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The radical reconfiguration over the last three decades of critical studies and what constitutes 'knowledge', whereby 'theory' and writing, literature and the 'social', poetics and politics have crossed eoch other's path, has led to an irreversible interrogation of previous autonomies. It would be simple to reduce this trajectory to a superficial social history that commences around 1968 and develops, above all, through the writings, both theoretical and literary, of new historical subjects distinguished by gender, ethnicity and minority status. However, these are also symptoms of an altogether deeper current that, to use the unfashionable concept of egemonia, *draws our attention to the limits and crisis, both intellectual and institutional, of a particular historical-cultural formation and its subsequent arrangement of disciplines in the western academy. The confident nineteenth-century positivism and/or idealism that cultivated and established the present day divisions and distinctions of the social sciences and humanities (and the critical and historical sense of such terms are themselves to be investigated) is exhausted. Confronted by nervous retrenchment into orthodox backwaters or else the continual adjustment of the inherited discipline in order to continue to converse with change, the initial* dispositif *is now clearly in crisis.*

Yet crisis is, of course, the very basis of criticism. This is to suggest a theoretical modality that is neither conservative nor merely accommodating. But if positivism and idealism are no longer able to mirror the world in their languages, if the confidence of a subjective objectivity orbiting around the universal I/eye (humanism) is justly afflicted by doubt, then critical work, whether in literature or anthropology, becomes an altogether more exposed, more vulnerable, undertaking. Whatever the response to such a situation, which, of course, requires recognition as a critical situation and not something to be brushed under the carpet, it becomes clear that a local response, for example restricted to the field of 'English literature', cannot be divorced from a wider comprehension of the crisis-criticism of the humanities and its particular tutelage of 'knowledge'. It is in this direction that the new series of Anglistica *proposes to travel, drawing critical strength, above all, from an interdisciplinary approach that has historically developed within the vicinity of English literary studies, that of cultural studies. But, precisely because it is interdisciplinary, existing between and beyond existing disciplines, neither cultural studies nor the critical perspective proposed for this journal can claim the authority of an intellectual orthodoxy nor the institutional recognition of a disciplinary regime. Being vulnerable is an uncomfortable, but necessary, position to occupy; the only comfort it provides is the perpetual aperture, the opening, through which an intellectual challenge can continue on its way.*

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Vol. 3 (1999), n. 2, *Miscellany*
(editors for this issue: Maria Concolato Palermo, Marina Vitale)

REVIEWS

EDITORIAL

It was with great enthusiasm and some trepidation that we accepted to edit the first miscellany issue in the new series of *Anglistica*. We were not blind to the risk that the absence of a central theme might attract an anodyne collection of essays. We were confident, however, that the intellectual challenge sought for by the journal would continue to be met on the ground of cultural and critical theory. The intensity of the critical debate which had already taken place on the pages of the first five numbers was proof enough that the journal was fulfilling the task it had decided to undertake: to open up a space for epistemological self-questioning on the narrow and uncomfortable edge between inhabiting and contesting cultural and critical traditions, "on the uncertain boundary between owning and disowning" – as Lidia Curti put it in her Editorial of the first issue.

As editors of this number we were happy to see that the papers submitted for publication had fully accepted this theoretical challenge. They also happened to possess a thematic unity of a kind, a subterranean web of shared motifs: a recurring interest for the in-betweenness, for the crevices and intervals in representation where a flimsy reflection of reality seems to flicker for an instant, only to remind us of its own un-presentability; uncanny fantasies of impossible bodies besetting our unconscious and infecting our aesthetic as well as our scientific imagination; *revenants* haunting our critical and literary space.

Above all, most contributors seemed to share a similar way of looking at the chosen subjects as it were from a lateral perspective, with a sideways glance that unsettles the observed scene and finds it was already de-centred. An unsought for, but lucky, coincidence happened to highlight this convergence of critical outlook: the manacled black leg half visible in a corner of Turner's celebrated *Slave Ship* offers itself as an emblematic image to the critical zig-zagging between center and margins both in Iain Chambers' and Anna Maria Cimitile's contributions.

Drawing mainly on visual narratives, Iain Chambers' essay exposes the marginalization and suppression of 'other' histories which

have been perpetrated by the Western historical perspective in the name of universality, modernity and progress. The ghostly presence of colonial experience haunts contemporary Western culture obliging us to question our own positionality. The postcolonial interruption allows no illusion to revive the archaic worlds which ghost our consciousness with their disquieting remnants.

The ghostly is also the cipher of Anna Maria Cimitile's essay. It takes its cue from the topical presence of spectres in a number of postcolonial narratives (including David Dabydeen's poem *Turner*, which gives back his/her voice to the ghost of the very slave thrown overboard in Turner's *Slave Ship*) to show that spectrality is indeed the dominant modality of being which is proposed by the culture of late modernity. Critical thought, she argues, tends to spectralize both the real and the subject, while looking at the literature of the past with a sideways glimpse which calls to mind the unsettling look of Shakespearean ghosts.

In her essay on "Intertextual Love", Catherine Belsey's critical gaze concentrates upon what Lyotard calls "the withdrawal of the real" and follows it along the intricacies of intertextuality, encountering various intertextually codified effects of truth exhibited by classic realist, modernist and post modernist narratives. It is only a playful game of hide-and-seek with reality which may, ironically, give an accurate account of representation, as it happens with John Madden's *Shakespeare in Love*, chosen as the typically intertextual postmodern film.

Intertextuality and ghost-writing are investigated by Marina Vitale's discussion of Mary Shelley's shadow-fighting with an overpowering literary tradition with which she can come to terms only through the metaphor of transcription and the fantasy of monstrous generation. The body of the text comes to life through a monstrous process of re-membering: the uncanny generation of Frankenstein's creature is also a powerfully grotesque representation of the technologies of writing. Uncanny bodies inhabit also *The Changeling*, Middleton and Rowley's play analyzed by Maurizio Calbi: with the help of the Freudian and Lacanian notion of the uncanny, he reads the multiple construction of the early modern body which is articulated by the play in its baffled effort to make class, gender and erotic boundaries cohere.

Anthony Chennells' contribution throws light on the hidden pattern of exclusions which relegates feminine characters to the peripheries of late nineteenth-century English imperial romance, dominated by white male characters and writers. He attempts a remapping of the canonic landscape of Rhodesian romance by looking at the work of three twentieth century women novelists – Cynthia Stockey, Gertude Page and Doris Lessing – whose narrative strategies disrupt the conventions of imperial romance by reinstating the feminine into place although the restoration of the blacks' negated histories into the universe of narrative discourse is much more problematic and seriously attempted only by Doris Lessing.

Maria Stella's essay focuses on the disturbing relation between narration and the theme of education in the Brontë's novels. She argues that the reliability as narrators of such characters as schoolmasters, teachers and tutors, who are central figures in their novels, is systematically undermined to the effect that both the representational potential of narrative and the credibility of the educational theories expounded in the novels are problematized.

The "Dialogue/Debate/Dissent" section consists of two contributions. The postmodern concern with ontological indeterminacy is discussed by Rossella Ciocca in connection with an international conference on the significance and perspectives of the novel which was held in Forlì in March 1999. Marina De Chiara's interview with César Flores, one of the actors of El Teatro Campesino, gives voice to the deeply committed experience of this Chicano theatre group who has worked for more than thirty-five years at the crossroad between aesthetics and politics, articulating the predicament of hybridity and oppression in a very distinctive language and style.

Marina Vitale

ARTICLES

Catherine Belsey

Intertextual Love

1. True Love

This essay is about the representation of love at three cultural (but not chronological) moments, classic realist, modernist and postmodern. I begin with a popular romance, *Summer Seduction,* published by Mills & Boon (or Harlequin in America) in 1998. Without necessarily having read this work, most readers are already in a position to assume that the central figure is a woman, and that antagonism between the heroine and a man will lead in due course to true love. Most readers also know that love will redeem the moody, withdrawn hero, that the story will end in marriage, and that marriage is synonymous with happiness.

How do we know all this? Perhaps from reading a good many popular romances. But even those who have never curled up with a supermarket love story have probably read at least *Jane Eyre* or *Pride and Prejudice*. Or they have seen the film *You've Got Mail*, which is studded with allusions to *Pride and Prejudice*. Perhaps they have also seen Shakespeare's *Much Ado About Nothing*, which anticipates them all in some ways. Maybe their parents read them "Beauty and the Beast", or took them to the Disney movie. Few of us can have grown up without coming across *The Lady Vanishes* or *The African Queen*, not to mention the tale of "The Frog Prince". Any of these would have had taught us enough about the meaning of antipathy between a man and a woman to indicate how *Summer Seduction* would end.

We learn our expectations of fiction from other fiction. Long before we can read, we encounter stories at home, at school, on television, at the pantomime. Romance is a direct descendant of the

fairy tale, where wit or virtue or supernatural intervention leads to the unlikely pairing of two people who go on to live happily ever after. Marriage means happiness there too, just as it does in so many nineteenth-century novels and twentieth-century romantic comedies. In *Summer Seduction*, or its sources and analogues, the generous and caring heroine transforms an animal into a handsome prince – or a hostile man into a caring husband.

Everyone who knows about romance, and some who don't, can tell that reality and fiction are not the same. Experts will remember, for instance, that romance heroines commonly have unruly hair. Blythe Summerfield, protagonist of *Summer Seduction*, can't keep hers from falling about her face. One unmanageable russet curl (russet is romance-speak for red) repeatedly escapes her efforts at restraint. Its colour and its waywardness signify a sensuality barely under control, a body which will go on in due course to betray her desire by inadvertent glances and blushes, and later by more direct, if still involuntary, sexual responses.

Here art does not necessarily follow life. Not all women with untidy hair are stirred into irrepressible sexuality by difficult men, except in romance, where the rule is invariable. In the same way, not every anti-social, monosyllabic man can be cured by affection, however hard some of us keep on trying. Jas Tratherne, hero of *Summer Seduction*, has no confidence in his power to retain a woman's love, despite his tall, rugged masculinity, characterised by dark hair, green eyes, imperious nose, firm mouth and chin and extraordinary sexual prowess. A loveless childhood, an equally loveless marriage, and a wife and child killed in a car crash leave him considerably more in need of straightening out than Benedick or Mr Darcy. Indeed, this New Zealand romance, knowingly intertextual, compares him momentarily with the more dangerous Heathcliff, adding, "She could imagine him striding across an English moor with a huge black dog at his heels".[1] (*Wuthering Heights*, however, is rather less optimistic about the capacity of marriage to solve Heathcliff's own problems.)

The heroine's mouth is a recurring feature of twentieth-century popular romance. Wide, generous, sensual, this too gives her away, despite her best efforts to maintain her distance. Blythe Summerfield's

[1] Daphne Clair, *Summer Seduction* (London: Harlequin Mills & Boon, 1998), 9.

mouth is "soft".[2] In this instance it is not even clear quite what facial configuration in the world we know would match the familiar signifier. I have never forgotten the grimaces of a class of sixteen-year-olds (boys as well as girls) I had asked to simulate a wide, soft mouth to the satisfaction of their neighbour. Meaning here is overtly textual, not referential: we understand the significance of the attribute, even if we are not quite sure how we'd recognise one in real life. The system of differences that gives meaning to physiognomy is generic, not empirical: the hero's mouth is firm; ungenerous characters conventionally have hard mouths or thin lips. Blythe also has a dimple,[3] indicating youth, innocence and a sense of humour, the latter a constant requisite of romantic heroines, from Rosalind's teasing exchanges with Orlando's straight man, through Elizabeth Bennet's wit, to the GSOH on offer in the lonely hearts ads.

The formula romances display a strong commitment to verisimilitude in terms of a detailed attention to location, the protagonists' professions, the heroine's clothes, and increasingly, the hero's, as well as domestic furnishings and recipes. But the project is not, in the end, to depict the real: on the contrary, the appeal of romance depends on a story that fulfils a wish – in this case that the unlikely but desirable lover should also turn out to be an ideal companion, deeply devoted, despite appearances, and able to reveal his love in response to the understanding of the right woman. Summer seduction, easy enough to find, proves in this specific instance to be that rare prize, true love that lasts till death. We want – or perhaps our society wants us to want – despite any amount of counter-evidence, to believe in the power and permanence of love, and romances gratify that desire.

Of course, in an empiricist world narrative wish-fulfilment itself depends on a degree of credibility. Popular romance creates the illusion of a familiar reality persuasively enough to depict convincing obstacles and a just-plausible victory over them. And in this respect the romances expose their intertextual dependence on earlier classic fiction. Also set in a world its readers are invited to recognise, *Pride and Prejudice* ends with a member of the landed gentry overcoming

[2] Ibid., 10.
[3] Ibid.

snobbery to value virtue in a wife, just like Mr B. in Samuel Richardson's *Pamela*[4] and, indeed, Prince Charming and his variants in any number of fairy tales. Elizabeth's arrival at Pemberley, like Cinderella's at the ball, represents a turning-point when she pays a visit to the palace of which she will eventually be mistress. *Jane Eyre* shows the dark, moody, mysterious Mr Rochester in love with a governess, and finally subdued to the point where he becomes a possible partner without impairing either Jane's virtue or her autonomy. True love recruits men as good subjects in Shakespeare, who invented modern romantic comedy;[5] the elements of *vraisemblance* in the novels vindicate the promise that contradictions really can be resolved.

Classic realist narrative strategies are designed to delay the fulfilment of the wish long enough to deepen its desirability and sustain the story. The project of the formula romances, though some are more lyrical than others, is not to draw attention to the textuality of the text. On the contrary, their readability depends on their reiteration of the familiar conventions. Like detective stories or classic science fiction, popular romances are easy to read to the degree that they reproduce the structure and mode of address characteristic of the nineteenth-century novel, and these conventions themselves are so familiar as to be all but invisible. Most obviously, a story apparently unfolding before our very eyes in the present is narrated in the past tense. At the same time, classic realism refuses to submit to the chronological order of events, moving backwards and forwards between past and present in flashbacks and inset narratives. The story is generally told in the third person, or perhaps the first, but not the second. It opens in the middle of things, as if we already knew the world it depicts, and finds ingenious ways of defining the characters and their context without appearing to introduce them. The story begins with an enigma (who will marry the heroine? who committed the murder? how? why?) and ends in closure which is also a disclosure. A fictional reality is finally revealed that makes sense of the opacities, ambiguities and misunderstandings

[4] Vivien Jones, "Introduction", in Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice* (London: Penguin, 1996), xxi-xxii.

[5] Catherine Belsey, *Shakespeare and the Loss of Eden: The Construction of Family Values in Early Modern Culture* (London: Macmillan, 1999), 27-54.

distributed along the length of the story. In *Summer Seduction* the truth that explains the hero's conventional moodiness turns out to be his equally conventional reluctance, as a result of his bitter experiences, to rely on a woman's love.

Above all, the project is to enlist the reader in the illusion that the events are taking place in a possible world and that we witness them unseen and unperceived. Repetition of the conventions is as crucial to the popular romances as the formulaic "Once upon a time" to the fairy tales they resemble, and a similar familiarity makes the textuality of the text virtually imperceptible. Nothing, apparently, intervenes between the reader and the events of the story. Moreover, we know where we are in classic realism, and know too that we can trust its promise to deliver the truth of the fiction in due course. The conventions, unmanageable hair and soft mouth, as well as tenses and person, identify the genre and inspire the confidence that makes reading easy.

There is a danger, however that, recognised as conventions, they undermine the claim to verisimilitude that makes the conclusion satisfying as truth. If we grow out of fairy tales or dismiss romances as escapist, we do so because their narrative strategies proclaim themselves conventional to the point where the resolution is no longer plausible. An ending that declares itself determined by the genre always risks failing to fulfil the wish it was designed to gratify. At the beginning of the twentieth century modernist writing, committed to the view that fiction should tell the truth, despaired of the conventions – and broke them. The "realism" of classic realism in its entirety was seen as deceptive, its strategies conjuring credibility out of falsehood like any illusionist with a hat and a rabbit. The new project was a deeper truth. Modernism would tell it like it really was.

2. Modernist Love

Life, we now acknowledge, does not necessarily follow the shape of a classic realist plot. Explanations are not always provided in the end. Indeed, in life "the end" might not constitute a resolution at all. More commonly, events in our own lives just drift on until they are forgotten, or the past frets away at the pleasures of the present, or we

simply die, leaving the problems unresolved. Modernist fiction reduces to varying degrees the prominence of plot, suspense, closure. Instead, the novel might record a more or less eventful day in the life of the protagonist, as it does in *Mrs Dalloway* or *Ulysses*. The omniscience of the narrative voice is significantly undermined, supplanted by increased use of the free indirect style, which records experience from the point of view of the characters. Quests remain unfulfilled, or fulfilled improbably, as in Proust or *To the Lighthouse*. Characters do not behave – or analyse their situation – in accordance with rational sequences: the stream of consciousness is designed to display how random or anarchic real thinking can be.

At the same time, modernism sets out to prevent the comfortable familiarity we associate with an easy read. Its conventions are therefore established only to be broken before they become habitual. In consequence, modernist fiction can justifiably be variously challenging, frustrating, irritating or boring, but once it is predictable, it has failed to fulfil its own project.

Nevertheless, modernist texts are also rooted in other texts, their intertextual relations no less crucial to the process of reading. As an example, though not necessarily a representative one,[6] D. H. Lawrence's story, *The Virgin and the Gipsy*, first published in 1930, also begins with a kind of antagonism between a woman and a dark, handsome, supremely masculine stranger. It too tells the story of an unlikely love, though it doesn't end in marriage. On the contrary, it precisely withholds the gratification that closure offers.

The primary enigma in Lawrence's novella is whether the bold, sexually desiring gipsy will relieve Yvette of the "dark, tremulous potent secret of her virginity",[7] and thereby release her from the stultifying repression of the rectory where she grows up. I *think* he does not, but it's difficult to be sure. Drenched and frozen by the flood that suddenly engulfs the rectory, the two spend the night in her bed in each other's arms. They are both shivering, their teeth chattering, convulsed with cold. Here is the critical paragraph:

> The vice-like grip of his arms round her seemed to her the only stable point in her consciousness. It was a fearful relief to her heart, which was strained to bursting. And though his body, wrapped round her strange and lithe and powerful, like tentacles, rippled with shuddering as an electric current, still the rigid tension of the muscles that held her steadied them both, and gradually the sickening violence of the shuddering, caused by shock, abated, in his body first, then in hers, and the warmth revived between them. And as it roused, their tortured semi-conscious minds became unconscious, they passed away into sleep.[8]

[6] It would be contrary to the project of modernism to throw up representative texts: difference is crucial to the challenge they offer to convention.

[7] D. H. Lawrence, *The Virgin and the Gipsy*, 45.

Mostly, I understand this as saying that the gipsy's vitality keeps her alive, his human but elemental warmth rescues her from the equally elemental but inhuman effects of the torrent of water, until they both lose consciousness and sleep. But sometimes I see my usual interpretation as naive, not least when I go on to read that Yvette's first thought when she wakes is of him: "Where was her gipsy of this world's-end night?". And later, "Oh, I love him! I love him! I love him! The grief over him kept her prostrate. Yet practically, she too was acquiescent in the fact of his disappearance. Her young soul knew the wisdom of it".[9]

In *Summer Seduction* Blythe Summerfield's house is engulfed by a cyclone. She too is rescued from its worst effects by the male protagonist. But in this instance what happens is perfectly clear. The two play out some of their antagonism, but he also confides in her – about his passion for mathematics, his childhood, his unhappy marriage. They shelter under a table, sharing a duvet to keep warm, and Jas demonstrates his suitability to be a husband by not taking sexual advantage of Blythe's vulnerability in the storm.

If the violence of nature parallels the intensity of their emotions, it is also clear that the cyclone is a literal event in the story. The flood in *The Virgin and the Gipsy* is also to be understood literally, but the extent of its figurative implications seems undecidable. Its cause is a burst reservoir: evidently the forces of nature, so long held in by the false proprieties of her family, break out for Yvette, killing the grandmother who personifies the repression. The rooms gape like mouths; the rector's study is wrenched apart. The enclosed

[8] Ibid., 85-86.

[9] Ibid., 87, 90.

hyprocrisies of the rectory are thus thrown open, when a dam breaks because a mine tunnel beneath it gives way. If the sexual act does not take place at the level of plot, it appears to be strongly indicated in the account of the flood, which seems closer to allegory than metaphor. What takes place occurs, we are invited to construe, at a deeper level than events or actions. Whatever happens between the virgin and the gipsy, and it seems that this is something profound, its importance subsists at the level of meaning, not mere fact.

The weather in *Summer Seduction* is generally benevolent, and many of the exchanges take place on the beach. Their setting is a remote corner of the Pacific shoreline, an earthly paradise which perfectly frames the wish-fulfilment of the story. Climatic conditions in *The Virgin and the Gipsy*, by contrast, are almost unremittingly dull and wet, though a moment of spring sunshine precedes the flood. The landscape, meanwhile, is relentlessly grim and rocky. Determined not to idealise, committed to the truth of modern life, the text makes no concessions to the reader's desire for pleasure. A rare moment of explicit intertextuality compares Yvette with the Lady of Shalott, imprisoned by four grey walls and four grey towers, forbidden to look directly at the real world. Ironically, the figure who appears at this moment, Yvette's Lancelot, is not a knight but a gipsy selling feather dusters.[10]

The narrative strategies of the text combine the elision of events with a certain gritty descriptive verisimilitude. Domestic details of life at the rectory are minutely observed and clothes are specified precisely. In addition, much of the dialogue gives the impression that it is a transcription from life. But some of this apparent realism turns out to be mere *vraisemblance*, and as incidental as the verisimilitude in *Summer Seduction*. Perhaps more so. A substantial proportion of the dialogue, however sharply heard, is largely vacuous, since people cannot say what they mean.[11] On the contrary, in this text the crucial transactions take place below the level of consciousness, and therefore outside the spoken exchanges. For instance, the gipsy has asked Yvette to come to the quarry on Fridays, when he will be there. Here is her reaction:

[10] Ibid., 40-41.
[11] See, for example, the conversation between Yvette and Lucille (ibid., 62).

> She never even thought of the gipsy. He was a perfectly negligible incident. Yet the approach of Friday loomed strangely significant. "What are we doing on Friday?" she said to Lucille. To which Lucille replied that they were doing nothing. And Yvette was vexed.
> Friday came, and in spite of herself she thought all day of the quarry off the road up high Bonsall Head. She wanted to be there. That was all she was conscious of. She wanted to be there. She had not even a dawning idea of going there. Besides, it was raining again. But as she sewed the blue dress, finishing it for the party up at Lambley Close tomorrow, she just felt that her soul was up there, at the quarry, among the caravans, with the gipsies. Like one lost, or whose soul was stolen, she was not present in her body, the shell of her body. Her intrinsic body was away at the quarry, among the caravans.[12]

The soul stolen away by migrants is another intertextual allusion, this time to the ballad of the raggle-taggle gipsies. Not present in her body, Yvette is not present in her speech or her behaviour. But she is not fully present in her consciousness either. She does not think of the gipsy and yet she thinks of little else. She wants to be at the quarry; it does not cross her mind to go there; she will do so in due course. Although Lawrence repudiated psychoanalysis, he sought a parallel access to unconscious processes. "Man or woman", the narrative voice observes, "is made up of many selves. With one self, she loved this gipsy man. With many selves, she ignored him or had a distaste for him".[13] A still deeper self is caught up in a struggle for power between the outcast, outlawed gipsy, who is exempt from the restraints and repressions of society, and her own "tremulous" but also "potent" virginity. It is, of course, a struggle that she (partly) wants to lose.

A classic realist plot is commonly sustained by a degree of equivocation. In detective stories the narrative voice withholds what the author must know from the beginning; it deliberately misleads the reader, though without actually lying (to lie is to cheat). Romance, too, depends on information withheld and exchanges misunderstood.

[12] Ibid., 46-47.
[13] Ibid., 77.

Summer Seduction includes a number of characteristic examples. Here is Jas's first reaction to Blythe:

> His head lifted slowly, his eyes taking in her well-worn sneakers, the bare legs emerging from crumpled khaki shorts, and the checked cotton shirt that skimmed her breasts and lay open at her throat.
> When he returned his attention to her face he didn't look impressed.
> Blythe hurried again into speech. "I live over there –" she gestured in the direction of the cottage. "I just wanted to welcome you ... your family ..."
> His expression totally closed down. "I don't have a family."[14]

His lack of ties, in conjunction with his failure to respond to her evident sexuality, signals to the reader his availability as a lover and at the same time the impediment that will sustain the story. But the practised reader might also note that the absent family is directly linked to his social withdrawal, and might see here a clue to his apparent sexual indifference. The narrative simultaneously hints at and withholds for the time being the disclosure – a loveless marriage, a wife and daughter killed in a car crash – that will retrospectively render his behaviour intelligible.

Pride and Prejudice is full of misunderstandings between Elizabeth and Mr Darcy, both local and structural, and the reader shares the majority of Elizabeth's misconceptions for most of the story. It takes the hero's long letter and Elizabeth's visit to Pemberley to dispel them. The device is older even than classic realism, however. The protagonists of Shakespeare's romantic comedies prolong the plot by telling the truth about themselves, but in the guise of another – cross-dressed, for example. The heroine of "The Well of the World's End", a Scottish antecedent of the folktale of "The Frog Prince", confronts the impossible task of carrying water to her cruel stepmother in a sieve. When a frog offers to help her, she cheerfully agrees in return to obey him for a night. "What harm can a frog do me?" she thinks.[15] Little does she know (classic formula of the fairy

[14] Clair, *Summer Seduction*, 7.

[15] Joseph Jacobs, *English Fairy Tales* (London: Penguin, 1994), 142-147 (p. 144).

tale) that her promise will commit her to share her food and her pillow with him. When she reluctantly follows the instruction to chop off his head, she discloses the truth of the frog's human identity, and only then do we see that by obeying him and sharing her bed and board with him, she has already married him in effect, without knowing he is a prince. She becomes a princess, in other words, not as a reward for repaying his gift, but in the course of doing so. The story constitutes a definition of marriage as promises fulfilled and reciprocal generosity.

"Beauty and the Beast", at least in its familiar eighteenth-century rendering by Madame Leprince de Beaumont, is still closer to classic realism in its treatment of the central structural equivocation, the identity of the hero. Beauty gradually penetrates to the truth of the beast's good nature, and though she many times refuses his proposals, she finally agrees to marry him when she reflects on the qualities in a husband that make a woman happy. They are not, after all, good looks or wit, but virtue and sweetness of temper, which he has already demonstrated in abundance. What all these narratives finally deliver, the object of desire it is their project to withhold till the moment of closure, is not only true love made permanent in marriage, but transparency, equivocation resolved, the truth at last made present in a language which conceals nothing.

This is also the project of Lawrence's modernist text, but because the truth it wants to tell is understood to be beyond the reach of consciousness, complex, elusive, plural, it can be set out only in figures, elisions and contradictions. The modernist text continues to withhold answers, not only at the level of plot (what did they *do*?), but also thematically (what is the *nature* of the desire which is or is not fulfilled in the flood and its aftermath?). If there are answers to these questions, they reside below the intellect at the level of the real, and are in consequence unnamable. The equivocation which structures the whole story remains necessarily unresolved.

At the end of *The Virgin and the Gipsy* Yvette receives a note from the gipsy, signed "Joe Boswell". The story concludes with the comment, "And only then she realised that he had a name".[16] Names, we are to understand, are superficial, a matter of relative indifference.

[16] Lawrence, *The Virgin and the Gipsy*, 90.

What is critical for the virgin is not the gipsy's individuality, but the strange impersonality of human desire. Names belong to a world of conventional exchanges and proprieties; they are largely irrelevant to the important events of the story, which take place in another realm entirely. The truth, no less an object of desire for the modernist text, subsists only as an experience that cannot be named.

Classic realism, in the modernist view, fails to disclose the real. Instead, it offers illusions, an imaginary coherence, a world which can be explained, a story that makes sense. Modernism, by contrast, will deliver the real itself – the real real. But to the degree that the real is identified as what cannot be named, the strategies of modernism in practice defer and deflect it, push it out of sight and out of reach.

3. Love in the Postmodern Condition

Jean-François Lyotard's essay "What is Postmodernism?" offers a definition and defence of both the term and the practice it denotes. Lyotard characterises modern art as the recognition of what he calls "the withdrawal of the real".[17] There are two alternative ways, he goes on, of engaging with this impossibility of making present what is unpresentable: on the one hand, a modernist regret, a nostalgia for "the missing contents";[18] and on the other, a postmodern affirmation of the unpresentable "in presentation itself", a search "for new presentations", and the "jubilation" which comes from "the invention of new rules of the game". He cites as literary examples the modernist Proust, eloquent, elegant, inhabiting with a difference the tradition he inherits, in contrast to the postmodern Joyce, experimental and exuberant, putting on display as illusionist the conventions designed to mask the inaccessibility of the real.[19] The distinction is not a matter of chronology, but generic: in this view, postmodernism refuses to hanker after the transparent representation of the truth.

[17] Jean-François Lyotard, "Answering the Question: What is Postmodernism?", trans. Régis Durand, in *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (Manchester: Manchester U.P., 1984), 71-82 (p. 79).

[18] Ibid., 81.

[19] Ibid., 80-81.

At the same time, Lyotard's unusually polemical essay[20] is not a plea for an irresponsible playfulness. Nothing can be more dangerous than the belief that we possess the truth. Lyotard associates this "transcendental illusion" with the "terror" of the guillotine and the deathcamps, and he challenges the artist to take up a radical position in relation to established rules and familiar categories.[21] Postmodern art, which in this account is always avant-garde, confirms as illusory all notion that we can lay hold on the real, and celebrates instead the capabilities of the signifier, opening and reopening, even if in a playful manner, questions that are serious to the degree that they challenge existing complacencies.

A number of love stories seemed to me in various ways, and with varying degrees of seriousness, to substantiate Lyotard's distinction, and to affirm in the process the inevitable intertextuality of fiction: Muriel Spark's *Loitering With Intent*, Jeanette Winterson's *Art and Lies*, almost everything by Julian Barnes, Alain de Botton's *Essays in Love*. I wanted to consider them all. But in the end I was impelled to draw my postmodern instance from film, that quintessential twentieth-century form, and of all the films in all the world, it seemed to me that my test case had to be *Shakespeare in Love* (dir. John Madden, 1998), on the grounds that a number of texts and genres went into its making: not just film and drama, but also the novel, to the degree that Jane Austen took over romantic comedy from Shakespeare, and when she had made it at home in prose fiction, it went on to flourish in the hands of Dickens and Trollope, until it was reappropriated by Oscar Wilde, Noel Coward and, of course, Hollywood.

Shakespeare in Love turns, in a sense, on the wager between Shakespeare and the Duke of Wessex that a play can show the truth of love. What is at stake between the two men is £50, and at another level Viola de Lesseps, and beyond her the status of writing. The film depicts with some accuracy the ambiguous value of theatre in the early modern period, when actors and playwrights were socially

[20] "Ce texte de combat très personnel de Jean-François Lyotard est traduit ... d'un article paru en italien dans *Alfabeta*, 32" (Lyotard, "Réponse à la question: qu'est-ce que le postmoderne?", *Critique* 419 [1982]), 357.

[21] Lyotard, "What is Postmodernism?", 81-82.

despised on the one hand, but were seen on the other as providers of entertainment fit for a Queen. In the event, Shakespeare's claim to make love real on the stage is apparently triumphantly vindicated: the Queen herself pronounces him the winner; the Duke of Wessex reluctantly hands over the money; and if the Duke secures Viola as his wife, it is Will she loves. But in consequence, the romance in this romantic comedy does not end happily: there is no marriage between the protagonists, and no promise to live happily ever after.

Unlike the modernist text, *Shakespeare in Love* flaunts its intertextuality. The love story explicitly rewrites *Romeo and Juliet*, which is then reinscribed as the play which tells the story of Will's star-crossed romance with Viola. Meanwhile, the screenplay is strewn with allusions to Shakespeare's other texts – most obviously, *Twelfth Night*, *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, the *Sonnets*, *Hamlet* and *Antony and Cleopatra*. Much of the comedy also depends on the ironic depiction of Shakespeare's theatrical contemporaries: Marlowe is everyone's preferred dramatist; little John Webster relishes all forms of violence off stage and on. There are no floods or cyclones here, but only a legendary puddle. As the Queen approaches it, all the courtiers dutifully begin unhitching their cloaks. Elizabeth sloshes through the dirty water, however, muttering, "Too late, too late". Elsewhere, the comedy relies on intertextual anachronisms like "Follow that boat" and a mug which is a present from Stratford upon Avon.

Not by any means self-evidently avant-garde – on the contrary, in fact – the postmodern film brings back plot with a vengeance. In spite of the ending, all the other familiar ingredients of romantic comedy are there: suspense, misunderstanding, mistaken identity, the conviction that all is lost, and chance that comes to the rescue in the nick of time. In that sense, the film represents a tribute to Shakespeare, whose generic invention in his own comedies is shown to have made the film possible, and the inclusion of the playwright's own work as a play within the play draws attention to the self-consciousness of the pastiche.

But *Shakespeare in Love* further enriches the Elizabethan mixture with more than a dash of the twentieth-century backstage musical. "The play must ... you know", Henslowe begins. "Go on", encourages Will, and a now-familiar genre is wittily invoked. Much of the suspense depends on how, with their theatre closed, a leading

lady whose voice has broken, and no male protagonist, the company can put on a show and thus pay their debts. "It's a mystery", they repeatedly affirm, but they know, improbably enough, from cinematic convention that it will turn out well.

The impediment to love is not antagonism in this instance, but marriage, the obstacle twentieth-century love stories, from *Casablanca* and *Brief Encounter* to *The English Patient*, have in common with medieval romance. Will is married already; Viola's projected marriage has the approval of the Queen. Their relationship is no more than a festive interlude, an escape from propriety while Viola's parents are away in the country. Neither seriously proposes overthrowing the forces of repression: the romantic problem is not resolved. Paradoxically, however, this intensifies the romance while permitting the film to retain a postmodern scepticism towards marriage as love's proper outcome. Prohibition deepens and perpetuates desire. "You will never age for me, or fade, or die", Will tells Viola in the last reel: passion, the movie proposes, is all the more binding when it is predicated on separation.

By making explicit the fictionality of its own story, the film can have its romantic cake and eat it too. Everyone knows that we know nothing about Shakespeare's love life, not even the sex of his objects of desire, despite all the conjectures about a dark lady and a fair young man. The film makes witty capital of this, showing Will in love with a blond woman dressed as a dark-haired boy. A wish is fulfilled here, but only within the confines of the cinema. We can still believe in romantic love – as long as we know it's not true.

Shakespeare in Love is a postmodern romance, and it is also, perhaps more seriously, a story about the possibility of representation. In the first instance, it seems to concern both love and writing, and the intimate and intricate relationship between them. At the beginning, Will is lost for words, but love, we are to understand, releases his gift; he transcribes his own story as poetry and the result is spell-binding; the final performance of *Romeo and Juliet* holds the fictional theatre audience enthralled, and wins the wager. Experience is rewritten as poetry, and love is made present in the play.

But this is so only on certain conditions. The performance works to perfection when the roles are realigned in accordance with life, when Shakespeare plays Romeo and Viola Juliet. In the film the story

of *Romeo and Juliet* cannot easily be disentangled from the story of Will and Viola: each is formulated in terms of the other, made present only by reference to the other. As a result, what guarantees the power of the poetry on the stage is the presence of the real-life lovers enacting their own off-stage story.

Or is it an off-stage story? The romance of forbidden love and the sweet sorrow of parting are realised more lyrically on-stage than off: the screenplay mostly doesn't try to compete with Shakespeare. If the presence of the lovers confirms the truth of the production, the love story of Will and Viola in turn needs the tragedy of *Romeo and Juliet* as *its* guarantee. After their first night together, Viola tells Will, "There is something better than a play", but it is Shakespeare's poetry that specifies the value of the sexual encounters between Will and Viola. The film's love scenes rehearse speeches from *Romeo and Juliet;* much of the love story is played out in the performance of the play, where the lovers inhabit identities other than their own. The truth of love is not to be pinned down either in the romance of Will and Viola, or in the poetry of *Romeo and Juliet*, since each constitutes the alibi of the other. Love needs the signifier to make it known, but belief in the signifier depends on a prior conviction of the extra-textual presence of love. Textuality, in other words, tells the truth about romance if and only if its script is enacted by real lovers whose passion is demonstrated in their fervent impersonation of fictional figures in love. And all this takes place within a self-proclaimed invention which is Mark Norman's idea and Tom Stoppard's screenplay for John Madden's movie. Only *Romeo and Juliet* has an extra-diegetic reality: it exists as a text which is all there is of the tragic Elizabethan love story, now rewritten as a sceptical postmodern comedy.

Postmodern Fables, first published in French in 1993, includes a chapter where Lyotard reaffirms that art is empty of presence. And he adds, "If the artfulness of great works can traverse the vicissitudes undergone by the cultural in the course of history, this is to the extent that the gesture of the work *signals* that desire is never fulfilled". I'm not sure about great works, but *Shakespeare in Love* is artful in every sense of the term, and it makes *Romeo and Juliet* traverse the vicissitudes of history, though, of course, with a difference. Lyotard's object of desire here is the absolute, which is not a metaphysical

category, but "that which exceeds every putting into form or object without being anywhere else but within them".[22] Rewriting Lyotard's absolute as the definitive, might we not read *Shakespeare in Love* as a celebration of that absent residue?

The romance ends in Viola's marriage, but not to Will. The story of representation, however, ends with the promise of another play to please the Queen on Twelfth Night. In response to Viola's urging, Will begins work on a comedy about a woman called Viola, who cross-dresses as a boy. This story starts with the lovesick Orsino, but ends in the marriage of the central characters. As the figure of Viola de Lesseps, washed up on the sea-coast of Virginia and walking resolutely towards her future, progressively diminishes below the final credits, Will writes the speech prefix, "Viola", and his fictional protagonist gradually begins to take her place. The rest of his story, not related, but taken for granted because we know it, will be a succession of texts, Shakespeare's works in their entirety. One wish *is* gratified, then, after all – Will's, Viola's and the audience's: poetry survives, but on condition of an absence. The film, which began by bringing experience and writing together, ends by driving them apart.

Truth is an affair of the signifier. In so far as a play (to a degree) tells the truth of love, it also (to a degree) supplants it. Writing, when it seeks to transcribe experience, to name the unnamable and take possession of the real, comes closest as the record of a wish which is and is not fulfilled. The signifier, the only place where truth is to be found, ends by deferring the desired presence and signalling its retreat. That recognition, and a corresponding jubilation in the freedom of textuality itself to invent, produce and combine, constitute, I have wanted to suggest, the pleasure – and the defining trace of pain in the pleasure – of overtly intertextual postmodern fiction.

[22] Lyotard, *Postmodern Fables*, trans. Georges Van Den Abeele (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 29-30.

Maurizio Calbi

"Behind the back of life". Uncanny Bodies and Identities in *The Changeling*

> He brings salves and balm with him, no doubt; but before he can act as a physician he first has to wound; when he then stills the pain of the wound *he at the same time infects the wound*—for that is what he knows best of all, this sorcerer and animal-tamer, in whose presence everything healthy necessarily grows sick, and everything sick tame.
>
> (Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*)

> What is closest *must* be avoided, by virtue of its very proximity.
>
> (Jacques Derrida, *The Post Card*)

Telling a tale "behind the back of life"

Towards the end of Middleton and Rowley's *The Changeling*, Beatrice emerges from Alsemero's closet, where she has been stabbed by De Flores, to deliver the following notorious lines, addressed primarily to her father Vermandero:

Bea. Oh come not near me, sir, I shall defile you:
I am that of your blood was taken from you
For your better health; look no more upon't,
But cast it to the ground regardlessly:
Let the common sewer take it from distinction.
(5.3.149-153)[1]

[1] All references to *The Changeling* are from the Revels edition of the play, edited by N. W. Bawcutt (London: Methuen, 1958), and are included parenthetically in the text.

In this "self-debasing" and "self-expelling" speech[2] she associates the blood flowing from her wounded body – a theatrical 'reality' – with that part of her father's blood removed in the course of what she sees as a kind of phlebotomy. In fact, she comes to identify herself entirely with this plethoric blood ("I am that of your blood"), whilst signifying it as a contaminating and contaminated remainder which can no longer be approached ("Oh come not near me") or seen ("look no more upon't") without danger and must therefore be thrown to the ground "regardlessly." Yet, the ultimate 'proper' destination she envisages for such an abject fluid is the "common sewer". It is in this receptacle that the loss of the distinctive physiological characteristics of blood, as well as the annihilation of her aristocratic prerogatives qua Vermandero's daughter (i.e., her "distinction"), will finally be sealed.[3]

Thus, Beatrice's speech suggests that there is an intimate connection between her sexual transgression and the pollution of aristocratic blood. The violent evacuation of the excrementitious matter she has become seems to be the only appropriate remedy to pollution, and is in fact figured as restorative of the "better health" of the patriarchal and aristocratic body of her father Vermandero. Can one therefore argue, by extending to *The Changeling* Leonard Tennenhouse's approach to other Jacobean 'tragedies of blood', that Middleton and Rowley's play upholds the political and symbolic necessity of "blood in its purest form, that is, the blood of the patriarch," in spite of, or rather *because of*, the fact that it stages the signs of its contamination?[4]

The cure of the disease which, in the form of corrupted blood, affects the aristocratic body/community is, no doubt, eventually carried out. Yet, the success of the (surgical) operation is somewhat compromised by the fact that the latter is not performed – and not performed *publicly* – by one of the male members of the aristocratic

[2] Frank Whigham, "Reading Social Conflict in the Alimentary Tract: More on the Body in Renaissance Drama", *English Literary History* 55 (1988), 340.

[3] Cf. Gail Kern Paster, *The Body Embarrassed: Drama and the Disciplines of Shame in Early Modern England* (Ithaca: Cornell U.P., 1993), 88-90.

[4] Leonard Tennenhouse, *Power on Display: The Politics of Shakespeare's Genres* (London: Methuen, 1986), 118.

community, as one might expect following the logic of Tennenhouse's argument.[5] Instead, the evacuation of Beatrice's infected blood is executed, or at least initiated, in the most private of places (i.e., Alsemero's closet) by none other than De Flores, a 'surgeon' who uses a "penknife" (5.3.173) and is ambivalently positioned in relation to the aristocratic community – he is "a gentleman" by birth but has been "thrust ... out to servitude" (2.148-149). Moreover, this is a surgeon who is most often shown, also because of his liminal status, to partake of the same lethal characteristics as those of the abject substance which he removes.[6]

That the 'surgeon' employed to expel excrementitious blood is but another 'em-bodiment' of (a socially codified) venomous and plethoric fluid indicates that the play's finale, even as it "violently subordinates the female body to male authority", fails to re-establish the boundaries of "a pure community of aristocratic blood".[7] On the one hand, the threat posed by Beatrice's blood is contained. Indeed, it is more than contained: it flows down the drain, as it were, along with a blood that is reduced to a status of utter un-differentiation. Yet, on the other hand, this 'a-bjectification', by promoting De Flores into a symbolically central position, reinstates the "distinction" (5.3.153) only by confounding it again. It introduces into the aristocratic body/community another version of the poison which has just been ejected. In other words, De Flores's bloodletting, obeying the 'alogic'

[5] Tennenhouse draws on Foucault's description of early modern public execution as one of the rituals through which the power of the king manifests itself in all its spectacularity. (See Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan [New York: Pantheon, 1977], 3-69.) If in public executions the king is "never present in person but always present in the person of the law" (120), in the elaborate rituals of punishment of the transgressive aristocratic female of Jacobean drama he is symbolically present in the person of his aristocratic patriarchal representatives.

[6] Indeed, the recurrent emphasis on the interchangeability between De Flores and poison is sometimes developed in such a way as to make it clear that the poison he incarnates is equivalent to contaminated and contaminating blood. In the penultimate scene of the play, for instance, the mere appearance of De Flores over the stage induces the following comments by Tomazo de Piracquo, brother to the murdered Alonzo: "He's so foul ...; / So most deadly venomous, / He would go near to poison any weapon / That should draw blood on him" (5.2.15, 17-19).

[7] Tennenhouse, *Power on Display*, 120; 119.

of the pharmakon described by Derrida, simultaneously decontaminates and infects.[8]

In the light of these remarks, one may contend that, at least in the case of *The Changeling*, the reassertion of the law of patriarchy somewhat *depends* for its effectiveness upon a 'contaminating' identificatory bond between men across class boundaries. One of the forms of this homosocial bond, feared and yet inescapable, is the essential agreement between Alsemero and De Flores over the meaning of Beatrice's transgression; a compact whose binding force is not erased by Alsemero's stress on the equal retribution that lies in wait for the "twins of mischief" (5.3.142):

De F. Has she confessed it?
Als As sure as death to both of you,
And much more than that.
De F. It could not be much more;
'Twas one thing, and that—she's a whore.
Als. It could not choose but follow; oh cunning devils!
How should blind men know you from fair-fac'd saints?
(5.3.105-109, my emphasis)

Thus, the play's finale activates contaminating substitutions, most notably the substitution of an 'outsider' for a male member of the aristocratic community as the active agent in the performance of the "deed" (5.3.129); and uncanny symmetries, like the cross-class identificatory bond between Alsemero and De Flores. I shall argue that these odd permutations and equivalencies are not specific to the end of the play, or only relevant to an understanding of De Flores and Alsemero's positions. Rather, they are symptomatic of the fact that bodies and identities are constructed as sites of contradictory and unstable articulations of different vectors of power such as class, gender and eroticism. In the course of the analysis, I shall explore some of these constructions, focusing not only on their 'social' but

[8] Jacques Derrida, *Dissemination*, trans. Barbara Johnson (Chicago: Chicago U.P., 1981), esp. 63-171. In "'Hidden malady': Death, Discovery, and Indistinction in *The Changeling*", *Renaissance Drama* 22 (1991), 95-121, Michael Neill concludes that the "cleansing" mobilised at the end of the play is "tantamount to self-annihilating convulsion" (116).

also on their fantasmatic and 'psychic' aspects. I shall also stress that the vicissitudes of the gaze, and, more generally, the multifarious ways in which the ocular and the specular are deployed within the play, are deeply implicated in these constructions. It is not by chance, for instance, to stay with some examples from the end of the play, that Beatrice's speech insists that her father avert the gaze from her contaminated blood, thereby linking the (attempted) restoration of his "better health" to the distinctness of vision: "Look no more upon't, but cast it to the ground regardlessly" (5.3.151-152). Or that Alsemero, in the above dialogue with De Flores, resolutely, if implicitly, thinks of himself as no longer one of those "blind men" (5.3.109) who lack a patriarchally inflected eyesight.[9] Or, finally, that Alsemero's advice to Vermandero regarding the 'wounded' part of the latter's "name" (5.3.180), whilst rehearsing the dominant logic of repression/ejection instituted at the end of the play, does not fail to re-cite that the threat to such a logic lies in what is hidden or too close to be looked at:

Als. Let it be blotted out, let your heart lose it,
And it can never look you in the face,
Nor tell a tale behind the back of life
To your dishonour.
(5.3.182-185)

The mirror, the gaze, the body 'a(na)morphous'

The play opens with Alsemero meditating outside the church where he has just seen Beatrice for the second time:

Als. The place is holy, so is my intent:
I love her beauties to the holy purpose,
And that, methinks, admits comparison
With man's first creation, the place blest,

[9] Alsemero is even able to spot the exteriorised sign of De Flores's guilt, a speck of blood upon his band: "What's this blood upon your band, De Flores? ... ['T]is almost out, but 'tis perceiv'd, though" (5.3.95, 99).

And is his right home back, if he achieve it.
The church hath first begun our interview,
And that's the place must join us into one.
(1.1.5-11)

This soliloquy locates Alsemero's courtly love for Beatrice in an erotic economy wherein the male lover's libidinal investment in, and overvaluation of, the Lady is not opposed to but superimposed upon his desire for himself, a narcissistic desire to recover or constitute his own self as a unity. Waiting for the (improbable) fulfilment of the fantasy of One-ness, Alsemero is "forc'd to repetition" (1.1.70), to reiterate his loving stance and chivalric pose: "I love you dearly" (1.1.71). As for the Lady, she keeps on acting as his mirror image and fantasmatic counterpart, thus signifying, to use a Lacanian terminology, the conflation of the Other with the *objet petit a* qua support of male fantasies, the reduction of the Other to man's (imaginary) 'other'.[10] Later in the play, to Beatrice's avowal: "I have within mine eyes all my desires" (2.2.8), Alsemero typically responds as follows:

Als. W'are so like
In our expressions, lady, that unless I borrow
The same words, I shall never find their equals.
(2.2.12-14)

Yet, the play has already shown that the complementary relation between (the) two (lovers) is only ever an unstable 'imaginary' formation. In fact, the precariousness of the sense of wholeness and completion which the specular double mirrors back to the subject comes to the fore as soon as Alsemero requests "the confirmation by the hand royal" (1.1.81-82) of his love, but realises that this ratification is not, as he assumes, the Lady's "part" (1.1.82). It belongs, instead, with Beatrice's father, as she emphasises: "Oh, there's one above me, sir" (1.1.83).

[10] For the fundamentally narcissistic character of the ideology of courtly love, see Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book VII: The Ethics of Psychoanalysis 1959-60*, trans. Dennis Porter (New York: W. W. Norton, 1992), esp. 139-154. See also Jacques Lacan, *Le séminaire, livre XX: Encore 1969-70* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1975), 65. It is in the latter seminar that Lacan cogently exposes the male fantasies of Woman as unbarred or absolute Other, as the quasi-godly locus through which man attempts to disavow splitting and division. See esp. 61-82.

Alsemero, of course, because of his rank and the former "acquaintance" between his (now dead) father and Vermandero (1.1.167-186), could have been a suitable husband to Beatrice and, more to the point, an appropriate son-in-law to Vermandero.[11] Yet, in Beatrice's words, he has "come so near his time" only to "miss it" (1.1.85-86), and this contre-temps makes his desire irreconcilable with Vermandero's equally ardent "will" to forge a bond with his daughter's betrothed, Alonzo de Piracquo. The play expands on the latter homosocial desire in great detail:

Ver. I tell you, sir, the gentleman's complete,
A courtier and a gallant, enrich'd
With many fair and noble ornaments;
I would not change him for a son-in-law
For any he in Spain....
Als. He's much
Bound to you, sir.
Ver. He shall be bound to me,
As fast as this tie can hold; I'll want
My will else.
(1.1.212-216; 217-219)

Yet, Vermandero's pursuit of an honorable alliance with a man of similar social standing is so intense that he surreptitiously keeps his options open, as it were, inviting Alsemero to "see [his] castle, / And *her* best entertainment" (1.1.201-202) (my emphasis) and to take part in his daughter's wedding. *On the one hand*, these are requests which 'abject' Beatrice's suitor: "He means to feast me, and poison me beforehand" (1.1.207). They also seem to irremediably prejudice his return to an ideal edenic point of origin before the Fall; a return for which the passage through Beatrice's body is still, at this stage of the play, an essential prerequisite:

Als. [*aside.*] How shall I dare to venture in his castle,
When he discharges murderers at the gate?

[11] This is made explicit by Vermandero later on: "Valencia speaks so nobly of you, sir, / I wish I had a daughter now for you" (3.4.1-2).

But I must on, for back I cannot go.
(1.1.222-224)

On the other hand, however, they position him as close as possible to the 'homosocial centre' of the play, and so much so that once the sequence of substitutions making up the plot comes to an end, he will be able to present Vermandero with "a son's duty" (5.3.216).

Vermandero's "will" (1.1.220) also finds itself at odds – but this time with no ambiguous or mitigating overtones – with Beatrice's endeavour to renegotiate her position after her encounter(s) with Alsemero. In 2.1 Beatrice dilates upon her father's desire in terms which emphasise her little margin for manoeuvre within the homosocial economy of Alicante:

Bea. [W]hat's Piracquo
My father spends his breath for? And his blessing
Is only mine, as I regard his name,
Else it goes from me, and turns head against me,
Transform'd into a curse.
(2.1.19-23)

She concludes by stressing how her betrothed's over-eagerness contributes to her predicament:

Bea. He's so forward too,
So urgent that way, scarce allows me breath
To speak to my new comforts.
(2.1.23-25)

These concluding lines, however, can also be read as referring to Vermandero's desire (i.e., his impatience to obtain a son-in-law), just as, in the previous citation, the "name" Beatrice is compelled to "regard" can alternatively be taken to be Piracquo's. This marks an interchangeability between the discursive position of the father and that of the prospective son-in-law, suggesting once again that both men are "hot preparing for this day of triumph" (1.1.189), for the marriage match which will seal their alliance.[12]

[12] It is this interchangeability which facilitates the substitution, on Beatrice and Alsemero's part, of Alonzo de Piracquo for Vermandero as a primary target of

However, Alonzo and Vermandero are not the only characters that "scarce allow [Beatrice] breath" (2.1.25). No sooner does she end her speech on her father/betrothed's forwardness in 2.1. than De Flores enters to deliver the following aside:

De F. [*aside*]. I can as well be hang'd as refrain seeing her;
Some twenty times a day, nay, not so little,
Do I force errands, frame ways and excuses
To come into her sight.
(2.1.28-31)

In effect, it is whilst running one of these "errands" that De Flores comes on to the stage for the first time. In 1.1 he sets himself to announce the arrival of Vermandero, but his alacrity is immediately rebuked by Beatrice:

Bea. What needed then
Your duteous preface? I had rather
He had come unexpected; you must stall
A good presence with unnecessary blabbing.
(1.1.95-98)

Yet, Beatrice is not only concerned about De Flores's "blabbing". She is "displeas'd ... on the sudden" (1.1.108) also because De Flores is a "deadly poison" to her "eyes ... the same that report speaks of the basilisk" (1.1.112; 114-115). She therefore regards his appearance as the emergence of an adverse, defiling gaze. Such a gaze, I would argue, punctures the specular reflection of like to like in which Alsemero and Beatrice engage.

Lacan's discussion of the discrepancy between the subject's eye and the gaze qua *objet petit a* can usefully be recalled in this context. In *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-analysis*, he emphasises that

aggression/aversion; a displacement which safeguards the position of the father, in practical and, to a certain extent, symbolic terms. Alonzo, for instance, is identified in 2.2. as the "cause" of Vermandero's "command" – a "cause" Alsemero offers to "remove" in the course of an aristocratic duel (2.2.23-24) – and as "an enemy, a hateful one, that wishes poison" to the "poor kiss" the two lovers have just exchanged (2.2.16-18).

> in our relation to things, in so far as this relation is constituted by the way of vision ... something slips, passes, is transmitted, from stage to stage, and is always to some degree eluded in it – this is what we call the gaze.[13]

For Lacan, the gaze thus "escapes the grasp of [the] form of vision" which inheres in "that order, which is particularly satisfying for the subject, connoted in psycho-analytic experience by the term narcissism" (74); an "order," as he notes, centred upon the specular image. The gaze is not contained or reflected in the mirror in which one pleasurably "see[s] oneself seeing oneself" (74) from one 'geometral' single point.[14] In short, as he states, "You never look at me from the place from which I see you" (103), which Slavoj Žižek glosses as follows: "I can never see properly, i.e., include in the totality of my field of vision the point in the other from which it gazes back at me".[15] This "point in the other" – the point of the ever elusive gaze – is, for Lacan, nothing but a blot, a "stain" (74), standing for lack and surplus, undermining the subject's self-mirroring and self-recognition and dividing its desire.

In *The Changeling* De Flores embodies such a "stain." In 1.1, for instance, as mentioned earlier, he is assimilated to a "deadly poison" (1.1.112) and likened to the basilisk, a fabulous reptile with a killing look. The extent to which this look is lethal, "to [Beatrice's]

[13] Jacques Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis*, trans. Alan Sheridan (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1979), 73. Subsequent page references will be included parenthetically in the text.

[14] For instance, Lacan asserts that "I see only from one point, but in my existence I am looked at from all sides" (72). Later on he adds: "I am not simply that punctiform being located at the geometral point from which the perspective is grasped" (96).

[15] Slavoj Žižek, "Looking Awry", *October* 50 (1989), 43. For a stimulating study of the discrepancy between a Foucauldian and a Lacanian understanding of the gaze, although in the context of film theory, see Joan Copjec, "The Orthopsychic Subject: Film Theory and the Reception of Lacan", *October* 49 (1989), 53-71. See also Mary Ann Doane, "Remembering Women: Psychical and Historical Constructions in Film Theory", in *Femmes Fatales: Feminism, Film Theory, Psychoanalysis* (London: Routledge, 1991), 76-95. For an analysis which employs Lacan's theory of the gaze in relation to early modern artifacts, see Barbara Freedman, *Staging the Gaze: Postmodernism, Psychoanalysis, and Shakespearean Comedy* (Ithaca: Cornell U.P., 1991).

eyes" (1.1.114) in particular, can be assessed within the context provided by Beatrice and Alsemero's 'imaginary' construction of their bodies and identities in each other's (ideal) image. This is a construction in the course of which they repeatedly bring into the foreground discerning eyes and "intellectual eyesight" (2.1.19) as that which is proper to love,[16] thus showing the intimate connection between the form in which each lover likes to be seen by the other and a sense of vision which is clear and all-encompassing; a vision emblematised by the image of 'plenitude' Beatrice evokes in 2.2 as she sees Alsemero: "I have within mine eyes all my desires" (2.2.8). De Flores's hostile and repugnant look interferes with these 'imaginary' bodies and lines of sights. It begins to hint at something which is "in the subject more than the subject";[17] something which is "strange to me, although it is at the heart of me."[18] In terms closer to the play, De Flores's appearance shifts the focus of Beatrice and Alsemero's dialogue from eyes as "sentinels unto ... judgements" (1.1.72) to eyes caught off guard; from a love which is synonymous with "certain judgement" (1.1.73) to a dislike for which Beatrice cannot "render reason"(1.1.110); and, most importantly, from the opposition between love and aversion to that which subtends and haunts this opposition. Alsemero, for instance, attempts to chivalrously justify Beatrice's inexplicable aversion for De Flores by attributing this "infirmity" (1.1.109) to "a frequent frailty in our nature" (1.1.116), whereby "one distastes / The scent of roses, which to infinites most pleasing is, and odoriferous; / One oil, the enemy of poison; / Another wine, the cheerer of the heart" (1.1.118-122). Yet, the line which summarises this diversity suggests that the object of repulsion and the object of attraction may be uncannily interchangeable: "There's scarce a thing but is both lov'd and loath'd" (1.1.125). Moreover, the exchange which follows Alsemero's admission that he is not immune to 'irrational' loathings himself[19] only stretches the paradox, as it registers the surreptitious

[16] See especially 1.1.65-82 and 2.1.13-14.

[17] Cf. Lacan, *Four*, 263-276.

[18] Lacan, *Ethics*, 71.

[19] "Myself (I must confess) have the same frailty" (1.1.126).

inclusion in the speculum of courtly love of a 'substance' whose exclusion is the *conditio sine qua non* for 'imaginary' bodies and identities to establish and sustain themselves:

Bea. And what may be *your poison*, sir? I am bold with you.
Als. What might be *your desire*, perhaps, a cherry.
(1.1.127-128, my emphasis)

It can thus be argued, in Lacanian terms, that De Flores's look marks the point in the mirror image where the gaze qua *objet a* reappears as a 'foreign body' – *not*, therefore, as a complementary 'object' which brings pleasure or wholeness but, rather, as an 'ex-timate' object which keeps on signifying the uncanny reverse side of the subject, its intimate alterity to itself.[20] As far as Beatrice is concerned, this is an 'object' which compulsively "come[s] into [her] sight" (2.1.31) in the first two acts of the play, and "more disturbs [her] than all [her] other passions" (2.1.53-54). She expands on this as follows:

Bea. I never see this fellow, but I think
Of some harm towards me, danger's in my mind still;
I scarce leave trembling of an hour after.
(2.1.89-91)

The emergence of the point from which Beatrice's "fellow" gazes back at her, re-presenting her as other than she is, other than her ideal image of herself, does not cease to provoke anxiety. But it is worth specifying that it is by virtue of his disfigured, 'a(na)morphous' countenance – as an "ominous ill-fac'd fellow" (2.1.53) – that De Flores provides the material correlative of a gaze which is too close for comfort, of the 'overproximate' gaze qua *objet petit a*.[21] To refer to one of Žižek's definitions of the *objet petit a*, De Flores's is a "strange body" which cannot be properly symbolised or specularised

[20] For Lacan's notion of *extimité* (i.e., intimate exteriority), see *Ethics*, esp. 139 and 71.

[21] I use 'a(na)morphous' in order to simultaneously stress the notion of 'amorphousness', the lack of a distinct form, and the notion of 'anamorphosis' as emblematising, according to Lacan, the excess over vision and the de-centring of the subject of vision as a punctiform being. On anamorphosis, see Lacan, *Four*, 79-119.

and is therefore "produced as a residue, a remnant, a leftover ... embodying horrifying jouissance"; a 'surplus enjoyment' which "simultaneously attracts and repels".[22] It attracts, or, rather, in Alsemero's appropriate words, "tempt[s] [Beatrice's] sight" (1.1.131), because it lacks proper and regular features and, by the same token, sticks out. As such, it unbalances her position as a viewer and inexorably draws her towards that 'point of otherness' where the distance from the image with which she is presented is threatened with annihilation.[23]

De Flores himself repeatedly returns to his unsightly appearance and the detrimental effect it has on Beatrice. The following lines, in particular, (re)emphasise that his body acts as the material support of the gaze, thus becoming 'a body too much':

De F. She ... does profess herself
The cruellest enemy to my face in town,
At no hand can abide the sight of me,
As if danger or ill luck hung in my looks.
(2.1.32-36)

Yet, as the speech progresses, De Flores's "looks" reveal themselves to be hideous as a result of a process of abjection which is 'social' as much as 'psychic'. He confesses that his face is "bad enough" (2.1.37). Nonetheless, he adds, "far worse ha[ve] better fortune, / And not endur'd alone, but doted on" (2.1.38-39).[24] He concludes with lines which may seem at first sight to have little to do with the rest of the speech: "Though my hard fate has thrust me out to servitude, / I tumbled into th'world a gentleman" (2.1.48-49). Yet, these are lines which establish an intimate connection between the lesser "fortune" of his face and the expulsion which has forced him

[22] Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (London: Verso, 1989), 180.

[23] As we shall see later, this 'distance' is also to be interpreted as a class distance and distinction.

[24] He goes on to describe these "far worse" faces as follows: "[S]uch pick-hair'd faces, chins like witches', / Here and there five hairs, whispering in a corner, / As if they grew in fear of one another, / Wrinkles like troughs, where swine-deformity swills / The tears of perjury that lie there like wash / Fallen from the slimy and dishonest eye" (2.1.40-45).

to cross a social boundary and turned him into an abject remainder which cannot be looked at straight on. In short, De Flores's deformed "looks" are anything but natural. They are "matter in the wrong place" also in social terms,[25] bearing the same lethal traits as those of the "rejected bits and pieces" to which Mary Douglas refers in her notorious study of pollution.[26] They retain a "half-identity" which constitutes a threat not only "to good order" and "the distinctions made," but also to the distinctness of vision, causing "the clarity of the scene in which they obtrude [to be] impaired by their presence".[27]

De Flores's speech therefore suggests that the psychoanalytic approach I have been putting forward needs to be supplemented by an emphasis on the interimplication between the 'social' and the 'psychic' and, more specifically, on how the differential distribution of power within the 'social' functions as the site of articulation of psychic material. In Beatrice's case, for instance, the play *does* stage the discontinuity or splitting of an identity faced with the re-emergence of a 'traumatic object'. Yet, this *mise en scène* takes place within historically contingent co-ordinates of class, gender and eroticism. In fact, Beatrice's aversion for De Flores can be re-read as the repetition of the process whereby the latter is "thrust ... out to servitude", as a kind of class abjection which cannot be safely carried out because of *her own* lesser "fortune", of her own (socially coded) "ill luck" within the patriarchal system of constraints in Alicante. "Would creation ... had form'd me man" (2.2.107-108), she sighs in the dialogue in which she sets in motion her partially successful plan to employ De Flores to eliminate her betrothed Alonzo. She continues with a speech in which she refers to her powerlessness *vis-à-vis* one of her "two inveterate loathings" (2.2.145). Nonetheless, the speech also throws some light on why her aversion for the repulsive 'fallen gentleman' *she is speaking to* is unable to sustain itself:

[25] "Matter in the wrong place" is Freud's definition of "dirt" in "Character and Anal Erotism" (1908), in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud* (hereafter *SE*), IX, ed. James Strachey (London: The Hogarth Press, 1953-74), 173. This is in English in the original.

[26] Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of the Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (London: Routledge, 1991), 160.

[27] Ibid., 160, 161.

Bea. Oh, 'tis the soul of freedom!
I should not then be forc'd to marry one
I hate beyond all depths, I should have power
Then to oppose my loathings, nay, remove 'em
For ever from my sight.
(2.2.109-113)

I pointed out earlier that the 'overproximate' gaze clinging to De Flores's "looks" (2.1.36) brings (back) into being the uncanny reverse side of Beatrice's body and identity. It can now be argued that the (re)appearance of this 'other-than-ideal' side of Beatrice – the 'a(na)morphous' blot in the mirror she can see only by fading as a subject – is inextricably linked to that subjection/abjection in gender terms which makes her class position, as well as any process of expulsion/repulsion initiated from such position, dangerously unstable. But it is worth re-emphasising that it is her turning away from the object of her father's homosocial desire, her "making choice of [Alsemero]" (2.1.9), that exacerbates the precariousness of her already 'hybrid' and split identity within the patriarchal and aristocratic community of Alicante, and thus facilitates the excruciating return of this uncanny lethal double of her self.[28]

Intimate bonds, corporeal 'acts', bodily contours

In her reading of the play, Lisa Jardine argues that Beatrice's choice of a marriage partner becomes "the epicentre of blame", especially inasmuch as it indicates some kind of agency on her part.[29] If this is so, it seems paradoxical that the character who is mainly entrusted with the indictment of this choice is none other than De Flores; a character, that is, whose 'erotic prospects' are furthered by her transgression of her father's command:

De F. [*aside.*] I have watch'd this meeting, and do wonder much

[28] On the splitting of Beatrice's identity, see Ania Loomba, *Gender, Race, Renaissance Drama* (Manchester: Manchester U.P., 1989), 96-97.

[29] Lisa Jardine, *Reading Shakespeare Historically* (London: Routledge, 1996), 123.

What shall become of t'other [i.e., Alonzo]; I'm sure both
Cannot be serv'd unless she transgress; happily
Then I'll put in for one: for if a woman
Fly from one point, from him she makes a husband,
She spreads and mounts then like arithmetic,
One, ten, a hundred, a thousand, ten thousand,
Proves in time sutler to an army royal.
(2.2.57-64)

De Flores sees Beatrice's choice as a 'serial act'; an act whose repeatability can only mean that he too will "have [his] will" (1.1.237), and partake of the horizontal bond of 'alienated brothers' invading her body. In 3.4, as he claims the "reward" for his "service" (2.2.129-130), he associates her "fly[ing] from one point" with a disreputable 'change' in her "affection" from her "first love", to then make such a movement/permutation strictly (and literally) synonymous with another kind of 'change' – the murder of Alonzo. The assumption, of course, is that Beatrice's choice is nothing less than a kind of homicidal act:

De F. Though thou writ'st maid, thou whore in thy affection!
'Twas chang'd from thy first love, and that's a kind
Of whoredom in thy heart; and he's changed now [i.e., Alonzo],
To bring thy second on, thy Alsemero,
Whom ... if I enjoy thee not, thou ne'er enjoy'st.
(3.4.142-147)

Jardine notes that "the strongest lines imputing dangerously disruptive motives to the active woman are all put into the mouth of the arch-villain".[30] Nonetheless, I want to suggest that the fact that De Flores plays such a crucial role in the demonisation of Beatrice's fashioning of a male/female intimate relationship – a fashioning from whose bankruptcy he profits – has more far-reaching implications than Jardine's analysis allows. In particular, it calls for a more extensive investigation of the discursive position(s) De Flores adopts.

[30] Ibid., 129

For Jardine, De Flores is a Bosola-like "household servant of the new model, who offers service for material reward". He lives in a world where "service is costed, and where the 'rate' for disposing of a suitor is sexual intimacy".[31] Thus, he cannot but rebuff Beatrice's appeal to the distinction of blood as an obstacle to a recompense of a sexual kind. Jardine refers to these often cited lines to support her point:

Bea. Think but upon the distance that creation
Set 'twixt thy blood and mine, and keep thee there.
De F. Look but into your conscience, read me there.
'Tis a true book, you'll find me there your equal:
Push, fly not to your birth, but settle you
In what the act has made you, y'are no more now;
You must forget your parentage to me:
Y'are the deed's creature; ... and I challenge you,
As peace and innocency has turn'd you out,
And made you one with me.
(3.4.130-137; 138-140)

Therefore, De Flores's act/service, by implicating Beatrice, brings about the undermining of the "distance" signified in the blood and makes her "one with [him]". Sign and symptom of a Machiavellian kind of praxis, it expels them both in a 'private' economy of negotiations and exchanges which is at odds with the fixed ordering of bodies and identities inhering in the *dispositif* of alliance.[32] Yet, of course, the transactions associated with such a 'proto-bourgeois' economy are far from being un-marked by inequalities of power. Indeed, the most conspicuous amongst these transactions in the 'reward scene' entail some form or other of coercion, like the 'marriage' De Flores forces upon Beatrice and the ensuing consummation/rape. They constitute a travesty of the mutual 'exchange' and 'coalescence' of bodies and identities typical of the

[31] Ibid., 126.

[32] For this notion, see Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1981), 105-106.

emerging ideology of 'companionate' marriages.[33] Thus, the undoing of class distinctions is not synonymous with the obliteration of all power demarcations. This, in turn, has a bearing on the positions De Flores occupies; positions, I now want to argue, which are multiple and heterogeneous to one other.

To some extent, the dialogue cited above re-marks De Flores's career as the uncanny double of Beatrice. It shows once again the (socially coded) impossibility on Beatrice's part to uphold or re-create the boundaries of her body and identity through the abjection of, or the displacement of her gender abjection onto, De Flores – in this case, through the invocation of the insurmountable "distance" separating her from De Flores – without the latter inexorably coming back to haunt. Yet, it is also worth stressing that there are some new elements in the dialogue, as well as in the 'reward scene' as a whole, which re-articulate the dynamics of haunting in quite peculiar ways. In this respect, one needs to specify that De Flores is not only inscribed *in* the "true book" of "conscience" as Beatrice's "equal", as the double which persistently and compulsively designates the intolerable sameness and uncanny interchangeability between allegedly opposed (socially marked) entities. By enjoining her to "look", "read" ,"fly not", and so forth, he also speaks *with* the voice of conscience. Thus, perhaps more clearly than anywhere else in the play, he dons the robes of a sadistic, guilt-producing superego; a figure, to paraphrase Freud's "On Narcissism", which watches her and measures her against her *class* and *gender* ideal.[34] To put it somewhat differently, the (supposedly) common 'expulsion' of Beatrice and De Flores into 'equality' is, from the latter's perspective

[33] After the "act" De Flores declares that they "should stick together" (3.4.84), and that it is not "fit" that a couple like them, "engag'd so jointly, should part and live asunder" (3.4.88-89). He then tries to seal his 'vows' with a kiss, having already presented Beatrice with the ring complete with finger he has cut off from Alonzo's body. Cf. Jardine, *Reading Shakespeare*, 125-126.

[34] Sigmund Freud, "On Narcissism: An Introduction" (1914), in *SE*, XIV, 67-102. Of course, at this stage, Freud does not yet speak of the superego, but of "a special psychic agency which ... constantly watches the actual ego and measures it by that ideal [i.e., the ego ideal]" (89). Freud often emphasises the 'cruel', 'dictatorial' and 'compulsive' character of the superego in *The Ego and the Id* (1923), in *SE*, XIX, 1-66.

at least, superimposed upon an 'imaginary' process of reversal of the movement which has "thrust [him] out to servitude" (2.1.48). It is this fantasmatic process of return to, and identification with, his ideal (social) self that enables the 'fallen gentleman' to pose as the embodiment of the gaze and voice of a judgemental superego.[35] That he also instigates Beatrice's 'sexual transgression' – her insertion in the 'private' bodily economy opened up by the "act" – whilst speaking from this position does not invalidate his functioning as an agent of psychic and social regulation. On the contrary, it is by coupling this instigation with the injunction to recognize the distance between herself and herself (as opposed to the class "distance" between them) that he ensures that her transgression be a highly regulated kind of affair.[36]

De Flores's disdainful rejection of Beatrice's offer of a pecuniary remuneration for the murder of Alonzo, which occupies most of the rest of the 'reward scene', also needs to be related to that fantasmatic reversal/return which culminates with his assumption of the stance of a superegoic figure. To De Flores, this is an offer which implicitly and explicitly ascribes to him a status which is not properly his: "Do you place me in the rank of verminous fellows, / To destroy things for wages?" (3.4.64-65) Later on, however, he qualifies these lines by acknowledging his current predicament: "You see I have thrown contempt upon your gold, / Not that I want it not, for I do piteously" (3.4.111-112). In fact, he adopts a pragmatic approach to the matter: "Well, being my fees I'll take it" (3.4.46), whilst hastening to add: "Great men have taught me that, or else my merit / Would scorn the way on't" (3.4.47-48).

[35] This fantasmatic process is a paradoxical form of class and gender advancement which is indistinguishable from the displacement of his class and gender abjection onto a character like Beatrice who, as I have argued, is compelled to contribute in a crucial way to this abjection.

[36] One can add that the fact that De Flores is simultaneously 'obscene' and 'hypermoral' is less of a contradiction than indicative of the 'normal' functioning of the superego, concesso non dato, of course, that anything to do with the superego can be seen as 'normal'. Particularly relevant here is Slavoj Žižek's Lacanian analysis of the 'idiotic' and 'obscene' superegoic law as a specific suspension of the (symbolic) Law; a suspension which does not fail to keep the subject in check. See *The Metastases of Enjoyment: Six Essays on Woman and Causality* (London: Verso, 1994), esp. 54-86.

De Flores admits that he wants, and "piteously." Yet, he wants more, and in direct proportion not only to the quality of the 'service' carried out on Beatrice's behalf or the 'risks' involved therein (including the deleterious, if calculated, effect on his conscience), but also to what he sees as his "merit" and "rank" – not "wages", then, or even just sexual intercourse with Beatrice, but, rather, her "virginity":

De F. And were I not resolv'd in my belief
That thy virginity were perfect in thee,
I should but take my recompense with grudging,
As if I had but half my hopes I agreed for.
(3.4.116-119)

This is also to suggest that in the 'reward scene' Beatrice's body is construed in two overlapping ways, and that this process is bound up with the double coding of De Flores's act/service: in sum, as an act emblematising a Machiavellian kind of praxis which is at odds with a sense of identity as the pre-established performance of the role occupied in the hierarchised body politic of Alicante; but also, at one and the same time, as an act symptomatising De Flores's fantasmatic recovery of his ideal (social) self, of the self he once was before the 'expulsion'. First of all, Beatrice's body is identified with, and essentialised as, a flesh-and-blood body whose hymeneal membrane constitutes the 'proper', all too material "recompense" for an act/service which is represented not only as erotically charged but also as that which eroticises the body of the perpetrator/doer.[37] Indeed, as the 'reward scene' progresses, Beatrice is constrained to see her bodily identity, through De Flores's eyes, not only as a 'hymeneal object' of transaction but also as the 'passive' counterpart to De Flores's own body; a body which De Flores describes as the quasi-literalised 'factual' site of 'sexual' drives:

[37] For instance, the "work of secrecy" (3.2.17) carried out by De Flores on a disarmed Alonzo from behind the latter's back looks very much like a form of anal aggression. In the 'reward scene', he glories in this "performance," whilst claiming to be "so warm yet in [his] service" (3.4.56-57). Later on, he exclaims: "Oh, this act / Has put me into spirit! I was greedy on't / As the parch'd earth of moisture, when the clouds weep" (3.4.106-108).

De F. I have eas'd you
Of your trouble, think on't, I'm in pain,
And must be eas'd of you; 'tis a charity,
Justice invites your blood to understand me.
(3.4.97-100)

In other words, the suspension of the metaphysical and political order of blood distinctions goes hand in hand, from De Flores's point of view, with the emergence of 'natural' and palpable bodies, of entities whose materiality seems to consist in that they are always-already marked by (asymmetrical) differences of sex/gender which function, in turn, as the primary and 'natural' determinants of erotic desire. Nonetheless, no sooner do these 'natural' and 'heterosexualised' bodies appear, offering a glimpse of the inception of an historically different formation of bodies and desires, than they are re-configured as entities that provide the (bodily) means for De Flores's articulation of his fantasmatic class and gender mobility at the expense of Beatrice. Hence, a second construction of Beatrice's body which is superimposed upon the first. Within the terms of this construction, Beatrice's body once again corresponds to her hymen, but this time this bodily margin is fantasized by De Flores as a class margin, as a partially idealised *limes* which can be re-crossed.[38]

The 'pro(re)gression' of male homosocial desire

De Flores re-presents himself in the 'reward scene' as the same as Beatrice, in a way which is intolerable to the latter; but also,

[38] Both Whigham ("Reading Social Conflict") and Neill ("'Hidden malady'") point out that the margins of Beatrice's body stand for the margins of the 'aristocratic body'. Whigham, in particular, citing from the speech delivered by De Flores at the end of the first scene of the play ("Now I know / She had rather wear my pelt tann'd in a pair / Of dancing pumps, than I should thrust my fingers / Into her sockets here" [1.1.231-224]), argues that "we ought to see the entire chain of glove/skin/pelt as marking an external boundary of the aristocratic body, already breached in prospect" (339). However, this is not the only construction of Beatrice's body. Nor can it be taken as emblematic of all the other constructions. Moreover, the fantasmatic dimension is also significant.

simultaneously, as not quite the same as her, not least because of the fact, as I pointed out, that one of the paradoxical effects of the "act" is a kind of purification which paves the way for his (partial) recasting of himself as a superegoic figure censuring Beatrice. It is by appropriating and speaking from this superegoic position, one can add, that De Flores, in spite of a concomitant rhetoric of sameness and equality, re-marks that his desire for Beatrice is not a form of identification.[39] Or, to be more precise, that his 'private' bond with her is both structured from within by gender asymmetry and, for the most part, subordinated to a fantasmatic bond with an idealised, class-bound former version of himself. But how does this disjunction between desire and identification relate, if at all, to the male homosocial economy which arguably governs the play; an economy wherein, to borrow from Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, male heterosexual desire is "a desire to consolidate partnership with authoritative males in and through the bodies of females"?[40]

To begin to answer this question, one can re-emphasise that within the male homosocial economy of Alicante Beatrice's body is equated with her virginity and thus reduced to a (detachable) bodily element which, strictly speaking, is not so much a part synecdochically standing for the whole as a fetishistic 'object' to which her body, and, as we shall see, her "soul" (1.1.193), is affixed. More importantly for my argument here, this bodily part takes on a contradictory position which reflects the more general fracture in women's status within a male homosocial economy; a "schism," as Sedgwick points out, "between being ostensibly the objects of men's heterosexual desire and being more functionally the conduits of their homosocial desire towards other men".[41] As the following dialogue suggests, Beatrice's hymen matters inasmuch as it is marked in advance by an act of 'proper' and 'legitimate' penetration within the

[39] De Flores's very first aside makes it clear that his desire is not an identification with the object of desire: "I'll please myself with sight / Of her, at all opportunities, / If but to spite her anger; I know she had / Rather see me dead than living, and yet / She knows no cause for't, but a peevish will" (1.1.103-107).

[40] Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (New York: Columbia U.P., 1985), 38.

[41] Ibid., 57.

bounds of a dynastic marriage; a penetration which, by interrupting her contiguity with herself, seals relations of friendship between men. Yet in itself (read: as simply the object of heterosexual desire), it is nothing and nothing but a trifle, a "toy":

Ver. [Alonzo]'s hot preparing for this day of triumph....
Bea. Nay, good sir, be not so violent, with speed
I cannot render satisfaction
Unto the dear companion of my soul,
Virginity, whom I thus long have liv'd with,
And part with it so rude and suddenly;
Can such friends divide, never to meet again,
Without a solemn farewell?
Ver. Tush, tush, there's a toy.
(1.1.189; 191-197)

Tomazo (the betrothed's brother) does not share Vermandero's homosocial confidence that the male heterosexual detour through the body of Beatrice is but an insignificant diversion which unproblematically leads to homosocial gratification. Having spotted the "small welcome in [Beatrice's] eye" (2.1.106) and "the dullness of her parting" (2.1.124), he realises that Alonzo's identification with Vermandero's (over)identification with him,[42] by being de facto structurally congruent with the lack of 'proper' supervision of Beatrice, is unable to effectively counter and/or counterbalance the 'effeminising' threat posed by the heterosexual detour of male desire – what he calls the "madness" of "love" whereby "a man quickly steals into vexation" (2.1.154-155). To Tomazo, who takes for granted the male traffic in women, the exchange of a 'property' such as Beatrice from Vermandero to Alonzo in order to create or renew a homosocial alliance between the men does not act as a guarantee for its possession: "[Y]our faith's cozened in her, strongly cozened; / Unsettle your affection with all speed / Wisdom can bring it to, your

[42] Vermandero, on whose intense homosocial desire I have already commented, salutes Alonzo and Tomazo as follows: "Y'are both welcome, / But an especial one belongs to you, sir, / To whose most noble name our love presents / The addition of a son, our son Alonzo" (2.1.96-99). Alonzo replies: "The treasury of honour cannot bring forth / A title I should more rejoice in, sir" (2.1.100-101).

peace is ruin'd else" (2.1.128-130). To strengthen his point, he conjures up a scenario which (paranoically) explores the "vexation" his brother would have to undergo as a result of the 'movement' of the woman-qua-property, even if such a 'movement', pending a further loss of "restraint" (2.1.139), were but minimal and imaginary, and strictly taking place within the legitimate confines of marriage:

Tom. Think what a torment 'tis to marry one
Whose heart is leap'd into another's bosom:
If ever pleasure she receive from thee,
It comes not in thy name, or of thy gift;
She lies but with another in thine arms,
He the half-father unto all thy children
In the conception; if he get 'em not,
She helps to get 'em for him.
(2.1.131-138)

In the fantasmatic scenario Tomazo envisages, Beatrice's imaginary transgression inexorably puts Alonzo in an unbearable triangular situation in which he serves as the 'feminised' and 'objectified' conduit for relations of (erotic) exchange between Beatrice and her lover. Moreover, and perhaps more crucially, it disrupts the legitimate reproductive designs which mostly motivate the heterosexual detour of male homosocial desire; designs which, through the transmission of the name, property and rank of the father, ultimately coincide with the reproduction and perpetuation of publicly acknowledged bonds between men. Yet, one needs to add, *first of all*, that in spite of the fact that Alonzo is transformed into a vehicle for the (repeated) intercourse between a man and a woman, the woman is not promoted to a position of power comparable to that occupied by a man within the dominant man-man-woman triangulation of desire. She "receive[s]", "lies", and, at the most, "helps to get [children]" for another man. In other words, even as Tomazo dramatises the threat posed to homosocial gratification by a betrayal which exposes Alonzo to a confusion of identities with Beatrice, the latter is (misogynistically) turned into some kind of doubly (re)productive but still subordinated medium, facilitating relations between a man and further narcissistic versions of himself. *Secondly*, and relatedly, the

usurping male is, from the point of view of the betrayed male articulated by Tomazo, as much the focus of anxiety and desire as the deceitful woman, or more. In this sense, Tomazo's *mise en scène* can be said to correspond to, or, at least, to provide the raw material for, a typical early modern scenario of male sexual jealousy. These scenarios, according to Dollimore, are "obsessively heterosexual" but do not fail to compulsively exhibit "eroticized images of the rival male".[43] Indeed, they show that, for the betrayed male, "the separate/d objects of identification and desire – the rival man and the faithless woman – ... unite ... as a distorted counterpart of ... the fantasized, fearful convergence of identification and desire".[44] Hence, in Tomazo's imagining, the erotic contiguity between the rival man and Alonzo – an anxiety-ridden fantasmatic and syntactic contiguity, as particularly displayed by the following line: "She lies but with another in thine arms" (2.1.135, my emphasis); but also, at one and the same time, the equally anxious proximity between Alonzo and the faithless woman. This proximity, because of the intervening male, is 'un-(re)productive' or only 'half-(re)productive'. It causes the legitimate husband to become the inverted but symmetrical double of the excessively and 'unproperly' (re)productive woman. It is thus liable to be connoted, within most early modern discourses on gender and sexuality, as lustful and 'effeminising', as an identification with, or a regression into, the 'inferior' status of woman.[45]

To Tomazo, therefore, Alonzo's detour through Beatrice's body threatens to bring into being – or, perhaps, to bring *back* into being – the instability of the mutual opposition between identification and desire which is constitutive of masculine identity within the male

[43] Jonathan Dollimore, *Sexual Dissidence: Augustine to Wilde, Freud to Foucault* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), 304.

[44] Ibid., 305.

[45] Many critics have recently underlined differences between early modern and modern and late modern erotic systems. 'Male effeminacy' is often referred to as an emblematic example of some of these differences. For a splendid analysis of masculinity as an anxious performance, endlessly attempting to dispel the spectre of effeminacy as emblematised by the 'default body' of the female, see Laura Levine, *Men in Women's Clothing: Anti-theatricality and Effeminization 1579-1642* (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 1994).

homosocial economy dominating the play. But, of course, it is not Alonzo who will undergo this kind of "torment" (2.1.131). It is, rather, the 'rival' himself who will endure something similar to the "vexation" Tomazo imagines. In this respect, it is worth pointing out that, outside the scenario of male sexual jealousy, the 'rival' Alsemero is not characterised by his sexual exploits. At least initially, he is marked by his feats as a seaman-adventurer, themselves mystifyingly connoted as a kind of obligatory and only temporary deferral of an even more 'masculine' enterprise – the revenge upon "those rebellious Hollanders" (1.1.183) who have killed his father. Given this, as well as the related fact that he is represented as satisfyingly operating within an entirely, almost egalitarian, homosocial milieu before the start of the play,[46] his 'friend' Jasperino cannot but exclude heterosexual love – that effeminising "hidden malady" (1.1.24) – as the reason for his sudden decision to bring his "inclinations to travel at a pause" (1.1.27):

Jas. Lover I'm sure y'are none, the stoic was
Found in you long ago; your mother nor
Best friends, who have set snares of beauty (ay,
And choice ones, too), could never trap you that way.
(1.1.36-39)

Nonetheless, it is precisely the prospect of a love bond with Beatrice which lies behind Alsemero's resolve to protract his stay in Alicante. At this stage in the play, of course, he does not see such a male/female bond as effeminising or in any way endangering his masculine identity. Nor does he consider it incompatible with his indefatigable peregrinations: "I'm all this while a-going, man" (1.1.45). Jasperino warns him that the 'movement' in which he is engaged may be "backwards" (1.1.46). He decides, nonetheless, to join forces with his friend and master and become "a venturer in this voyage" (1.1.90): "Yonder's another vessel [i.e., Diaphanta], I'll board her" (1.1.91). Yet, one needs to specify that, as far as Alsemero

[46] This is Jasperino addressing Alsemero: "Ashore you were wont to call your servants up, / And help to trap your horses for the speed; / At sea I have seen you weigh the anchor with 'em, / Hoist sails for fear to lose the foremost breath" (1.1.29-32).

is concerned, this is not just any kind of "voyage". Beatrice's virginal body, as well as the sacred enclosure of the temple with which her body is associated, are "his right home back" (1.1.9) to a paradisiacal Beginning – *back*, that is, to an originary plenitude *and*, simultaneously, back to the Father.[47]

Alsemero, as is often the case with the play as a whole, uses the language of metaphysics to articulate a sexual politics, emphasising an even balance between a male/female and a male/male bond, as well as an unproblematic passage from one to the other. Yet, as I pointed out, Beatrice's impending marriage thwarts the arrangement of bodies and identities he contemplates. In particular, it implicitly and explicitly turns his desire, which is ultimately a desire to put an end to desire, into yet another forward motion that threatens to endlessly defer the return – the movement *back* – to the Father: "But I must on, for back I cannot go" (1.1.224). This compulsive movement forward, inasmuch as it denotes a loss of masculine self-control, is virtually indistinguishable from that "going backwards" Jasperino warns Alsemero against; a "going backwards" standing for a frightful identification with, and/or a regression into, that which he 'heterosexually' desires. Moreover, because of the impossibility on Alsemero's part to formally negotiate reliable bonds with authoritative males inside the body politic of Alicante, such a movement forward/backward also threateningly points to a confusion of identities between him and a class outsider such as De Flores – an 'out-cast' who, as he strives to re-cross those class boundaries he fantasises as 'em-bodied' by Beatrice, similarly "cannot choose but love her" (1.1.235) and is "enjoin'd / To follow ... whilst she flies from [him]" (1.1.101-102).

'Re-visions' and cryptic incorporations

The play's finale shows the completion of the movement leading *back* to the Father: "Sir, you have yet a son's duty living, / Please

[47] They also constitute, that is, the 'proper' alternative route that should enable Alsemero to seal the gap opened up by his father's death.

you, accept it" (5.3.215-216), which coincides with the creation of a fraternal bond between Alsemero and Tomazo: "Your change is come too, from an ignorant wrath / To knowing friendship" (5.3.202-203).[48] But to what extent is Alsemero able to fully obliterate and/or reverse that 'pro(re)gression' he has not ceased to inhabit in spite of himself? The first crucial step towards this obliteration/reversal is the detection of the secret liaison between De Flores and Beatrice, which echoes De Flores's discovery of the equally clandestine relationship between Alsemero and Beatrice in 2.1:

Jas. Your confidence, I'm sure, is now of proof.
The prospect from the garden has show'd
Enough for deep suspicion.
Als. The black mask
That so continually was worn upon't
Condemns the face for ugly ere't be seen—
Her despite to him, and so seeming-bottomless.
(5.3.1-6)

This is a discovery which undermines De Flores's control over the 'private' spaces and hidden recesses of Vermandero's castle (including those emblematised by Beatrice's body); a control which is repeatedly associated with the possession of a scrutinising gaze. It is by appropriating such a gaze that Alsemero launches his own visual inspection of Beatrice. Following Jasperino's advice to "search this ulcer soundly" (5.3.8), he employs the gaze as a surgical "probe" (5.3.7) to explore and bring to light what is concealed or secret: "I'll ... seek out truth within you, if there be any left" (5.3.36). Coterminously, he does not fail to vow that "[he]'ll ransack [her heart] and tear out [his] suspicion" (5.3.38-39). his is a pledge which indicates how an active will to punish regularly surfaces in a context in which a 'salutary double' – a double erstwhile facilitating relations between oneself and (the other as) oneself – re-presents itself as an opaque, "deform'd" (5.3.77) and 'castrating' double: "Did my fate wait for this unhappy stroke at my first sight of woman?" (5.3.12-13).

[48] Vermandero's 'magical' acquisition of a son bears witness to the recurrent early modern male fantasy of reproduction untainted by the passage through the female body.

As these remarks begin to suggest, the aggressive economy of the *speculum* implemented by Alsemero is inextricably bound up with his attempt to construct – or, rather, extract from Beatrice – a consistent and unified narrative aimed at making sense of, and thus overcome, the traumatic events that have taken place in Alicante.[49] Crucial to this attempt is also a process of 're-vision' of the 'trauma', which compulsively drives his narrative towards a dramatic turn (in both senses of the word).[50] Such a 're-vision' reaches its climax when Alsemero recasts himself as a dramatist and incites De Flores to join Beatrice in the closet, soliciting the re-enactment of that "scene of lust" which takes place offstage at the end of the third act; a potentially iterable "scene" which will later be shown, for theatrical and ideological reasons, only through its effects, as an evacuation of contaminated fluid:

Als. Nay, you shall to her.
Peace, crying crocodile, your sounds are heard!
Take your prey to you, get you in to her, sir. *Exit* DE FLORES.
I'll be your pander now; rehearse again
Your scene of lust, that you may be perfect
When you shall come to act it to the black audience
Where howls and gnashings shall be music to you.
Clip your adult'ress freely, 'tis the pilot
Will guide you to the Mare Mortuum,
Where you shall sink to fathoms bottomless.
(5.3.111-120)

In his role as a dramatist, Alsemero scrupulously delivers 'stage directions' which signify the hiatus dividing him from the "scene of lust" and thus bear witness to his desire for (visual) mastery: "Enter

[49] This is a narrative which represses, but does not fully suppress, alternative accounts of the same events such as the one offered by Beatrice, who insists, on the one hand, on Alsemero's implication in Alonzo's murder ("Your love has made me / A cruel murd'ress" [5.3.64-65]; "Forget not, sir, / It for your sake was done" [5.3.77-78]); on the other, on the system of patriarchal constraints which has left her no "[b]etter means than that worst, to assure [Alsemero] to [her]" (5.3.71-72).

[50] This is a narrative which does not seem to proceed without hesitation: "In what part of this sad story shall I first begin?" (5.3.87-88); "I forgot my message" (5.3.100).

my closet" (5.3.86); "Take your prey to you, get you in to her" (5.3.113); "Rehearse again" (5.3.114); "Come forth, you twins of mischief" (5.3.142); and so forth. In effect, to refer to Katharine Maus's study of early modern scenarios of male sexual jealousy, he implicitly redefines his marginality vis-à-vis the "scene of lust" he eagerly produces as a *self-inflicted* marginality and, by doing so, he attempts to turn "his impotence and helplessness" into a "form of potency: the power of superior discernment".[51] One must add that this is a self-inflicted marginality which actively marginalises, in that it is strictly simultaneous with his endeavor to re-create the boundaries of his body and identity through the abjection/expulsion of those 'deformed' (non)entities he confines to the 'private' space of his closet. Yet, one only needs to take a second look at the way in which Alsemero sets up and visualises the "scene of lust" to realise that he not only invites Beatrice and De Flores to "rehearse again" that "scene of lust" he does not fail to (re)present to himself. He also continuously, if fantasmatically, crosses the threshold of the closet to re-present himself in the scene by means of an identificatory bond with a figure like De Flores that acts as his double. In other words, the "scene of lust" is also a fantasy scene whose 'subject' is a 'subject', to borrow from Borch-Jacobsen's more general deconstructive analyses of the 'subject' of/in fantasy, that "never avoids yielding to an identification and always confuses itself in some way with another (an alter ego – but one that is neither other nor self)".[52] This is an identification which manifests itself, more or less explicitly, in Alsemero's allocation of roles, which tends to play down De Flores's contribution to transgression as compared to Beatrice's. Indeed, whilst De Flores is cast as Beatrice's "prey", she is fantasised as taking on the (active) role of a "pilot" who "will guide [him] to the Mare Mortuum". This is less an unbiased reflection of the positions they respectively occupy when they first

[51] Katharine Maus, "Horns of Dilemma: Jealousy, Gender, and Spectatorship in English Renaissance Drama," *English Literary History* 54 (1987), 571.

[52] Mikkel Borch-Jacobsen, *The Freudian Subject*, trans. Catherine Porter (Stanford: Stanford U.P., 1988), 21.

'rehearse' the "scene of lust" at the end of 3.4.[53] than a reinterpretation which owes much to the fact that Alsemero, just as he enjoins De Flores to 'enjoy' in his place, invites him to mime the position he has come to identify as peculiar to his own relation with Beatrice. Given this 'imaginary' reversibility of positions, one may add, it makes perfect sense for Beatrice to be referred to by Alsemero as De Flores's "adult'ress".

Alsemero's placing of himself in a position of *intimate* exteriority with respect to the re-enactment of the traumatic "scene of lust", inasmuch as it indicates some kind of blurring of precise distinctions between outside and inside', 'self' and 'other', is hardly reconcilable with his simultaneous effort to 're-view' and re-present the scene *to* himself from the (supposedly) safe distance bestowed on him by his role as a dramatist. More specifically, this is a position which complicates one of the most essential aspects of the movement towards (visual) mastery and/or containment he devises – the re-creation of himself through the re-establishing of clear-cut demarcations along class and gender lines. Indeed, Alsemero's position of intimate exteriority suggests that his self-(re)fashioning does not so much correspond to an exclusion/abjection of both "twins of mischief" (5.3.142) as to an *including* exclusion, a cryptic incorporation of De Flores which also further excludes/abjects Beatrice.

As with the process of cryptic incorporation described by Derrida, Alsemero's is "an inclusion intended as a compromise" which turns out to be plagued by "a certain ceaselessly threatening instability".[54] By making De Flores into a man who equally falls "prey" to Beatrice's 'change' and thus presenting himself as the rule rather than the exception, Alsemero somewhat defends himself against the anxiety about the possession of Beatrice; and, more

[53] For instance, in Alsemero's *mise en scène*, Beatrice is quite unlike the "turtle" she is for De Flores at the end of the third act: "'Las, how the turtle pants! Thou'lt love anon / What thou so fear'st and faint'st to venture on" (3.4.170-171).

[54] Jacques Derrida, "Fors", trans. Barbara Johnson, *The Georgia Review* 31 (1977), 70 and 80. Derrida's "Fors" is an introductory essay to Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok, *Cryptonymie: Le verbier de l'Homme aux loups* (Paris: Aubier-Flammarion, 1976).

generally, against the anxiety about the effeminising effect of heterosexual desire; anxiety to which he is not only contingently but almost by definition subjected, due to his position as an actual outsider and class aspirant.[55] Yet, he does not fail to reproduce these anxieties elsewhere and in a different form, not least because his furtive bond with – his 'cryptic incorporation' of – De Flores, whilst registering, in a necessarily oblique way, "the primacy and tenacity of the homosocial bond even among antagonists",[56] does nothing but secretly compromise the politics of class exclusiveness predominantly displayed at the end of the play. This is even more so if one considers that the fantasmatic interchangeability between Alsemero and De Flores obtaining in the (re)presentation of the "scene of lust" as imagined by the former provides an uncanny mirror image of, and, arguably, paves the way for, the substitution of De Flores for Alsemero as the active agent of class 'cleansing'. This is a substitution which guarantees Alsemero's impermeability from the shedding of blood in the play's finale. Yet, by the same token, it dis-places him from the central position he claims for himself within the process of redefinition of class and gender boundaries he initiates.

The substitution of De Flores for Alsemero and Alsemero's 'cryptic' bond of incorporation with De Flores superimpose upon each other to suggest that the play's finale is unable to present unproblematic instances of containment/ejection and/or a 'proper' and satisfactory closure. Indeed, this is a finale which operates by uneasily and unceasingly exchanging one form of anxiety for another in an effort to make class, gender and erotic boundaries cohere. The play thus ends *in* and *as* a compromise, but one, to have recourse to Derrida, which "can only maintain in a state of repetition the mortal conflict it is impotent to resolve".[57]

[55] On the unstable position of Alsemero as a class aspirant, cf. Jardine, *Reading Shakespeare*, 122.

[56] Dollimore, *Sexual Dissidence*, 159.

[57] Derrida, "Fors", 70.

Iain Chambers

At the Edge of the World. Dislocating visions, relocating histories: whose place, whose time?*

I would like to begin this discussion of art, vision and positionality by considering a short sequence from Werner Herzog's film *Cobra Verde* (itself based on Bruce Chatwin's novel *The Viceroy of Ouidah*). At the beginning of the film there is a scene where we witness black slaves cutting and collecting sugar cane on a plantation in Brazil while the owner explains to the protagonist and future slave trader, Dom Francisco Manoel Da Silva portrayed by Klaus Klinski, the economy of a sugar trade dominated by Britain's 'sweet tooth'. This is sugar for a Britain that has abolished slavery and seizes slave ships on the high seas, but which continues to draw domestic benefit from slave labour. In this cruel paradox lies the "bitter history of sugar": Derek Walcott, *Omeros*.

Of course, this is not the usual story that modernity tells itself and its participants. Slavery, ethnic absolutism and racism, are considered aberrations; vile, unfortunate accidents, external factors that do not touch the heart of modernity and the triumphs of progress, political democracry and cultural enlightenment. (It goes without saying that the contemporary tragedy of the Balkans provides a cruel and continuing mirror to these reflections.) But to bring that story, that monstrous history, into focus, is to render explicit what is perhaps central to the very making of occidental modernity. To expose the repression of modernity's heart of darkness, the repressed that permits a coherent, homogeneous image and narrative to be publicly and privately

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sustained, is also to ask whose progress, freedom and enlightenement are we referring to here? Is this not also a universalism that speaks in deliberate avoidance of the unfreedom and oblivion of others; a universal perspective that is only true for some, not for all.

Why and how does this particularity claim universal status? To answer that question is to enter a specific disposition of power and knowledge; it is to recognise a historical configuration in which other histories are necessarily marginalised, rendered subordinate, subdued and sometimes forcibly expelled from the account.

The horror of the other, most precisely located in a racialised difference and imputed biological distinction signified in the colour of skin, is not only, and more obviously, the fear of an external threat. Its potency lies in the potential of the transgression, destruction and doing away with that order, with its social, political and aesthetic understandings, with its power. Such power is not only, and most obviously, political and economical, but also sexual and ethnical, cultural and psychic. There is the peril of that disciplinary order being displaced, absorbed, annihilated; all terms that tend to be associated with eighteenth-century definitions of the sublime, which, like darkness and dread, now acquires a deeper resonance in a racial and racist configuration of such terms.

J. M. W. Turner's picture *Slavers Throwing Overboard the Dead and Dying: Typhoon coming on* (also known as *Slave Ship*) was first publicly shown in London in 1840. A sailing ship is tossed on the wild waters of an oncoming storm. Between the waves fish and screeching gulls can be glimpsed. In the bottom right hand corner, a manacled black leg is about to slip beneath the surface forever. This painting by Turner brings to the heart of an aesthetic discourse a complex manifestation of the dreadful sublime, condensed in a historical and social signal: slavery, which had been abolished only seven years earlier in the British Empire, and was still active elsewhere around the Atlantic. Here the object of reason, the disinterested gaze contemplating beauty, is rendered doubly disquieting: for there is both the disquiet of the sublime, of excessive sentiments and irrational passion, and the disquiet of facing the repressed: the repression of slavery whose indirect profits from sugar, cotton and coffee plantations financed the productive world and society that sustained the world, the exhibition, the art gallery and the purchase of such paintings as Turner's.

This is not to condemn the picture, but rather to grasp its ambiguity – Turner's reasons for painting this scene were clearly not to support slavery – and to grasp in that ambiguity different ways of interpreting and responding to the work and, with it, to occidental modernity.

The painter's first owner was the art critic John Ruskin. It was a gift from his father. In his book *Modern Painters* Ruskin discusses the painting entirely in terms of how water should be painted, suggesting it to be "the noblest sea" ever painted by Turner and by man. The fact that 'the guilty ship' is a slave ship throwing slaves overboard is relegated to a footnote. Of course, the painting can be discussed in terms of painting water, but the elision here whereby slavery slips out of the frame, is perhaps also revealing. Twenty years later, Ruskin sold the painting. It was said that he found the subject matter too painful to contemplate. What he had found too painful to contemplate was not, however, allowed to interfere with his aesthetic judgement.[1]

What I'm briefly suggesting here, following the black British critic Paul Gilroy's commentary on this affair, is that it might be, on the contrary, very revealing to interrupt an aesthetic judgment with an ethical one, or even to mix and conjoin the two. This would be to arrive at the Wittgensteinian maxim that ethics and aesthetics are the same thing. But, and this is what Gilroy suggests (and what German Romanticism in its critique of the Kantian subordination of the sublime to reason, also held out), if we were to mix the two, this would open a door not only on to a new view of the painting, but also of modernity itself.

To put slavery back into the frame, to take those discarded black bodies and return them to the story, is not only to confront the limits of a reason and an aesthetics unwilling to contemplate the other side of the story. To return those bodies to the picture is also to mark the limits of such a reason, and its political and cultural narratives, and to suggest that there are further stories, further modernities, to be narrated. It is this type of radical reconfiguration that constitutes the persistent groundswell of Paul Gilroy's crucial book *The Black Atlantic*.[2]

[1] Paul Gilroy, "Art of darkness: black art and the problem of belonging to England", in Paul Gilroy, *Small Acts: Thoughts on the Politics of Black Cultures* (London: Serpent's Tail, 1993).

[2] Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (London: Verso, 1993).

Returning to the art discourse, the preceding comments clearly propose art as a process of disclosing, not necessarily reflecting, a position in the world. Art as an event speaks of a location in time and language, in society and technology. Or how are we, am I, placed? But the idea that art discloses a positionality in the world is not exactly how modern art, or the art of occidental modernity, initially conceived of itself.

In its inauguration, modern western art was usually considered to offer a window on the world, to reflect what the eye observes so that "things seen appear upon this plane surface as if it were made of transparent glass" (Leon Battista Alberti).[3] Such a logic of representation legislated the supremacy of optics and the centrality of the eye. It is the technology of perspective that assures the eye that space is uniquely determined "by three coordinates perpendicular to each other and extending in infinitum from a given 'point of origin'".[4] Perspective, a point of origin, a regulated and homogeneous geometry of space, locates the eye of the viewer at the centre of the frame, controlling and defining what is to be seen, catalogued, described, explained. The grid of theory, the frame of vision, the self-centred order of sight, protects the observer from exposure to what she cannot see, contemplate or represent. It is this individual and absolute power over space that renders it uniform and fully transparent to the beholder. It is the systematic elaboration of the principles of perspective that the Renaissance painter, architect and town planner embodies in the history of art. The knowledge, and æsthetics, that arise from this unique and self-centred point of view are, of course, deeply embedded in the formation and subsequent execution of modernity itself. So, the biography of the artist emblematically becomes interchangeable with the biography, or narrative, of the universal genius that is occidental modernity.[5]

With perspective there is installed the rationalisation of space, its colonisation, that permits the viewer to pull back from the brink of

[3] Erwin Panofsky, *Renaissance and Renascences in Western Art* (London: Paladin, 1970), 120.

[4] Ibid., 123.

[5] Catherine M. Soussloff, *The Absolute Artist* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997).

infinite dispersion. As with the Kantian sublime, the threat of dispersal and abjection, the 'vanishing point' in the picture, is relocated within the realm of rational appropriation: the continuum that opens up between the eye of the subject and infinity is rendered discrete, susceptible to measurement, calculation and convergence.[6] This is an art that locates the viewer at the centre. It is her or his vision that activates the perspective that guarantees her or his position as the point of origin for what is represented. Although drawn along lines of sight towards the infinite, the viewing gaze neither falters nor disappears. Held in the frame, and suspended in the calculated geometry of the visual field, the subject confirms the picture in the shared instance that the picture reconfirms the pivotal position of the subject.

In this persistent centrality of the eye/I, the distance between the simple Renaissance apparatuses employed to delineate perspective and the present day digital video camera, both rendering reality immediate, as though without technical intervention ("an orchid in the land of technology", Walter Benjamin), is far briefer than the five centuries that separate them suggest. It is the subsequent displacement of this 'world picture', and its subject-centred humanism, it is the historical, political and poetical, or aesthetical, implications of this displacement, that I wish to consider.

Such a dislocation, and potential reconfiguration, renders the confident rationalisms of an earlier, universal point of view vulnerable to interrogation. Critical thought, writing, art and debate, over the last two decades has forced a fundamental re-evaluation of occidental modernity in the light of the global migrations, historical displacements and cultural translations that have emerged as being central to modernity from its very inception five centuries ago. So, if the West has in many ways become the modern world, with its political economy, languages, techniques and technology providing a global frame, that space has also become the differentiated place, the 'home', for other histories, cultures and identities. In worlding the world the presumptions of the West to own and direct the language and institutions that carry its name are irretrievably transposed.

[6] Victor Burgin, "Geometry and Abjection", in John Fletcher and Andrew Benjamin, eds., *Abjection, Melancholia and Love: The Work of Julia Kristeva* (London & New York: Routledge, 1990).

This emphasis on dislocation, migration and reappropriation is not proposed in order to recuperate the migration of others for my benefit, and to claim that we are all 'migrants' now. It is, rather, to register a response, a responsibility, within the languages at my disposal for the necessary interruption and reassessment of my voice, history and culture in a world in which migrancy and modernity have become an inseparable formula. Here both a poetical and a political configuration of the world comes to be reworked, or worlded differently. The self-confirming vision provided by the critical distance of subjective perspective, and the universalism of the birds-eye view from on high, is now supplemented and subverted by an oblique gaze coming out of a particular history and locality, invariably from 'below', that leads to the displacement and dislocation of the former.

What comes into view, what comes to be registered and heard, once this movement is enacted?

The unilateral rigidity of the observer-observed/subject-object relationship that we have inherited from a subject-centred perspective gives way to a diverse language: one that is less violent in its insistence and more open in its signification. Direct intentionality and unilateral agency give way to a less conditioned encounter, to a receptivity, and the adoption of listening. The other is not positioned in order to be deciphered and explained as the object of my discourse and knowledge, but is received as the reverberation, the resonance, of what escapes the intentions of my representation.[7]

Here the subject, the "I", is provoked and invoked by the other to the degree that she or he is brought to the threshold of also becoming an object in the shared belonging of the interpreter to the object of interpretation – what Gadamer famously calls the "fusion of horizons". But what emerges here, and what breaches the conclusive circle of Gadamer's own hermeneutic æstheticism, is not so much the replacement of a Kantian 'critical distance' with an organic sublation of subject and object in the communal nature of things, *but rather an acute sense of historical positionality*. An awareness so acute as to cut into the universal pretensions of a rationalism that presumes already to fully know itself and the history it proposes to reveal, and

[7] Gianni Carchia, *La legittimazione dell'arte* (Naples: Guida, 1982), 17.

so acute as to render each and every tradition of interpretation, each and every hermeneutics, each and every knowledge, an unstable site of transit, of transformation and translation.[8] In this more agonistic and vulnerable version of history, without an objective reason able to guarantee the constellation of our lives, the very premises of the subject and historical agency, of occidental humanism, are what I am invited to reconsider in a radical recasting of historical understanding and cultural critique.

This brings me back to the question of the 'truth' in art. Opposed to a propositional understanding in which language and objectivity are supposed to coincide in a relationship secured by consensual rationality, here the prospect of 'truth' becomes an undecidable condition that speaks of more than any rational language can contain. This is not a theological or mystical proposal, even though Walter Benjamin, for example, constantly entertained that possibility, but is rather an argument about time and locality, or history and being, as German Romanticism, Benjamin and Heidegger, in different ways, sought to suggest. It is art that most sharply maintains the aperture on this horizon.

Held in a historical constellation where meaning emerges from limits, and not from the timeless universality of an abstract language, art presents us with the temporal indications of a horizon of language, worldly location and terrestrial framing, that lies *behind us, before us, and beyond us*. This is a sense of meaning that emerges from within the material constraints of historical configuration which is, precisely for such reasons, both locatable but ultimately without permanent or timeless foundations. In time and of time, such meaning constitutes a "way" (Heidegger), a "passage" (Benjamin) that registers a positionality, a responsibility for a location, rather than the universal, accumulative, "progress" that instrumental rationality seeks to collect around itself.

To think in this non-humanist manner, that is in a manner that precedes and exceeds the "subject", does not mean to think in anti-humanistic terms: that would be equally arbitrary, equally despotic; that is, equally humanistic. To invert the sign, to turn the formula upside down, is only to reconfirm it. To take critical leave from the

[8] Ibid.

history of possessive subjectivism does not mean to identify with the indifference of the inhuman. On the contrary, the non-humanist is that critical supplement that precedes and exceeds the imperialism of the subject.

For many this critical supplement is what language, understood in the widest sense of the term, holds in custody. Language preserves the performative potential of what exceeds the merely instrumental and the prescriptive. As an unfolding inscription, as a cultural and historical disclosure, language is not a linguistic matter, but a matter of becoming whose lexicon and grammar may be spoken in an ethical and a poetical lexicon, by bodies and technology, by sexualities and sounds. The poetry of Hölderlin for Heidegger, the contemporary and future cyborg for Donna Haraway; for each a supplement that is irreducible to the consolations of humanism and the subsequent grounding and reconfirmation of the subject. In this suspension of the humanist disposition, the dilution of its logic, the weakening of its voice, the displacement of its vision, there exists the invitation to accept the asymmetrical and incomplete world not as the consolatory destiny of a disenfranchised humanism but as the spur, the interrogation, of a non-identity that draws us on.

The art that I am seeking to evoke lies within proximity of this edge, announcing such a threshold, recalling what sustains us in our transit from the apparently known to the unknown.

At this point the rationality of a specific formation of representation is itself required to register its limits. It is where a particular sense of the world, and the instrumental reason that secures its centrality, is confronted with a point of arrest. It is where a reason, an art, an identity, nurtured in and by such a formation, is required to break with its premises and go beyond itself. To go beyond one's 'self' does not here mean to enter into a delirium of self-identification with one's history, technology and culture (something that clouds Heidegger's pronouncements on the disclosure of art); it suggests, rather to take into custody and cure such a self-centredness.[9]

To register such limits is to step away from a self-absorption which turns language, history, culture and world over to a sterile,

[9] Andrew Bowie, *From Romanticism to Critical Theory: The Philosophy of German Literary Theory* (London & New York: Routledge, 1997).

ultimately murderous, preoccupation with property: "my" language, "their" culture, "our" history. To step away and pursue an art in this dispossessed manner is to render proximate the promise of displacement and alterity, and with it the potential to reconfigure the sense of our selves. Such an art does not profer escape or sublimation, something that seemingly allows us to relax secure in the contemplation of self-confirmation, but is rather an interrogation. It is not what allows us to escape ourselves, but rather what renders us more susceptible to query and doubt.

This is to propose neither integration nor domestication, but rather a social and historical constellation that irritates and interrogates institutional undestandings. Merely to recognise in alterity the relativity of previous claims to absolute sense, knowledge and truth, does not necessarily dislocate the subject's continuing pretence to self-realisation through the objectification of the other; the continuity of that relationship, even relativised and historicised, remains fundamentally untouched. It is rather the observer cured of her or his illusions and self-centredness that permits the observer finally to speak, not for, but in the vicinity, of an other.[10]

So, neither to sharply reject, or fully identify with, the abstract Other, but rather to replace the artefice of intellectual distance with historical and cultural contingency. It is here that the ideological uniformity of modernity, desirous to render all transparent and subject to its rationalism, comes most acutely to be dislocated and reconfigured. This is why the "post-" of "postcolonialism", for instance, is more a spatial than a chronological metaphor. For it not only speaks after the event of colonialism, but also narrates history, above all, "my" history, from elsewhere, from a site that is decentred with respect to the socio-technical rationalism that seemingly governs modernity's "reason". To bear witness to that elsewhere is simultaneously an aesthetical and an ethical appropriation of the language and cultural identities in which I find my "self". It is where the categories that seemingly provide each of us with a sense of history and identity are interrupted, transgressed and interrogated.

[10] "not to speak of, but close by", to quote from Trinh T. Minh-ha's film *Reassemblage*, 1982.

This rewrites (and resites) the narrative – intellectual, disciplinary and common-sensical – that many of us believe we are reciting. It involves a re-writing, a re-figuring, that invests not merely the contemporary moment but the overall historical formation that made me. This rent in the fabric of my world, now located in time, place and language, provides a gap through which to re-view in the most radical manner the modalities of its representation.

In the border between worlds, histories and identities lies the much discussed anthropological reduction of an other to the classificatory principles and linear organisation of knowledge afforded by occidental prescription. This is not a one way traffic however. In this space there also emerges the ambiguous intercourse between worlds in which the once colonised officially adopts the rhetoric of "Europe" in the name of "modernity", including the emancipatory dialects of marxism. In sub-Saharian Africa, for example, historical difference and cultural detail has frequently been reduced by local oligarchies to a numbing mimicry of "progress" in the shape of business suits, cellular phones, corruption and white Mercedes.

In Bulawayo, stepping between the cars, a casually smart black youth with a multi-coloured Star Tac™ Motorola cellular phone hooked to his belt crosses at the lights. Yet the south of the world, with its volatile mix of global signs and local realities, remains the south of the world. Investments, standards of living and life prospects remain so dramatically diverse that even the drone of statistics cannot hide the tragedy they embody. In Zimbabwe, average life expectancy has dropped by 30 years in the wake of HIV. No American airline flies to any city in Africa, and that includes El Cairo and Johannesburg. In a continent in which power appears to be sustained more by patronage than by profit or development, to speak of Africa as being in a neo-colonialist relationship to the West has little sense in economic terms when its share in world trade was only 1.9% in 1990 (it was 5.2% in 1950), and returns on investments in the continent have dropped from 30.7% in the 1960s to 2.5% in the 1980s. The scene is one of almost total disinvestment, with external, private, commercial investment totalling only $504 million in 1992, "or 1.6% of the total investment in Africa, Asia and Central and South America as a whole". The GNP of the whole of sub-Saharian Africa in 1992, at $ 270 billion, was less

than that of the Netherlands. Sub-Sahara Africa includes South Africa. Put bluntly, "the continent is slipping out of the Third World into its own bleak category of the nth world".[11]

In the global calculus a continent – Africa – has simply gone missing. The World Bank predicts that a third of all food required will have to be imported by 2000. Between 1961 and 1995, Africa's food production per person decreased by 11.6% (by comparison Latin America's increased by 31.4% and Asia's by 70.6%). In this scenario the state is a 'neo-patrimonial' structure where it is not development but staying in power that is the main issue.

Staying in power is the main objective. The army must be kept happy, urban masses must be fed, conflicting interests of political coalitions must be balanced. To this end every aspect of the economy becomes an instrument of patronage. Quotas, tariffs, subsidies, import licences, the over-valued currency and so on become channels of enrichment, through rent-seeking activity. The privileges of the élite depend on the monopoly of power within a society, and not on the productivity of society as a whole, much less on any feelgood factor permeating the population at large. In the short term at least, a successful programme of economic development conflicts with that. The political and economic exigencies of personal rule follow their own logic. Mismanagement actually has a rationale with the neo-patrimonial system.[12]

In this disjunctive globe, with the very real distances established and maintained by economic and intellectual disciplines, not to speak of the widening gap sustained by political parody, the pre-scriptural is relegated to the timeless world of the 'archaic' and the 'primitive': "a rumor of words that vanish no sooner than they are uttered, and which are therefore lost forever".[13] Still, the traces of such lost languages – ancient rock paintings in South Africa and Zimbabwe, for example – can prise open a situation that not only confirms such a point of view (after all, we are not dealing here with an oral

[11] All figures and quotes from Paul Gifford, *African Christianity: Its Public Role* (London: Hurst and Company, 1998).

[12] Ibid., 13.

[13] Michel de Certeau, *The Writing of History*, trans. Tom Conley (New York: Columbia U.P., 1988), 212.

representation but a graphic one), but which can also serve as an interrogation of that all-inclusive manner of knowing.[14] The maintenance of temporal and existential distance, both by instrumental rationality and the certitudes of historicism, can be confounded by the traces of the archaic that return in the guise of aesthetics: a form of graphic representation, a manner of narrating, relayed in the pictorial trance and shamanic evocations of the world that are neither necessarily linear nor unequivocal.[15]

In the presence of another language, and associated forms of knowledge, there emerges an unsuspected dynamic that sunders the sharp distinction between the presumably natural and static universe of the 'primitive' and the perpetual cultural movement of the 'modern'. A logocentric linearity that insists on the passage from the pre-historic to the historical, from nature to culture, from orality to writing, dissolves into something less reassuring.[16]

If writing enters into the archaic, fracturing any illusion of recovering that world 'as it was', the archaic also enters to become a contemporary instance of the writing that seeks to represent it. A

[14] The disturbance of the idea of stable cultural formations located in the mythic time of 'primitive' societies can be rapidly countered by the evidence of austral Africa and north America – historical spaces traversed by migrations and movements, as well as shifting territorial claims and confines, both before and after 'first contact' with Europeans. Merely one instance could be that of the coercive pressure of the Iroquois Confederacy all along the Great Lakes and stretching into the eastern prarie as it pushed other nations, including the Sioux or Lakota further west; or the migration some 800 hundred years ago of a part of the Athabascan linguistic group out of Northwest Canada into the present day South West of the United States, in the process becoming Navahoes and Apaches. In southern Africa, there was the early nineteenth movement of the Ndebele from Natal into southern Zimbabwe, putting military and territorial pressure on the Shona and the San peoples of that area prior to the direct usurpation of that space by Anglo colonisation. The land as mythic point of origin, as the constant horizon of identity and the testimony of tradition, is, despite appearances, never timeless. It is cultivated by language and, if transformed by myth into a constant referent, is not immune to new inscription, new tellings. See Trevor Ranger's essay, "'Great Spaces Washed With Sun': The Matopos and Uluru compared", in Kate Darian-Smith, Liz Gunner and Sarah Nuttal, eds., *Text, Theory, Space* (London & New York: Routledge, 1996).

[15] Peter Garlake, *The Hunter's Vision: The Prehistoric Art of Zimbabwe*, (London: British Museum Press, 1995).

[16] Carchia, *La legittimazione dell'arte*, 177.

world as 'it was' is lost forever, what remains are the remnants of representation. These remnants, however, are not dead objects, waiting to be classified and explained, but living interrogations that ghost my understanding with other stories, with alterity. The archaic, as Pier Paolo Pasolini's cinema strives to suggest, is not only safely back there, before my time, but also a disturbing presence that proposes a new configuration of my present.[17] Such scenes do not represent modernity's 'exotica' so much as its interrogation, its interruption: an invitation to reconceptualise and reconfigure modernity itself. In Pasolini's film *Oedipus Rex* (1967), for example, mythical Greece and contemporary North Africa are temporal, cultural, physical and psychic peripheries that are rendered disturbingly proximate.

In this context, writing, and its associated organisation of knowledge and understanding, comes to be re-located in the more extensive world of graphic inscriptions where the transparent logic of mimetic utility, the linear transmission of a clear and coherent 'message', is overtaken and subsumed in the traces, in the tracing, of heterogeneous worldly being. The desire for symmetry and the subsequent establishment of distance between the modern and the archaic, between the occidental observer and the 'objects' of his or her discipline and field of research, is unexpectedly brought into vicinity and potential disruption. The archaic returns as an asymmetric presence to interrogate the apparent triumph of monotheism and the separation of the spiritual from the material world, of culture from nature, of rationalism from other forms of reason. It is precisely this space, the space of non-identity, that permits an awareness of alterity to emerge.

Such a perpective, no longer subject-centred, but inter-worldly might mean, in the words of the Indian visual artist Anish Kapoor, "to bring to expression ... and then move towards a poetic existence".[18] It is Kapoor's idea of "resident narrative", what lies in the material, what can be excavated from what is already given, deposited and disseminated, that can prove suggestive here. For material is what insists, and which awaits a form. It is what comes to

[17] Clement Page, "Pasolini's 'Archaisms'", *Third Text* 42 (Spring 1998).

[18] Anish Kapoor, quoted in Homi K. Bhabha, "Anish Kapoor: Making Emptiness", in *Anish Kapoor* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: Haywood Gallery/University of California Press, 1998).

meet and interrogate us. It is what, in being framed, invites us to consider that very process of framing which constitutes the perspective of sense, knowledge and affect, but which simultaneously, in drawing attention to the act of framing, accentuates and acknowledges the limits of those registers. We are conversing with what opens up the interval and the tension between terrestrial material and the particular world and languages that enframe and register that interval. What pushes us against the frame; what, in becoming, renders the im-possible possible: it is in that "what" that the poetical takes over the potential. It is, to quote the title of one of Anish Kapoor's own works, a giant, blood-red, hollowed, disc suspended from the ceiling, to find oneself, "at the edge of the world".

An attention to the interrogations sown by intercultural forms that circulate in the world, dealing in the traffic between histories, traditions, literatures and oralities, invariably underlines the volatile location of historical and cultural translation. This is a "border" discourse, a "frontier" language, both in the obvious geopolitical sense of the term, but also, and more immediately, in its relationship to existing fields of research and institutionalised figures of knowledge. To introduce a border, a limit, into critical language is to renounce a knowledge of the "other"; it is to evoke an æsthetics, and ethics, that brushes up against, and registers, an "other" knowledge; a knowledge which irritates, disturbs and disrupts a previous power.[19]

This does not simply strip away the claims of realism to represent the world, both "mine" and that of the "other"; it also disarms all claims of representation with the disquieting errancy of differentiated bodies, languages and identities refusing to acknowledge the signs with which they have been historically and culturally burdened. This argument has been persistently pursued by black artists in Britain over the last 20 years.[20] Here the explicit refusal to embody the "other", the "native", the "primitive" and the "black", as though a transparent figure of knowledge, is an æsthetical and ethical challenge that irreversibly exceeds the logic of previous framings.

[19] José David Saldívar, *Border Matters: Remapping American Cultural Studies* (Berkeley, Los Angeles & London: University of California Press, 1997).

[20] See *Ten.8*, vol.2, n.3, "Critical Decade: Black Photography in the 80s".

An edge, a borderland, an open wound, to evoke the Chicana writer Gloria Anzaldúa, is rendered explicit; an open wound that bleeds into earlier categories and distinctions.[21] It is here, living simultaneousy *below and beyond* the categories of national, sexual, ethnic and gendered identity, that a border art and inter-worldly inscription acquires significant ethical and aesthetical valency. For while bearing witness to a particular history and place, the testimony such art affords also furnishes the context for the reappropriation of occidental modernity as *unfinished business* through an exposition of one's "self" that is also the exposure of the historical constellation in which it occurs.

At this particular point, I arrive at a temporary conclusion around the work of two women artists whose vision and language propose a sense of movement and accommodation, migration and dwelling, sensitive to terrestrial framing, to the perpetual becoming of identity and to the uneven ground, powers, voices, bodies, histories and desires that world the present world.

Reading Adrienne Rich's poem *An Atlas of the Difficult World* I encounter a startling resonance in the visual work of Hélène Hourmat.

> Flags are blossoming now where little else is blossoming
> and I am bent on fathoming what it means to love my country. [22]

Hourmat, a contemporary artist, of Moroccan background, was brought up in France. Her mixed media panels trace the journey – both the physical journey and the complex cultural itineraries – of national, ethnic and gendered identity from one side of the Mediterranean to the other, of one world (Jewish, Sephardic, Moroccan and Maghrebian) within another (European, French, cosmopolitan), amid the languages, and limits, of visual enframing. Figures of families, of men and women, the latter usually in traditional dress, evoke a series of dispatches, post cards, snap shots,

[21] Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 1987).

[22] Adrienne Rich, *An Atlas of the Difficult World: Poems 1988-1991* (New York & London: W. W. Norton, 1991), 22-23.

from a world, an elsewhere, that is also a narrative, a 'here', *internal* to a modernity intent on maintaining physical and psychic distance. In the jolt of proximity a journey is registered and an interval, an interrogation, disseminated.

> remember
> that blessing and cursing are born as twins and separated at birth
> to meet again in mourning
> that the internal emigrant is the most homesick of all women and
> of all men
> that every flag that flies today is a cry of pain.
> Where are we moored?
> What are the bindings?
> What behooves us?

In the vocal and visual registration, the insistence of a precise historical trajectory, of a seemingly peripheral cultural configuration, within the deterritorialised grammar of modernity brings each – the centre and the periphery, the particular and the generic – to account, while transforming their respective histories into an element of freedom.

Anthony Chennells

Imperial Romances and Narratives of White Rhodesian Nationalism. Cynthia Stockley, Gertrude Page and Doris Lessing*

The English imperial romance as it developed towards the end of the nineteenth century contains a number of conventional narrative features. The setting is exotic for European traveller and European reader. Finding lost treasure often serves as a trope for the economic exploitation of the future colony. The central agents of these narratives are white males who re-define English masculinity through their encounter with the exotic place and its people, an encounter which is necessarily violent. As central to these romances as violence is the homosocial and from the intense relationships between English men, white women are necessarily excluded. They have an existence on the peripheries of the romance or, more precisely, the return of the men to the domestic space over which white women preside serves as a conventional closure, an unsought-for reward, which awaits the men once they have completed their journeys. Women of colour, however, intrude into the world of the white male but their presence does not transgress the presuppositions of its order. Sexual relations between white men and women of colour assume hierarchies of gender which confirm hierarchies of race. Because such women are never seen in the metropole, their presence does not impinge on its domestic space where the English man, his identity newly reaffirmed through the colony, literally reproduces himself.

King Solomon's Mines gives classic expression to most of these

* A version of this paper was read at the 1998 Modern Language Association of America Convention in San Francisco. The session was entitled "Doris Lessing and Settlement Narratives".

conventions although in 1885 Haggard was less concerned to extend empire than to recover English manhood through an atavism where Englishmen compete on equal terms with savage men. Haggard shaped his romance around the rumours he had heard of Great Zimbabwe and his more direct involvement in Shepstone's interference in the Ndebele succession crisis which followed King Mzilikazi's death.[1] When Rhodes first proposed the colonization of the land which was to become Rhodesia, he recognized that the Ndebele were the most immediate threat new to any white settlement in the interior. Like most of his contemporaries Rhodes believed that Great Zimbabwe was the ruined evidence of some failed colonial endeavour of some forgotten northern people. Many people regarded the new settlement as in part an atonement for that failure of an imperial will which had allowed itself to succumb to savagery.[2] Not surprisingly several Rhodesian novels of the 1890s employ the conventions of Haggard's novel.[3] But once the Risings of 1896 had been repressed, Rhodesian writers found the conventions of the imperial romance an inadequate aesthetic for the emerging Rhodesian ideology. From the very beginning of his seeking a royal charter for his company, Rhodes conceived of Rhodesia as a settler colony with the territory over which his company ruled becoming home to a new branch of the British race. The first settlers were soon,

[1] H. Rider Haggard in "The Real King Solomon's Mines", *Cassell's Magazine* XLIV (1907), 142, claimed that while he was in South Africa he had never heard "of the great ruins of Zimbabwe, or that the ancients had carried out a vast mining enterprise in the part of Africa where it stands". Nearly twenty years later in C. J. Longman, ed., *The Days of My Life: An Autobiography*, 2 vols. (London: Longman, Green, 1926), I, 242, Haggard remembered that he had "heard faint rumours of these things [King Solomon's mines and Zimbabwe] during [his] sojourn in Africa". In fact there was wide-spread speculation about the ruins in South African papers while Haggard was in South Africa. Tim Couzens, "The Patterson Embassy to Lobengula 1878 and *King Solomon's Mines*" (London: Univ. of London Institute of Commonwealth Studies Seminar Paper, 24 January, 1973) discusses the Ndebele background to Haggard's novel.

[2] P. S. Garlake, *Great Zimbabwe* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1973), 65-66.

[3] Examples include A. A. Anderson and A. Wall, *A Romance of N'Shabé* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1891); Ernest Glanville, *The Fossicker: A Romance of Mashonaland* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1891); Edward Marwick, *The City of Gold: A Tale of Sport, Travel and Adventure in the Heart of the Dark Continent* (London: Tower, 1896).

in fact, to be known as Rhodesians. Absent the white woman might be from the imperial romance; she was very present within Rhodesia as the bearer of sons and daughters for the new country. Haggard never settled in Rhodesia but after meeting Rhodes in 1888 his art was placed at the service of Rhodes's schemes. In *Allan's Wife* (1889) the noble savage has disappeared and blacks have become a force of disorder constantly threatening the white-owned farm of the novel which has been established in the ruins of an ancient white settlement. Haggard implicitly acknowledges the permanence of white settlement in the African interior when, in his two last novels set in Rhodesia, *Elissa: Or the Doom of Zimbabwe* (1900) and *Benita: An African Romance* (1906), he places white women at the centre of the narratives.

Haggard's influence on the British imperial imagination cannot be underestimated but more significant for a paper on white women and Rhodesian nationalism is that after 1900 the most important Rhodesian settler novelists were women: among them Gertrude Page, who died in 1922, and Cynthia Stockley, who died in 1936, both sold millions of copies of their novels and more recently Doris Lessing. If conventionally the white woman is present only on the peripheries of the imperial romance, she is necessarily silent within the narrative. The woman writer, however, through the act of authorship refuses both her silencing and her peripheral presence. She assumes for herself authority and yet her authority can be only over a world where she has no right to be. She has to negotiate her right to speak at all. Stockley and Page writing as they are about a country which is the preserve of the male-authored romance take as a starting point the literal presence of the white woman within the country. In Page's *Love in the Wilderness* (1907) and Stockley's *The Claw* (1911) begin with their heroines coming into Rhodesia. Unlike their male counterparts neither are primarily aware of a dangerous world which needs to be subjugated. Instead both experience on their first days in the country a heightened state of consciousness. Page's Enid Davenport watches the sun rise from the train and sees an offer of hope in "this richness of colouring, this early freshness, this sense of

[4] Gertrude Page, *Love in the Wilderness: The Story of Another African Farm* (London: Hurst and Blackett, 1907), 2.

a world that was new and young, and strong indeed".[4] Stockley's Dierdre Saurin travelling at sunset through the Limpopo valley discovers in the harsh bush of the valley

> a world ... filled with gracious dimness, and made up of illimitable lovely space.... It seemed to me as if the lungs of my soul drew breath and expanded as they had never done in any land before.[5]

Both of those passages register the land as an emptiness. The imperial romance demands that the English man's encounter with the native is violent and through violence the native is forced into submission. For these two women writers, on the other hand, the land is unpeopled, unformed; from it something new can be created. Their narrative of creativity is predicated on the closure of the romance narrative. Men have done their work, have acted violently towards Africa and have added another dimension to the destiny of the English by emptying the land. Colonial woman will now join them in an act of imperial creativity.

The foregrounding of this particular concern in the female-authored narrative can be recognized in *The Claw* which includes an account of the historic attack on the Khumalo kingdom and the defeat of Lobengula, the Ndebele king. The reader learns only at second and third hand of the Chartered Company's men destruction of Lobengula's capital, Bulawayo, and the king's flight to the north. Instead the narrative directs our attention to the great space before the King's house, once his throne-room and court where

> magnificent peacocks ... strutted and scratched, preening their jewelled feathers and crying their sinister unmusical cries ... [N]one except the peacocks dared break the silence when the Lion of Matabeleland sat considering his savage politics and arranging the affairs of the nation.[6]

Because white men have completed their destructive quest, the king and his peacocks are a memory and only an open space now remains of what once was the centre of an African order. The Company's

[5] Cynthia Stockley, *The Claw* (London: Hurst and Blackett, 1911), 8.
[6] Ibid., 202-203.

forces have overcome despotism and on this space the colonials, both men and women, will write the new form of the land's destiny. That women are worthy of this task is evidenced by their presencing in an alternative space within this part of the novel. When the invasion of Matabeleland begins the women go into laager and they grow in stature: those who have behaved with petty malice, complaining of the lack of rice powder and pretty clothes suddenly show "the quiet air of sensible, self-possessed women, prepared for any emergency ... [T]hey behaved as though sleeping in laager was an everyday affair".[7] Stockley writes the laager as a domestic space, controlled by women in which children are amused and taught. But it is a domestic space within the larger heroic narrative. Men get on with the fighting; women lay the foundations of the new nation.

Gertrude Page's *The Silent Rancher* (1909) offers another version of the new country:

> In this young country the battle is to the strong.... Here there are no hard-and-fast rules robbing young souls of their birthright of freedom and rich fulfillment, rather than let them clash with unconventionality and prejudice.... Here you are back near the beginning, where Truth and Strength and Courage come first.[8]

The return to Eden is a conventional trope in writing about colonies for they are new worlds which in their making will avoid Europe's mistakes. In Rhodesia the women novelists not only register the pre-Lapsarian state, but use it to make possible a visionary discourse which transcends the primitive unformed present. Strength and courage hover ambiguously in that last passage. Their primary meaning is the strength and courage to build a new world; and yet these assume strength and courage to destroy black societies so ruthlessly that only an emptiness remains.

In Page's *The Veldt Trail* (1919) the colony has returned to the beginning in order that a new beginning can be made. Elizabeth Lyall's vision of the new colony is of

[7] Ibid., 165.
[8] Gertrude Page, *The Silent Rancher* (London: Hurst and Blackett, 1909), 303.

> charming houses and lovely gardens dotted about these ranches – with tennis lawns, and ball-rooms, and parks ... big homes and little homes all friendly together, in a free open life without too many conventions ... Rhodesia a progressive, enlightened country, with no slums at all, and no unemployed, and no dreary monotonous round for the workers, playing fields and flowers for everyone and plenty of books and interesting lectures.[9]

The freedom is course freedom for a racial elect and a year after *The Veldt Trail* was published, the Southern Rhodesia Missionary Conference protested to government about conditions in the so-called locations – the black suburbs. Overcrowding, crime and disease were rife in them which was hardly surprising since in the capital, Salisbury, there was on average only one well for seven hundred black people.[10] The slums were already part of Elizabeth Lyall's world and her Eden was rotten at its urban core. But then big houses and the little hoses purged "of envy, hatred, and all uncharitableness" are for whites.[11] Her vision has preceded from an unpeopled emptiness and having de-created blacks, she is at liberty to imagine a world in which they have no existence.

If I am right in saying that the metropolitan domestic is the final closure of the imperial romance, the Rhodesian women novelists displace that domestic from the metropole onto Rhodesia itself. This also is a domestic which they control but rather than representing closure to male action, it absorbs male action in the making of a new nationalism. The women writers are serving the national project with an alternative and transgressive discourse which centres their domestic power at its heart. By this act of centering they initiate a discourse which no longer has the metropole as its end: implicit within this discourse is a transition from metropolitan domesticity to the Rhodesian nation.

The constitutional history of settler Rhodesia was an endless struggle to obtain constitutional independence from Britain. The last battle of this struggle, before the metaphorical war made way for

[9] Gertrude Page, *The Veldt Trail* (London: Cassell, 1919), 205-206.

[10] Ian Linden, *The Catholic Church and the Struggle for Zimbabwe* (London: Longman, 1980), 20.

[11] Page, *The Veldt Trail*, 205.

Zimbabwe's Liberation War, was in 1965 when the settler leader Ian Smith unilaterally declared Rhodesia independent from Britain. UDI as it became known is a striking example of the transgression of the colonial discourse: Rhodesians unambiguously directed their loyalty not to Britain but to the new nation which they claimed to have created. Men were responsible for UDI and Smith's speech recalled the imperial romances in his UDI proclamation when he spoke of Rhodesians as "a heroic people" whom history had "cast ... in a heroic role". But his speech also spoke of Rhodesia representing "civilisation in a primitive country" where "moral standards" were upheld which had been allowed to crumble in other places. UDI, Smith said, "is a refusal by Rhodesians to sell their birthright".[12] The norms and rationales of the speech were those on which the women novelists had centred their fiction. In 1965 Smith was as indifferent to the birthright of blacks as Page had been fifty years previously.

Doris Lessing left Rhodesia in 1950 and four years later was declared a prohibited immigrant in the country in which she lived for nearly thirty years. She therefore as it were had spent much of her life living within the discourse which defined the peculiar features of Rhodesian colonial identity. I have emphasized its nationalism. Lessing, however, is much more aware of the white Rhodesian identity as something which was constituted through the cultural displacement which white Rhodesians had undergone in moving from metropole to colony. Rhodesians possessed fragments of a cultural memory which constantly prevented them from seeing Africa, of Rhodesia in its context, of the world they actually inhabited. The child of her short story *The Old Chief Mshlanga,* in every way a Rhodesian child, ranges "the bush over her father's farm" but her "eyes [are] sightless for anything but a pale willowed river, a pale gleaming castle". The witchweed in the mealie fields

> [summons] up ... he Northern witch, bred of cold Northern forests ... and ... the mealie fields ... [fade] and [flee], leaving her among the roots of an oak, snow falling thick and soft and white.[13]

[12] *The Rhodesia Herald*, 11 November 1965, special edition.

[13] Doris Lessing, *The Old Chief Mshlanga,* in her *African Stories* (New York: Touchstone Press, 1981), 47.

Alien texts veil the child's context and only when she hears of the dispossession of the chief who formerly lived on the land and speaks to one of his sons does she see the farm in its precise detail. By allowing black speech an authority in her life the child knows the farm for the first time. The newly recognized farm is, however, an ideological space defined by colonialism, implicitly waiting for an anti-colonial re-appropriation. For much of the story, European narratives have informed her understanding so that her colonial identity is obscured. They allow her to remain innocent of historical process. Gertrude Page saw the colonial woman's purpose as the replication in Africa of upper-middle-class English life which was not in any sense formed by a dialectical encounter with black Africa. Black Africa is more peripheral in Page's novels than white women are in the most misogynist of imperial romances. Lessing by contrast makes the voice of a black man present and he speaks of usurpation and destruction. Page and Stockley show colonial women dreaming of a new and fresher world and nurturing the white children who will enter into that inheritance. Lessing with characteristic intelligence asks that colonial women's dreams take into account the great wrong that has been done to Africa and registers the possibility that Africa will once again take control of its destiny.

As with other Rhodesian novelists (Page is an egregious exception), Lessing's settlers explicitly see themselves creating a culture which will break with the tired, class-obsessions of the English. When the young people in *Martha Quest* organize a sports club, they refuse to allow class to influence membership. Such divisions are "not in the spirit of the country. This wasn't England.... [T]his was a new country".[14] Lessing, however, does not allow Rhodesia to remain in simple opposition to England, demanding and receiving from the settlers a single, uncomplicated loyalty. In an earlier epiphany Martha Quest sees what Rhodesia might have been. She imagines rising above "harsh scrub and stunted trees, a noble city" where children of all races without any sense of difference, play among the "white pillars and tall tress".[15] When the club is built,

[14] Doris Lessing, *Martha Quest* (Book one of "Children of Violence") (London: Michael Joseph, 1952), 176.

[15] Ibid., 22-23.

however, it blocks out any view of the bush around the town and effectively constitutes a barrier between Africa and the town. The club is a metonymy of Rhodesia – the Zambesia of the sequence – and as such it both reproduces and denies the noble city of Martha's vision. It is a "a noble building, in the Cape Colonial style.... all curves and gables and a deep verandah supported on stately white pillars".[16] Its members may have rejected the castes of English society but they conform to a mediocrity of attitudes and ideas not least of which is race prejudice. The club protects them from an encounter with Africa from which a distinctive identity might arise. They are a privileged petty bourgeoisie, narrow and intolerant.

Lessing's *The Grass Is Singing* is a most subversive text if it is read against Page and Stockley's construction of Rhodesia. The earlier novelists celebrate the freedom within the colony and are silent on the historical fact that white freedom could be achieved in Rhodesia only at the loss of black liberty. Lessing in her first novel denies the reality of colonial freedom certainly as far as women are concerned. Page's colony was a site where "young souls entered into their birth right of freedom and rich fulfillment". From the very beginning of the *Grass Is Singing* the reader is aware of the silent and ubiquitous pressure that demands that all whites conform to the settler perceptions of race. The novel opens with Mary Turner's murder but instead of grieving for her, the neighbouring white farmers and their wives close ranks: they "behave[d] like a flock of birds who communicate – or so it seems by means of a kind of telepathy".[17] The shared telephone – significantly known as the "party line" – images a society, where everyone is under surveillance: "click, click, click, you can hear the receivers coming off all over the district, and soft noises like breathing, a whisper, a subdued cough".[18] And then with one of those skillful authorial interventions which are a striking feature of Lessing's early work, the narrator observes:

> When old settlers say "One has to understand the country", what they mean is, "You have to get used to our ideas about the native". They are

[16] Ibid., 178.

[17] Doris Lessing, *The Grass Is Singing* (1950; London: Michael Joseph, 1953), 10.

[18] Ibid., 17.

> saying, in effect, "Learn our ideas, or otherwise get out: we don't want you".[19]

As far as Lessing is concerned, whatever else the colony can claim about itself, freedom is not among its characteristics.

On their own these details would be familiar in any of the protest novels coming from Southern Africa after the Second World War. Lessing, however, is concerned to deconstruct the very colonial woman which a century of colonial discourse has meticulously constructed. Within that discourse the greatest fear a colonial woman can have is a fear of rape by a black man; second to that is her fear of his murdering her. The woman shooting herself when rape becomes inevitable is a stereotype of the few imperial romances where white women appear at all: death is far less destructive of a English woman's identity than a black man's violation of her sexuality. Mary Turner has been killed by her servant Moses. There is no question of his innocence. Lessing sets up the scene, only to refuse the murder its customary echoes within the discourse. In place of outrage or even pity which the readers schooled in the convention might expect, the district feels

> a fine fierce indignation against Mary, as if she were something unpleasant and unclean, and it served her right to get murdered.[20]

As far as the district is concerned, if Mary Turner is a victim, she is the subject of her own victimhood.

Not only does *The Grass Is Singing* refuse any idea of colonial freedom but in a remarkable way it itemizes as it were the points at which constraints are felt. When Page's Elizabeth Lyall wants to replicate middle-class England in Africa, she ignores the fact that gardens, tennis-lawns, dances and lectures must metonymically be extended into the exploitation of black labour which alone would make possible the details of bourgeois respectability. Lessing refuses any such evasion and getting underpaid black labour to work figures

[19] Ibid., 20.
[20] Ibid., 12.

significantly in the novel. There are, however, other constraints which the novel also focuses on. The beginning of the movement to Mary's inevitable murder lies in the almost casual observation: "all women become conscious, sooner or later, of that impalpable, but steel-strong pressure to get married".[21] Both Stockley and Page by making the colony an empty space imply that here new beginnings for humanity will be made. The sardonic comment of Lessing's narrator suggests that as far as women are concerned, some things will certainly remain the same. Whatever other social relations the colonial woman may like to imagine for herself, she cannot authorize an identity which frees her from marriage.

The Grass is Singing, however, is remarkable in refusing to separate her marriage to a white man, which is socially inevitable, from other social constructions which similarly constrain her: the most importance of these is the rôle imposed upon her as a white woman in Africa. She must relate to, probably submit to a white man. She must at the same time assume her superiority over any black man. Her relationship to her white husband and to all black men define her as a colonial woman. Much of the irony of *The Grass Is Singing* derives from the subversion of the imperial narrative by Dick Turners' ordinariness. One of the novel's epigraphs remarks: "It is by the failures and misfits of a civilization that one can best judge its weaknesses", and the novel extends the implications of that remark to the imperial romance and the ideological assumptions which it helps to formulate. The male heroes of the romance stand above the common run of other Englishmen. Part of Dick's ordinariness is shown in his refusal to use fear to control his black workers or the absence in him of a desire to exercise a total control over the land. Mary on the other hand is far from ordinary. Her ambitions for her marriage may be those of a petty bourgeois and the narrator, with feigned casualness, may remark of Mary that "[s]he needed a man stronger than herself and she was trying to create one out of Dick".[22] But Mary has a ruthlessness in her character which brings her very much nearer to the old imperial male hero than it does to the women dreamers of Page and Stockley. When Dick has malaria, Mary is

[21] Ibid., 47.
[22] Ibid., 156.

forced for a day to supervise the farm labourers in the fields and she derives a new understanding of herself through the same dialectic with which the colonial man in Africa has always redefined himself: he knows his power because it is a power which derives from his control of black bodies:

> The sensation of being boss over perhaps eighty black workers gave her a new confidence; it was a good feeling, keeping them under her will, making them do as she wanted.[23]

Violence, as I suggested earlier, is a necessary part of the engagement with colonial space by both imperial and colonial man. The colonial woman's command of the black body, however, is more problematic. While it keeps intact the hierarchies of race, such a power is deeply transgressive of the hierarchies of gender. Something of this is registered when Moses working with the other men breaks ranks and asks for water. Mary raises her whip, her sjambok, and slashes him across the face. In terms of colonial discourse the whip is correctly used as an instrument of racial control. Because she is a woman, however, the black male body is not simply a body to be controlled by violence and made to serve the larger ends of colonialism. The novel momentarily adopts Mary's perspective and within her gaze, Moses's body is ambiguously eroticized: blood

> splashed to his chest. He was magnificently built, with nothing on but an old sack tied round his waist.... For a moment the man looked at her with an expression that turned her stomach liquid with fear.[24]

Sexual attraction is as obviously present there as the revulsion of fear. Together they constitute desire. Later in the novel, the narrator remarks of the incident:

> What had happened was that the formal pattern of black-and-white, mistress-and-servant, had been broken by a personal relation; and when a white man in Africa by accident looks into the eyes of a native

[23] Ibid., 137.
[24] Ibid., 147.

> and sees the human being ... his sense of guilt, which he denies, fumes up in resentment and he brings down the whip.[25]

"[M]istress" is not absorbed into the inclusive language of "white man" in that paragraph. White mistress and black male servant have to belong to a different order to that of the white male employer and black male labourer.

The relationship between Mary and Moses began in the fields, a space where the public economic life of the colony is enacted. Once Moses comes to work in the house, however, the relationship begins to be controlled by the imperatives of the domestic space. The very purpose of domestic space is to allow the enactment of heterosexual and family relationships. And in a terrible parody of the family this is indeed what happens as both refuse to confront, let alone enact, their sexual attraction for one another. Mary slowly regresses into childhood in order to absolve herself from confronting the desire which the colony knows as the greatest betrayal of herself which a white woman can recognize. Moses responds to this by taking on himself a range of familial tasks. He dresses and undresses her displacing her mother in that task. For her part Mary has a dream which conflates Moses with her father; when Dick falls sick again Moses takes her place as watcher at the bedside assuming momentarily her rôle as wife. The one relationship which they cannot have is the only one which might have saved them: the relationship of lovers. Lessing has set up a conventional enough love triangle: husband, wife and wife's lover; weak husband, wife and strong man. If salvation for Mary might indeed have come in the shape of a strong man, then Moses is possibly that man. But the colony perverts all human relationships by making race the dominant imperative so that love and even friendship are subordinate. The racist codes of the colony have as their telos white power.

Whatever the relationship is between Mary and Moses, because Mary cannot confidently transgress her construction as colonial woman, their relationship can end only with Mary's murder and Moses's execution. When finally the neighbouring farmer persuades Dick to leave the farm, Moses out of jealousy kills Mary. Various symbolic meanings cluster around the murder. Moses has not been

[25] Ibid., 177-178.

allowed to enter Mary's body sexually with love or even as an act of male dominance and can therefore enter her only as he destroys her by smashing open her head. When Mary whipped Moses, the narrator observes that "[s]he had behind her the police, the courts, the jails; he nothing but patience".[26] As that comment suggests, the murder is not an act between two individuals for neither has been allowed to be an individual: Mary is white Rhodesian woman; Moses is a black man in Rhodesia. The murder then both anticipates and is metonymic of the Liberation War which was to transform Rhodesia into Zimbabwe. Finally the murder suggests that only through violence will the colonial mind-set be smashed and the settler mind be made receptive to other readings of Africa than a savage space peopled by savages which requires white control.

These symbolic presences are accessible to the reader partly because *The Grass Is Singing* reads back in order to subvert both the imperial romance and the colonial romances authored by colonial women. Page and Stockley de-peopled the land to realize the nationalist visions which depend on child-bearing and nurturing colonial women. Lessing restores black people to the land and the novel suggests that what has to be negotiated if the whites are to have any claim to Rhodesia is that both whites and blacks learn to recognize a common humanity with one another. Implicit in the novel is the hope that race as a category should cease to signify.

In the end history denied Rhodesians their nationhood or rather allowed them a discrete nationhood only in Zimbabwe, the black-ruled nation, which represents the most fundamental transgression of everything white Rhodesia had ever stood for. Within the early novels, the laager over which women presided is as effective an image as any of Rhodesian nationalism in its insistence on a space from which blacks are excluded. Much of Lessing's African fiction traces the racial exclusiveness of Rhodesia. She understood, as Martha's noble city indicates, that the nation will come into a being only when the habit of racial exclusion is put aside. More radically, Lessing's art suggests that the authority to include would have to come from blacks themselves and that would be possible only once history had closed the colonial narrative.

[26] Ibid., 147.

Anna Maria Cimitile

Of Ghosts, Women and Slaves. Spectral thinking in late modernity

Postcolonial ghosts

Spectres, phantasms, ghosts populate much contemporary fiction. The publication of Toni Morrison's *Beloved* in 1987 has certainly made the "ghost" a powerful central figure of postcoloniality. Indeed, Afro-American culture has a haunting presence with which it struggles and to which it relates in an ambivalent way: *slavery*. For slavery, as Barbara T. Christian suggests, is its repressed history which urges representation while remaining the unmentionable 'thing', the 'origin' that must be silenced and repressed. The ghost thematizes the ambivalence toward slavery: it is present and absent at the same time, it appears and disappears, is visible and invisible, just as slavery is in the figure of Beloved, the ghostly daughter who comes back to life. As Beloved was killed by her mother to be freed from a future of subordination, she is allegedly a 'free' subject; but her liberty tells insistently of slavery and of the violence that it prompted. *Beloved* is only one, although an excellent one, of many texts that bring together the spectral and the postcolonial. It seems that through the figures of phantasms and spirits of various provenances, many recent texts construct spectrality as a specificity of postcoloniality. The project I have undertaken and that I am introducing here is to explore the different configurations of ghostliness in contemporary culture(s) (the global condition of late modernity keeps the plural in brackets), to see how our thinking of our time is reformulated in/by them. My argument is that contemporaneity is figuring itself according to 'modalities of ghostliness', for the spectral not only appears in our narratives in the

form of ghosts, the spirits of the dead, but also in our theory, literary criticism, cultural analysis and even sociology, as I shall briefly refer below. I think that an exploration of these 'spectral modalities', even of the 'uses' of ghosts, is one way of "reflecting on time", to adapt a famous title by Jean-François Lyotard.

What does it mean that the ghost is a central figure of contemporary cultures? What are the implications of positing it at the core of postcoloniality? The spectral is a liminal presence, it puts binary oppositions in disarray, opens up a space *between* presence and absence, life and death, past and present (and future), and locates itself there. It questions any order of things or episteme, for they rely too much on structure, fixity of order, taxonomy. Ghosts are elusive and unveil the inadequacy of language itself to present their reality: "present" and "absent" become obsolete and incongruent vocabulary when dealing with the phantasmatic.

How do spectres relate to postcoloniality? With Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, by postcoloniality I mean "the contemporary global condition" that retains, in its very name, the awareness of a past of colonization, the deep, marking character of which is not erased even after the supposed evolution of colonialism into neocolonialism.[1] Old oppressor and oppressed are equally affected by the event of colonization, a "past" that *haunts* their present and models it around and within its spectral presence. Postcoloniality would therefore be the time when the Marxian master/slave dyad – even if not totally overcome, even if 'materially' present in evolved forms in the neocolonial world order (which however could not be read exclusively with the lenses of a Marxian history) – has turned into *the* ghost haunting the present. This means that political agency finds itself imbricated with the invisible, with the silent, yet persistent, uncanny memory of a violent hierarchization located in the past; taking action is imbued with that 'presence' and plays with it a more or less conscious *fort-da* game. Late modernity proves a

[1] Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Towards a History of the Vanishing Present* (Cambridge, Mass., and London: Harvard U.P., 1999), 172. Spivak distinguishes between "postcolonialism" and "postcoloniality", and acutely critiques the first as being an "academico-cultural 'postcolonialism'", often only a "bogus" (358). Taking up her distinction, here "postcoloniality" will similarly be considered the condition of our late modernity.

haunted time, and its hauntedness has a markedly *political* character; it proves to be a time with a *haunted agency*.[2]

The ghostly is thus an apt figure for postcoloniality. Which are the features of the contemporary spectral? The model of the present as the time of a kind of "return of the repressed" is only one aspect that this hauntedness of contemporaneity assumes. The ghostly is in that case frightening and even horrific, as is the ghost in *Beloved* before it turns itself into a "ghost of flesh". But ghosts can be assuring too, our way of instating a continuity with the past, a paradoxically invoked and/or necessitated haunting of our present.[3] In Fred D'Aguiar's novel *Feeding the Ghosts* (1997) the phantasms of the title are not present as such, they are only retrospectively given this definition.[4] They are created by Mintah, the main character of the story, who in late life surrounds herself with wooden statuettes that she has carved herself, to keep alive (the "feeding" of the title refers to this) the ghosts of all the sick slaves who travelled with her on the slave ship *Zong* from Africa to the Caribbean Islands and were thrown overboard during that journey. Ghosts are a powerful element in the book. They are constitutive of Mintah's present from a certain moment of her life until her death. The text proposes a way of living the present through the keeping alive of the past. If, as in many other texts, this stresses the central role of *memory* in postcolonial time, the distinctive aspect here is that the past is as it were willingly kept in its phantasmatic form. The keeping alive refers to ghosts, and it seems to be demanded, as in an injunction: at one point in the novel it is expressedly said that one must feed the ghosts in order to release them or, paradoxically, get rid of their frightening haunting. Spectral entities become the centre around which all action is performed; life is subordinated to their 'life', as they prove an indispensable presence in Mintah's old age. *Feeding the Ghosts* is exemplary of what I

[2] The acknowledgement of a haunting of agency has great potential for a reformulation of agency itself as well as of subjectivity and culture. It would open up a reconsidering of the very materiality of the postcolonial condition, which is addressed here but needs further investigation. I am only briefly pointing to the implications of the spectralization of the real for a redefinition of culture, subjectivity, agency.

[3] Freud had already pointed to this ambivalence of our relating to the dead, as spirits or demons, or as the protecting figures of the ancestors, in *Totem and Taboo* (1913), but he did not put it in terms of an urge for hauntedness, which is what I read in contemporary culture.

[4] Fred D'Aguiar, *Feeding the Ghosts* (London: Vintage, 1997).

believe to be one distinctive trait of late modern culture: the construction and "feeding" (though not always necessarily intended) of a hauntedness of our own time, performed in various fields and through different discourses.

Ghosts construct presence and the present with a consistency different from the concreteness we are used to ascribing to reality. *The contingent becomes spectral*. Where does this figuration come from? Indeed many elements would contribute to such a configuration of the present; the Internet has for some time offered us an inconsistent space to inhabit. Virtual reality is the phantasmatic site par excellence. And the inter-face, the metaphor of post-postmodern relations, makes those very relations spectral. The very idea of spectrality is redefined while being put forward: the cyberspace offers a contamination between physicality and virtuality that makes the phantasmatic a hybrid and the evanescent a process of transformation rather than a state. The hauntedness of the present introduced above goes hand in hand with the spectralization of reality in the cyberspace.[5] Both spectralize our time while at the same time reshaping the phantasmatic: ghostliness in late modernity is expressedly political and *in flux*.

Does spectrality affect time? How is the latter configured by the spectral? The ghost is beyond life and death: inhabiting a realm between the two, it defies time's linearity. In its most traditional form, a ghost is the past entering the present, breaking the sequence. Is this a form of defying history and historical progress? Does the spectre freeze time? If the gothic ghosts, vampires, and other figures of liminality in nineteenth-century literature had a character of eternity, the postcolonial envisioning of ghosts is different even in its configurations of time. David Dabydeen's poem *Turner* (1994)

[5] In different terms, the postcolonial and the virtual have already been brought together by the specialized discourse of cyberfeminism, which has drawn on the coloured woman as a strategic figure for its own aims. See Donna Haraway, "The Promises of Monsters", in Lawrence Grossberg and Cary Nelson, eds., *Cultural Studies* (New York and London: Routledge, 1992), 293-337. For a different, critical position on cyborg culture and a disclaimer that it may share the same space as the postcolonial subject, see Joseba Gabilondo, "Postcolonial Cyborgs: Subjectivity in the Age of Cybernetic Reproduction", in Chris Hables Gray, ed., with the assistance of Heidi J. Figueroa-Sarriera and Steven Mentor, *The Cyborg Handbook* (New York and London: Routledge, 1995), 423-432.

presents a special 'ghost' in its revisioning of the famous painting by J. M. W. Turner known as *Slave Ship*. First exhibited in 1840 and praised in its time as a great example of the sublime in art, the painting is acknowledged today as a representation of the condition of slavery. Dabydeen's poem takes as its central character the slave in the water thrown overboard along with other sick slaves, and of whom only a chained leg is visible in the picture.[6] The dying slave is given voice and can finally tell her/his story from *her/his* perspective;[7] the surprising thing is, s/he tells a story that is long four hundred years. For in Dabydeen's poem the slave has outlived her/his death so to speak, and kept on 'living' in the sea, where she/he has been spectator to many other crimes, many other violent throwings overboard of slaves. The slave renames all the things s/he comes across in the sea; history is a linguistic act and s/he starts hers/his through naming. Her/his narrative unsettles precisely for this reason: the poem opens with the figure of a stillborn child tossed overboard, called Turner by the ghost slave, in an act that capsizes roles and confounds biographies:

> ...
> The part-born, sometimes with its mother,
> Tossed overboard. Such was my bounty
> Delivered so unexpectedly that at first
> I could not believe this miracle of fate,
> This longed-for gift of motherhood.
> What was deemed mere food for sharks will become
> My fable. I named it Turner
> As I have given fresh names to birds and fish
> And humankind, all things living but unknown,
> Dimly recalled, or dead.[8]

Time and history are rephrased as the ghost slave only names, gives 'birth' to, the rejected and killed, to people and things that have been

[6] David Dabydeen, *Turner: New and Selected Poems* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1994).

[7] On Turner's painting and the import of the acknowledgment of the slave's presence in the picture for a reconfiguration of modernity, see Iain Chambers, "At the Edge of the World. Dislocating visions, relocating histories: whose place, whose time?", in this issue.

[8] Dabydeen, *Turner*, 1.

thrown overboard the ship of History. The rescue or retrieval of the repressed crams time and disturbs its linearity.

Not only does the ghost rephrase history but it is also affected by the passing of time: in *Beloved* the ghost daughter is a young woman when she appears in the flesh to her mother, her age as it would have been had she not been killed in her infancy. In *Turner* the ghost casts her/his gaze on history and lives it directly. In these texts historical progress is not frozen but is presented through the eye of the ghost; the phantasm-in-history reconfigures history as a haunted 'space'.

Ghosts are originary. The phantasm starts up narration. Patricia Grace's *Baby No-Eyes* (1998) introduces the ghost of a never-born baby girl who died in a car accident when her mother was pregnant with her.[9] She appears to her younger brother and from that moment on sees the world through his eyes (at the hospital hers were taken away "by mistake"). In this novel the ghost is the pretext for a long, multi-voiced narration of a Maori family's story: the phantasm becomes the origin of history, of its telling. If on the one hand it reveals the 'normality' of dealing with ghosts which is a specific trait of certain cultures, most importantly the phantasm's presence in this as in other texts posits the void or absence as the very possibility for history. The ghost girl in *Baby No-Eyes* and the stillborn child in *Turner* are cogent figures of this reformulation of origins performed by ghostliness: rather than death, both are the non-life that prompts narration; they point to the violent truncation of being, and consequently to a phantasmatic being (what could have been) that makes history possible.

I have mentioned the overtly political import of postcolonial spectres. In the texts mentioned so far two figures seem to recur, at times even overlapping: *the ghost of the dead daughter* and *the haunting (black) slave*. Women and blacks have long been denouncing their oppression or silencing, in a voice that often also vindicates an absence of voice. Both the dead daughter and the slave are disturbing figures that redefine the very orders within which they appear. They deconstruct structures of linearity and binary oppositions and let ambivalence emerge.

[9] See Patricia Grace, *Baby No-Eyes* (London: The Women's Press, 1998).

The dead daughter presents the already complex mother/daughter relation and unveils in it the (abject?) desire to unmother: in *Beloved*, the killing of the daughter is done to free her from a future of slavery, and in this it discloses another story, where, in Morrison's words, a "nurturing instinct that expressed itself in murder" is presented. Medea's story, or Lady Macbeth's, where the woman's power is asserted against the female stereotype. Is this not the spectre of a powerful, different womanhood? The phantasmatic becomes the site in which to rephrase gender difference and to reveal its constructedness; it is the emergence of the unseen aspects that haunt the desire to mother.

The problematization of gender accompanies the remodelling of history in the texts mentioned above. In *Beloved*, the mother-as-assassin capsizes lineality and linear history: the young die before their elders, mothers kill, they truncate rather than assure the flow of time through generations; then the daughter returns as a ghost into the present of her mother's life (into the present of her own past, so to speak, to haunt it). Gender distinction and history are the stakes in *Turner* too, where again motherhood is the centripetal force of revision. I have referred to the slave protagonist using both the pronouns "she" and "he". This is because the figure's gender remains ambivalent throughout the poem, and its desire to mother represents not a confirmation of its female gender, but rather a disturbance of our perception of the slave as a man in Turner's painting. The interrogation of assumptions on gender differences is one way of rewriting history performed by the dead daughter and the androgynous slave's revisionings for postcolonial times.

Like the ghostly daughter, the slave is a disturbing figure. The haunting slave presents the originary injustice on which many Western democracies were founded; the Enlightenment, the age of Reason, valuing freedom and equality as the inspiring ideals for present and future times, could not do without the violent restriction of others' liberty. The slave calls ethical values into question and haunts the very idea of justice. For the slave is the subordinated individual that guarantees the privileged her/his role of subjugating subject; possibly, the existence of a slave is intrinsic to the being of a subject *qua* subject: Prospero's acknowledgement of Caliban as his own "thing of darkness" in Shakespeare's *The Tempest* might well

present slavery as an unconscious and inalienable part of subjectivity. Like the unconscious, the slave is perceived as a force that can react and attack, a force that must be kept under control but that remains uncontrollable; figuratively its unsettled and unsettling condition is a constant reminder of the instability of the master/slave power relation.

Indeed, the daughter and the slave, figures of filiation and subjugation, prove potent tropes for power relations. Reading them as postcolonial ghosts also provides a useful gangway into the "psychic life of power", to quote Judith Butler's title, and into its historical specifications.[10] They represent insightful explorations of the political in/of the psychic, for the dead daughter and the slave can also be read as figures for the formations of subjectivity, of the subject's relation to the symbolic order. I have focused on the ghostliness of these figures in some contemporary texts for I think they contribute to a *spectralization of the real and the political* that can also be detected in recent philosophical discourse and theory.

I think that it is possible to trace a 'route' of the evanescent that is specific of late modernity. By following the tracks of thought, by interrogating its detours, we can make sense of our time. When we turn to recent philosophical and literary studies, as well as to psychoanalysis, we find that this route of the "vanishing present" proceeds by way of Shakespeare.

What has Shakespeare got to do with it?

In 1993 Jacques Derrida's *Spectres de Marx* was published.[11] The book is Derrida's first lengthy engagement with Communism. There the French philosopher analyzes Marxism and its configuration as the spectre that has haunted Europe since its inception. Derrida links the political with the spectral in a sustained, consistent way throughout his reading. Deconstruction has always more or less overtly

[10] See Judith Butler, *The Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjection* (Stanford: Stanford U.P., 1997).

[11] See Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx: The State of Debt, the Work of Mourning and the New International*, trans. Peggy Kamuf, with an Introduction by Bernd Magnus and Stephen Cullenberg (New York and London: Routledge, 1994).

presented us with the phantasmatic: differance would be one way of putting it as the unfixity of meaning, the signifying 'invisible' excess in/of language. The book even more overtly states a spectrality of the political and the ideological. Its first chapter is entitled "Injunctions of Marx". There Derrida starts his discussion of Communism by way of an inspired reading of the ghost in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*.

In 1987 Marjorie Garber published *Shakespeare's Ghost Writers: Literature as Uncanny Causality*, a brilliant analysis of Shakespeare's recurrent 'apparitions' in philosophical texts by Marx, Nietzsche, Freud.[12] The return of Shakespeare in other, altogether different discourses, as alternatively metaphor and methodological explanatory tool, not only spectralizes Shakespeare's presence there, but also confers a ghostly being to the very writers who engage with it. Garber's reading exposes the ghostly being of literature and of writing itself, by showing the uncanny intersections between the Shakespearean plays mentioned and the texts that mention them; in her analysis the ghostly is configured as this indistinction or uncanny sympathy between the 'inside' and the 'outside' of the text.

More recently, Ned Lukacher has explored what he calls the "history of conscience", analyzing interpretations by, among others, Freud and Heidegger in *Daemonic Figures: Shakespeare and the Question of Conscience*.[13] The book deals with the ghostly as "spirit", and identifies in the liminality of the *daimon* the "figure of the language of moral judgment". It posits the space of conscience as undecidable and in-between: "[t]he daemon is ... the figure for the incontrovertible ghostliness, the familiar strangeness, that dwells between the perceptions and reflections of consciousness and the enigmatic ground of Being itself".[14] Lukacher reads the history of conscience via Shakespeare, as he focuses on both the way the Shakespearean texts fashion conscience and its effects on twentieth-century philosophy. In a study that points to the ghostliness of conscience, Lukacher explores that most excellent ghost of literature: Shakespeare.

[12] See Marjorie Garber, *Shakespeare's Ghost Writers: Literature as Uncanny Causality* (London: Methuen, 1987).

[13] See Ned Lukacher, *Daemonic Figures: Shakespeare and the Question of Conscience* (Ithaca and London: Cornell U.P.), 1994.

[14] Ibid., 2.

Different as they are, these studies all configure alternatively the political, literature, morals, in terms of the spectral and do so by calling Shakespearean textuality into question. What is the sense that these reiterated associations produce? What can we make of this insistent appearance of Shakespeare in the ghostly figurations of the present? Why are Shakespeare and the phantasm invoked to figure 'presence' in late modernity? And how do those figures redefine presence? Shakespeare is most certainly a privileged site in which to start a discussion on spectrality. Many of his texts present ghosts, some more famous than others. Hamlet's spectre is among the most popular, enticing many to engage in a confrontation with it. Lacan used it to talk of desire and/as the phantasm. Derrida has read it in close relation to the political. The liminality of the ghost explains its recurrence in philosophical discourse; spectrality refers to the 'other' condition that always looms up within the 'present': "[t]here is something disappeared, departed in the apparition itself as reapparition of the departed", in Derrida's words.[15] But why Shakespeare's ghosts?

Here I would like to draw briefly on *Richard III*. In act 5 of the play there is an unusual proliferation of ghosts: on the night before the decisive battle at Bosworth, when Richmond will at last defeat the 'evil' Richard, the ghosts of young Prince Edward, Henry the Sixth, Clarence, Rivers, Grey, Vaughan, Hastings, the two young Princes, Lady Anne, and Buckingham, all come in turn to visit both Richard and the future king Henry VII. What the spectres say is plain: they curse Richard and give their blessing to Richmond. The spectral becomes, once more, the inception of history, as the ghosts' wishings anticipate the historical end of Richard, his actual defeat at Bosworth. What is even more interesting, however, is the spectres' modality of being. Gordon Craig said something revealing about Shakespeare's ghosts, calling them "waiting figures intangible as death ... mysterious featureless faces of which, sideways, we seem to catch a glimpse, although, on turning fully round, we find nothing there".[16] The presence proposed by Shakespearean ghosts is only this *sideways glimpse*.

[15] Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, 6.

[16] Edward Gordon Craig, "On the Ghosts in the Tragedies of Shakespeare", in *On The Art of the Theatre*, London, Mercury Books, 1962 [first published in 1911], 268.

Obliquity is a feature of representation in *Richard III*. Richard closes act 1, scene 2, with this address to the sun: "Shine out, fair sun, till I have bought a glass, / That I may see my shadow as I pass". Already in the play's opening monologue Richard had started an iterated imagery of mirror reflections and shadows: his reality and theirs have the same consistency, one of doubles, of images, inconsistent, repetitive and in this sense *ghostly*. But this reality is also ghostly in the sense of *haunting*, as Richard's deeds entertain a relation with the good order they seemingly interrupt that is more like a spectral inherence in that order than a stark opposition to it. We can guess that Richard has to put the mirror aslant in order to see his shadow; his act repeats the obliquity that is in my opinion the modality of disclosure of this play. He has a lot to say about power: he actually embraces the organization of lineal power that he seems instead to contrast, and, at the same time, he unveils the 'corruptions' that are constitutive of lineage, thus revealing its very ambivalence. By spying on his shadow in the sun, Richard points to the spectral presences that are intrinsic to reality and power; by using a mirror put aslant, he suggests that only an oblique gaze will see them.

Ghosts and obliquity, then. A detour in linearity. *Richard III*, which seems to be about nothing else but lineality and linearity, urges some reflections: is there anything like linearity? Or isn't it always the case that the latter relies, paradoxically, on its most contrary modes, obliquity and deviation? Richard is a 'deviationist': he uses the "G" prophecy to have his brother George of Clarence accused of plotting against the king and imprisoned, when it is plain that the prophecy is about himself, Richard of Gloucester. Richard proves signification to consist in a series of deviations, and linearity (in meaning, power, history) to be an ideological construct. Contemporary critical thinking, from psychoanalysis to poststructuralism to deconstruction, also focuses on the 'turnings' of the subject, meaning and teleology, detours similar to those it uses in the process of its investigations. Meaning is produced in turnings. Sometimes they are U-turns: Lacan advanced psychoanalysis by invoking and practising a "return to Freud". Postcolonial literatures urge a reliving of history as a way to 'move on': "Where else to row, but backward?" is the question posed by Derek Walcott in *Another*

Life. Richard III, with its mirrors put aslant, its shadows and doubles, presents a modality that is also proper to our contemporaneity.

Critical theory as well as postcolonial discourse advance a pregnant 'ghostly' reality that is politically charged; obliquity is the modality both of its being and of the gaze that uncovers it. Contemporary theory discovers the turnings of presence, be they in the form of the unconscious, textuality, or difference. Shakespeare's phantasms, with their oblique presence, prove to be figures of the contemporary ghostly.

Theorizing evanescence

The spectralization of reality is reshaping our notion of "culture". Pauline Melville's short story *The Migration of Ghosts* (1998) uses the ghostly in a clever way for it has no 'real' ghosts.[17] A Macusi Indian woman is on holiday in Europe with her English husband; she does not like being here, and longs for their quick return to America. During her stay in Prague, she suddenly perceives a strange, unusual sense of familiarity while walking in the city's magical streets; she thinks the feeling is due to ghosts come from her country to keep her company. Paradoxically, from that moment of 'recognition' on, her sense of uneasiness at being in a foreign place disappears. Here it is a ghostliness, the perception of another degree of reality *beside* ours, and the feeling that we are part of it too, that puts the main character in a relaxed mood. The story identifies the sense of the homely with the inconsistent presence of ghosts, and culture itself with the phantasmatic. The woman at one point also recognizes as an Amerindian boy someone who is in fact from Mongolia. The story proposes *méconnaissance* as the *heimlich*, the familiar produced in misrecognition.

What I am suggesting by drawing on this story is that possibly the contemporary recognition of an ontological 'homelessness', the sense of not belonging, the perception of one's self as 'stranger to oneself', is paradoxically producing an easiness in dealing with the ghostly and a movement toward the indefinable. This is more like an

[17] See Pauline Melville, *The Migration of Ghosts* (London: Bloomsbury, 1998), 179-209.

acknowledgment of the *evanescence* of the concreteness we used to consider our home, the sense of belonging, the fixity of culture. As *The Migration of Ghosts* also suggests, cultures 'translate'. In their constant shifting what we see is their 'vanishing', the presence/absence of the features that are lost/acquired in the translation; indeed, culture as such emerges as this vanishing: "[t]here is something disappeared, departed in the apparition itself as reapparition of the departed". Late modernity proposes spectrality as a modality of being, of culture itself.

Psychoanalysis is of course highly relevant to contemporary spectral figurations of presence. The discovery of the unconscious, the notion of its latency, have marked the subject with a phantasmatic if powerful reality. Psychoanalytic investigation has proved very productive in the study of culture and the subject: Louis Althusser read ideology as an "interpellation" that constructed subjects; Fredric Jameson has discussed a "political unconscious"; Slavoj Žižek wittily uses Lacan to read ideology alongside popular culture;[18] Octave Mannoni, Franz Fanon and Homi K. Bhabha have again made use of psychoanalysis to explore the colonial and postcolonial condition; and Judith Butler's investigations are also attentive to the imbrications of the political and the psychic. Discussions on power relations as well as questions of race make a *political* use of psychoanalysis. This political appropriation of psychoanalysis configures the postcolonial phantasmatic.

We seem to appreciate evanescence in different fields. Literary criticism appears to be turning to figures of spectrality as key objects of investigation, no matter which historical period is being analyzed. From Shakespeare to Modernism to postcolonial literatures, criticism is configuring a literature of ghosts for all times.[19] The literary itself

[18] Among his many books, see Slavoj Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (London: Verso, 1989), and *Looking Awry: An Introduction to Jacques Lacan through Popular Culture* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, and London: M.I.T. Press, 1991).

[19] If we associate the spectral to the gothic of late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century literature, contemporary studies read other periods in terms of the ghostly too. On Shakespeare, see, among others, Lidia Curti, ed., *Ombre di un'ombra: Amleto e i suoi fantasmi* (Napoli: I.U.O., 1994), for literary criticism on *Hamlet* focusing on its spectrality. Even Modernist literature is currently being explored in terms of ghostwriting. See Helen Sword, "Necrobibliography: Books in the Spirit World", *Modern Language Quarterly* 60.1 (1999), 85-112. And, once more, postcolonial literatures offer much material to explore in terms of the ghostly, as the examples above show.

is stressed as spectral. Contemporary studies in cultural history, in their own way, can also be said to focus on a 'ghost'. Catherine Belsey's critical practice, far from attempting a recovery of the past, underlines its pastness, the gap between past and present; and it is in this interval that she identifies the productive space of signification and of history-making.[20] The phantasm there takes on the characteristics of *difference*: the historical distance Belsey insightfully focuses on can be read as the pregnant ghostly that enables our meanings and gives them their specificity. Taking the evanescent into account is not too far from producing it. By turning to ghosts as alternatively objects of investigation, or rhetorical figures or metaphors for its representations, contemporary critical thought affirms a spectral reality that is positive and meaningful, acknowledging the immaterial and the invisible as equally serious 'matter'.

Philosophy and the human sciences are enthralled by the ghostly. Philosophy *is* spectral: being asked about ghosts Derrida replied that he is one himself. Deconstruction has stated a relation of hauntedness between itself and what it investigates: both inside and outside the text, it advances the spectral in/as its own aporia of being that which, because it is not a method, can and cannot be applied to a text.[21] Lyotard's notion of the "unpresentable" also introduces postmodernity as the time of a spectrality of sorts: it points to something that, elusive of representation, *is*, nevertheless, a presence that affirms itself in a different modality, stating non-presentability as a positive feature. Possibly due to our being at the close of a millennium and feeling the sense of an ending, we envisage our present as "vanishing".[22] It has been noted that feminism itself (to briefly force the singular onto a variety of discourses) is performing a

[20] See, among others, Catherine Belsey, *Desire: Love Stories in Western Culture* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994); and *Shakespeare and the Loss of Eden: The Construction of Family Values in Early Modern Culture* (London: Macmillan, 1999).

[21] "If deconstruction, then, is nothing by itself, the only thing it can do is apply, to be applied, to something else.... Deconstruction cannot be applied and cannot not be applied. So we have to deal with this aporia, and this is what deconstruction is about." See Derrida, "*As if* I Were Dead: An Interview With Jacques Derrida", in John Branningan, Ruth Robbins and Julian Wolfreys, eds., *Applying: To Derrida* (London: Macmillan, 1996), 218.

[22] See Spivak's latest book, *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason*, the subtitle of which stresses precisely this feature of the present time.

kind of spectralization, through its alignment "with the critique of positivism and the defetishization of the concrete".[23]

I would like to conclude with an example from sociology which is in my opinion the best instance of the spectralization of the real in recent theory. Avery F. Gordon's book, *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination* (1997), is a sophisticated example of how spectres have entered even the pragmatic, statistic-based world of the social sciences.[24] Ascribing a matter-like quality to the ghostly, Gordon courageously affirms the presence of invisible factors – left unaccounted in traditional sociology – in the workings of power relations as well as history, and sets out to explore those factors. She states the great implications of such an approach, as ghosts question the sociologists' very modes of inquiry and their assumptions about the social world: confronting the ghostly aspects of social life "requires (or produces) a fundamental change in the way we know and make knowledge, in our mode of production".[25] The vocabularies fail to "communicate the depth, density, and intricacies of the dialectic of subjection and subjectivity (... structure and agency), of domination and freedom, of critique and utopian longing".[26] Which obliquely states that ghosts also dismantle dialectics itself as a structure.

> Of course, it is not simply the vocabularies themselves that are at fault, but the constellation of effects, historical and institutional, that make a vocabulary a social practice of producing knowledge.[27]

Ghosts become epistemic unsettlers, and force the rethinking of how we produce knowledge.

Gordon explores the ghostly matters of more or less recent events in American history: state repression and the *desaparecidos* in Argentina, and slavery and Emancipation in the U.S., via a compelling analysis of Morrison's *Beloved*. Even for Gordon

[23] Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?", in Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg, eds., *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture* (London: Macmillan, 1988), 296.

[24] Avery F. Gordon, *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997).

[25] Ibid., 7.

[26] Ibid., 8.

[27] Ibid.

ghostliness reformulates history, locating it in the invisible crevices *between* what is considered History 'with a capital H' and the particular event. "Transferential haunting" is what Gordon names the different way of accounting for/rescuing the past proposed in *Beloved*. Mis-takings become the productive site of that retrieval: as present events are invested with what haunts one's memory, often wrongly envisaged through that haunting, they finally disclose a story that would not have emerged were it not for that very 'mistake'. The ghostly becomes once more the productive, originating space of the 'factual'.

The ghostly is liminal and subversive of epistemic orders. I believe this is the main reason why it is the subject of much contemporary fiction, the object of recent critical analysis but also the mode of its inquiry; it is the rhetorical figure both for a different modality of being and for a questioning of ontology itself. In its postcolonial configurations what is spectral associates with slavery and womanhood, the haunting powerful figures of our present. History is rewritten by it, above all in its mode: linearity, teleology, progress are all questioned by a phantasmatic 'being' that alternatively emerges as difference, mis-take, the unconscious, in-betweenness.

Engaging with ghostliness in different ways, contemporary critical thinking acts a spectralization of the real. Obliquity is the ghostly's dominant feature: "Shine out, fair sun, till I have bought a glass, / That I may see my shadow as I pass" is Richard III's cry for power, and contemporary spectrality repeats the Shakespearean modality. With its political imbrications, the postcolonial phantasmatic configures itself in the Shakespearean spectral; a "crucible for political mediation and historical memory",[28] the ghost asks to be followed, like Hamlet, and in so doing it requalifies history for late modernity: "what seems to be out front, the future, comes back in advance: from the past, from the back".[29]

[28] Ibid., 18.
[29] Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, 10.

Maria Stella

Nelly, Agnes and the Professor. Narration and education in the Brontës' early novels

All true histories contain instruction.
(Anne Brontë, *Agnes Grey*)

To a teacher of languages there comes a time
when the world is but a place of many words....
(Joseph Conrad, *Under Western Eyes)*

1. Portraits of schoolmasters, teachers and tutors abound in the nineteenth-century novel's long gallery, in which they mirror the growing social relevance of the new professions, while at the same time signalling the authors' uncertainties and doubts about their origin, value and destiny.

In this sense the shrewd governess Becky Sharp in Thackeray's *Vanity Fair* (1847-48) and the ambiguous schoolmaster Bradley Headstone in Dickens's *Our Mutual Friend* (1864) can be considered as gendered "negative" archetypes in a line which nonetheless includes a larger and more reassuring variety of characters. In *A Tale of Two Cities* (1859), for instance, Dickens himself allows the French aristocrat Charles Darnay to be transformed, in England, in a credited and respected language teacher, a forerunner of the Victorian gentleman.

Rarely, though, are the educators allowed to become narrators; when they do, the author's intention to destabilise the reader still further seems to gain strength, as it happens in Dickens's short story *George Silverman's Explanation* (1868). The teacher's first-person narration, with its often quoted "double" beginning and ambivalent implications, becomes even more intriguing once the reader realises Silverman's role and responsibilities as the tutor of his beloved Adelina. Dickens subtly invites us, in other words, to distrust the instructor.

This process seems to culminate, at the end of the century, in the disturbing "explanation" of Henry James's governess in *The Turn of the Screw* (1898), whose witness is continually questioned from the inside, casting a shadow on the reliability of both her language and vision. A motif Conrad will soon resume by making a language teacher the unreliable narrator of *Under Western Eyes* (1911), a novel deeply concerned with the theme of hearing and/or being deaf, with the difficulties of decoding what Roland Barthes would call the "hum of the language". Suspicions of a metanarrative nature, concerning the medium as well as the message, are thus aroused in the reader.

In the light of these late-Victorian developments, the role of the Brontës, at their very debut as writers, deserves to be investigated, since the three sisters simultaneously and radically challenge, in their first novels, the conventional nexus between narration and education.

2. *Wuthering Heights*, *Agnes Grey* and *The Professor* were written in the same period and sent to the same publisher, Newby; *The Professor*, rejected, had to wait until Charlotte's death in order to be published, while the other two novels came out at the end of 1847.[1] A comparative and horizontal reading of the three novels as they were originally intended for publication by their authors, allows the theme of instruction to emerge as particularly relevant in their structure.

Moving from the collective dimension of their private adolescent writing[2] to official and public authorship, each sister becomes more conscious of the reader's reactions and the novel's pedagogical function: in the three novels the narrator is at the same time an educator, and a conveyer of culture. Nelly Dean, Agnes Grey and William Crimsworth – however different in their roles of country

[1] Quotations and pages are taken from the following editions: Emily Brontë, *Wuthering Heights*, ed. David Daiches (London: Penguin, 1965); Anne Brontë, *Agnes Grey*, ed. Angeline Goreau (London: Penguin, 1988); Charlotte Brontë, *The Professor*, ed. Margaret Smith (Oxford: Oxford U.P., 1991).

[2] On the Brontës' juvenilia see: Fanny E. Ratchford, *The Brontes' Web of Childhood* (New York: 1941); W. D. Paden, *An Investigation of Gondal* (New York: Columbia U.P., 1958); Christine Alexander, *The Early Writings of Charlotte Brontë*; T. J. Wise and J. A. Symington, eds., *The Brontës: Their Lives, Friendship and Correspondence* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1980); Tom Winnifrith, *The Brontës and Their Background* (London: Macmillan, 1973). Criticism of their early work is reported in Miriam Allott, *The Brontës: The Critical Heritage* (London: Routlegde and Kegan Paul, 1974).

nurse, governess, and teacher – share a common responsibility for their own education, that of the other characters, and finally, the reader's.

As the titles make evident, each narrator organises his "instructive tale" in a different way, but the complex problems of class, power and gender connected to the transmission of culture are always kept in the foreground.

Of the three narrators only Agnes Grey is eponymous heroine. Only in the title of Anne's fiction female identity and authorial identity are allowed to coincide, as they were not in Anne's biographic experience, still conditioned by the use of the neuter pseudonym. But in order to do so, the fictitious name must signal, however ironically, the insufficiency of the protagonist – a woman and a governess – to produce a traditionally interesting story, in the black and white tones of the conventional male adventure.

Being "Grey", Agnes bears in herself the traces of the lowering of tone and status necessary to the direct writing of a governess' ordinary experiences. Greyness symbolises social uncertainty, suspension, mediation, but is also a formal strategy consciously devised by the writer to avoid stereotyped readings: the omissions and silences implied in its shades challenge conventional expectations and give shape to a female identity which has not yet been defined and narrated.[3]

In the title of her first novel Charlotte Brontë does not mention the narrator's name (as she will later do with *Jane Eyre*). She rather chooses, as a man would do, to identify him by the title of his profession: namely, *The Professor*. But it is interesting to notice that a process of "greying" similar to Agnes' – implying social hybridisation and literary neutralisation – is undergone by Charlotte's protagonist, whose surname was initially Ashworth: someone who gets his "worth" from the symbol and colour ("ash") of mortality. But also someone who, like Cinderella, rises from a very low status to a higher one.

A similar intriguing coexistence of positive evaluation and

[3] See Marisa Sestito, "Introduzione" a Anne Brontë, *Agnes Grey* (Roma: Editori Riuniti, 1989), xvii: "Agnes Grey è, e insieme non è autobiografia. Pur partendo infatti dal dato personale, la narrazione lucidamente se ne discosta, sperimentando un metodo attento all'economicità della composizione, teso più spesso a sottrarre che a dilatare".

puzzling negative implications is suggested in the protagonist's final surname. The root of "crime" and "criminal" is evident in Crimsworth and points out the ambiguous essence of the male autobiographical voice we are asked to trust. To prove Charlotte's insistence on this theme, covered in a "cloak of hodden grey" will also appear, later on, Lucy Snow, the elusive heroine of *Villette*.

While imagining in *The Professor* to write what could be called the autobiography of a non-eminent Victorian, (faithful to the canons of an increasingly popular genre in that period), Charlotte revises a literary tradition going back to Samuel Richardson's *Sir Charles Grandison*, in which several pages were dedicated to the relationship between teacher and pupil. She also connects herself to the female tradition started by Harriet Martineau in *Deerbrook* (1839), the first novel to deal extensively with the problems of tutors, teachers and governesses; a narrative line destined to be continued later on by George Sand in *Consuelo* (1842).[4]

If in the title of Emily's novel there is no mention of the narrator/instructor's personal and professional identity, in the choice of the house's name, *Wuthering Heights,* there could be an allusion to the "elevated turbulence" of what the educator is planning – even if with great ambivalence – to tame and to lower. The problem of ordering and controlling nature through instruction concerns several voices and generations in the text, from Catherine Earnshaw's absolute, transgressive, lyrical language,[5] to her daughter's more rational and logical expression; from Heathcliff the uncultivated and ignorant child in the novel's first part, to Heathcliff the adult persecutor depriving Hareton of education in the second.

Given this progressive diffusion of the educational theme in the novel, the distance between the narrator and the pedagogue's role

[4] On Harriet Martineau's cultural role see R. K. Webb, *Harriet Martineau: A Radical Victorian* (New York: Columbia U.P., 1960). On George Sand's reception in England see Patricia Thomson, *George Sand and the Victorians: Her Influence and Reputation in Nineteenth-Century England* (New York: Columbia U.P., 1977).

[5] The best introduction to this quality of Emily's language is George Bataille, "Emily Brontë", in *La Letteratura e il male* (Milano: S.E., 1987), 15-30. See also Margaret Homans, *Women Writers and Poetic Identity* (Princeton: University of Princeton Press, 1980);. Homans, *Bearing the Word: Language and Female Experience in Nineteenth-Century Women's Writing* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986).

must be intensified. Emily commits therefore to the first narrator, the diarist Lockwood, only the external "wooden frame" of the story, without allowing him to instruct anyone, not even himself. His inadequacies in this respect – narcissism, passivity, emotional repression – have been extensively underlined by recent criticism.[6]

Apparently obeying the rules of Victorian fiction by condemning her reader only to an indirect, male-mediate perception of female voices and writing, Emily systematically undermines any belief in objective or omniscient narrators. Her enquiry on education, her questioning of its meaning is neither obvious nor evident: it is rather perceived in the narration's most hidden folds, where conventions are subjected to criticism and transgression. We could quote, as an instance, the famous passage in which Catherine Earnshaw's writing – a girl's writing – first appears to Lockwood's eyes.[7] He can't help noticing its subordinate placement as a note in the margin of a book written by somebody else:

> ... a pen and ink commentary ... covering every morsel of blank that the printer had left (62).

But at the same time he perceives its evident insubordination:

> ... and at the top of an extra page, an excellent caricature of Joseph, rudely yet powerfully sketched (62).

The memory of an institutional pedagogical role echoes ironically in the second narrator's name, Dean: the nanny Nelly, who has actually nothing to do with academic and ecclesiastic appointments and is consequently allowed only a long oral deposition.

In Emily's polyphonic novel Nelly's lesson is removed at a certain distance from the reader, who is never directly admitted to listen to it, but forced to filter her tale through Lockwood's unreliable and intransitive written testimony. Partaking of the passions,

[6] See Angela Carter, "Love in a Cold Climate: Some Problems of Passion, Protestant Culture and Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights*", in Romana Rutelli and Anthony Johnson, eds., *I linguaggi della passione* (Udine: Campanotto, 1991).

[7] Some interesting observations on this aspect are contained in Robert C. McKibben, "The Image of the Book in *Wuthering Heights*", *Nineteenth-Century Fiction* 15. 2 (1960).

mistakes, emotions expressed by the other characters, Nelly's word is the link between Catherine and Heathcliff's metaphysical language and the novel's realistic needs: she is the one who translates poetry into prose.[8]

The Brontës share a plan for a radical redefinition of education through narration, and the theme of women's instruction acquires a structural narrative relevance by being worked out in the most minute details.

As it has been proved by Terry Eagleton, *Wuthering Heights'* main theme is the transition from one system of cultivation – the land's and the individual's – to the other: from the yeomanry's to the gentry's.[9] In this larger social context the theme of reading and writing assumes a particular relevance for each character belonging to the two different houses, generations and classes.

Nelly's peculiar relationship with culture, for instance, has to be understood not only in its conventional connection to books, schools and libraries, but also in its alternative, more private and unusual forms. Backdating the novel's events by more than seventy years from the date of publication, Emily reveals her retrospective taste for what Charlotte will define "the secret annals of every rude vicinage".[10] A taste for the local histories in the manner of Crabbe, Goldsmith and Burns which Emily articulates in Nelly's peculiar oral language.

Her idiom is in fact something intermediate between Joseph's dialect, the Earnshaws' material and passionate expression and the Lintons' rationalistic coldness. It is a language permeated by the elements of superstition, fairy tales and folklore, but at the same time capable of quoting from Shakespeare and the Bible. Self-taught, Nelly has read from the Lintons' library and has learned to distinguish the mysterious signs of unknown languages. She can

[8] On this aspect see Maria Stella, "Il potere della parola in Emily Brontë ", *Annali di Anglistica*, Istituto Universitario Orientale, Napoli, 36.1-3 (1993), 191-217.

[9] See in particular Terry Eagleton, "Emily Brontë", in *Myths of Power: A Marxist Study of the Brontës* (London: Macmillan, 1975); Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, "Looking Oppositely: Emily Brontë's Bible of Hell", in *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination* (New Haven: Yale U.P., 1978), 248-311.

[10] C. Brontë, "Preface" to Emily Brontë, *Wuthering Heights* (London: Th. Cautley Newby, 1847), reprinted in the quoted Penguin edition, 37-41.

therefore assume different pedagogical roles and voices, exercising each time the authority of playmate, nurse, stepmother and jailer.

At the same time, throughout the novel, she is the vehicle of a different kind of knowledge, connected to a feminine care – and cure – of the body, of its elementary needs, passages and illnesses. These are the forms and contents of a new education – not less important than reading and writing – to be passed on, together with the book, to the next generation.

And in fact Catherine Linton's passage to maturity will take place only after her long lonely vigil at the bedside of the dying Linton Heathcliff: a cultural function generally assumed by Nelly. Indeed, as she had told Lockwood:

> I'm seldom otherwise than happy while watching in the chamber of death (201-202).

In order to survive as a woman, the second Catherine will have to learn and share Nelly's lesson: only after that funeral rite – a passage from *thanatos* to *eros* – she will be able to instruct Hareton in a traditional way, passing him the weapons of reading and writing. These abilities would otherwise remain a dead letter, as her mother Catherine had clearly realised regarding Edgar Linton's relationship with the book and the library:

> Among his books! And I dying! I on the brink of the grave ... What in the name of all that feels, has he to do with books, when I am dying? (159).

The life of the body and the life of the mind, divided in a man's perspective, will be unified again through the assimilation of Nelly's different approach.

In a coherent way, the second part of the novel aims at making Nelly – "a poor man's daughter" – progressively and symbolically closer to cultivation and writing, as is evident in one of the last scenes of instruction in the book. Her pleasure in contemplating those she calls "her two children" who are reading the same word out of the same book, is evidently the pleasure of reconciliation through culture. But the word chosen by Emily's poetic and paradoxical

imagination, is a word rich with echoes from Blake: "contrary", implicitly denying reconciliation:

> 'Con-*trary*!' said a voice, as sweet as a silver bell – 'That for the third time, you dunce! I'm not going to tell you, again – Recollect, or I pull your hair!'
> 'Contrary, then,' answered another, in deep, but softened tones (338).

In the face of this paradox Nelly's reaction is very different from Heathcliff's retreat into silence, back to his initial aphasia: "he took the book, glanced at the open page, then returned it without any observation". Hers is a movement of acceptance juxtaposed against Lockwood's flight at the sight of the new "educated" couple. The first narrator feels in fact "irresistibly impelled to escape them again"). Nelly's word is the place of mediation, where opposites are conjugated, in the conviction that "without contraries is no progression".

As she says:

> ... on looking round again, I perceived two such radiant countenances bent over the page of the accepted book, that I did not doubt the treaty had been ratified, on both sides, and the enemies were thenceforth, sworn allies (345).

But in order to complete the cycle of her own education Nelly must come to terms, through the natural-unnatural quality of Heathcliff's death, with her own mortality. Confronting his physical deterioration, she finds for the first time a tragic and poetic language of her own. And she is allowed, in the brief space of a prophetic dream, to produce her only form of writing in the book, the inscription of Heathcliff's name on his tombstone:

> ... all I can remember is, being exceedingly vexed at having the task of dictating an inscription for his monument and consulting the sexton about it; and, as he had no surname, and we could not tell his age, we were obliged to content ourselves with the single word, 'Heathcliff' (360).

That name – with its enigmatic coincidence of organic and

inorganic, out of nature and out of society – becomes the secret spring of Nelly's identity, both sexual and authorial: it reveals for the first time, by naming it, her unconscious double desire to be a woman, and a woman who writes.

3. If in Emily's narrative structure the theme of education gains strength and radical impact from its problematic diffusion in the text, Charlotte in *The Professor* works by concentration: she assumes strictly the point of view of a single narrator, while at the same time hinting that she has doubts about its credibility. The final effect is that of a double exposure that intensifies the distance between the narrator and himself, and the narrator and the reader, thus showing the conflicts and the ambiguities in the ends and means of instruction.

William Crimsworth's autobiography in *The Professor* reveals Charlotte's diffidence and ambivalence – both as a woman and as an author – in assuming a literary genre whose main tradition was masculine and elitist.[11] She emphasises the *aurea mediocritas* of her subject – the "not exciting and above all not marvellous" narration of a teacher's experiences – but at the same time she consciously addresses a new type of reader she herself has created:

> ... individuals who, having toiled in the same vocation as myself, will find in my experience, frequent reflections of their own (11).

An ambition to become teacher of teachers, we could say. By wearing the mask of the professor Charlotte obtains a certain detachment from her own Belgium memories (where she had been at the same time teacher and pupil). At the same time she manages to expose and denounce what the educator's mask usually implies and hides. Just like Lockwood's diary, Crimsworth's autobiographical writing is deliberately structured in order not to be thoroughly trusted by the reader.

[11] On women's autobiography in general and on Charlotte's peculiar use of the form see: Estelle C. Jelinek, ed., *Women's Autobiography: Essays in Criticism* (Bloomington: Indiana U.P., 1980); Maria Teresa Chialant and Angiolina Arru, eds., *Il racconto delle donne* (Napoli: Liguori, 1990); Hélène Moglen, *Charlotte Brontë: The Self Conceived* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1976); Annette Tromly, *The Cover of the Mask: The Autobiographers in Charlotte Brontë's Fiction* (Victoria: University of Victoria Press, 1982).

The middle class values of self-help, social ascent and powerful control which are personally enacted by the narrator are constantly discussed and made relative by comparison with different points of view: his wife's, his friend's and his son's. Crimsworth is forced to include their comments in his narration, but he cannot thoroughly control them. His initial radical rejection of the epistolary form attests to his inability to "correspond", that is to communicate as an equal with another individual voice.

From this inadequacy probably comes his assumption of an official didactic role "to the benefit of the public at large" as is typical in autobiographies. And in fact Judith Williams has ironically defined the book as "the autobiography of a male governess".[12]

In her first sketch of a preface, Charlotte identifies in Crimsworth, together with a lack of irony and self analysis, "the touch of the pedagogue",[13] implicitly criticising the power and authority he is allowed to exercise in his profession and undermining his credibility as a narrator.

Though the professor would like to persuade himself and others that he is rationally in control of the events, there are several instances in the novel of his being dominated by irrational and subconscious drives, as in the famous quasi-seductive night attack of *Hypocondria*:

> She had been my acquaintance, nay my guest, once before in my boyhood; I had entertained her at bed and board for a year; for that space of time I had her to myself in secret; she lay with me, she walked out with me, shewing me nooks in woods, hollows in hills, where we could sit together, and where she could drop her drear veil over me, and so hide sky and sun, grass and green tree; taking me entirely to her death-cold bosom and holding me with arms of bone (211).[14]

[12] Judith N. Williams, *Reception and Expression in the Novels of Charlotte Brontë* (London: U.M.I. Research Press, 1988).

[13] The Preface is reprinted in C. Brontë, *The Professor*, eds. Margaret Smith and Herbert Rosengarten (Oxford: Oxford U.P., 1987).

[14] Crimsworth's passivity is analysed also in Penny Boumelha, *Charlotte Brontë* (London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1990). On this and other aspects of Charlotte's psychological imagination see Gilbert and Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic*; Robert Keefe, *Charlotte Brontë's World of Death* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1979); John Maynard, *Charlotte Brontë and Sexuality* (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 1984); Irene Tayler, *Holy Ghosts: The Male Muses of Emily and Charlotte Brontë* (New York: Columbia U.P., 1990); Janet Gezari, *Charlotte Brontë and Defensive Conduct* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsilvania Press, 1992).

In this scene, as in many others, readers and author are allowed to see more than the narrator does: his frustration and depression becoming, in the allegory, a sort of professional malady.

Involved in complex class conflicts and subject to his brother's "mastery" in the first part of the novel, Crimsworth in turn becomes "master" in the second. Master of himself, because he produces and controls his own professional ascent and career; and master of his pupils, because he confirms the racial intellectual and social distinctions among them and shares all the biases of gender, physiognomy and religion:

> An air of bold, impudent filtration or a loose silly leer was sure to answer the most ordinary glance from a masculine eye ... I suspect the root of this precocious impurity ... is to be found in the discipline, if not the doctrines of the Church of Rome (89).

Charlotte seems to know very well the fight for power, the cruel game of aggression and submission involved in the process of education, where the eye of the master spies at and controls and the eye of the pupil suffers and confirms. Teaching is seen from the double perspective of master and pupil, with all the ambiguities (even the sexual ones) involved in the subversion and exchange of roles: the game of seduction is part of the educational process.[15]

Through the experiences of Crimsworth's favourite student and future wife, Frances, Charlotte denounces the limits and aberrations of the traditional school system, but she also gives us one of the first portraits of a self-made woman, who fights in order to get a job and is determined to work even after marriage.

Charlotte's "international theme" of instruction is focused on the double process of teaching and learning languages, a very relevant point in the transmission of patriarchal culture. After discovering Frances's hybrid anglo-swiss nationality, Crimsworth will have to draw out her original English mother tongue from her French:

> 'Since your mother is an Englishwoman – why do you not speak

[15] See Stella, "Introduzione" a C. Brontë, *Il professore* (Milano: La tartaruga, 1996), 5-16.

English with more facility?'
'Maman est morte –il y a dix ans.'
'And you do homage to her memory by forgetting her language? Have the goodness to put French out of your mind so long as I converse with you – keep to English' (128).

Though tactless and authoritarian in his enquiry, the professor will in the end be able to carry out his plan to lead Frances back to her fatherland, as to a regained paradise.

But behind the appeasing final picture Crimsworth draws, Charlotte discloses the persistence of evil. The professor becomes increasingly despotic in the family: his aggressive plans for his son, his outburst of violence towards his dog, his indifference to Hunsden's ambiguous presence are resisted by Frances's lesson in liberty and love.

If Crimsworth talks of "curbing" his son's "spirit" ("a kind of electrical ardour and power, which emits now and then ominous sparks"), she "reasons with him" and, without spoiling him, "looks at him with the eyes of love". In the book's last pages William's short-sightedness as a narrator is strongly counteracted, from the inside, by Frances's far-sighted opposite vision: the professor's mask is the weapon used by Charlotte to teach us her lesson as a woman ahead of her time.

4. In *Agnes Grey* the relationship women have with culture, work and education is represented more directly than in the other two novels: Anne's focus – as well as Agnes's – is on Agnes. The roles of protagonist, narrator and author coincide in the autobiography of a governess.[16]

This proximity between the experience of education and that of

[16] On the Victorian governess in society and literature see L. Davidoff and C. Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1700-1850*; Martha Vicinus, *Suffer and Be Still: Women in the Victorian Age* (Bloomington: Indiana U.P., 1972); Vicinus, ed., *A Widening Sphere: Changing Roles of Victorian Women* (Bloomington: Indiana U.P., 1980); K. Hughes, *The Victorian Governess* (London: The Humbledon Press, 1993); Stella, "I beni dell'istitutrice nel romanzo vittoriano", in Lidia Curti, ed., *Donne e proprietà: un'analisi comparata tra scienze storico-scociali, letterarie, linguistiche e figurative*, 2 vols. (Napoli: I.U.O., 1996), I, 169-193.

writing about it, requires the development a different narrative voice, rich in general implications and tones that transcend the individual. This is a voice that looks back to the form of the eighteenth-century novel (to Goldsmith and Johnson, but also to women novelists like Burney and Edgeworth),[17] in order to vindicate the universal rights of the nineteenth century governess. George Moore captured its astonishing balance between internalisation and comedy of manners when he defined it "the most perfect prose narration of English literature".

In contrast with *The Governess* (1839) by the Countess of Blessington,[18] *Agnes Grey* shows no trace of idealising or romanticising the heroine's experience. "Passages in the life of an individual" says the subtitle. The accent seems to fall on the moment's relevance: *passages* implying change, transition and discontinuity, in order to represent the *life* of that particular *individual* which is a governess. The crucial episodes in Agnes' rather uneventful life are but fragments of a whole never to be narrated in its completeness, bound to remain either alluded to or eluded (as it happens, for instance, with her life as a wife and a mother).

The sequence of passages reveals a highly selective process of representation, a narrative technique more typical of the short story than of the novel: compared to the length of the other two novels, *Agnes Grey*, with its scarce two hundred pages, has a sort of unusual size.

Within this peculiar measure the narrative female voice, the individual "I", is perceived, defined and expressed as a "passage", something transitory and unobtrusive, very different from a novel's traditional hero, whose identity is fully conceived and develops progressively.[19]

At the end of her "bildung" Anne goes back, through marriage, to

[17] On Anne's relationship with tradition see Arnold Craig Bell, *The Novels of Anne Brontë* (London: Merlin Books,1992); P. J. M. Scott, *Anne Brontë: A New Critical Assessment* (London: Vision Press, 1983); Elizabeth Langland, *Anne Brontë: The Other One* (London: Macmillan, 1989).

[18] Goreau, ed., *Agnes Grey*, 42.

[19] See Marisa Sestito, "Introduzione".

the same class – the lower clergy – she came from. There is no compromise with society, but an *a priori* moral choice.

Anne's undivided conscience is governed by a self-determined ethical code: we never doubt what she says, because she evaluates critically and ironically her own behaviour, her own pride and prejudice. As a consequence, she can learn from experience, as Crimsworth and Lockwood could not.

Compared to Nelly Dean, Agnes as a narrator has the privilege to write, and to write in the first person, about herself. But in order to do this she must shape and control her emotions within the strong recognisable formal structures of classicism. She must express them in a transitive, transparent style.

The interplay of memory, forgetfulness and desire in her retrospective narration shapes the double process of instruction and self-instruction. This is the only Brontëan novel in which a lesson in independence and autonomy is directly imparted from mother to daughter. Yet the governess must experience frustration in love, social conflicts and solitude, must learn to keep her dignity in the face of violence and offence. But any excess in her representation is tempered by classic constraints: the extremes of farce and tragedy, though evident in the parents' irresponsible behaviour and in the children's ignorance, are both avoided. A middle, neutral – indeed grey – tone is maintained throughout the narration.

Following Horace's precept, Anne "hides her art": while narrating of herself, she annuls herself, so that misquoting Virginia Woolf's comment on Emily's novel – "There is no I in *Wuthering Heights*".[20] – we could paradoxically say that in Anne's perspective "there is no I" in a governess' autobiography.

[20] Virginia Woolf, "*Jane Eyre* and *Wuthering Heights*" in *The Common Reader 1* (London: The Hogarth Press, 1984), 155-161. See also E. M. Forster, *Aspects of the Novel* (London: Penguin, 1985), 131-132.

Marina Vitale

Mary Shelley's Ghost Writers

The hand and the page

With the diffusion of word-processing and desktop printing such words as "typescript" or "manuscript" have either disappeared from our vocabulary or taken up an antiquarian sense. Other words have changed or lost some of their meanings. This is the case, for example, of the word "hand", which in pre-electronic times could be used as a synonym for "handwriting" in such expressions as "to have a bad hand", where the intimate relation of the act of "writing" to its bodily mediator could be grasped with immediate evidence.

Quite obviously, the process of writing has not ceased to take place through the medium of the author's body. But the material aspects of both the composition and the transmission of a text are much less evident nowadays – to begin with the visibility of the hand which mediates between the intellectual conception of a text and its material textualization: the writer's hand physically tracing words and leaving the mark of his/her handwriting on a white page.

Easy access to computer writing has indeed created a paradox. On the one hand it contributed to destroying our last illusions about the authorial authenticity attached to the material text of a piece of 'writing', speeding up the process of dissolution of the 'aura' historically identified by Walter Benjamin with the technical reproduction of works of art. On the other hand, it brought back under the firm control of the authors the fidelity of their final texts to their original intentions. More and more frequently publishers request copy-ready diskettes and the correspondence of publications to the authors' intentions – which once seemed guaranteed by the materiality of their original hand-writing – depends, basically, on the mechanical compatibility of interfaces.

At the time *Frankenstein* was composed, a work of literature came to life in the form of a manuscript passing through a number of hand-made draftings. The body of the text bore the marks of corrections, interpolations, cuts and seams. The greater or lesser amount of manipulation and the distance between the first draft and the final text depended on this or that author's working method – a circumstance that still provides textual philologists with mixed joys. Even when no variants have been preserved, there must have existed working papers that might bear witness to subsequent stages of the 'gestation' of a literary work. Again the passage from the intellectual conception of a text into its textualization was a physical act requiring the mediation of a hand which wrote, rewrote, cancelled and modified words on a page.

Moreover various copies had to be made before sending a text to the printers. Copies were often circulated among friends and some texts had been widely read long before their printed editions were out. Famous are the cases of Torquato Tasso's *Jerusalem Liberated* or Samuel Taylor Coleridge's *Christabel*. In the course of the last few centuries, or decades, the importance and interference of such mediators as printers, typists, copyists, scriveners, and so on has progressively waned. Not only their functions, but the very words describing them, have gone through a process of continuous, and now accelerated, obsolescence. Photocopying machines and scanners, microfilm- and microfiche-readers have made the necessity of copying anything by hand absolutely anachronistic. In pre-electronic times, the reproduction of texts had to rely on a bodily mediation: the mediation of the many hands which had to copy already written texts in order to allow them to circulate. Suffice it to think that even personal letters were often copied before being sent out and that it was a common practice to make integral or partial copies of especially beautiful or significant letters one received, in order to pass them on to other people. Not surprisingly Mary Shelley's correspondence confirms this practice.[1]

Even more important, Mary's hand often carried out the task of

[1] See Betty B. Bennett, ed., *Selected Letters of Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins U.P., 1995).

copying the literary creations of other authors who were more impatient and hurried than herself, or whose handwriting was more difficult to read than her own. It is well known that she made fair copies of several of Lord Byron's compositions – including two cantos of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* – to be sent to the publishers, and even introduced some minor corrections (in the sense of spelling normalisation) a few of which were accepted by Byron himself. It is true that one should not exaggerate the importance of this circumstance, taking into account that it was a very common, if ancillary, practice: Claire Clairmont, Mary's step-sister, is another member of the Byron-Shelley circle who made fair copies for the publishers on behalf of the moody Lord, copying his *Prisoner of Chillon* in the summer 1816.[2] On the other hand this function of copying or transcribing another (of another's) writing materially carried out by Mary, alerts us to the recurrence of the topos of transcription in *Frankenstein* and its paratextual apparatuses.

In her 1831 introduction she identified the genesis of *Frankenstein* in a nightmare of which the novel is supposed to be the faithful transcription:

> ... 'What terrified me will terrify others, and I need only describe the spectre which had haunted my midnight pillow'. On the morrow I announced that I had *thought of a story*. I began that day with the words, *It was on a dreary night of November*, making only a transcript of the grim terrors of my waking dream.[3]

In other words, looking back to the genesis of the novel, she was putting at its basis the mechanism of transcription from another text, from an oneiric text in this case. It is of course completely useless to speculate on the degree of truthfulness of this reconstruction of the birth of *Frankenstein* offered by the author herself. It may be useful instead to accept it as a possible reading key, as an invitation to recognise in the mechanism of transcription the focus of the entire

[2] See Richard Holmes, *Shelley: The Pursuit* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1989), 338.

[3] Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein, or the Modern Prometheus* (Oxford: Oxford U.P., 1971), 10. All quotations from *Frankenstein* will be taken from this edition and the indications will be given parenthetically in the text.

narrative design of *Frankenstein*. What is certain is that each of the three protagonists of the stories which, in concentric circles, are woven into the narrative fabric of the novel, obeys an overpowering urge to transcribe a story which imposes itself on his attention.

Robert Walton, the ambitious explorer whose tale of a failed polar expedition coincides with the external diegetic frame of the novel, is motivated by this very urge: he makes a transcription – as literal as possible – of an oral autobiographical tale that is entrusted, and almost dictated, to him by Victor Frankenstein whom he encountered among the polar ice-rafts and whom he took on board his ship:

> I have resolved every night, when I am not imperatively occupied by my duties, to record, as nearly as possible in his own words, what he has related during the day. If I should be engaged, I will at least make notes (31).

This text is afterwards revised and corrected by its author, Victor Frankenstein himself:

> Frankenstein discovered that I made notes concerning his history: he asked to see them, and then he himself corrected and augmented them in many places; but principally in giving the life and spirit to the conversations he held with his enemy. 'Since you have preserved my narration,' said he, 'I would not that a mutilated one should go down to posterity' (210).[4]

Victor, however, is not the original 'author', but the faithful transcriber of a large part of this narration. He seems to act like an editor animated by a passion for textual philology. The central

[4] This quotation is also taken from chapter XXIV, which is still a part of the IV letter, under the heading "WALTON, *in continuation.* Aug. 26th, 17_". The letter, started on the 5th August, continues as if it were a diary on the 13th and the 19th and is resumed on the 26th August with an ambiguous textual existence, since it follows the chapter numeration of the *oto*biographical story Frankenstein has just concluded. The rest of the information on the adventures of Frankenstein and his creature are provided partly as a heterodiegetic narration of the last conversations between Walton and Frankenstein until the latter's death, partly as a narration of Walton's encounter with the monster.

section of his tale is constituted, word by word, by his report of the speech addressed to him by the 'monster' who had come up to him among the glaciers and precipices on Mont Blanc and obliged him to listen to his story. A story which impressed itself on Victor's memory with absolute precision, remaining as firmly inscribed there as God's Commandments on the Tables of the Law.[5] Like Hamlet who is obliged to 'remember', word by word, his father's revelations and commands, Frankenstein too is doomed to remember the tale and the commands of his creature who imposes himself upon him like a master:

> Slave.... Remember that I have power; you believe yourself miserable, but I can make you so wretched that the light of the day will be hateful to you. You are my creator, but I am your master; – obey!' (165).

As for the monster, he bases the truthfulness of his statements on the exhibition of a number of texts; written texts he learnt by heart: technical reports of the states of advancement of his own assemblage he found in a pocket of Frankenstein's laboratory; books of which he can relate the contents with fastidious precision. He has even taken the trouble to make copies of certain texts he leaves with Frankenstein as evidence of his reliability: these are letters concerning Safie, a minor character in the novel, whose story is not closely connected with the main plot (or plots) of the novel, but has to do with the adventures of the De Lacey family, in the surroundings of whose house he had taken refuge watching them unseen and learning from them all he knows about human beings. The following are the creature's words:

> 'I have copies of these letters; for I found means, during my residence in the hovel, to procure the implements of writing; and the letters were often in the hands of Felix or Agatha. Before I depart I will give them to you; they will prove the truth of my tale; but at present, as the sun is already far declined, I shall only have time to repeat the substance of them to you' (ch. XIV, 108).

[5] Many critics agree that Frankenstein's confrontation with his 'creature' may be read as a parodic-subversive rewriting of the biblical episode of Moses receiving the Tables of the Law (and of Milton's reworking of that episode in *Paradise Lost*).

The insistence of the novel on the topos of transcription may be read as a hint alluding to the urgency of fixing on the page a text which asks, which demands to be written; a text which writes itself through the medium of Mary's hand, just like the creature's tale imprints itself on Frankenstein's memory in full detail like a printed text, complete with annexes, documentary evidence and philological footnotes; just like Walton's hand, with total fidelity, obeys Victor's voice dictating his own story.

A dissemination of words

The stories of the three main characters (the creature's, Victor Frankenstein's and Robert Walton's) nestle one inside the other like Chinese boxes and each of them, starting from the central core of this three-layered diegetic structure, imposes its own registration, its own writing at the higher diegetical level. The narrative model is indeed much more complex than this, because inside it there are an enormous number of textual graftings, like so many cysts spreading and growing inside the narrative body.

This irrepressible demand for expression moves outwards from the centre of the narrative structure. Its centrifugal drive finally exceeds the limits of the text written by Robert Walton, since this is a letter, presumably mailed or otherwise delivered to its addressee Margaret Walton Saville. And Mrs Saville is evidently a part of a potentially infinite chain of addressees of messages which lengthens *ad infinitum* both ways. On one side it regresses backwards toward the first creation: it is highly significant, for example, that among the messages gathered and preserved by Frankenstein's creature, who has so carefully transcribed or memorized them, is Milton's *Paradise Lost*, which retells the tale of *The Genesis*, the tale of the origin of mankind itself, the tale of the Word creating the world. On the other side the chain expands equally *ad infinitum* in the potential process of dissemination of Walton's letters to his sister that have somehow reached us passing through the composition of the novel written, or transcribed, by Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley: a woman writer whose initials coincide with those of Margaret Walton Saville.

The movement of textual dissemination from the heart of the novel towards the outside calls to mind the vortex of ghostly leaves driven by the wind in the first stanza of Percy Shelley's *Ode to the West Wind:*

> Thou from whose unseen presence the leaves dead
> Are driven, like ghosts from an enchanter fleeing,
>
> Yellow, and black, and hectic red,
> pestilence stricken multitudes ...
>
> (vv. 3-5)

It is the same centrifugal movement as that of the words/sparks of the last lines of the poem:

> And, by the incantation of this verse,
>
> Scatter, as from an unextinguished hearth
> Ashes and sparks, my words among mankind!
>
> (vv. 65-67)

Neither can one overlook the analogy between the image contrived by the *Ode* and the monster's last words, at the end of the novel:

> I shall ascend my funeral pile triumphantly, and exult in the agony of the torturing flames. The light of that conflagration will fade away; my ashes will be swept into the sea by the winds (223).

The monster's corpse will not be confined to a grave but dissolve into ashes and fall into the ocean. The thing of darkness whose story could not be repressed will impregnate the whole world. The textual dissemination carried out inside the novel and beyond through the reverberation of the monster's story from narration to narration finds an appropriate metaphor in the dissemination of the remains of the monster's body in the sea. The motley body Doctor Frankenstein had put together with morsels of corpses will separate again into tiny, almost unsubstantial, particles which will permeate the waters and reach out towards the most distant shores.

Writing as uncanny 'growth'

Looking back to one of the forerunners of *Frankenstein* and more generally of Gothic fiction – Horace Walpole's *Castle of Otranto* – we find that the narrative structure of the novel is dominated by an equally strong pressure generated by something mysterious, monstrous and mighty which tries to break through towards the textual surface and beyond. In a letter he wrote a couple of years after the publication of his novel, Walpole maintained that he had composed *The Castle of Otranto* under the impression of a dream, or rather a nightmare, where he was standing in the hall of a Gothic castle when, looking up, he saw a gigantic hand, bound in an enormous gauntlet, resting on the banister of a monumental staircase. He felt obsessed by this vision until he finished writing the novel, which he composed without a pause, without a draft, without a plan, as if the ghostly hand he had been so impressed by in his dream had guided his own hand on the page. It may be interesting to notice that the word 'hand' is used in his letter both in its proper and figurative meaning:

> The work grew on my hands, and I grew fond of it.... In short I was so engrossed with my tale, which I completed in less than two months, that one evening I wrote from the time I had drunk my tea, about six o'clock, till half an hour after one in the morning, when my hand and fingers were so weary, that I could not hold the pen to finish the sentence, but left Matilda and Isabella talking, in the middle of a paragraph.[6]

It is also interesting to reflect on the centrality of the image of growth in this reconstruction of the genesis of *The Castle of Otranto*: as the work "grows" on his hands, the author undergoes a transformation, "growing" so fond of its work that his whole being becomes possessed by it; he is "engrossed" with his tale which grows inside him like an embryo, like a foetus, like something alien emerging from the depth of his unconscious and demanding to get "written in

[6] Quoted in W. S. Lewis's "Introduction" to Horace Walpole, *The Castle of Otranto* (Oxford: Oxford U.P., 1969), ix.

large letters" (this is the Middle English origin of the word "engrossed" according to the *O.E.D.*). The tale gets written through a process of growing which passes through the body of the author like a monstrous gestation.

It is perhaps superfluous to say that the giant hand haunting Walpole's dream appears also in the novel as a sort of metonymical manifestation of another nightmarish presence that is revealed (or rather veiled) in a prophecy, as sibylline as any prophecy, which sounds as follows:

> That the castle and lordship of Otranto should pass from the present family, whenever the real owner should be grown too large to inhabit it.[7]

The prophecy comes literally true in the conclusion of the novel which ends with the castle crumbling down all of a sudden, as if it had exploded from within due to the progressive expansion of the ghost of the offended Alfonso, whose spectral armour had already stirred up terror in various episodes of the novel when some of its parts (starting with a giant helmet) had appeared and fallen with lethal consequences upon several characters. Now he may take his revenge, and in the literal terms of the prophecy:

> The moment Theodore appeared, the walls of the castle behind Manfred were thrown down with a mighty force, and the form of Alfonso, dilated to an immense magnitude, appeared in the centre of the ruins (108).

The ghostly authorship of a ghost story

Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* originated as a 'ghost story'. This is confirmed by a large body of documentary and autobiographical material: the author's 1831 introduction, private letters, entries in the journals of some of the people who took part in the famous 'literary game' waged among the Shelley-Byron group in the summer of

[7] Ibid., 15-16.

1816. Without this paratextual evidence it might even be difficult to label the novel as a 'ghost story' especially if one thought of a ghost as a 'revenant', as a dead person coming back from the 'undiscovered country', from the 'Otherness' from which nobody returns.

But what is a ghost? Stephen Dedalus speculated on this question in that wonderful, paradoxical and profound lecture on Shakespeare that constitutes the 'Scylla and Charybdis' chapter of Joyce's *Ulysses*:

> What is a ghost? Stephen said with tingling energy. One who has faded into impalpability through death, through absence, through change of manners.[8]

This connotation of impalpability is confirmed by the definition of the word 'ghost' given by the *O.E.D.*:

> 1. The soul or spirit; 2. Breath; 3. A person; 4. An incorporeal being; 5. SPIRIT (The Holy Ghost); 6. The soul of a deceased person, spoken of as inhabiting the unseen world; 7. The soul of a deceased person, spoken of as appearing to the living; *fig.* An apparition, a spectre; 8. A corpse; 9. An unsubstantial image; hence a trace; 10. *Optics* ...; 11. One who secretly does artistic or literary work of which his employer takes the credit (1884).

A ghost, then, for both Stephen Dedalus and the *O.E.D.* is impalpable: it is a spirit, not a body.[9] On the contrary the 'creature' Doctor Frankenstein brought to life by assembling parts of dissected corpses is not a 'spirit', but rather a 'body': a dishomogeneous and, presumably, soulless body. The 'creature' is provided with a brain, instincts, nerve centres and the whole complex nervous system that allows him to have perceptions and sensations and to respond to experiences so as to develop a sensibility and a personality. But it is hard to say that he is a soul.

[8] James Joyce, *Ulysses* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1969 [1922]), 188.

[9] It is to be noted that only one example is given for meaning number 8 (from Shakespeare, *2 Henry VI*) while meaning number 11 shows a recent evolution in the usage of the term in a direction perfectly in line with my argument.

Bodies can be dissected and sutured, dis-membered and re-membered. Bodily transplants – of which *Frankenstein* offers a very early fantasy – have become an everyday reality, while it is still quite difficult to conceive of transplants of souls, even if in the last few decades science fiction and scientific experimentation have acquainted us with graftings of identities carried out by means of relatively simple cybernetic procedures such as implantings of microchips in both androids and human beings (for example nobody is puzzled by the substitutions of memory – and therefore of personality – exhibited in films like *Terminator*). But cybernetic miracles like these were not available in Mary Shelley's times and this makes it even more difficult to think of the composite body stitched together by Doctor Frankenstein as a spectre in the proper sense of the word.

The 'creature' has no name. It cannot have a name because it is disowned by its own creator. But it is also perfectly appropriate that it had no name because a name identifies a person, and the creature is a conflation of different bodies, different corpses, different dead persons. If a ghost is a *revenant*, a dead person who comes back, then Frankenstein's creature would be a very peculiar kind of ghost: it would be a mosaic of *revenants*.

The author of *Frankenstein* has no name either. She is destined to have none. She published the first edition of her novel anonymously for complex reasons including the preoccupation that her public might not like the idea of a very young woman writer who dared to deal with such a terrible subject. As she herself writes in her 1831 Introduction:

> ... I shall thus give a general answer to the question, so very frequently asked me – 'How I, then a young girl, came to think of, and dilate upon, so very hideous an idea?' (5).

Written almost entirely by Percy, the 1818 Preface had taken great pains to present the novel as a work untouched by the dangers of irrationalism. It had therefore denied that the story was in fact a 'ghost story' ("The event on which the interest of the story depends is exempt from the disadvantages of a mere tale of spectres or enchantment", 13). Still – even if with great caution – the preface had

to admit in its conclusion that the novel was, in a way, a ghost story, originating under the influence of some German ghost tales read by a group of literary friends who had been trapped by bad weather in a summer residence among the mountains in Switzerland; that indeed it was the outcome of a sort of literary competition ("These tales excited in us a playful desire of imitation", 14). The return of good weather however, allowing the party to resume their normal routine, dispelled "all memory of their ghostly visions" from their minds.

Thus, according to the 1818 Preface, *Frankenstein* is the only story "founded on some supernatural occurrence" completed on that occasion. Of course we all know that this is not true, because during the summer of 1816 another very successful and terrifying literary creature was born in the same literary *milieu*: i.e. the Vampire who is somehow the specular twin and spiritual version of Frankenstein's bodily creature. Although much might be said about the chiasmic interconnection of the spiritual and physical connotations of these twin literary 'monsters', at a first glance the Vampire is not a body without a soul: it *is* a soul. It is not a body physically put together starting from organic 'materials' taken from dead bodies. It is a soul which does not want to leave its body and which, in order not to leave it, feeds unnaturally on an organic material – blood – it takes from living bodies.[10] That the vampire's manifestations of desire are mainly carnal, while Frankenstein's creature's are mainly cultural and spiritual, is another question. But one thing is certain: the lineage of the vampire cannot be traced and his name is suspected to be false. His identity is in hiding.

The 1818 edition, then, was published anonymously and was preceded by a preface in which not only were the name and gender of the author hidden, but the first person pronoun (which was to become prominent in the 1831 Introduction) was also banned. In the 1818 edition the author was so much in hiding that the unsigned preface attached to the novel was not even written by her but by her husband as she recalls in the 1831 Introduction : "As far as I can recollect, it was entirely written by him" (10).[11]

[10] It is interesting that the term "materials" is used as a stylistic key-note in Branagh's film *Mary Shelley's Frankenstein*.

[11] Interesting insights into the psychological and cultural obstacles to self-expression historically met by women writers can be found in P. M. Spacks, "Selves in Hiding", in *Women's Autobiography: Essays in Criticism* (Bloomington: Indiana U.P., 1980).

The 1831 edition, instead, is preceded by an "Introduction" written in the first person and signed by Mary with the initials M.W.S., three letters which clearly show their ghostly nature since they keep the uncanny trace of the names of two dead people: Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley. At the time of publication of the new edition the author of *Frankenstein* had already taken up her mother's surname, Wollstonecraft, renouncing her father's, Godwin. The initials she chose for her signature evoke the names of two great absentees, the two people whose death had marked her life with the imprint of mourning.[12]

Between the first and second editions, Mary Shelley had come out of her hiding anonymity, because her identity had been revealed, but at the same time she had – in a way – gone back into hiding, because her name was invariably absent as such from the covers of all her subsequent books where she was always referred to as "the author of *Frankenstein*", with an impersonal definition which had come to be considered as a good credential by publishers who did not want to risk their money unless on already successful authors.[13]

Writing as re-membering

The enormous success she achieved with her first novel allowed Mary Shelley to inscribe herself on "the page of fame", fulfilling the expectations Percy – and herself – had nourished, as she recalled in her introduction:

> My husband however, was from the first, very anxious that I should prove myself worthy of my parentage, and enrol myself on the page of fame (6).

This is a revealing sentence. One can sense how anxiety-producing

[12] Nadia Fusini has written very interestingly on the relation between mourning and writing in Mary Shelley in *Nomi* (Milano: Feltrinelli, 1986), 169-201.

[13] This impersonal and captivating definition was sometimes used also by Claire Clairmont, Mary's step-sister, who lived the condition of 'trespasser' on the terrain of literature even more dramatically than Mary.

the responsibility of being the daughter of two famous authors, the lover of an equally famous poet, the neighbour and close friend of an even more famous bard must have been for a nineteen-year-old would-be writer.[14] In the midst of so many celebrities, physically present beside her or impending upon her in spirit, Mary represents herself as speechless ("I was a devout but nearly silent listener", 8) and utterly unable to write a single word on the white pages which were supposed to inscribe her "on the page of fame". Day after day she struggles with the difficulty of finding an idea for the ghost story she has pledged herself to write. She is paralysed by her feeling of inadequacy. Until she has a vision: the vision of a failure. She has the awesome vision of a "pale student of unhallowed arts" (9) who tries to create the most perfect living being but ends up by releasing a hideous phantasm. He cannot create anything new: he can only put together morsels of dismembered bodies. He can only re-member.

The failure of the would-be creator in her nightmare duplicates the nightmare of the failure she forebodes for her own project. She too will be unable to produce an original creation. She will only be able to re-member, to piece together scattered textual fragments. Her story will be, literally, a ghost story: it will be the ghost of a story. Her progeny will be as "hideous" as the phantasm evoked by the sinister scientist in her nightmare.[15]

That phantasm was perhaps the product of her state of anxiety and frustration *vis-à-vis* the ghost of writing; a ghost that had always haunted all the people who were living or had lived around her; a ghost that materialised on the pages she was incessantly reading, translating, transcribing; in the voices of her friends and relatives who read aloud or gave her their works to copy. The spell of writing

[14] How not to think of H.D., another woman writer whose identity was hidden behind initials and whose artistic and sexual life was contradictorily tied to such towering male personalities as Ezra Pound and Richard Aldington?

[15] The frequency of the notion of hideousness in the novel cannot be overlooked. It is aptly summed up by the macabre envoy of the 1831 Introduction: "And now, once again, I bid my hideous progeny go forth and prosper" (10). The psychological pressure to become a great writer that Mary must have felt since childhood, is well expressed by Claire Clairmont's remark reported in Mary Poovey's "My Hideous Progeny: Mary Shelley and the Feminization of Romanticism", *PMLA* 95.3 (May 1980), 332: "In our family, if you cannot write an epic poem or novel, that by its originality knocks all other novels on the head, you are a despicable creature, not worth acknowledging".

surrounded her like an obsession, breeding lively and often terrifying visions that took form and relief in the rooms she inhabited. It was that spell that brought her and her friends fondly to pursue the memory of past writers in the places where they had lived (like Villa Diodati itself where Mary's imagination got the first glimpse of *Frankenstein* and which Byron had chosen as his summer residence because Milton had sojourned there when in Switzerland); or that brought them to follow in their footsteps, not only metaphorically but also literally, as Byron and Percy Shelley had – with great emotion – in the summer of 1816, pacing up and down the terrace of the villa in Lausanne where Gibbon had completed his *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*.[16]

The drama of potential authorship is also reflected in the feverish state Victor puts himself into during the gestation of the creature he sturdily wants to author. It is a state of mind that can be seen as an example of the "anxiety of influence" Harold Bloom identifies at the heart of creative writing.[17] The authors Bloom takes into account in his seminal work are exclusively poets, and male poets at that; poets belonging to the great canonical tradition.[18] But his argument may be extended to other kinds of writers and it may help understand Mary Shelley's attitude to writing. According to Bloom a study of poetry reveals very deep and contradictory intra-poetic relationships which amount to creative misreadings, misinterpretations or, to use a characteristically Bloomian term, misprisions. To be fruitful such misprisions must spring from intertextual relations comparable to what Sigmund Freud called the family romance, in the sense that any significant act of writing implies a strenuous battle engaged against one's poetic father: "Battle

[16] Holmes, *Shelley*, 337.

[17] Harold Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry* (New York and Oxford: Oxford U.P., 1973).

[18] Quite obviously the dissident genealogy highlighted by Bloom is only one among possible canonical traditions. As Christopher Norris pointed out in *Deconstruction: Theory and Practice* (London and New York: Methuen, 1982), 115, it is at variance with the Anglo-Catholic and conservative line proposed by T. S. Eliot. But it is even more dramatically at variance with equally 'great' feminine traditions re-discovered by feminist criticism in an effort to redress a time-long injustice against Shakespeare's sisters (to recall the Woolfian definition echoed by Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar in their authoritative *Shakespeare's Sisters: Feminist Essays on Women Poets* (Bloomington and London: Indiana U.P., 1979).

between strong equals, father and son as mighty opposites, Laius and Oedipus at the crossroads ... though some of the fathers are composite figures".[19]

The act of misprision works both ways: the late-comer appropriates tradition remorselessly, but cannot avoid getting imprisoned by it, cannot escape being caught in a double bind. It is a paradoxical situation, further illustrated by Bloom who quotes from Kierkegaard's panegyric upon Abraham:

> He who will not work does not get the bread but remains deluded, as the gods deluded Orpheus with an airy figure in place of the loved one, deluded him because he was effeminate, not courageous, because he was a cithara-player, not a man. Here it is of no use to have Abraham for one's father, nor to have seventeen ancestors – he who will not work must take note of what is written about the maidens of Israel, for he gives birth to wind, but he who is willing to work gives birth to his own father.[20]

To give birth to her own parents, to give birth to herself as a writer, piecing together a composite spectre, taken (or mis-taken) from preexisting texts: this is the operation accomplished by the author of *Frankenstein*. She moves her hand on the white pages willing to follow as nearly as she can the trace of another writing, of other writings; she starts copying, as exactly and devoutly as she can, shreds of her literary parents' texts, stitching them together with more or less visible seams, but the copy she produces is not in the original's "own image". She finds herself a prey to the utmost anxiety of influence:

> "Be me but not me" is the paradox of the precursor's implicit charge to the ephebe. Less intensely, his poem says to its descendant poem: "Be like me but unlike me." If there were no ways of subverting this double bind, every ephebe would develop into a poetic version of a schizophrenic.[21]

[19] Ibid., 11. As argued by Barbara Johnson, Mary's effort was made even more problematic by the historical circumstances of her birth: "Her declaration of existence as a writer must ... figuratively repeat the matricide that her physical birth all too literally entailed" ("My Monster/My Self", *Diacritics* 12.2 (Summer 1982), 8.

[20] Quoted in ibid., 72-73.

[21] Ibid., 70.

The text of *Frankenstein* shows clear symptoms of this anxiety producing situation of double bind. But it is evident that Mary Shelley must have found a way not to "develop into a poetic version of a schizophrenic". She must have found it in her belief in the relative autonomy of literary production from literary tradition.

Writing as a nearly silent listening

In her introduction to *Frankenstein* Mary Shelley expressed her awareness that "every thing must have a beginning ... and that beginning must be linked to something that went before". She explained the precarious balance linking together the elements of this ideal chain by recalling the Hindoo belief that the world is poised on the back of an elephant, which stands in its turn on the back of a tortoise. And her gloss is that "invention, it must be humbly admitted, does not consist in creating out of void, but out of chaos" (8).

She expressed this idea even more clearly in her preface to *The Last Man*, a novel she wrote between 1823 and 1824. This preface is itself a narration: the narration of what she claims to be the genesis of the novel. *The Last Man* is presented as the transcription of a story written on the withered leaves gathered by her and Percy in the Cumaean Sybil grotto that the couple had actually visited in December 1818. According to her tale, while visiting the archaeological site in Cuma they had happened to penetrate into an unexplored cave, after creeping along a very narrow underground passage. They had realised that that was indeed the Sybil's Cave because they had found it strewn with leaves still inscribed with the traces of the enigmatic words of the mythical prophetess. These scattered and fragmentary words were deeply mysterious and uncanny also because they were written in different languages, some of which were not yet spoken in classical times. The author's task, then, was to reconstruct a unified text from the scattered fragments she had found, as if she had to discover the hidden pattern of a puzzle, finding a guiding thread among a heap of already inscribed *tesserae*, filling up possible gaps and interpreting faint hints.

The genesis of the novel is described as a hermeneutic process, derivative and creative at one and the same time. The meanings

carefully assembled by the author would at the same time be substantially 'the same' and deeply 'different' from those expressed by the Sybil:

> Scattered and unconnected as they were, I have been obliged to add links, and model the work into a consistent form. But the main substance rests on the truths contained in these poetic rhapsodies, and the divine intuition which the Cumaean damsel obtained from heaven.[22]

The author/translator's task is very demanding. She must comply with the formal requirements of the modern linguistic rendering of the old text ("I have often wondered at the subject of her verses, and at the English dress of the Latin poet"). But she is also faced with equally serious problems connected with the composition of an autonomous text. At this point the preface abandons the apologetic register typical of the found manuscript convention, which had loomed so large in the introductions of so many eighteenth- and nineteenth- century novels.[23] The transcriber's restraint gives way to an outburst of authorial pride:

> Sometimes I have thought, that, obscure and chaotic as they are, they owe their present form to me, their decipherer. As if we should give to another artist, the painted fragments which form the mosaic copy of Raphael's Transfiguration in St. Peter's; he would put them together in a form, whose mode would be fashioned by his own peculiar mind and talent. Doubtless the leaves of the Cumaean Sybil have suffered distortion and diminution of interest and excellence in my hands. My only excuse for thus transforming them, is that they were unintelligible in their pristine condition.[24]

The found manuscript proves to be reticent, if not unintelligible. It does not offer its decipherer a sufficient 'cover'. It does not protect

[22] Mary Shelley, *The Last Man*, ed. M. D. Paley (Oxford and New York: Oxford U.P., 1994), 6.

[23] In the course of the eighteenth century the convention of the found manuscript thrived especially because novelists were afraid of being accused of irrationalism for the presence of romance elements in their narratives. A famous instance of this practice is offered by the introduction to the first edition of Horace Walpole's *Castle of Otranto* (1764).

[24] Shelley, *The Last Man*, 6-7.

her from the opprobrium of giving her text a form too akin to the peculiarities of her own sensibility and intelligence. Therefore she vindicates, strongly and proudly, her right to allow her personality to come to the fore. She does that under the transparent veil of an evidently fictional pseudo-autobiographical narration. Her gesture of attaching the ultimate responsibility for the text to the mythical prophetess by presenting herself as a mere decipherer, could never shield her from the shame of a possible failure. It tends, instead, to establish a mysterious and subterranean link among various individual acts of artistic creativity.

Her mythologico-autobiographical little tale, much more than a nicely put *captatio benevolentiae*, is an eloquent statement about an aspect of the aesthetic question which had been and still was the theme of heated debates at the time: the ambiguous and controversial relation between originality and conventionality, creation and imitation.[25] The debate had been started at least a century earlier by the thinkers and literati who had taken part in the "battle of the books" originated by Sir William Temple and Jonathan Swift and it was still engrossing the intellectual milieux connected with Mary. Many writers belonging to the closely knit group of her friends and relatives had openly addressed the question in highly strung theoretical essays like William Hazlitt's *The Four Ages of Poetry* (1819) or Percy Shelley's *The Defence of Poetry* (1820) or in poetical works like the latter's *Ode to the West Wind*. And it is impossible to overlook the analogy (linguistic as well as thematic) between this *Ode* and Mary's Introduction to *The Last Man*. As we have seen the image of leaves, of masses of withered leaves driven by the wind is powerfully present in the first stanza of the *Ode*. The conclusion establishes the same ideal connection suggested by Mary between leaves and writing, between leaves and prophecy:

> Be through my lips to unawakened earth

[25] Mary Shelley's Promethean endeavour to hybridize the powers of *fancy* and *imagination* is discussed very inspiringly in Maria Del Sapio Garbero's "Metamorfosi demoniache: l'ordine e l'orrore in *Frankenstein* e *Heart of Darkness*", in Lidia Curti and Laura Di Michele, eds., *Gli amici per Nando: Giornata di studi in onore di Fernando Ferrara* (Napoli: Istituto Universitario Orientale, 1998), 119-148, where it is brought to bear on the author's intertextual and metamorphic conception of literary space.

The trumpet of a prophecy! O, Wind
If winter comes, can Spring be far behind?

The whirlwind of leaves-sparks-words originated in the first stanza expands unlimitedly over the whole earth, awakening it to a new life. It expands towards the future, announcing it, or, rather, conjuring it up. Notwithstanding their visual and lexical analogies with this whirlwind, neither the image of ashes and sparks with which Frankenstein's monster takes his leave, nor the image of the masses of leaves heaped up in the Cumaean grotto in *The Last Man* show the same confidence in the power of the artist's prophetic message and especially in its awakening function. In Percy Shelley's vision the dissemination of the poet/prophet's words amounts to a life-bringing promise, absent from both *Frankenstein* and *The Last Man*: the monster's ashes disperse into the ocean which cannot be fertilised; the Sybil's prophecy re-membered by the writer's fictionalised "I" in the Introduction to *The Last Man* is a mortipherous message captured and transcribed while rebounding from futurity to antiquity and back, speaking the language of Death from the vantage point of the last man's memory.

Once more Mary Shelley takes up the posture of the copyist. She plays the medium who intercepts and echoes sybilline messages exchanged between ghost writers. She allows her ghost writers to write through her own hand. She cannot write unless she obliterates herself as a writer and puts herself in the role of "a devout but nearly silent listener".

DIALOGUE/DEBATE/ DISSENT

Rossella Ciocca

Plurality and Representation. A few notes on the novel

This article takes its cue from the international meeting "Spaces and Borders of the Novel. Literary and non-literary narrative forms between 1990 and 2000" held in Forlì in March 1999. The occasion saw novelists, academics, intellectuals and other experts gathered to discuss the recent past and the near future of the novel. The metamorphosis of the genre in post-war years, its relation to the sciences on the one hand and to mass media on the other, the novel as a form of knowledge and the role of ethics in narrative fiction were the major themes the guests were asked to deal with.The multifaceted nature of their experiences produced an open-ended – yet rich and stimulating – line of inquiry.

Trying to link the main issues discussed during the meeting with the ongoing debate in the fields of English studies and Literary theory, this brief essay sets out to analyse, in its first part, the role played by the aesthetics of plurality in the process of the novel's rebirth. In the second part, attention is focused on the relationship between the proliferation of narrative modes and ontological indeterminacy. Namely, how the rethinking of knowledge and 'the quarrel between word and world' have affected the question of representation, and whether the hermeneutical concern for meaning in the text could provide a relative (but not merely perspectival) possibility for 'truth claims'.

Plurality. The novel's rebirth

As Raffaella Baccolini (chair of the session "Metamorphosis of the

novel") pointed out, the starting point of any critical debate on the state and nature of the contemporary novel is the general acknowledgement of its regained vitality. This new lease of life, hailed as the survival to various announced deaths, was nontheless regarded at the meeting with a mixture of relief and mistrust.

Fiction was seen as showing unsuspected resources of adaptability and rejuvenation and, at the same time, the literary present was also pessimistically considered as an age dominated by the selling strategies of aggressive commercialism.

On the one hand, fiction was seen as having outlasted the end of meaning and of the word and the very death of the novel itself, as Mario Lavagetto recalled in his welcoming address.[1] Umberto Eco exuberantly proclaimed that nowadays more works of fiction are written and published than ever before, and the book still retains its power of fascination and the ability to keep its contract with the reader.[2] On the other hand, contemporary writing was also seen, by some, as a far too repetitive and mechanical job; the novel as a far too easy form of entertainment with its deliberate mass-consensus schemes and tricks.

In his polemical paper, Alberto Arbasino lamented the degeneration of the contemporary novel, reduced, after the wonderful formal adventures of Modernism, to running after the modes of the 'politically correct' and the clichés of the best-seller. Novelists become stars, and celebrities of all sorts sooner or later end up as writers. The instant book pushes its way to the front of the shop window. Money, as ever and to a greater extent, is changing quality

[1] About the gloomy prophecies of the post-war decades, it is worth recalling Leslie A. Fiedler's afterthought: "More than thirty years ago, I declared in print boldly, unequivocally.... The Novel is dead.... What I must have meant then ... was that the kind of novel written in response to the social and aesthetic exigencies of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries ... would disappear from a radically changed, late industrial world, in which the sensibility to which that kind of novel appealed had become as obsolete as the modes of production which had originally helped determine its form and function". Leslie A. Fiedler, "The Death and Rebirths of the Novel: The view from '82", in Ihab Hassan and Sally Hassan, *Innovation/Renovation: New Perspectives on the Humanities* (London and Madison: Wisconsin U.P., 1983), 225-226.

[2] On March 4th. 1999, selected passages of the paper of Umberto Eco, reports of his thought and interviews were published in *il Resto del Carlino, la Repubblica, Corriere della Sera*, and *La Stampa*.

into quantity, levelling, smoothing, keeping up the circulation of bad as well as good words.[3]

By far the most concerned about the attack of the *everything-goes* system over quality, Ismail Kadarè called into question the only apparent freedom of unlimited production ("also Mao for the Chinese cultural revolution wished millions of poets ..."), going so far as to call for the raising of a defensive 'wall' against the chaotic development of the writing business.[4] However, despite some apocalyptic notes, even this Albanian emigré was confident about the future of the novel in the third millennium of cultural mélange and hybridity. On the whole, he judged the plethora of dubious writing practices as only the other side of the otherwise very interesting picture represented by the phenomenon of the novel's sheer plurality. As everybody indeed agreed, at the end of the millennium, the fluid, flexible and crossbred identity of the "capacious monster"[5] was considered the main source for its vigorous rebirth.

Plurality – stylistic, structural, ethnic, cultural, in both language and content – was thus confirmed as the quintessential resource for contemporary fiction.

All the more so when we shift focus to the English Novel.[6]

[3] The whole report of Alberto Arbasino was published on *la Repubblica* (March 4th, 1999). With reference to the British book market, I quote from Steven Connor, *The English Novel in History* 1950-1995 (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), 17-18: "The 1980s saw a simultaneous increase in the size of publishers and a remorseless reduction in their number. Increasingly, publishing houses found themselves either part of large publishing conglomerates, which demanded high-volume sales from every unit of production, or part of multinational companies, whose publishing sections were only a small part of a range of different activities. If this sometimes gave publishers access to levels of capitalisation that they did not have before ... it also meant that their product became increasingly difficult to distinguish from other commodities and the techniques used to promote and sell them. Most importantly, the rationalisation of the book market, and especially the fiction market which continued to grow in proportion to the rest, involved an unprecedented and dramatic rise in the importance of advertising and promotion".

[4] Ismail Kadaré takes from Schiller the idea that the birth of literature was to be ascribed to Greek Tragedy. The first playwrights chose to codify the thousands versions of Myth, preferring a difficult freedom to a chaotic one. They fixed the Unities of time and place and raised the Chorus as a fender between stage and audience. Now, he says, we are getting back to primaeval chaos: everyone writes his own story; nobody has time to read the mythologies of others.

[5] This definition was given by A. S. Byatt. Her paper was focused on the use of 'geological' imagery in British contemporary novels to convey the sense of stratification and change in history.

[6] By this expression I mean the novels written *in* English.

When the liberal hopes of the postwar years began to falter in the 1960s, the realistic potential of the novel, with its moral and social concerns,[7] started to slacken as well. In a world in which the human being was seen as the sum of his/her roles[8] and humanism was to appear, perhaps more radically than ever before, as a lost dream, many of the by-passed modernist impulses came back to influence writing moods and manners. Formal questions about reality and representation reasserted themselves, but this time in an ontological rather than epistemological perspective.[9] The concept of art as forgery, the insubstantiality of the novel's characters, the conventional and provisional status of language – all undermined the mimetic claim of narrative and ignited once again the fire of experimentation. A deep crisis was felt once more and elaborated in terms of a creative exploration of the limits and possibilities of the literary form. The novel in particular had undergone pressure. Faced by the demands of a rapidly changing cultural scene, challenged by the story-telling function of the media, the textualization of reality and fictionalization of history,[10] the genre seemed to have exhausted

[7] It is commonly said that the postwar British novel was characterised by a conscious recoil from the "stylistic and formal artifice of modernist fiction, and by a return to the demands and responsibilities of realism" (Connor, *English Novel*, 45). See also Malcolm Bradbury, ed., *The Novel Today* (Glasgow: Fontana/Collins, 1977), 10, and Neil McEwan, *The Survival of the Novel: British Fiction in the Later Twentieth Century* (London and Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1981), 7.

[8] With reference to individuals occupying 'roles' rather than 'selves', see Patricia Waugh, *Metafiction: The Theory and Practice of Self-Conscious Fiction* (London and New York: Routledge, 1984), 3.

[9] Taking his cue from the concept of "the dominant" as formulated by Roman Jakobson, Brian McHale in *Postmodernist Fiction* (London and New York: Routledge, 1987), 9-10, writes about the shift from modernism to postmodernism: "I will formulate it as a general thesis about modernist fiction: the dominant of modernist fiction is *epistemological*. That is, modernist fiction deploys strategies which engage and foreground questions such as .... 'How can I interpret this world of which I am a part? And what am I in it?'.... This brings me to a second general thesis, this time about postmodernist fiction: the dominant of postmodernist fiction is *ontological* ... typical postmodernist questions bear either on the ontology of the literary text itself or on the ontology of the world which it projects, for instance: What is a world? What kinds of world are there, how are they constituted, and how do they differ? What happens when different kinds of world are placed in confrontation, or when boundaries between worlds are violated?".

[10] The concept of the textual nature of reality has been theoretically formulated within many disciplines and it has come to dominate contemporary critical theory and the practice of fiction itself. According to Allan Megill, *Prophets of Extremity* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1985), 21, for example: "The irony that pervaded

its potential and, in the wake of Beckett's work, to be sentenced to a state of terminal decline.[11]

By the mid-seventies, however, signs of a shift in attitude had begun to appear. In Bergonzi's *The Situation of the Novel* and David Lodge's "The Novelist at the Crossroads", the novel was seen as receiving a stay of execution, even though, at the time, the new directions it was taking were looked at 'with something less than enthusiasm'.[12] Indeed, some of the most radical formal

modernism tried to uncover a Man or Culture or Nature or History underlying the flux of surface experience. In postmodernism, this has given way to a new irony, one that holds these earstwhile realities to be textual fictions". It has also been increasingly suggested that history is much more similar to fiction than we were wont to think: "The challenge ... to the positivists' scientific elaboration of a covering law model has come from a variety of sources – feminist, Marxist, narrativist, post-structuralist, post-colonial, New Historicist. These different theoretical perspectives all question history's claim to know the past.... This undoing is characterized by scepticism about the claims historians used to make: that the past exists in a pre-established form which simply requires human beings to discover it; that the historian can speak from a universal (objective) standpoint; that what constitutes the subject of history does not change with time and is agreed upon by most practitioners; that the historian can offer a totalizing, synoptic account of the past, which is complete in all necessary particulars". Andrzej Gasiorek, *Post-War British Fiction: Realism and After* (London: Edward Arnold, 1995), 147-148. Speaking about *metafiction*, Waugh also argued: "[it] suggests not only that writing history is a fictional act, ranging events conceptually through language to form a world-model, but that history itself is invested, like fiction, with interrelating plots which appear to interact independently of human design" (*Metafiction*, 48-49), and "texts which introduce real people and events expose not only the illusion of verisimilar writing but also that of historical writing itself.... So history, although ultimately a material reality (a presence), is shown to exist always within 'textual' boundaries. History, to this extent, is also 'fictional' ..." (ibid., 106).

[11] "... the novel was under pressure from the events of recent history, which seemed not only to be unrepresentable but also to have shattered pre-war illusions; from mass culture in the form of radio, cinema, and later television; and from the after-shocks of modernism. These concerns fall into two categories: the first concentrates on external events (war, social change, cultural transformation), the second focuses on developments internal to the novel (style, technique, form). Between them, they were used to explain a perceived crisis of fiction" (Gasiorek, *Post-War British Fiction*, 1). For an accurate description of the cultural atmosphere of the '60s in relation to literature, see also Waugh, *Harvest of the Sixties: English Literature and its Background 1960 to 1990* (Oxford and New York: Oxford U.P., 1995), 5, 10, and Bradbury, *The Modern British Novel* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1994). For mass-media competition see Connor, *English Novel in History*, 12.

[12] Both critics rejected the thesis of the 'death of the novel' but were partly disturbed by the direction experimental writing was taking. Bergonzi feared that the novel, turned to sub-genres and pastiche, was no longer 'novel'. Lodge showed his doubts about experimentation in the very terms he used to discuss it: "Such narratives suspend realistic illusion in some significant degree in the interests of a freedom in plotting characteristic of romance or in the interest of an explicitly allegorical manipulation of meaning, or both. They also tend to draw inspiration from certain popular forms of literature, or subliterature, in which the arousal and gratification of very basic fictional appetites (such as wonder, wish fulfilment, suspense) are

experimentations (with their self-concerned textual tactics and paratextual and syntactical devices) were seen as unrewarding.[13] But their cumulative, open-minded, intentionally pliant spirit was the right one, as time was to demonstrate.

If, on a thematic plane, disenchantment, disaffection, anxiety and apocalypticism were pervasive, on a stylistic level, fantasy, fabulation, grotesque, gothic, and pastiche were on the increase. A bewildering array of meta-fictional strategies produced the self-conscious referential novel, with its range of talkative, narcissistic, unreliable, god-playing, lie-displaying, intrusive or untimely vanishing narrators; the modes of reportage, the documentary and journalism broadened its boundaries; the meshing of popular sub-genres – from horror to science-fiction – emphasized its parodic strain. On the whole, fiction was borrowing a wider spread of styles, techniques and registers from other arts and forms of communication; poetry, music, film, television, and the word processor were all conflated in a new crossbred language.[14]

With reference to the relationship between the novel and the media, at the Forlì meeting, Don Delillo was reported to have declared that he became a writer by watching movies every day and reading comics the rest of the time ... And, indeed, in a far broader sense than Adorno's pronouncement seemed to imply at the time, osmosis between the novel and the media proved crucial to the renovation of the former. Language and the treatment of time were the areas where a deep impact was most felt. The colour of street talk

only loosely controlled by the disciplines of realism: especially science fiction, pornography and the thriller". David Lodge, "The Novelist at the Crossroads", in Bradbury, *The Novel Today*, 102.

[13] As Ian McEwan writes in "The State of Fiction: A Symposium", *New Review* 5.1, (Summer 1978), 51: "The formal experimentation of the late sixties and early seventies came to nothing largely because the stuff was inaccessible and too often unrewarding – no pleasure in the text. And there can surely be no more mileage to be had from demonstrating yet again through self-enclosed 'fictions' that reality is words and words are lies. There is no need to be strangled by that particular loop – the artifice of fiction can be taken for granted. Experimentation in its broadest and most viable sense should have less to do with formal factors like busting up your syntax and scrambling your page order, and more to do with content - the representation of states of mind and the society that forms them".

[14] According to Connor: "Like television and film, too, the novel has maintained its energy and invention through its parasitism of other forms, rather than through any strong aesthetic principles of its own" (*English Novel in History*, 28).

and every sort of slang, lexicon and stylized vocabulary, as well as the new film-derived time syntax, with its infinite possibilities of regression and projection, both in time and consciousness, permeated literature and impressed new rhythms and flavours on narrative communication. Video-clips, commercials, the news, sports commentaries, jingles, fashion and advertising - the whole flow of metropolitan images and voices (what Don Delillo called "white noise") – affected the literary quality of language and the time-shifting schemes of the novel. The heteroglossic, discontinuous, media-tuned soundtrack of everyday life resonated in the linguistically flamboyant and multi-layered, exuberantly time-sequenced texts of contemporary fiction. It is no chance, then, that the latter term is now equally used to imply both written and filmed stories. How can we imagine a Martin Amis or John Irving or even Salman Rushdie novel without the soap-tabloid-movie derivative universe of popular mythology? Not only intertextuality and pastiche but the blurring of the distinction between 'mainstream' and 'genre' are themselves due as much to the novel's dialogue with its past as to its contemporary interaction with the new languages and technologies of the media.[15]

In the meantime fiction was also absorbing a much greater range of international influences. In the age of global ethnic migration, the English novel embraced interaction with other cultural traditions, written in the same (basic) language but told from a different set of religious, mythical, historical and obviously racial perspectives. African, Caribbean, Australasian, Indian and other fictional worlds had freed themselves from their exotic label and entered the now world-wide literary scene, marking, with their confrontational attitudes, the beginning of the post-colonial era in literature.

But the so-called "romance of the marginal"[16] with which some

[15] So much for the recent past. But what, from a technological point of view, seems really to be at stake now, and susceptible of exercising a complex unpredictable influence on the literary future, is the combined action of Internet and virtual reality. The space and time reduction to the 'here and now' of electronic mail, its new flow of epistolarity; the new open and demotic quality of canonical texts subjected to unlimited personal manipulation, once they have been inserted in the Net; the creation of a potentially world-wide public for unpublished writers, with the consequent exponential proliferation of texts; the shift of fantastical projection from fiction to virtuality: these are only part of the current recognizable by-products of the personal computer.

[16] See for a whole discussion of this definition Waugh, *Sixties*, 153-154.

features of postmodern writing have been identified, did not only originate in the loosening of national stereotypes, the regaining of a lost history and the new right for the voices from the edge to author their own novels. The definition also arose from within the internal dynamics of what was only at first an exclusively western social field. When it became apparent that racial and economic inequalities were not the only causes of discrimination, the awareness of the ideological nature of the construction of gender identities inaugurated another area of friction, reconceptualization and renewal: certainties, behaviours and, in the literary domain, narrative representations underwent a storm of revisions (that of the literary canon amongst others).[17]

The '80s and '90s were dominated by the identitarian perspective of 'otherness': from class to gender, from ethnicity to age, from life-style to sexual behaviour, oppositional subordinate minorities vindicated their own way of access to cultural expression. (Indeed, in the last years, both from right-wing and 'left-conservative' positions, this state of affairs has been seen as following a sometimes insidious drift towards increasing particularisms. A politically concerned debate on the supposed excesses of poststructuralist and deconstructive critical approaches is still in progress. On the one hand, ideological pluralization is seen as responsible for having fragmented effective resistance and reduced it to a myriad of specialized, academic practices. On the other hand, strong and passionate is the reaction against oversimplifications of the complex and diversified phenomenon of postmodernism when it is represented as a merely 'factionalizing' and 'politically paralyzing' cultural trend. Above all the separation of the cultural from the material and consequently from the political, somehow implied by the leftist attacks, is firmly called into question.)[18]

[17] With reference to *genre/gender* relationship and postmodernist writing see Lidia Curti, "Generi al femminile e postmoderno", in *Questioni di Genere*, ed. Laura Di Michele (Napoli: Istituto Universitario Orientale, 1993) e "Femminismo, Postmoderno e Romanzo", in *Storia della civiltà letteraria inglese*, Vol. III, ed. Franco Marenco, Torino, Utet, 1996.

[18] Relevant to this topic is the whole section Dialogue/Debate/Dissent of *Anglistica* 1.1-2 (1997), dedicated to "Left Conservatism" and in particular Marina De Chiara, "Response-abilities: An inquiry into 'Left Conservatism' with Judith Butler". See also *Teoria della Letteratura. Prospettive dagli Stati Uniti*, ed. Donatella Izzo (Roma: La Nuova Italia Scientifica, 1996), 21-26 and Waugh, *Sixties*, 213.

However, despite circumscribed critical controversies, the aesthetics of plurality is seen as absolutely central in any attempt to keep pace with the never-ending flux of differentiation in psychological and cultural human realities. Actually a diverse line of interpretation would sustain the existence of a heterogeneous and mutable root in the genre from the very outset of its history. Following a Bachtinian approach, for instance, the novel is not to be associated with any definite social group, nor is it to be defined by any once-and-for-all given form; its modernity consists rather in its structural tendency to disclose the polysemic, dialogical complexity of societies. And still, in its susceptibility to change and in its ongoing quarrel with its superseded versions, in its crisscrossing of genres and languages, the novel is confirming its modernity once again. Applying the instruments of fantasy and hyperbole, it is reinventing a sort of 'mimetic' adherence to the magmatic, hybrid, diffracted, virtual reality that everyone experiences.[19] Trilling observed that, in a disenchanted world, literature expresses the "disenchantment of our culture with itself".[20] Yet, midway between art and sociology, history and psychology, philosophy and entertainment, literature and commodity, the novel is now not only the "epic of a world from which the gods have fled" as Lukàcs put it, but also, using the words of Rushdie, a propos of *The Satanic Verses*, "the love-song to our mongrel selves".[21]

Yet, once their main role in the novel's revival has been stated, variety and multiplication still call into question other more entangled issues.

Formal eclecticism accommodates mutually exclusive aesthetical approaches and favours the proliferation of narrative modes: from apocalypticism to ecologism, from mysticism to nihilism, from carnival to 'cannibalism'..."provided that these modes of

[19] "In the modern world it [the novel] has become ... an exploration of the strange and everchanging unreality that the world around us has become" (Bradbury, *Modern British Novel*, 455).

[20] Quoted in Waugh, *Sixties*, 22.

[21] "Melange, hotchpotch, a bit of this and a bit of that is how newness enters the world ...". Salman Rushdie, *Imaginary Homelands: Essays and Criticism. 1981-1991* (London: Granta, 1992), 394.

consciousness are not seen as ontologically grounded".[22] Indeed, no intellectual or methodological system, no way of perceiving reality or constructing fictional strategies is allowed to demand unquestionable superiority; the claim for 'objectivity' is considered untenable.

The death of God, the crisis of metaphysics, the dismissal of essentialism had perforce to involve the rethinking of knowledge; and the still topical quarrel 'between word and world' that sprang from it had necessarily to affect the problem of representation.

Knowledge, representation and the novel

One session of the Forlì meeting was devoted to the novel as a form of knowledge. Contributions by philosophers gave the discussion a theoretical character. The range of issues extended from comparison with historical and scientific gnoseological systems (questioning the possibility of having a complete and thorough picture of the world from history and science), to a discussion of why philosophy, after centuries of terminological, methodological, conceptual controversies, is increasingly reverting to fiction and metaphor to make sense of reality, and ultimately to the very availability of any truth at all.

Most participants (Magris, Bodei, Givone, Tadini) stated that the novel is the only form able to give a view of that fine grain of experiences and events that tends to vanish in historical reconstruction. And that, with respect to the segmentary, circumscribed, partial versions provided by physics or sociology, fiction is more fully and widely enabled to interpret the real as a whole. Representing a meeting bridge between the individual subjectivity and the collective dimensions of shared values and laws, the novel can try, better than philosophy, to register and render the

[22] "Indeterminacy may lead to magical forms, to mysticism, to transcendentalism, to the cult of apocalypticism ... or to the existential, to the post-existential, to a 'dehumanization', to a loss of ego, to ecologism, to fragmentation, to a new futurism, etc. etc. ... provided that these modes of consciuosness are not seen as ontologically grounded". Hans Bertens, "The postmodern Weltaschauung", in Douwe Fokkema and Hans Bertens, eds., *Approaching Modernism* (Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publ., 1986), 28.

sense of dissolution and fracture of the contemporary world by aesthetically synthetizing what logically remains irreconcilable.

But knowledge and truth are not simple concepts any longer and nothing about them can be taken for granted. Echoed at the meeting, with repeated references to *constructivism* and to the debate on realism, the question of the limits of representation is pivotal in any discussion about the function of literature in the contemporary world.

If, as has been authoritatively affirmed over the last thirty years, reality is cognized within culturally determined structures of thought and vindications of truth are always made with reference to the rules of particular communities of knowledge,[23] then after certain tendencies both in fiction and criticism the world can no longer be known because the subject has no unmediated pre-discursive access to it.[24] In this perspective, mind-independent reality is unattainable and the quest for objectivity becomes altogether pointless. Cut off from things, men and women are confined to a confrontation with accounts of facts (historical, even scientific) that are only textual fictions.[25] To an even greater extent, whatever their apparent realism, novels are nonetheless seen as ineluctably separate from the universe they represent.[26]

[23] Seminal studies in the so-called *epistemological turn* are Hans Georg Gadamer, *Wahreit und Methode* (*Truth and Method*) (1960), and Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (1962).

[24] "The simple notion that language passively reflects a coherent, meaningful and 'objective' world is no longer tenable. Language is an independent, self-contained system which generates its own 'meanings'. Its relationship to the phenomenal world is highly complex, problematic and regulated by convention" (Waugh, *Metafiction*, 3).

[25] "In the absence of essences, of ontological centers, man creates himself and his world through a language that is, poststructurally, divorced from the world of objects" (Bertens, "The Postmodern Weltanschauung", 29).

[26] "... literary fictions can never imitate or 'represent' the world but always imitates or 'represents' the discourses which in turn construct that world" (Waugh, *Metafiction*, 100). With relation to specific literary strategies Waugh adds: "There are those novels at one end of the spectrum which take fictionality as a theme to be explored.... At the centre of this spectrum are those texts that manifest the symptoms of formal and ontological insecurity but allow their deconstructions to be finally recontextualized or 'naturalized' and given a total interpretation.... Finally, at the furthest extreme ... can be placed those fictions that, in rejecting realism more thoroughly, posit the world as a fabrication of competing semiotic systems which never correspond to material conditions". In terms of criticism she lists two tendencies: "... one that finally accepts a substantial real world whose significance is not entirely composed of relationships within language; and one that suggests there can never be an escape from the prisonhouse of language.... It is this exposure of 'reality' in terms of 'textuality' ... which has provided the main critique of realism" (*Metafiction*, 19, 53).

Yet a different formulation of premises denies this sort of *noumenal* quality to the external world and sees language, and the signifying function, as the bond that holds subject and object together. As we are always already pitched in the midst of things, the phenomenal world is always already apprehended in some terms of relative knowledge.[27] We do not face reality but share with objects a common condition of being; together we shape reality. In this circularity a way is still available for positive perception. Maybe not the perfect cognition validated by a metaphysical system of thought, but at least a comprehension that is able to resist the general "will to unmaking",[28] and to make the most of this subject/object proximity.

If articulating a purely objective knowledge of anything is not possible because we already have some preconscious, subjective and ideologically orientated understanding of it, it is also true, as Gadamer has pointed out, that looking for (and *at*) the unknown as openly and accurately as possible makes us aware of the prejudices we inhabit and helps us to modify them.[29]

Even when we finally accept intransitivity as a primary characteristic of language[30] we cannot draw the conclusion that the literary artefact, as it is linguistically mediated, cannot be intimately connected with the universe it depicts. On the contrary, even the novels in which autotelic, metanarrative dimensions are particularly emphasized cannot exempt themselves from engaging with a recalcitrant world that will not be removed.[31]

In accordance with Paul Ricoeur, narrative accounts of the real are certainly not isomorphic with it, reconstruction being a new

[27] For a thorough discussion of this concept, see Gadamer, *Wahreit und Methode*, Italian translation *Verità e Metodo* (Milano: Bompiani, 1983), 542.

[28] With reference to Hassan's expression, see Bertens, "The Postmodern Weltanshauung", 26.

[29] In *Wahreit und Methode*, Gadamer argues that we all exist as embodied agents in a cultural context that shapes the limits of our capacity of knowledge. Knowledge, then, can never be fully articulated but the search for it propels us to seek understanding of the unknown.

[30] With reference to Roland Barthes's critique of the "totalitarian ideology of the referent", see "To Write: An Intransitive Verb?" in Richard Macksey and Eugenio Donato, eds., *The Structuralist Controversy: The Language of Criticism and the Science of Man* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins U.P., 1972), 138.

[31] According to Gasiorek (*Post-war British Fiction*, 15): "... the realization that cognition, and any literary artefact that is its product, is linguistically mediated ... does not shatter the intimate connection between text and world but forces the link between them to be reconceptualized".

construction and mimesis not simply a reduplication but a creative representation. Yet those accounts not only retain their connection with, but indeed are deeply inscribed on, reality. The very reality which can in fact be thought of in terms of fiction and is often resented as increasingly unsubstantial, but which still, as Lodge was wont to recall, is ordinarily felt and experienced as unremittingly actual ("History may be, in a philosophical sense, a fiction, but it doesn't feel like that when we miss a train or somebody starts a war"[32]).

Anyway Ricoeur escapes the reflectionist impasse by conceiving representation not in terms of a mere replica but as a form of productive reference which improves our understanding of reality by making sense of it.[33]

From the same standpoint, a much weaker form of referential aesthetics, such as Goldman's theory of fittingness, could be aptly juxtaposed with the antirealist attacks on the so-called "epistemology of the mirror".[34] The latter, by Cartesian heritage, conceives of the mind as a mirror that can reflect things as they are *in themselves*. Recalled at the meeting by Armando Massarenti, chair of the session on "Ethics and fiction", it results in the notion of a transcendental match between our representations and the world. Dismissed as pure fantasy, the concept of truth as correspondence and the distinctively designative quality of language are nonetheless suitably substituted by a rather more modest claim that the world, even if it cannot be exactly known, can at least be reliably learnt about.[35]

The metaphor of fittingness is drawn from the imagery of clothing. Altogether discarding the conception of truth as a one-to-one correspondence, it is not concerned with how words match with objects but with how certain propositions succeed in making sense of reality.

[32] "The Novelist at the Crossroads", in Bradbury, ed., *The Novel Today*, 137.

[33] Paul Ricoeur, "The Function of Fiction in Shaping Reality" in Mario J. Valdes, ed., *A Ricoeur Reader: Reflection and Imagination* (Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1991), 134.

[34] See Richard Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (Princeton: Princeton U.P, 1979) and *Objectivity, Relativism and Truth* (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 1993), and Hilary Putnam, *Reason, Truth and History* (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 1981).

[35] "The world that I learn *about* is an unconceptualized world. But *what* I learn about this world is that some conceptualization (of mine) fits it. *How* I learn this is by a process that begins with the unconceptualized world but terminates in a conceptualization. Does this (realist) theory make the world into a noumenal object, an object that cannot be known or correctly described? Not at all. On the proposed version of realism we can know of the world that particular representations fit it. So the world is not a noumenal object." Alvin I. Goldman, *Epistemology and Cognition* (Cambridge, Mass., and London: Harvard U.P., 1986), 154.

> The mirror metaphor is only one possible metaphor for correspondence. A different and preferable metaphor ... is *fittingness*: the sense in which clothes fit a body. The chief advantage of this metaphor is its possession of an ingredient analogous to the categorizing and statement-creating activity of the cognizer-speaker. At the same time, it captures the basic realist intuition that what makes a proposition, or statement, true is the way the world is.[36]

Against the refusal to care for objectivity since discourses cannot grasp the truth but are only able to reveal the infinite game potential of language, Goldman insists that clothes are certainly not the same as the wearer but still the latter is satisfactorily clad only by some garments and not by others.[37] In other words the world can be interpreted many times and after many fashions but not by just any free play of vocabulary.[38]

If indisputable knowledge is definitely out of the question, its transient and historical character having been assumed once and for all, discernment in plurality becomes nonetheless fundamental.[39] Escaping the hypertrophy of interpretations, for instance, is increasingly considered as important as escaping logocentric absolutisms.[40] Against the full gnoseological status accorded to mere perspectivism,[41] in defence of intellectual rigour, a concerned relativism promotes the search for the most satisfying interpretation

[36] Ibid., 152.

[37] "There are indefinitely many sorts of apparel that might be designed for the human body, just as there are indefinitely many categories, principles of classification, and propositional forms that might be used to describe the world.... Despite all this variety – humanly invented variety – there is still the question, for any specified type of apparel, whether a specific token of that type fits a particular customer's body. This question of fittingness is not just a question of the style of garment. It depends specifically on *that* customer's body." Ibid., 152-153.

[38] For a discussion on the relation between truth and rethorical seductiveness, see Terry Eagleton, *The Ideology of the Aesthetic* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990), 396.

[39] Eagleton, for example, laments the fact that often in post-structuralism: "Plurality ... is a good in itself, quite regardless of its ethical or political substance" (ibid., 399).

[40] For instance Giovanni Bottiroli, who teaches Literary Theory at Bergamo University, thinks that we are seriously harmed by interpretative proliferation. A proliferation that is seen as responsible for having let possibility to be preferred to logical necessity or inner consistency, and the peculiarity of a view or a belief to be pursued to the point of fanaticism. See Bottiroli, *Teoria dello stile* (Firenze: La Nuova Italia, 1997), 117-118, 225-226.

[41] For a further discussion of the distinction between *relativism* and *perspectivism*, see Bottiroli, *Teoria dello stile*, 203-205.

(of the real or of a text) in order to restore dignity to hermeneutics, if not at the ontological level, at least in ethical terms.[42]

Objectivity eludes the artist, the interpreter, but represents the goal they must continue to struggle for despite the only relative degree of success they could be granted. Rushdie, already quoted in support of pluralism in the novel, thinks that literature, in its own fantastical ways, must nevertheless engage in the debate over the nature of reality and that to reject altogether the possibility of reliable knowledge results in nothing less than moral and political quietism.[43] The very passivity that in the shape of aestheticized nihilism[44] eventually favours only the already dominant late capitalistic metanarratives (the wondrous necessity of the free market, the compulsory diffusion of material progress, consumerism as *joie de vivre* ...).

The recovering vigour of an artistic, and critical, concern for what is true (and, if needs be, for what is right, as Abraham B. Yehoshua[45] claimed on the occasion of the Forlì meeting) must perforce be conceived inside a weak, if not altogether negative, ontological system in order to shirk the dangers of incidental neo-rationalist temptations. This possibility becomes real within the horizon of "tragic thought"[46] (two exponents of which were present in Forlì, Sergio Givone and Remo Bodei) which, once it has radically

[42] In the session of the Forlì meeting given over to "Ethics and fiction", most of the participants stressed the concept that in the quest for truth, despite the uncertainty of the results, what is important is the effort of delving into things: "In the novel it is moral to ask why, to have doubts" (Bodei); "The eye that looks at evil is less cynical than the one that looks away from it" (Giuseppe Pontiggia); "In the novel it is moral to look for truth, to reach the dark bottom of things" (Claudio Magris).

[43] See Rushdie, *Imaginary Homelands*, 100-101.

[44] In *Immagini del nulla* (Milano: Bruno Mondadori, 1998), 97-99, 132-149, Giuseppe Cantarano develops his polemical attack against aestheticised nihilism with which he juxtaposes the negative ontology of "tragic thought".

[45] Yehoshua lamented the fact that contemporary criticism of the novel gives importance exclusively to aesthetical questions. As ethical implications are always present when human relationships are dealt with, as happens in the novel, Yeoshua thought that both critics and authors should again concern themselves with moral matters.

[46] "... tragedy ... staging of a crisis within tradition. And crisis means, contradictorily, both the belonging and the disengaging, both the confirmation of a given system of values and the suspension of judgement, both the assertion of a historical identity and the acknowledgement of its dissolution. What is really important here, what is really decisive is the representation, the *mise-en-scène*. The *mise-en-scène* doesn't resolve the contradiction but is able to exhibit and endure it at the same time. The exigency of another thought is thus affirmed.... a form of thought that combines the double logic of faith and the most radical

assumed the aporetic dimension of the post-metaphysical condition, still allows one to believe in 'poetical truth'. This is the only truth that is able to sustain ambivalence, as Givone firmly maintained in his much appraised report at the meeting: "Truth can be multiple and contradictory, many and different instances of truth can exist at the same time; literature is not only able to endure this condition but in a way rests on this very premiss".

Burning his own play in front of the theatre of Dionysus, the young Plato chose the only precise, luminous path that led to philosophy ('truth must be sun-like') and the school of Socrates, renouncing the irreconcilable ambiguity of tragedy.[47]

Nowadays philosophy increasingly goes back to fiction and metaphor as the only means by which the discords of the world can be made sense of. In the age in which "the world has turned into a tale", Givone reads this Nietzschean statement by going back to Novalis who maintained that "the world *must* turn into a tale", because the only possible dimension of knowledge is interpretative, imaginary, 'fantasizing', never given once and for all but always renewed with effort and creativity.[48]

Such knowledge, going beyond rationality and its limited propositions without succumbing to irrational whimsicality, is painfully free to look at the enigma of being, deprived of the solace of any causative or finalistic theory, but nonetheless capable of marvelling at reality, at its power and indifference, ready to catch any tenuous glimpse of authenticity, and to try to share it with others.

The modern epic, the novel, is able to interpret reality more adequately at present than other forms of art. According to the definition given by Claudio Magris at the meeting, the novel can offer knowledge of the real 'in the subjunctive', ready not only to register the 'muddy flow of events' and the chaotic and spurious quality of life, but also to ask why it is so and even how different it could be or is on the verge of being.

doubt. Tragic thought." Givone, *Storia del Nulla* (Bari: Laterza, 1995), XIX (my translation). Givone teaches Aesthetics at the Università di Firenze.

[47]Ibid., 30.

[48]Ibid., 112.

Marina De Chiara

El Teatro Campesino. An Interview with César E. Flores

César E. Flores has been an actor with the renowned Chicano theatre company El Teatro Campesino for more than 27 years.

El Teatro Campesino, after more than thirty years of activity, is still staging its works in the beautiful mission town of San Juan Bautista, California, where the troupe established itself as a resident company in 1971. The roots of El Teatro are to be found in the socio-political tensions which exploded in California during the sixties and the seventies, particularly in connection to the Chicano people's struggle for civil rights. El Teatro Campesino was founded in 1965 by Luis Valdez and Agustín Lira to teach and organize Chicano farm workers, and to support César Chávez, the United Farm Workers union organizer, in his struggles for the rights of the *campesinos*, the Chicano and Mexican farmworkers.

The typical actions through which the members of El Teatro participated in these events were the so called *actos*, that is, short improvisational sketches (often staged in the streets along the vineyards or on the back of flatbed trucks), portraying characters and events from the life in the fields, especially focusing on the relationship between the exploited *campesino*, the Mexican farmworker, and the *patroncito*, the white boss. From the initial focus on the inhumane life conditions of the *campesinos* in the fields, the interest of El Teatro shifted towards wider socio-cultural issues like the unequal and racist educational system in American schools, the war in Vietnam, the brutality of police, the meaning of Chicano identity, life in the degraded neighborhoods, the *barrios*, the legacy of the Mexican-American conflict, the exploitation of Mexican cheap labor by U. S. capitalism.

Through its insistence on always using both English and Spanish in its plays, El Teatro has also defended Chicano people's right to bilingualism, thus strongly opposing the ongoing governmental attempts to reduce the richness and complexity of Chicano culture, a frontier culture, to the sovereignty of an English-only speaking culture. The Chicano language, a mixed language, reflects indeed the colonial history which has traced everywhere in the U. S. Southwest a geography of continuous territorial displacements and mixing of peoples of different races, languages, cultures: the Aztecs, first inhabitants of the mythic Aztlán (U.S. Southwest), were exterminated by the Spaniards who then mixed with the colonized, giving birth in 1521 to the Mexican race, a new "mestiza" race of mixed Indian and Spanish blood. Then came the Anglos, who occupied Mexico in 1846 and seized the present lands of Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, Colorado and California.

Chicano language is still paying the price for its own hybrid nature, hence marginalized nature. In his introduction to an anthology of Mexican American literature (1972), Luis Valdez, founder of El Teatro, commented: "Anglo America, no doubt, will resent the bilingualism of the Chicano. The average educated gabacho ['gringo', white man] will probably interpret bilingual Chicano literature as reflecting the temporary bicultural confusion of the Mexican American".

After 1970 El Teatro Campesino started a theatrical experiment, The Theater of the Sphere, as a project focusing on the idea of the 'spherical' essence of the actor, that is, the essential unity of the person onstage and offstage (the circle, the sphere, is the image of this harmonization). The ideas originating this experiment came from researches into the ancient philosophical traditions of Mayan and Aztec cultures. There began an exploration of the powers that animate human life, and an understanding of the ancient roots of Chicano culture in the Americas. This also means for the Chicanos not to discard their Mexican ancestry and their Spanish language. Many productions of El Teatro Campesino use, in fact, both Spanish and English, and some, like for instance *La Virgen de Tepeyac*, which is the story of the apparition of Our Lady of Guadalupe to the poor Indian Juan Diego, are entirely in Spanish.

The German playwright Bertolt Brecht is often mentioned as a

major influence on El Teatro Campesino, together with other European theatrical forms like the Italian *commedia dell'arte*, Spanish Golden Age drama, or the Russian agitprop. This insistence on European connections may obscure the complex influences that actually shaped the aesthetic of Teatro Campesino, like the Mexican performance tradition of *carpa* (itinerant tent shows dating back to the eighteenth century) and its Rasquachi aesthetic, that is to say, the underdog perspective and its carnivalesque irreverence toward authority, hierarchy and institutional power; or the ancient Mayan and Aztec rituality, and the comedic spirit present in Native American ritual dances. The comic spirit emerges clearly also in the quality of the acting, with its use of the whole range of bodily movements, the gestures and postures, and very vivid facial mimicry.

In 1969, the year of the first gathering of Chicano *teatros* in Fresno, California, and also of the institution of *TENAZ* (El Teatro Nacional de Aztlán), El Teatro performed *The Shrunken Head of Pancho Villa* and *actos* at the World Theatre Festival in Nancy, France. In 1973 *La Carpa de los Rasquachis* (*The Tent of the Underdogs*), the story of a Mexican who after crossing the border into the U.S. is exposed to various indignities, was so successful that the production toured the United States and Europe many times.

In 1978 Valdez was individually commissioned to write the play *Zoot Suit*, co-producing it with the Center Theater Group of Los Angeles. The play was an immediate success. Following in the style of the Living Newspaper, the political theatrical form popularized in the thirties, *Zoot Suit* is a sort of docu-drama based on the real events of the 1942 Sleepy Lagoon case, when twenty-two young *pachucos* (Chicano street dudes) were unjustly arrested for the murder of a Chicano youth at a party; the events and the murder trials that followed witness the atmosphere of racial hatred between Chicanos and Anglos after the Second World War in Los Angeles, and the U.S. Marines' gratuitous brutalizing of Chicano people and *pachucos* in the *barrios* . The Los Angeles success of *Zoot Suit* brought Valdez to write a film-adaptation in 1981.

Although the play was a great success for the Chicano community, the production of *Zoot Suit* signaled a transformation in the relationship between El Teatro and Luis Valdez: Valdez abandoned the initial commitment to a Chicano alternative theater

based on the collective work of Chicano-only people, and started to write for actors outside the group, Hollywood artists, both Latino and non-Latino; in 1980 he decided to transform El Teatro Campesino from a collective ensemble into an administrative apparatus, or 'production company', auditioning actors from Hollywood and insisting on 'professionalism', which represented a deep change within the company's work philosophy.

After 1980 many other productions followed: *Rose of the Rancho* (1981), *Bandido! The American Melodrama of Tiburcio Vásquez* (1982), *Corridos* (1983), *I Don't Have to Show You No Stinking Badges* (1986). Today, El Teatro continues to be an inspirational icon, through its past, through its members' current involvement in cultural projects for the Chicano community, and through its lively productions. It still represents in the official history of American 'civilization' a much needed dissonant voice which digs up hidden parts of that history, casting Chicano perspectives on it, with dedication, humor and commitment.

When I interviewed actor César Flores, whom I saw playing the role of the drunken father in *The Shrunken Head of Pancho Villa* (San Juan Bautista, May, 1998), and the role of Fiddler Feliz and Old Gabriel in *Bandido! The American Melodrama of Tiburcio Vásquez, Notorious California Bandit* (San Juan Bautista, August, 1998), he was working on a staged reading of *Pedro Páramo*, a theatrical version of the masterpiece by the late Mexican writer Juan Rulfo. The interview took place at the El Teatro Campesino Playhouse in San Juan Bautista, California, September 30th , 1998.

Q -What is your role with El Teatro Campesino?

A - Currently I have a title which is facility manager. Basically what I'm doing is I'm taking care of the physical plant, the theatre itself, the heart of the organization of the Teatro itself. You know, without a solid foundation it won't function as well, you have got to make it feel like home. So, basically, my job is to do that. Definitely I do maintenance around here, that's part of it, you know, that's volunteer. My role with the Teatro Campesino has been as an actor, as well as a writer. I did an adaptation of a play written in 1914 by Richard Walton

Tully and David Belasco, which was actually produced in Broadway, called *Rose of the Rancho*, and I did an adaptation primarily because the play focused on San Juan Bautista, that's where it took place. However, in 1914, the way it was written made the Californios and the Indios like ... it was a stereotypical view, I would say a European stereotypical view of the Californios. They [the authors] always looked down on Mexicans anyway because we are half-breed, we are mestizos, we are not European, we are actually Indians, with some European blood. So, I took it and changed it all around. But I have been an actor for thirty years, with the company. I was involved in some of the early productions in the actual development of some of the stock plays that we have now, some of the old actos, and some of the plays. It's a different relationship, it's totally different than many things you would expect, you know, out of the realm of Teatro Campesino. I feel to myself that I'm like a catalyst, and a role model for the younger actors that are coming up. And I remember, as a young actor myself, I used to wonder "can I do this, can I do that?", because that's the way we are conditioned, we always have to ask permission, because of the educational system that we were brought up, so, I make it very clear to most of the young actors that "hey, it's okay, go ahead, do it!", and also that gives them a different perspective. I try to motivate the young actors, I try to set an example.

Q - So, it sounds like you actually direct them.

A - I haven't directed any play here lately, because I had my own company for five and a half years.

Q - What was it called?

A - It was called Teatro Espíritu de Aztlán. I was here for about two and a half years, and then I had to finish school, so I went back to school, I got my four year degree, and in the process I started the company in Orange County. We were together about five and a half years, we toured all of the Southwest and Mexico. I trained the actors, actually, collectively we did all the writing.

Q - Did you write your own plays?

A - Yes, we did. We were primarily dealing with social issues, you know, that's the heart of most of the Chicano theater companies and Chicano groups. We were providing, maybe, like a mirror to the community and dealing with those problems that are inherent in our community, you know, everything from spousal abuse to drug abuse, to abuse of your credit card ... we picked life as a whole and looked at it and say "what is the message that we want to present?". And basically we were trying to better ourselves, you know, spiritually as well as economically.

Q - What happened to your company, then?

A - What happened was that I got married and I had a child ... and I also missed Teatro Campesino, so I had to come back to my roots. When I had my own company we were still associated [with El Teatro] because I would bring my company up here for workshops, like come up here on weekends, or anytime we had time, and we would work with Luis and any other members of the company. We didn't come here just to look, we would get involved with whatever production was going on, whatever needed to be done, you know, anything ... from sweeping the floor to cleaning toilets, to being in the shows.

Q - There must have been a lot of energy put into such collective efforts.

A - A lot of energy. At one time, nationwide in the U.S. we had counted about a hundred and fifty Chicano theater groups.

Q - When was this happening?

A - That was in the early seventies, the mid-seventies. It was very strong at that time what was happening here in the United States, when there was a resurgence of "pride", you know, with the whole

Chicano Movement, pride in who we were, not trying to assimilate into the system, because here, you know, they say "well, this is the melting-pot", but it's not true ... it's all in writing, they talk about it but, just as an example, look at television, I mean, how many Chicanos, Latinos, do you see on TV? Very few Chicanos. Well, more so now, but at that time, we are talking about the early seventies. And even so, you turn on the TV and for the rest of the world the United States is black and white.

Q - Well, many Chicano actors, like for instance Anthony Quinn, 'came out' only after they were already very famous.

A - Anthony Quinn was actually born in El Paso or Ciudad Juarez, which is the border of Texas and the U.S., but, you know, you had to change your name to 'pass', I mean, there is Vicky Carr, she had to change her name, and very few kept their names, because if you had a Spanish sounding name ... forget it! They were not going even ... You know, even today I go to auditions, and they say "Well, you're a little too ethnic". Too ethnic! What are you trying to tell me, that I look like a Mexican? Is that what you're trying to tell me? Or I sound like a Mexican? Well, I am a Mexican! That's why I sound and I look like one! And that's not the image that the media wants to put out. Consequently, we are relegated to roles that are substandard roles, we are always the gardeners or we are always the bad guy, and very seldom you see somebody who is, say, a doctor, although in real life we have doctors, professors, professional people all over, but that's not what comes out in the media. So, if I didn't know any better I would say "well, the United States is totally populated and run by whites and blacks".

Q - What made you want to become an actor?

A - I suppose it goes way back to when I was a child. I must have been seven or eight years old. See, I came from a migrant family, migrant farm-workers from Texas, both of my parents were born and raised in Texas, and they never went to school. My mother is eighty years old, she doesn't speak English, she can't read or write, and my

father was seventy-four when he passed away, he spoke English but he couldn't read it or write. I was born in Michigan actually, but by the time I was seven years old I was working the fields, I mean, the child labor laws were not in effect, I was born in 1942, so, there wasn't any law to protect the children, and we have always had large families, so all the kids had to work out in the fields.

Q - Was the work that kids had to do in the fields different from the work adults did?

A - No, I mean, of course we couldn't do as much work, but we did the same, I picked cotton, I harvested onions, I planted onions, potatoes, I picked fruit, I remember dragging big long sacks full of cotton, and getting like a dollar fifty for a hundred pounds of cotton, and you work all day and you make maybe three dollars. I remember, at the age of thirteen, working in a restaurant getting thirty-five cents an hour, for washing pots and pans, scrubbing floors, and what was really the irony about this all thing was that I lived in a segregated town [Abilene, Texas], prior to the 1964 Civil Rights Act which made it illegal to discriminate against the individuals. There was a junior high school right across the street from my house, but I couldn't attend it because it was an all-black school, so you had the blacks in one area, the Mexicans in one area, and the whites in all the rest of the city. The restaurant that I worked at, I couldn't go in the front door, it was a white-only restaurant. And here we are, in 1998, and there's still discrimination. I worked for the government and I retired from the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission which is a government agency that enforces the Civil Rights Act, it's an anti-discrimination laws in employment. So my job was to investigate allegations of discrimination in employment, whether it regards your natural origin, your race, your sex, your gender, your age or disability, and it's still out there … it's very subtle but it's still there.

Q - What do you think of the recent abolition in California of affirmative action [Proposition 209 passed in California, halting the equal opportunity employment and educational programs which

provide special access channels, taking into account people's ethnicity, gender, class]?

A - Well, there is a difference between affirmative action and Equal Opportunity. The law of the land is already equal opportunity laws. However, the tool to implement those laws is affirmative action. So, most people don't know the difference; you can do away with affirmative action as long as you want to, but the laws are in the books. And a violation of the law is a violation of the law.

Q - Let's go back to the initial question of how you became an actor. Did you go to an acting school?

A - I actually was a drama major, but I think that what really hooked me into theater was when I was in the military. I was about seventeen years old, I was in the air force, and there was a group called The First Nighters, and it was a local theater group at the air force base of our station in Las Vegas, Nevada, and I liked that, I liked the limelight, I liked the tension, and all that. But what really cemented that idea in my brain was when I was an engineering designer, I worked in the electronic field, and I took a night class at theater. You know, I had been taking all those engineering classes, and I wanted to take a theater class, and I was hooked, the first night, and that was a production put on by the students. Of course I was relegated to playing minor roles, you know, I was always the bad guy, I played Arabs, or Italian mafiosos, never a lead role, of course. But then I ran into El Teatro Campesino. I was introduced to it by the director of the department, who had gone to school with Luis Valdez, at San José State University. I met the group and it totally changed my whole life. Coming from the humble beginnings that I had I thought it was a tremendous tool to educate the masses, and that was something that made me feel whole.

Q - What do you mean by that?

A - It made me feel relevant. It made me feel like I had a mission on earth for being here instead of just working the rest of my life

running a meager living. And I guess maybe I really wasn't too much into making a lot of money, that was not my primary purpose in life. It's like you wake up in the morning and you go "Is this all there is to life?", getting up in the morning, going to work, coming home at night, and then it becomes such a routine, I mean, what am I contributing to life, what am I leaving behind as a record? I needed to do something, I needed to contribute something to the community, to the world, to life. I came from a real bad life situation, I mean, my mom and dad were divorced, my dad was an alcoholic, and as I got older I began to understand why my father was that way, you know, it's pain, you feel this pain that you want to yell out, you want to kick it out of your system but you don't know how. So you have to live with this, this pain, all the time, all these emotions that you keep suppressed. However, when you get on stage you have an opportunity, you play those roles and you know the emotions that the characters are going through because you've been there, and it's a safe environment for you to let it out.

Q - What was the pain you wanted to cry out?

A - It was a lot of things put together, being poor, being discriminated against. You know, I remember in school, third grade, not having enough money to eat. We fed ourselves from the crop that we worked, we were almost strictly vegetarian because that's all we worked with, vegetables. I think that in order to be a good actor you have to suffer pain and you have to have struggled in your life. I think it would be very difficult for me as an actor to portray emotions, pain, hurt, fear on stage, if I had never experienced them.

Q - Was your feeling of 'wholeness' as both a person and an actor also owed to the communitarian life you shared with the other members of El Teatro Campesino?

A - Definitely. The idea behind this is mainly that we are related, you are related to me and I'm related to you, and here, with El Teatro, the way we work as a collective – in the earlier days we actually lived as

a collective, we lived together – means that even though we have blood relatives we are not as close to our blood relatives as we are close to other people we meet in the process of living, and that's what happened with the company. Working as a collective we have become a family and we have learnt together to be proud of who we are. We were also in the process of discovering what we were doing, we did a whole research into our roots, our indigenous roots.

Q - When did this process start?

A - In the seventies. For instance, in 1974 when we went to Mexico we had the first encounters with Mexican theater groups, and Latin American theatre groups. They were striving for social change, or being a reflection of the societal conditions in their respective realities. We had a festival in Mexico city, and part of the requirement was that we had to take a "mito", we had to develop a "mito", which is the Aztec and Mayan myths, and I had my company at that time in Orange County and what we took was the creation of the world, and the way it was done in the Popol Vuh. That was our interpretation and it made us realize that we are indigenous to this continent. And yes, we speak Spanish because of the influence of the Spaniards, the conquest in the fifteen hundreds, and we have French blood. We have all mixed blood, but our base root is indigenous, we are Native Americans. We didn't come from Europe. It's a whole discovery of who we are as a people. We don't have to wait for society itself to validate us, you know, when we know where we come from, where we stem from, that gives us that validity. We do have a culture, whereas the United States, America, has no culture. What I learnt through the educational system is that history didn't begin till the white man landed on this continent. But when this continent was occupied there were flourishing civilizations, and those are the things that we started discovering, we discovered that we are all human, and that is one of the reasons why we use the calavera, the skull, in a lot of our productions, that is, once we take the skin away from our face, we all look the same, we are basically human beings, we have pain, we have sorrow, we have joy, we have love. And when you find that, you start loving yourself more, as opposed to be

embarassed about who you are. Just to give you an example, in Texas, our history textbooks in elementary school – third, fourth, fifth grade – were like cartoons, always picturing the Mexicans invading the United States and killing the Americans, and they showed the big fat guys with long moustaches and greasy looking, ignorant, and they would call them "chili choppers" and "greasers", and, you know, we were reading this in school, and when the class is eighty per cent Mexican, how do you think that made us feel as children! We were embarassed! As I got older I realized that wasn't the truth. In fact, the United States invaded Mexico, the rest of the world knows that, but most people here don't realize it, they don't even accept it.

Q - Would you consider the idea of re-writing history as one of the major concerns of El Teatro Campesino?

A - No, not a re-writing of history. I think that we are writing history, we are making history, we are writing our own history, and we are presenting a different facet to the world that has never been recognized before, because the point of view of the Anglo, or non-Mexican, non-Latino (they want to call us Latinos, but we are not from Latin America. They want to call us Mexicans, but we are not from Mexico, so of course we want to call ourselves Chicanos), well, a non-Chicano perspective is that the Mexican is a beast of burden, and that all that we are good for is working in the fields. But most of us are educated, most of us have degrees, you know, I have two university degrees, we are well educated individuals. And in doing our art we are establishing something that is not going to go away, we have created a whole new genre of theater and it's embraced by a lot of communities. We have been to the Philippines, and there is a theater group there called El Teatro Campesino. Luis Valdez went over there, he went to Manila for some reason, and he met this lady who had a group called El Teatro Campesino, patterned after El Teatro Campesino. And we are also providing a creative avenue for our youth, teaching them that it's okay to be an actor, it's okay to write. And when the audiences come to see us they become part of us, they become part of the play. We don't use that forth wall so much in our productions,

we reach out to the audience, we communicate with the audience, we are not in a fish-bowl, so we have a tendency to break away that forth wall, to attract the audience. So, one of the key things that we learn in El Teatro is that you have got to make the audience aware that you are aware they are there. We are not acting for ourselves, we are acting for them, we are providing them with the gift of our art, and we are also opening ourselves because we are alive, this is not film, this is not television, it is happening there. And I think this goes back to the idea of respect, the Mayan concept of *In lak'ech* (tú eres mi otro yo, te amo y te respeto a tí, me amo y me respeto a mí; you are my other self, I love and respect you, I love and respect myself). And when you give yourself that type of respect then it makes you a better person, and then the other person is not a stranger. In *Pensamiento Serpentino*, that Luis Valdez wrote after reading a lot of the Mayan philosophy and the Aztec philosophy, we find that the serpent represents the earth and also humanity, people, and we, as individuals, are like serpents, the serpent sheds the skin and moves on.

Q - César, do you think that to have a campesino background is still important for the actors working with El Teatro?

A - It's very important that the young people that are still experiencing the campesino experience understand that they don't have to stay there, and that we that have been campesinos in the past are an example for them.

Q - Is any production of El Teatro particularly meaningful to you?

A - I think that Christmas shows are very special, they are very spiritual. We take a large group of people, just think that the *Pastorela* cast has something like thirty or forty people, and about eighty-five per cent of them are not actors or not singers, yet, within a relatively short time you have all these massive people putting out something so beautiful that it makes people cry. Christmas shows are spiritual for a lot of reasons, first of all because we are doing it inside, on the altar of a Catholic church, the mission that was built from the sweat and blood

of Native Americans, you know, those adobe walls were built by the local Indians, which was part of that whole colonization process by the Spaniards ... and the Catholic church. We recreate there something that is doctrine, the church doctrine. The apparition of the Vírgen de Guadalupe, who is the Holy Mother also represents in the indigenous world Tonantzin, Mother Earth.

Q - What is the importance of keeping alive a bilingual theater today?

A - In the past it was a form of striving for self-identity, but I think that today the great importance of it is that we are a bilingual people. In 1971, on our first tour to Mexico City, one of the heavy criticisms we got from the students was: if you are Mexicans, why don't you speak Spanish?, and we would say: well, over here you call us gringos, over there they call us Mexicans, what are we? We are not coming here to show you what you want to see, we are going to show you what we are all about, we are going to show you that yes, we do speak English because we are U. S. citizens second or third generation, and yes, we have been educated in that country, and yes, it is our country, but our culture, our roots are here, in Mexico, and we have not forgotten that. If we want to get technical, right here where I'm sitting now it was Mexico till 1848, look at all the names of so many cities in California, they are Spanish! And I'm bilingual because I don't speak two languages, I speak one language, mi lengua es inglés y español, esa es una lengua para mí, no hay diferencia, I speak to you in English y te hablo en español, I don't have to think what I'm saying. To me it's one language. But most people born and raised in the United States are not aware of this.

Q - What is El Teatro Campesino today?

A - I think we have completed a cycle, not in the sense that we got right back to where we started, but I'm thinking of the image of the spiral. And I think that at this time we are going through a renaissance of the initial spirit that gave birth to El Teatro.

REVIEWS ESSAYS

Simonetta de Filippis

Lawrenciana. An overview of Lawrentian studies in the nineties

Since 1979, when the Cambridge University Press launched the project for a new, authoritative, critical edition of the *Letters* and *Works* of D. H. Lawrence, the field of Lawrentian studies has grown increasingly fertile: a remarkable number of books and essays have appeared in the past twenty years; Lawrentian journals such as the American *D. H. Lawrence Review* (first published in 1968) and the French *Études Lawrenciennes* (since 1986) have provided a vivacious arena for critical debate; the establishment of a chair of Lawrentian Studies at the University of Nottingham in 1992 has emphasized the importance of Lawrence in European culture and literature; international conferences have been organised in Europe, America and Asia almost every other year since 1985, the centenary of Lawrence's birth; a number of Lawrence Societies in a few countries contribute to the widening interest in Lawrence also outside the academic world; and, finally, a formal recognition of Lawrence's artistic stature was the unveiling of a memorial stone in a dedication ceremony at Poet's Corner in Westminster Abbey (16 November 1985).

1. Editions

The Cambridge edition of Lawrence's works and letters is now well advanced in its publication: the seven volumes of letters have all come out (1979-1993) and about thirty volumes of the works have already appeared. The texts are all edited through a rigorous and accurate study and collation of surviving manuscripts, typescripts,

proofs and early printings thus establishing authoritative texts as close as possible to those which Lawrence himself would have expected to see printed. The Cambridge volumes have often been enriched with new unpublished material, and offer matter-of-fact introductions reconstructing the genesis, development and publication history of the texts included in each volume; moreover, the explanatory notes and textual apparatus where the various stages of Lawrence's writing are recorded make this edition truly precious for scholarly work.

The edition, however, has generated much debate and controversy, some of which is openly discussed in the volume *Editing D. H. Lawrence: New Versions of a Modern Author*, edited by Charles L. Ross and Dennis Jackson (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1995, pp. 258). This book includes contributions by a few of the Cambridge editors – Helen Baron, Michael Black, L. D. Clark, Paul Eggert, Cristopher Pollnitz, Michael Squires, and John Worthen – who discuss and explain the editorial principles adopted, particularly in those cases in which textual problems of individual volumes required different editorial criteria from those established for the whole edition; a number of essays, however, are not by scholars involved in the Cambridge project: William Cain, Paul Delany, and, of course, the two editors of this volume, Ross and Jackson. The positions of these scholars are often rather critical, both of the editing of individual texts and of general editorial principles, and, though undoubtedly more objective and impartial, sometimes the criticism of specific editorial problems appears to be clearly too external. However, Jackson concludes by saying that, whatever the debate and inevitable faults, the Cambridge edition has to be considered as a major publishing venture and a fundamental contribution to the development of Lawrence studies in the world.

The authoritative texts of the Cambridge edition are now available in Penguin, a less expensive and less bulky edition, with critical introductions – intended for a less specialized readership – written by well-known Lawrentian critics and scholars and, sometimes, by the same Cambridge editors (this is the case of *Apocalypse and the Writings on Revelation* edited by Mara Kalnins, *Lady Chatterley's Lover* edited by Michael Squires, *The Plumed Serpent* edited by L. D. Clark, *Sketches of Etruscan Places and Other Italian Essays* edited by

Simonetta de Filippis, and *Sons and Lovers* edited by Helen Baron). This Penguin edition, started in 1994, has also greatly contributed to the widening of the interest in Lawrence in the Nineties by making texts available to the general reading public which otherwise would have been confined mainly to scholars and university libraries.

2. Bibliographies and critical collections

Paul Poplawski, *D. H. Lawrence: A Reference Companion* (with a Biography by John Worthen, Westport: Greenwood, 1996, pp. xxii+714) is a worthy contribution to the updating of the Lawrence bibliography after the publication in the Eighties of the two volumes edited by James C. Cowan, *D. H. Lawrence: An Annotated Bibliography of Writings About Him* (1882, 1885). It is divided into five sections – "Life", "Works", "Critical Reception", "Reference Bibliographies", and "Indexes" – and provides students and scholars with very useful information and material (including plot synopsis and publishing history as well as detailed bibliographies for the novels in the "Works" section). Particularly interesting and valuable are the checklists in the "Critical Reception" section of different critical approaches: historicist, psychoanalytic, archetypal and mythological, rhetorical and linguistic, philosophic and religious, and feminist and sexual-theoretical. In short, it is an important tool for research intended mainly for libraries given its high cost.

D. H. Lawrence: Critical Assessments, edited by David Ellis and Ornella De Zordo (East Sussex: Helm Information Ltd., 1992, 4 vols., pp. 1376) is a collection of essays which covers about 80 years of critical interpretation of Lawrence's works through the contribution of about 200 critics and scholars. Volume I includes reviews and essays by Lawrence's contemporaries; these writings are often more lively, original and frank than later criticism, and, more importantly, they are of great literary interest for the presence of names such as Henry James, Arnold Bennett, John Galsworthy, T. S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, Bertrand Russell, Virginia Woolf, E. M. Forster, F. R. Leavis, André Malraux, Aldous Huxley and many others. Volumes II and III cover the critical debate on Lawrence's fiction, whereas volume IV presents essays on "Poetry and Non-Fiction" with the

addition of 28 general essays representing "The Modern Critical Response 1938-1992". The essays were clearly chosen by the editors in order to provide landmarks of Lawrence's criticism along with different views and approaches so that this anthology represents an important contribution to Lawrentian studies for its wide and exhaustive selection of critical voices which testify to the importance of this writer and the vivacity of the critical debate inspired by his writings (Helm's *Critical Assessments* Series includes authors such as Eliot, Conrad, Joyce, Woolf, Dickens etc. who have generally attracted the interest of formal criticism more than Lawrence).

A very recent collection of essays entitled *The Reception of D. H. Lawrence Around the World*, edited by Takeo Iida (Fukuoka, Japan: Kyushu U.P., 1999, pp. 303) emphasizes the importance of Lawrence and Lawrentian studies both in the West and in the Far East. As a matter of fact, the essays are divided according to continents: Europe, America, Australia, Asia, this last section including contributions by scholars from Japan, Korea, China and India. The aim of the volume, as the editor explains, "is to see how Lawrence has been received and evaluated in different ways in the world, whether in the form of scholarly works, translations, films or other media, and to see wherein lies the unfathomable power of his works which has attracted so many readers worldwide" ("Introduction", x). It is interesting to compare the variety of social and political situations which have determined the effect Lawrence has had in countries such as China and Finland where he became a symbol of freedom, or India where he was regarded as a champion of revolt against British values; the difference in cultural background can explain the preference for Lawrence's poetry in countries such as India and Poland in contrast to the preference given to his fiction by Japanese and Korean readers. In France Lawrence attracted the interest of intellectuals and philosophers such as Simone de Beauvoir, Gaston Bachelard, Michel Foucault and Gilles Deleuze, whereas, as far as Italy and Australia are concerned, the impact that these countries had on Lawrence is somewhat more relevant than his effect on Italian and Australian average readers. In most countries much of the popularity Lawrence achieved was connected with the trial of *Lady Chatterley's Lover* in 1960, after which his works were translated and published in many countries. Therefore, Takeo Iida, with this volume, has offered a useful contribution not only to the

knowledge of Lawrentian studies in the world but also to the understanding of his work in a wider perspective, confirming that Lawrence has to be considered as an artist whose work cannot be restricted to the boundaries of his own culture.

The volume *D. H. Lawrence: The Cosmic Adventure. Studies of his Ideas, Works and Literary Relationships*, edited by Lawrence B. Gamache and Phyllis Perrakis (Nepean, Ontario: Borealis, 1996, pp. 290) includes 16 of 140 papers presented at the Fifth International D. H. Lawrence Conference held at Ottawa in June 1993. Most of the essays are by well-known Lawrentian scholars such as Mark Spilka, H. M. Daleski, Ginette Katz-Roy, James C. Cowan, Michael Squires and George J. Zytaruk and offer new insights into single works and on more general aspects of Lawrence's ideology and of his language and writing strategies.

3. Biographies

New biographies of D. H. Lawrence have also appeared in the last decade, the most important being the three-volume biography published by the Cambridge University Press and written by three leading names in the field of Lawrentian studies: *D. H. Lawrence: The Early Years 1885-1912* by John Worthen (1992, pp. 672), *D. H. Lawrence: Triumph to Exile 1912-1922* by Mark Kinkead-Weekes (1996, pp. 989), and *D. H. Lawrence: Dying Game 1922-1930* by David Ellis (1998, pp. 816). Considering the almost 2,500 pages of this biography, it is certainly the product of major and accurate research which leaves little to be said on this author and leads it to be defined as 'the' official, authoritative biography and as an important complement and completion of the C.U.P. Lawrentian project. The authors, however, state in their preface that no final word can ever be said, especially on such a controversial and ever-changing personality as Lawrence, and that "our one work by three writers, each allowing his particular material rather than any overview to dictate his form, will produce the necessary tension between a continuous and continuously changing Lawrence, in a way that no synoptic view could achieve ... three different voices to tell Lawrence's story – but at the same time give the lie, by their very

difference, to the idea that any single view, however detailed and comprehensive, could ever be 'definitive'; any pattern of interpretation the pattern" (xiv-xv). These volumes have attracted some criticism for being so accurate and detailed that sometimes they result pedantic, and for leaving the reader too narrow a margin for interpretation when single works are discussed. Even if this may be true, they provide such an incredible amount of information along with stimulating critical insights that any incidental and consequential pedantry can no doubt be forgiven. This biography is a work of "impeccable scholarship" – as David Lodge wrote in *The New York Review of Books* when the first volume came out – based on documentary and oral sources, many unpublished, enriched by photographic material and, although written by three different hands, they all combine a lucid and lively prose with a depth of scholarship resulting in pleasant as well as useful and well-informed reading.

Brenda Maddox is the author of a biography entitled *D. H. Lawrence: The Story of a Marriage* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1994, pp. 623) based on totally different criteria. Maddox's purpose is to give a 'coherent' picture of the writer, but the result is a rather unreliable 'new' biography where various sources are used in a casual way, details are often fictionalized, and the resulting portrait of Lawrence is consequentially rather personal and distorted.

Elaine Feinstein has chosen to limit her research to *Lawrence and the Women: The Intimate Life of D. H. Lawrence* (New York: Harper Collins, 1993, pp. 275), a biography containing many references to Lawrence's writings and to the biographical material available, and which – in spite of a title suggesting a scandalistic approach – supplies a well-written and well-documented account of Lawrence's relationships with the women of his life and, at the same time, gives enlightening insights into his attitude towards democracy, education, and sexuality and the male/female polarity.

The 'collective' biography by Louise DeSalvo – *Conceived with Malice: Literature as Revenge in the Lives and Works of Virginia and Leonard Woolf, D. H. Lawrence, Djuna Barnes, and Henry Miller* (New York: Dutton, 1994, pp. 437) – proposes an unusual approach not so much in that it tends to consider episodes in the life of these authors as the principal source of inspiration for the composition of their works but because these works are analyzed as consequential

'acts of aggression', manifest revenge against friends, relatives, lovers. The section devoted to Lawrence is entitled "'Like a Lion Raging After Its Prey': D. H. Lawrence, Ottoline Morrell, and *Women in Love*" and proposes the character of Hermione Roddice as an enraged representation of Lady Ottoline Morrell. DeSalvo, however, adds very little to what is already well-known to Lawrence scholars; moreover, the general purpose of this book remains unclear also because there is no explanation as to why these five authors and some of their works have been singled out among all others.

4. General criticism

The field of gender studies has greatly developed in the Nineties and Lawrence has also attracted interest in that perspective. Particularly interesting is the volume by Cynthia Lewiecki-Wilson, *Writing Against the Family: Gender in Lawrence and Joyce* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois U.P., 1994, pp. 301), in which the similarities between the two authors are discussed, above all as far as their anti-patriarchal attitudes are concerned, though neither of them is considered a feminist writer. The critical interpretation of this study is based on a close reference to psychoanalytical theories about gender and family, particularly those of Freud, Lacan, Kristeva, Cixous, Irigaray and others; this is certainly the most interesting aspect of this book and a contribution to the development of Lawrence studies.

An aspect which has always greatly stimulated the critical debate is Lawrence's philosophy: his controversial ideas on life, society, politics and art. *The Visionary D. H. Lawrence: Beyond Philosophy and Art* by Robert E. Montgomery (Cambridge: C.U.P., 1994, pp. 253) discusses Lawrence's works in a philosophical perspective placing him in the tradition of both great Romantic poet-philosophers such as Blake, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Shelley, Carlyle and Emerson, and visionary thinkers such as Nietzsche and Heraclitus, at the same time pointing out the difference between Lawrence as a prophetic-poetic writer and some contemporaries such as T. S. Eliot and W. B. Yeats.

Michael Black comments on *D. H. Lawrence: The Early Philosophical Works* (Cambridge: C.U.P., 1992, pp. 476), including the "Foreword" to *Sons and Lovers* (1913), *Study of Thomas Hardy*

(1914), *Twilight in Italy* (written in 1912-13 but later heavily revised and published in 1916), "The Crown" (1915) and "The Reality of Peace" (1917). Black discusses these works in their chronological sequence, and tries to indicate those elements which link them together; his great knowledge of the subject, however, sometimes leads him to refer to Lawrence's texts too extensively, thus undermining his own comments.

Kingsley Widmer, in *Defiant Desire: Some Dialectical Legacies of D. H. Lawrence* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois U.P., 1992, pp. 246), focuses on Lawrence the thinker comparing him with Nietzsche, Norman Mailer, Arthur Miller and Harold Bloom. Widmer tends to consider Lawrence in a mysoginist and anti-feminist light but underlines the strength of his writings in stimulating a critical debate and above all in driving his readers to question their own lives and the depth of their being.

Artistic techniques and visionary elements of *The Rainbow* and *Women in Love* are discussed by James B. Sipple in *Passionate Form: Life Process as Artistic Paradigm in the Writings of D. H. Lawrence* (New York: Peter Lang, 1992, pp. 128) which analyzes Lawrence's theological and philosophical beliefs. The two novels are seen as a re-writing of the Old and New Testament, a re-adaptation of Biblical motifs, metaphors and myths in Lawrence's own terms. Nineteenth- and twentieth-century vitalist thought is seen as widely influential on the development of Lawrence's works and beliefs, as well as the pragmatism and pluralism of William James.

Lawrence's view of art is the main subject of *D. H. Lawrence: Aesthetics and Ideology* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993, pp. 211) by Anne Fernihough, who compares Lawrence's thought with that of some major thinkers such as Freud and the Bloomsbury writers, particularly Roger Fry and Clive Bell, whose writings on art greatly influenced the development of Lawrence's ideas. Lawrence is also compared to his predecessors – Carlyle, Ruskin and Morris – and an affinity with Martin Heidegger is also discussed, particularly in order to stress the "anti-imperialistic" quality of Lawrence's aesthetics; this view seems to contradict the authoritarian nature of some of his fiction but the contradiction remains unexplained.

Barbara Mensch, in *D. H. Lawrence and the Authoritarian Personality* (London: Macmillan, 1991, pp. 276), interprets *Women in Love*, *Aaron's Rod*, *Kangaroo* and *The Plumed Serpent* according to the concepts of "fascism", "authoritarianism", and "totalitarianism", three terms which are defined in the introductory chapters. Using these definitions, Mensch discusses the authoritarian personality referring to the theories of Wilhelm Reich, Ernst Noltë, T. W. Adorno and others, and shows how authoritarian characteristics are present in Lawrence's minor characters rather than in the major protagonists and, above all, how Lawrence portrays the authoritarian personality "as a destructive force ... Lawrence cannot, therefore, justly be labelled as right-wing or authoritarian. Instead he possesses the characteristics of the 'genuine liberal' in Adorno's sense of the term.... He sees clearly the wrongs, the injustices that exist, and points the way towards the rebirth of society through the regeneration of the self" (260, 262).

D. H. Lawrence: Sexual Crisis by Nigel Kelsey (London: Macmillan, 1991, pp. 197) considers the cultural and political value of the sexual crises represented in *Sons and Lovers*, *The Rainbow* and *Women in Love* in an unusual perspective, making use of structuralist, post-structuralist and feminist theories, particularly those of Foucault, Barthes, Bakhtin and Millett. Kelsey argues that "if Lawrence represents the dynamics of family life as potentially destructive of an individual's personal development, he also demonstrates how subjects who are not embroiled in traumatic familial relations can equally experience acute personal and sexual crisis during their lifetimes.... In this respect, 'sexual crisis' aptly describes the major 'structural' feature of all three texts despite the injections of hope represented by Paul's decision to walk towards the bright city lights, the symbol of the rainbow, or Birkin's proposals for a new order of socio-sexual relations" (184).

There are many other books worth recommending to the attention of the reader, but it would take too much space to list and discuss them all, however briefly; nevertheless, there is a recent study by an Italian scholar I would like to discuss here.

5. An Italian contribution

D. H. Lawrence's life can be described as a long journey which he started in 1912, when he first left England to move to northern Italy.

His pilgrimage round the world took him to southern Italy (1919-22), to Ceylon and Australia (1922), to New Mexico and Mexico (1922-25), to central Italy (1925-28), and finally, for his 'death-journey', to Spain, Switzerland and France (1928-29).

Lawrence's travelling assumed the ideological meaning of a quest, a search for an ideal society still in touch with the vital elements of nature, and where life and its creative force could still represent the basis for human existence; at the same time, travelling was a means to explore his own inner vital needs and to confront his own cultural identity with different worlds. Places and spaces are then of great importance in Lawrence's writings and his characters are often a literary transfiguration of his own restlessness and drive to move to ever new places.

The meanings of spaces and places in Lawrence's fiction and their importance in the structure and architecture of his major novels and stories are discussed by Stefania Michelucci in *L'orizzonte mobile: Spazio e luoghi nella narrativa di D. H. Lawrence* (Alessandria: Edizioni dell'Orso, 1998, pp. 245). This book opens with a few theoretical observations on the categories of space and place – the former being mainly physical and philosophical, the latter cultural and anthropological – and on their binary organization determined by the basic distinction between I/not-I, Subject/World, a contrast from which other oppositions derive connected both with space (internal/external, closed/open, empty/full, close/far, stillness/movement, etc.) and of a psychological nature (known/unknown, friend/enemy, reassurance/threat). These elements are used by Michelucci as tools to investigate and reconstruct the 'geography of the text', that is, a sort of frame and background not only for an interpretation of characters and events but also to establish those references and relations which form the basic structure of a novel. Moreover, places are particularly important in the interpretation of a text for their double function, being at the same time an objective element to which all the characters refer but which can be interpreted and represented subjectively by each of them.

In Lawrence's first novels, Michelucci traces a structure based on a series of oppositions – nature/culture, known/unknown, us/the others, man/woman – whereas his post-war fiction shows an attempt to overcome these dychotomies through the exploration of new

cultural and geographical spaces which expand the horizons of the characters giving them the opportunity to show their strength and commitment to the achievement of their goals, although they often fail in their attempts.

Michelucci analyzes the space/place category in Lawrence's fiction as the central, structural element around which the narrative mechanism revolves. In *The White Peacock*, for instance, she traces a tripartite structure defined according to the movement of the characters from their centre to a threshold, from an enclosed world to wider horizons, to hostile and unknown places which allow them moments of discovery and knowledge, and which change them into more mature characters. In the collection *The Prussian Officer and Other Stories*, places objectify the sense of extraneousness towards a different social environment from the one the characters belong to. *The Trespasser*, on the other hand, emphasises the problems connected with the attempts of the protagonists to go beyond the limits, to face the unknown from the threshold on which they often find themselves; in addition, in this novel the sea represents a natural space in its otherness, infinity, and inaccessibility. The two parts in which *Sons and Lovers* is divided – the family with its internal conflicts and the growth of Paul Morel in relation to the external world – underline the importance of places which Michelucci sees as linked to Paul's formative experiences.

The Lost Girl and *Aaron's Rod* are considered rather innovative for their narrative structure and the construction of their protagonists, whose evolution depends on their interacting with places which are increasingly different from those the characters originally belonged to. If Paul Morel's final gesture of leaving his previous reality behind marks the beginning of the Lawrentian 'quest', the true quest starts with Alvina's and Aaron's choice of leaving England and the Midlands to go to Italy, a country where Lawrence seemed to find, at least partially, those positive life values that England had irretrievably lost.

I have discussed this aspect elsewhere, stressing also the coincidence of the beginning of Lawrence's pilgrimage in 1919, when he left England for good, with the beginning of his characters' journey to the same places he chose to go to. Michelucci's choice to place these two novels before *The Rainbow* and *Women in Love* in

her discussion is rather puzzling since not only are they chronologically later but, above all, Alvina and Aaron are the first characters able to leave the Midlands, thus representing a further stage in the Lawrentian quest. In fact, when Michelucci comments on *The Rainbow* and *Women in Love*, she implicitly admits that they represent a step backward in the achievements of the characters; in fact, she sees how the protagonists try to get away from the Midlands and to enlarge their horizons but they fail to find anywhere definite: the narrative is left open and there is no given solution.

In the early Twenties, Lawrence left Italy on realising how quickly that idealised place was moving towards industrialization. His characters follow him to the New World and all his subsequent production is focused on the polarity Europe/America, old/new, and known/unknown. The otherness of a different world is felt by Lawrence as unknowable and, though attracted by the 'spirit of the place', he realises how difficult it is to interact with it. The failure of the protagonists of *The Woman Who Rode Away* and *The Princess* in their attempt to establish a contact with a different culture is partly counterbalanced by Kate in *The Plumed Serpent* whose quest takes her to the primitive heart of Mexico where otherness implies a rebirth of the past and its ancient rituals. Kate, however, remains on the threshold, fully aware that "she belonged too much to the old world of Europe" (*The Plumed Serpent*, 421).

After the failure of his encounters with alien cultures depicted in his American fiction, Lawrence goes back to the well known English reality with *Lady Chatterley's Lover*. Michelucci interprets Lawrence's return to his cultural roots as a choice to abandon his hopes for a regeneration of humanity and confine his prophetic attempts to individual existence (see 202). It is true that in some of his American fiction Lawrence had presented religious and political movements as proposing a different way of life; however, they were never dealt with convincingly nor were they ever considered a possible alternative for Western people; besides, in those writings he focused his attention on the individual and his/her relation with and reaction to those movements, so it is not totally true that, as Michelucci says, Lawrence is moving from the whole of mankind to the individual. Moreover, the story of Connie and Mellors is not simply the experience of two individuals, particularly if one

considers that these two characters have attained a mythical dimension and have become the symbols and models of a fulfilling, sensual, deep love relationship.

The conclusion of this volume is rather interesting: Lawrence's last narrative production is interpreted according to the oppositions straight line/circle, open/closed, movement towards new, far-away places/standstill in the circularity of a limited world. Connie Chatterley finds the answer to her existential quest in the circular, closed, limited space of the wood where she recovers her own instinctiveness and naturalness. Lawrence, then, in his last novel abandons the straight line and the openness which had characterised his previous narrative and chooses the circle and the closeness, finding in his own roots and in known places the only possible solution to his existential quest (see 206).

Michelucci's book is an excellent contribution to the field of Lawrentian studies. It is well written and well organized; for example a large number of critical studies is widely referred to in the footnotes which therefore become the arena for the discussion of critical positions and the presentation of the major aspects of the Lawrentian critical debate without interrupting the linearity and coherence of Michelucci's analysis. If, on occasion, the specific perspective adopted, as is often the case, is slightly limitative and leads to a few questionable statements, the critical approach of this study is not trite; Michelucci develops her analysis very rigorously, offering interesting critical insights and, though limiting her discussion to the novels, she manages to give a very clear idea of the whole Lawrentian production.

Jane Wilkinson

Relocating Shakespeare. A review essay

Lemuel A. Johnson, *Shakespeare in Africa (and Other Venues): Import and the Appropriation of Culture* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 1998), pp. 467.

Lemuel A. Johnson, *Highlife for Caliban* (Trenton, N.J.: Africa World Press, 1995), pp. 110.

Lemuel A. Johnson, *Hand on the Navel* (Trenton, N.J.: Africa World Press, 1995), pp. 73 .

Lemuel A. Johnson, *Carnival of the Gold Coast* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 1995), pp. 98.

David Johnson, *Shakespeare and South Africa* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), pp. 286.

Shakespeare and Post-Colonial Conditions, ed. Denis Salter, *Etudes théâtrales / Essays in Theatre* 15.1 (November 1996), Special Issue, pp. 133.

Ania Loomba and Martin Orkin, eds., *Post-Colonial Shakespeares* (London and New York: Routledge, 1998), pp. 308.

Thomas Cartelli, *Repositioning Shakespeare: National Formations, Postcolonial Appropriations* (London and New York: Routledge, 1999), pp. 233.

"Beneath the turbulence of árbol, arbre, tree, etc., there is an island that repeats itself until transforming into a meta-archipelago and reaching the most widely separated transhistorical frontiers of the globe. There's no centre or circumference, but there are cultural dynamics that express themselves in a more or less regular way within the chaos and then, gradually, begin assimilating into African, European, Indoamerican, and Asian contexts up to the vanishing point." Antonio Benítez-Rojo's considerations on the "phenomena of

reflection, refraction, and decomposition" produced by the interaction of the "foreign" and the "traditional" in the Caribbean in *The Repeating Island: The Caribbean and the Postmodern Perspective* (Durham: Duke U.P., 1992, 24, 21), do not figure among the multiple and variegated epigraphs to Lemuel A. Johnson's productions. Nor are they among Johnson's occasional quotations from the book; yet they provide a useful key to his work, reflecting on and refracting the textual fragments he uses to build his own chaos/cosmos model. Brought up in Freetown, the capital of Sierra Leone, Johnson continued his education in France and the United States, where he has lived and taught for many years. His cultural allegiances are multiple, thanks both to his personal inclinations and to the peculiar structure and history of his family and childhood roots. Freetown is itself a "repeating island", sharing with the Caribbean islands a Creole history and experience and deeply rooted memories of the Middle Passage. Little wonder, then, that Johnson's "Africa", like his "Shakespeare", should be the product of a complex trans-Atlantic *métissage*.

The epigraph to the first volume of Johnson's "Sierra Leone Trilogy", *Highlife for Caliban*, is an extract from Amos Tutuola's *The Palm-Wine Drinkard*: "A FULL-BODIED GENTLEMAN REDUCED TO HEAD". A local belle is carried away by the beauty and "completeness" of a stranger she meets at the market. But after leaving the market, the stranger begins to divest himself of his hired parts – arms, legs, trunk, neck, skin and flesh – until he is "only SKULL" (3). The Tutuola story, itself a variant on a folktale that exists in numerous versions throughout West Africa, has been used by Ebun Clarke as a familiarizing device to overcome her difficulties in teaching *Othello* to Nigerian university students ("Othello the Complete Gentleman: An African Folkloric Interpretation", *Journal of Commonwealth Literature* 25.1 [1990], 182-198); but in Johnson's usage the tale assumes deeper implications. In his recent assemblage of talks, essays and reflections, *Shakespeare in Africa (and Other Venues): Import and the Appropriation of Culture*, he returns to the story of the complete gentleman with its attendant warning "DO NOT FOLLOW UNKNOWN MAN'S BEAUTY", seeing in it a tale of desire, loss and recovery. Like other episodes from Tutuola's works, it is, he says, an "Allegory of Re-turn" that can be applied to

yet other sites and stories of cultural "transport", negotiation and exchange (36-38, 126).

In *Shakespeare in Africa*, the full-bodied gentleman episode becomes one of the author's founding images, undergirding the zigzagging routes he carves out through densely populated intertextual jungles. Another conceit Johnson returns to is that of the "*AKSIDENT STORE – ALL PART AVAILEBUL*" from Wole Soyinka's drama, *The Road*. Finding in it a convergence of topography, revelation and language, he sees in this "ramshackle configuration of wreckage and asylum" both a subversion and a confirmation of "the utopian assurance that chaos can be translated into cosmos" (295). Like that of Alejo Carpentier, another of his favourite authors, the world he builds from his cross-cultural, polyglot trafficking is one of "symbiosis", a "theater of Universal Voracity" similar to that of Carpentier's *Explosion in a Cathedral* and *Concierto Barroco* (207).

Africa appears in Johnson's volume less as an actual presence than as cultural memory, an origin of (un)becoming, imported, appropriated and re-elaborated, syncretized with other places and cultures in much the same way as the Shakespeare the book purports to display. The contents anticipated in its title are dismantled and then recovered, but only obliquely, by way of a complex, apparently contradictory negotiation. Logorrhoic, corporeal, all-inclusive and dispersive, *Shakespeare in Africa* is a repetitive journey through disseminations of *mestizaje* creativity – or, to use another of Benítez-Rojo's formulations, through "a stream of texts in flight" (*The Repeating Island*, 26).

The repetitions in Johnson's itinerary are probably intentional. From *The Devil, the Gargoyle and the Buffoon: The Negro as Metaphor in Western Literature* (Port Washington, N.Y.: Kennikat Press, 1969), the revised version of his doctoral thesis in comparative literature, and from the poems of *High Life for Caliban* to those of *Hand on the Navel* and *Carnival of the Gold Coast*, and now to *Shakespeare in Africa*, the author's production is singularly organic. His outlook and style of writing have remained much the same, allowing him to publish the Sierra Leone trilogy as if the material it presents were appearing for the first time. Yet *High Life for Caliban* had already been printed over two decades earlier (accompanied, as

in the 1995 edition, by an afterword by Sylvia Wynter). A quotation from Wynter's afterword is the first of the two epigraphs to the essay "How to Breathe Dead Hippo Meat, and Live" that is reprinted at the beginning of each of the three 1995 volumes and at the end of *Shakespeare in Africa*; while "Calypso for Caliban" appears in all three volumes of the trilogy. The effect is not of a suspended or downgraded, de-historicized, temporality, but of time as all-too-historical repetition. What was topical in 1973 – Caliban's "high life" as the high life of postcolonial black dictators – applies equally and depressingly to '95 and again to '98.

A different, more theoretically based relevance or resonance is added when Johnson's poems and prose passages are viewed against the proliferation of works on postcolonial Shakespearean intertextuality and rewriting and, generally, on creolization and the culture of diaspora over the last two decades. An extract from *Shakespeare in Africa* was published in 1996 in the journal *Research in African Literatures*. Together with articles by Alamin M. Mazrui, Lupenga Mphande and Ekema S. Agbaw, it constituted a forum on African Shakespeares that signalled an opening out to Africa of the hitherto predominant interest in Caribbean and Oriental Shakespeares shown by post-colonial and third world literature scholars. This was confirmed by the publication of David Johnson's carefully documented study on *Shakespeare in South Africa* (ranging from essays, lectures and teaching practice in the Cape Colony in the19th century to South African Shakespeares of the present) and by the "Shakespeare–Post-coloniality–Johannesburg, 1996" conference organized by Martin Orkin (the author of the 1987 volume, *Shakespeare and Apartheid*). A selection of papers presented at the conference was later published in *Post-Colonial Shakespeares*. Co-edited by Orkin and Ania Loomba, the volume brings together studies of early modern and postcolonial Shakespeares that focus not only on the hybrid subjects engendered by Shakespeare's work, but the hybridizing it is itself subjected to through its "performances, mutilations and appropriations" (8). African Shakespeares figure particularly in the second part of the volume, devoted more specifically to "post-colonial Shakespeares", appearing in various forms and contexts in essays by Michael Neill, Martin Orkin, Nicholas Visser, David Johnson and Andreas Bertoldi. The volume

closes with Jonathan Dollimore's essay on "Shakespeare and Theory". After tracing the "culture of pessimism" he finds in both idealist, fascist and cultural materialist thinking on the relation of art and politics, he warns against theory that is only "tenuously connected with the real" (269). Against the relativity of post-modernism, "a theory in which human freedom is emphatically denied, only to be endlessly replayed in intellectual fantasies of sublimation" (269), he calls for a return to both intellectual and social history. The theory he desires is one that may embody "a greater effort of historical understanding; a theory adequate to understand, challenge and maybe even change those complex cultural realities that we inherit" (275).

Recent work on *The Tempest* includes rediscoveries of Shakespeare's Mediterranean and its cultural, historical and political sources, as well as the Irish connections that had already been suggested by Paul Brown in "'This thing of darkness I acknowledge mine': *The Tempest* and the Discourse of Colonialism" in *Political Shakespeare: Essays in Cultural Materialism*, ed. Jonathan Dollimore and Alan Sinfield (Manchester: Manchester U.P., 1985) and have now been developed by Barbara Fuchs in "Conquering Islands: Contextualising *The Tempest*", *Shakespeare Quarterly* 48 (1997), 45-62. While in *Virgil and "The Tempest": The Politics of Imitation* (Columbus: Ohio State U.P., 1990), Donna B. Hamilton had brought new theoretical approaches and a wider and deeper exploration of *The Tempest*'s Virgilian subtexts to work on an area already partly opened up by Jan Kott and John Pitcher, Richard Wilson looks into contemporary documents on piracy in the Mediterranean in his "Voyage to Tunis: New History and the Old World of *The Tempest*", *English Literary History* 64 (1997), 333-357, suggesting a new genealogy for Prospero. Mediterranean – as well as Irish – contexts for *The Tempest* have also been proposed by Fuchs, whose assertion that "a multiple historical interpretation can unpack the condensed layers of colonialist ideology" ("Conquering Islands", 45) finds ample confirmation in the first essay of Loomba and Orkin's *Post-Colonial Shakespeares*.

In "'This Tunis, sir, was Carthage': Contesting colonialism in *The Tempest*", Jerry Brotton adds a further contribution to the debate. In the attempt to redress what he sees as "the marginalization of the

Mediterranean contexts of *The Tempest*" (24), Brotton queries the "historically and geographically monolithic concept of 'the' discourse of colonialism" prevailing in several influential cultural materialist and new historicist studies. This should, he says, be countered by recourse to "a more diverse range of historically and regionally distinct discourses and effects of cultural encounter and exchange", interrogating "the specificities of *The Tempest*'s complex negotiation of its Mediterranean contexts" (26, 37), including its North African references. Why, for example, does *The Tempest* erase any Ottoman presence from its Mediterranean? What function is played by the "aura of suitably familiar and assimilable myths of classical imperial travel and conquest, personified in its overdetermined references to Virgil's *Aeneid*"? How does Britain's difficult involvement in Mediterranean trade and diplomacy reflect back on the prospects held out by its early encounters with the Americas? Relocating *The Tempest* within the Mediterranean of Shakespeare's times does not imply a rejection of its New World coordinates. The play is "precisely situated at the *geopolitical bifurcation* between the Old World and the New". There is a linkage between the "compromised and subordinated position within which [the English] found themselves in the Mediterranean" and their realization of "the possibility of pursuing a significantly different commercial and maritime initiative in the Americas" (37).

An attempt to "supplement" if not redress the "current New World bias" (43) is also evident in Jonathan Burton's reconsideration of the connections between Leo Africanus and *Othello*, "'A most wily bird': Leo Africanus, *Othello* and the Trafficking in Difference". To Burton, *The Geographical Historie of Africa* is an example of "strategic mimicry and supplementation" (59). It also suggests the need to reconsider early modern cultural intercourse not in terms of "dominating colonialism" but of "trafficking". Rising in the context of Mediterranean commerce, the significantly divided, bi-directional, Latin-Arabic origin of the term makes it particularly appropriate for endeavours to "displace unidirectional models of early modern cross-cultural encounters" (59-60). A further displacement occurs in Ania Loomba's "'Local-manufacture made-in-India Othello fellows': issues of race, hybridity and location in post-colonial Shakespeares". After tracing some of the debates among post-colonial theorists,

Loomba compares two very different examples of hybridity from the Indian sub-continent: a dance-drama adaptation of *Othello* by the Kathakali Centre in Kerala, on the south-western coast of India, and Salman Rushdie's *The Moor's Last Sigh*. In the Kathakali *Othello*, Fanon's "model of agonistic hybridity is modified by a dualism in which one aesthetic code does not necessarily displace the other" (159). The challenge in this and other productions by the Centre lies not in engaging with the foreign text to produce a new interpretation, but in "working *within* the rigid conventions of Kathakali, and flexing *them* to tell an alien story" (160, emphasis mine). The Shakespearean text is turned into a tool for reviewing and expanding Kathakali theatre practice.

The need to interrogate "what happens not only to Shakespeare but to local performance traditions and innovations – *and* to moral and ideological orthodoxies – when Shakespeare undergoes an inter- and intra-cultural sea change" is also posed in Denis Salter's introduction to the special issue of the Canadian journal *Etudes théâtrales / Essays in Theatre, Shakespeare and Postcolonial Conditions* (7-8). In "The End(s) of Shakespeare?", written shortly after the Johannesburg conference, Salter surveys "the story so far" – initially centred around *The Tempest* – listing a number of *desiderata* and raising the question of a possible, however paradoxical, "*re*colonisation" of Shakespeare along national lines within postcolonial theory and criticism (4).

If *Post-Colonial Shakespeares* can be seen as a development in the ongoing debate on hybridity and hybridization, contributed to by a distinguished group of British, American and post-colonial critics of varying extraction, Thomas Cartelli's volume of essays is an important addition to studies on the phenomenon of appropriation. *Repositioning Shakespeare: National Formations, Postcolonial Appropriations* brings together articles written and revised over a fairly wide span of time – including a new version of the author's justly famous "Prospero in Africa: *The Tempest* as Colonial Text and Pretext" – together with hitherto unpublished material. The unifying project of the volume is explained in the Introduction, which provides an extremely useful survey of different forms of appropriation, adaptation and accommodation. Cartelli adds further distinctions to Jonathan Bate's discussion of the terminology of

appropriation vs. adaptation in *Shakespearean Constitutions: Politics, Theatre, Criticism 1730-1830* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989) and Jean Marsden's considerations in her introduction to *The Appropriation of Shakespeare: Post-Renaissance Constructions of the Works and the Myth* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1991). Like Bate, Cartelli prefers the act of appropriation to that of adaptation or accommodation. Emphasizing its "selectively predatory" nature as well as its "sense of self-constituted agency" (16-17), he examines its satiric, confrontational, transpositional, proprietary and dialogic modes, the last four of which are exemplified through the texts he analyzes in the rest of his book, relating them to "broader social and institutional circumstances including, but not limited to, constructions of Shakespeare" (19). Appropriation does not necessarily or always serve a counter-discursive function. On the contrary, as Vijay Mishra and Bob Hodge note in "What is Post(-)Colonialism?", *Textual Practice* 5.3 (1991), 401, the single term of appropriation is applied to "a large and diverse set of strategies, involving both accommodation and compromise, whose political meaning is highly dependent on specific historical circumstances".

"Democratic Vistas", the first of the three parts or sections into which Cartelli's book is divided, is devoted to U.S. encounters with Shakespeare, ranging from Emerson's view of Shakespeare as "the author of 'the text of modern life,' who 'drew the man of England and Europe; [and] the father of the man in America'" (33) and Whitman's call for a "re-writ[ing]" and "re-stat[ing]" of master-spirits like Shakespeare, Kant, and Hegel, "grown not for America, but rather for her foes, the feudal and the old" (32), to Gus Van Sant's repositioning of the histories in *My Own Private Idaho*.

A useful supplement to Cartelli's study, providing several of the texts from which his quotations and examples are drawn, is Peter Rawlings's collection of essays on Shakespeare by over forty American authors (from Irving, Cooper, Emerson and Lincoln to James), *Americans on Shakespeare, 1776-1914* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 1999). Most of Cartelli's attention is devoted however to three apparently minor texts not included in Rawlings's selection, starting with *Aylmere, or Jack Cade*, Robert T. Conrad's appropriation of the sub-plot of *2 Henry VI*. First performed in 1835 and revised in 1841 under the influence of Edwin Forrest and William Leggett, the

play was closely related to the attempts to free the American stage from dependence on foreign sources, culminating in the Astor Place Riot of 1849. In the next of Cartelli's "democratic vistas", a Chicago social reformer, Jane Addams, uses her reading of *King Lear* as a critique of feudal family relations to scrutinize the clash between the industrialist and philanthropist, George Pullmann, and the worker-residents of his "model town". In her 1894 essay, "A Modern Lear", she calls for "endurance" and a "community of interests" from both parties to the conflict, suggesting that the industrial relations of her times may in the future appear "as incomprehensible and selfish, quite as barbaric and undeveloped, as was the family relationship between Lear and his daughters" (48, 49-50).

Addams was also an enthusiastic promoter of the use of Shakespeare to "feed the mind of the worker, to lift it above the monotony of his task, and to connect it with the larger world outside of his immediate surroundings" (59-60). A similar endeavour lay behind Percy Mackaye's 1916 tercentenary masque, *Caliban by the Yellow Sands*, which Cartelli convincingly links to the "Melting Pot rituals" the Ford Motor Company English School produced for its foreign-born employees the same year. Mackaye's masque was performed by thirty professional actors and "hundreds of mainly 'mute figurants' ... representing several of the dominant ethnic groups and immigrant 'colonies' of the city of New York" (63). In it, the forces of darkness – Setebos and Sycorax and Lust, Death and War (personifications of the Great War) – contend with the forces of light – Prospero, Ariel and Miranda – to gain possession of the soul of Caliban, the apparently intractible, but ultimately educable representative of "that passionate child-curious part of us all [whether as individuals or as races], grovelling close to his aboriginal origins, yet groping up and staggering ... toward the serener plane of pity and love, reason and disciplined will, where Miranda and Prospero commune with Ariel and his spirits" (65).

The perspective of Mackaye's early twentieth century American Prospero has much in common with the Prospero figures in the opening chapter of the next section of *Repositioning Shakespeare*, "Prospero's Books". Here, however, the perspective is overturned. Prospero – in his new guise as John Thompson, a colonial functionary, in Ngugi wa Thiongo's *A Grain of Wheat* (1968) – is

presented from the viewpoint of his colonized subjects. Although Thompson identifies himself and "the British Mission in the World" with Prospero, his violence and rhetoric make other identifications and affiliations come to the fore. If he can combine within himself versions of Prospero and Kurtz, Prospero too may be "coextensive" with Kurtz. Kurtz, in his turn, becomes "a latent, potential, or actualized version of Prospero" – although, significantly, neither Kurtz nor Conrad are ever referred to explicitly by Thompson (94). Taken together, Prospero, Kurtz and Thompson can be seen as rehearsals of "a movement that may be considered characteristic of the European response to the colonial encounter" (96).

Postcolonial re-enactments of the master-narratives of empire, whether creative or critical, risk being locked in a "parasitic relationship" to their imperialist hosts, according to Cartelli (115). A similar doubt is expressed in Salter's introduction to *Shakespeare and Postcolonial Conditions*, when he speaks of postcolonial "disempowerment" and entrapment within a potentially ineffectual "intellectual culture of antagonism and complaint" (4). It is also indirectly engaged with in Dollimore's essay in *Post-Colonial Shakespeares*, where it is recalled that even the most radical project for social change is rooted "in the same culture of pessimism which such change needs to abolish as a precondition of its own success". "[R]adical thought" – Dollimore concludes – "remains to some extent inside what it struggles to escape ... it must simultaneously learn from the past and escape its influence" (274). Instead of being subversive, the "circular hermeneutic" of the post-colonial narratives may produce "sub/versions", as Lemuel Johnson puts it in a 1990 essay cited by Cartelli (109). What is needed, Cartelli continues, is a "reconfiguring and superseding [of] the fixed subject positions established both by the play itself and its appropriators" (116).

This is achieved by Michelle Cliff's *No Telephone to Heaven* and by some of the refashionings of the "Othello complex" explored in the last section of *Repositioning Shakespeare*. The analysis of Cliff's novel is followed by a detailed discussion of the complex publication and performance history of *Oroonoko* and its adaptations. The last of Cartelli's essays on the "Othello complex", "'Like Othello': Tayeb Salih's *Season of Migration* and Postcolonial Self-Fashioning", opens with considerations on some of the African-American

appropriations of Othello's name. This however is merely the preface to what is probably the finest study yet produced of *Season of Migration to the North*, probing into its connections not only with Shakespeare but with the history of Anglo-Sudanese relations. Cartelli identifies the novel – originally published in Arabic in 1966 – as the first clarification of the "specifically Orientalist proportions of Othello's construction, and its implications for a very different kind of self-fashioning," (148). By implicitly liberating Shakespeare both from "service to imperial interests and from the circuit of countertextual applications such service inspires" (169), Salih opens the way for a possible remobilization of the Shakespearean texts towards concerns of a social and sexual nature.

Repositioning Shakespeare concludes with an all-too-brief description of *My Son's Story* (1990), also engaged with by Michael Neill in his survey of a variety of post-colonial Shakespeares, including Salih's, in the Loomba-Orkin volume. In Gordimer's novel, as in Robert Stone's *Season of Light* (1986), Cartelli detects a displacement from the preoccupation of previous postcolonial writers with "more expressly politically and racially charged works like *Othello* and *The Tempest*" (178) towards other works such as *Hamlet*, *Lear*, *As You Like It* and the Sonnets. In *My Son's Story*, a space is opened up in which the prevalently private domain of Nadine Gordimer's new set of Shakespearean subtexts is made to clash with the public sphere staged in the novel itself. The double conflagration which destroys both the protagonist's Shakespeare collection and his home in an integrated suburb can be seen as a kind of icon for the movement to decolonize the Bard.

Cartelli's observation about the shift to a new array of Shakespearean texts in recent post-colonial writing recalls the prominent presence in *Post-Colonial Shakespeares* of reconsiderations of works like the Sonnets or *The Rape of Lucrece*. Kim F. Hall, for example, explores "Literary whiteness in Shakespeare's sonnets" and in Elizabethan portraiture, poetics and royal mythology while Margo Hendricks reads Lucrece's confession as "a complex interpellation of racialization", presented in the 'confessional' atmosphere of a conference in post-Apartheid Johannesburg (85).

Although none of the essays in *Post-Colonial Shakespeares*

specifically addresses gender and feminist issues, the relocations operated by gender considerations in the performances and appropriations of Shakespeare's plays are constantly returned to. Appearing both in the essays of Hall and Hendricks and also, marginally, in Avraham Oz's fascinating study of "Nation and place in Shakespeare: The case of Jerusalem as a national desire in early modern English drama", they are particularly evident in the essays by Loomba on the Kathakali *Othello* and Terence Hawkes on *1 Henry IV*. Lemuel Johnson's *Shakespeare in Africa* also raises questions of gender, particularly in the first section, "Whatever Happened to Caliban's Mother? Or, The Problem With Othello's". Rather than follow the author's chaotic journeying from "(wo)manchild in the (com)promised land" to "A conclusion: the murder of all mothers", by way of Faulkner's "*womanshenegro*" in *Light in August* and the Ghanaian critic Abena Busia's Sycorax as "unvoiced female", among multitudinous other references, I prefer to close this survey with the Ophelia of "Ophelia at Elsinore" in *Highlife for Caliban*: "rot[ting] in a hole [and] … gathering the rot of seaweed / and mud / in the holes between her eyes / and nose / in the holes between her thighs / where, under the hair, she waited so to be / dead in a place into which / a voice, politely impolitely, leaned, / once, to say: / 'lady, shall I lie in your lap?'" (65-66). Like his Caliban and Othello, but also his Judas, Lazarus, Hagar, Shylock and Quasimodo, Ophelia too is seen by the author as a "thirdworlder". In a comment cited in Sylvia Wynter's Afterword, Johnson describes his non-heroic outsiders as "confused, impotent, schizophrenic – which, I suppose, is the way I see my problems with Prospero's apparently inexplicable prosperity in the light of our (my?) inexplicable dispossession" (109).

REVIEWS

Francis Barker, Peter Hulme and Margaret Iversen, eds., *Cannibalism and the Colonial World* (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 1998), pp. 309

Reviewed by Sara Marinelli

It might seem an easy temptation in reading and writing about *Cannibalism and the Colonial World*, edited by Francis Barker, Peter Hulme and Margaret Iversen, to use the very metaphor that the book itself employs and analyses, that of cannibalism. Originating from the 1995 Essex Symposium "Consuming Others: 'Cannibalism' in the 1990s", this collection of essays is an invitation to satisfy the appetite for cannibalism of both its writers and its readers by journeying through a variety of temporal and spatial territories (from mythology to contemporary times and from Fiji to Guyana, Brazil and Mexico). Cannibalism has recently become the most repulsive and tantalising ingredient in the ravenous representation of the non-western world by the West. The book offers a selected menu of perspectives from which to examine the wide-ranging fascination exerted by this topic, from anthropology, cinema and literature, to popular culture, placing the debate not only within the context of the colonial world, as its title suggests, but also in the field of cultural and post-colonial studies.

The traces and images of cannibalism collected on this journey reveal that the practice of anthropophagy not only changes its meaning and interpretation once it is decontextualised, but it also changes its name. If anthropophagy has been granted a meaning linked to holy rituality and symbolism – though not without controversy – the same cannot be said for cannibalism. "Cannibalism" as a term has replaced "anthropophagy", becoming more popular in the process. Its immediate significance of violence and devouring has been applied to the modes of production and consumption characteristic of modern and contemporary society.

In contemporary analyses, the figure of the cannibal has been assigned a potent critical and cultural significance. It is a ghostly presence that invades the language of popular culture, literature, anthropology, film, travel writing, economics and finance, thereby becoming much more a question of cultural criticism, a "linguistic phenomenon" (5), than a simple issue of anthropological speculation. The analyses and investigations proposed in this book privilege a reading in which western culture and present temporality are at stake, and where the cannibal is no longer the subject of the act of devouring, but also the object of European invasion and *cannibalisation*.

It is in this respect that William Arens' investigations *in the field* have led to the assumptions that any discourse on cannibalism implies a subject

and an object and produces a question of agency. It is also in this respect that the relationship between cannibalism and western imperialism has been called into question, displaying a reciprocity of power in the construction of what he calls "the man eating myth", (the title of his much discussed book, published in 1979). Arens, who had never replied to the debates and accusations that his book provoked, takes the opportunity to do so in the opening chapter of this volume, showing how documentation and the search for proof have played a crucial role in the making and unmaking of the myth. An important conclusion pursued by Arens, and followed by other contributors to the book in different contexts, is the affirmation that anthropophagy cannot be interpreted as just a common feature of primitive cultures. Such an affirmation questions European agency and its dominance and the construction not only of non-western identity but also of European identity and power.

This pattern is also followed by Gananath Obeyesekere who, in his analysis of cannibalism in the Fiji, believes it is part of the British Empire's strategic representation of Maori culture, a tool of Empire. Cannibalism, then, is considered not only as a part of the discourse on alterity, but "also as belonging to a discursive exchange between native populations and European interlocutors" (23). In this respect, cannibalism is conceived as a strategic counternarrative performed by Maori populations through their ritual acts of devouring. According to Obeyesekere these acts were deliberately accomplished with the utmost violence and ferociousness in order to generate terror in European observers and reconfirm their identity as cannibals.

That cannibalism can be an adequate metaphor to decipher our world is made more evident in the central section of the book, where it is freed from its negative connotations and is translated into a counternarrative of power. Sérgio Luiz Prado Bellei, for instance, proposes an analysis of Brazilian *modernismo* from a socio-political point of view. In his reading of the *Manifesto Antropofago* (1928) by the Brazilian poet Oswaldo de Andrade, he insists that the use of the grotesque in considering cannibalism as a common denominator between cultures can be conceived as a real revolution, a scandal in the representation of this theme. According to Bellei, De Andrade's ironic evocation of anthropophagy as a practice that binds humanity together conveys a provocative message of regeneration that involves questions of national and communitarian identity in the light of a colonial past.

Elsewhere, in some Caribbean texts, like Wilson Harris's *The Palace of the Peacock* and Mittelholzer's *My Bones and my Flute*, both explored by Graham Huggan, cannibalism achieves a different power. It becomes a

"countermemory to the hegemonic European accounts on Caribbean history" (30) that cannot be denied or cancelled and that finds in the cannibal a *textual mediator* through which the literary past can be reinvented.

Marina Warner, instead, goes back to an immemorial past to find traces of the cannibal, reclaimed as an archetypal presence in children's fairy tales and mythology. In her explication of the myth of Cronus who devours his children, and in the figure of the ogre present in most children's books, she conceives the cannibal as an ancient cultural and psychic sign of evil. In her choice of literary characters like King Kong and Robinson Crusoe, she manages to bring her reflections and analyses to bear on questions of race, gender and imperialism.

The spectre of cannibalism also enters the contemporary western world and appears in our established systems and relationships, assuming other frightening and less frightening names like capitalism, consumerism, and vampirism, which are discussed in the last four chapters of the book.

John Kraniuskas' essay, "Cronos and the political economy of vampirism", proposes a reading of a vampire film by Guillermo del Toro, *Cronos*. Kraniuskas makes cross-references to other texts dealing with the subject, such as *Dracula* by Bram Stoker and *American Tabloid* by James Ellroy, but he takes Marx's *Capital* as his fundamental subtext. Reflecting on the connection between cannibalism and vampirism, he argues that vampirism is likely to replace the practice of cannibalism in the colonial imagination, raising questions as to whether vampirism should not be considered as a modern, popular form of cannibalism. He also makes wide references to Marx's use of this metaphor in his work, and to the image of Modernity as a Vampire in the regions of Mexico where the film *Cronos* is set.

Marx returns in Jerry Phillips' and Crystal Bartolovich's essays where other forms of cannibalism, such as consumerism and capitalism, are considered. In her reading of Marx's *Capital* Bartolovich does not equate the capitalist with the cannibal in their habit of consumption but in the size of their appetite. The capitalist finds in the figure of the cannibal a reflection of his own desire for total consumption, but he is rather a parasite, a *cannibal-manqué*. Capitalism, argues Bartolovich, functions *vampirically*, as it does not ingest its victims, but leaves them with the drop of blood that is necessary to keep them alive and "to preserve a minimal existence in which labour-power can reproduce" (213). The cannibal appetite for absolute and unproductive consumption is the capitalist's impossible desire, whose accomplishment would subject him to the threat of a potential anthropophagy of the world.

The book closes with a troublesome task, accomplished by Maggie Kilgour, that of defining "the function of cannibalism at the present time". She proposes an insight into the Western literary tradition through the trope of cannibalism. Her speculation is very demanding as it suggests a correlation between cannibalism and the development of the self and of the species, sustained by a reading of Freud. Kilgour wonders about the function of cannibalism and finds an answer in its deployment as an instrument of cultural criticism. But she is also conscious of its ambiguous powers of fascination and repulsion, and the insistence of its sublime nature. This emerges clearly from her own words: "the role of the cannibal is especially seen in questions of boundaries formation and exclusion, where cannibalism works as a dark double, a tension towards the sublime of existence, a simultaneous desire for autonomy and identification, the subversion of boundaries and their reinforcement" (242).

Eleanor Kaufman and Kevin Jon Heller, eds., *Deleuze and Guattari: New Mappings in Politics, Philosophy and Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998)

Reviewed by Luciana Parisi

Science, philosophy and politics increasingly appear combined in the work of theorists moving towards what can be defined a geo-physical thought. After the humanist reaction to technoscience, which included both a rejection and an assimilation of the organic/inorganic continuum, the emergence of geo-physical thought in the analysis of culture has marked a new threshold in the tendencies of post-structuralism. The geo-physical approach deploys the perspective of a circuit of matter-energy, and the construction of a theoretical plane or 'plateau': the weaving together of particles and flows that inaugurates a process of individuation moving from the virtual to the actual plane of existence. Such an approach indicates the dynamic composition of a body as a collective bio-political, cultural and social field of intensities. From Foucauldian microphysics to Deleuze and Guattari's stratified analysis of power, such a composition hinges upon an intersection of relations between velocities and effects. It is from this perspective that this collection of essays on Deleuze and Guattari examines the crossing of philosophy with science, proposing geo-physical thought as a method of cultural and political analysis of the body.

The collection can be considered as one of the first attempts to apply and experiment with Deleuze-Guattarian geo-physical thought. The book is

divided in five sections. It groups together some of their crucial intuitions and proposes innovative lines of analysis. The *Introductory Pieces* opens with Eleanor Kaufman and a previously untranslated essay by Gilles Deleuze, "Having an Idea in Cinema". Kaufman's introduction explains the focus of the book in terms of mapping virtual/actual spaces of thought crossing the social, physical and economic fields in conjunction with the cartographic thinking of Deleuze and Guattari. She insists on the connections between the "work of Deleuze and Guattari and topics [of the book] that range from the Gulf War to Citizen Kane to quantum physics". The approach of this collection seeks to follow a rhizomatic paradigm as opposed to an arborescent model of representation that aims to reproduce the "thought of" according to a transcendent principle of analysis. This collection, on the contrary, produces maps through the chance encounter of distributed yet singular thoughts. Kaufman goes to argue: "Mapping, then, is at once the act of charting out a pathway and the opening of that pathway to the event of the chance encounter. The aim of this collection is to open up the potential for such chance encounters in the realm of thought". The process of mapping also involves a micropolitical activity which animates the entire book. Such a prospect is already present in Deleuze's article. "Having an Idea in Cinema" specifically proposes an autonomous and active space of invention for cinema. Here the idea does not hide behind cinema as a tool of production or interpretation. An idea is not a matter of communication and information which presumes a system of control. "The work of art is not an instrument of communication" (18). Quite the contrary, an idea in cinema unfolds its own space of invention, immediately expressing an act of resistance.

With this premise, we enter the second section on *Global Politics*, focusing on the flows of capitalist decodification in the Deleuzian understanding of a society of control. Michael Hardt conceives the society of control as resonating with the contemporary postcivil organization of flexible structures and positions. In this diverse constitution of relations of power, control is visualised as the "infinite undulations of the snake", "shifting desert sands", the "smooth surfaces of cyberspace". Such mobility and anonymity mark a decisive distance from Hegelian civil society. A society of control deploys the real subsumption of labor under capital. Flexible rigidities turn labor into an invisible, yet vital, component piece of social capital. Mapping the shift from Foucault's disciplinary society to the released energy and flexible borders of informatic control, Brian Massumi discusses the dissolution of civil society in terms of structures of dissipation. The subsumption of life to Capital, sharply illustrated by the Human Genome Project, and the proliferation of "total peace" as "total war", reveal

the positive modulations of the society of control. Against this is opposed "a pragmatics of intensified ontogenesis: at life's edge. This is the countercapitalist principle of vitalist metaconstructivism" (60). As a pragmatic principle, metaconstructivism entails the extraction of the germs of its own collapse from Capital itself. Eugen W. Holland analyses the shift to the society of control alongside the Deleuze-Guattarian use of the term schizophrenia in *Anti-Oedipus* and *A Thousand Plateaus*. He argues that in the former the capitalist entropic desire for the maximum dissipation or expenditure of energy is not opposed to a counter-political strategy. In the latter, instead, such a strategy emerges in the analysis of forms of power (sovereignty, discipline, control), modes of domination (enslavement and subjection), and types of capture (rent, profit and "levy"). The political resonance between the society of control and *A Thousand Plateaus* becomes the key for understanding the movements of a flexible, yet still segmented, bio-cybernetic capitalism.

The third section proposes a full immersion in *Cinema, Perception, and Space. Perception* acquires singular traits under the society of control and alongside the capitalist strategies inhabiting its spaces. Jonathan L. Beller in "Capital/Cinema" discusses how the cinematic mode of perception is central to strategies of control. Perception itself is labor whose value, however, can be diverted and directed towards micropolitics. Bernardo Alexander Attias moves from the cinematic perception to outline the revolutionary tendency of rhetoric. Through Guattari's a-signifying semiotics, he presents this rhetoric as invested with material forces defining the positive task of schizoanalysis. John S. Howard pushes the revolutionary tendency towards the analysis of space itself to experiment on the concept of the "city as event". Eighteenth century London and contemporary Los Angeles are cities examined through the implosion of a smooth space producing a nondialectical ensemble or "Body without Organs". Samira Kawash goes further, exploring this "body without subject" in the particular case of 415 Palestinian men deported from Israel and denied access to Lebanon in 1992. She draws on the geo-physical thought of Deleuze and Guattari to propose a cinematic politics, a perception of the deported body having a space of its own.

Beyond the language of representational logic, the section *Mapping against the Grain* specifically proposes a schizoanalytic diagram of the unconscious that breaks with signifying semiotics and psychoanalysis. Schizoanalysis proposes an anti-interpretative and anti-phenomenological method of analysis of the unconscious as coexistent in its multiplicities with the Outside, a transorganic and transubjective plane which can only be individuated through diagrams (i.e. experimental lines of connection on the

"body of the earth" rather than projected models of the self). In this context, in "From Text to Territory", Bruno Bosteels explicitly refers to a necessary movement for post-structuralism. Using Guattari's a-signifying semiotics, and re-working Pierce and Hjelmslev, he writes about the transversality and functionality of the schizoanalytic diagram which produce the non-symbolic space of an event. In a more detailed engagement, Gary Genosko analyses "Guattari's Schizoanalytic Semiotics" in terms of a transversal politics; a micropolitical modality where abstraction is the key to material flows of becoming. In the final essay of this section, Bryan Reynolds establishes the schizoanalytical task of material abstraction to map the symptomatic body of Rousseau alongside two profound psychic processes (the desiring-machines and the Body without Organs) rather than within the classical Oedipical triangle. Here desire is not folded back into the confrontational space of the Oedipal family – mother, father, son – but is rather deployed across a field of intensive multiplicities outside the law of social organization.

The last group of essays are more closely related to Deleuze alone. *Philosophy and Ethics* touches on a geo-physical ethics, which is at the heart of Spinoza's materialism. Timothy S. Murphy explores the resonance that emerges between Deleuze's thought and David Bohm's work on quantum physics. Resonance involves a machinery of perception, virtuality and heacceity: a mode of thought which does not aim to create meaning. There is rather a tension between virtual and actual planes that produces a differential and never perfect identity. This resonance is also at work in Kaufman's essay and is defined as an absence of work: an anti-reproductive thought and ethics. In exploring the relationship between Deleuze and Foucault, itself obliquely connected to the "obscure figure" of Jacques Martin, she explains this absence as creative rather than negative. The exchange of letters and essays on each other's work, for Kaufman, signals a non-localizable and non-representational space of ethical encounters between friends. Ethics becomes a mode of resistance in Daniel W. Smith's essay which follows the Deleuzian overturning of the Kantian moral law with the "trasvaluation of values" of Nietzsche. Spinoza, of course, is key to such an overturning, but more specifically, to the definition and construction of an immanent mode of existence. In this essay the body acquires crucial importance for its power acting and being affected insofar as, for Spinoza and for Foucault, a body as a mode of existence is above all a question of ethics. With a final question, this essay echoes the initial sections on the society of control: "How resistance is possible under the society of control?".

An ethical thought poses a singular and insistent question which, in the

final essay is directed towards the problem of freedom. This consists of a collective essay by Aden Evens, Mani Haghighi, Stacey Johnson, Karen OcaÒa, and Gordon Thompson, that considers the problem of freedom as a "purely positive power". Re-working Deleuze's analysis of the fascist desire of enslavement, this essay discusses freedom outsidethe sphere of free will and systems of determination. Freedom is, in fact, a matter of creativity which constitutes a "genesis of intuition in intelligence": that is, the extension of thought into action (279). Returning to Deleuze's opening piece on aesthetics and resistance ("Having an Idea in Cinema"), this essay closes the collection evoking a multivoiced ethics. As its title proposes: "Another always thinks in me". This is not to delimit the mapping but to insist on a resonance with what has been in play since the beginning of the book.

Such a movement turns the book into a territory, whose intensive milieus emerge in the rhythms of thoughts that connect and experiment on abstract yet actual planes of cultural, political and economic flows. These writings provide and provoke a map of the tendential movements of these flows, and result in exemplary instances of geo-physical analyses.

SUMMARIES

Catherine Belsey

Intertextual Love

Classic realism silently invokes familiar, intertextually derived conventions to depict "the real", but to the degree that these are recognisable as conventions, the text is no longer plausible as truth. Modernism, meanwhile, repudiates the conventions, but cannot escape intertextuality, and at the same time cannot present the real, which is by definition unpresentable. Postmodernism abandons all claim to tell the truth and celebrates intertextuality, but may, ironically, give an accurate account of representation in the process.

Maurizio Calbi

"Behind the back of life".
Uncanny Bodies and Identities in *The Changeling*

The paper offers a reading of Middleton and Rowley's play as a text which dramatises and re-articulates multiple 'constructions' of the early modern body. From a theoretical point of view, the paper is alert to the historically specific coordinates of power within which these constructions take place, but also investigates their fantasmatic and 'psychic' aspects. In particular, it interprets the liaison between Beatrice and DeFlores in the light of the Freudian and Lacanian category of the uncanny. The paper also that argues, the body of the aristocratic female, because of historically specific formations of gender, is itself 'ab-jected', which further contributes to the volatility of the psychic and bodily economies of the play, tending compulsively to repeat the conflicts it is unable to solve.

Iain Chambers

At the Edge of the World. Dislocating visions, relocating histories: whose place, whose time?

In considering the colonial experience as a formative instance of occidental modernity, the hegemony of visual representation – and its unilateral economy of knowledge and aesthetics – is examined in the light of what comes into view in the wake of its displacement. In particular, the subsequent return of the repressed is discussed not only in terms of the assertions of existing margins, but also, drawing upon Pasolini's cinema and rock paintings from austral Africa, in terms of the return of the archaic. The homogeneous framing of 'progress' is here confronted by the heterogeneous interrogations of a diversified modernity irreducible to a unique centre or perspective. An objectivity sustained in the continual confirmation of the occidental subject's needs and desires gives way to something more open and altogether more disquieting.

Anthony Chennels

Imperial Romances and Narratives of White Rhodesian Nationalism. Cynthia Stockley, Gertrude Page and Doris Lessing

The imperial romance as a genre excluded white women as protagonists and this paper examines how Cynthia Stockley and Gertrude Page negotiate their right to speak about Rhodesia which was simultaneously a setting for male-authored romances and a settler colony. The paper argues that while the visionary and the domestic discourses which both novelists employ displaced the conventions of the imperial romance, they provided the sentimental terms within which a new Rhodesian nationalism was proclaimed. On the contrary much of the power of Doris Lessing's novels derives from her willingness to confront racism as the central reality of the colonial experience. She simultaneously subverts both the heroism of imperial romances and a nationalism which evades colonial reality and simply excludes the majority black population.

Anna Maria Cimitile

Of Ghosts, Women and Slaves.
Spectral thinking in late modernity

This article investigates the spectral configurations of postcoloniality. From Toni Morrison's *Beloved* to David Dabydeen's *Turner* there seems to be a proliferation of spectres in literature, recurring especially in two figures: the ghost of the dead daughter and the haunting slave. Critical thinking similarly seems to explore our time in terms of the ghostly, from deconstruction to psychoanalysis, from François Lyotard's notion of the "unpresentable" to Avery F. Gordon's "ghostly matters". This spectralization of the real, of the subject, as well as of culture, is highly political, and reshapes the very notion of *agency*. Shakespeare is individuated as a persistent presence in contemporary spectral configurations of the present.

Rossella Ciocca

Plurality and Representation.
A few notes on the novel

This article takes its cue from an international meeting held in Forlì in March 1999 when novelists, academics, intellectuals and other experts gathered to discuss the recent past and the near future of the novel on the verge of the new millenium. Trying to link the main issues that emerged during the meeting with the ongoing literary and critical debates, this brief essay sets out to analyse the role played by the aesthetics of plurality in the process of the novel's rebirth. Subsequently, attention is focused on the relationship between the proliferation of narrative modes and ontological indeterminacy.

Marina De Chiara

El Teatro Campesino. An Interview with César Flores

For more than thirty years, César Flores has been an actor with the famous chicano theatre company El Teatro Campesino, which is still staging its bilingual works in the beautiful mission town of San Juan Bautista, California. This interview took place in September 1998 and witnesses the life-long commitment of El Teatro, and its director Luis Valdez, to chicano communitarian politics.

Maria Stella

Nelly, Agnes and the Professor. Narration and education in the Brontës' early novels

A parallel reading of *Wuthering Heights* by Emily Brontë, *The Professor* by Charlotte and *Agnes Grey* by Anne allows the surfacing of the theme of education as a central concern of the three novels. Nelly Dean, William Crimsworth and Agnes Grey – however different in their roles of country nurse, governess, and teacher – share a common responsibility for their own education, that of the other characters, and finally, the reader's. Entrusted with the task of giving a first-person account of his/her experience, each narrator organises his/her "instructive tale" in a different way, but the complex problems of class, power and gender connected to the transmission of culture are always kept in the foreground. The essay explores this motif, while at the same time pointing out how it helps to redefine the structure of both autobiography and polyphonic novel.

Marina Vitale

Mary Shelley's Ghost Writers

The essay interrogates the centrality of the topos of transcription in Mary Shelley's writing, namely in *Frankenstein* and *The Last Man*. The metaphysical and metaphorical implications of this topos are related both to the material conditions of literary production in pre-electronic times and to the cultural and gender pressures besetting the author's creativity. Only by conceptualizing literary production through metaphors of transcription/translation/ghost writing can Mary Shelley succeed in giving birth to herself as a writer. Only by taking up the posture of the copyist can she produce her "hideous progeny". Her literary work can only be a motley re-membering, a misprision conceived by "a devout but nearly silent listener".

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

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Iain Chambers teaches at the Istituto Universitario Orientale, is author of *Migrancy, Culture, Identity* (1994) and editor, with Lidia Curti, of *The Post-colonial Question: Common Skies, Divided Horizons* (1996).

Anthony Chennels is Associate Professor of English at the University of Zimbabwe. He has published many articles on Southern African literature, history and art. *Emerging Perspectives on Dambudzo Marechera* which he co-edited with Flora Veit-Wild was published in 1999.

Anna Maria Cimitile holds an M.A. and a Ph.D. in Critical and Cultural Theory from the University of Wales, Cardiff. She is currently completing her post-doctoral research on figures of spectrality in contemporary literatures in English. She has published articles on postmodern literature, postcoloniality, as well as on Shakespeare, and is author of *Shakespearean Orders: Language, Representation and Epistemic Subversions* (forthcoming).

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Marina Vitale is Professor of English at the Istituto Universitario Orientale, has written on working class writing in the 1930s, on literacy and the radical press in the early nineteenth century, on women and writing and on Shakespearean revisitations. Among her publications are *Le voci di Calibano* (1988), *L'altra Inghilterra* (1993), *Stampa e cultura popolare nell'Inghilterra del primo Ottocento* (with Maria del Sapio, 1982).

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