction was content to be stuck in the realms of Updike's and Roth's suburban malaise (a tradition which not even Barth was innocent of), science fiction could represent the cosmic human condition, that essential human spirit stranded mournfully among the engines, the entertainments, and the stars of the twentieth century. The author argues that *Galaxies*,

> rather than showing us an alternate reality . . . may only be showing

> us our own but *extended*, opened up so that the novel may give us, as science fiction can in the rare times when it is good and as almost nothing else ever can, some glimpse of possibilities beyond ourselves, possibilities not truly compensated by word rates or the problems of categorization to a limited audience. (*Galaxies* 91)

But here again the authorial voice is misleading us: it is not the novel's conventional science fiction tale of a spaceship's descent into a black galaxy that opens up the reader to new possibilities, but rather the tale of the author's descent into the black galaxy of his un-writable novel. What the novel allows us to find beyond ourselves is another beating human heart, trying desperately to lead us to an understanding of his vision, however flawed it may be. As Malzberg himself would, we find that in the novel's damages lies its magnificence. *Galaxies* is a cry for legitimacy and a playful experiment in subverting audience expectations. It is a contentious, contradictory, paradoxical, and finally *human* novel.

This paper has sought to demonstrate the uniqueness of Barry Malzberg's position in postmodern literature. We see his fiction professing a willful allegiance to a commercial genre that could never truly accept him, while he wholeheartedly believed it could accomplish the sort of essential, forward-thinking cultural and existential introspection that capital-L Literature could not. In this light, Malzberg emerges as one of the great neglected visionaries of the postmodern period. But, of course, he already knew this. He knew it back in 1975 when he made a half-hearted and partially unsuccessful attempt to quit writing SF, if for no other reason than to ease his frustration. He knew it again back in 1980, when in his nonfiction work, *The Engines of the Night,* he declared that he once desired to "administer CPR" to the "fibrillating heart of science fiction" (181), only to immediately follow this statement with a short story about a pitiful, failed SF writer and his lost dream to "arrest the decline of science fiction into stereotypes and cant, open up the category to new vistas" (182). Although Malzberg saw his work falling short of accomplishing its aims to significantly revise the relationship between science fiction and literary fiction, his concerns have been taken up by others with more widespread success: in 1973, Thomas Pynchon published his extremely successful and influential quasi-SF *Gravity's Rainbow*, a novel as deeply concerned with and paranoid over the death grip technology has on our culture as any of Malzberg's science fictions; in 1993, David Foster Wallace would express in an interview with Larry McCaffery his nearly identical interest in "administering CPR" to the heart of fiction through his own use of metanarrative (McCaffery 131). Wallace's form of metanarrative, seen in stories like "Octet" and "Good Old Neon," shows that intense vulnerability of the author that Malzberg's fictions always

do, and those of the classic metafictionists like Barth and Coover almost never do. Moreover, what could we call Wallace's psyche-shattering Entertainments, manufactured teeny bopper-heartthrob Presidents, and country-wide hazardous waste dumps but the staples of transgressive science fiction? The success of these and other writers lends legitimacy to Malzberg's visions; regrettably, that same success has not rescued his visions from obscurity. The fact remains that Malzberg's work, no matter its merit, is labeled "Science Fiction," while works like *Gravity's Rainbow* and *Infinite Jest* are monolithic "Literature." Why do these labels still seem to hold firm in our boundary-obliterating postmodern era? In a review of Malzberg's novel *Guernica Night* in *The New York Times* back in 1975, Joyce Carol Oates took pains to make clear that the novel's concerns were "poetic and philosophical" and not at all like the science fiction that she was accustomed to. Perhaps what Malzberg has truly sought is to accustom us to what *else* literature can be.

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Coover's Lazy Susan: Irresolution in "The Magic Poker"

Nicole Hitner

My first foray into Robert Coover's *Pricksongs and Descants* was shot through with disappointments. Heavy on metafiction and light on content, his short stories struck me as spitefully irresolute. "The Magic Poker," above all, is crawling with half-baked characters, endlessly revised storylines, sudden shifts in narrative style, and ignored archetypes. However, I suspended my judgment of the postmodern genre until I'd read Pynchon's *The Crying of Lot 49*, and, upon finding it even more frustratingly ambiguous than Coover's story, decided that reading postmodern fiction was about as pleasant as being spun around on a lazy Susan at a crowded dinner party. Fictional texts (especially fairytales) are, like parties, a sort of public venue, a place where reader meets narrator according to established cultural conventions. Dinner guests tacitly agree not to draw unseemly attention to themselves or their companions just as narrators agree not to draw attention to the narrative act or to the reader's role as observer. Metafiction, however, has the habit of returning that observing gaze in an almost eerie fashion: it forces the reader to know that it knows the reader is watching. This, for a dinner guest, would be akin to being placed on display—perhaps on the dining table itself—before the other guests. In "The Magic Poker," the reader is not only "watched" in this way but is also forced, by Coover's unique brand of metafiction, to experience the narrative from dozens of conflicting vantage points, causing the story elements to whirl and bleed into one another. Our party guest, elevated and red-faced, is now set to spinning. My encounter with the story left me disoriented and resentful at having been the butt of what I perceived to be an elaborately contrived joke. Indeed, Coover and other innovators of metafiction from the 1960s and '70s have been criticized for popularizing a "narcissistic" (McCaffery 135) form of the narrative art that David Foster Wallace would later dare call "solipsistic," "pretentious," and a "godawful trap" (McCaffery 142).

Metafiction *is* these things, but only when used irresponsibly. Most simply, metafiction may be defined as fiction about fiction, but its fundamental function is to draw attention, by any number of means, to what Wallace calls "fiction as a mediated experience" (McCaffery 142). Some writers draw attention to this mediation simply to demonstrate that they can; in doing so, they fail to make productive use of the technique. It wasn't until I'd reread "The Magic Poker" that I came to see why Coover could not be accused of such pretentiousness. What I'd previously experienced as some kind of intellectual taunt turned out to be a sincere and masterfully crafted attempt to reveal to

me my own expectations of the fictional world. I realized that the fairytale narrative I presumed to be the focus of Coover's story was, in fact, incidental to the larger story of the text's creation, merely a vehicle through with the metadrama could unfold. This understanding allowed me to develop an appreciation for a narrative innovation that has since become a cornerstone of the postmodern period.

In this essay, I will examine critics' negative responses to metafiction in order to isolate the nature of their complaints. From there, I will probe psychological texts for evidence of humankind's need or desire for closure, resolution, and patterning in hypothesizing that these attributes are precisely why fairytale stories have seen such popular success in diverse cultures. I will also argue that Coover seeks, through his fiction, to reveal to us our cognitive relationship with such "master narratives." Coover was an innovator of metafiction, and his liberal use of it in conjunction with fairytale elements draws attention to the utter *lack* of authorial presence in traditional fairytales, which, being author-less, are essentially tales we tell ourselves. In frustrating our expectations, Coover does not criticize the cultural need for master texts so much as call into question our dependence on certain resolutions: on the happy ending, the thwarted and despicable villain, the pure and virtuous princess. I will argue that Coover replaces these ideal resolutions with the meta-narrative's resolution: the text itself. Fractured and fluctuating, the story functions as the answer to its own critical question and, when approached appropriately, loses its dizzying effect.

Of the diverse methods an author may employ in dotting his story with meta-moments, Coover makes use, albeit *liberal* use, of only two. His short stories have been described as "brightly painted paragraphs" that have been "arranged like pasteboards in ascending or descending scales of alternating colors" (Gass) so that the narrative is somehow unidirectional while still appearing patch-worked. Both shifts in style and printed section breaks divorce each paragraph from the rest, so a meta-device employed in one paragraph may be entirely absent in the next. The oft-quoted opening passage of "The Magic Poker" begins with what may be the most prevalent of the two methods he employs in it: revealing the narrator as the author of the story:

> I wander the island, inventing it. . . . I deposit shadows and dampness, spin webs, and scatter ruins. Yes: ruins. A mansion and guest cabins and boat houses and docks. . . . All gutted and window-busted and autographed and shat upon. (20)

This paragraph is unique in that it also employs the second method: attracting attention to the elements of the story. Here our attention is drawn to the creation of *setting.* Later, we watch as our narrator/author furnishes the is-

land with a history, inhabitants, and even a will of its own. In his own words, "anything can happen" (20). Typical of Coover, the paragraph that follows is devoid of that authorial *I* and instead adopts the perspective of a third-person observer. Still further on, the tense shifts from present to past, and the narrator adopts a storytelling tone: "Once, earlier in this age, a family with great wealth purchased this entire island . . ." (22). Later the narrator goes so far as to throw his own existence into doubt: "Didn't I invent him [the caretaker's son] myself? . . . To tell the truth, I sometimes wonder if it was not he who invented me" (31). By employing just two meta-narrative techniques, Coover succeeds in constructing a fairytale world uncannily bereft of stable relationships. Such is the nature of Coover's shifting story of two girls who come to an island to find a magic poker and encounter a genteel man in the midst of a ruined mansion.

We have been conditioned by traditional narratives to train our attention on the girls and their adventure. We expect the girl in the gold pants to find the poker; the demure Karen to play the supporting role; the caretaker's son, with his shaggy buttocks and low-slung genitals, to attack our heroines on some evil agenda; and the magic poker to supply deliverance in the form of some prince-charming-or-other. We expect these things because the author, by promising a tale of enchantment that occurred "once upon a time" (41), has signaled his intention to tell us a story we already know, a story that has shaped *our* moral paradigms as much as *they* have shaped the cultures that gave rise to this story.

But Coover has a different agenda, and it is this agenda, Wallace informs us, that renders his metafiction the work of a "genius" (McCaffery 135). Unlike the "crank-turners," who employ metafictional techniques simply to flaunt a high-brow authorial power and antagonize the reader, Coover uses "formal innovation in the service of an original vision" (McCaffery 145-46). Coover himself explains that "our basic assumptions about the universe have been altered," and "our old sense of constructs . . . [has] lost its efficacy"; we must therefore "reform our notions of things" (qtd.in Bacchilega 173). Thus, "The Magic Poker" presents us with serialized versions of even the minutest details with the intent to frustrate us, yes, but only as part of our liberation from the absolutist objectivity of the master narrative. We watch, for example, the girl in gold pants crouch as she picks up the poker, her "golden haunches gleaming over the grass" (24), later "curving golden above the bluegreen grass" (25), and still later "gleaming golden over the shadowed grass" (30). In each rendition, the poker elicits a different effect, first—POOF!—producing a handsome man from thin air (24), then emerging from the grass covered in bugs (25), later initiating a conversation with the man that completely undermines the notion of enchantment (30). All this revision is in the name of asking, no, compelling

readers to forgo cleaving to the beloved master narrative.

Let's return, for a moment, to the lazy Susan. If the surrounding sea of partygoers may be said to represent the traditional story elements in "The Magic Poker," and if focusing on their multiplicity leads merely to head- and heartache, in relation to what must we orient ourselves? By rendering the narrator no more solid than his creations, Coover forces us to train our gaze not on the characters, nor on the author, but on ourselves. Since the story makes *us* and our expectations its focus*, our responses* to it must serve as the resolution to its meta-narrative.

Irresolution, especially where it is least expected, has the tendency to frustrate the human need for cognitive closure, which in a 2006 study on the need for closure and its effects on group dynamics, is defined as "'the desire for a firm answer to a question, any firm answer as compared to confusion and/or ambiguity'" (Kruglanski 85). This psychological study operates from the assumption that "individual knowledge," or self-knowledge, is "inevitably grounded in a shared reality, and a desire for shared reality is tantamount to the quest for a firm individual knowledge" (Kruglanski 85). Not surprisingly, a positive correlation is found between the need for closure, intolerance for ambiguity, and affinity for dogmatism (Kruglanski 86). Those who crave closure are less likely to consider their audience's unique needs when communicating (87), more likely to stereotype, and also more likely to "arrive at a speedy consensus" even if it means "exerting uniformity pressures" on the group (87).

In light of these findings, it makes sense that folk stories and fairytales have sprouted up in virtually every culture around the world and continue to be retold ad infinitum. These stories, having, with a handful of exceptions, no author but the oral traditions from which they arose, are essentially artistically coded contracts. Even those that were once the intellectual property of a single author have since been adopted by the multitude. Having issued from many mouths, they homogenize popular sentiment in a way that ignores the particularities of individual listeners. Their structures are uniform, their principles overwhelmingly dogmatic, and their conclusions hasty to reach that crowd-pleasing conclusion. Thus, fairytales, as part of our ethnic identities, constitute a portion of the shared reality we continuously imbibe.

This type of shared reality, restricted by a collective single-mindedness, is precisely what Coover actively combats in his fiction. Coover, we might surmise, would likely rank very low on the scale of need for closure. Such individuals are characterized by the need for cognition and "fear of invalidity" (86). Fear of invalidity refers to a general distrust of "definite options" (86) and the suspicion that they function only to displace other equally viable options. Hence, the discovered poker furnishes as many functions as its author's imagination can supply in the space allowed. The favoring of any one version

would render him guilty of the prescriptive mode he seeks to circumvent.

We see an abundance of the need for cognition in "The Magic Poker." It appears every time the narrator steps into the frame to agonize over or reflect upon his story. He spends a considerable amount of time just trying to *understand* his story. For example, about a quarter-way through the text, the narrator cries out:

> Wait a minute! This is getting out of hand! What happened to that poker, I was doing much better with the poker, I had something going there, archetypal and even maybe beautiful, a blend of eros and wisdom. . . . But what am I going to do with shit in a rusty tea kettle? No, no, there's nothing to be gained by burdening our fabrications with impieties. (30)

While Coover's tattered plot-line might seem evidence of neglect, it is in passages like these that we become keenly aware of both the narrator's and Coover's dedication to including details that *mean*, nuances that matter. The defiled teakettle, Coover announces, represents a departure from the fairytale "archetype," a deliberate impiousness that Coover exposes as such so that we, too, are compelled to process its significance. The narrator's facetious tone in this passage argues that there *is*, in fact, value in deviating from the archetype, in acknowledging the ugliness in the teakettle. Coover's meta-narrative systematically ensures that we notice and reciprocate his active cognition.

The purpose of this cognition is not, however, to devise the perfect plot point or wording of a passage. It is rather to avoid invalidity, to refrain from settling on any one interpretation of reality. The narrator's purposeful irresolution regarding his obviously Calaban-esque character, the caretaker's son, is especially intriguing to trace. At first, the son's covert observation of the girls as they explore the island and the narrator's crass description of his shaggy body lead readers to identify him as the brute villain. The narrator tells us it is the caretaker's son who "squats joyfully over the blue tea kettle, depositing . . . a love letter" (30) but then takes responsibility for this squatting himself, compelling us to wonder who is more indelicate, the author or his creation? Later, the son suffers Rachel's ridicule. Still later, his likeness emerges in a sketch of the princely character. And, in the section that most resembles a real fairy-tale, the caretaker's son accomplishes what all the princes could not in removing the girl's gold pants, only to be called a "monster" (43) and slain. Thus, Coover presents to us the problem of representation, of being faithful to a subjective reality. He refuses to solve this problem, for to cast the caretaker's son in any one of the above roles would be to obliterate the others in favor of a fallacious, single-minded rendering.

Though we all experience the text differently, Coover expects us to react to the story according to our cultural preconceptions of what a fairytale does.

Those of us who shudder at the thought of being denied closure would benefit from interpreting that discomfort *as* resolution. For Coover's underlying agenda, as demonstrated in "The Magic Poker," is not to teach a simple moral lesson or to tell a tale of good and evil or even to demonstrate the ambiguity of such constructs. It is to trigger discomfort in some and to unleash glee in others by defying expectations and temporarily hijacking a genre whose voice belongs to no one alone. Under Coover's direction, the fairytale appears robbed of its purpose and bereft of its satisfying qualities. But then, as we wrangle with the story's inconclusive conclusion, it dawns on us that we're meant to feel dissatisfied, that the composite plot strives for nothing less than to send us reeling into a space of self-reflection. That this hijacking is for a purpose—the purpose of exposing to us our romance with homogeneity—should be of some comfort to us, should at least persuade us to take Coover's prose for another spin.

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Rhetorical Illness: Classical Ethos and Postmodern Oratory in Roberto Bolaño's "Literature + Illness = Illness"

Sarah Hurd

In his 2010 book *The Insufferable Gaucho*, Roberto Bolaño creates a series of narratives about illness in a chapter entitled "Literature + Illness = Illness." These stories primarily become a thematic catalyst that allows him to examine big-picture questions regarding life and death, perhaps even his own sickness. According to Jay Aubrey-Herzog in a review of the collection, "'Literature + Illness = Illness' is the centerpiece of the book, an essay that deals with his liver disease in an elliptical way that is allergic to cliché" (1), suggesting that "it's hard not to read his final books as some kind of message from the grave, especially since Bolaño was fully aware of his terminal condition as he wrote them" (1). Bolaño creates a narrative presence in this chapter that manages and mismanages his audience's expectations, unveiling a meta-strategy that fosters our identification, while also forcing us to step back and examine how we read texts about illness. In each of the stories in "Literature + Illness = Illness," Bolaño's narrator affronts and traumatizes us to signal the gap between narrative completion and the expectation of catharsis in how we consider postmodern texts. Through this chapter, Bolaño suggests that narratives about illness are capable of examining existential paradoxes regarding death and the life-affirming possibilities of testimony, while simultaneously alerting us to maintain a critical eye towards the narrator controlling the text. By investigating the rhetorical possibilities ripe in these narratives, we may consider our own mortality, closeness to illness, and empathetic connection to the actuality of suffering and death.

Bolaño begins this series of stories with "Illness and Public Speaking," a one-paragraph narrative that highlights and undermines our expectations of closure by retelling an anecdote of an absentee public speaker: "Let us imagine the following scenario. The speaker is going to speak about illness" (123). Bolaño's speaker gestures meta-fictively toward his own authorial stance in composing the story we're reading *and* composing the absentee speaker. The anticipation that Bolaño's narrator will retell the public speaker's lecture puts us in a situation of expectation of closure and catharsis and draws further attention to the tragedy of the speaker's absence. Thus, we feel a sadness for this being that exists only in the narrator's representation of his absence.

In the first part of the reversal of narrator, Bolaño writes, "It's a pleasure to speak to such a well-mannered group of people" (123). In this brief sentence, the speaker of the text takes on the duty of addressing his textual audience to

introduce the lecture in the place of the absentee speaker. In this moment, we aren't sure if Bolaño's narrator is addressing his readers or the imagined audience waiting to hear the public speaker's address. By creating ambiguity in his audience, the speaker further subjugates our expectations through the ambiguity of the language. We aren't provided any quotation marks to suggest that the speaker of the text is providing us with the sudden intrusion of the public speaker. Rather, through his use of free, indirect discourse, Bolaño collapses his narrative persona with the speaker, making these roles disturbingly fluid: "But the speaker fails to appear" (123).

The dubious nature of this reversal of orator is this: Bolaño's narrative presence fails to draw attention to the public speaker's absence until much later in the anecdote. By using our expectations of this speaker's arrival, Bolaño's narrator slides his way into the role, only to thwart our expectations of his arrival. In fact, the only point of this retelling is to draw attention to the public speaker's failure to speak because of sudden illness. Bolaño's speaker creates an expectation he cannot fulfill. While this strategy of becoming the absentee speaker seems ethically compromised, in that he is replacing a sick individual, Bolaño's speaker creates an ironic re-imagination of the connection between illness and representation. In this case, representation can fill the void created by sickness, in that Bolaño can create a story from tragic absence. Because Bolaño's speaker invites us into the recollection, he also invites our empathy towards the speaker who will inevitably be too sick to provide us with closure, or a speech at all. Bolaño's audience feels the pang of this absence as a testament to the random reality of illness and the debilitating effects it can have on the external world.

Bolaño's text demonstrates the necessity for an audience critical of the speaker, in that an awareness of narration will allow us to understand how the text can work to misuse audience expectations and make arguments that are purposefully ethically unsound to engage us into feeling the existential crisis of illness and death. Beginning in the Platonic tradition, rhetoric was supposed to convey a higher truth, with purposes based solely in instruction. In fact, Nan Johnson notes that a rhetorician "should be a philosopher, not a panderer. . . . rhetoric has the noble mission of producing order and proportion in souls" (99). With such lofty goals for rhetoric, Plato establishes a tradition of critique, taking the position that we must be skeptical of "sophist rhetoric" that "aims to produce gratification and pleasure" (99). In light of Platonic rhetorical theory, we must search ardently for the truth of an argument, with a critical eye toward the aims of the rhetorician.

In opposition to Platonic theory, we return to Bolaño's text to examine how Cicero's understanding of ethos leads to corrupt narration. Cicero, in opposition to Plato's preoccupation with the endeavor of discovering truth,

believed rhetoric functioned as merely persuasion, with an emphasis on practicality. In the section "Illness and Apollo," Bolaño's narrator by creating an analogy between illness and this mythological character artfully uses persuasive tools to create a illogical and unethical argument that denigrates the integrity of the collection of narratives. In fact, this section is the sparsest section of the collection, comprising only two sentences: a question, followed by a reply. Bolaño asks, "Where has that faggot Apollo got to?" (130), a question that misuses societal cues through the pathos-ridden word "faggot," a word that conjures punitive associations of judgment. His placement of this question within the larger body of "illness narratives" forecasts the causal argument that will follow. To this random question, Bolaño's narrator answers with, "Apollo is ill, seriously ill" (130). Because Apollo's sexuality is mentioned prior to his illness, the narrator establishes a causal relationship between the two: the cause is homosexuality; the effect is "serious" illness. This textual moment provides us with an ethical slippage, alerting us to the power of narrative to misuse our emotional associations to thwart large philosophical investigations. Rhetorically, the emphasis shifts from the profundity of illness to the superficiality of Apollo's supposed sexual orientation.

In this moment in Bolaño's text, we encounter the pitfalls of a narrator that uses pathos-ridden words and causal arrangement to create an argument that is not only ethically empty, but also lacks any substantial evidence as proof. Without examining this textual moment closely, we fall prey to being fed preposterous arguments that fundamentally challenge not only our morality, but also the morality of the speaker. Bolaño uses these pathos-ridden words interwoven within this familiar causal argumentative strategy to work with our expectations and draw our attention to the correct way to read his text. We are not meant to simply accept this outrageously illogical proclamation. By repeating the word "seriously" in conjunction with the word "faggot," Bolaño's narrator employs colloquial language in an attempt to engage us in his argument. Instead, we're called upon to examine how pathos and ethos can work to affront us so we may resist and combat these linguistic blows and identify with the problem of misrepresenting illness.

An additional example of style and arrangement falling prey to a cunning and ethically compromised narrator occurs in the section "Illness and Dionysus." In another allusion to classical mythology, this section begins with a confession: "To tell the truth, the honest truth, cross my heart and hope to die, it's something I find very hard to admit" (128). Again, Bolaño's text does not in any way address the title, "Illness and Dionysus"; instead, it serves to address the speaker's difficulty with truth-telling. The speaker admits that "truth-telling" is difficult for him and offers an allusion to Dionysus (a mythological character that values disorder). His opinions about "truth telling" clearly dis-

tance him from the ends of Platonic rhetoric and also draw attention to how we should read this text, with a critical eye turned to the narrator. Clearly, we should not trust the narrator and be diligent in protecting our separateness from the narration through embodying the critical audience. Thus, we enact the critical gaze of Platonic theory to examine the *truth* of the narrator and his persuasive aims.

The narrative that then follows, in which a new prisoner in a Mexican jail is raped and abused by his "sweetheart" (128), attempts to provide evidence for his claim that sexual relationships can become definitions for illness. This narrative only complicates the paradox the narrator establishes, a paradox similar to the paradox of illness. In both instances, the beauty of life is subsumed by the harsh violence of pain and suffering. The relationship between the two men is, at first, made beautiful through the use of the word "sweetheart." However, the ironic connotations introduced by the context (rape) complicates the beauty of the relationship; the word serves as a violent reminder of how "ill" the rhetoric becomes because of the environment. "Sweetheart," a word that signifies feelings of sweetness and love, becomes juxtaposed against the nightmare of a rape. Thus, the word undergoes transformation at the hands of a violent narrative. By forcing us to confront this undoing of language, Bolaño models for us the ways in which narrative and representation can force us to empathetically feel for the victim of this sexual assault while considering how language itself represents the incident.

As the tale of the two "lovers" ends, the speaker notes that "Obviously, neither of these men is what we would call a homosexual. If someone called them homosexuals to their faces, they'd probably get so angry and be so offended, they'd brutally rape the offender, then kill him" (129). This ironic, satiric, and darkly comical assertion again uses pathos-ridden language to create a connection for the audience. Bolaño's speaker uses "we" strategically, to force our involvement in experiencing this depraved argument, but also in defining the word "homosexual." According to the logic of the anecdote, "homosexual" becomes a dangerous label that insinuates hostility and violence. This is the same way that we socially define the expletives in the stories of Dionysus and Apollo. Again, as in "Apollo and Illness," Bolaño equates homosexuality with a depraved sickness. If someone were using a socially defined word, like "homosexual," to categorize these "lovers," he would suffer a horrible death. Using a word becomes equated with death in the world of this story. Unless we carefully examine Bolaño's narrator, we're apt to miss the insinuations present in these arguments, and this argument is very important because it cleverly draws our attention to words' usages, again forcing us to confront the ethos of the speaker using them.

By challenging straightforward, uni-vocal narration, via postmodern

techniques such as shifting narrators, inhuman narrators, and multiple levels of mediation, this work reminds us that we must always seek to know the *aims* of narration if we are to understand its meanings. Rhetorically, "Literature + Illness = Illness" creates an argument about illness that is incomprehensible, with competing anecdotes seeking to posit definitions of illness that unite it with rape, mental illness, absence, etc. However, Bolaño's use of his narrative presence creates a separate argument about how we should read postmodern texts. Instead of focusing on closure, endings and meanings, we should focus on the rhetorical choices that create the content, the exigencies of the rhetorical situation. By relying on the finished product as indicative of the message, we forget that each component of the rhetorical situation argues a message (even a subtle point), and Bolaño doesn't forget that these arguments can conflict. If Bolaño's text argues anything absolutely, it argues that we must consider how texts work within the web of human experiences of the postmodern world.

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Pursuing Productive Postmodernism: From Richard Brautigan's *Trout Fishing in America* to Louise Erdrich's *Tracks*

Jesse Cersosimo

Faith, family, and community are merely a few of the vital identity markers upended by poststructural thought. In removing God from the center of *logos,* we are left to locate a legitimate base of meaning. Poststructural thought places that base in language itself, as our very concept of existence and reality is constructed by words. However, language does not operate according to some stable formula. Instead, each sign evokes an endless chain of signifiers, subjectively interpreted, prompting further chains of signification, *ad infinitum*. Meaning can never be pinned down, deferred as it is always down the chain. What we call meaning is only the contrast of differences between seemingly polar binaries—binaries that do not stand upon closer investigation. At the core of language—the basis upon which we construct reality—there is only indeterminacy and flux.

The social implications of this theory are profound and potentially destabilizing. Literature, whose utility prior to deconstruction derived from our belief in its power to disseminate universal maxims of human experience, has struggled over the last fifty or so years to retain a valid position in an episteme that simultaneously elevates and undermines the efficacy of the medium that renders it. Early attempts by fiction writers to engage poststructural theory are especially mired in this crisis. Authors who confronted the suspect authority of language succeeded in dramatizing the uncertainty and fluidity of the postmodern condition, without yet finding ways for language to re-construct necessary values. Richard Brautigan's 1967 novel, *Trout Fishing in America,* poignantly elegizes the passing of authenticity by contrasting a mythic pastoral to contemporary consumer culture. But in mourning the loss, he is incapable of proposing specific political action to reclaim his vision of America for posterity. Instead, he exploits the slide of signifiers to indulge an imaginative strategy for enjoying the desecrated landscape in the present moment, diminishing concern for future progress.

Nevertheless, the need for literature to communicate the values that inform progressive action has never been more vital than in the postmodern era. Realizing this potential would come only when authors moved past the morass of meaninglessness and instead began to explore linguistic indeterminacy as the site of boundless possibility. Contemporary minority writers, many accustomed to postmodern notions of loss, fracture, and suspicion of

authority as a result of historical oppression, aptly extend the meaning-making enterprise with the flawed tools at their disposal. In contrast to Brautigan, Louise Erdrich, a writer of Chippewa descent, confronts the decimated American landscape with the urgent imperative to perpetuate an embattled cultural identity. Her 1988 novel, *Tracks,* uses poststructural ideas as a tool for negotiating false binaries and gives contemporary readers a formula for synthesizing meaning in a mode that does not simply return to logocentricism. Whereas avant-garde writers like Brautigan can be credited for introducing the problems of the postmodern condition to readers, it is more traditionally narrative-focused writers like Erdrich who have co-opted the lessons of deconstruction and in turn opened up its productive possibilities.

Richard Brautigan's work revels in the wasteland, functioning much like the hallucinogenic drugs that pervaded his implied counterculture audience. It is a response to the loss—vivid and pleasurable—that fails to move beyond present-moment indulgence. Brautigan's prose is seductive, promising freedom in the infinite space of the imagination. However, such indulgent imaginative play willfully ignores the reality of a degraded America, embroiled in social conflict at home and military conflict in Vietnam. Though Brautigan's tone is elegiac of lost or failed American ideals, he bears no sense of personal responsibility for a nation that inflicts violence both at home and abroad, nor does he see such a reality as an obstacle to his creative enjoyment of the present. In vignette after vignette, Brautigan moves quickly from a vague characterization of a social disorder to an imaginatively conceived mode in which he revels despite the destruction.

That such a mode endures only at the expense of posterity is disturbingly dramatized in the "Worsewick" chapter. The narrator, traveling with his "woman" and "the baby," encounters a creek, haphazardly dammed to join with an adjacent hot spring and create a tub for bathing. He coolly notes, "There was a green slime growing around the edges of the tub and there were dozens of dead fish floating in our bath. Their bodies had been turned white by death, like frost on iron doors" (43). Here, the human-made tub is a stand-in for the postmodern destruction of the American pastoral. Yet, the narrator does not dwell on this point. Undeterred, he decides instead to enjoy it for what it is: "We played and relaxed in the water. The green slime and the dead fish played and relaxed with us and flowed out over us and entwined themselves about us" (43). The close proximity to death is not an uncomfortable juxtaposition for the narrator. Instead, he is in harmony with it, establishing a parallel between himself and the dead fish though repetition of the verb phrase "played and relaxed."

However, the narrator wants to do more than just harmonize with the wasteland; his ambition is to fornicate in the face of the abyss. In order to do

so, he must literally turn his back on posterity. With the baby removed to the car, he indulges his lust. By no means is the sex in this vignette a redemptive act, an assertion of life in the midst of death. Because the narrator and his "woman" both agree that they don't "want any more kids for a long time," he spends his ejaculate into the hot, polluted water. His life-giving power is absorbed by the destruction in the final image of the vignette: "I saw a dead fish come forward and float into my sperm, bending it in the middle. His eyes were stiff like iron" (44). The message is clear: Brautigan's brand of fornicating-in-the-face-of-the-abyss is a purely present-moment indulgence, with no generative potential. And while such indulgence makes the present passable, it precludes perpetuation of the future.

A generation would pass from the publication of *Trout Fishing in America* to the introduction of a very different sort of postmodern novel, represented by the 1988 release of Louise Erdrich's fictionalized account of South Dakota's Chippewa Indians. In that span, critics exhausted with "the literature of exhaustion" began to question whether moral ambivalence and the absence of an action-oriented imperative were the only plausible manifestations of the postmodern novel, or if such phenomena represented a yet-to-be-deconstructed hegemonic vestige. Such critics began to imagine that poststructuralism could be wielded as a tool of liberation by those previously excluded from narrative. Jay Clayton maps this perceptual shift, arguing that the reinvigorated narrative purpose with which marginalized writers have invested their work is not an abandonment of theory; rather it is "true to the narrative implicit in deconstruction" (50). Indeed, while many early deconstructive projects illustrated the invidious incursion of suspect ideology into our literature, they insisted upon a "throw the baby out with the bathwater" solution to narrative that actually aborted the ambitions of poststructural theory. After all, it was the power of narrative to shape lived experience that prompted the postmodern critique and led to the rupture in the first place. Edward Said was among the first critics to insist upon the enduring value of the flawed medium. According to Clayton, Said argued that "even a constructed authority retains a valid intentionality, a power (demystified, deconstructed, yet still effective) to initiate projects in the real world" (46). Reclaiming that power, tempered by deconstruction's lessons, became key to preserving literature as an effective medium for shaping social experience.

Enter Louise Erdrich's *Tracks*. Initially, *Tracks* appears to inhabit a space entirely unrelated to the postmodern milieu of American counterculture mediated by Richard Brautigan. For one thing, Erdrich is narrating events of the past. However, it is significant that Erdrich, herself of Chippewa descent, does not use her narrative to construct a revisionist history, nor does she specifically react against the chronological markers referenced in traditional, colonial

accounts of the time period in which American policy aimed to disintegrate western native populations in pursuit of the resources needed for the final expansionist march to "Manifest Destiny." What Erdrich constructs is not the replacement of one incomplete representation of an always inaccessible past with simply another mediated through the lens of native perspective.

Instead, *Tracks* characterizes the experience of South Dakota's Anishinabe tribe from 1912-1924 in terms of a rupture, or loss of authenticity, in which tribal identity came unmoored from its fixed and stable signification, tied to the land, and entered the period of fragmentation and displaced meaning familiar to contemporary readers and native descendents. In this way, Erdrich engages the same fundamental problems of postmodernity confronted by Brautigan. Erdrich, like Brautigan, mourns a lost pastoral, a loss that is even more poignant to American Indians displaced from the land that once provided both physical and spiritual sustenance. Unlike Brautigan, Erdrich uses deconstructive logic to escape the nostalgia of a hopelessly lost past and the narcissism of short-sighted indulgence in the decimated present to pursue the vital ambition of preserving tribal identity for posterity.

Still, Leslie Marmon Silko criticizes Erdrich, insisting that "[she] is more interested in the dazzling language and self-referentiality associated with postmodernism than in representing Native American oral traditions, communal experiences, or history" (qtd. in Peterson 982). But rather than signaling Erdrich's "sellout" of the minority political agenda in embrace of some obscure and ethnocentric intellectual discourse of the colonizer, her adoption of a postmodern structure for *Tracks,* as well as the extent to which she dramatizes critical tenets of poststructural theory, is as much a reflection of the authentically postmodern condition of contemporary native identity as it is an affirmation of the broad application of postmodern discourse to the human condition. Erdrich's writing is postmodern because that is the remedy best suited to the reality of contemporary American Indians, not because she seeks to ingratiate herself with the American literati. That Erdrich is able to work through the deconstructed landscape (unlike Brautigan, who can only encounter and accept it), turning poststructural tenets from traps into tools, argues for her right to engage both theory and politics.

Tracks opens with the first-person narration of Nanapush, an elder member of the Anishinabe tribe. His retrospective story begins in loss, with the death of his entire family from a disease epidemic. It's a psychologically debilitating event from which he nearly does not recover. Coupled with this familial loss is the concurrent loss of land and the tribal way of life that was tied to it. Recuperating from these traumas is at the core of his story. But before that can begin, Nanapush must first realize that his once concrete notion of identity as fixed to the land no longer holds. He narrates:

> That's when I began to see what we were becoming, and the years have borne me out: a tribe of file cabinets and triplicates, a tribe of single-space documents, directives, policy. A tribe of pressed trees. A tribe of chicken-scratch that can be scattered by a wind, diminished to ashes by one struck match. (225)

The tribe Nanapush describes is constituted only by language. As we come to understand the depth and breadth of the rupture Nanapush has survived—a break from his identity as a father, husband, and spiritual leader in a tribe once bound by shared beliefs, which has forced him to confront the reality of an existence grounded in only the ever-shifting medium of language—Erdrich's contemporary reader can identify his problem and that of the Anishinabe tribe as an essentially postmodern one.

Thus, Nanapush's will to rebound from his trauma is a figurative example for the contemporary reader who comes to the novel seeking means to push past the postmodern rupture. Nanapush's story arcs towards the creation of a new identity for himself that embraces indeterminacy in order to satisfy the very determinate conditions of human fulfillment: the love of friends and family, participation in a community, the sense of honoring one's obligation to posterity. Repeatedly, Nanapush insists that his life depended on his ability to continue constructing despite his lost referents: "During the year of sickness, when I was the last one left, I saved myself by starting a story. . . . Death could not get a word in edgewise, grew discouraged and traveled on" (46). Nanapush can only continue telling new stories if he chooses to believe that endless stories are yet untold. Shelly Reid reiterates the importance of Nanapush's choice to the contemporary reader grappling with identity: "His life story *is* the tribe's life story; his adaptation to a new bureaucratic identity in the end of the novel literally and figuratively ensures the survival of the tribe" (79). In other words, he must embrace a fluid reality, as the free-play of signifiers ensures no end to the constructive possibilities.

Importantly, the narration we read from Nanapush is not directly addressed to us, the abstract print audience; rather, it is a transcription of the history he speaks to his granddaughter, Lulu. Unlike Brautigan's narrator in *Trout Fishing in America,* whose own daughter is never named and must even be physically removed in the "Worsewick" scene in order for him to indulge his play, Nanapush's address to Lulu establishes the first rung of the novel's reach into the future. That Nanapush cares so much for Lulu is evidence of his successful embrace of indeterminacy. Lulu is not Nanapush's blood granddaughter; his whole blood family is dead. His new family was created or "constructed" by language. When Lulu is born, the government insists that a name be recorded on the birth certificate; Nanapush gives the name of his

dead daughter, adding his own surname to establish a fictional fatherhood. Yet the lie—the language-based construction—is able to give birth to a family that functions for each member in meaningful ways. And when Lulu is in danger of being absorbed entirely into the white world through government schooling and marriage into an assimilationist clan, the lie is able to uphold the truth: it allows Nanapush to rescue the girl he has come to love as his own blood relation.

However, the novel's concern with posterity extends beyond the fictional Lulu. Erdrich also addresses the posterity implied by her readers, who, in the endeavor to synthesize meaning that we might apply to our own lives, are not permitted the flawed simplicity of passively absorbing Nanapush's lessons. The reader must also consider the oppositional narrative perspective of Pauline, alternated with each of Nanapush's chapters. Through her back-and-forth use of competing narrators, Erdrich structures the novel according to polar binaries. Nanapush reinforces the distinction: "She was worse than a Nanapush . . . for while I was careful with my known facts, she was given to improving the truth" (39). However, readers must be skeptical of Nanapush's assertion, as we remember his propensity to fictionalize. Erdrich encourages this skepticism as part of her poststructural strategy, which only begins with the dueling binary narrators. The novel is replete with character foils that illustrate broader oppositional pairings between native religious practices and the Catholic Church, tradition and assimilation, primitive and civilized, speech/writing, men/women, birth/death, and so on. Ultimately, Erdrich leads us to countenance even the broadest binary constructions of history and fiction, truth and fabrication that we bring to the novel.

Nevertheless, the binaries stand only to be swiftly cut down. Erdrich espouses the poststructural understanding that such binaries are the means through which language conceptualizes experience. However, deconstructive analysis demonstrates how every seeming binary actually overlaps, or shares a good deal of common ground with its putative opposite. Thus, we realize that Erdrich establishes these binaries only to demonstrate that such hard-line distinctions are merely heuristics. According to Reid, "the Native American perspectives that Erdrich explores require a kind of deconstructive logic in which each reader comes to a conclusion somewhere between the binary terminal points, and no two readers are likely to come to the *same* 'final truth'" (81). Reid, therefore, recognizes the fallacy of the Nanapush/Pauline binary when she observes that they both "share a high tolerance for ambiguity and do not directly contradict each other's stories" (71). By bringing her readers to see commonality in either end of the binary spectrum, Erdrich eases our apprehension over apparent contradictions and invites us to broaden the base from which we might construct a harmonious identity.

Still, *Tracks* is not a relativistic novel that abandons moral rectitude to the proliferation of undistinguishable "truths." While certain distinctions do not stand, say the opposition between Christian and native religions, the reader cannot avoid contrasting others. For example, we contrast the humanity and humble care that flows from Father Damien's brand of faith (Damien literally sustains Nanapush's clan when he brings them food) to Pauline's arrogant assertion that she will be the savior of God (an inhumane, egomaniacal faith that pushes her to self-mortification and, ultimately, murder). By contrasting these polar concepts of Christianity, we synthesize an idea of faith that respects the worldly concerns of human beings. Though poststructuralism warns of the politicized privileging of one polarity over another, it also recognizes that such privileging constructs the differences that allow us to distinguish concepts through language. Erdrich's privileging of a human-centered Christianity does not derive from an unquestioned set of *a priori* values, but from the pragmatic notion that a sense of purpose is necessary to enliven an otherwise purposeless existence. And, ultimately, the text empowers each individual reader to evaluate such claims.

The allure of Erdrich's work lies in its courage to again imbue fiction with a moral imperative that works within the deconstructed linguistic space. While early postmodern works, produced by authors like Richard Brautigan, secure in the dominance of western civilization, fail to move beyond a view of signification sliding hopelessly down the slope to nihilism, the variety of untold stories stemming from the uniquely oppressive circumstances of so many previously excluded "others" ensures that fiction's political exhaustion is far from universal. Marginalization heightens the imperative to articulate what is vital about a beleaguered identity and the need to pass attributes of that identity to posterity. Work like Erdrich's, which reveals a deeply personal understanding of the postmodern condition in the specific circumstances of the subaltern, "stretches" the potentiality of language with the effect of moving the discourse away from false endpoints towards its profoundly liberating possibilities.

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Form and Feeling in David Foster Wallace's "Mister Squishy"

Rick Harnden

In his guest editor's introduction to *Best American Essays 2007*, David Foster Wallace takes a stab at branding contemporary American culture as capital-T-capital-N "Total Noise," which he defines as "a culture and volume of info and spin and rhetoric and context that I know I'm not alone in finding too much to even absorb, much less to try to make sense of or organize into any kind of triage or saliency or value" ("Deciderization 2007" 301). Regarding "Mister Squishy," a sixty-four page Wallace story published in *McSweeney's* in 2000 and collected in 2004's *Oblivion,* no better description of the experience of the story could suffice. When Wallace describes the effect of Total Noise as "[tending] to level everything out into an undifferentiated mass of high-quality description and trenchant reflection that becomes both numbing and euphoric" (301), he describes the very narrative style that he produces in "Mister Squishy."

Its narrator is obsessed with minutiae, detailing his surroundings with exceptional clarity and analysis. His narration ranges from the numerical breakdown of haircuts and wristwatches in a room to the socio-psychological traits those choices represent, from the most banal descriptions of conference rooms and skyscraper windows to the deepest fears, secrets, and desires of the characters he describes. The noise doesn't end there: the narrator is himself an actor within the story's plot, a plot that is layered with unclear motives, extra-temporal descriptions, non-linear plot jumping, rising but ultimately unresolved action, and a tiring host of advertising biz jargon that would make one think Wallace himself had earned a degree in the field. (He, of course, hadn't.)

But within that complex and belletristic form, one set of passages stands apart from the rest: the accounts of the broken emotional state of the character Terry Schmidt. The moments in the story in which we enter his mind shift the narrative mode so dramatically that, emerging from the tangled web of plot and narration, the rhetoric appears disorientingly clear. I argue that in these passages Wallace implicitly argues for a shared faith in humanism, a belief in the import of the human condition; he argues that systemic movement toward noiseless objectivity contributes further to the noise within the human heart as it becomes aware that it is less and less essential to the processes of the modern world, and that despite the grind and din of our environments that subject us to forces well beyond our control, we *must* feel that our motions

and actions and relationships are in some way pregnant with meaning: a true, nourishing, redemptive meaning. Through the use of the second-person "you" during Schmidt's stream-of-consciousness narratives, Wallace evokes sentimentality in the form of interpellation: a call to an "other" in the hope that she will identify herself as the one being called and thus establish mutual awareness. This act moves that reader to identify with the socio-psychological issues that Schmidt himself experiences, and in that identification, she acknowledges that she is *not* alone in experiencing the Total Noise of the modern world. It is an appeal for *feeling* in a world that grows increasingly dependent on empiricism and reason. This is an appeal rooted in a humanistic faith, and we know that an assertion of faith in the postmodern world might meet some ideological resistance.

But before I discuss the philosophical implications of Wallace's affective rhetoric, I'd like to talk about the plot of this bear of a story. It's characteristically Wallace: The year is 1995, and Mister Squishy is a national brand of ultra-sweet confectionery treat that employs Team Delta-Y, a cutting edge marketing firm. They're researching a still-in-development product's performance in taste and satiation in a group setting. The Targeted Focus Group's facilitator is Terry Schmidt, a middle-aged rep with degrees in behavioral psychology and descriptive statistics, who, we learn, suffers from debilitating social and romantic anxieties. We also learn that Schmidt is secretly producing a ricin-based poison to contaminate via hypodermic needle the same line of retail candies for which he administers the focus group. Meanwhile, to the shock of a growing crowd on the sidewalk, an urban climber scales the marketing firm's building toward the focus group's windowed conference room while wearing an inflatable Mister Squishy mascot costume and holding what appears to be an automatic machine gun; we never know whether the gun is real.

To complicate the parallel plot lines, the story's single first-person narrator is a planted covert marketing operative who wears a clandestine earpiece; this surveillance equipment tells us that he's aware of the urban climber-slash-terrorist, who is thus also a marketing operative, and that, when the climber reaches the conference room's window with machine gun in tow, he will employ an emetic device to spray highly realistic, but fabricated projectile vomit all over the conference room table at which the focus group subjects are gathered. The masterminds of these three plots of terror—the ricin poison, the urban climber, and the falsified vomit—*appear* to occupy the highest ranks of the marketing firm, but it's unclear whether Schmidt's ricin is explicitly sanctioned by the corporate bigwigs. It could be a ploy to make a "real impact" upon the industry, something Schmidt finds himself unable to otherwise produce, by increasing the cost of the candy bars' packaging material, potentially

driving down the profits of Mister Squishy's competitors by forcing them to use tamper-proof packaging. Or it could be an act of anonymous terror and malicious violence, an act of rebellion by a man paralyzed by self-loathing.

But Wallace doesn't lay the plot out for us as a treat to be easily unwrapped and savored: this is not a simply structured, meta-critical allegory of post-industrial ennui, what one might expect of the social novel or any kind of broad rhetorically minded fiction. It takes significant mental work to realize that the entire emetic-prosthesis-filled-with-simulated-vomit-slash-urban-climber-with-a-machine-gun conceit is a device for which Scott Laleman and Alan Britton, the wily ad executives, are responsible. The story's closing section seems to reveal that they wish to market the cleverly named Felonies snack cakes with an astonishingly self-aware genesis story of actual criminal behavior on the part of their marketing employees (importantly, at the behest of an insane confectionery bigwig who is obsessed with the product) to capitalize on a growing sense in adolescents that yes, they too are a part of the consumer body whether they like it or not. But it is wholly unclear without close, detail-oriented reading how the whole conference room scene serves that genesis narrative. Or if it does. Is this guerrilla marketing? Is it a series of related acts of anti-consumeristic terror? Is it pretending to be the latter while actually being the former? Or is it a setup to eliminate Laleman for his betrayal of Britton?

If it sounds complicated, that's because it is. Yet the intricacies of the plot are compounded further by an unnamed narrator who filters information in a perplexing way. He is a viewpoint narrator, but he has a staggering, almost surreal knowledge of the other characters in the story, a knowledge of personal fears and habits that only a psychologist might have. If Schmidt's ricin poison is not, in fact, sanctioned by the marketing firm's diabolical guerrilla campaign, how does the narrator know that Schmidt is developing it? Nor do we know how he hears the conversations of the people on the street looking up at the climber, while he himself waits in the conference room sixteen floors above for the signal to fulfill his objective. But it is the character of the information that he chooses to relate that is perhaps the most curious of all. The narrator notes the conflation of the emotional self and the professional self in Schmidt, but really describes himself as well: "somewhere along the line his professional marketing skills had metastasized throughout his whole character" (26). The focus group facilitator, he says, "[possesses] . . . a natural eye for behavioral details that could often reveal tiny gems of statistical evidence amid the rough raw surfeit of random fact" (9). And the reader receives those "tiny gems" in the way of long, digressive descriptions of what another might perceive as inconsequential minutiae, minutiae that probably, at least the first time through, would drive you, the reader, mad.

The critical difference between the narrator and Schmidt, though, is that the narrator seems unfazed by his absorption into this professional conditioning that governs what is and is not important to the subconscious mind. He merely reports what he sees and the associated behavior with that observation. Every act of every person, he reports, is part of a symbolic system that we can construct and create meaning in—all through market research. Schmidt, on the other hand, is driven mad by the inherent deceit of the job. To eliminate noise in the data, he must at all times "behave as though he were interacting in a lively and spontaneous way while actually remaining inwardly detached and almost clinically observant" (9). The resultant state of being is of double consciousness and emotional suspension. This suspension does not produce a numbing, soothing apathy. Instead, the human need of empathy throbs still greater within him. Lonely and unsociable, he is secretly enamored with his married coworker, both respecting and lusting after her, but his relationship with her is largely a product of his imagination. He attempts to resolve his desire by trimming a company picnic photograph of the two of them and setting it as the background of his home computer's desktop. His conjugal fantasies, both sexual and emotional, persist despite his feeling that he cannot, as a fellow employee, make an advance on her without dire consequence. We learn further that the intended agent of Schmidt's satisfaction has been transferred, after trial and failure, from organized religion to personal relationships, and finally to an anonymous violent act upon an unknown set of individuals. The narrator speaks of Schmidt's emotional burden and his criminal intent:

> [He] imagined that it was probably only in marriage . . . that partners allowed each other to see below the berg's cap's public mask and consented to be truly known . . . perhaps every once in a while sobbing in each other's arms . . . and pouring out the most ghastly private fears and thoughts of failure . . . within a grinding professional machine you can't believe you had the shame of being so hungry to make some sort of real impact on an industry that you'd . . . [decided] that making a dark difference with a hypo and eight cc's of castor bean distillate was better, was somehow more true to your own inner centrality and importance, than being nothing but a faceless cog and doing a job that untold thousands of other bright young men and women could do at least as well as you. (31-32)

The formal complexity of this passage is easy to overlook in the midst of such a direct address to the reader; Wallace speaks through a concrete narrator that inexplicably accesses yet *another* character's mind, but the free indirect discourse blurs the boundaries between that character, Schmidt, and the reader herself. Schmidt is ostensibly talking to himself, but this self-interpellating act

extends to the reader as well. It asks her to identify as the "you." The shift from the specific to the general—from the unique circumstance of Schmidt's dehumanizing marketing job to the general feeling of angst produced by "a job" in a hostile, competitive market—marks Wallace's unhidden literary interpellation, his call to an imagined reader. The experience of the story is no longer about the bizarre circumstances of the story's plot, nor the funhouse-like image of the narrator coming in and out of view; it is an image of the pains of modern life and a call to identify oneself in accordance with that image that Wallace constructs. And it's a bold proposition: Schmidt has manifested those feelings of alienation and discontent in the homicidal, the immoral. It is Wallace's burden to successfully humanize the criminal, not to excuse his behavior but to ask if it's any wonder that a dehumanizing world produces this kind of person who can be both capable of kindness, as Schmidt is to Darlene, and unremitting cruelty.

The narrative shifts away from Schmidt's emotional dilemma in the story's final section, illustrating those forces against which Schmidt seeks to act. Marketing executives Scott Laleman and Alan Britton revel in the grand changes in marketing that the future holds. Soon, Laleman boasts, there will be systems in place to remove the greatest detriment to "knowing" the consumer: the marketing facilitators themselves. So long as they exist in the information chain, humans are incapable of conducting research without affecting the results. It is therefore impossible to eliminate the noise introduced by those focus group representatives without eliminating them altogether. And, with the coming of the internet, this apparent impediment to acquiring information is a happy truth for Laleman, one that gives meaning to his professional career. Schmidt, he says, will be the first out the door, and Laleman will be the one pushing him. The internet, with its massive quantities of point-and-click data, cheaply collected and efficiently analyzed, will usher in a new era in marketing, in which the marketer can close the gap between the consumer and the product and more accurately give individuals what they desire. The irony isn't hard to see here: human desire clamoring to make human necessity obsolete. When Britton, Laleman's superior, gives him a chance to show his creativity, which is the only thing keeping him relevant, Laleman goes mute, seeing what we may assume to be a piece of a Felonies snack cake under Laleman's nail, and realizes that Britton has become the aforementioned insane confectionery bigwig of their genesis story advertising campaign, and that Laleman himself is now just a soon-to-be-replaced cog in the machine he helped build. It's a dense—and darkly funny—conclusion to a story with so many tangents and misdirections, but it doesn't seem to resolve much.

And perhaps that's because resolution would ring false in the world of Total Noise. Wallace's concern is not with halting the monolith of capitalist

consumerism in the twenty-first century. Throughout his fiction, he concerns himself instead with a revolution of the modern heart. Although we feel constricted by the ideological and commercial devices that leave us in a constant state of desire and deferral, as Schmidt does, we should, according to this humanistic rhetoric, identify that others engage with the same kind of pain and reassess our own sufferings as a common experience. That this endeavor can be successful is the belief in the value of empathy that lurks in much of Wallace's short fiction. The problem in this humanistic assertion, however, is that humanism seems to rely on the stability of signs to achieve its significance. That there is a reality underneath the sign, whether it be of the body or image or word, is impossible to ascertain in postmodernity. Wallace's literary depiction of suffering is a sign, a simulacrum of a reality of modern life, but it breaks with postmodernism in its attempt to show the sign not as an empty vessel, an endless deferral of meaning, but as an approximation, however flawed, of reality, whose success depends on the emotional response of the reader. Wallace's faith is that his language does not merely produce literary simulacra that obliterate reality by mimicking it, but that the feeling that produces that simulacra can be transposed and received by another.

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Language and Autonomy in *Cloud Atlas*

Ian Hammons

One of the most significant changes in recent postmodern literature has been the shift towards an increasingly humanist outlook. Humanism champions the individual's central position within the world, as opposed to institutions, and focuses specifically on issues pertaining to human values such as individual freedoms and education. Postmodern author David Mitchell establishes the humanist framework of his fiction in an interview from 2008, where he explains: "My own ethical obligations as a writer evolve with those which inform me as a human being" (Interview 96). Mitchell's ethical inclinations are clearly evident in his 2004 novel, *Cloud Atlas*, which follows a series of interwoven subaltern voices that serve as a multifaceted critique against the corrupt language of power. In this essay, I argue that language in the novel works as a tool of both domination and agency within *Cloud Atlas*, and that the complex narrative layering of the text ultimately champions the power of language to combat cultural domination. While postmodernism is often viewed as a genre that focuses on the failure of language, *Cloud Atlas* is a compelling example of the opposite: that language has the power to promote individual autonomy and unite people toward humanistic goals.

To introduce us to the world of *Cloud Atlas*, I will first briefly describe its unique and complex structure. The novel is composed of six different narratives and begins with "The Pacific Journal of Adam Ewing," which follows a young American traveling through the South Pacific during the nineteenth century. This narrative abruptly ends in the middle of a sentence, and is followed by "Letters From Zedelghem," which chronicles the fight for creative control between two composers, one young and one aging, in the early twentieth century. Subsequent narratives continue to move chronologically forward through time and each ends seemingly unfinished. "Half-Lives: The First Luisa Rey Mystery" takes place during the 1970s and follows a young woman trying to expose the dangers of a corrupt nuclear power plant; "The Ghastly Ordeal of Timothy Cavendish" follows a man in modern-day England who gets trapped in a domineering nursing home; and "An Orison of Somni-451" is about a human clone, called a fabricant, that is being sentenced to death in the near future for opposing a dystopian government. The sixth narrative, titled "Sloosha's Crossin' an' Ev'rythin' After," can be considered the apex of the novel's structural arc. This section is set in a distant post-apocalyptic future after the events of "An Orison of Somni-451," and follows a peaceful tribe of Hawaiians called Valleymen as they are forced to deal with warring tribes.

This section, unlike the others, does reach a definitive conclusion. The novel then finishes each previous narrative from where it left off in reverse, from the future back through to the past. While this structure is unique in itself, *Cloud Atlas* is further complicated by the subtle ways in which the narratives become increasingly connected. We learn throughout the first half of the novel that each narrative's main character has a comet-shaped birthmark, and every section contains some sort of opposition to a totalizing system of power. Most importantly, however, the second half of each narrative brings in a plot element from a chronologically preceding section that ties the two together, such as the discovery of Adam Ewing's journal in "Letters From Zedelghem." This interweaving of the six narratives is what ultimately unites the voices into a powerful stance against the language of domination.

In order to best understand the relationship between language and power in *Cloud Atlas*, it is helpful to frame it within a postcolonial context. Postcolonial theory recognizes that language is a key component of imperialist ideology. Edward Said explains that this ideology is supported by "notions that certain territories and people *require* and beseech domination" (*Culture* 9). The idea that certain groups of people require domination is part of the rhetoric of imperialist language that attempts to justify its actions as necessary to both conqueror and conquered. Said gives the example of how nineteenth-century British propaganda "extolled the empire and stressed its necessity to England's strategic, moral, and economic well-being, at the same time characterizing the dark or inferior races as unregenerate, in need of suppression, severe rule, indefinite subjugation" (*Culture* 150). By reaffirming the strengths of its own culture while diminishing others as "unregenerate," the language of British imperialism was essential to constructing and maintaining a cultural hierarchy.

Given the novel's concern with language and power, it is not surprising that *Cloud Atlas* opens during the height of imperialist culture with Adam Ewing's narrative. Ewing's keen observations of the world around him reveal how language is tactically used to manipulate and dominate others. Early in his voyage, Ewing attempts to chronicle the origins of the Moriori tribe, whose members have all but disappeared from their native island. Ewing learns that the peaceful ways of the Moriori tribe gave both imperial opportunists and other tribes an opportunity to ravage their lands, culminating with their enslavement at the hands of the warlike Maori tribe. We discover that the Maori "proceeded to lay claim to Chatham by *takahi*, a Maori ritual transliterated as 'Walking the Land to Possess the Land'" (*CA* 14), a ritual that seems to justify Maori domination by divine right. The irony, however, is that the Maori and Moriori share common heritage, as it is mentioned that both have "similarities of tongue and mythology" (11). The Maori's resolve to dominate the Moriori

despite cultural similarities is a prime illustration of the binary logic that characterizes the language of power.

Another example of this logic comes from the missionary Preacher Horrox, who embodies the fantasy of religious and racial superiority as an instrument of domination. Horrox imagines an idealized world where "all races shall know & aye, embrace, their place in God's ladder of civilization" (488). Horrox justifies his missionary aspirations by using the language of scientific racism and dogmatic belief as a way to "prove" the superiority of the Aryan race over others. This kind of language creates a closed-circuit loop that prevents the native population from gaining agency, solely based on race. While Horrox romanticizes the language of power, Dr. Henry Goose offers a more pragmatic assessment of this language. Goose asserts that desire and greed are the only motives behind the will to dominate, which resonates in his Darwinian principle: "The weak are meat the strong do eat" (489). Goose connects greed to gluttony, which helps explain how rapid consumption of the earth in part leads to the post-apocalyptic future of this world.

The fifth section, "An Orison of Somni-451," features some of the most compelling instances of the language of domination. The language of the fabricant Somni's dystopian world is largely molded by corporate efficiency and control. Somni describes a fabricant ritual, in which: "We recite the six Catechisms, then our beloved Logoman appears and delivers his sermon" (185). The daily reciting of the "Catechisms" and sermon of the "Logoman" consistently reinforces the dominating values of the corpocracy, as the government is called, to the fabricants through the language of religious devotion. Words with "ex-" prefixes also have changed to begin with "–x", and brand names such as "ford" and "sony" have become assimilated into the language to singularly represent their respective products. These examples further show how corporate efficiency has taken absolute control over the entire language.

As Somni-451 begins to gain autonomy through an insatiable desire for knowledge, she notices how fabricants are discriminated against in her society. While discussing the repercussions of another fabricant's alleged kidnapping of a human child, Somni reminds the archivist conducting her interview: "You felt the corpocratic world order had changed, irrevocably. You vowed never to trust any fabricant" (195). Somni draws attention to the media's portrayal of the event as a terrorist plot that permits the government to pass constrictive laws. Toward the end of Somni's narrative, it is revealed that her gaining of knowledge was part of a larger government plot to contain and therefore stifle revolution. The government's portrayal of Somni as an insurgent devoted to the destruction of the corpocracy is designed to instill fear of fabricant autonomy into humans, which allows even more repressive laws to gain support. Said writes that "threats to humanistic culture seem to be ingrained in the

very nature of thought about the human situation in general" and reminds us "how useful a hostile Other is in such circumstances" (*Humanism* 36). Somni becomes a perfect representation of the constructed, hostile "Other," designed to keep resistance against the corpocracy at bay by creating a schism between humans and fabricants.

If the language of power were the only discourse in *Cloud Atlas*, it would provide a rather bleak commentary on human nature. However, the aspiration to subvert this language through multiple voices ultimately prevails in the text. Each narrative's structure determines how characters in other sections interpret the narrative by enlisting a different writerly genre, including a journal, a series of letters, a mystery novel, a memoir, a virtually recorded interview, and an oral recounting of a story. In the fourth section, "The Ghastly Ordeal of Timothy Cavendish," Cavendish brings himself to read the novel's third section, "Half Lives: The First Luisa Rey Mystery," and eventually claims, "the young-hack-versus-corporate-corruption thriller had potential" (357). Cavendish's sudden excitement to edit the novel for publication shows not only his relation to Rey as an underdog against the world of power, but also that her ideas of resistance will be reproduced and spread to a wider reading audience. Then at the conclusion of Luisa Rey's own narrative, she smells the second set of Robert Frobisher's letters and asks herself: "Are molecules of Zedelghem Chateau, of Robert Frobisher's hand, dormant in this paper for forty-four years, now swirling in my lungs, in my blood?" (436). The intimacy that Rey feels with Frobisher's letters, which overwhelm her with "dizzying vividness of the images of places and people that the letters have unlocked" (120), reinforces the emotional connection that arises between these narratives and their characters.

The central section, "Sloosha's Crossin' an' Ev'rythin' After," takes a more complex approach to the transmission of ideas between narratives, voices, and time periods. Zachry and his fellow Valleymen worship Somni-451 as a god, though they are unaware that she actually existed in the past. Zachry lives in a post-apocalyptic world from which written language has disappeared, but Somni's survival as a god suggests that her published manifesto of resistance, called *Declarations*, has in fact "been reproduced a billionfold" (349), even if her message is no longer understandable to the people who inherit it. The remaining Valleymen's decision to hold on to Somni's virtual interview at the end of the section, despite its being useless for survival, shows how it functions as a symbol of hope. Zachry's son's closing invitation to "Sit down a beat or two. Hold out your hands. Look" (309) is directed at the reader, asking her to share a vessel of hope that has tenaciously persisted despite a lack of contextual understanding, ensuring that humanist values can survive even in a post-apocalyptic world. Giving Zachry's son the final words of the chapter is

also significant because it shows how each narrative is not just dominated by a single voice. By fragmenting the narratives into many voices and sections, the structure of *Cloud Atlas* stands in opposition to totalizing metanarratives.

The polyphonic structure of the novel is also recapitulated through musical motifs in the "Letters From Zedelghem" narrative. Frobisher's *Cloud Atlas Sextet* is an exhaustively constructed musical score described as a "'sextet for overlapping soloists': piano, clarinet, 'cello, flute, oboe, and violin, each in its own language of key, scale, and color" (445). The sextet is, of course, a musical rendition of the cyclical structure of *Cloud Atlas*, but the use of musical language in this passage emphasizes a variety of unique voices. Each instrument that Frobisher lists has its own distinct timbre and range, from the feathering trills of a flute to the nasal croon of an oboe, yet all have equal weight within the sextet. Said characterizes a musical canon as "expressing motion, playfulness, discovery, and in the rhetorical sense, invention" (*Humanities* 25). Discovery and invention therefore are only possible through an assortment of voices interacting with one another, which the *Cloud Atlas Sextet* clearly demonstrates.

Discussing the structure of *Cloud Atlas* is pivotal to understanding how language works as a tool against domination in the text. What makes the novel so urgently felt, however, is its humanist core. Adam Ewing's decision at the chronological end of the novel to become an abolitionist is a powerful stance against binary imperial power: "To wit: history admits no rules; only outcomes. What precipitates outcomes? Vicious acts & virtuous acts. What precipitates acts? Belief" (507). Ewing's contention that belief is at the core of all historical outcomes emphasizes how our world is only constructed by collective human thought, for better or for worse. Through belief, Ewing can attempt to create "a world I *want* [my son] Jackson to inherit, not one I *fear* Jackson should inherit" (508), which shares Laura Ahearn's view that "language does not merely reflect an already existing social reality; it also helps to create that reality" (111). It is Ewing's final decision to act in the hope of a better world that ultimately defeats Goose's "eat or be eaten" principle.

Cloud Atlas boasts both a colossal structure and extraordinary characters, but the text's enduring humanism is what makes it stand out as a work of fiction against the purely cerebral language games of postmodernism's past. Mitchell realizes that language is at the center of our struggle for autonomy as humans, echoing Said's statement: "language is where we start from as humanists" (*Humanism* 28). While the language of power clearly rules the world of *Cloud Atlas* with an iron fist, the struggle of individual voices to gain autonomy within a polyphonic structure is at the heart of the text. Adam Ewing's final line, "Yet what is any ocean but a multitude of drops?" (509), asserts the necessity of each individual drop, or voice, to humanity. *Cloud Atlas* proves

that it is only when these drops come together through language that we have a hope for changing our world for the better.

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IV | Poetry

Kentucky Hill Wife

Jan Zlotnik Schmidt

She hears the blackbirds' incessant caw, goes to the front door. Gone. She remembers the scrape of his boots against the planked floor. Against the grain. Then the tight grip on her wrist. The whitened imprint of his fingers against blue veins. She clenches her fist. For now she's alone. He's left with the others. Gone to the creek to stop the water. Stop it from rising over the banks. Stop the currents from flooding the streets, the paths, the gullies of her small town. Creek waters that would seep into the yard, the basement, the floors of the house perched too close to the mountains. She backs away from the threshold, the damp mold, the rot of stubbled corn, browned marigolds, tomato vines, skunk cabbage, creeping in with the morning air. The grass and weeds flattened like thin reeds. Flattened by mud. By the force of the river's course. There is a buzzing in her head, a blue static. She presses her fingers to her closed eyes. Presses coolness against her twitching lids. Waits for the static to turn to quiet. To a silence that will fill her body and stop her heart from pounding. Finally her breath slows. She turns to dishes, to cupboard, to open a cabinet door. There on the inside wood with a stub of a pencil, she draws wings like *v*'s, then thick letters. The curves and loops of words, the swirl of them like a whirlwind in her mind. Letters curving around themselves, letters in short bursts, etched words that still the beating of her heart. Then she presses her name into wood. Writes it again and again. She knows he will not find her there. A stream of letters wavering across her sight.

Spare Change

> *Canada's government on Thursday announced its intention to withdraw the penny from circulation, saying it costs more to produce than its face value.* —AP 29 March 2012

Pauline Uchmanowicz

HAVE A HAPPY DAY,
capitalized in Canadian pennies
like an inlaid copper path
paving Toronto sidewalk,
stretched toward a panhandler's
borrowed doorstep,
on the corner of St. George
and Bloor, across from
Bata Shoe Museum,
where fine-tooled pumps
commemorate ten-year marriage
in pliable, durable tin,
and visitors may don
knockoff ruby slippers, thinking,
There's no place like home.

Outside Death Spiral: On Watching the Favorite TV Programs of a Lost Loved One

H. R. Stoneback

It took almost four years before I could
watch her favorite drama—*Law and Order*—
dry-eyed. I don't watch much TV but with her
I sometimes did. For three years if I heard
in passing that theme tune it was a sudden
knife and the wetness started and I changed
the channel quick. Now that's all rearranged
and when I hear that *duh-duh-duh-duh-dun*
I watch and she is in the room with me:
Order restored by magic of TV.

Her other favorite, figure skating—
summer is safe, winter another thing.
Looking for a football game the other night,
I passed the ice-skaters, paused, saw ice-light,
heard that music, watched those moves, then the melt
started and she who hated cold and snow
was next to me in TV's sacral glow—
calling the moves, holding her breath, then yelling
at the judges' scores. During one Winter Games
she called all the skaters by their names

then said so-and-so *knows how to love the ice*
her double-axels triple-toe loops—real grace
and nothing touches her outside death spiral.
She loved the gravity and grace, the fire,
the dance of law and order on the ice,
the disciplined transformation that sufficed
to get her through the hardest longest winters.
Wet-eyed with loss, I'm just a beginner.
But maybe by the next Winter Olympics
I'll grasp and drink from her spiral-alembic.

> We never skated but we did it all with fire
> *backward forward inside outside death spiral*

Imposition of the Difficult

Dennis Doherty

You clear a crest and stumble
upon a slope of recognition:
this mountain, till now unremembered,
a vague delight, notes from a bird
obscured. These firs and outcrops
remain vessels, trembling chambers,
faintly vibrant with joyful past
and the after hum of lost life
in a place that waits and happens.
That wind your hymn? What comes to pass?
What comes again? The chase and loves
of others blot your eyes and ears.
The movement of these critters
is unscripted; each plot in view
uncharted. Some goodness filled you
in these hills, and not this scold of crows.
Nothing can be what was. The climb
takes odd and numbing turns to where.
Echoes can never touch their source.

A stag sidles to your scent and speaks
unafraid, an elder, a foreign father.
Being only half deer, you only half
understand: something about death,
something about fear. Half brother
to the soil who loves the soul but
covets the pelt, what do *you* say?

Comfort, fathers of nostalgic rue?
I'm charged to deliver the new, but
change has shifted the shape of me;
pain has twisted the make of me
from all I thought I knew. Nomadic
mappers of the land, I'm lost.
Am I the message, messenger,
or the one who heeds what calls?

Edge Crush Test (40 Pounds)

Dennis Doherty

So now we know, refugee box upon
the back porch heap awaiting the sweep
and order of spring's disintegration.
Only forty pounds? Can my brawn bring so
much to bear, container? I'll no doubt punch
in your sides, flatten you, razor your spine.

It is well that you're crush tested, as am
I, but why the label? Advertisement?
Satisfy overseers, regulators?
Your filaments can hold under so much
pressure solely upon the tested edge.
Get sodden and see what happens.

A warning? I don't fear *your* fate,
who know of spring and heaps, and porches too,
where tests have been twisted into verses
by the view of wooded hillside alive
with the life that was eating it: peckers
at the poplar boles, squirrels co-opting
forest's germs, deer at plume and mole at root.
One contemplated crushes there, and weight.

This is no confessional. I've given
And got, and seen other scenes on larger
scale, and not: a mountain slowly smote by
snowstorm's languid, fury-concealed hour hand.
Sapsucker draws the last honeysuckle,
the crush that slakes the host, smashed and riven.

for Stevie Smith—From Long Distance

Laurence Carr

The abyss is always at the center.
And only abysmal
because it's gotten such bad press.

No one takes time to understand it
or give it full attention.
If it were a poem, it would get no deep reading.

Poor us—we stand at the edge,
look out to sea
and see no far horizon.

But it's not what's out there
that terrifies, but what's behind,
over our shoulders.

We hesitate to stick in our toe for fear
it will dissolve like rainbowed powder
beakered in the highschool chemsy lab.

But maybe sometime I, or you,
or she or he will stick in that toe
and feel that abysmal wave gently lap to ankle.

Then curl up to knee, to thigh, past parts
reproductive and unproductive,
all the way to lips and teeth, and nosey eyes.

And there we'll be, washed out to sea—
Looking back at that commodious shore
far away from where we stood.

Not drowning.
No.
But waving.

for George's Boys

Laurence Carr

Everyone who hung out at George's could put away a six-pack of Iron City, Duke or Schlitz in record time, but Rolling Rock, on the other hand, was considered a queer beer that was lifted or purchased as a last resort when the Saturday night binge involved Francy or Ginger and the profane prayer of a little girly action in the ravine down by the tracks where mile long box cars crawled through every Tuesday and Friday night on their way west laden with virgin steel from the 48 inch rolling mill that supplied George's boys with enough pocket money and rubbers, when they remembered, to kindle sly and secret grins with the knowledge that the army or the Federal pen would never catch them.

Taboo

Joann K. Deiudicibus

In thirty-four years, I was born and you died twice.
At birth, Catholic charities sent you to live upstate
with silence and faces that look nothing like you.

Incubator womb, oxygen tube, jaundice,
four pounds: I took seven months to cultivate.
In thirty-four years, I was born and you died twice.

In a barn, on feed bags infested with mice,
my father took you. The jaws of life extricate
your silence and faces that look nothing like you.

The suckling denied breast still grew.
Mothers mourn the empty house's weight.
In thirty-four years, I was born and you died twice.

Still I pick up your unfamiliar voice
calling like an old psalm. What's akin alienates:
Silence and faces that look nothing like you.

One labored, the other raised and gave advice.
Only a child of two tribes can relate.
In thirty-four years, I was born but both died twice—
silence with faces that look something like you.

Gravity

Joann K. Deiudicibus

Words descend from
slick peaks, blanketing
soil in cool white-out.

Now, they hike firm earth,
press into sod, stir dust
until buds become clear.

They sprout lightly glowing
blue feathers and fins, slicing
green streams and waves mid-flight.

Words move warily
as the moon who does not disturb
black drops of dreams, floating fragments
that pitch and scatter after voids collide.

Rivers Are Where Stories Converge in the Dead of Night with Minerva's Blessing

*For Sgt. David F. Ferris, Company E, 44th New York Infantry **

Robert Singleton

After her stroke she thought she was five, but my great-grandmother said on her ninety-eighth birthday that everything touches the web, and that all stories are woven there until rivers with names like Shenandoah, Crazy Woman Creek, and Plum Run carry them away. To this day I believe her. The rivers carry language like blue lava and bear the endless progression of memory and metaphor. One lost river feeds from the other's strength like a burial at sea welds spring breezes to the frozen ground of epitaphs. Tenderness and love script a tenuous yoke between ground and air. There are poems carved in stone and in sheets of pressed iron called tintypes. A tintype is a box in which warmth still survives. Candles are lit under a dark canopy for those who return home. Those who stayed need no light. Some who come back will fade into pigment or write sarcastic notes in the margins of Southern histories. Later, at their last reunions, they will say, while some were glorified, some lay gut-shot in a dusty road pouring out patience and anger at the vile irony that marks their final concession to duty and honor. David wanted to be a teacher they will say. Like poets searching for the right vowel, they peruse Normal School scrapbooks in the hot moon of their canvas tents. Someday, one of them will be lain down against the stones to shake the established world so that generations to come can lay a copper likeness on the cool marble cross. But in the present where only the image can bring us, the snap of last year's leaves shaking off a dusting of snow sings like a kicked chain on the hinge of a faux Egyptian tomb. A crow sits alone in a nearby tree while they bury my father. Everything touches the web. Flocks of bluebirds from Gettysburg numb the sound of the last careful shot from a tiny derringer. They touch the hem of Laura Keene's dress as she runs up the back stairs of Ford's theater to cradle the president's head in her lap. Later, her blood stained dress will be cut into squares and sold as mementoes. But now it seems that the silver dollars on our eyes only trap the love that builds our homes. The pragmatists are gone, their conspiracies forgotten. The romantics pitch honey at the jargon of the new historicists or chase bees of metaphor into the ether clouds of photographers while wearing white gloves stolen from egregious theologians. But we still leave our stories in small towns like emeralds of ivy on faded porch rails or in dusty frames on parlor shelves or in missing limbs that suddenly

reappear on glass plates where silence begins in cooling water. We have just one request. Please come haunt our universe, so that in the process we can forgive ourselves for being human and for shunning the needs of those who loved us at the worst possible times. Remembrance is salvation, imagination, a crossed sword.

**David Ferris was studying to be a teacher at the State Normal School in Albany when, in August of 1862, he and a number of his classmates responded to a recruiting drive and enlisted in the 44th New York Infantry. They became known as "The Normal School Company." Ferris was killed in action on 3/31/1865, a little bit more than a week before the end of the war.*

Variations from the Enola Diner on the Road to Gettysburg

Robert Singleton

The ride's the same, every curve a habit of highway. The Harrisburg rail yards gleam in the artificial street light like a book left open to a Keats poem.

The moon's a crowd of nerves whose coat's alive with lunisolar owls.
A train's a complex of megaphones that eats bridges and consumes hearts.

A few men from the night shift wander in and order black coffee. If it was 1863, they could be mistaken for an artillery crew after a battle, or as one of Wordsworth's rustics on a cottage step.

For them, history is a life of errors crushed in the beds of their pickups like oiled feathers. At least one of them remembers stories about the Indian School in Carlisle and life on the prairie.

They are not Jim Thorpe. They are the sons of Crazy Horse who refused to be photographed. Like him, they are novas in shreds trapped by the industry of the new Rome.

The Leek Soup Song

"Hey Matt, who grew those leeks?"

Matthew Nickel

Not potato and leek soup
Just leek soup
Sometimes a little cream
And a potato or two

Sometimes just leek soup
Always her hands and
The way she poured you a cup
Always her hands and

The smell of the kitchen and
The song that she sang
And the smell and her eyes and
Her singing which made

Your hands tremble with song
And leeks chopped leeks
Everywhere even the green
Always the green

Parts of the leek and her eyes
Gave you the cup
Trembling like a grail and
You laughed when

She smiled and you forgave yourself
Your greatest sins
When her wrists handed you
The gift overflowing

And her song was leek soup
And the leeks are still a-growing

The Gift

All day, I had wandered in the glittering metaphor
For which I could find no referent.
—Robert Penn Warren

Matthew Nickel

No bigger than my smallest finger
Curled at the end to a point, back on itself
Like Santa's hat with the point hanging in his face
Or the defunct end of an elf's shoes, pointing, point where
But there in the middle of the road on the bridge
Like a sentinel keeping the distance foreshortened

A distance unaccounted, beyond the pool of half-frozen water
Where my image bends toward maples along
The old shipyard road, stone fences—where beyond
No one knows which way your own road goes—
There discarded over the creek only the sound
Of water over stones and the mink scat there on the bridge

when running in snow the weasel's hind feet usually register
in the front tracks, nearly or completely, so that the trail
*appears as a line of twin prints (Fig. 23, b)**

And then the snow begins to fall in slow hypnosis,
Deer no longer perceive my bulk as the road sinks
Into nothing under the blank white—ahead your road
That was no road becomes an empty alley in space
Finally occupying a place in nature's vast chasm of being,
Or else—nothing is behind me but the blanket of snow

When I was a boy I held my breath under water
Until light flashed and the surface bent away
My hands like weights heaving weightless water, sometimes
I did not want to surface and wondered what lay beyond
Last breath, imagined night falling on my chest:
And what would they say, they knew I could swim

chiefly nocturnal; solitary except
for family groups

an excellent swimmer

Out of any hole, wouldn't drown, what would they say—
But then: rising at the last second breaking into gaping air,
Still years later I hold off sleep until dew fall
Waiting until the last dark notes of night
Wondering how long I can stay awake until
My eyes can no longer keep the light from opening

Catching my breath now cold in the dead air
Alive only with the sound of water under the bridge
Legs ache from the long run, snow falls heavy through breath
And the discarded waste of the mink keeps me poised
Over the bridge as if to ask the inevitable question
As if to contemplate and account for the distance when

as boys, some of us used to poke a long switch into
a suspected mink den. If we then caught the scent given off . . .
we knew that the animal was at home

In the pause of falling snow he appears like a gift,
A *v*-shape in water, my heart freezes and I can hear
Even deer lifting tails above a distant fallen tree
The road then is a two-dimensional drawing, the snow
Zeroes all perspective toward the vanishing point
My heart sees his head like a serpent

Yet I know it is Christmas Eve, know there are
No snakes in the half frozen pond in winter here
I cannot see his eyes, still, my heart is afraid
At what moves apart the water in lines receding
Lines that break the mirror surface pond, waking
Gently and murderously beneath the ice

along a river in winter you may find

a smooth round hole down through the snow and
through an air hole in the ice

*Italicized refrains in this poem are quotations from the following two books: Murie, Olaus J. *A Field Guide to Animal Tracks*. The Peterson Field Guide Series. 1954. New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1974. Burt, William Henry. *A Field Guide to the Mammals North America North of Mexico.* The Peterson Field Guide Series. 1952. New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1976.

Pete, Pharmaceuticals & Time

Sean Antonucci

In here a friend is:
anyone that melts,
wriggles up into a flower,
and struggles to evaporate.
We supplicate some SecretService,
from within a winter coat in the summer,
and embrace the pages and last days
on a ladder—
Boy—
step away from the latter.

Stomach your coffee.
Oh
No.
Stomach your teary-eyed tangents in a chair.
Oh
No.
Stomach your "god" and the quadriplegic.
Oh
No.
Stomach your own stomach.
Yes,
andlettherestleakouttayourwounds.

Wound in a sheet waiting for water—
Say: "please don't" to your own cognitions.
Making out with filters and locking I's—
Say: "love" to your mother.
Swallowing needles in the bed—
Say: "afraid" to your father.
Say: "stay"
—and say: "stay"—
and then stay.
.

Incumbent Maze

Robert Cutrera

There goes that young winter step
Across the morning ground.
She goes with the wind,
Chill under a cloudy shade;
And goes against grainy
Filaments, seeking a breath
Of fresh air;
And surrenders
Her strides, leading to
A source of heaving heat.
The trees loom in winter,
While the girl scurries,
Hoping to beat the snow.

Sonrisa

Dan de Sá

1. it is a crescent moon
that makes me smile,

antennae holding up
a ghostly sheet, harbinger

to the woods' faint
echoes, the who-who-

who, the garbage-bandit,
and the white-tailed

silence. these branches, holding up
the night's smile, transmit

a green world, a world no white
noise could embrace.

2. a smile is more in the eyes
than the mouth.

but even so, it's more
in the cheeks than the eyes.

this subtlety is often overlooked.
how else could it be

so simple to wipe a smile away
with a clenched fist?

3. as I lie here in the gutter,
that crescent smile

fades, a robin's-egg
comforter tucks in the sun-

rise, and I am left
to wonder why it makes me wince.

I Do Not Want To Be Sylvia Plath

Rachel Golden

I do not want to
Be Sylvia Plath.
I do not want to
Succumb to a thousand
Bright and brilliant burning thoughts
Nor have my brains fried
By life.
I do not want to be Sylvia Plath.
But
I found my Ted Hughes.
I've been burnt by my passion . . .
An inferno lit by a trick candle,
Ignited by a ruse.
I do not want to be Sylvia Plath
And die before my time . . .
My time
Which has been wasted by a poet
Who fooled me with his words
And snagged me on his lines.
I do not want to be Sylvia Plath
And have the burning letters
Of my words stamped upon my skin,
But I do.
I wear him like a scar,
An irremovable tattoo.
I do not want to be Sylvia Plath
And have the pen that saves me
Be the knife that kills;
But these words flow through me like blood
And my pen bleeds like death.
He steals my every word.
My pen bleeds my blood
But breathes his breath.
My air has been sucked up by the fire;
Stolen by an expert liar.

Do not be fooled
By the thoughts which pour from my
Head.
I am not here.
Much like Sylvia,
I am dead;
Fallen victim to that bastard Ted.

Two Eulogies

Rick Harnden

when Uncle Jim went ahead and cast off mama stood up front and cried and said it was that it was from sadness or something else I do not think it was from sadness though because Uncle Jim was what some had said at his funeral a *fiery young man dedicated to service* which I believe was more of his more youthful days instead of the good ol' Uncle Jim the man with a dogged service cap and patches on his coatsleeve and a perfectly unlegible black-green blot down his left forearm that occupied the same space as the tight fire-poker crosshatching raising up toward the eye (he was no longer allowed in our den by his lonesome, for more reasons than one) him prone to a spell or two each weekday of drinking mash and drinking it hard until the bar-top chatter would boil down to bar-floor mumble and yes the long prostrate drag to the foyer's phone-booth and the sliding shut of the folding door he would go ahead to offer up the contents of his pale-grey belly which were by that point a stew of complimentary peanuts and peanut shells (most often him unable to tell the difference, I had seen it myself) and the always-sympathetic Management would let him get on there in the phone booth and make his mess and ruin a perfectly good white pages and so Uncle Jim would make amends by stealing the new arrivals off of the Legion's neighbors' stoops when they came in (he knew the delivery schedule and everything) and keep them in the trunk of his Cutlass until it was called up for duty and so he'd make it right again, it was the very same thing, you see, and sometimes even when he wasn't at fault on whatever given day he would lie down real close like and scrub the floors while Gladys preened up on her turtleneck's collar and Humper her husband for the millionth time made the fog on his specs and wiped it away and they stood behind the counter-top and silently audited Jim's labor and Jim he knew it and I guess that made it alright so yes as mama said there are many reasons why a man might choose to live or not live and yes mama said that it was that her brother died from sadness but I know that I know it was his heart

To Our Cosmic Mother*

Robert F. Kilcrease

From deep inside a star, the core was low
On hydrogen: it started to expand
And grow to massive size to sate demand
For precious fuel: it had not long to go,
Before it would explode, and we all know
That when it did it then began a grand
And cosmic light show, nothing could withstand
The force this blast had made, so long ago.
And from this stardust planets would accrete,
A solar system formed, which we call ours,
The star's demise made everything of worth
(This planet we have found beneath our feet)
And so we took our place among the stars,
But still we thank the one that gave us birth.

* I would like to thank Neil deGrasse Tyson and Michio Kaku for suggesting this poem, in their various series on the formations of stars and planets.

Rain

translated by Rick Harnden

This afternoon has come to brightness
For rain falls, sudden and small.
Fallen or falling. The rain is a thing,
We know, that happens in the past.

Who hear it fall have once more
Heard that strange breath that
Speaks of a darkened flower we call rose
And of its color, its curious color.

Rain falls, and in falling it blinds
Each windowpane, quickens in some lost barrio
The black grapes strung along a vine of some unseen porch

That has ceased to be. The wet afternoon
Carries its voice, that uncanny voice
Of my father, who returns and has never died.

Lluvia

Jorge Luis Borges

Bruscamente la tarde se ha aclarado
Porque ya cae la lluvia minuciosa.
Cae o cayó. La lluvia es una cosa
Que sin duda sucede en el pasado.

Quien la oye caer ha recobrado
El tiempo en que la suerte venturosa
Le reveló una flor llamada rosa
Y el curioso color del colorado.

Esta lluvia que ciega los cristales
Alegrará en perdidos arrabales
Las negras uvas de una parra en cierto

Patio que ya no existe. La mojada
Tarde me trae la voz, la voz deseada,
De mi padre que vuelve y que no ha muerto.

The Lausanne-Torcello Poem: Or, Across the Lagoon and Into Cipriani's

for Hemingway in Venice and Torcello

H. R. Stoneback

Ah how full our short happy lives
how deep our two-hearted rivers
how strange our country of kitchen
tables and candlelit back porches

and all green well-sighted places
where the rich are never dull save
when they've lost their backgammon
where the wine of Wyoming runs

for daughters and sons gamblers and nuns
for a long lonesome cat in the rain
where the winner takes nothing
and sometimes gives everything:

And if change comes and all is lost
how will we reckon the three-day cost
in our time of selected letters
and damp dejected Macombers

where fifth columns work the green hills
of Kentucky and all the islands
in the stream where roads are only true
at first light under Kilimanjaro:

Now I lay me undefeated
another country out of season
up in Michigan cross-country snow:
I lift the world-light of Torcello

where men without women slumber
sleepless through the dangerous summer
beyond death in the afternoon heat
dreaming a new moveable feast

where we know what we have and have not
the porter on a train trip cries out:

Di là dal fiume e tra gli alberi:
Per Hemingway a Venezia

translated by Rosella Mamoli Zorzi

Oh come sono piene le nostre viti felici, per poco
come sono profondi i nostri fiumi dai due cuori
come è strano il nostro paese di tavoli
da cucina e portici sul retro al lume di candela

e verdi posti ben guardati
dove i ricchi non sono mai noiosi
salvo quando hanno perso a backgammon
dove scorre il vino del Wyoming

per figlie e figli giocatori e monache
per un lungo e solitario gatto sotto la pioggia
dove chi vince non prende niente
e a volte dà tutto:

e se viene il resto e tutto è perduto
come calcoleremo il costo di tre giorni
nel nostro tempo di lettere scelte
e umidi tristi Macomber

dove quinte colonne lavorano le verdi colline
del Kentucky e tutte le isole
nella corrente dove le strade sono vere
solo alla prima luce sotto il Kilimangiaro:

Ora mi poso invincibile
un altro paese fuori stagione
su nel Michigan attraverso la neve:
alzo la luce del mondo intero

dove uomini senza donne si coricano
insonni per tutta l'estate pericolosa
oltre la morte nel pomeriggio rovente
sognando una nuova festa mobile

dove sappiamo chi ha e chi non ha
il controllore in un viaggio in treno grida:

All Aboard for the place where the bell
in the breeze tolls and glory is spelled

like last good country: Summer people
sing late songs in gone gazebos
sing farewell to arms in gardens
of Eden: Say nothing of how far

they have gone across the river
and how deep deep into the trees
where love in its laughing guises
tells how the sun also rises

Original Author's Note: This poem may mean nothing. Or everything. Its source is in my admiration for the well-chosen titles of Hemingway's works. The poem rides on its form of quatrains obliquely rhymed aabb—except when they're not, a position (as any poet knows) reserved for foregrounded emphasis. The form, the syntax of song, the grammar of grace, also demands an avoidance of punctuation except for six colons. This apparent colonic idiosyncrasy is perhaps rooted in a long 44-page poem entitled *Ua mau ke ea o ka aina i ka pono* that I had the guts or the eccentricity to write in 1965 with no punctuation but colons. (Largely because I felt that the music of the Hawaiian language disdained punctuation.) The deep form of this poem is dictated by the arbitrary heuristics I imposed on the poem: every stanza must contain echoes of at least two Hemingway titles. One stanza contains no less than seven title-references. There are at least 38 title-references in 40 short lines of poetry. Not bad. Be the first to identify them all and I'll buy you a drink in Venice or dinner in Torcello.—HRS Lausanne 2010

Later note: There are a few manuscript variations reflected here and any discrepancies are not to be assigned to the translator. Given the vagaries of revision in the Computer Age, the author does not have the exact version from which the translator worked.—HRS New York 2013

Tutti a bordo per il posto dove suona
la campana nel vento e la gloria è scritta

come l'ultimo bel territorio: i villeggianti
cantano canzoni tardi in gazebo scomparsi
cantano addio alle armi in giardini
dell'Eden: non dicono nulla

di quanto oltre siano andati al di là del fiume
e quanto in fondo in fondo tra gli alberi
dove l'amore nelle sua forma festante
dice che il sole sorge ancora.

V Graduate Essays

"Throwout the [poleist] glas hir bemis brast": Reading Like a Man in Henryson's *Testament of Cresseid*

Dan de Sá

Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde* is a poem that both examines and critiques an ideology of patriarchy. Carolyn Dinshaw has pointed specifically to how the poem provides the reader with an easy route toward reading like a man, which is to identify the "Other" in the text as feminine and to limit it within the framework of a patriarchal structure. In her consideration of the poem, she makes the case that it is Pandarus who stands out as exemplary for what it means to read like a man. She also explains, however, that reading *like* a man does not necessarily stem from reading *as* a man, a fact opening the way for a feminist reading of the poem. Taking Dinshaw's theoretical framework, we find that the narrator of Robert Henryson's fifteenth-century "sequel" to Chaucer's poem, *The Testament of Cresseid*, has a distinctly Pandaric temperament, which is reinforced by the narrator's alignment with Saturn, the chief judge of Cresseid in the council of the gods. Unlike *Troilus and Criseyde,* however, the *Testament* seeks to silence any possibility of a feminist reading. Henryson's narrator is adamantly hostile to Cresseid and formally distinguished from her by the metaphor of "glas," which is used as a mirror just after Cresseid's judgment and as a window just before the narrator's retreat from Venus to the fireplace. It is particularly by this metaphor that we discover the only way Henryson's poem allows one to read: like a man.

In her consideration of Chaucer's poem, Dinshaw explains through an examination of the male characters what it means to read like a man. The act of reading like a man is to identify the "Other" in the text as feminine and to limit it, to turn away from it, "in order to provide a single, univalent textual meaning fixed in a hierarchical structure" (28-29). This concept of reading like a man is, in fact, a method, and one that Dinshaw concludes is used by both of the prominent male characters; Troilus and Pandarus read like men: "they invoke structures of authority in order to order the disorder, to stop the restless desire represented in and enacted by their texts, to find rest" (51). This totalizing view of reading is made concrete and conveyed by the metaphor of the whetstone, which is applied to Pandarus. Early in the poem, when he offers to help Troilus obtain Criseyde and acknowledges his own lack of practice in the realm of love, Pandarus clarifies his utility to Troilus by comparing

himself to a whetstone: "A wheston is no kervyng instrument, / But yet it maketh sharppe kervyng tolis" (1.631-32). This comparison indicates Pandarus's utility to Troilus in wooing Criseyde, but also implies that Troilus is the student and Pandarus the teacher; Troilus becomes sharper because of Pandarus. Dinshaw's concept of reading like a man becomes clear when in Book 5, just before Pandarus gives his judgment and condemnation of Criseyde, he is said to be "As stille as ston" (5.1729). The stone that is Pandarus is a whetstone when he needs to help out Troilus, another male in the patriarchal world of Troy, but when faced with the actions of Criseyde and the sorrow they bring to Troilus, Pandarus is as still as a stone. He first identifies Criseyde as feminine by identifying her opposite, Troilus, as masculine with the address, "My brother deer" (5.1731), and he then turns away from her by asking for her swift death and refusing to speak further of her: "fro this world, almyghty God I preye / Delivere hire soon! I kan namore seye" (5.1742-43). In his reading of Criseyde, Pandarus is as "still" (hard, unyielding, absolute) as a stone, identifying that which opposes the patriarchal world of Troy and turning away from it in order to stabilize its hierarchy. There is a clear divide here in how Pandarus seeks to help Troilus and condemn Criseyde, thus ordering the disorder—a divide produced by Pandarus's reading like a man.

An important thing to note about this incident is that Pandarus's identification with the whetstone is implied here: he is *teaching* Troilus how to read like a man. Dinshaw notes the significance of this in light of Pandarus's rejection of Criseyde: that it is an act performed for the benefit of Troilus and that "reading *like* a man is a behavior that can be adopted in specific circumstances; there are thus other ways to read *as* a man" (63). By this distinction, and in light of Pandarus's actively teaching Troilus how to read like a man (favorable to the feminine when it fits the patriarchal mold, indignant of the feminine when it upsets the mold), Dinshaw shows how Chaucer's poem leaves open the possibility of other ways to read Criseyde, a possibility the Chaucerian narrator explores (as a man), if finally rejects. Henryson's narrator, as we shall see, is Pandaric in the sense that he not only reads like a man, but teaches his readers that this is the only way to read. Unlike Chaucer's narrator, Henryson's doesn't allow readers to deviate from this reading like a man; thus he is opposed to the openness of Chaucer's narrator and is Pandaric through and through. In order to see this, we shall focus on how Henryson aligns his narrator with Pandarus.

Henryson's poem opens with his narrator's retreat from the cold and dismal weather to the fireplace: "for greit cald as than I lattit was / And in my chalmer to the fyre can pas" (27-28). While by the fire, and "armit . . . weill fra the cauld thairout," the narrator takes a further measure to thwart the "cauld" winter night: "I tuik ane quair—and left all uther sport— / writtin by the wor-

thie Chaucer glorious / Of fair Creisseid and worthie Troylus" (40-42). The scene embodied by the narrator, reading about Troilus and Criseyde while sitting by the fireplace, is a visual echo of Pandarus as he sits by the fire to observe the two lovers (while pretending to read an old romance): "he drow hym to the feere, / And took a light, and fond his contenaunce, / As for to looke upon an old romaunce" (3.978-80). This equation goes further when we consider the actions Pandarus takes while he is reading the scene before him. When, in the course of his wooing Criseyde, Troilus is overwhelmed by sorrow, Pandarus interjects himself into the scene by throwing Troilus into the bed, ripping off his clothes to the "sherte" and saying, "O thef, is this a mannes herte?" (3.1097-99). The meaning of this interjection seems ambiguous at first: is Pandarus speaking to Troilus's wallowing while he should be wooing, or is he attempting to help Troilus by appealing to Criseyde with this statement? The latter seems the answer once we read Pandarus's further question to Criseyde: "Yee, nece, wol ye pullen out the thorn / That stiketh in his herte?" (3.1104-05). It may be the case that Pandarus simply says this to help Troilus, but the ambiguity of the addressee of Pandarus's statement leaves open the possibility of his annoyance at Troilus for not playing the role of the man. Pandarus, the continual whetstone, is showing Troilus how to read like a man, how to frame the Other as feminine. In order to properly teach this, Pandarus becomes involved in the scene that he is reading, and he interjects himself into the narrative as he finds it necessary. This point is further reinforced when he realizes his candlelight is not good for Troilus's situation and returns with it to the "chymeneye" (Chaucer 3.1141).

A further indication of Pandarus's involvement in the love scene he observes (or narrative he reads) is his manipulation of it to suit his desire. Before retiring to the fireplace, Pandarus has been instrumental in preparing the lovers for this scene. Just before, he arranges the lovers' posture and advises them how to speak: "Now doth hym sitte, goode nece deere, / Upon youre beddes syde al ther withinne, / That ech of yow the bet may other heere" (3.975-77). Pandarus's arrangement of the lovers speaks to the artifice of the scene, but also, and perhaps more importantly, to the purpose of the scene. He frames both characters "withinne" the curtain of the bed as he observes their actions, claiming that their placement is for their better audibility to each other. His careful framing of the scene reveals, however, that Pandarus is most concerned that the scene be visually appealing to him, the "reader" of the romance.

When the lovers have consummated their love, and after Troilus leaves the scene, Pandarus remains in order to address Criseyde. After a brief exchange, she covers her face with the bedsheet, under which Pandarus begins to "prie," or peer, and "With that his arm al sodeynly he thriste / Under hire nekke, and at the laste hire kyste" (3.1574-75). Pandarus's act of peering un-

der the bedsheet speaks to his attempt to satisfy a visual desire, to view what is visually appealing. The forceful nature by which he grabs Criseyde by the "nekke" in order to kiss her indicates that the love scene between Troilus and Criseyde wasn't his only goal. Troilus, at this point, has left after the visual frame has been established. Once the male lover is literally out of the picture, out of the frame, Pandarus approaches. Criseyde attempts to shield him from viewing her, but he forces his way into the frame, views what he finds appealing, and finally interjects himself into the frame with unbridled masculine force. This is indicative of the idea that informs the concept of reading like a man that the feminine need only be rejected if it upsets the order of patriarchy. Pandarus is in control here, and Criseyde has not been deemed a traitor to Troilus; thus, the female who fits the patriarchal mold must be praised. After Criseyde leaves, the narrator reveals that "Pandarus hath fully his entente" (3.1582); the framing and consequent reading of Criseyde was always Pandarus's "entente."

Returning to Henryson's narrator, we find that his actions echo those of Pandarus during this scene by the fireplace. Just as Pandarus interjects himself into the scene to achieve his "entente," Henryson's narrator proposes to alter his reading of Chaucer's narrative in order to focus on Cresseid. He first picks up "ane uther quair," which contains "the fatall destinie / Of fair Cresseid, that endit wretchitlie" (61-63) and then remarks that

> Quha wait gif all that Chauceir wrait was trew?
> Nor I wait nocht gif this narratioun
> Be authoreist, or fenyeit of the new
> Be sum poeit, throw his inventioun. (64-67)

The narrator's choice of a second source of undisclosed origin and author mimics Chaucer's narrator's renaming of Boccaccio, the author of the actual source Chaucer used, as the fictitious Lollius. However, whereas Chaucer's narrator makes changes to the Boccaccio-Lollius narrative without acknowledging these changes, Henryson's narrator makes it clear from the beginning that he will be conveying a narrative that is not told in Chaucer's "quair." He justifies this narrative by blurring the lines of authority between Chaucer and this undisclosed author. It's not clear if the account given by this source is "authoreist" or concocted by "inventioun," but the narrator implies that the same might be said about Chaucer's "quair" when he asks "gif all that Chauceir wrait was trew?" Questioning the authority of each "quair" allows the narrator to present his second "quair" as a source that is possibly authoritative.

In the *Testament*, then, Henryson's narrator is aligned with Pandarus by means of this visual echo of a male sitting by a fire and reading the scene before him, preparing the scene and manipulating it to suit his purposes.

If Henryson's narrator is Pandaric in his method, he is also Pandaric in his conclusion regarding Cresseid. In Chaucer's "quair," after Troilus reveals to Pandarus that Criseyde has been untrue, this fireside reader concludes: "I hate, ywys, Cryseyde; / And, God woot, I wol hate hire evermore!" (5.1732-33). This judgment is followed by a plea for her death and a declaration of silence on the matter: "fro this world, almyghty God I preye / Delivere hire soon! I kan namore seye" (5.1742-43). Pandarus is thus shown to judge Criseyde and wish for her swift death. As we have seen through Dinshaw's concept of reading like a man, and in the metaphor of Pandarus's standing still as a stone when faced with Crisedye's upsetting of the patriarchal order, his silence after issuing his damning judgment is an attempt to turn away from Criseyde in order to reassert order.

This silence is echoed in the line that concludes the *Testament*: "Sen sho is deid I speik of hir no moir" (616). Henryson's narrator has no need to *wish* for the death of Cresseid because, like Pandarus at the fireside, he is in control of this aspect of the narrative; Henryson's narrator brings about the death of Cresseid under the guise of reporting from his "quair" of undisclosed authorship. In light of Susan Aronstein's suggestion that this "quair" represents the pre-Chaucerian misogynistic tradition regarding Cresseid, we can understand how this conclusion fits into this tradition (8). But what of the judgment of Cresseid? Aronstein argues that Henryson's text goes further than simply reasserting the pre-Chaucerian misogynist tradition: "[Henryson] attempts to fix his reading as the last reading, enshrining it with Cresseid" (8). Henryson's narrator, unlike Pandarus, doesn't simply exclaim his unequivocal hatred for Troilus's once-beloved and goes further than the simple reiteration of this tradition in his judgment of her.

Cresseid's judgment by the gods is a moment where the symbolic representation of the patriarchal world in which she lives becomes manifest. Cupid stands as representative of the gods when he identifies Cresseid's crime: "hir leving unclene and lecherous / Scho wald returne in me and my mother, / To quhome I schew my grace abone all uther" (285-87). Cresseid's crime is in attributing "hir leving unclene" (285) to Cupid and Venus, that is, the gods who represent the patriarchal world in which she lives. Aronstein clarifies what Cupid is addressing when she says that her crime is not labeled as a spiritual offence, but "her claim that she was only following her 'devine responsaill,' that she is the victim of a system that destined her to become a whore and not, as the text insists, the agent of her own fall" (15). Cresseid's crime, from the mouth of patriarchy, is in blaming the system. If Cupid is the voice of this male system, reasserting his power once it is challenged by the female Other, then we must look at the figures chosen by the gods to proclaim Cresseid's judgment: Saturn and Cynthia. Once we understand how Henryson interjects

himself into the narrative by aligning himself with Saturn, we shall see how he goes further than Pandarus in reading Cresseid like a man.

The key characteristics that stand out in the initial description of Saturn are those wrought with frost imagery. From the god's hair hang "ice shoklis" that are as long "as an speir" (160-61). His locks are further described as "ovir-fret with froistis hoir" (163). His clothes are said to be "out woir" by "the wind" (165), and his "teith chatterit and cheverit with the chin" (156). This image of the shivering god fraught with hoary frost recalls Henryson's narrator at the beginning of the poem and his retreat to the fireside in order to be well "armit . . . fra the cauld thairout" (38). It is the northern wind which purifies the air and drives the narrator away from Venus and towards the fireside: "But for greit cald as than I lattit was; / And in my chalmer to the fyre can pas" (27-28). He further attests to the power the cold on him in his description of how the wind makes the air colder: "the froist freisit, the blastis bitterly / Fra Pole Artick come quisling loud and schill, / And causit me remufe aganis my will" (19-21). This retreat from the cold, in light of Saturn's frosty description, implies the narrator's alignment with the god. This alignment becomes more concrete once we consider how the narrator arms himself against the "cauld": he "mend[s] the fyre" to "beikit" himself and proceeds to read Chaucer's "quair." Since we know that the narrator's reading of Chaucer's "quair" is one by which he interprets loosely, by means of the second, undisclosed "quair," the fate of Cresseid, we can infer that the narrator's choice to focus on Cresseid is a sort of reaction to the "cauld." Indeed, by the time we start to read the description of Saturn in the poem, it seems as though the north wind had blown the narrator straight into the council of the gods in the figure of Saturn.

Turning to Saturn's judgment of Cresseid, we can begin to understand the significance of the similarities between the god and the narrator. In the moment of judgment, Saturn approaches Cresseid and "on hir heid he laid ane frostie wand" (311). He then proceeds to declare his judgment of her:

> I change thy mirth into melancholy . . .
> Thy moisture and thy heit in cald and dry;
> Thyne insolence, thy play and wantones,
> To greit diseis; thy pomp and thy riches
> In mortall neid; and greit penuritie
> Thow suffer sall, and as ane beggar die. (316-22)

The theme of Cresseid's punishment here is the shift from "mirth" to "melancholy." In light of the god's laying his "frostie wand" upon her head, however, as well as his previous description as covered in hoary frost, the shift which stands out the most is the shift from "moisture" and "heit" to "cald" and "dry" (318). The remaining details of the passage (the shifts from "insolence" and

"wantones" to "greit diseis" and from "pomp" and "riches" to "mortall naid") leading to Cresseid's death as a beggar stand as an outline for the remainder of the *Testament*. Saturn can be understood, in this way, to write Cresseid's judgment with his "frostie wand," which instigates her fall from "mirth" to "melancholy" and heralds the remaining details of her fate. In light of the narrator's alignment with Saturn by means of this frost imagery, and in light of his focus on Cresseid and his method of interacting with the text to suit his purposes, it's difficult to read Saturn's judgment as anything other than an interjection by Henryson's narrator, through the figure of Saturn, to manipulate and rewrite the fate of Cresseid.

Up to this point, we have been considering a strictly male perspective on Cresseid as she is presented in the *Testament*: the Pandaric perspective of the narrator as present in the text through the figure of Saturn. But in light of Dinshaw's argument that biology is not destiny for readers, we might ask if the *Testament* leaves open the possibility of reading as a woman. When we look at the judgment scene, however, we find that there is only one particular way to read: *like* a man, both *as* a man and *as* a woman. The judgment of Cresseid by the council of the gods is the equivalent of Pandarus's exclamation of hatred, but it goes even further: whereas Pandarus's judgment of Criseyde is obviously interested and personal, Saturn and Cynthia pronounce judgment on Cresseid in a way that leaves the reader no alternative but to concur.

The distinguishing characteristic of the goddess Cynthia is her reflective quality; indeed, she seems to have nothing of her own. Her judgment of Cresseid is a reflection of Saturn's judgment: "Fra heit of bodie I the now depryve, / And to thy seiknes sall be na recure / Bot in dolour thy dayis to indure" (334-36). Like Saturn, and by extension Henryson's narrator, Cynthia condemns Cresseid to coldness by removing the "heit" from her body, and then proceeds to reiterate her shift from "wantones" to "diseis" (319-20) by rephrasing Saturn's judgment as incurable "seikness" and everlasting "dolour" (335-36). Another instance of her reflective quality occurs when the narrator describes the source of her light: "For all hir licht scho borrowis at hir brother / Titan, for of hir self scho has nane uther" (258-59). Cynthia has no light of her own; she reflects Saturn's judgment similarly to how she reflects Titan's light. Because Cynthia is one of the divinities represented in the council of the gods and as one of the two representative of the judgment of Cresseid, her reflective quality is significant in regard to her role as one of the poem's female characters.

Venus, another female character present in the council of the gods for the judgment of Cresseid, is shown to be just as reflective as Cynthia. At the beginning of the poem, before the narrator retreats to the fireside, he notes this reflective quality in the goddess by her opposition to the sun:

quhen Titan had his bemis bricht
Withdrawin doun and sylit under cure,
And fair Venus, the bewtie of the nicht,
Uprais and set unto the west full richt
Hir golden face, in oppositioun
Of God Phebus, direct discending doun. (9-14)

The first thing to note here is the equivalent action of Phebus and Titan: the latter "Withdrawin doun" (10), the former "direct discending doun" (14). Opposed to this action is Venus's, having "Uprais" her "golden face" in the night sky (12-13). The gods Phebus and Titan are collapsed into one image of the sun who sets in opposition to Venus's rising as the "bewtie of the nicht" (11). This image evokes the sense of Venus as the moon and is reinforced when the narrator relates the strength of the light she casts on him: "Throwout the glas hir bemis brast sa fair / That I micht se on every syde me by" (15-16). The "bemis bricht" (9) of Titan which "Withdrawin doun" (10) during the night are shown here to be reflected at night by Venus. Both Venus and Cynthia, in this moon-like way, reflect the light of the sun. The light of the sun reflected off these moon-like female characters indicates that these characters are in line with the order represented by the council of the gods; neither Venus nor Cynthia upsets the order, but instead both reflect the light, the judgment, and the condemnation of their male counterparts.

Since Cresseid does not reflect the light of patriarchal order, she is condemned by the gods in general. This means that she is condemned by the men, and this condemnation is reflected by the women when she looks to them. This condemnation is visually represented in the poem when she awakes from her dream to look at herself in the mirror: "than rais scho up and tuik / Ane poleist glas" by which she saw "hir face sa deformait" (347-49). Sarah M. Dunnigan acknowledges the damning nature of this reflection, but proposes a positive outcome to be learned from it: "Cresseid offers herself as an exemplum; the image of her desecrated body therefore acts as a cautionary mirror into which women can read themselves and their fate. Yet it also represents the potential to become other than that—the punished or martyred female body" (114). Dunnigan points to the mordant lesson this scene offers to the female reader: by Cresseid's recognizing her own failings in the world rather than blaming them on the system, she is showing other female readers that one must recognize such failings to avoid falling to deformed disgrace. Dunnigan goes further by saying that the *Testament* means to reflect this example for a female audience: "In larger interpretive terms, Henryson's poem holds up a glass to an audience which is feminine, soliciting it to recognize and reject—as the exemplary Cresseid is compelled to do—the limiting concept of

the material feminine" (121).

It seems as though Dunnigan's assertions are in line with Cupid's logic in condemning Cresseid for blaming the gods for her deformity and demise. The consequences of her condemnation are reflected in the "glas" which she picks up just after the judgment. There is another important "glas" mentioned in the poem which frames the "golden face" (13) of "fair Venus, the bewtie of the nicht" (11): the "glas" by which Henryson's narrator views Venus. Venus is framed as an exemplary female in a patriarchal world, and it is through this "glas" that "hir bemis brast sa fair" (15). It is at this point that we must remember that "hir bemis" are actually the "bemis" (9) of Titan/Phebus, the light which resonates from a patriarchal voice. The notion of Venus as exemplary is reinforced when we further recall that Cupid, the patriarchal voice of the poem, refers to Venus as her "To quhome I schew my grace abone all uther" (287). This "glas" that frames Venus is a "glas" by which the voice of patriarchy is reflected for the pleasure and purpose of men: it reflects order, stability, and hierarchy. The "glas" by which Cresseid's deformity is reflected is a mirror that reflects disorder to the patriarchal world of the poem. When the final stanza concludes by addressing its audience as female, it is thus telling the audience that there is only one way to read the female: *like* a man, whether *as* a man or *as* a woman.

Through an examination of the key male and female gods present for the judgment of Cresseid, we have seen how Henryson's narrator alters his text to close it off from the feminist possibilities offered by Chaucer's text. In aligning himself with Saturn, the god who carries out the final judgment of Cresseid, this narrator goes further than Pandarus's mere wish for Criseyde's death; he actually carries it out. This closes off the possibility, revealed by Pandarus and noted by Dinshaw, that reading *as* a man doesn't strictly coincide with reading *like* a man. Henryson's narrator thus presents the polar extreme to the openness of Chaucer's: the *only* way to read is like a man. The poem is an attempt to have the final word on Cresseid and, through her example, on women in general.

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Experience and Contemplation: Early Visions of Stephen Dedalus in James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*

Ryan James McGuckin

It is evident that Dante's *Commedia* resides between the lines of Joyce's narrative experience. In *Joyce and Dante: The Shaping Imagination*, Mary T. Reynolds notes, "In all Joyce's work Dante is a massive presence . . . in a great variety of ways. The simplest are easily discernible as verbal clues, direct quotations, and allusions. The more subtle uses . . . are completely intermingled with other material" (3-4). In *Joyce Annotated: Notes for* Dubliners *and* A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man, Don Gifford assists readers in scrutinizing Dante's multivalent presence in *Portrait,* such the following sentence in chapter four of Joyce's novel: "The end he had been born to serve yet did not see had led him to escape by an unseen path" (139). Gifford highlights that "to escape by an unseen path" is Joyce's allusion to Dante and Virgil's "escape from the heart of the *Inferno* . . . through 'a space, not known by sight but by the sound of a rivulet descending in it'" (216). Here, Gifford reminds readers that the gravity of Stephen's journey, more than the emergence of his artistry, involves, like Dante's, an arduous and mysterious process in the salvation of his soul.

Among numerous accounts, Reynolds's and Gifford's scholarly directives help demonstrate the Joyce-Dante correlation in the way the *Commedia* and *Portrait* both convey the theme of journey by means of symbol, allegory, and allusion. Yet even without Reynolds or Gifford, it seems natural to apply Dante's theoretical apparatus in reading Joyce's narrative sequence. By overlaying Dante's colossal system onto the first chapter of *Portrait*, a deliberate structure emerges: the pandying incident becomes the *Inferno*'s ocular and corporeal education of power led astray, Stephen's visit to the rector is the *Purgatorio*'s educational voyage of restoration by way of penance, and the emergence into the acceptance and exaltation of peers is the *Paradiso*'s education of salvation and reward for one's faith to act in accordance within a system of beliefs.

Although it is evident that *Portrait* makes allusions to Dante's *Commedia*, unlike the redemption that Dante's epic displays, Joyce's novel appears more like an exercise in failure than a refurbishment of the soul. For readers and film enthusiasts reared in a culture of contemporary Bildungsroman narratives, a work's emotional merit and satisfaction of closure commonly comes through the protagonist's epiphanic surge and bravadic display of nonconformity. Nevertheless, the end of *Portrait*'s first chapter appears to undermine this

expectation by rendering reestablished institutional piety and programmed guilt instead of conveying the early signs of the artist's transcendence to come. For a work that should entail the artist's personal education and coming-of-age among the din of culture, this appears anomalous and problematic.

To counter this notion of deterministic piety, it is possible that the opposite is actually in play in *Portrait*'s first chapter. Although Stephen appears to conform to the habits of obedience and piety contrary to the environment of peers that exalt his individual efforts, the end of the first chapter is not a display of Stephen's habitual submission but is instead the early indication of his insight and maturation. By way of experience, the world that Stephen could only previously interpret through observation now has personal meaning, which informs his performative language and acts that close the first chapter. Even though Stephen's actions appear hesitant, the way in which he recalls his pandying experience, his decision about its injustice, his ability to journey to the rector and narrate his account, and his decision to remove himself from peer praise and seek out a more contemplative moment are early signs of an artistic mind developing a unique worldview from the clay of tradition and experience. To develop this reading of *Portrait*, in addition to an incorporation and critique of Jonathan Mulrooney's essay "Stephen Dedalus and the Politics of Confession," it is worth applying Søren Kierkegaard's formulation of subjective truth to help expand on an analysis of Stephen's experience. Kierkegaard claims meaning about the world and the ways we respond to it reside in involvement rather than observation, which counters Mulrooney's deterministic claims about the novel. Before beginning an examination of *Portrait*'s first chapter, a review of Mulrooney's and Kierkegaard's general formulations is appropriate.

Jonathan Mulrooney's "Stephen Dedalus and the Politics of Confession" is an essay that parallels one of deconstruction's central aspects regarding communication and experience: the world is only a series of texts and nothing beyond it. In *Of Grammatology*, Jacques Derrida expresses this idea when he writes, words "cannot legitimately transgress the text toward something other than it, toward a referent . . . or toward a signified outside the text whose content . . . could have taken place outside of language" (158). Like Derrida, Mulrooney argues that Stephen—the artist—and the narrative he produces—his artistic medium—will never escape the world from which it emerges, but only produce more of what it must be: an artifact and product of its cultural environment, which is to say, in the sentiment of Derrida, a text within a text. To enhance this argument, Mulrooney applies Foucault's poststructural formulations that also demonstrate how Stephen's conclusive worldview is only a product of his setting rather than something separate from it. These ideas all support how *Portrait* is not about Stephen perceptively and artfully employ-

ing confessional language to construct an identity that is critical of, separate from, and unique to his surrounding conditions. This is to say that *Portrait* opposes the depiction of Stephen's emerging identity as an artist in ascension.

Furthermore, Mulrooney shows why Stephen's artistic ascension is an unlikely reading of *Portrait*, since, for one thing, the notion of a developed and critical perception by way of separation seems paradoxical. In short, one cannot earn an intimate cultural view at arm's length. Instead, Mulrooney implies that this process is destructively circular insofar as Stephen's confessional language is not the agent of critical freedom but the medium of repression. Stephen usurps himself by unknowingly employing the same linguistic practice that resides in the traditions and institutions that repress him. Thus, confession does not transform him but quashes his uniqueness while fostering conformity. This utilization of language is Stephen's grand, strategic error: "Stephen develops a conception of reality, a consciousness, that is informed and indeed created by the continual regimented experience of his . . . environment. [In] Seizing control of . . . narrative, Stephen merely repositions himself [with]in a system of social relations" (167). In essence, Stephen does not transcend his surroundings through art and reveal his deeper self but merely shifts his perspective and ironically, perhaps absurdly, relocates himself within the very limiting customs of his culture.

This is a compelling article, especially since it fits the traditional reading of Joyce according to one of his most prevalent motifs, that of paralysis. However, Mulrooney's analysis seems incomplete, not because paralysis is an inappropriate way to experience Joyce's literary milieu but because it renders Stephen's observations, encounters, and meditations as the single expression of an inert presence. In this uniform view, the novel rests in such a singular pause that it should leave the reader wondering why it must go on for five chapters and two-hundred or so pages. There must be more in the text and more for readers to witness. Stephen's inwardness and contemplativeness is not a mere manifestation of paralysis but might be a clue to another way readers can journey into additional layers of the text. To assist us, we can apply Søren Kierkegaard's philosophy, which is very much interested in inwardness and contemplation.

Specifically, and contrary to Mulrooney's reading of *Portrait*, Søren Kierkegaard's rendering of subjective truth requires the contemplative life. Truth is not something to witness, valorize, and objectively document; truth is an emotional significance deeply experienced, felt, reflected on, and believed. In this fashion, he celebrates inwardness as the central hallmark of ardent living, which opposes Mulrooney's claims on how limiting and repressive this way of being is, as Mulrooney states: "Concerned with individual identity more than anything else, Stephen denies himself the interactions with others that would

enable him to create [for himself] an authentic aesthetic representation" (166). In contrast, as most of his writing demonstrates, Kierkegaard's philosophy of inwardness is nothing less than a personally devout and passionate choice: "What use would it be to be able to . . . explain many separate facts, if it had no deeper meaning *for me and my life?* Certainly I won't deny that I still accept an *imperative of knowledge* . . . but *then it must be taken up alive in me*" ("The Journals" 5). Uncommon in contemporary culture's generalizations about research and academic pursuits, the challenge Kierkegaard presents is the celebration of knowledge along with the responsibility of maintaining a personal ethos of meaning in relation to life's central elements and motivations.

For Kierkegaard, the difference between belief and proof is not a matter of taste but two different modes of orientation: "When the question of truth is raised in an objective manner, reflection is directed objectively to the truth, as an object to which the knower is related. Reflection is not focused upon the relationship, but upon the question of whether" the knower observes the truth ("The Subjective Truth: Inwardness Truth is Subjectivity" 210-11). Simply, if objective truth is sought, such as the proof that $2 + 3 \neq 7$, it matters not if the knower cares about math or is a scholar of mathematics because the knower, regardless of personal commitment, is in the truth by observing how two of one thing plus three of another amounts to five in total, not seven. However, subjective truth is more than flippant opinion. It is not a simple matter of the knower merely claiming $2 + 3 = 7$ because he or she casually desires. In fact, for Kierkegaard, it is not about making objective claims at all because it would reduce belief into an abstract ideal an individual seeks to objectively prove rather than live dedicatedly among.

On the contrary, for subjective truth Kierkegaard says: "When the question of the truth is raised subjectively, reflection is directed subjectively to the nature of the individual's relationship: if only the mode of this relationship is in the truth, the individual is in the truth, even if he should happen to be thus related to what is not [objectively] true" (44). The key distinction here, between objective and subjective truth, is the word "related" versus "relationship." The word "related," regarding objective truth, entails if the knower is visually related to or aware of an observable fact. On the contrary, with subjective truth, the word "relationship" entails the knower's deep commitment with personal experience and a set of beliefs that are impossible to objectively prove. Kierkegaard's objective truth involves descriptions of things external, where subjective truth regards decisions and commitments towards personal ways of living that one experiences as internal.

The Christmas dinner episode in *Portrait*'s first chapter provides an opportunity to apply Kierkegaard's formulation of objective truth. Here Stephen is a receiver and follower of the commands of his family without having any

personal connection and deeper awareness of their domestic and religious undercurrent. With little understanding or active participation in the development of events, Stephen only knows by what he is told or told to do, as noted when Mr. Casey "tapped the gland of his neck with his fingers. And Stephen . . . [only then] knew . . . it was not true that Mr. Casey had a purse of silver in his throat" (22). Similarly, Stephen needs prompting in order to engage in religious ceremony and cultural protocol, which the text displays when narrating the Dedalus's Christmas dinner: "When all had taken their seats . . . [Mr. Dedalus] laid his hand on the cover and then said quickly, withdrawing it: —Now, Stephen. Stephen stood up in his place to say the grace before the meals" (24). Here, Stephen needs direction in the practice of grace—a practice that should be automatic, especially in such a religiously saturated culture. Concomitantly, the text displays the servants and their lack of deep devotion to their servitude during the dinner. Yet, the servants act out of their own accord, which implies they still exhibit a more self-sufficient role in contrast with Stephen's audienced position.

Along with a text wrapped in many allusions, the third-person narrative creates for readers the disorientation I imagine they are supposed to undergo and regard as the same confusion that the young Stephen experiences. The reference to "three cramped fingers making a birthday present for Queen Victoria" is one of many examples that appear confusing to Stephen (23). This section creates for readers, and Stephen, the need to obtain meaning from the heated religious and political debate among Stephen's family and dinner guests. In addition, Stephen's family both protects him—"Simon! Simon! Said uncle Charles. The boy"—while also offering him up as a rhetorical excuse to bolster an argument and encourage its continuation: "O, he'll remember all this when he grows up . . . the language he heard against God and religion and priests in his own home" (26, 28). Is this supposed to be meaningful to Stephen? How is he supposed to form personal commitments regarding things that do not refer to personal and meaningful experiences? Even if he were aware of the allusions that speak to his family's religious strife, in Kierkegaard's words, "What use would it be [for Stephen] to be able to . . . explain many separate facts, if it had no deeper meaning *for him and his life*" ("The Journals" 5).

Stephen must rely on generating his own mythology: "How could a woman be a tower of ivory or a house of gold? Who was right then? . . . Eileen had long white hands . . . long and white and thin and cold and soft. That was ivory: a cold white thing. That was the meaning of *Tower of Ivory*" (29). This achieves a few things in the development of *Portrait* that serve to complicate the novel while also supporting a Kierkegaardian reading of the text. It exhibits Stephen's creative and sensitive ability to make meaning within him rather

than demand it from others. Paradoxically, it also exhibits a young Stephen who is eager to discover the truth about his surroundings, perhaps, in part, to understand the motives of people's behavior, which, up until this point of the novel, are elusive and emotionally jarring all at once.

Nevertheless, Mulrooney doesn't seem to be thinking about any of this in "Stephen Dedalus and the Politics of Confession," especially when he claims, "Throughout the book's central sections, Stephen is constantly in this state of self-examination and narration; he catalogues his every action . . . and defines his identity solely within the parameters of Catholicism's master discourse" (171). Mulrooney might be correct about Stephen's self-reflexivity in regards to his religious atmosphere, but he states it here in a way that puts a negative value to self-examination entirely. If thought works its way through the confessional apparatus of Catholic traditions, according to Mulrooney, this will only cultivate repression and rigidity. In general, this method of thought categorizes Kierkegaard's brilliant and dynamic mind of philosophic creativity and religious devotion as a person duped by tradition and lured into a mechanized life of consecration. A deeper reading of his philosophy suggests the contrary.

Mulrooney's reading also implies that there is one way of thinking about religion and acting according to its tenets. This notion needs no rebuttal in that the great variety of scholastic philosophers, which Joyce was well aware of, attests to how homogeneous this tradition of inquiry is. Stephen's early association with religious reflection displays the mind of a philosopher, not a youngster unknowingly trapped and duped into the confines of Catholic limitations, as he demonstrates here: "Was that a sin for Father Arnall to be in a wax or was he allowed to get into a wax . . . or was he only letting on to be in a wax? It was because he was allowed because a priest would know what a sin was and not do it. But if he did it one time . . . what would he do to go to confession?" (40). Though the tone here mixes Stephen as innocently curious and purposefully critical, it is clear Stephen has the sensitivity and creativity to employ examination in a way that is expansive rather than reductive and conforming. Stephen is able to make meaning and excel in his capacity to understand by mere observation. And yet, applying Kierkegaard, observation and facts without meaning leave no grounds for one to establish significant beliefs or make informed commitments.

Stephen begins to mirror Kierkegaard's notion of subjective truth when he contemplates justice in relation to his personal experience of Father Dolan physically punishing him in class for not following academic protocol and, according to the Father, using broken glasses as an excuse to forgo his Latin exercises. Contrary to law as an objective and measurable fact, such as a hierarchical printing of the Jesuit order, Stephen reflects on being pandied by

Father Dolan and from this devises his personal beliefs of justice, beliefs that carry meaning by way of experience and contemplation. Contrasting this, during the Christmas dinner, Stephen is an outside observer to the implied ills of religious discord where he "looked with affection at Mr. Casey's face . . . [and wondered] why was he then against the priests?" (29).

Stephen wonders less about the mystery of religious strife when the direct experience of Father Dolan's pandying has his heart suddenly beating fast while the "burning stinging tingling blow . . . made his trembling hand crumple together like a leaf in the fire . . . [and the] scalding water burst forth from his eyes . . . burning with shame and agony and fear, [as] he drew back" (41-42). This punishment is Stephen's real religious conversion: burning strikes to his hands that deliver a baptism by fire and biting of the apple to help reveal an awareness of the fallen minds of men and women among the fallen world of institutional brutality. Following this, assuming the role of priest-poet, Stephen reflects on this experience, which reorients his personal mythology toward his experienced reality:

> He felt the touch of the prefect's fingers as they had steadied his hand and at first he had thought he was going to shake hands with him because his fingers were soft and firm: but then in an instant he had heard the swish of the soutane. . . . [Afterword in reflection] he sat in the refectory . . . [and] suffered time and time in memory the same humiliation until he began to wonder whether it might not really be . . . something . . . which made him look like a schemer. . . . it was unjust and cruel and unfair. (44)

For this experience and reflection, and not the pressure of his peers, Stephen, like Kierkegaard, takes up meaning alive in himself, which deeply impassions him to make a personal commitment and report this injustice to the rector. This is a bold action for a boy to approach the authority of a religious and educational institution. In short, according to Kierkegaard's process of subjective truth and commitment, Stephen earns it in this decision to trust his newly formed personal meaning and the faith in that meaning to carry out his complaint, no matter how timid or reserved his actualizing of it is. John D. Caputo's comparison of Kierkegaard's subjective and objective truths might sum up Stephen's valiant action: Stephen's commitment and act exhibits "the inward action of man . . . not a mass of information" (Caputo 10). That is to say, Stephen's inward action is his contemplative ability to recall his punishment, commit to a personal belief system regarding it, and inform his decision to act.

This notion of action is interesting because it also implies non-action, especially since Kiekegaard's philosophy concerns itself with inwardness and

contemplation. This certainly applies to the puzzling ending of the first chapter where Stephen emerges from the rector's office and is successful in issuing his complaint to persuade the rector in preventing any further punishments from Father Dolan. Applying Kierkegaard's theory offers an alternative way to interpret Stephen's willful decision to retreat from his peers in favor of contemplation rather than social celebration. In this section of the chapter, there is a curious juxtaposition between Stephen's peers and Stephen. In fact, each of the two can represent both aspects of Kierkegaard's notions of truth. Stephen's peers exhibit the role of outsiders interested in objective truth and the many facts that satisfy the need for ocular and aural proof: "The fellows had seen him running. They closed round him in a ring, pushing one against another to hear. —Tell us! Tell us! —What did he say?" (49).

Although it is likely that a few of his peers have experienced being pandied by Father Dolan, the text implies that Stephen's journey to the rector "in the low narrow dark corridor" is an allusion to Dante (48). As the singular and infernal journey at the start of the *Commedia* states, "I woke to find myself in a dark wood, / For I had wandered off from the straight path," Stephen has made his own unique voyage that is likened to Dante's in which he is the only person to journey through a world unknown to the living (1.2-3). Of course, this implies that the rector's office is infernal, but the focus here is how this separates Stephen from his peers. Stephen has journeyed where no student has ever before attempted. His peers can only respond as Stephen did at his family's Christmas dinner: the rote reaction to festivities by way of protocol. In the case of the end of chapter one, his peers "caught their caps and sent them up again spinning" (49). Yet, when Stephen removes himself from the celebration, his peers have no deeper understanding of Stephen's journey, since there is nothing more they can witness and gather as observable fact. Therefore, when Stephen "escaped from them they broke away in all directions" (49). With nothing left to see, his peers go looking elsewhere, which implies they are oblivious to the meaning that Stephen's feat entails.

If Stephen's peers can be likened to Kierkegaard's display of objective truth, then Stephen, at the end of the first chapter, represents subjective truth. Contrary to his peers, instead of needing observable celebration to mark the success of his journey, Stephen instead "struggled to get free. . . . The cheers died away in the soft gray air. He was alone. He was happy and free" (49). This is Kierkegaardian inwardness, which is only attainable by way of the type of journey Stephen endured. Mulrooney's critical view again counters this by stating, "Stephen Dedalus, disciple in the sodality of beauty, committed intellectually to an art that valorizes the dissolution of the egotistical artist, is in the end as entrapped as ever he was in a psychic cloister fashioned by Catholic self-representation" (174). It is difficult to argue against this particular

claim of Mulrooney's, but I would like to propose his point actually supports Kierkegaard's argument. Perhaps Stephen is submerged in Catholic self-representation. Regardless, whatever he is steeped in, it is by means of subjective truth or the choice of committing to a way of living rather than being obsessed with objectively proving to others the importance of that way.

In addition, after Stephen willingly escapes the praise of his peers, another puzzling moment that is worth reconsideration, in the presence of Kierkegaard's philosophic apparatus, is Stephen's wish "to do something kind for" Father Dolan (49). Instead of either fulfilling the role of Bildungsroman rebel, in seeking exile, or of Bildungsroman magistrate, in Dantesquely ensuring that Father Dolan experiences the same trauma he sinfully inflicts on others, Stephen instead wishes to "show him that he was not proud" (49). This initially appears as an apparent lapse back into submission and, therefore, a confirmation of Mulrooney's argument. Then again, it could also imply Stephen's awareness and sensitivity of the flawed inner workings of his educational institution and of Father Dolan's, which only a creative and artistic mind could conceptualize, realize, and pledge through a Kierkegaardian process. Stephen might after all be more dynamic than Mulrooney's analysis suggests. I would be interested in a further exploration of the validity of Kierkegaard's formulation in the remainder of *Portrait* as well as how other aspects of Mulrooney's essay argues or unexpectedly fits into this concept of Kierkegaardian truth. My hopes are that this short essay successfully displays the likelihood that such a study would be of scholarly value.

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Watching the Garden: The Dangers of Allegory in *Richard II*

Louis Reid

Popular historical accounts surrounding the production and immediate historical context of *Richard II* reveal how certain settings, plots, characters, and conflicts within Elizabethan England envelop, shape, and complicate our readings of Shakespeare's most controversial history play. One of the most renowned stories reports that the Earl of Essex found such recalcitrant and revolutionary under- and overtones in *Richard II* that he would use it as stylistic flair to kick off his coup d'état. We know, however, that Essex's rebellion never really came to fruition, nor was Queen Elizabeth ever usurped; moreover, in Paul Hammer's detailed investigation of the letters and propaganda surrounding February 7, 1601, the day Essex would literally and figuratively try to transform Elizabeth into Shakespeare's Richard, Hammer loosens the knot tying Essex to *Richard II*; he concludes, "Saturday, 7 February, had no direct connection with what happened the following day because those events were unforeseen on Saturday afternoon" (18), and the image of Essex was crafted and "led by men who were Essex's personal enemies . . . because it reflected their own fears about what Essex had been planning" (4). Looking past the loose ends that might retroactively exonerate Essex, one politically charged factor remains irrefutable: Queen Elizabeth never allowed the deposition scene to be performed, nor did she allow that scene to be printed. Elizabeth identified with the titular character, famously remarking, "I am King Richard, know ye not that?" Her self-proclaimed affinity with Richard and her strictures on aesthetic representation reveal that theater functioned as a cultural and political weapon. They also reveal that the Queen read allegorically.

To remove *Richard II* from allegorical reading undercuts the cultural significance of this history play. David Scott Kastan's new historical analysis proposes that rule in Elizabethan England was very much a role and that the customs of the state were very similar to those of the stage. Arguing that artistic representation subverted those represented, in particular monarchs and nobility, Kastan notes that representation "undermine[d] rather than confirme[d] authority" (113). Kastan's conclusion that the monarchy was a social construct needing to be realized and actualized by engaging and fitting performances (of which Elizabeth was Oscar-worthy) illustrates the complex implications of allegory echoing within and around *Richard II*: "When the theatrical space is the city itself rather than the playhouse, the immediate danger of unregulated representation increases" (119). What and who the audience saw on stage,

through the process of allegoresis, would be matched with a real counterpart, and Kastan and other critics, like Jeffrey Doty and Phyllis Rackin, contend that Shakespeare's politically savvy audience would match their Queen, just as Elizabeth did, with Shakespeare's king. Then, in the deposition scene (4.1), the actor playing Richard stood as a pseudo-Elizabeth, and theatergoers could observe a rather "unregulated" and controversial scene as Shakespeare's King/their Queen lost the crown. Thus, in weighing the subversive effects of theater, the media surrounding Essex's rebellion, and the culture-wide inclination for allegoresis, it is no surprise that Elizabeth would keep the deposition scene on the cutting room floor. What much of the criticism has overlooked, though, is the process through which audiences analyzed *Richard II*; that is, what if the fraught political controversy surrounding and informing readings of *Richard II* lies within the process of interpretation? What if the danger is not just representation, but also the socially symbiotic act of allegorical reading?

For Elizabeth, aesthetic representation—verbal or visual—was a polemical act, and in the garden (3.4), *Richard II*'s Queen must perform her own allegoresis of the gardeners' language: she has to connect the flowers, caterpillars, and "unpruned" fruit trees with their real counterparts (3.4.45). Among the untamed apricot trees grows politically charged language cloaked in metaphor, and behind those trees awaits a hypercritical and paranoid Queen, and Shakespeare plants this scene within a metatheatrical and self-reflexive space. Once Shakespeare sends his queen to the shadows so she can clandestinely listen to her subjects "talk of state" (3.4.27), the following scene is imbued with exclusivity and verisimilitude. What we hear is an update on Richard's defeat, but it begins in metaphor, and both the Queen and the audience are forced to weed through the gardeners' botanical rhetoric. The Queen's prescience, in combination with her covert position of interpretation, places her analysis at center-stage, and it is her allegorical interpretation that redoubles her grief, that incites her "want of speaking!" (3.4.83). The garden scene presents art—the gardeners' polemical metaphors—and the process of aesthetic interpretation—the Queen's allegorical reading—within a self-reflexive structure, all of which in a society already laden with political controversy. The garden scene exposes how allegory and allegoresis functioned within Elizabethan culture and simultaneously asks audiences to analyze their own analyses.

The garden scene's dynamic (the Queen's covert position, the audience's self-reflexive standpoint, and the gardeners' figurative language) imbue 3.4 with politically provocative messages, most importantly that art and interpretation are inseparable from society, and that *Richard II*, in retrospect and its immediate context, is bound to allegorical interpretation. Attempting a new critical reading of *Richard II* discounts much of its dense and teeming underbelly because *Richard II*'s genre—history—prescribes allegorical

interpretation. In writing a history play, Shakespeare, borrowing much of his narrative from Holinshed's chronicles, creates a dramatic reenactment of England's monarchy, a drama that culminates at Elizabeth. Queen Elizabeth is thus part of a story, a character on history's stage: "Whatever their overt ideological content, history plays inevitably, if unconsciously, weakened the structure of authority: on stage the king became a subject—the subject of the author's imaginings and the subject of the attention and judgment of an audience of subjects" (Kastan 111). This allegorical approach to *Richard II* opens up the text in a way that exposes its social and cultural implications; the stage and state were enmeshed, directing and editing one another, and what was performed on stage in history plays found an Elizabethan counterpart. Outside the play but living in history, Elizabeth understood that theater "creates and authorizes a critical public" (Kastan 118). And what made this public such an erudite audience was its ability to read allegorically and to analyze how "the histories expose idealizations of political power by presenting rule as role" (Kastan 121). *Richard II*, because of its overtly political content and self-reflexivity, prescribes and engages the process of allegorical interpretation.

The garden scene grows out of the tension between both spheres through its metatheatrical structure, which positions the sociopolitical concerns of allegory in a space that prompts audiences to reflect on what is represented and how Shakespeare's characters respond to polemical genres. As we are removed from our position as the primary and sole audience in 3.4, which signifies "the adoption of an active rather than a passive stance," Jeffery Doty believes that this distance "induces an audience member to break off engagement with the theatrical fiction in order to assess his or her position as a spectator and how such a position relates to larger questions of being a member of the public" (202). Upon hearing the gardeners approach, the Queen and her assistants hide, knowing "They will talk of state" (3.4.27), therefore creating two audiences; "we, the audience, become participants, directly involved along with the characters on stage" (Rackin 262). The dual audiences, theatergoers and Queen Isabella, become voyeurs as we both watch something "realer"; it is not directed, set up, or performed, but it appears as part of a "living" history.

By playing a "realer" scene, and by giving the Queen the gift of foresight, Shakespeare constructs this scene around the Queen's analysis. Not only does the Queen's prescience instill the entire scene with impetus and exclusivity, but it also prescribes a certain interpretation for the Queen off the stage, one that corresponds with Elizabeth's skepticism of aesthetic representation. *Richard II*'s Queen is forced to interpret allegorically, just as Elizabeth was forced allegorize what walked out on stage; what happens in the garden is exactly what the Queen expected, and this verisimilitude transcends the stage and enters Elizabeth's sphere, using allegory as a vehicle. The structural and per-

formative aspects of this brief scene encourage us, who have been distanced from the action on stage, "to judge judgment, to analyze analysis" (Doty 192). In short, Shakespeare presents audiences with the social dangers of interpretation as they are interpreting.

Detached from the normal position as the ultimate audience, "the playgoing public [is afforded] a critical distance from which to think through the role played by the people in the usurpation" (Doty 192). Shakespeare's "people," the gardeners, are cultured and artistic orators, and for nearly sixty lines they discuss matters of state and political ideology under the guise of metaphor. Doty cogently points to this unique portrayal of the working class: "While Shakespeare sometimes presents the commons in the political sphere as monstrous, and almost always renders them as objects of cruel laughter, he breaks this pattern in *Richard II*" (195). The gardeners, with their cunning commentary, are the "critical public" (Kastan 118), "synecdoches for 'the commons'" (Doty 197) or "idealized protocitizens" (Doty 197). Shakespeare's anomalous representation of the commons, along with their charged and apt political critiques, implies that the gardeners can subvert and subject authority with artistic representation and simultaneously reflect the sentiments of the working class and the theoretical scope of Elizabethan England. Their polemical metaphors conceal truth and concurrently intensify the embedded social implications: words, characters, and performers possess layers of meaning, forcing those subjected to Shakespeare's imagination to interpret the multiple social connotations implanted in representation. For either Queen, the commons embody and reflect the dangers of unregulated representation and interpretation.

The Queen's covert operation infuses the gardeners' opinions with salience, and the monarchy is indeed subjected to the "impudent gaze of its subject" as the Gardener discusses apricots (Kastan 113). Kastan's ingenious analogy of the state as stage and the performativity of social class raise the political overtones of 3.4 to a nearly deafening volume:

> Go bind though up young dangling apricocks,
> Which, like unruly children, make their sire
> Stoop with oppression of their prodigal weight.
> Give some supportance to the bending twigs.
> Go thou, and, like an executioner,
> Cut off the heads of too-fast growing sprays
> That look too lofty in our commonwealth.
> All must be even in our government.
> You thus employed, I will go root away
> The noisome weeds, which without profit suck
> The soil's fertility from wholesome flowers. (3.4.29-39)

The Gardener's critique is complex, opening a number of interpretive avenues. On the surface, the "too-fast growing sprays," editors of the Arden edition posit, signify "new branches; conceivably there is a subliminal link here with 'bushy' and 'green' (the ironic names of the favourites whose heads have just been *Cut off*)" (365). While the herbaceous connection is succinct, this can also be an allusion to Bolingbroke's rebellion. Dorothea Kehler believes so: "The garden scene in *Richard II* exposes the reason behind Richard's failure; although Richard has 'pruned' his uncle Gloucester, there still remains Bolingbroke, the more than needful branch of Richard's family tree" (124). In what seems like a short amount of time, Bolingbroke defied Richard's edict, assembled an army, and started his march toward the capital; therefore, he could very well be the "too-fast growing spray" (34). Madhavi Menon, investigating the relationship between metaphor and metonym in *Richard II*, posits, "the metaphor of the garden makes perfect sense as a gloss of the state of England: King Richard has been a bad gardener and so the garden has gone to seed, enabling rebellion where order should have existed" (663). If we see Bolingbroke as a spray, the scene is then instilled with pro-monarchy sentiments, suggesting that any sort of deposition, even one that culminates at Elizabeth, damages the state. Or, if we read these metaphors as articulations of Richard's faults, the gardeners, the synechdochaic "protocitizens" (Doty 197), who know more than Queen Isabella, can be proposing a rather violent solution. Bolingbrook's rise to the throne follows the Gardener's recommendation, insinuating to Shakespeare's critical audience and to Queen Elizabeth that the elimination of "sprays" is a worthwhile tactic. It is no secret that Queen Elizabeth read Holinshed and watched Shakespeare, and her appreciation and interpretation of both creates an eerie connection with the garden scene because Essex is executed shortly after February 7, 1601.

The Gardner's first allegory addresses another critique of Richard, implying that Richard "[looks] too lofty in our commonwealth" (3.4.35) Often criticized for his exalted lifestyle—i.e., one "Extending to a great height in the air; of imposing altitude, towering" (*OED* 1a) or "Elevated in style or sentiment; sublime, grandiose" (*OED* 2c)—Richard loses the respect of his subjects because of his abuse and misuse of power. Richard's excessiveness and his image as a "wasteful king," an impression Menon believes Shakespeare borrowed from Holinshed, spoils the allegorical garden: England "now has to bear the consequences of this unproductive indulgence" (663). The Gardner ultimately prefers equality within the garden, that is, within England, and line thirty-six—"All must be even in our government"—intensifies the Gardner's egalitarian sentiments. Recalling Kastan's theory that theater verbally and visually subverted those subjected to the artist's imagination, the Gardner's preference for an egalitarian state is a direct challenge to monarchical rule.

To echo one of Kastan's earlier points, this line also overtly "[derogates the] majesty by subjecting it to the impudent gaze of its subjects" (113).

Multifaceted and metaphorical, the Gardener's critique could be reprimanding rebellion, condemning Richard's nearsightedness and loftiness, or purporting parliamentary government, and its trajectory mimics the allegorical process. The first parenthetical expression, "like unruly children," breaks from the botanical metaphors, drawing a connection with a more tangible referent, just as allegory depends on symbolic connections to find meaning. In the second parenthetical expression, "like an executioner," the Gardener exudes grimness; no longer are they trimming the verge, but they are "beheading" the "citizens" disrupting their government. Either parenthetical expression functions as a simile within a larger metaphor, and both accord with his political terminology to detail the Gardner's directions. Instead of "trunk" or "tree," he uses "sire"; instead of "garden," he says "commonwealth"; he also uses "supportance," which contains political and theological associations (*OED*). For both audiences, the Queen and those in the theater, allegoresis is the only way to understand the Gardener. 1 Man's response upholds the Gardener's standard, and 1 Man uses another allegorical metaphor to convey his discontent with Richard's "garden":

> Why should we in the compass of a pale
> Keep law and form and due proportion,
> Showing, as in a model, our firm estate,
> When our sea-walled garden, the whole land,
> Is full of weeds, her fairest flowers choked up,
> Her fruit trees all unpruned, her hedges ruined,
> Her knots disordered and her wholesome herbs
> Swarming with caterpillars? (3.4. 40-47).

1 Man's allegory reconstitutes, reaffirms, and reconnects what is inside the garden with what and who are outside, and his inquiry addresses the core function of allegory. Within the garden, certain "people" need to be decapitated, and outside the garden and the theater, certain "plants" need to be trimmed. Because the "sea-walled garden" is overrun with unrestrained growth, thereby compromising the land and state, 1 Man sees no reason to "keep law and form and due proportion" in the garden. The referent, England, sets the example for what and who are "inside the compass of a pale," and when England is "swarming with caterpillars," preserving the beauty of the garden seems meaningless.

From the standpoint of either audience, this conversation and the garden itself function socially. "Under Elizabeth," Kehler posits, "theatrical interrogations of a monarch's actions, if the monarch had not been officially certified a tyrant, were safest when veiled" (125); for both Queens, political

interrogations arrive enshrouded in figurative language, and allegoresis reveals the political and social extent of either speech. Within the garden, we are not only complicit in the political commentary, watching and allegorizing the gardeners' words, but we, as part of the "critical public" (Kastan 118), are given a self-reflexive scope and asked to reflect on our evaluation. By doing so in a metatheatrical space, Shakespeare prompts audiences to investigate the extent to which allegory functions and who it implicates in the process. The problem here is that either of the gardeners' critiques is multifaceted. Pointing to a number of political questions and implicating a number of figures and notions, each commentary complicates a neat, succinct allegoresis. In turn, the complexities speak to the socially pervasive effects of allegory. If the stage and the state are in conversation, then whoever walks out, particularly in a history play, can find an allegorical and living counterpart. In his response to the 1 Man, the Gardener removes the allegorical veil and uncovers the signified:

> Hold thy peace.
> He that hath suffered this disordered spring
> Hath now himself met with the fall of leaf.
> The weeds which his broad-spreading leaves did shelter,
> That seemed in eating him to hold up,
> Are plucked up, root and all, by Bolingbroke—
> I mean the Earl of Wiltshire, Bushy, Green. (3.4.47-53).

Beginning in an allegorical metaphor and concluding in an explicit articulation, the Gardener completes the allegorical process, yet 1 Man fails to follow the allegory to its real endpoint: "What, are they dead?" he asks the Gardener (3.4.54), to which the Gardener responds, "They are" (3.4.54), and "O, what pity is it / That he [Richard] had not so trimmed and dressed his land / As we this garden!" (3.4.55-57). The metaphor, as Kehler suggested earlier, proposes that Richard's downfall stems from his inability to identify supporter from sycophant and his futile attempts to "pluck" or "prune" possible threats. Despite the precise resolution of this allegorical metaphor, what precedes it has lingering effects for an Elizabethan audience. Shakespeare calls attention to the possibilities: what figures can be signified and tangled within allegory. The answer is found in the unpredictable, unregulated, but socially conscious act of allegoresis, an act as dangerous as representation.

For the Queen positioned in the shadows, 1 Man's follow up question creates a disturbing dramatic irony. Where the gardeners' conversation started in a discussion of political ideology, it now focuses on the specific players and actors within the sea-walled garden. The allegory transitions from branches, apricots, and weeds to nobility and the recently dethroned king "Depressed he is already, and deposed / 'Tis doubt he will be" (3.4.69-69)—and the Queen

follows along, terrified while interpreting. Shakespeare, through the gardeners, subjects her husband and his supporters to the "law and form and due proportion" of a metaphor written in iambic pentameter (3.4.41), situating them in an artist's imagination, their clout allegorically undermined. While the self-reflexive distance enables a "playgoing public" to question rule and sovereignty, this "critical distance" is dangerous for the Queen (Doty 192), who is twice-removed from the truth (she must hide and decipher metaphor), which places Elizabeth three degrees away from genuine meaning as she watches another queen watching and interpreting art. Kastan argues, however, that "we must . . . be careful not to idealize, in turn, the subversive power of theatrical representation. In the playhouse, divorced from any specific political intent, such imaginings are not treasonous" (126-27). The prominence of allegorical interpretation in Elizabethan England, along with the fraught political setting of 1601, reveals that allegoresis was socially charged and, for that, dangerously encompassing. In turn, the total artistic process—representation and interpretation—is polemical and potentially all-inclusive. *Richard II*, then, cannot be dissociated from any specific political intent, especially when looking at the self-reflexive mirror Shakespeare assembles to reflect our interpretation and the social connotations thereof.

What this mirror also reflects is a hypercritical and neurotic Queen whose interpretation embodies the social implications of allegoresis. Queen Isabella's interpretive process is visceral, eventually propelling her out of the shadows, yet before she curses the Gardener, Shakespeare imbues her with irony. Her first lines in the garden, "What sport shall we devise here in this garden / To drive away the heavy thought of care? (3.4.1-2), retrospectively establish her as a tragically ironic figure, as her "heavy thought of care" only increases when the gardeners enter and become her "sport." The Queen has a list of excuses not to dance, listen to a story, or sing, yet as soon as she notices the gardeners, eavesdropping and interpreting—not conversing, or even interrogating—win her favor. Secrecy, exclusivity, and suppressed but seething political turmoil characterize the garden, and for Shakespeare's audience, a group that knew of Essex's actions and motivations—recall that the opinion and image of Essex were crafted and "led by men who were Essex's personal enemies . . . because it reflected their own fears about what Essex had been planning" (Hammer 4)—those traits construct Elizabethan society's stage.

Because the Queen, much to her inevitable discomfort, chooses eavesdropping and consequently interpretation, her judgment and analysis draw our attention. Moreover, because the Queen must analyze something "realer" than, say, *Hamlet*'s "Mousetrap," political, historical, and social sentiments surround and pervade both of our readings. Jeanie Grant Moore also notices the unique social dynamics of this scene, noting, "As an alternative viewpoint in

Richard II, the queen offers an opportunity to see from her oblique position an unconventional subversive view, one that the centric view of the surface text would not reveal" (22). Grant Moore suggests that in contrast to Richard, who, screened by his central and masculine interpretations, could not see which "weeds" needed plucking, the Queen's marginalized perspective offers a nuanced vantage and discloses "a subtext denied to the centric position" (26). Grant Moore's study illuminates *Richard II*'s feminist subtext by offering a scope through which we can understand the role of women in *Richard II*; in effect, "Shakespeare treats the marginality of the queen in such a way that, without actually demarginalizing her, he manages to valorize her point of view" (Grant Moore 28). What (an allegorical metaphor) and how (allegoresis) the Queen interprets lie at the crux of this scene. Analyzing history over art, the real over the performed and illusory, suggests that the denied subtext is the ability to read allegorically, something which the real Queen can perform and match.

As the gardeners' metaphors actualize and begin to explicitly connect the signifier with the signified, her interpretation and recognition erupts within her:

> O, I am pressed to death
> Through want of speaking!
> Thou, old Adam's likeness,
> Set to dress this garden, how dares
> Thy harsh rude tongue sound this unpleasing news?
> What Eve, what serpent hath suggested thee
> To make a second fall of cursed man?
> Why dost though say King Richard is deposed?
> Dar'st thou, thou little better thing than earth,
> Divine his downfall? Say where, when and how
> Cam'st thou by this ill tidings? Speak, thou wretch! (3.4.71-80)

The Queen's explosive response catches the gardeners off-guard, and as if their rhetoric set the "law, and form, and due proportion" for the ensuing dialogue (3.4.41), the Queen returns their allegorical metaphors with one of her own. By comparing the gardeners to the first gardener, Adam, Shakespeare suggests that the Queen relies on allegory as a form of communication, a way of expression that articulates the meaning and tonality of her words, even as they fly out during an impassioned outburst. Fittingly, she does not scold either of the gardners' treasonous political ideologies; instead, she reprimands their voices, the "harsh rude tongue" used to articulate figurative language, the vehicles through which they create allegory. In extending the biblical allegory to Eve and the Serpent, the two figures most often characterized for their cun-

ning and ultimately fateful use of rhetoric, the Queen's allegory builds on the dubious and multifaceted implications of language, a medium which has the power to conceal, deceive, and subvert those subjected to it.

Recalling Queen Elizabeth's ironic adage, "I am Richard, know ye not that," we see that allegory was not only a driving force within Elizabethan aesthetics, but also entrenched in Elizabethan culture. Social implications pervade allegorical representation and inform allegorical interpretation, and the gardeners and the Queen intensify and politicize the entire process. Within the garden, Shakespeare situates those "heavy thoughts of care"—that is, allegorical interpretation—in the interstitial space between the actors and the audience, the stage and the state, art and society, ultimately turning Elizabethan society into a text.

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VI Thesis Abstracts

Texts Between the Galaxies: Art, Entertainment, and Problems of Representation in Recursive Science Fiction

Jeffrey Canino

My thesis charts the notable presence of metafictional elements in the genre of science fiction throughout the twentieth century, paying special attention to its coincidence with the revolution of content and intention brought about in the experimental science fiction New Wave of the 1960s and 1970s. In a distinct move away from the playfulness of contemporaneous mainstream literary postmodernists, science fiction writers like Robert Silverberg, Samuel R. Delany, and Barry N. Malzberg employed metafiction to deal with the grim realities of the market conditions they worked under and to tease out the real world relevance of science fiction in the aftermath of the Space Age. Ultimately, my thesis seeks to prove the importance and unique position of these works of science fiction in the larger metatextual web of postmodern literature.

Quantitative Rhetoric in Humanitarian Aid Texts: What Numbers Do For and To Those They Help

Dan Libertz

Joanna Wolfe notes that despite numerical language being a critical aspect of the modern argument, there has been little scholarship on it in rhetoric and composition studies (452). Drawing from postcolonial theory and cultural studies, this present study examines how numbers function rhetorically in charity and humanitarian aid texts in order to represent non-Western peoples. When considering the effects of Edward W. Said's theory of Orientalism and notions found in Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?" there can often be a predilection by Westerners to interpret "others" in the developing world in a reduced and distorted fashion, and this paper argues that this is only further reinforced when applying the generalizing and distorting effects of numerical representation of subjects. If relying too heavily on the Western "objectivity" of numerical language misrepresents the peoples charity organizations are attempting to help, this paper aims to suggest more appropriate strategies of representation, which might increase the effectiveness of their arguments overall.

Wolfe, Joanna. "Rhetorical Numbers: A Case for Quantitative Writing in the Classroom." *CCC* 61.3 (2010): 452-75. *EBSCO.* Web. 22 Sept. 2012.

Kierkegaard's Rhetorical Situation: The Organizing-Principle Paradox of Person and Place

Ryan James McGuckin

In 1968, Lloyd F. Bitzer inaugurated the rhetorical situation as "observable historical facts in the world we experience" (11). Richard Vatz countered this, claiming that these "facts or events communicated to us are *choices*, by our sources of information" (461). Other scholars (e.g., Biesecker, Edbauer, and Consigny) disagree with the above and, instead, define the organizing principle of rhetorical situations as opposing elements, churning ecological communities, or artistic expressions of reception and integrity. For this thesis, I'm interested in the way Søren Kierkegaard's prodigious philosophy addresses what Vatz, Biesecker, and others ignore: how living involves not only the empirical but the intangible, not only the world of things but the world of faith. That Kierkegaard's formulations challenge how we rethink existence within subjectively complex settings is of particular interest. I hope to unveil what a Kierkegaardian cluster of organizing principles might be and explore how they will add to rhetorical situation theory.

Bitzer, Lloyd F. "The Rhetorical Situation." *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 1.1 (1968): 1-14. Print.

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VII | Book Review

Belinda Jack, *The Woman Reader*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012.

Thomas G. Olsen

Anyone concerned with the fields of language, literature, and written communication is always—or should always be—concerned with the role of the reader in any discursive situation, from the emotional appeal of a catchy advertising slogan to the intellectual and ethical suggestions of a great literary work such as, say, Joyce's *Ulysses*. In the field of literary and cultural criticism, the last several decades have been especially good ones for our collective understanding of the role and functions of the reader, from the early theories of Reader Response critics such as Louise Rosenblatt and Stanley Fish, to recent studies centered on the history of the book and reading by the likes of Roger Chartier, Stephen Roger Fischer, Anthony Grafton, and others.

How, then, can it be, with all we *think* we know about women as readers, as writers, as patrons of the literary arts, and as literary taste-makers, that the first comprehensive study of women readers appeared only last year, in the form of Belinda Jack's *The Woman Reader*, a 300-page survey from the age of rudimentary cave markings some 30,000 years ago through to the present day? Suffice it to say that the time has certainly come for a work of this kind. But whether Jack's study answers the call is another question entirely.

The book is organized as a chronological overview, in ten chapters of between about 20 and 40 pages each. Chapters 1 through 4 take us from the first human written records, those of crude but fascinating cave inscriptions and paintings discovered in southwest France through the high Middle Ages. Understandably, the first chapter in particular is very schematic, covering a lot of territory and a lot of reading history: from cave markings to the fall of Roman Empire and the rise of Christianity. The sparseness of records for this period—though by no means is it a time without any revealing records—sets up what returns again and again as both a basic theme and a persistent challenge in *The Woman Reader.* Jack constantly faces the obstacles of, on the one hand, insufficient evidence in earlier ages, and, on the other, in later periods a quantity of evidence so overwhelming as to cause a kind of narrative paralysis. Both prove to be impediments that compromise this ambitious project.

Chapters 5 and 6 treat the Renaissance and seventeenth centuries; by this point in history the record of women's reading is considerably more ample and detailed. Chapter 7 treats the eighteenth century, probably the watershed

period in the development and reach of the printing press in Europe, not so much because of any significant technical advances (Gutenberg himself would have had no difficulty printing on an eighteenth-century press) but because of the vastly greater access to book and pamphlets that an increasingly literate and affluent European population, both men and women, enjoyed. As Jack rightly notes, the eighteenth century was a time when backward-looking efforts to control women's reading "had the effect of creating a culture in which women were much more self-conscious about the power of their reading" (190). Out of this new sense of power came a rich tradition of *salons*, reading groups, literary correspondence, and even a kind of interactive reading in which, for example, Samuel Richardson actively solicited responses from his mostly female readership. He and others created a new kind of literary public sphere that, among other things, made the literary marketplace much more literally a marketplace, where both the ideas produced and the money earned by the pen were exchanged (202-06). Chapters 8 and 9 are paired sections treating the all-important nineteenth century, when profound technological advances, including the introduction of steam-driven presses vastly more efficient than hand-powered ones, ever-cheaper supplies of labor and paper, and levels of literacy and access to the printed word unthinkable just a century before created by far the most robust and far-reaching publishing and reading infrastructure that the world had ever seen. Chapter 10, fewer than 20 pages in length, is the author's attempt to describe "The Modern Woman Reader" of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

Needless to say, there is not a lot of space to deliver a deep history of any of these periods, and to my mind the book would have been a better one with a more explicit disclaimer about its objectives. Especially in pre-Renaissance matters, we get rather predictable potted histories and examples drawn from the usual literary and historical suspects familiar from undergraduate syllabi: Hildegard of Bingen, Christine de Pisan, Julian of Norwich, Margery Kempe. No one can be an expert in all fields, clearly, but this project would have been much stronger with fewer generalizations drawn from anecdotes and more grounding in the rich fields of book history, literacy studies, and European intellectual history. Several major experts in the history of European book studies—Eisenstein, Grafton, Lebvre and Martin, to name just three—are not cited, even passingly. Pronouncements about complex and much-contested topics such as literacy rates and the spread of printing need a level of documentation and discussion that they do not receive.

Belinda Jack's strengths as an historian show much more clearly in those periods where evidence is available and attainable, but also manageable. Practically speaking, this means the seventeenth, eighteenth, and some of the nineteenth centuries, and almost exclusively in Europe and North America

(especially the United States), where a significant record exists, but a record of sufficiently limited scope to allow readers to see important through-lines and generalizations.

Whereas these middle sections of *The Woman Reader* offer readers a generally well-structured if rapid survey of the most significant periods of transformation in European reading history, Chapter 10, consisting of fewer than twenty pages, fails in its ambition to describe "The Modern Woman Reader" of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. How could it not, when nearly any aspect of this topic merits a book of its own? This last chapter is most disappointing because it is so alarmingly cursory in treating the centuries in which the mass-market paperback, the Book of the Month Club, the Internet, the blogosphere, TV-driven book sales, and the digital reader forever changed the way everyone, women included, obtains, reads, interacts, and even thinks about books. The author deals in very broad strokes often throughout this study, but never so obviously as in this unsatisfactory final chapter.

Taken for what it is—a 300-page overview of some 30,000 years of reading history, much of it obscured by the veil of years, lost evidence, and the chilling effect of a generally dominant misogynistic rhetoric, Belinda Jack's study does succeed in some notable ways. Her efforts to supply a visual complement to her history hit the target nicely: the book presents over 60 paintings and other depictions related to women as readers, across an interesting spectrum of the sacred, sentimental, suggestive, and salacious (on this last category see, notably, Antoine Wiertz's 1853 *The Reader of Novels*). She offers a convincing and clear account of what I would characterize as the two easiest, first-level themes of women's reading history: the ubiquitous relationship between political power, often repressive and sometimes violent, and women's access to the word; and the complex interplay, never far from the reach of political power, of women's sexuality, free thought, and reading habits. Her study is also generally successful at developing a somewhat more nuanced major theme, namely the ways that reading and women's *imaginations* have in various ways presented threats to masculine order. Perhaps most notable in this regard is the many ways over the centuries that men, and sometimes women too, registered their suspicion of women's attraction to romance and especially to the novel, whose conventions from the very start favored the realms of the imagination, the sentimental, the irrational, and the transgressive.

I also credit Jack with a very good analysis, over several of the middle chapters, of the ways that serial publication and the beginnings of a kind of proto-interactive reading affected and often defined women's ways of reading. Indeed, women's correspondence with each other and their participation in reading groups, whether informal (the women of the Vaucluse region of

France who owned no books but routinely stitched together and shared installments of serialized novels from their husbands' newspapers), formal (the African American Aurora Reading Club, founded in 1894), or underground (the "Sewing Circles" of Herat, Afghanistan that provided cover for forbidden women's reading groups) helped to define something genuinely distinctive about the history of women readers, a tradition sometimes in parallel but often at odds with male reading.

The Woman Reader is pleasant reading. Jack is a good stylist and delivers a generally convincing and engaging, if to my mind too cursory and anecdotal, history of women's engagement with books. Part of my objection in this regard concerns questions of scale and proportion. *The Woman Reader* is a study whose aims, frankly, are much too ambitious for its form. Not every topic can fit into the now-conventional academic monograph format of 200-300 pages, and it does neither Yale University Press nor the author any credit to have tried to shoehorn such an enormous topic into even the upper end of this range. One consequence, I think, of this fundamental misstep is that this becomes a study whose level of documentation presents real challenges to readers principally interested in a deeper and more substantial history of women readers from the perspective and disciplinary traditions of book history and the history of reading, rather than from those of women's history. A work that has the look, feel, and technical apparatus of a scholarly monograph often reads more like an introductory textbook, with undocumented claims such as the number of printing presses active in eighteenth-century England (188) or "By the end of the century, in industrialized societies at least, there was growing consensus that what mattered now was that women be educated—in the interests of the nation" (271) all too frequent. A few brief forays into non-Western traditions—those of Japan, China, and Iran—feel like after-thoughts rather than amplifications of a truly global approach to the topic. Both defects speak, I think, to a basic murkiness about what this book was meant to accomplish. Some discussion early in the book about the limitations of space and length might have gone a good distance toward helping the reader see the value and the objectives of this project a little better.

Despite *The Woman Reader*'s merits and the author's laudable efforts to tell a long and complex story, I think we are going to have to wait a little longer for the kind of history of women's reading that I believe the world needs and deserves.

VIII News and Notes

In this column we feature news from current and recent graduate students: honors, achievements, publications, conference papers, progress in PhD programs, and other news.

1. Professional activities and achievements of current MA and MAT students and December 2012 graduates:

Gregory Bruno (MA) presented the paper "Constructing Sale, Constructing Silence: Apparatuses of Power in the Rhetoric of Neuroscience" at the "Minding the Body: Dualism and Its Discontents" conference, CUNY Graduate Center, February 2013.

He was a co-presenter of the paper "Sometimes Keeping Students Afloat Means Not Assuming They've Already Drowned" at the "Keeping Students Afloat" conference, organized by the Mid-Hudson Area Tutoring Educators (MATE), February 2013.

Christopher Conroy (MA) was a co-presenter of the paper "Sometimes Keeping Students Afloat Means Not Assuming They've Already Drowned" at the "Keeping Students Afloat" conference, organized by the Mid-Hudson Area Tutoring Educators (MATE), February 2013.

Jessica Conti (MA-MAT) published the article "In Search of Unattainable Love in the Poetry of Aldington, Poe, and Keats" in *Ghosts in the Background Moving: Aldington and Imagism* (Florida English, 2013). The article was first presented at the VII International Richard Aldington Society / III Imagism Conference, Les Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer, France, June 2012.

She also presented "'You and I've never done anything wrong together': The Myth of Incest in Hemingway's 'The Last Good Country'" at the 15th International Hemingway Society Conference, Petoskey, MI, June 2012;

"'What did you bring to read?': Literature in 'The Last Good Coun-

try'" at the 23rd American Literature Association Conference, New Orleans, LA, October 2012;

"Reading Roberts' Short Fiction as Poetry" at the 84th South Atlantic Modern Language Association Conference, Durham, NC, November 2012;

"Modern Prophets: Elizabeth Madox Roberts and Flannery O'Connor" at the XV Annual Elizabeth Madox Roberts Society Conference, Springfield, KY, April 2013.

She is Program Director for the XV Annual Elizabeth Madox Roberts Society Conference, Springfield, KY, April 2013.

Jennifer Dellerba (MA) presented the paper "Sense of Place in Roberts' Short Fiction and Anderson's *Winesburg, Ohio*" at the XV Annual Elizabeth Madox Roberts Society Conference, Springfield, KY, April 2013.

Nicole Hitner (MA) presented the paper "Ecocomposition in Theory and Practice: Re-applying the Ecology Metaphor" at the Conference on College Composition and Communication, Las Vegas, NV, March 2013.

William Kroeger (MA) presented the paper "Art, Truth and Love: Relationships of Love and Artistic Expression In Shakespeare's Sonnet 48" at the Massachusetts Renaissance Conference, Massachusetts Center for Interdisciplinary Renaissance Studies, October 2012.

Louis Reid (MA) presented the paper "Tracing Story and Threading Myth in Elizabeth Madox Roberts' *The Time of Man* and *The Great Meadow*" at the XV Annual Elizabeth Madox Roberts Society Conference, Springfield, KY, April 2013.

Patrick Skea (MA) presented the paper "Wanderlust and Pilgrimage: An examination of Roberts' *In The Time of Man* and Kerouac's *On the Road*" at the XV Annual Elizabeth Madox Roberts Society Conference, Springfield, KY, April 2013.

2. Graduates of our MA program in PhD and other post-baccalaureate programs:

Michael Beilfuss (2005) at Texas A&M University (PhD English)
D. A. Carpenter (2005) at Texas A&M University (PhD English)
Kevin Cavanaugh (2002), at the University of Albany (PhD Curricu-

lum/Instruction Program)
Lee Conell (2012), at Vanderbilt University (MFA).
Thomas Doran (2010) at the University of California, Santa Barbara (PhD English)
Timothy Gilmore (2004) at the University of California, Santa Barbara (PhD English)
Valerie Hughes (2010) at SUNY Buffalo (MS Library Science)
Jennifer Lee (2007) at the University of Rhode Island (PhD Rhetoric and Composition)
Jaclyn Lyons (2010) at New York University (MS Gallatin School of Individualized Study)
Brad McDuffie (2005) at Indiana University of Pennsylvania (PhD English)
Sharon Peelor (1997) at the University of Oklahoma (PhD Education Studies)
Rachael Price (2005) at the University of Arkansas (PhD English)
Donna Bonsignore Scully (2001) at St. John's University (PhD English)
James Stamant (2005) at Texas A&M University (PhD English)

3. Graduates of our MA program with full-time academic positions:

Eileen Abrahams (2002), Associate Professor of English, Schenectady County Community College
Cristy Woehling Beemer (2002), Assistant Professor of English, University of New Hampshire
Kevin Cavanaugh (2002), Assistant Professor of English and Humanities, Dutchess Community College
Lynne Crockett (1996), Professor of English, Sullivan County Community College
Deborah DiPiero (2001), Assistant Professor of English and Director of Writing, St. Andrews Presbyterian College (Laurinburg, NC)
Dennis Doherty (1991), Instructor of English, SUNY New Paltz
Laurence Erussard (1992), Associate Professor of English, Hobart and William Smith Colleges
Mary Fakler (1994), Instructor of English, SUNY New Paltz
Penny Freel (1995), Instructor of English, SUNY New Paltz
Thomas Goldpaugh (1978), Associate Professor of English, Marist College
Thomas Impola (1989), Assistant Professor of English, Ulster County Community College

Jennifer Kaufman (2003), Instructor of English, Ulster County Community College
Brad McDuffie (2005), Instructor of English, Nyack College
Michele Morano (1991), Associate Professor of English, DePaul University
Fiona Paton (1991), Associate Professor of English, SUNY New Paltz
Michael Rambadt (2009), Instructor of English and Humanities, Dutchess Community College
Rachel Rigolino (1992), Instructor of English and Director of the Composition SWW Program, SUNY New Paltz
Arnold A. Schmidt (1990), Professor of English, California State University, Stanislaus
Nicole Boucher Spottke (1996), Assistant Professor of English at Valencia Community College (Orlando, FL)
Kimberley Vanderlaan (1995), Assistant Professor of English, Louisiana Tech University
Amy Leigh Washburn (2005), Assistant Professor of English, CUNY Kingsborough

4. The Editors would remind students of the Russell S. Cleverley Memorial Fellowship, established by Luella and Donald Cleverley in memory of their son Russell S. Cleverley, who earned his MA in English from SUNY New Paltz in December 1995. The Cleverley Fellowship is open to students matriculated in the MA English program with a 3.5 GPA who register for ENG 590, Thesis in English, in the award semester. The amount of the fellowship is $500. Please submit a letter of application with transcript, the thesis proposal signed by the thesis director, and two letters of recommendation (one from the thesis director) to the English Graduate Director. Applications for the next award (fall 2013) are due May 15, 2013.

IX Guidelines for Submissions

The *Shawangunk Review* is the journal of the English Graduate Program and publishes the proceedings of the annual English Graduate Symposium. In addition, the Editors welcome submissions from English graduate students in any area of literary studies: essays (criticism; theory; historical, cultural, biographical studies), book reviews, scholarly notes, and poetry. English faculty are invited to submit poetry, translations of poetry, and book reviews.

Manuscripts should be prepared in accordance with MLA style and should be submitted as an electronic file accompanied by a hard copy. Essays should not exceed 5000 words (15 pages), book reviews 1250 words, poems five pages, and MA thesis abstracts 250 words. With your submission include a brief biographical statement.

Please submit material to the Graduate Director, Department of English, SUNY New Paltz; the deadline for Volume XXV of the *Review* is December 15, 2013.

X Contributors

Sean Antonucci has an MS in Library and Information Science and is currently a student and Teaching Assistant in the English MA program at SUNY New Paltz. His literary interests include literature of the absurd, postmodernism, word-image hybrid texts, and experimental comics.

Stephen J. Burn is Associate Professor of American and European literature at Northern Michigan University. Burn has published two monographs, *David Foster Wallace's Infinite Jest: A Reader's Guide* (2003) and *Jonathan Franzen at the End of Postmodernism* (2008), and has edited several collections of essays, interviews, and letters of and about David Foster Wallace and Richard Powers. His eagerly anticipated *A Companion to David Foster Wallace Studies* will appear soon from Palgrave. Currently his work investigates how contemporary American fiction has reacted in form and theme to recent neuroscientific research, which has revolutionized our understanding of human identity. His *Neurofiction: The Contemporary American Novel and the Brain* examines the impact of such neuronal thinking on generations of postmodern novelists, from John Barth and Don DeLillo to Wallace, Powers, and Franzen.

Jeffrey Canino completed the MA in English at SUNY New Paltz in 2012. During his graduate program he was a Teaching Assistant in Composition, and he was awarded the Cleverley Thesis Fellowship. His critical interests are twentieth-century postmodern literature, science fiction, and the horror film.

Laurence Carr teaches Creative and Dramatic Writing at SUNY New Paltz. His Codhill Press book of fiction, *Pancake Hollow Primer*, won first prize in the 2012 Next Generation Indie Book Awards for first novel. His prose, poems and plays have been published and produced throughout the US and in Europe.

Jesse Cersosimo completed the MA in English at SUNY New Paltz in 2011. He has recently presented papers at the "Falkner and West Point at 50" conference and the "Principles of Uncertainty" conference at the CUNY Graduate Center. He is currently employed as senior copywriter for a luxury home goods designer.

Robert Cutrera is an English MA student and Teaching Assistant at SUNY New Paltz. At the moment, he is reading Kafka, Tolstoy, and Billy Collins.

Joann K. Deiudicibus is the Staff Assistant for the Composition Program

and an Adjunct Instructor at SUNY New Paltz, where she earned her MA in English (2003). Her interests include creativity and mental illness, and twentieth-century American poetry, particularly the work of Anne Sexton. She is the Associate Editor (poetry) for *WaterWrites: A Hudson River Anthology*, a collection celebrating the Hudson 400. Her article "Axing the Frozen Sea: Female Inscriptions of Madness" is forthcoming as part of an anthology about writers with affective disorders, edited by Stephanie Stone Horton (Georgia State University).

Dan de Sá earned his BA in Adolescent Education from SUNY New Paltz, and he is currently a student in the New Paltz English MA program. His research interests include the medieval and early modern period, Romantic poetry, and feminist theory.

Dennis Doherty teaches creative writing at SUNY New Paltz, where he received his BA in 1987 and his MA in 1991. His essays, poems, and stories appear throughout the literary press—online and in print— national, regional, worldwide, from *Yankee* to *Visions International*. He is author of three volumes of Poetry: *The Bad Man* (Ye Olde Font Shoppe Press, 2004), *Fugitive* (Codhill Press, 2007), and *Crush Test* (Codhill Press, 2010). He is currently writing a book provisionally titled *Why We Should Read The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (New Street Communications).

Rachel Golden received her BA from SUNY Stony Brook, where she was a member of the English Honor Society, Sigma Tau Delta, and is currently a student in the English MAT program at SUNY New Paltz.

Ian Hammons is an English MA student and Teaching Assistant at SUNY New Paltz. His literary interests are rooted in modernism and postmodernism and include such authors as Hemingway, Joyce, and Wallace.

Rick Harnden completed the MA in English at SUNY New Paltz in 2012. During his graduate program he was a Teaching Assistant in Composition, and he plans to begin teaching abroad in fall 2013.

Nicole Hitner is an English MA student and Teaching Assistant at SUNY New Paltz. Her scholarly interests include ecocriticism, ecocomposition, and postmodern literature.

Mary K. Holland is Assistant Professor of Contemporary Literature at SUNY New Paltz. Her book *Succeeding Postmodernism: Language and Humanism in Contemporary American Fiction* was recently published by Bloomsbury; it uses fiction by DeLillo, Wallace, Danielewski, McCarthy, Foer, and others to argue that fiction of the twenty-first century uses poststructural narrative techniques toward humanist and realist ends. Her chapter on Wallace's *Brief Interviews with Hideous Men* is forthcoming from Palgrave (in *A Companion to David Foster Wallace Studies*, Boswell and Burn, eds.). She has published other articles on Wallace and A. M. Homes in *Critique*, and on media and mothering in *The Journal*

of Popular Culture. Currently she is working on articles comparing postmodern beginnings and "endings," using DeLillo and Jennifer Egan, and John Barth and Wallace.

Sara Hurd completed the MA in English at SUNY New Paltz in 2012. During her graduate program she was a Teaching Assistant in Composition, participated in the 2011 English Graduate Symposium, and presented papers at conferences throughout the eastern US on Roberto Bolaño, Don DeLillo and Albert Camus. Currently, she is an Adjunct Professor at SUNY Sullivan and looks forward to begin teaching ESL to Korean students in March of 2013.

Robert F. Kilcrease earned his BA in English from SUNY New Paltz in 2011 and is currently a student in the New Paltz English MA program. His primary literary interest is Shakespeare.

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