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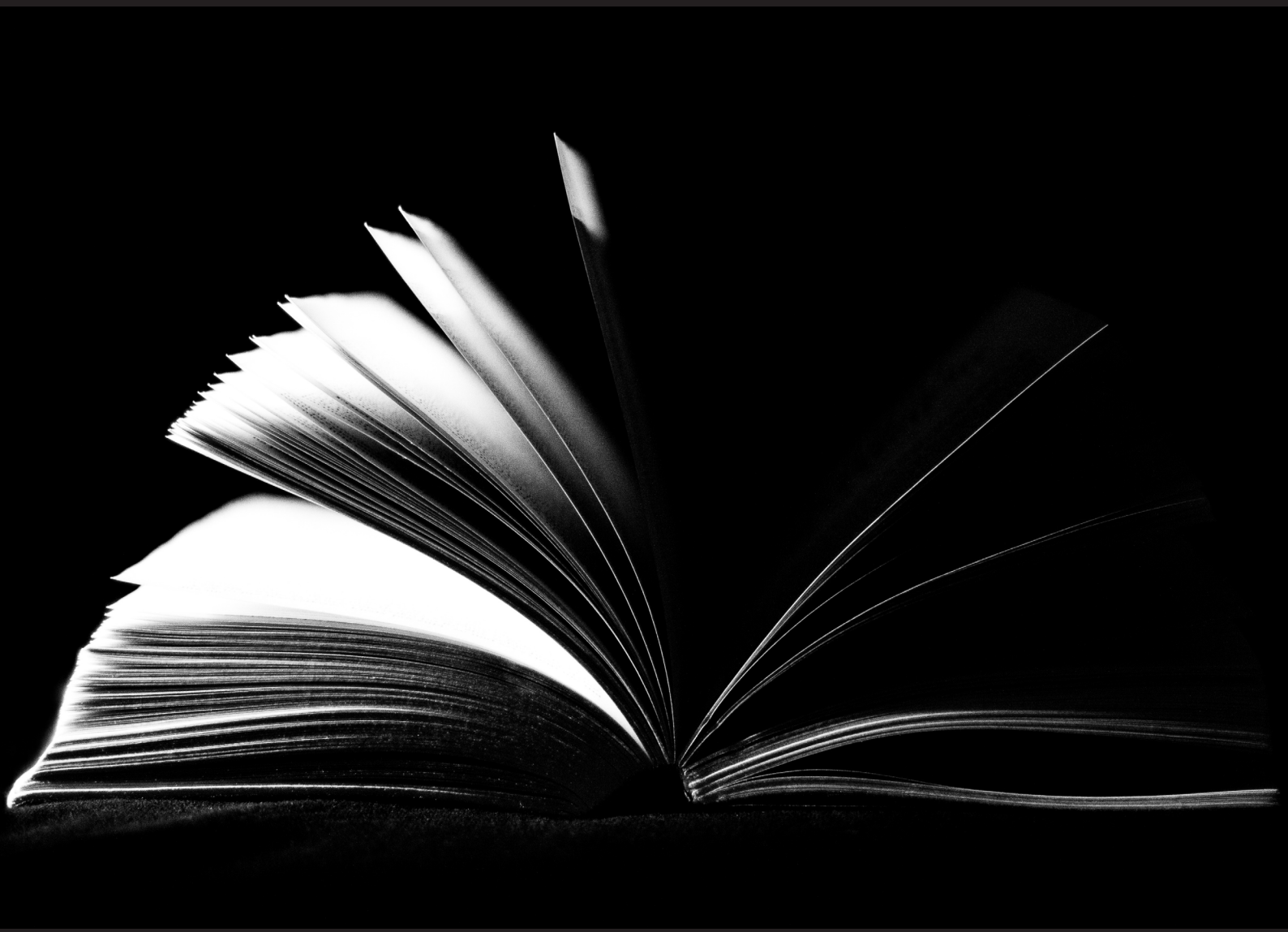

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Table of Contents

Introduction 1
Alfonso J. García Osuna

Notes on Facing *The Biographical Illusion* Without Getting Lost in the Process 3
Alex Pereira

The Indivisibility of Change: The Challenge of Trauma to the Genre of Coming-of-Age Narratives 13
Nicole Frey Buechel

Verbally Constructed Reality and Alternative Realities through Communication – An Exploration 23
Paul Rastall

The Past is Present and Future: Recurring Violence and Remaining Human in J. K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* Series 35
Alaa Alghamdi

Locating and Relocating Cultural Engagements in a Transnational Age 59
David Bell

W. B. Yeats' "September 1913" as an Elegy: Generic Deviation 77
Lamia Jaoua Sahnoun

The In-Between 93
Cedric van Eenoo

Wallace Stevens's "Flawed Words and Stubborn Sounds": Poeticizing the Imperfect? 113
Ikram Hili

New Naturalism of Herzog and Deleuze 121
Mehdi Parsakhanqah

Introduction

Welcome to Volume 5 Issue 1 of the *IAFOR Journal of Arts & Humanities.* The articles in this issue make exceptional new contributions to the analysis of contemporary and well-established works of art and literature.

In his article, Alex Pereira claims that biography is a specific area of knowledge. The argument is formulated by examining the epistemological gaps identified by Pierre Bourdieu in his harsh criticism of this genre. It also analyzes the conceptual and methodological arguments that defenders of biography (such as Franco Ferrarrotti, François Dosse, and Giovanni Levi) have made to place the genre at the heart of innovative trends in the humanities.

Nicole Frey Buechel analyses Evie Wyld's novel *All the Birds, Singing* (2013), drawing attention to the interrelation of personal history, trauma narratives, and coming-of-age stories. Particularly, Wyld's novel is considered with reference to two bodies of theory: Bergson's model of the "indivisibility of change", which re-conceptualizes the past as part of a "perpetual present", and Pederson's revised literary theory of trauma, which deviates from crucial tenets of traditional literary trauma studies.

Paul Rastall explains that much of our everyday reality is constructed verbally or by other semiotic means – not just perceptually. His article proposes answers to the questions: What can our knowledge of language tell us about the language/reality relation? Can we conceive of different experiences of reality constructed by verbal or other semiotic means? How can such thought experiments help us to understand language as it exists?

Alaa Alghamdi studies the Harry Potter novels, stating that although the series does not deal directly with the events of 9/11, their storyline provides a powerful psychological representation of both the accelerating threat of violence and the intergenerational trauma. These themes are expressed and explored both through a variety of symbols and themes within the novels as well as through metanarrative elements.

David Bell asks how Japanese visual phenomena live in transnational communities today, how they embrace international tropes while retaining the distinctly local sensibilities of Yamato-e "Japanese picture", cursive kana calligraphies, or ukiyo-e "floating world pictures". He examines the apparent paradox of these questions through the divergent projects of Katsushika Hokusai, Kusama Yayoi, and Masami Teraoka.

Lamia Jaoua Sahnoun consults recent views on genre and genre modelling in an effort to elucidate how W.B. Yeats's "September 1913", by embodying prominent generic features of poetry and elegy, can be read as a model of compound generic deviations.

In his article, Cedric van Eenoo declares that when the focus diverts from elements that are present in the artistic composition to those that are absent, a new dimension in the aesthetic experience can emerge. By concentrating on what is missing, the mind experiences an atypical perception of the work of art; that absence activates an indirect, implied message that promotes freedom of interpretation.

Ikram Hili charts the course of the tension generated between politics and poetry, between an imperfect, bitter reality and the delightful poetic release that is a core component of Wallace Stevens's poetic output. Hili assess the antagonistic pulls of consciousness and imagination,

perfection and imperfection that take place within what Stevens describes as “the never-resting mind”. This is primarily achieved through a reading of “The Poems of our Climate”.

Mehdi Parsakhanqah reviews distinctive elements of Werner Herzog’s naturalism and endeavours to analyse it within a philosophical framework that has Gilles Deleuze’s ideas as primary referent. Deleuze’s discussion of Stoic philosophy, specifically the concept of quasi-causality, is the critical mainstay for this reading of Herzog.

The vibrant dynamism evident in this collection of essays will interest artists and humanists, especially those who are most concerned with the continuing debate regarding the future of the humanities as a field of research.

Dr Alfonso J. García Osuna
Editor

Notes on Facing *The Biographical Illusion* Without Getting Lost in the Process

Alex Pereira
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Abstract

This article claims that biography is an area of knowledge. The argument is formulated by examining the epistemological gaps identified by Pierre Bourdieu in his harsh criticism of this genre. It also analyzes the conceptual and methodological arguments that defenders of biography (such as Franco Ferrarrotti, François Dosse, and Giovanni Levi) have made to place this genre at the heart of innovative trends in the humanities. The goal of this study is to show both the epistemological and hermeneutic potential of biography without risking the centrality of the individual's freedom in constructing historical analysis.

Keywords: biography, epistemology, hermeneutics, biographical illusion

Introduction

Of the influential social scientists of the twentieth century, Pierre Bourdieu was perhaps the one who most emphatically denounced the epistemological problems of biography. His criticisms of the practice were so acute that there is hardly a researcher who engages in this kind of study that can afford to overlook them. Even those of them who do not share his theoretical perspectives have to take his criticisms into account. This is because, ironically, in Bourdieu's supposed refutation of biography we can find ways out of the epistemological pitfalls that have forever hindered the discipline. Hence, while Bourdieu denies biography any relevance, this article attempts to discuss his objections in order to explore alternatives that enable us to overcome them. That is, it seeks to create a balance of the criticisms that he has raised in order to show alternative approaches that can make the biographical genre a field with greater heuristic and hermeneutic possibilities.

To develop these ideas, this article is divided into four parts, followed by a brief conclusion. The first describes the objections that Bourdieu expressed towards biographical research. The second and third parts, which are supported using other authors, examine a series of responses to such objections and at the same time outline some methodological alternatives for biographical practice. In the fourth part, a didactic exercise is conducted which describes the research of an imaginary biographer in order to demonstrate how we might deal with *the biographical illusion* without getting lost in the process.

Biography: A Genre Under Suspicion?

In several passages of his work, Pierre Bourdieu refers to biographical studies, but it is undoubtedly his article "The Biographical Illusion" (2004) which best consolidates his views on the subject. There, Bourdieu rejects any analytical relevance to biography or autobiography and affirms categorically that because it is based on an artificial creation of meaning, it is an absurdity. Bourdieu claims that biography suffers from a dangerous problem of subjectivism that leads biographers into a series of illusions with no escape. Thus, he denounces the ambiguous relationship established between the biographer and the biographical subject, in the sense that the former, in an attempt to give an interpretive coherence to the existence of the latter, tends to become an ideologist and accomplice of the subject's life. In writing about the autobiographer, Bourdieu states with a combative tone:

> This inclination toward making oneself the ideologist of one's own life, through the selection of a few significant events with a view to elucidating an overall purpose, and through the creation of casual or final links between them which will make them coherent, is reinforced by the biographer who is naturally inclined, especially through his formation as a professional interpreter, to accept this artificial creation of meaning. (Bourdieu, 2004, p. 298)

To summarize Bourdieu, the subjective implications of biography would eventually lead the researcher to a series of illusions. The first is believing that a person's existence has a particular unique character, one which in its singularity expresses its own historicity, as if the distinct trajectory of a person's life could account for an unrepeatable historical process and were not actually the product of structural constraints that also weigh on the social categories of individuals. The second illusion is pretending that the trajectory of an individual's life has a linear chronological evolution, in which successive events are tied to each other and directed toward the fulfillment of an ultimate purpose, thus falling into the fallacy of a teleological,

monocausal process. The third consists in assuming that, just as with someone's name which does not change in the course of a lifetime, the person also enjoys a unitary identity capable of remaining stable regardless of circumstance, time or place. In doing so, we would be denying the plurality of identities that a person has – always dynamic and frequently contradictory – which in effect a person possesses. In short, these illusions would lead the biographer to presume that the biographical subject has a coherent life trajectory, one that would endow the subject with an implicit intentionality that impels his or her existence towards the fulfillment of supreme goals that, of course, the biographer knows beforehand. Furthermore, the prior knowledge that biographers have of the end of their subject's life would lead them to force impossible connections to unrelated events with the objective of giving overall coherence, thus falling into essentialism. For all these reasons, Bourdieu denies a disciplinary character to biography as an area of knowledge, concluding emphatically:

> Trying to understand a life as a unique and self-sufficient series of successive events (sufficient unto itself), and without ties other than the association to a "subject" whose constancy is probably just that of a proper name, is nearly as absurd as trying to make sense out of a subway route without taking into account the network structure, that is the matrix of objective relations between different stations. (Bourdieu, 2004, p. 302)

The metaphor of "a subway route without taking into account the network structure" implies that Bourdieu requires the biographer to favor the study of the social structures that condition the actions of the individual. More precisely, Bourdieu argues that in order to escape subjectivism and the illusions that it entails, it is necessary to reconstruct the context in which the studied person behaves. This, in terms of his own theory, supposes before anything else an understanding of the successive states of the distinct fields in which the biographical subject's life unfolds. This, in turn, requires examining the objective relations that bind the biographical subject together with other subjects, at least in the relevant fields of the particular study. "This preliminary construction is also the condition of all rigorous evaluation of that which can be called the *social surface*, as rigorous description of the *personality* designated by the proper name." (Bourdieu, 2004, p. 302)

In another of his texts, Bourdieu continues with his quarrels about the disciplinary legitimacy of the biographical genre. We read what can be considered a proposal to overcome the epistemological problems described above. In his essay "Field of Power, Literarary Field and Habitus", Bourdieu rails against Jean Paul Sartre's biographical study of Flaubert. He accuses the author of having lost himself in the illusions already described. For Bourdieu, Sartrean analysis depends on the endless and desperate attempt to integrate the entire objective truth of a condition, a history, and an individual work into the artificial unity of an original project: "Sartre seeks the genetic principle of Flaubert's work in the indivudal Gustave, in his infancy, in his first familial experiences" (Bourdieu, 1993)

Bourdieu vehemently defends the way in which, according to him, scientific work should be undertaken. He insists that the only methodological path for biography is based on a structural analysis of the relational systems that define the state of the fields and the different *habitus* that the agents possess due to their position in the social structure.

From Bourdieu's perspective, "fields" are social spaces that form around the evaluation of scientific, artistic, political, cultural, and other events. These are fields of power that establish objective social relations, in which individuals compete to occupy a place in the hierarchy

generated among actors who hold different types of capital – symbolic, political, economic, etc. In this sense, fields constitute within themselves and in their connection with other fields, networks of class relations where conflicts are generated over the acquisition of different types of capital. From this it follows that each field can achieve degrees of autonomy that compel them to compete with each other within the broader field of power, which encompasses the whole social structure.

In this interwoven network of social relations, individuals have a clearly defined position that conditions them to act within the limits of certain historical possibilities. That is to say, the objective situation that social agents occupy within distinct fields conditions them to certain types of behaviors and modes of feeling and thinking. The latter is what Bourdieu calls the *habitus*, which consists of the social practices that individuals have acquired during their social formation: tastes, skills, language, and ways of expressing opinions and making decisions. In general, the *habitus* functions unconsciously, because it is a historical outcome, or rather, the way individuals synthesize society in themselves. Thus, the *habitus* simultaneously generates the reproduction of existing relations of domination and the possibility of transforming them. In other words, the *habitus* functions as a form of control for those atop the hierarchies of power and, on the other hand, gives those who are dominated the maneuvering room necessary to transform the social structure.

That being said, we can now understand why Bourdieu contends that biographical studies should start from the structural analysis of relational systems, since they would define the state of the fields and the *habitus* that actors take on due to their objective situation within them. From this point of view, it is clear that what is important for Bourdieu is to explain the *habitus* generated among groups of individuals who share similar positions within and between distinct fields. It follows that what is pertinent is not the individual, nor the particular events, but ultimately the structural conditions that produce behaviors and events between different groups of individuals. This is why Bourdieu unequivocally disqualifies Sartre's question about Flaubert, which is the same question nearly all biographers ask themselves about their subjets: How did John Doe become who he is? According to Bourdieu, this is a specious question because no individual is truly original, nor does any life conform to an implicit plan that must be fulfilled in a teleological way. What is important, in the case of an intellectual biography, which is Bourdieu's example, is to ask: From the point of view of the socially constituted *habitus*, what should be the various categories of artists and writers in a given society, in order to occupy the positions pre-arranged for them by the intellectual field, and consequently, to be able to adopt aesthetic or ideological stances objectively linked to the occupied positions? "Then, we must completely reverse the procedure and ask, not how a writer comes to be what he is, in a sort of genetic psycho-sociology, but rather how the position or 'post' he occupies – that of a writer of a particular type- became constituted." (Bourdieu, 1993, p. 162)

Consistent with this question, and taking the intellectual experiences of the writer investigated by Sartre as an example, Bourdieu proposes that the answer should come from an analysis divided into several stages that would be woven into it. Like a three-stroke engine, its method would be as follows. The first stage would analyze the objective position occupied by the intellectuals in the structure of the dominant class, taking into account the type of connection that they bear to that position, namely whether they belong to it, either by origin or by condition.

This would be followed by an examination of the objective relations between the various groups of intellectuals within the structure of the intellectual field, taking into account the disputes generated by the legitimacy of certain intellectual currents in a given era. This in turn

presupposes establishing the particular rationale that governs in the historical moment in question, both the intellectual field and the field of power as a whole. As will be recalled, all fields exist in the field of power, which is why we must also analyze the degree of autonomy that the intellectual field has reached with respect to other fields and, in particular, to that of power. Only by analyzing the preceeding conditions might we understand the possible range of action that belonging to the subject's category, that is, the *habitus* that the subject belongs to as a result of his or her location in this structural system of social relations.

Consequently, the third stage would be to reconstruct the *habitus*, which is what would ultimately allow us to know the set of practices and ideologies, the ways of thinking and acting prevalent in the distinct categories of the field being studied. This would not only help to explain the work and actions of the biographical character, but also – and this is undoubtedly very important for Bourdieu's anlaysis – to understand the distinct groups of intellectuals existing in the period in question, the position they have in the social structure and, therefore, their ideological and creative possibilities. The working margin of different intellectual groups to act would be conditioned by the degree of autonomy reached by the intellectual field against the field of power, dominated in the modern era by the different fractions of the bourgeoisie. Thus, since intellectuals tend to display a material and political dependence on dominant bourgeois groups, their actions show degrees of independence only insofar as they achieve autonomy in their field. This independence is possible by virtue of the development of a market for symbolic goods, with the ability to impose its own sanctions and which would allow a wider margin of action for intellectuals.

Following Bourdieu, it could be said that in order to escape the traps that biography entails, one must study the social structure that conditions the thoughts and actions of the biographical subject. Undoubtedly, this is an objectivist claim. It bears repeating: one must reconstruct the network of objective social relations that governs the subject and the other actors of the same group, who like the subject have the same possibilities within the social structure. This would be what Bourdieu proposes to overcome the biagraphical illusion. This is, to break the complicity that biographers assume with their biographical subject when they attempt to give coherence to a life by creating an artificial sense of an existence that has nothing permanent in it but the name that appears on the birth certificate, if that.

Regarding Bourdieu's Critiques of the Biographical Genre

There is no denying that Pierre Bourdieu twisted his knife into the wound of biography. His critiques go straight to the heart of the genre's fundamental epistemological snafus. Except for the most naïve traditional biographers and radical postmodernists, few social scientists would dare overlook the fact that biographical research is riddled with traps, rightly labeled illusions by Bourdieu. And so, rather than seek to invalidate his assertions, we must take them as a series of additional challenges to face in the difficult work of biography. For this reason, the objective of this section is to assume Bourdieu's critiques as a starting point to search out escapes from the labyrinth that biographical practice creates.

That there exists an extreme subjectivist implication on the part of the biographer with respect to the biographical subject is certain. Likewise, it is true that the biographer is caught up in the fantasy of wanting the biographical life to contain an absolute history with a proper beginning and end, chronologically linear, like a continuous process that conceals a teleological development. The above implies an attempt to give coherence to the life of the subject, when it is certain that all human existence is discontinuous, discordant and plural. To try to do

otherwise would be to slip into essentialism, for the attempt to give coherence to a life necessarily forces a preconceived logic in the selection of events. This is even truer when biographers have prior knowledge of what their biographical subject has become, which tempts them to show the achievement of goals that were to be accomplished. In this way, biographers manufacture a wholesale fiction in which the narrated history would be like the movement of a closed circle, of the trajectory of an individual who came into the world to fulfill certain objectives, like a predestined Messiah.

Nevertheless, if we follow Bourdieu word for word, we would be renouncing the entire genre of biography, since from his perspective biographical research ends up being radically invalidated. This is clear not only from the critiques that Bourdieu makes, but also in the alternative that he proposes to escape the biographical illusion. This alternative consists, as we have seen, in privileging the study of structural logics as a way to understand individual practices, or rather, to explain the behavior of social groups where subjects would only be examples that serve to verify social norms. That is why Sartre's Flaubert had no relevance to Bourdieu's study except for the objective relations in which he was involved in a social field. This is clear if we remember the metaphor that Bourdieu uses regarding a subway ride: to convey the life of an individual is as absurd as explaining a subway trip without having knowledge of the network's structure.

While Bourdieu's criticisms are relevant, it is difficult to support him in the alternative he provides for the epistemological problems he observes in biography. Accepting his solution would be to trade the risk of subjectivism for the reductivist risk of structuralism, the latter of which would certainly crush the case for biographical studies. Put more colloquially, it would be like prescribing a cure that is worse than the disease, for the medicine would end up killing the patient, or in the case of the biographical genre, eliminating what is unique to it: its subjectivity, its concern for the particular, its irreducible anti-nomothetic character, and its historicity. As François Dosse (2007) says in support of those who criticize Bourdieu´s alternative, "the objective is, therefore, to objectify subjectivity and subjectify objectivity"[1] (p. 213). This would be a way out of the false dilemma between the individual-structural, subjective-objective, particular-general, and so on.

In an attempt to go beyond these strict dichotomies, Dosse argues that it is necessary to understand that a good alternative for biography would be to use theoretical models that are not rigid, that is, dynamic and flexible approaches capable of capturing biographical trajectories without losing sight of structural dynamics. Thus we might overcome both the problems of subjectivity and the impoverishment that structuralist schemes bring into the analysis of a particular life (Dosse, F. 2007, pp. 213–215). Dosse accepts the criticism against Bourdieu's biographical subjectivism from a perspective that conceives biography as privileged terrain for experimentation. Instead of seeing this criticism as an epistemological outlet, however, he perceives it as a watershed vital to humanizing the human sciences. Conscious of the empathy that biographers experience with their biographical subject, one which necessarily transforms both during the research process, Dosse states:

> If we take Paul Ricœur's beautiful demonstration that selfhood (*Ipse*) is constructed not in a repetition of itself (*Idem*) but in its relation with another, biographical writing is very close to that movement towards another and from the alteration of the self to the construction of a self transformed into another.

[1] All translations are my own.

> Obviously, such an adventure entails risks: between the loss of one's identity and the loss of the singularity of the biographical subject, the biographer must know how to keep his or her distance. (Dosse, F. 2007, p. 14)

For Dosse, it is clear that since the late eighties, the openness of the human sciences has made it possible to resolve epistemological problems that were previously thought intractable for biographical studies: the crisis of rigid structuralist approaches and mechanical schemes of interpretation; new questions about human action – individual and collective – about subject, identity and singularity in history; and advances in cultural history, including a preoccupation with the subject of narrative, studies on the relationship between science and fiction, changes of scale in social analysis, and a renewed interest in case studies. These are some of the elements that make biographical research more relevant than ever. Moreover, Dosse claims that it is precisely the hybrid character of biography – with its promiscuous relationship between social science and literature-, that can provide many of the answers to the questions that are at the center of social-scientific debates today.

In this sense, Dosse assumes the problems identified by Bourdieu, but without renouncing the epistemological aporias that belong to the biographical genre, of which we would expect a certain necessary tension to stimulate experimentation and investigative creativity. Dosse also accepts that we must break with the biographical concepts that conceive of a person's life as unitary and coherent, chronologically linear and falsely teleological – but only as long as we do not give up studying the individual's singularity and his or her capacity for social action and freedom. Using research examples that have examined the multiple and plural nature of the human being from an interdisciplinary perspective, Dosse shows that it is not only valid to speak of the different meanings of a subject and his or her different identities, but also that it is possible to use certain forms of heterochrony to alter the linear parameters of classical biographies, that is to say, through presentations that convey the time and the studied themes in a fragmented and variable way, which would not only allow a better approximation of the studied individual's life – which always contains multiple levels, changes, interruptions, continuities, and setbacks – but also a better representation of the fragmentary character of the sources themselves.

Ferraroti

For his part, Franco Ferrarotti has defended the autonomy of the biographical method, and this defense is worth highlighting. In a text published around the same time as "The Biographical Illusion," but from a quite different perspective, Ferrarotti contends that if we want to make use of the full heuristic potential of the biographical genre, we must abandon the objectivist postulates of the traditional scientific method and seek instead the specific epistemology of biography. For Ferrarotti, this specificity comes from the subjective implications of the genre, which are precisely what gives biography a potential value as an area of study to further knowledge. In this regard, the Italian socioligist writes:

> The biographical method seeks to attribute a value of knowledge to *subjectivity*. A biography is subjective on several levels. It reads social reality from the point of view of a historically specified individual. It is based on material elements that most of the time are autobiographical, therefore exposed to the innumerable deformations of a subject-object that are observed and rediscovered. It is often situated within the framework of a personal interaction (interview). In the case of any biographical account, this interaction is much narrower and more complex than the observer-observed relationships admitted by the Method: co-optation of

> the observer into the truth of the observed, reciprocal manipulative mechanisms that are difficult to control, absence of objective reference points, and so on.[2] (Ferraroti, F. 1993, p. 128)

Beginning with biography's overexposure to subjectivity, Ferrarroti (1993) arrives by his own means to a conclusion similar to that of Paul Ricœur. He claims that the biographer is necessarily implicated in the field of the biographical subject, who, far from being a passive object, transforms his or her observer in the research process, and in turn, is transformed as well: "This circular feedback process ridicules any presumption of objective knowledge. Knowledge has no object to the other; its object is the inextricable and reciprocal interaction between the observer and the observed" (p. 129). This explains the subjective empathies between the biographer and the biographical subject. Ferrarotti also attempts to answer the question of how to produce knowledge in this genre of study without evading the subject's centrality and the specific historicity that he or she possesses.

He proposes an alternative that supports the validity of the sixth of Marx's *Eleven Theses on Feuerbach*: ". . . the essence of every man . . . is in his reality, the ensemble of social relations" (Ferraroti, F. 1993, p. 134). Namely, that every human praxis is a synthetic activity, ". . . active totalization of a whole social context. A life is a praxis that appropriates social relations (social structures), internalizes them and retranslates them into psychological structures by its structuring-restructuring activity" (Ferraroti, F. 1993, p. 134). This singular retranslation consists in the reappropriation of the historical context that an individual uniquely creates from his or her own social experience. For the biographer, this presupposes access to a reality based on the irreducible specificity of a person or, what is essentially the same, of this person's individual practices and subjective experiences.

From this approach, Ferrarotti fights any determinism or social mechanism without renouncing the study of structural relations. In this way, individuals cannot be interexchanged, even though they share experiences in the same social group, since it is understood that individuals mediate the time and society they are born into through their own subjective dimensions. Here the metaphor of the subway ride loses its validity, since the emphasis of the study is placed just as much on the subject's freedom of action as on structural conditions. That is, the individual is not seen as a passive reflection of the social structure, but rather as a singular product of it, with ample possibilities of transforming it via the filter of the individual's subjective vision of the world.

Moreover, it calls significant attention to the fact that both Bourdieu and Ferrarrotti base their conflicting points of view on Sartre, even if the former uses him to demonstrate the absurdity of biography and the latter to highlight its exceptional possibilities. Bourdieu and Ferrarrotti, though writing at much the same time, give diametrically opposed readings of the approach defended by Sartre. The possibility that there can be two such divergent readings of the Sartrean biographical method rests on the fact that Sartre himself hits the mark in certain propositions but errs in others. This situation allowed Bourdieu to make use of the erratic Sartre and Ferrarotti of the accurate one, with neither of them paying much attention to the other side of Sartre's approach, that is, to that which would invalidate their own argument.

[2] All translations are my own.

Sartre

As seen above, Bourdieu's example to invalidate biographical studies is taken from Sartre's biography of Gustave Flaubert, which endeavors to explain how the writer came to be, based on the search for a certain identity formed in the earliest stages of his life, one which determined the rest of his existence: Sartre says that some aspects of Flaubert's character "can be explained if we understand that everything took place *in childhood*; that is, in a condition radically distinict from the adult condition. It is childhood which sets up unsurpassable prejudices" (Sartre, 1963, pp. 59–60). Ideas such as this, which are based on Freudian psychoanalysis, are what Bourdieu uses to show that biography is founded on an artificial creation of coherence that bestows the subject with an unshakeable identity, which leads the subject to fulfill the goals of a destiny, taking the form of a particular story and with a false teleological development.

The problem with the Sartrean approach is that it places too much emphasis on the early experiences of childhood, which are only as decisive as events that occur in other stages of life. The emphasis that Sartre places on the childhood of his subject is what undoubtedly causes him to lose his way in the biographical illusion.[3] But it does not follow that his entire approach is flawed, since the root problem that interests him are the possibilities of choice and freedom that individuals possess. This seems to be what genuinely annoys Bourdieu, who despite evidencing a certain interest in individual action, highlights above all in his works the structural conditions that weigh upon the actions of those individuals.

Sartre defends the capacity of individual freedom from a perspective that qualifies as Marxist dialetic as much as it does existentialism. His perspective attacks any type of theoretical model that, in its eagerness to see conceptual postulates confirmed, reduces the concrete experiences of subjects to simple structural determinations. This is why Sartre (1963) advocates a "living Marxism," rather than what he calls a loose Marxism, universalist and a priori, of which, like other structuralist theories, the "sole purpose is to force the events, the persons, or the acts considered into prefabricated molds" (p. 37). Moreover, in anticipating critics such as Bourdieu, Sartre writes:

> But it would be a mistake to accuse us of introducing the irrational here, of inventing a "first beginning" unconnected with the world, or of giving to man a freedom-fetish. This criticism, in fact, could only issue from a mechanist philosophy; those who would direct it at us do so because they would like to reduce *praxis*, creation, invention, to the simple reproduction of the elementary given of our life. It is because they would like to explain the work, the act, or the attitude by the factors which condition it; their desire for explanation is a disguise for the wish to assimilate the complex to the simple, to deny the specificity of structures, and to reduce change to identity. This is to fall back again to the level of scientistic determinism." (Sartre, 1963, p. 133).

Indeed, it is this Sartre as defender of the individual's freedom to act that Ferrarotti makes use of, the Sartre that maintains:

> But without living men, there is no history. The object of existentialism—due to the default of the Marxists—is the particular man in the social field, in his class,

[3] Sartre's emphasis on childhood to explain an individual's life trajectory can also be seen in his autobiography, which focuses on his own childhood. See: Jean-Paul Sartre, *The Words* (New York: George Braziller, 1964).

> in an environment of collective objects and of other particular men. It is the individual, alienated, reified, mystified, as he has been made to be by the division of labor and by exploitation, but struggling against alienation with the help of distorting instruments and, despite everything, patiently gaining ground. (Sartre, 1963, p. 151).

In order to study the individual in this way, Sartre (1963) proposes a model that he calls progressive-regressive and analytic-synthetic. These terms imply a simultaneous analysis that moves between the social system and the particular trajectory of the subject, in a sort of back and forth pendulum motion, which seeks to achieve a structural and historical approximation both of the individual and of the society. Sartre summarizes his approach as follows: "It is at the same time an enriching cross-reference between the object (which contains the whole period as hierarchized significations) and the period (which contains the object in its totalization)"(p. 148). As can be seen, Sartre's methodology does not reject the study of structural conditions; on the contrary, it appeals to them but on the condition that they can be studied through the singular experience of the subject or of the particular meaning of an event.

Sartre's proposal of a living, dialectical and existentialist Marxism seems as necessary as the heuristic analysis of events and individuals. He also argues for a move toward the concrete from a heuristic perspective. This allows us to *understand* both the particular meaning of the events and what the social structures in general reveal. In this sense, it must be understood that this methodology is based on comprehensive procedures, or rather, hermeneutic ones, that seek to establish not only the real circumstances of the events and of the individuals but also their historical significance of them. In this vein, Ferrarotti (2003) comments: "This methodology does not reject the contribution of nomothetic knowledge: it requires it to integrate in a heuristic movement with non-linear hermeneutical models that appeal to dialectical reason and not to formal reason" (p. 140) This position, which is at once heuristic and hermeneutic, is a reliable alternative for biographical studies, which will be treated in greater detail at the end of the final section of this article.

"The Normal Exception": A Methodological Alternative for Biography

Levi

Giovanni Levi, one of the most renowned representatives of Italian microhistory, warned in a 1989 article (the year "The Biographical Illusion" was published) that biography was at the center of the methodological problems of contemporary historiography, specifically: those related to interdisciplinary work, those inquiring about the relations between history and storytelling, those that debate about changes of scale in the analysis, those related to the nexus between rules and social practices and, perhaps most important, those that discuss the complexities of understanding the limits of human freedom of action and rationality (Livi, G. 2014, pp. 61–62). In his article, Levi provides reason for the critiques raised by Bourdieu, but does not follow them in his proposal. He consideres Bourdieu's ideas on biography to be closed without truly moving beyond structuralist approaches. He means that Bourdieu's perspective only offers an interest in the subject as long as it exemplifies representative statistical practices, that is, typical forms of conduct or behavior. This would be evident in the relationship between the *habitus* of the group and the *habitus* of the individual studied by the sociologist, which requires the researcher to select events that would be common and measurable within the styles of a social field. Referring to Bourdieu, Giovanni Levi writes:

> This approach contains a few functionalistic elements in the identification of the norms and style which belong to the group and in the alienations and abnormalities rejected as not significant. Pierre Bourdieu addresses both the question of determinism and the conscious choice, but the conscious choice is more recongnized than defined and the accent seems to lie on the deterministic and unconscious aspects. (Livi, G. 2014, pp. 67–68).

As can be seen, Levi – and, in fact, the whole strain of Italian microhistory – does not agree with the decentralization of the subject that the structuralist theories end up suggesting. On the contrary, this strain of historians defends the irreducible character of the individual. Without falling into extreme relativism, Giovanni Levi proposes an approach to biography where the central questions are individual freedom of action and the system of norms in which it operates. Recall that there is no normative system which is sufficiently structured; there are always inconsistencies and fissures in the social structures that allow for the conscious action of individuals, the negotiation of rules, and even their manipulation.

Based on the above, Levi states that the researcher must deepen the study of the type of rationality put into practice by the subjects, since this is never absolute, nor do all individuals possess the same cognitive dispositions, nor the same information, nor do they all act according to the same calculation, nor obey the same decision-making process; nor do they guide their actions exclusively to obtain maximum benefits. Humans are never entirely rational. Rationality, Levi states, is limited and selective, so its definition must be investigated to avoid reductions of the kind that equate the rationality of an individual to that of a category or social group. He writes:

> One cannot deny that an age has its own style, a custom which is the result of shared and repeated experiences, just as every age recognizes a group with its own style. But there exists for every individual significant room for freedom which has its origin precisely in the incoherence of the social surface and which gives life to social change. One cannot, then, attribute the same congnitive procedures to groups and individuals; and the specific character of each individual's practices cannot be treated as if they make no difference and have no importance. (Livi, G. 2014, p. 74).

Ginzburg

The approach proposed by Levi can be read as a defense and, at the same time, as a systematization of what was done in 1973 by Carlo Ginzburg in his now classic book *The Cheese and the Worms*. In that study, many of Levi's hypotheses were already implicit through the biographical approach of the "borderline case". As is well known, Carlo Ginzburg studied Menocchio, a sixteenth-century Italian miller, and examined his special rationality during a time of deep cultural mutation. It is, therefore, not a study on the life of an average individual; on the contrary, it is a singular person in a particular moment, that is, in an extreme situation or a structural crisis. In this sense, what was considered problematic in biography becomes a virtue, because through the particular subjectivity of an individual in a situation with structural discontinuities, Ginzburg seeks access to widely propagated social practices. At first glance, this appears to be a contradiction, which is why it is better to read what exactly Ginzburg asserts:

> Even a [borderline] case (and Menocchio is certainly this) can be representative: in a negative sense, because it helps to explain what should be understood, in a

> given situation, as being "in the statistical majority"; or, positivily, because it permits us to define the latent possibilities of something (popular culture) otherwise known to us only through fragmentary and distorted documents. (Ginzbug 1980, p. 21)

The paradox found in this method can be translated thus: a borderline case also contains regularity, a structural norm, but in a state of continuous and unpredictable movement; it views the general from the particular, and in a process of transformation. This is a change of scale in order to observe social phenomena. Nor does it abandon the study of the subjective, the different types of rationality, or the particular. Neither does it abandon the study of the general, much less the inquiry into the many structural factors. After all, the case of Menocchio shows an individual who, despite his undeniable singularity, also had attitudes similar to those in his peer groups, who shared the same popular culture and class experiences.

Referring to this approach years after the appearance of *The Cheese and the Worms*, a group of Italian microhistorians described this study as the "normal exception."[4] With this it should be emphasized that the idea was to simultaneously study the exception and the norm: the particular case and the structure. That is to say, the biographies created with microhistory had to account for a duel movement: the way in which exceptionality breaks structural constraints and, at the same time, the way in which structural constraints operate on that exceptionality – all seen from the perspective of a particular concrete and well-defined case.

The richness of this perspective is based on the following aspects. First, the subject once again has relevance. Second, different types of rationality, both individual and collective, can be observed. Third, understanding the capacity for action and freedom of individuals and social categories would not impoverish the effort, since the borderline case would point out strategies that break with common sense. Fourth, because this particular case is exceptional, that is, by condensing the features of a group in a contradictory way, there would be more room for examining what is unpredictable, incoherent, and pluralistic in people. This last point takes biography away from its classic narrative strategy, because it would necessarily have to break with the linear chronology in order to account for the plural aspects of an individual. Thus, without losing its own historicity, the biography would not have to be involved in an analysis that hides the illusion of a teleological development in the background.

Biography: A Hermeneutic of Experience

> *But who can guarantee that the order of the story is that of life? We are made of those illusions, dear master, as you know better than I.*
> - Ricardo Piglia, *Artificial Respiration*, 33.

Piglia

Although the text quoted above seems to have been taken from a dialogue between Pierre Bourdieu and some of his most experienced pupils, it is a comment made by Emilio Renzi to his uncle Marcelo Maggi, about "those illusions" contained in biography. Renzi and Maggi are two of the central characters in the novel *Artificial Respiration* by the Argentinian author, Ricardo Piglia (1994). Before engaging in literature, Piglia was a professionally trained

[4] Aside from the article quoted by Giovanni Levi on the history and the meaning of the "normal exception," please also see Dosse, La apuesta biografica, 254–276, as well as Justo Serna y Anaclet, *Cómo se escribe la microhistoria* (Madrid: Ediciones Cátedra, 2000),100–105.

historian, which allowed him to write his works from a *historical gaze*, to use an expression used by his character, Marcelo Maggi, when telling his nephew that it is necessary to understand individuals like leaves floating on the river of history. "We are but leaves floating on a river and must learn to look at what comes as if it had already happened. There will never be a Proust among the historians, which comforts me and should serve you as a lesson" (Piglia, 1994, p. 17) says Maggi to his nephew.[5]

For Marcelo Maggi, history must be understood as a river in continuous movement, in which it is necessary to look at the waters that have run before to find relations with the present: you have "to look at what is coming *as if it had already* happened." This constant movement can also be found in individuals, who are like leaves that follow the wider flow of a river. In other words, the changes in individuals are also mapped through time and the wider movements of societies, revolutions, changes of mentalities, class relations, and so on. However, these subjects do not cease being themselves with their own specificities, like a particular leaf that advances on the currents of that river. Maggi is an insightful lawyer who has reached these conclusions in an attempt to write the biography of the nineteenth-century Argentine character, Enrique Ossorio, the alter ego of Enrique Lafuente, who in addition to being the private secretary of General Rosas was one of the founders of the Argentine Salón Literario, an important gathering space that gave rise to that country‘s modern intelligentsia.

Like any historian involved in biography, Maggi encounters methodological hurdles that are difficult to leap over. Emilio Renzi, his nephew, describes some of these problems in the correspondence he maintains with his uncle:

> …beyond the arguments we pretended to have from time to time, what emerged as the focus of Maggi's correspondence with me was his work on Enrique Ossorio. He has been writing that book for a long time and the problems he was having began cropping up in his letters. I am like someone lost in his memory, he wrote me, lost in a forest, trying to find a path, tracing what remains of that life besides the proliferation of fragments and testimonies and notes, all the machinery of oblivion. I suffer the classic misfortune of the historians, Maggi wrote, although I am no more than an amateur. I suffer that classic misfortune: to desire possession of those documents so as to decipher the truth of life in them, only to discover that the documents have eneded up taking possession of me, imposing their rhythms and chronology and peculiar truths on me. I dream about that man, he writes to me. (Piglia, 1994, p. 24)

Maggi is entangled in a situation that has led him to the problem of the biographical illusion. The situation, which is not negative but dangerous, consists of having been "lost in a jungle": letting his biographical subject take over his inner self. The empathy he feels for his subject has driven him to be possessed by him. "I am lost in his memory," "I dream of that man," he bitterly confesses to his nephew when he realizes that the documents, that is, the recorded experiences of his biographical subject, "have taken possession of me and imposed their rhythms and chronologies and their particular truth." Although it sounds pathetic, and the scene is indeed pathetic, we are faced with a situation that could resemble a séance, where the soul of the deceased takes over the body of the living to tell us about the deceased existence in the present. "Dedicated as you are to prying into the mystery of the life of other men (of one other

[5] In many ways literature has produced more complex works to try to understand the problems contained in biographical practice. This article only deals with Piglia's novel, but the reader can also consult such works as Barnes (1990), Auster (2006), Strachey (1988), Cabrera Infante (1998) and Nabokov (2008).

man, Enrique Ossorio), you have ended up resembling the object you investigate," says Emilio Renzi to his uncle (Piglia, 1994, p. 88).

We are again faced with the epistemological dilemma denounced by Bourdieu, that is, the empathy that leads the biographer to a complicit relationship with the biographical subject. This tends, in turn, to become a search for total coherence in the life of the one being researched, as if it were a monocausal scheme, in the manner of a particular story replete with a certain univocal expression. Moreover, it is an illusion that expresses itself when putting an individual's life on paper, as if it could be reproduced in the structure of a text as it was actually lived. Therefore, to the question posed by Renzi, "but who can guarantee that the order of the story is that of life?" the answer must be "no one," since in fact a *life lived* does not correspond to a *life written* on paper. Just to be clear, however, this cannot lead us to reject the relevance of biography as a genre to help us understand the past. As Renzi himself said: "We are made of those illusions, dear master, as you know better than I" (Piglia, 1994, p. 33). In fact, these illusions exist and one must know how to deal with them. They would even seem to be necessary in the process of creativity in biographical research.

The crux of the matter lies in not allowing these empathies to end up merging the personality of the biographer and the biographical subject into one and making them each lose their identity, or rather, to have the biographer fully identify with the biographical subject to the point of pretending, often unconsciously, to write an official story of this character. In order to avoid this situation, it is necessary to know how to maintain a critical distance from the studied individual and to allow an extremely ambitious attitude to encompass the whole life of the biographical subject, as if all actions and thoughts were keeping a correspondence with each other. The life of any person is full of multiple meanings. People are formed by various identities, which in turn are reflected in actions and thoughts that change over time, as well as being capable of becoming contradictory.

However, the alternative that Marcelo Maggi finds in his study is worth exploring here, because it supports and reinforces the ideas expressed earlier in this article. In another letter sent to his nephew, he writes: "I face difficulties of various kinds. First and foremost, it is clear that I do not intend to write what is called in the classic sense, a Biography. I am instead trying to show the movement of history contained in an essentially *eccentric life*" (Piglia, 1994, p. 28). Curiously, Maggi as a barely amateur historian has managed on his own to arrive at the same alternative proposed by the Italian microhistorians. By placing the word *eccentric* in italics, Maggi tries to highlight the ambiguous character of that word and the difficulty he has in expressing what it really means, since he understands the *eccentric life* of his character as an example that paradoxically contains singular elements that make it different: its irreducible subjectivity. But, at the same time, he understands that this eccentricity is only possible within the larger historical movement in which his character lived. As such, it could be said that Maggi winds up finding a Menocchio in Argentina. This is no joke, since, as we have already seen, it supports something similar to what Carlo Ginzburg defines in the concept of the borderline case (see previous section).

Nevertheless, Maggi continues: "I have several working hypotheses, each implying a different way of organizing the material and ordering the discussion. It is necessary, above all, to reproduce the *evolution* that defines Ossorio's existence, something very hard to capture. Opposed in *appearance* to the movement of history" (Piglia, 1994, p. 28). In this part, the italics once again try to express the ambiguity of the selected words. Thus, with the term *evolution*, rather than wanting to understand a linearity from beginning to end and following the

benchmarks of progress, Maggi wants to refer to the procedural and contradictory character of a particular life within the historical movement. The same can be said of the expression "opposite in *appearance*," which suggests the fact that an individual has been able to go against the historical current, or the strongest currents of nineteenth century Argentine thought, but never ceases to be part of them. These currents of thought are the ones that in the end drive his thoughts and actions, as in the metaphor of the leaf that floats along the currents of the river.

Maggi is conscious that a linear or simply evolutionary narrative structure does not work in writing the life of his biographical subject when he says the following:

> I am sure, besides, that the only way of capturing the sense that defines his destiny is to alter the chronology, to go backwards from the final madness to the moment when Ossorio takes part with the rest of the generation of Argentine romantics in founding the principles and bases of what we call the national culture. (Piglia, 1994, p. 29)

When Maggi speaks of that last element that defines the meaning of Ossorio's existence, or when he says to look for that hidden something that defines the destiny of his biographical subject, we must understand that he is simply making use of the poetic resources of his particular speech. Such language, however, should not be understood to mean that he is in search of any essentialist or deterministic element in his research. In fact, what these words conceal, which so annoys social scientists, is the approach of a problem, which in an attempt to solve it permits a narrative coherence to the biography, not to the life of the biographical subject, which will always be contradictory and full of multiple identities. This is what Maggi knows but in the manner of a detective who pursues a criminal (and in biography, the biographer is always the criminal) and is on the hunt to solve conundrums that help to understand aspects of Ossorio's life and the society in whch he lived.

In this case, the biographer manages to account for the many vicissitudes of his subject's life by showing the ambivalent nature of his personality and actions (Piglia, 1994, pp. 26–27). He shows that Ossorio was the son of a colonel from the Independence and that, in addition to studying law, he was very interested in philosophy, which later helped him obtain a position as the private secretary to Rosas. From here, he established clandestine networks with the exiled intellectuals of the time: Félix Frías, Sarmiento, Alberdi, Echeverria, Juan María Gutiérrez, among others. Maggi succeeds in establishing that Ossorio leaked private information of Rosas and his government to this group of exiled intellectuals, who at the time were preparing a plot against the government. He also, however, offers information that leads one to suspect that Ossorio received money from Rosas, to whom he also provides intelligence. This situation does not allow the researcher to establish if Ossorio is indeed a double agent: "The exiles are fearful; they think he is a double agent. Isolated and disillusioned with politics, he goes to Brazil, where he settles in Rio Grande do Sul, lives with a black woman slave, and devotes himself to writing poetry and contracting syphilis" (Piglia, 1994, p. 26).

Taking this into account, Maggi asks the following:

> Doesn't Ossorio exhibit in a dramatic way a tendency latent in the entire history of the Argentine intelligentsia, increasingly autonomous in the Rosas period? Aren't his writings the other side of Sarmientos's? Was he really a traitor? Did he always keep in touch with Rosas? (Piglia, 1994, p. 28)

The reader may appreciate that these are questions that contain hypotheses. They are questions for studying aspects of Argentine culture and politics of the time, in addition to aspects of the biographical life. Certainly the problems that Maggi arrives at range from the ambiguous character of Ossorio's personality (a traitor?) to the very ambivalences with which an autonomous intellectual community arose in Argentina – an intellectual community which he claims, without loosing his irony, had founded "principles" and "the reasons for what we call the national culture."

Despite Maggi's evocative language, which he uses to give a certain effect to his literary account of his biography, it is clear that this is more than simply aesthetic rhetoric. It is true that sometimes the way he describes his research leads us to think that he is hunting for the fundamental element that defines the life of his biographical subject. That is because we are faced with a fictional character wrapped in a fictional plot, or at least in a novel that seeks to give an enigmatic and mysterious effect to its characters. Nevertheless, the investigative methods used by Maggi allow us to appreciate the kind of detective that uses hermeneutical analysis to solve a series of problems that repeatedly arise. Thus, one could differentiate how Maggi describes his research versus the way he carries it out.

That attitude of a hermeneutic detective is latent in almost all parts of *Artificial Respiration* – one could even say this applies to all of Piglia's novels and essays – and not just reflected in Maggi's inquiries. Just like literary critics, Piglia's characters are always conducting hermeneutic analyses. Or to turn it around: Piglia is always doing hermeneutical analysis through his characters, particularly through Emilio Renzi, his alter ego, who tends to appear again and again in his works as that young man who investigates. Moreover, in several interviews Piglia reveals the debt that his work has to his initial training as a historian. He highlights the fact that he was educated by professor-researchers who spent almost all of their time in the archives: "I think the most interesting thing for me was the experience of working in the archives," he repeats on countless occasions. To which, he adds, perhaps a little romantically: "Historians are the most extraordinary type of reader one can imagine. They spend days and days reading blind documents until they find a light that flickers in the darkness. And with that flash, they begin to illuminate an era."[6] The attitude with which his characters read documents, both written and oral, could hardly be better described.

The above is presented in order to show an example of hermeneutical analysis performed by one of the characters in *Artificial Respiration*. In the novel, Marcelo Maggi dies leaving his nephew with the task of completing the biography of Ossorio. Thus, like his uncle, Renzi asks and interprets, always following fragmented texts: "What is certain is that I gradually reconstructed the fragments of the life of Enrique Ossorio" (Piglia, 1994, p. 25). But for Renzi the hermeneutical inquiries go still deeper. Their ways of constantly advancing make us see the multiple interventions that impact the sources that we have for our research. His investigations show that even the sources with which the researcher works with are not only mediated by those who produced them but also by others who interpret them. In this regard, let us look at a short example: "That, but expressed in a much more beautiful and enigmatic way, was what the woman told him, Marconi said, Tardewski tells me" (Piglia, 1994, p. 161). This is reminiscent of Chinese whispers or the telephone game, in which one player after another sequentially whispers a message to a final player, who rarely receives the same information transmitted by the first player. This results in several versions of the initial report, recounted by diverse voices, much in the form of a theme and variations in a musical piece.

[6] See: http://luchadores.wordpress.com/2006/11/21/entrevista-a-ricardo-piglia-2/

In an interview that Renzi has with Senator Luciano Ossorio, the grandson of Enrique Ossorio, the senator honors his grandfather's name by conducting a hermeneutical analysis of an "event" in the life of his father with admirable lucidity. This example of interpreting an event is interesting because it also plays with the idea that Piglia has about the interventions that impact the sources. As we shall see in this case, it is an oral source from an interviewee, who not only provides information about an event but also interprets it; that is, he performs a hermeneutic reading of what that event could mean. In this sense, Piglia, through Renzi's narration, suggests that what the researcher actually does is an interpretation about the interpretation that others have previously done of the same event. This is what Renzi tells us the senator *said*:

> …notice that my father died in that duel in 1879 and that it was the first case of a crime of honor brought before a jury in a public court. The trial in which he who killed my father in a duel was brought to judgment was an *event.* An "event," said the Senator. But what was, he said, an event, what, he said, in that case, was *the* event? "Not the duel," but the event of that trial. An event like that was not, generally speaking, preserved by historians and yet, he said, those who want to know the meaning of our modern world, those who desire to know what was opening up in this country about 1880, to be precise, need to be able to decipher in that event the first sign of change, of transformation. That was more or less what the Senator said about the duel that had taken his father to the grave. "For the first time, in a trial held to judge the duelist who had killed my father, in the case of that coward in the pay of the Varelas, justice became something in and of itself, independent of a literary and moral mythology of honor that had served as a norm and truth. For the first time the norm of passion and that of honor do not coincide," said the Senator, "and an ethic of true passion emerges. Because in truth those men, those gentlemen, those Masters had learned that it was when they were facing others, when they were *with* those others facing them, that they had to prove who was the Slave. They had discovered," said the Senator, "that they had another means of proving their manliness and chivalry, that they could go on living in the face of death without the need to kill one another; instead, they could *unite* among themselves to kill those who were not disposed to recognize them as their Lords and Masters. As in the cases," he said, "of immigrants, gauchos and Indians. So that," the Senator concluded, "the death of my father in a duel and the subsequent trial is an *event* that in a sense is linked, or rather, I would say," said the Senator, "that accompanies and helps explain the condition and changes that brought to power General Julio Argentino Roca. (Piglia, 1994, pp. 50–51).

This quotation provides a good example of what may be a heuristic and hermeneutical analysis applied to biographical studies. It shows that it is indeed possible to understand the specific and general meanings that can be interpreted for a particular event in the life of a singular individual. As we read, the Senator not only establishes the truthfulness of a real fact – the trial for the man who killed his father – but also the meanings he has to understand the historical movement of the society in general: the establishment of the modern state in Argentina. Based on Marx's ideas, Sartre (1963) proposes the progressive-regressive and analytic-synthetic method: "he gives to each event, in addition to its particular signification, the role of being revealing. Since the ruling principle of the inquiry is the search for the synthetic ensemble, each fact, once established, is questioned and interpreted as part of a whole" (p. 26). And certainly, in this case, the Senator is applying that procedure precisely. Let us see how it succeeds in detail.

The Senator starts from a hypothesis that tries to decipher the meanings that a particular human action has: the trial of his father's murderer. The hypothesis: after the independence of Spain in the early nineteenth century, Argentina experienced various confrontations between the different elites that made up the country. However, toward the end of the same century, these elites succeeded in agreeing to lay the foundations of a modern state that protected their interests and kept the lower classes – natives, gauchos, immigrants, workers – at bay. That oligarchic pact would make the government of General Julio Argentino Roca possible. He would come to power a year after the assassination of the Senator's father, and under his term, the first jury trial and public session for a crime of that type took place. Thus the trial in question revealed the structural importance of the secularization of the judiciary promoted by the government elite, which managed to reserve for itself control over the mechanisms of power.

As will be recalled, under the government of General Julio Argentino Roca, Argentina managed to establish a national army (as is found in most modern nation-states), and to integrate itself into the world market as a supplier of raw materials and purchaser of manufactured products, all under the motto of "Peace and Administration." The head of this process was General Roca, who managed to secure an agreement among the elites around his government. Thus, Argentina experienced a period of stability that would advance the modernization of the State and the consolidation of a nascent national bourgeoisie. For this reason, General Roca is considered the great architect of Argentine national history.

Nevertheless, as the Senator sees his interpretation of the facts, it is a process that is built on a history of blood and repression that is not generally recognized. It is the genocidal history of thousands of natives of Patagonia and Chaco, carried out by General Roca in his infamous conquest of the desert, which would serve to expand the frontier for agricultural exporters. It is also the exclusion of the gauchos and the repression of immigrants and workers, which would be useful to the interests of the new capitalist elite. In short, it is a process in which the elites, increasingly frightened by the pressure exerted by sectors of the popular classes, close ranks to protect their interests. Thus, in his hermeneutical analysis of the trial of his father's murderer, the Senator concludes: "...the death of my father in a duel and the subsequent trial is an *event* that in a sense is linked, or rather, I would say, the Senator said, that accompanies and helps explain the conditions and changes that brought to power General Julio Argentino Roca" (Piglia, 1994, pp. 50–51): the architect of the modern Argentine state.

Conclusion

During the last century and a half, the discipline of History fought to conquer a respectable place in the social sciences. And to the extent that it succeeded, biography, as a genre suspended between fiction and fact, had to be banished so that History, which had to be written with a capital H, could achieve a long-sought-after scientific respectability. Given its unclassifiable and impure character, its proximity to the literary, the intuitive, the emotional or any kind of subjectivism, biography wound up confined to the attic of old memorabilia, along with the trumpets and drums of the old history of great heroes, confined to where no one would embarrass anyone else.

Being a biographer was something like being a frustrated novelist or, as it were, a small-time historian. "Those are things for less serious people", professional historians would say mockingly here and there. However, the temptation to pursue a biographical subject persisted. As if it were an irresistible sin, historians have never failed to be seduced by the act of

biography. These are the polemics that have been awakened in this genre, which despite the contempt it endured during the last century is back today with a vitality that places its practice at the center of the most innovative historiographic currents.

At present, biography is seen as a field of research with enormous possibilities for experimentation, which by its subjective nature and in search of the real, tends to break with both the old models of mechanistic structuralism and fashionable postmodernism centered on narrative aesthetics. Biography, as we understand it here, continues to focus on the establishment of concrete facts, the understanding of flesh and blood human beings and their subjective mediations—all without losing sight of the structural constraints, the use of theoretical models and, ultimately, the rigorous analysis of society and subjects.

Biography is a complicated endeavor that leads researchers down narrow paths full of traps and illusions, which they must know how to deal with in order not to get lost in teleological and literary fictions. But, regardless of whether it is Marxist, psychoanalytic, Weberian, Bourdieusian, or any other explanatory approach used by the biographer, one of the most fruitful alternatives presented to them today is the use of heuristic and hermeneutical strategies. The possibility offered by these strategies for the real establishment of facts and subjects, including their many particular and structural meanings, gives biography an experimental potential to discuss theories and concepts, as well as the understanding of the individual and society. To repeat: by its very hybrid nature, which is both factual and fictitious, biography has been rediscovered today as a privileged space for the experimentation of social sciences. Thus, at the same time, it challenges the currents that defend scientistic approaches, which involve monocausal and deterministic explanations, and those that are entangled in outlandish postmodern and aesthetic discourses of extreme relativism. Biography stands as a genre concerned with historical veracity that is sensitive to the use of the imagination as a means to access reality. There is no last word with biography, but rather a whole world with which to experiment.

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The Indivisibility of Change: The Challenge of Trauma to the Genre of Coming-of-Age Narratives

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Abstract

Evie Wyld's novel *All the Birds, Singing* (2013) draws attention to the interrelation of personal history, trauma narratives, and coming-of-age stories. Herein, Wyld's novel will be analysed with reference to two bodies of theory: Bergson's model of the "indivisibility of change" (p. 263), which re-conceptualizes the past as part of a "perpetual present" (p. 262), and Pederson's revised literary theory of trauma, which deviates from crucial tenets of traditional literary trauma studies. Due to the novel's unconventional structure of a backward-moving narrative strand interlocked with a forward-moving one, the crisis the narrator experienced in adolescence moves centre stage, which shows that, in the case of trauma, coming-of-age requires a continual negotiating of this experience. The novel challenges "strategically grim" coming-of-age narratives that represent trauma merely "as part of a narrative of the young protagonist's redemption or maturation," so that "resolution occurs as a matter of narrative convention […]" (Gilmore and Marshall, p. 23). *All the Birds, Singing* demonstrates that the painstaking processing of a painful personal history in narrative, achieved by establishing a dialogue of voices (and thus of selves), is an essential prerequisite for maturation. Accordingly, the genre of coming-of-age narratives, besides including novels that present a crisis merely as a necessary step on the way to adult life, also needs to incorporate texts documenting the persistence of trauma in a protagonist's life.

Keywords: coming-of-age narrative, genre, trauma, literary trauma theory

Introduction

Evie Wyld's novel *All the Birds, Singing* (2013) draws attention to the interrelation of personal history, trauma narratives, and coming-of-age stories. The narrator-protagonist, Jake Whyte, who grew up in Australia, is deeply traumatized by her experience of a first, unhappy love as a young teenager. After realising that Denver, the boy to whom she was attracted, only talked to her in order to get close to another girl, Flora, Jake flung a cigarette in frustration and triggered the bush fire that killed Flora. At the hospital bedside of the unconscious Denver, Jake promised to admit her guilt, but then escaped from the police. After a long odyssey, during which she was beaten up by an angry mob, worked as a prostitute, was held captive as a sex slave and escaped to a far-away sheep farm, she finally left Australia to single-handedly run a farm on a remote British isle. Due to its generic hybridity, reviewers have labelled Wyld's novel a gothic novel, a mystery, a fantasy and a horror story, amongst other descriptions. Yet, since the most horrific moment in this text is related to a Jake's growing-up process, *All the Birds, Singing* must above all be considered a coming-of-age narrative.

Typically, texts belonging to the genre of coming-of-age narratives represent a young protagonist's transition from childhood to adulthood. This transition period conventionally includes one or several moments of crisis that the protagonist has to overcome. As Baxter (2013) argues, "[t]he developmental arc of the protagonist is motivated by the desire to become an adult, and this journey toward adulthood quite often entails struggle" (p. 3). Mintz (2013) reasons that his struggle may take the form of trials or difficult experiences centred on issues such as "education […] or on rebellion against a father, on sexual initiation, or on experience of first love" (p. 55). Moretti (1985) distinguishes between trials as obstacles and trials as opportunity (p. 132). If the protagonist's trial functions as an obstacle, he/she must overcome a barrier to "enter into [his/her] own role as an adult" (p. 132). By comparison, if the trial is perceived as an opportunity, it is "not an obstacle to be overcome" but "something that must be *incorporated*, for only by stringing together 'experiences' does one build a personality" (p. 132; emphasis given). In any case, "[…] 'coming of age' signifies an arrival at a destination […]" (Baxter, 2013, p. 3): the young person is considered to have matured or 'come of age' when these troubles have been solved, and a 'complete, cohesive, stable sense of self' has been achieved" (Baxter, 2013, p. 4). The last phase of the young adult's development is, therefore, granted ample space and is moved centre stage in conventional coming-of-age narratives. On a textual level, the resolution of his/her troubles is usually mirrored by a sense of closure at the end of the narrative. As Gilmore and Marshall (2013) argue, stories primarily focusing on the solution of the young protagonist's conflicts are essentially "pedagogical" (p. 23). The lesson these texts teach their teenage readers concerns the question of what it means to mature. Such texts often "[…] feature adolescents who come of age in hard circumstances, but find redemption in adulthood. When the adolescent narrator or protagonist ends up wiser for the hardship, difficulty is incorporated into a meaningful lesson" (Gilmore and Marshall, 2013, p. 23). Consequently, the difficulties faced by the young protagonists typically serve as a mere narrative convention. Gilmore and Marshall develop the concept of so-called "strategically grim" coming-of-age narratives to refer to texts that include critical moments, traumata or conflicts merely for strategic reasons:

> These representations of trauma are employed as part of a narrative of the young protagonist's redemption or maturation […] Although narratives for teen readers often depict danger and crisis, we characterize them as strategically grim if crises resolve as a young protagonist steers out of harm's way. That is, resolution occurs as a matter of narrative convention, affirms the cultural construction of growing

> up as an individual, if perilous, passage, and refrains from a critique of the formations that permit violence. (p. 22)

With many strategically grim coming-of-age narratives, in other words, readers tend to focus more on the young person's maturation, whereas the moment of crisis or trauma itself is not at the centre of critical attention. Yet this model proves insufficient in the case of Wyld's *All the Birds, Singing*. Bergson's (2002) concept of the "indivisibility of change" (p. 263), and Pederson's (2014) revised literary trauma theory, in turn, reveal the true significance of trauma for the coming-of-age process. With its rather unconventional narrative structure, the novel challenges the mere strategic role of the trial and provides insight into the long-lasting effects of trauma on adolescence. In doing so, the text also calls for a re-definition of the genre of coming-of-age narratives.

Analysis

All the Birds, Singing opens with Jake Whyte leading a secluded life as a sheepherder on a British isle. She remains a stranger on the island and keeps feeling "unnatural […] in the place" (Wyld, 2014, p. 18). There are various signs that she is physically and psychologically wounded. Her body is scarred – she arrived on the island with her "arm in a sling" (Wyld, p. 7) and "a blooded thumbprint below [her] ear (p. 5) – and she suffers from repeated panic attacks and paranoia. Jake is startled by every sound, smells dangers everywhere, suffers from terrible nightmares and always has a gun at the ready when she goes to sleep (p. 53). What is more, she comes across as deeply traumatized and paranoid because she feels pursued by almost everyone; for example, she informs the police of her conviction that her sheep did no die naturally, but must have been killed by a mysterious trespasser on her property.

While Jake shows clear symptoms of being haunted by a traumatic past, she never gives any clues as to the cause of her trauma, which is a pattern well documented in traditional trauma studies. According to certain clinical trauma specialists, trauma patients do not talk about the cause of their suffering because they are not able to remember their trauma: it is "so intensely painful that the mind is unable to process it normally," as a consequence of which the patients may "totally forget the event" and suffer from "amnesia" (Pederson, 2014, p. 334). This suggestion was "also a foundational insight for the first wave of literary trauma theorists […]."[1] Taking the by now heavily contested idea of traumatic amnesia as a starting point for their analysis of literature, they searched for gaps in trauma texts, as textual lacunae were believed to represent the forgotten event, the unspeakable, or memories that "elude straightforward verbal representation" (Pederson, 2014, p. 336). From this point of view, the reader of *All the Birds, Singing* may at first be tempted to consider the fact that Jake never mentions the past as precisely such an instance of a textual void, a circumstance that points to her amnesia and thus to her repression of the traumatic event. As is revealed much later in the novel, however, Jake deliberately does not want to think about her traumatic personal history. She follows her friend Karen's advice to not open certain doors in her brain and ponder on a bad memory but to simply "leave" if it "turns into a bad room […] and "find a new door," should the memory be too painful (Wyld, 2014, p. 173).

Jake's determination simply to ignore her past reveals that her notion of history itself deviates from conventional understandings of the concept of the past as a period of time that has passed once and for all. As the philosopher Henri Bergson (2002) explains, the past is commonly

[1] For example, Hartmann, Felman and Caruth (Pederson, 2014, p. 334).

considered to be "inexistent," as it is regarded as a distinct stage of life that is lost, so that "the present alone exists by itself" (p. 261). Bergson, however, juxtaposes this view with a different vision of the past: he re-conceptualises the past as part of a "perpetual present" (p. 262) and claims that the past "is necessarily automatically preserved" and indeed "survives complete" (p. 253). Consequently, "our most distant past adheres to our present and constitutes with it a single and identical uninterrupted change" (p. 263). This "indivisibility of change" (p. 263) "re-establish[es] continuity" in life (p. 255) and constitutes "true duration" (p. 260). By comparison, "time" is "divisible, quantitative and studied by science," as Wilson (2007) explains (p. 34). Bergson "privileged duration as that which indicated most truthfully the nature of existence," as "[i]n duration, time is quality not quantity" and "the past and present are not distinguished […] but form a whole [….]" (Wilson, 2007, p. 35). The application of Bergson's concept to *All the Birds, Singing* reveals that Jake's decision not to think about the past is only possible if, in principle, the past is still available; one can only ignore something that has not been lost. Indeed, Jake's reaction is not surprising, as to ignore one's past is very human, as Bergson (2002) emphasizes: "our practical interest is to thrust it aside, or at least to accept of it only what can more or less usefully illuminate and complete the situation in the present […] The brain serves to bring about this choice: it actualises the useful memories, it keeps in the lower strata of the consciousness those which are of no use" (p. 253). Our mind, in other words, blots out aspects that are not of any apparent use in a concrete situation: "[t]he brain seems to have been constructed with a view to […] selection" (p. 253). As a consequence, knowledge is an effect of a "sudden dissociation," in that everyday life demands that human beings narrow their perception (p. 252). Jake, in other words, thrusts away those aspects of her life that are too painful in her present situation.

Indeed, the fact that Jake has blotted out her history – rather than completely forgetting it – not only reveals a different concept of the past but is also congruent with newer findings in psychological and psychiatric trauma research, which deviate from traditional trauma theory. Psychologists have more recently proposed that "traumatic amnesia is a myth, and while victims may *choose* not to speak of their traumas, there is little evidence they cannot" (Pederson, 2014, p. 334; emphasis given); "contemporary psychological research suggest[s] that trauma victims can both remember *and* describe their traumatic past in detail" but may not always be willing to do so because the memory is (too) unpleasant and painful (p. 338; emphasis given).[2] Pederson demands that the literary theory of trauma needs to be revised, too, so as to take into account the new psychological insights about trauma patients' ability to describe their memories. Deviating from this crucial tenet of traditional literary trauma studies, he suggests that readers should "[…] turn their focus [away] from gaps in the text to the text itself" (p. 338). In other words, instead of searching for instances of lacunae and thus concentrating on what is absent from the text, Pederson invites readers to pay attention to what is there, as this will "open up new expanses of material for interpretation" (p. 338). Interestingly, when proposing that readers should "seek out evidence of augmented narrative detail" and pay attention to what previously may have passed unnoticed (p. 339),[3] Pederson seems to apply Bergson's argument that human beings may well perceive "without seeing" (p. 252) as sometimes our perceptions do not "explicitly strike our senses and our consciousness" (p. 252) and, thus, are not consciously and actively registered. He argues that "[i]f things

[2] Pederson refers to the psychologist Richard McNally's publications of "dozens of new studies – both his own and others" published since 2003, in which he challenges "some of the field's sacred truths" on the basis of his findings in clinical studies of neuroscience (p. 334).

[3] Pederson refers to McNally's finding that "[s]tress does not impair memory; it strengthens it," as a result of which "trauma may actually enhance memory – rather than banishing or hindering it," so that "more words – not fewer" may be needed to represent trauma (p. 339: emphasis given).

happened this way, our perception would as a matter of fact be inextensible; it would consist of the assembling of certain specific materials, in a given quantity, and we should never find anything more in it than what had been put there in the first place" (p. 252). For this reason, Bergson (2002) asserts that people need to be "deepening and widening" their perceptions (p. 251), as this would open up new possibilities, not least in psychology: "[…] I am of the opinion that an entirely new light would illuminate many psychological and psycho-physiological questions if we recognized that distinct perception is merely cut, for the purposes of practical existence, out of a wider canvas" (p. 252). Bergson thus anticipates what Pederson performs in his revised literary trauma theory. While Pederson does not specify what aspects such a close observation of the "actual text" should incorporate, I would suggest that such an examination must not only focus on the content (i.e. the topics and themes touched upon) but also include structural and formal aspects of a text, as these are integral to the *gesamtkunstwerk* of the text and contribute to its meaning.

Such a comprehensive approach to the text proves very fruitful in the case of Wyld's *All the Birds, Singing*, which is characterized by a highly original narrative structure. The novel consists of two intertwined narrative strands, whose chapters are narrated in alternation. Jake's first narrative deals with her life on the British sheep farm and represents a "mimetic text," that is, a chronological, retrospective narrative told in the past tense by a narrating self temporally distanced from the experiencing or narrated self (Richardson, 2002, p. 49). Into this first narrative a second one is intertwined, whose chapters alternate with those of the first one and deal with Jake's previous life in Australia. The power of this second narrative derives from the fact that, in direct contrast to our conventional sense of time as progressive, the movement in time is reversed. The narrative is told backwards, starting with Jake's decision to escape from Australia and ending with her adolescence and childhood, which means that it "feature[s] strikingly impossible or antimimetic elements" (Alber, Ivesen, Skov Nielsen and Richardson, 2013, p. 1). It is an example of a so-called "unnatural narrative," as it does not "mimetically reproduce the world as we know it" but instead "confront[s] us with bizarre storyworlds which are governed by principles that have very little to do with the real world around us" (Alber, qtd. in Alber, Ivesen, Skov Nielsen & Richardson, 2013, p. 2). Richardson (2002) labels backward-moving unnatural narratives as "antinomic" (p. 49). The interlocking of a mimetic and an antinomic narrative in *All the Birds, Singing* results in a counter-movement. On the one hand, the two narrative strands are moving away from each other in time, one forward, the other backward, so that the temporal distance lying between the individual chapters constantly grows bigger as the respective plots move towards the future and the distant past. On the other hand, the two narrative strands are intertwined, which means that the temporally distant episodes also occur side by side and are thus characterized by spatial proximity.

This idiosyncratic structure is meaningful with regard to Jake's trauma, for, as it turns out, her intention to blot out her traumatic experience proves very difficult, if not impossible. Involuntarily, fragments of her past repeatedly force themselves into her consciousness when triggered by events in her present surroundings. Hence, she must remember her personal history even if she does not want to, which once more echoes Bergson's (2002) argument that the past has actually been preserved rather than lost. Events recounted in the first narrative repeatedly evoke memories of the past, which are subsequently narrated in the second narrative, so that often an action in the present is paralleled by the memory of a similar action in the past. This results in the paradoxical situation that, while the first narrative shows Jake's attempt to "outrun her past," the second one represents a gradual movement towards the past (Meloy, 2014, n.p.). At the very moment the narrator-protagonist is trying to ignore her memories, she remembers and, ironically, recounts them. Her checking for a hammer under

her bed every evening as described in chapter 3, for instance, is mirrored in chapter 4 by her memory of how she searched for a hammer on the Australian sheep farm (Wyld, pp. 21 and 29). Similarly, her mentioning that she keeps a breadknife in her bedroom is followed by her account of how she used to hide a knife behind her bed when she was staying with Otto in Australia (pp. 90 and 99). Moreover, her companion, Lloyd, tells her in chapter 13 that "the human eye senses movement before all else"; this very sentence is repeated in chapter 14 when she remembers hiding from her tormentor, Otto, in Australia (pp. 105 and 114). In reaction to triggers in the first narrative, Jake ends up recounting her personal history step by step in the second, antinomic narrative until these accounts of her past experiences culminate at the end of the novel in her narration of the trauma of her first, unhappy love during adolescence (chapters 26, 28 and 30).

In this context, it is crucial that the information about the past is not provided in a chronological order, as in conventional narratives, but told "too late," so to speak. With the second narrative strand moving backwards, some previous events are only explained at a later stage in the novel, so that it takes a while for the reader to be provided with the information necessary to understand some of the implications and connections. In particular, the deeper relationships between the characters are only gradually revealed to the reader, and some important correlations between the protagonist's past and present state – a sense of duration, to use Bergson's term – are brought to the fore in retrospect. For instance, the sense of guilt Jake experiences after accidentally killing one of her sheep in the penultimate chapter of the first narrative strand (Wyld, p. 209) is mirrored and further highlighted in the subsequent penultimate chapter of the second narrative strand, when she recounts the details of Flora's death in the fire (pp. 223–224). It is only after reading about the tragic event in Jake's youth in the Australian narrative that the reader understands that the feeling of guilt has persisted in her life and that, in the first narrative, she is consequently mourning much more than merely the death of an animal. Indeed, the sheep acquires a symbolic meaning and comes to stand for Flora, who was also accidentally and innocently killed.

That some events only become available for narration at a later stage in her narrative is due to the fact that the narrating self of the antinomic narrative only (re-)experiences – and thus processes – her traumatic past at the moment of narrating it, although, in effect, the events happened long before. In contrast to chronological, retrospective narratives, where the narrating "I" looks back on the past and is therefore temporally removed from the experiencing "I," the narrating and the experiencing self coincide in antinomic narratives: crucially, there is no temporal distance between the incident itself and its narration. At the moment of telling, the narrating self experiences the events again as if they were happening contemporaneously. This simultaneity of experience and narration also explains why antinomic narratives are told in the present tense. The present "momentarily creates an illusory (as-if) coincidence of two time-levels, literally 'evoking' the narrated moment at the moment of narration" (Cohn, qtd. in Tegla, 2016, p. 7). The present tense "functions not as a 'true' but as a metaphorical tense" (Cohn, 1978, p. 198) as "the speaker, as it were, forgets all about time and recalls what he is recounting as vividly as if it were before his eyes" (Jespersen qtd. in Cohn, 1978, p. 198). The very fact that Jake's Australian narrative is indeed recounted in the present tense indicates that she has not been able put any temporal distance between her past and present, but, instead, re-experiences her first love and the disappointment that accompanies it as if they were happening right at that moment, which again hints at the indivisibility of past and present. While she has ignored the past so far, she now re-lives every moment of it and thereby processes her memory. What is more, in contrast to retrospective narratives, the narrating "I" and the reader approach the past together; it is not only the reader who wants to know what happened (as in conventional

narratives); the narrator also re-discovers the past, so that, interestingly, the reader and the narrator are in the same situation of experiencing the events (as if) for the first time.[4]

As Jake's self is composed of two voices or narrating selves and can thus "be seen as a sign marking the site of multiple voices that can be disentangled to a greater or lesser degree […]," it is neither "single, unified [nor] monolithic" (Smith and Watson, 2010, p. 74). In accordance with postmodern conceptions of identity, her self, instead, is dynamic, incomplete and "more the product of the marking of difference and exclusion, than […] unity" (Hall, 1996, p. 4). Indeed, such a "split, fragmented, provisional [and] multiple" narrating self (Smith and Watson, 2010, p. 74), among other things, may serve to "reproduce more accurately the jagged fissures within a single subjectivity" than one narrative voice would, as Richardson (2006) argues (p. 67). What is more, the two different voices and narrating selves represent different aspects of her persona and have different functions. The narrating self of the retrospective narrative that looks back at the past, and is able to structure and interpret the events, contrasts with the narrating self of the antinomic narrative that is still in the process of regaining the past. The latter lacks stability as it does not recount events from "an external […] point of vantage, from which [it] could survey and define the structuredness of the reported sequence as one integrated whole" and for this reason is not able to interpret the events from a distance (Margolin qtd. in Tegla, 2016, p. 8).

The simultaneity of narration and experience, and, thus, the indivisibility of past and present, become particularly meaningful at the end of the novel when the moments furthest away in time are recounted immediately after one another, a device that influences the reader's interpretation. For the revelation of the terrible events responsible for Jake's trauma in the second narrative is immediately followed by an account of a growing friendship between Lloyd and Jake in the subsequent chapter of the first narrative. Having felt haunted by a phantom throughout the novel, now, finally, she no longer runs away in panic when she senses its presence again, but stays at Lloyd's side:

> 'It's huge,' he [Lloyd] said in a voice that did not sound like his own.
> 'It's here – it's just here.'
> 'And you see it?'
> 'It's just in front of us.'
> Something crunched in the undergrowth.
> 'Should we run?' I said, *but I didn't think we would*.
> It moved deeper into the woods and we stayed standing, watching and listening.
> 'My god,' said Lloyd quietly.
> I looked down and saw that we were holding hands. (Wyld, p. 228; emphasis added)

The fact that Jake no longer runs away at this critical moment implies relief and improvement: for the first time, she no longer feels the urge to escape. As this moment immediately follows upon the account of the fire and Flora's tragic death in the antinomic narrative strand, it is suggested that the very narration of the trauma is synonymous with a first step towards healing. This is supported by the very last chapter of the novel, which reveals that, as a child, Jake felt at home in her family and trusted that things would never change: "[…] this is how life will always be, and I will always be there" (Wyld, p. 229). While life, against her wish, has revealed

[4] Richardson (2002) explains that in antinomic narratives "both narrator and reader are moving prospectively (present tense, even future tense), though time's arrow is reversed" (p. 49).

itself to be full of change and she did not always stay at home, the very fact that the novel ends on this note implies that she has made a first step towards recovering the sense of trust she had as a child. Once again, chapters in the respective narrative strands interact and have an impact on each other, and thus also on the way the reader interprets the events recounted therein: with the cause of Jake's pain being narrated in juxtaposition with the beginning of her journey towards healing, the novel communicates the message put forward by psychology that improvement becomes possible once the trauma is narrativized.[5]

Wyld's novel not only emphasizes the importance of the narrativization of trauma but also suggests a possible form this may take. In that the two narrative strands are interlocked, the two voices are ultimately mutually enabling. On the one hand, gaps in the first plot are gradually filled as the past is narrated and Jake's traumatic memories are voiced in the second narrative strand. On the other hand, traumatic experiences that she has been evading for a long time are finally confronted, so that a dialogue between inner voices – and selves – is created. There are some psychological studies which suggest that, indeed, the mere verbalization of inner states may already help to overcome feelings of stress and mourning, so that neither the presence of another person nor immediate communication are absolutely required (Waller and Scheidt, 2010, p. 68).[6] This also seems to be true for Jake Whyte, who does not talk to anyone else, but gradually develops an inner dialogue between narrating selves. Previously suppressed or ignored memories are confronted, internally verbalized, and subsequently processed in the second narrative strand. As such, Jake exhibits that the formation of selfhood in literature indeed "involves language […] as a tool of *conversation*" (Moretti, 1985, p. 133; emphasis given). In the novels of the 18th and 19th century, "conversation" was meant literally: characters had to acquire the ability to communicate with one another, which included the "willingness of the participants to abandon their own viewpoint in order to embrace that of the other" (Moretti, 1985, p. 133). Wyld's novel, by contrast, shows that, in the case of a 21st-century trauma narrative, such a conversation may be internalized as well. The various selves of a character need to learn to enter into an (inner) dialogue with one another, to grant each other space, to engage with each other sincerely as well as to have "*trust* in language" (Moretti, 1985, p. 133; emphasis given), in order for self-formation to become possible. Taking into account the past and voicing a trauma leads to a sensible perception of the present and reveals a willingness to go on living. The powerful message that the development of an inner dialogue between selves is a precondition for successful self-formation is, finally, also symbolically expressed by the title of the novel: all the birds – as symbols of Jake's various selves – must be able and allowed to "sing," that is, to have a voice and articulate themselves, in order for a person to be able to develop a personality.[7]

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[5] See McAdams (2006), for instance: "Stories may bring our lives together when we feel shattered, mend us when we are broken, heal us when we are sick, help us cope in times of stress, and even move us toward psychological fulfillment and maturity" (p. 393).

[6] Waller and Scheidt (2010) refer to the studies of Pennebaker (1993) and Pennebaker et al. (1997) in this context (p. 68).

[7] Throughout the novel, various birds (both European and Australian) are mentioned. They symbolically represent the various facets of the protagonist's situation. The crows, for instance, "are believed to exist in the past, present and future simultaneously, to embody darkness within light and light within darkness […]" (King, 2007, p. 139) and thus they symbolize Jake's various voices – past and present – which fuse into a dialogue in the course of the novel. Similarly, the currawong (an Australian bird) is believed to be a bird that helps "remove negativity from our life; the burdens and baggage, fear, pain, grief and dishonesty" and helps to face "inner demons – and depose them forever" while simultaneously guiding one to "unite [one's] spiritual, mental and physical selves" (King, 2007, p. 144). As the currawong is mentioned in various chapters of the antinomic narrative set in Australia, this particular bird symbolizes Jake's gradual recovery of her past and of the indivisibility of change (with the past and present forming an entity). It therefore functions as a metaphor for what Jake will have to do in order to heal mentally and physically, namely to face her trauma rather than try to outrun it.

These findings also have wide-ranging implications when considering Jake's trauma from the perspective of genre. As she feels haunted by her past, the traumatic experience of her first love represents a typical instance of a trial, as often occurs in conventional coming-of-age stories. More specifically, in Moretti's (1985) terminology, Jake's trial represents an obstacle that must be overcome rather than an opportunity.[8] On closer inspection, however, it becomes evident that Jake's trauma is an obstacle or trial with a difference. As the second narrative strand develops side by side with the first, Jake's crisis increasingly becomes the main focus of the text. Initially, Jake just wanted to tell Greg "the in-between bits of [her] life…" (Wyld, p. 24), but, as the analysis has shown, she increasingly narrates more aspects of her past as a result of her recurrent memories, causing the reader to gain an overwhelming sense of her suffering and crisis. Indeed, in the case of *All the Birds, Singing*, the moment of the protagonist's trial appears as under a magnifying glass. It does not just function as the necessary starting point of a journey towards resolution and maturation; rather, it is shifted to centre stage in this text, so that practically the entire novel deals with the trial. Accordingly, her crisis narrative (i.e. the second narrative strand) is ultimately more substantial than the account of her present. As far as Jake's development to adulthood is concerned, this means that she is as if *on hold*. For most of the text, she is shown to be paralyzed by her trauma and unable to move on with her life. Her situation bears a strong resemblance to that of Prince Tamino in Mozart and Schickaneder's *The Magic Flute*, as described by Moretti (1985): "[…] Tamino is nothing. He is pure potentiality. He can be what he ends up being, or he can be knocked back down to what he was […] he is *on hold, at zero degree* […]" (p. 129; emphasis added). Similarly, Jake's potentiality is explored in the novel, with both options – the return to her dark past and the gradual progression towards a brighter future – being investigated and, indeed, substantiated in the two narrative strands moving in opposite directions. This means that Moretti's (1985) characterization of Tamino's present as "elastic [and] elusive" (p. 129) can be applied to Jake as well, because Wyld's novel never fully and conclusively resolves the conflict arising from these opposite narrative directions. Jake needs to first confront and process her trauma in an imaginary and ongoing dialogue between inner voices before she can build a personality and successfully enter adult life. Yet, significantly, the novel never arrives at the end of this process: the sense of final achievement so typical of conventional coming-of-age narratives is never reached; even her first step towards improvement (implied by her memory of home) is no more than a possibility that is vaguely hinted at, as the text does not move beyond the state of that "zero degree" (Moretti, 1985, p. 129) in which Jake finds herself and finishes before she has fully recovered from her trauma. As a consequence, there is no sense of real closure, neither with regard to Jake's (grown-up) self nor with regard to the text. Instead, the representation of the protagonist's crisis and her past trauma is ultimately what *All the Birds, Singing* is really about.

In terms of genre, therefore, Wyld's novel significantly deviates from conventional coming-of-age stories, especially with regard to the narrative function of the trial. In marked contrast to a strategically grim coming-of-age narrative, the traumatic past of the protagonist is not something that has already been left behind completely and can be looked at from a distance by an adult narrator recounting his youth. Instead, with Jake's crisis resisting "incorporation in an uplifting storyline" (Gilmore and Marshall, 2013, p. 22), the novel challenges the

[8] In his classification of trials, Moretti (1985) usually speaks of obstacles as "external barriers" (p. 132). By comparison, Jake's trauma represents an internal barrier. Whereas this change from external to internal barriers is likely to result from the process of internalization that fiction has undergone from the 18th century to the present, the implications for the protagonist remain the same. As with external barriers, the adolescent must overcome internal barriers in order to "enter into [his/her] own role as an adult" (p. 132).

conventional model of coming-of-age stories and thus comes to (individually) perform the genre.[9] While it shares the core topic of a young protagonist's journey towards adulthood, it places the main focus on the protagonist's crisis and trauma, rather than on the constant move towards the climax of resolution, as is usually the case. As a result, *All the Birds, Singing* confirms the fact that literary genres are "highly malleable forms or sets of conventions that tend to change their shape in different historical, cultural, aesthetic […] contexts" rather than "given or stable entities" (Basseler, 2011, p. 41).

Conclusion

In his essay "Backwards" Chatman (2009) wonders what "authors gain from employing backwards and/or anonymizing discourse – with all its extra burdening of the reader's attention and patience" (p. 48). This analysis of *All the Birds, Singing* with reference to Bergson's (2002) concept of the "indivisibility of change" and Pederson's (2014) revised literary trauma theory has provided an answer to this question. The interlocking of two narrative strands moving in opposite directions reveals that Jake Whyte's traumatic past is by no means forgotten, but remains an integral part of her present. Indeed, the novel shows that the eventual stabilization and healing of the self in the present depends on the continual confrontation of a traumatic past, and thus of a previous, unstable self. Wyld's novel performs this to an extent that the text can no longer be regarded as the escape narrative it seemed to be at first. Instead, it is a coming-of-age narrative in which a long silent and traumatized self finally finds a voice and enters a dialogue with the protagonist's other selves. As such, the novel demonstrates that traumatic experiences suffered during childhood and adolescence may have a lasting effect. Accordingly, in the case of trauma, processes of coming-of-age and maturation necessitate an incessant negotiation and continual processing of this painful personal history and experience in narrative form. Growing up depends on the young person acknowledging his/her past and making it a meaningful part of the present. Finally, in terms of genre, the novel deviates from strategically grim coming-of-age narratives and their conventional ending in that it does not offer a sense of achievement, as the effects of the trauma continue to challenge the protagonist. *All the Birds, Singing* suggests that the genre of coming-of-age novels should not be limited to texts merely showing the young protagonist's outgrowing of the crisis; instead, it needs to be elastic and flexible enough to incorporate texts that document the persistence of trauma in a protagonist's life.

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[9] Frow suggests regarding individual texts as "performances of genre rather than reproductions of a class to which they belong" (qtd. in Basseler, 2011, p. 58).

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Verbally Constructed Reality and Alternative Realities through Communication – An Exploration

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Abstract

Science tells us that reality as we experience it and ultimate physical reality are different. It also tells us that we can imagine other physical possibilities, and that perceptions of reality can differ. However, much of our everyday reality is constructed verbally or by other semiotic means – not just perceptually. What can our knowledge of language tell us about the language/reality relation? Can we conceive of different experiences of reality constructed by verbal or other semiotic means? How can such thought experiments help us to understand language as it exists? Small model languages and imaginary semiotic means are used to explore the issues and some possibilities for changed communicational parameters leading to alternative views of reality are considered.

Keywords: language, reality, truth, mental models, model languages

Introduction

This paper is an exploration with a thought experiment. There is no formally stated hypothesis and not much in the way of empirical testing; it is mainly a form of questioning and imagining. It is important to understand that the paper does not claim to be an addition to knowledge through research. It is concerned with the limits of our understanding and asks whether we can conceive of other forms or experiences of reality *by changing the parameters of communication*. It is, perhaps, more similar to a Wittgensteinian language game.

We know that there are limits to human perceptual abilities, but the paper considers whether we are limited also by our means of communication and, if so, what the limitations are and whether alternative forms of communication might lead to different experiences of reality. Does language lead to a false sense of reality or prevent access to reality? Exploring how different realities might be conveyed linguistically (or by other semiotic means) can highlight features of natural languages and their limitations. Naturally, that involves some speculative thinking and abstracting the communicational input to our sense of reality from the perceptual input.

Reality

The term "reality" is, of course, a difficult and controversial one. We can distinguish our everyday reality, reality as it appears to us in our ordinary lives, from the "ultimate" physical reality revealed by science – the world of atomic particles and forces, organic and inorganic chemistry, bodily processes not observable to the eye, and so on. Science extends what is observable by technology and explicable through quantificational modelling. Our senses are too limited to observe this ultimate physical reality, and what we perceive is constructed by our brain processes. In everyday terms, we can notice the gradual withering and decomposition of a flower over a period of hours or days, but not the processes of change happening every second or fraction of a second, or in chemicals and molecules beyond our level of perception, let alone atomic or gravitational forces. We can read a text, but not be aware of the complex cognitive processes involved in its recognition and interpretation. Science tells us that "reality is not what it seems" (Rovelli, 2016; 9 and 224 *ff*). Nevertheless, science tells us that the physical world and all its processes are one connected reality. This scientific view is a modern version of monist philosophy that has emphasised the oneness or interconnected totality of existence since Parmenides in the west and the earliest Zen philosophers in the east. The idea is clearly expressed by – among others – the philosopher, F.H. Bradley (1897). We live in a world of appearances which are dependent on our perceptual range and the forms of our cognition– the ways our brains work. Everyday reality as we perceive it, and as we conceive it, depends on, and is a function of, complex physical processes beyond our perceptual abilities and awareness, but connected to the world around us. That is, reality as we experience it is also part of a single totality of existence.

We typically feel separate from external reality as observers or as participants in events or the world around us. Philosophers such as Kant and Husserl have distinguished the "empirical" subject from the "transcendental" subject in order to account for the "paradox" that, as knowing subjects, we are both in the world and part of it *and* we are the "creators" of a world of understanding in our minds (Carr, 2017, p. 115). The world of understanding we create in our minds – our reality – as "knowing subjects" appears to be separate from the physical processes of cognition, but science would tell us that the world as we represent it to ourselves in everyday life is also a function of unobservable physical processes, and a matter of constant change.

Much of the world seems relatively stable to us, but it is beyond our perceptual range to see the flux of reality (as Rovelli noted in the same context as above). Our mental models of the world as we know it also seem relatively stable– changes are generally small and not noticeable. Their stability can be maintained as something relatively constant only by using energy to counteract entropy. Our verbal associations would degrade into disorganisation if we did not expend a lot of energy to maintain them– the brain accounts for about 20% of all our energy needs.

Physical science ignores, however, the role of communication/semeiosis in the process of our construction of reality. While communication must rest on a physical basis, it involves degrees of conventionality and all of the social and semantic associations in our verbal (and other semiotic) resources. This raises the question of the sign function; that is, how verbal form and meaning are linked. For followers of Saussure, the meaning of a form and the form of a meaning are simply different ways of looking at the same thing in conventional language (Saussure, 1972: 97 *ff*). The Saussurean view of the sign and its mass of associations in the sign system are consistent with physical science in *not* offering a magical formless meaning. Our verbal meaning is a way of representing a verbally constructed reality through the semantic perspective on the sign in its many associations. The sign – from the point of view of the signifié – *is* the meaning, and is our verbally constructed reality.

Of course, our everyday reality is different for each individual, so we must distinguish between the specific individual reality and generalisations about what is broadly common to us. But we must also distinguish between ever-changing experiential reality and the relative constancy of our mental models of reality, our expectations and construction of the world. We expect the street or garden to be largely "the same" as it was before or the car to be in the garage where we left it; your friend or colleague is expected to be the "same" person as yesterday; an orange is not expected to taste like pasta but like other oranges. However, we know that there are constant changes to everything and everyone. Our experiential reality is constantly updated through interaction. Indeed, scientists such as Rovelli (2015, p. 18) assert that (physical) reality *is* the interaction of entities. We cannot know about the ultimate constituents of the universe except through their interactions; they come into being through interactions, and those interactions are the physical basis of our everyday reality. Our mental models of reality (Johnson-Laird, 2006) are temporary and appear to us to be long-lasting only because of the scale on which we observe them and because of the limitations of our perceptions. But even on an everyday level, it is clear that our updating of mental models of reality comes through perceptions or through communication, or both. Thus, we might see that there is some change on a well-known street (e.g. road works) or we might be told *there are road works up the street*, or we might both hear the works and be told of them, or see a conventional road sign indicating road works. In all cases, there is some semeiosis involved. The semeiosis might be the energy transmissions involved in natural indices such as the sounds associated with road works, or we might see a typical warning triangle with the symbol for road works, or the semeiosis may be verbal. This awareness of the world around us, our everyday reality – whether perceptual or communicated – is also a matter of constant interactions of many sorts, notably the interaction of (qualitative/interpreted) information with our mental models.

The question of what we regard as real invites the question of what is *unreal*. We regard as unreal, most obviously, things which are not supported by relevant evidence – that is, little green men on Mars – or, secondly, things which are not consistent with known processes. Thus, we know that the magician does not really cut his assistant in two and put her back together again. Thirdly, we regard as unreal things which have no practical consequences in a given

respect. There is no legal difference if we travel from Paris to Rouen, but if we travel from Paris to Geneva there is a legal difference. Thus, the border between France and Switzerland may be an arbitrary line with no clear physical differences on either side, but it is a reality. £10 is a reality but it may indifferently be a £10 note or two £5 notes: there is no "real" difference in value. Clearly, our ideas of the real can change as we become aware of new facts (e.g. about the artistic abilities of Neanderthals), processes (such as new mobile communication technologies, a fantasy not so long ago), or of new distinctions with practical consequences (such as new tax regulations). We now have some criteria – evidence, processes, and consequences – with which to test variations in reality constructed by changing the parameters of communication. Dreams and hallucinations can seem very real, but they are not generally seen as "real"; their contents lack evidence, contain irrational processes, and have no practical consequences. Their contents also are not inter-subjectively experienceable or testable; that offers a fourth criterion. In literature or fantasy, we can "suspend disbelief" to see the *realism*, or relevance, of the content through comparison with real-world issues; the criteria for factual statements do not apply in those cases. We can accept that there was no real, that is, historically evidenced, Anna Karenina, good Samaritan, or Cinderella, but we can see the reality of the issues that are found in novels, parables, fairy tales. Literature creates realities in a "discussion world" that is entirely semiotic. Communication creates the "unreal" that we treat as real for that discussion world. Verbally constructed reality and ultimate reality are clearly not identical, just as perceptual reality and ultimate reality are different.

Reality as we construct it, of course, is of many sorts, as the philosopher Karl Popper asserted (1972, pp. 37 *ff*). Here we are concerned with the everyday reality of evidence, processes, and consequences insofar as they are *communicationally* constructed and intersubjectively experienceable. This implies a concern with the limitations of our everyday semeiosis.

Communication

Broadly, we can say that all models of human communication involve (1) a physical means of transmission of a signal including the energy transmissions from the cognitive processes of the sender through the nervous system to muscular execution in the creation of speech or writing, sound or light waves (physical contact in Braille or touch) and the "reverse" processes in the receiver[1], (2) some set of connected conventions for communication, and (3) some social context for communication including the interpersonal relations, previous discourse, and social situation of the participants in communication. (The well-known model of Shannon and Weaver (1949) is typical but does not contain the component of social context insisted on by many scholars subsequently.) It follows that, if we are to change the parameters of communication, we must consider those three areas as possibilities.

Physical means

Different realities in experience are conceivable, and in some cases possible. Our perceptions of reality are limited by our sensory limitations, as we have seen. Our reality would be different if our perceptions worked in nano-seconds rather than fractions of a second – we would notice small-scale changes to a decomposing flower (and ourselves). If we could detect high-frequency waves, we could perceive a world in sonar "vision" through echo-location in the dark like a bat. If we could detect electrical fields, we could detect living things in the way that a duck-billed platypus (*ornithorhynchus*) can (although proximity to power lines would be a problem). In actuality, we know that there can be different perceptual experiences of reality

[1] Or other physical mechanisms such as smell or touch for non-verbal semeosis.

through altered states of consciousness. Such states can be induced by drugs, sensory deprivation, and extreme forms of meditation or self-denial, for example. The issue here is whether the parameters of communication can be altered to create a different experience of reality. It should be obvious that the answer is "yes" at least as far as the physical means of communication are concerned– the first factor in communication considered above. We can change reality as we experience it by changing the perceptual input in such a way that our brains work differently (with drugs, for example), but we cannot change our perceptual range, although we can imagine such a change.

Communication systems

However, this paper starts with the assumption that a significant part of our reality – that is, reality as we experience it in everyday life, at the "macro-level" of experience we have described– is verbally constructed, and asks whether other verbally (or semiotically) constructed realities are conceivable– and what they might be like, that is, whether we might experience reality differently through *communicational*, rather than perceptual, means. (The emphasis is on language here but changing the parameters of communication systems implies different mechanisms of semeiosis.) This means considering the second systemic and third social factors in communication. As an example, we can arrive at different experiences of reality through art. Surrealist painters, such as Dali, attempted to release unconscious associations through distorted or juxtaposed images precisely in order to create alternative experiences of reality. In surrealism, the parameters of semeiosis are changed through images, their juxtaposition, and their associations, that is, through symbols and natural indices. It challenges what we consider to be "real". It should also be obvious that different communities and societies constitute different realities through their various norms and regulations. In some societies, for example, there are coming of age rituals which are absent in others, or which are found in other forms. Thus there can be different realities of **social context** also. But here we focus mainly on verbal systems of communication for the creation of reality and any consequences for social relations.

Verbally Constructed Reality

The assumption of a verbally or semiotically constructed reality seems relatively uncontentious, although the relation of language and reality is not. The relation between language and reality is controversial and has been a matter of debate since early Greek philosophy. Without going too far into that debate here, one might make a few points from a *linguist's* point of view.

Firstly, for the linguist, there can be no radical separation between language and reality, as seems to be assumed in some forms of empiricist philosophy, especially those concerned with a correspondence theory of truth; that is, where truth is taken to be a function of language on the one hand and the factual world on the other. That is the position of truth-functional semantics (e.g. Davidson, 2005). For the linguist, language **is** a reality and everyday reality is to a large extent linguistically constructed. Language plays a key role in our construction of, and orientation in, reality as we know and experience it. This means, first that truth cannot be a simple relation between language, on the one hand, and factual reality on the other, because what we perceive as reality depends to a large extent on language. This is obvious with ethical or attitudinal statements such as *Justice is good*, or *Economic growth is desirable*, where we must know the meanings of *Justice, good, economic growth,* and *desirable* in order to determine what constitutes our sense of reality in those spheres of existence and, hence, the truth of the statements, as well as any particular real-world states (or instances) that they refer

to. Indeed, we need to know what "truth" means here since there can be numerous perspectives on the above propositions. But even in the well-known Tarskian example (for the investigation of experiential/empirical truth) of "*Snow is white* if and only if snow is white" we need verbal means to determine what counts as snow and white in the external world[2] (and what does not) before we can determine whether the statement corresponds to the factual state of affairs, and *vice versa*; the statement and the factual state are asserted to be logically equivalent ("if and only if"). However, second, not all of our reality is concerned with statements, either factual or value-based. We have the realities of requests, promises, warnings, and so forth, in various sorts of speech act. Furthermore, as Foley (1997, p. 74) says, language has "colonized" our brains. Many brain functions have been adapted to language behaviour, which is, as it were, our normal *modus operandi* in all areas of life.

Effectively, our reality (i.e. reality-as-we-experience-it) is highly dependent on language. Another demonstration of this is that language is also a means to *extend* our experience of reality. For example, the use of striking imagery by outstanding poets such as Baudelaire, Rilke, or Pasternak creates new perspectives on reality. Also our understanding of the world is advanced through *scientific* discourse. The information that, for example, DNA analysis of hair samples shows that the so-called yeti or abominable snowman is a kind of bear creates a new understanding of this myth. The same could be said of any form of reportage. Consequently, an important role for linguistics (and semiotics more generally) is to address the issue of how language constructs reality at the everyday or "macro-level" of experience, and how it interacts with perceptual reality and new information. However, the *extension* or change of our reality through linguistic means is not the same as changing the *parameters* of our communication.
We leave aside here the physical basis of language behaviour in the mass of brain connections and their patterns which give rise to our experience of language and also the deeper or "micro-level" of scientific/quantificational understanding – a different form of reality accessible only to relatively few scientists.

Language, as we know it, exists at the "macro-level" – *our awareness of utterances and texts in ordinary speaking and reading*, although that "macro-level" may have several "layers". Thus, in everyday terms we can speak in terms of a rising and setting sun, or the sun being very bright or dull, or the sun breaking through the clouds, but know that our ordinary experience of the day is an illusion which does not correspond to the reality of the earth rotating about the sun, and that the relative appearance of the sun depends on meteorological conditions; it does not "break through" clouds[3], but we "know what we mean", that is, what experience is referred to. Degrees of scientific understanding, as well as varying perspectives, create these layers of reality. Our everyday experience of language is on the "macro-level" of spoken sentences or utterances, and written texts of all sorts. That verbal experience also involves various dimensions concerned with the form of utterances (their register or social association) and different layers of meaning (central or "connotational") and their function in current discourse. Those are things we are aware of on an everyday level. Of course, absence of scientific layers of understanding can be associated with verbally created myths, for example, about what happens to the sun at night or how it is "regenerated" each day, or how the physical world (e.g. of crops) can be influenced by propitiation rituals, which are realities for some communities.

[2] Davidson (2005, pp. 220 *ff*) moves toward this view with his idea of "truth in a language", but I think he still underestimates the role of linguistic conventionality. Truth in ordinary language statements, in my view, is a matter of coherence between statements and our everyday experiences rather than correspondence to "fact" (Rastall, 2011).
[3] In English, one speaks of *the sun trying to come out* on a dull day. Factually, we know this to be nonsense; but we all "know what we mean", that is, what is the everyday experience referred to.

To some extent we all live in a world of myths– who has not "wished upon a star" or crossed fingers for luck?

If we can accept that language to some extent constructs our everyday reality, then let us also accept for the purposes of discussion the idea of "model-dependent realism". This is explained by Hawking and Mlodinow as follows:

> According to the idea of 'model-dependent realism...our brains interpret input from our sensory organs by making a model of the outside world. We form mental concepts of our home, trees, other people, the electricity that flows from wall sockets, atoms, molecules, and other universes. These mental concepts are the only reality we can know. There is no model-independent test of reality. It follows that a well-constructed model creates a reality of its own. (2010, pp. 216–7)

Language is a way of modelling reality. This position is close to that of the mental models approach of Johnson-Laird (e.g. 1983, 2006) or Kintsch and Van Dijk (1983). It should be clear that the position adopted by Hawking and Mlodinow is also very similar to the idealism of the philosopher, George Berkeley (1710/1910) in which we can have no direct knowledge of the outside world, since all knowledge comes to us through the medium of our senses ("ideas" in his wide sense of the word). For Berkeley, *esse est percipi* (where *percipi* is also taken in a wide sense). For Hawking and Mlodinow, the dictum might be *esse est intelligeri*. As Berkeley made clear, this does not mean we must be solipsists, but that perceiving and understanding is our only route to knowledge of the external world. Linguists, who deal in communication between people and about the perceptual world, can hardly deny the existence of the external world or other people.

We have known for a long time that the way we perceive things depends on the construction of our brains. Thus, our perception of grass as green depends on the reflection of light in a certain wavelength in the spectrum, and the interpretation of that light energy in our brains as "green". We make an everyday perceptual model of the world in which grass is green; that model is also a function of numerous hermeneutic/semiotic processes, in the form of natural indices mediated through the senses. Naturally, there is some surprise when we find that grass is black in the dark or that other creatures see a different spectrum in which grass is not green, or do not see in colour at all. We name our colour experience *green* and *green* becomes a way of constructing our visual experience of plants, walls, cars, and so on, and metaphorically approaches to the environment or permission to act. The greenness of grass may seem to be a reality, but we are misled by verbal expression into attributing qualities in reality which are merely appearances. But similarly, our experience of language is also the construction of our brains. For example, what we perceive as discrete "speech sounds" is an interpretation of continuous sound energy by our brains represented as "speech sounds". Discrete speech sounds do not exist in external reality; they are constructions of our brains- again, reality is not what it seems.

Hawking and Mlodinow focus on the world of physical things as we perceive them and as we construct our understanding of them. They are less concerned with everyday interactions and communications which constantly update our everyday mental models, but their position can be extended to our everyday, macro-level experience. Thus, we have mental models of reality as we experience it, and hence expectations about it. Those models are constantly updated as we receive new information. That view is similar also to the philosopher David Hume's account of our belief in the continued existence of entities and states that we are not currently

perceiving. As Hume points out (1748/1968, pp. 189 *ff*), there must be some constancy in our repeated perceptions (e.g. of a garden) and some coherence in any changes; they must be explicable. If the grass in the garden looks darker in colour than our last view of it, we understand that the change is due to changing light conditions, for example. Hume's view implies a mental model for comparison to take place.

However, as we have seen, a significant part of the input for our construction of reality is verbal, as in the case of our sense of justice or economic growth (or conveyed by some other semiotic system, such as a warning light or car alarm). Furthermore, our way of *representing* our mental models is verbal. I can tell you what I know about grass, birdsong, or DNA analyses of hair samples, and the information can be added to, confirm, or disconfirm your mental model. Mental models are constantly updated and adjusted as we make sense of *perceptual* input. The appearance of clouds in a clear blue sky heralds a change in the weather, that is, our model of the current weather and how we expect it to develop. Clouds become an index of the weather in the perceptual world. But language does the same thing through symbolic means. An utterance such as *The bin men have been*[4] or *The wind has blown down the daffodils in the garden* serves as input which leads to an adjustment of our mental models, and hence expectations, and to actions such as taking in the rubbish bin or emotions such as disappointment[5]. It is this verbal input to, and organisation of, our models that Hawking and Mlodinow underestimate. It is, however, mentioned, but not investigated, by Maslin (2017, pp. 150 *ff*). Our sense of reality on this view is, as Rovelli (2015, p. 18) has said in a different context and we noted above, a matter of interactions between perceptual and/or communicational input and existing mental states. This is why we need to consider the role of language in effecting changes in mental models and behaviour.

There are certain things we know about verbal communication which are relevant to the discussion of language and reality. As noted above, we also know that utterances too – as we perceive them – are models that are dependent on our brain processes. As noted, "speech sounds" are constructs from sound energy as it is perceived and processed by our brains. But there are many other layers of modelling of utterances, the grouping of sounds and their identification as verbal units (morphemes, words, etc.), the mutual relations of verbal units, the qualitative values in different parameters of meaning. All of those processes involve huge numbers of verbal associations as well as links to the perceptual world. More abstractly, we can make models of those associations and their patterns to give an account of language. Such models range from the simple ideas acquired at school and the socially acquired aesthetic values ("educated", "posh", "northern", "lower-class", etc.) through to advanced theoretical models. In all cases, we have models for the purpose of understanding supposed (but unobservable) real-world models.

Another thing we know is that multiple "universes" are constructed verbally. When we discuss anything – a poem, housing, the cost of butter, democracy, evolution, belief systems in Papua New Guinea… – we make a "world" of verbally expressed ideas. In the area of scientific rational debate, Popper (1972:31*ff and 235 ff*) called that the "argumentative function" of

[4] This is an example of the verb *to be* carrying an implication of some fulfilled purpose as in *Father Christmas has been* (i.e. and delivered presents); *the plumber has been* (to mend a tap); *the woman next door has been* (to deliver a message). It is the implication which updates the mental model. If the binmen have been then the domestic rubbish has been removed and I can put the bin back in its usual place. My reality has been updated.

[5] In this sense, language is a "power" (Rastall, 2006); it has the capacity to bring about change...or be changed by the verbal input of others in the spread of verbal "memes".

language[6]. But it should be obvious that the creation of a verbal world goes beyond the critical discussion of ideas in science, or – as Popper describes – rational problem-solving and the control of the environment; it also involves all aspects of the social world. In all cases of the verbal construction of a "world" of discourse, we can start from an initial utterance, statement, or text, which is then commented on. The verbal starting point is "reified" or "objectified" so that it can be treated as a counter in a discussion from various points of view (See Strawson, 1971, and Mulder, 1993). Effectively, it becomes a citation form, or component of a discussion world. It is not just statements which can be the starting points for discussion worlds, of course. Any speech act – promises, exclamations, requests, and so forth – can be discussed.

When the French linguist Martinet (1962, p. 3) asserted that "function is the criterion of linguistic reality", for example, it is obvious that he was attempting to encapsulate the functionalist approach to linguistic analysis and particularly the idea that nothing is "real" in language unless it has a "function", that is, it is separately relevant to communication. But Martinet's view is clearly open to discussion. We can ask what is meant by "function" and "linguistic reality", and one can ask whether there are non-functional linguistic realities. Grammatical relations, for example, do not "commute" in the usual functionalist sense (they are not mutually substitutable in the same context like *present* vs. *past tense* in *we walk/walked*), and aesthetic register values or socio-linguistic regional varieties are "realities" but scarcely "functional" in the narrow sense. The point here is that the debate about functional approaches and the validity of a functional view of language involves taking Martinet's dictum *and creating a verbal discussion world around it*, not to mention discussion of the discussion (e.g. in a thesis or article, as here). We can discuss the *applicability* of Martinet's approach in linguistic description, but his theoretical concepts are non-empirical; they are verbally created reference points. The same would be true of discussing the literary or ethical aspects of the fairy-tale, *Cinderella,* and the concepts needed for that discussion, or the concept of democracy in political theory. These are examples of verbally constructed realities.

Yet another thing we know is that languages vary in their conventions for communication. Whatever one's position on linguistic relativism and universalism, any translator or speaker of more than one language will know many cross-linguistic differences. Among many examples, there is a range of possibilities for naming kinship relations as well as verbal means for expressing real-world roles (e.g. case and non-case systems) and perspectives on states and actions. Thus, we find four words for "brother-in-law" in Russian reflecting different relationships with no hyperonym – (*šur'in* ("wife's brother"), *d'ev'er'* ("husband's brother"), *z'at'* ("sister's husband"), *svojak* ("wife's sister's husband'") – , distinctions of elder and younger brother and sister in Chinese (*ge^{1}ge/ di^{4}di, jia^{3}jie/ mei^{3}mei*), as well as the aspectual distinctions in Russian, for example, *b'egat'/b'ežat'/pob'ežat'* – "run"– indefinite, imperfective, perfective). A person *is six* in English, but *a six ans* ("has six years") in French and *jemu (or jei) šest' let* ("to him/her (are) six years") in Russian. However we look at it, verbal conventions vary from language to language and *give different perspectives on reality*, for instance in notions of kinship or the ways actions are considered[7].

One does not have to accept the Sapir-Whorf view in its entirety to see that, if language helps to create our mental models and sense of reality, then differences in verbal conventions raise the possibility of differences in "model-dependent reality" due to variations in verbal

[6] "Argument function" is preferable as the reference is to rational discussion, not vexatious dispute. For a discussion of Popper's ideas, see Rastall (2017).

[7] This fact of linguistic relativity is one of the reasons why one should not accept an equivalence between language and fact, as is implied by Tarski (above).

conventions. For example, we may conceive of a "day" as the time between one midnight and the next midnight as in English, *day*, but a "day" might also be the time from one sunset to the next, as in the Jewish tradition or in Malay, where *malam selasa* ("night of Tuesday") means *Monday* night, that is, the period of darkness after sunset on Monday to sunrise on Tuesday. There can then be variation in what is considered a "day". Similarly, time may be considered in a 60-year cycle as in the ancient Chinese tradition rather than as a linear progression. (The issues around the Sapir-Whorf view are well discussed by Carroll (1973, pp. 1–34) and Lyons, 1977, pp. 245 *ff*).)

On the other hand, it is clear that in some respects the ways in which languages help to create our sense of reality are very similar. We have already considered imagery, discussion, and scientific information. Another obvious example is the naming of parts of the environment and the naming of states, events, and actions. Conventional distinctions in the way naming is done vary, as we have seen; concomitant determiners vary (articles and cases occurring with naming expressions), verbal aspect and modality (personal or impersonal) vary. But all languages, and hence the sense of reality of all people, involve *some* form of naming, and hence the classification of the world into discrete components. Thus, naming is one of the language features that contribute to our sense of reality.

Now, philosophers have long said that language is "misleading", and that language must be analysed to determine "what is really meant", that is, to arrive at a more accurate statement of facts. Ewing (1951, p. 37 *ff*) is one of many philosophers to explain their reservations. Empiricist philosophers such as Russell (1912/1940) drew attention to the difference between conventional expression and objective fact. Logical symbolisms such as that of Whitehead and Russell (1910) and Wittgenstein (1922) were intended to represent more accurately the structure of reality. While everyday verbal behaviour is clearly not "misleading" in that in practice people understand each other perfectly well for practical purposes, it is true that language is not an accurate reflection of objective facts and processes, as we saw in the example of expressions about the appearance of the sun. Linguistic conventions impose distinctions and perspectives on experience which are fundamentally arbitrary and vary from language to language. Examples include differences in tense or number systems and expressions for kinship. Language is for communicating everyday practicality and social relationships, not representing ultimate reality. Thus, we may take the view that the reality constructed by verbal means for everyday purposes does not correspond to actuality. In that respect, the necessary and useful conventionality of language is misleading in relation to physical reality and events. The physicist Rovelli, for example, states that "We slice up the reality around us into discrete objects. But reality is not made of discrete objects. It is a variable flux" (2016, p. 224). Rovelli is pointing to the fact that our perceptual abilities do not allow us to observe this continual flux of being, but also to the role of verbal conventions in our naming of parts of the world. That is, while conventionality in language is a practical necessity for advanced communication, it creates false impressions which are not consistent with ultimate physical reality. This, in turn, suggests that, if the parameters of verbal communication were changed, then we could see reality differently as a result. This goes beyond exchanging one set of conventions for another, as for example when we express time relations with respect to completeness/incompleteness/indefinacy as in Russian rather than by reference to relevance/irrelevance to the present as in the English distinction between present perfect and past. As with the construction of symbolic systems, we can try to think of different systems of communication.

Alternatives

Physicists try to consider alternative realities or universes, where different physical laws apply, for example, by changing the values of physical constants (such as the constants of the electromagnetic or gravitational forces). This helps in the understanding of the special features of our universe. One might ask whether we can imagine alternative verbal (or semiotic) realities in which communication does not have the central features of human natural languages. What kind of reality would be constructed? As Rovelli (above) suggests, we live in a world of named entities such as mountains, waters, valleys, and so forth. but the recognition of such entities is verbally constructed. There is a well-known (possibly provocative or deliberately paradoxical) Zen statement by the Song dynasty monk Qing Yuan Weixing, which is nevertheless instructive. It is quoted by Wang Keping as follows:

> Before I had studied Zen for thirty years, I saw mountains as mountains and waters as waters. When I arrived at a more intimate knowledge, I came to a point where I saw that mountains are not mountains and waters are not waters. But now that I have got the very substance, I am at rest. For it is just that I see mountains once again as mountains, and waters once again as waters. (2008, p. 132)

This is a philosophical perspective in line with the ideas of physicists working at an atomic or quantum level. On an everyday, superficial view, there is a mountain, but on reflection there is no mountain. I take this to mean (among other things[8]) that in everyday life we make a sharp distinction between subject and object, and we recognise objects in the environment as separate from us and distinct (as Rovelli says). We tend to accept the everyday verbal classification of things as a matter of convenience. However, by looking harder and expanding the object of perception into the widest context and questioning our preconceptions, we might realise that the environment is a continuity without discrete boundaries. Where does the mountain begin and the plain or valley end? What differentiates a mountain from a hill? So it could be said that no mountain or waters exist as discrete objects without our conventional verbal distinctions for naming– reality and conventional communication do not coincide.

Conventional verbal distinctions are rather "broad-brush" and involve a lot of indeterminacy. As Antal (1976, pp. 51–2) pointed out, we think of the Danube as one "thing", but of course it changes in many respects over time and all the time. "It" can be identified using our verbal decision to give a changing (broadly similar) reality a fixed name. This is a practical necessity; otherwise the name would change constantly with the changes in the river or we could not recognise *Danube* because of real-world changes, and *mutatis mutandis* for any other name. Furthermore, humans are part of the overall totality and not completely detached observers (again a position of idealist philosophers from Parmenides onwards), however convenient the "objective stance" may be in helping our understanding[9]. In linguistic analysis, it is important to remember that we are *internal* to the communication process and not purely detached

[8] Qing may have been referring to the Buddhist idea of the 'inherent non-substantiality' of phenomena. For many Buddhist scholars, phenomena are "just names" – see Dalai Lama, 1999, pp. 109 *ff* and hence ways of classifying the world of appearances.

[9] As Ewing (1951, p. 245) points out, we must in practice select a limited number of variables in any explanation or study in order to make progress. We cannot consider every phenomenon in its limitless number of respects. We thus see everything partially rather than its wholeness. For example, we might look at a sign from the point of view of morphology or its syntax or its connotation or its role in discourse, each separately for the purposes of analysis, although the sign actually takes its place in a mass of different associations in the totality of a language.

observers. We use our speech processing and knowledge of verbal associations to perform analyses.[10]

In other words, our verbally created reality and "real", ultimate reality are, as many philosophers and scientists have said, quite different, and language conventions are central to "divorcing" language from (ultimate, physical) reality. This suggests that one could have a form of communication which more exactly mirrored ultimate reality or that different forms of communication might misrepresent reality in different ways.

Other Communicational Realities

We know that other communicational realities exist, just as we know that there are other mental models for orientation in other environments. Thus, ants communicate and act collectively through pheromones. Clownfish living in coral reefs and bats operating with sonar have mental models of *their* environment in ways and using semiotic means that we cannot experience. We cannot be part of the communicative or environmental "worlds" of ants, bats, or clownfish– we can only try to understand them; their reality is different from ours. We cannot escape linguistic conventionality, but we can try to understand different verbally constructed realities. So, how can we explore them? Can they tell us anything about the limitations of natural languages in constructing reality?

One way forward is simply to imagine a language *without* selected features of real languages and another is the possibility of constructing small model languages as ways of exploring our assumptions[11] and other possibilities. That is, we can change the parameters of communication– at least in a thought experiment.

Two of the advantages of real languages are signs embodying abstract concepts and the mass of signs naming different identifiable objects in the world around us.

Abstraction

We could imagine a language *without* abstract signs/concepts. It would be a language without the signs– *fairness, kindness, compromise*, and their opposites, *injustice, cruelty, force*, and so on, and also without the signs *love, hatred, sympathy, indifference*, and so forth. A world without those signs would construct a reality in which there could be no sense of another as a person[12] and in which only material considerations existed along with instinctual responses to benefit/disadvantage, power, danger, opportunity, for example. There would be no constructs, such as "good" and "evil", "justice" or "morality", or the hypostatised entities that go with them– and without the discussion worlds about them. Thus, not only would we change the verbal system, we would also change social relations.

It is difficult to conceive of complex reasoning without abstract signs. The sign, *reason*, itself would not exist. The discussion world and this article would not exist. Our relations could involve bonding as well as competition for resources, cooperation for mutual benefit, and instincts to satisfy natural desires, as well as simple exploitation of connections of cause and

[10] The idea of applying "procedures" to a "corpus" of data in the ideal of the well-known American linguist Zellig Harris (1951, pp. 1–24) was never workable. All of his "shortcuts" in analysis showed his presuppositions about verbal reality stemming from being part of the communicational reality, rather than being a detached observer.
[11] For the notion of 'small model languages' see Rastall 2015 and the discussion in *Language under Discussion*.
[12] Of course, there have been racist societies in which the humanity of outsiders or those of different appearance has been denied, but also such notions as personality, identity, rights, values would not exist in the case in question.

effect in the way that some corvids can use tools (but not discuss them). It would be a language at a primitive stage of development with a limited reality without any discussion world or verbal problem-solving. Insofar as we could test those conclusions, it would be necessary to devise a notion of, for example, good or identity, using only non-abstract language, but that would be impossible as *good* or *identity* would be absent from a language without abstractions. Terms such as *good* and *identity* imply the capacity for abstraction in self-referential (or "meta-linguistic") language.

Again, we could imagine a language without question words *why, when, how*, and so on, and without the corresponding expressions to answer (*because, at, by*, etc.). Without an alternative means of questioning and reasoning, we would have a reality of factual states, but not objectively comprehended connections, or even the sense that questions can be used for exploration and discussion. This could be tested by trying to reason without those expressions. In fact, natural languages do have alternative means for questioning and reasoning through the juxtaposition of sentences. Thus, we could eliminate *why* and *because* but still say *Fred went home. Give me the reason*/ *Fred went home. He felt sick*. Such a juxtaposition involves intuiting the connection of consecutive utterances– in fact a feature of all language behaviour. A further possibility (described by Spector, 1979) is reasoning with juxtaposition and *unstated* premises. *You can't play outside. It's pouring with rain* contains the suppressed, unstated premise *You don't play in the rain/ You can't play when you will get wet*. So, simply excluding *words* for reasoning and questioning would not preclude reasoning, but merely make it more cumbersome because questioning and reasoning operate with the self-referential function to link, compare, and contrast statements into complex arguments.

However, we can imagine a language in which there could be no reasoning by juxtaposition in this way or any other, but only unconnected statements and directives– *Rain! ... Don't play.... There are bananas.... Climb the tree....* Similarly, we could imagine a language without counterfactuals of the sort *what if Napoleon had won at Waterloo?* or *what if Genghis Khan had died at the age of three?* The exploration of alternative scenarios can extend our thinking in the imaginary or fantasy world (as we have noted), but would be absent from a language without counterfactuals. We could not ask if alternative forms of communication could exist.

Naming

A reality in which we could not specify particular objects in the environment through *naming* would be a continuity in which we could perceive, but not refer to, parts of the world around us. One could imagine that a dog can "see" London[13] as a passing continuum of visual impressions, but a dog could not name benches or Big Ben or know what they were; they would be incomprehensible items in the environment. A dog, on the other hand, would create a smell map of London; a reality for the dog which is beyond human perceptual abilities and therefore a different reality from ours.

In many animal communication systems, there is no representational (or symbolic) function, so there is no naming. There is only expression (symptomatic function) and address (signalling function).[14] Thus, robins (*erithacus rubecula*) perform territorial singing as an address (warning) to other male robins and an appeal (attraction) to female robins. They express "anger" with twittering when their space is invaded, for example, by humans, but they cannot

[13] Or Naples. Quine (1960, p. 16) claims 'there is nothing linguistic about seeing Naples', but knowing what we mean by Naples – where does it begin and end? – and what it is to see it or name its parts are very clearly linguistic – how much do you have to see and from which perspective, tourist, sociologist, inhabitant...?

[14] I am using Bühler's (1934) classification of the functions of the speech act for convenience.

name (or consequently discuss) components of their environment, although they have a very good mental map of it. Like dogs, they live in a different reality from ours.

An intermediate case might be modelled by a set of basic naming expressions and the rule that any pair could be combined to create a metaphor for other environmental realities, i.e. we could have a small model:

> <{*head, foot, end, light, sky, land, water, day, night,...*}: (*x,y*) (*x R y*) = name>, where (*x,y*) is any pair of words and *R* is a relation of combination.

We could have, for example,

> *land water = lake, sky water = rain, sky foot = horizon, head foot = body, day night = time, land end = shore, water head = spring, night light = moon*, *land sky = world*, and so forth.

We can imagine a reality consisting largely of comparisons and linkages. Metaphors are, of course, very common means of communicating (Lakoff and Johnson, 2003). Metaphorical combinations of the sort in the above little model are in fact quite common in Malay, where we find such expressions as *anak mata* ("child of the eye" = pupil), *anak panah* ("child of the bow" = arrow), *kaki langit* ("foot of the sky" = horizon), *ayer mata* ("water of eyes" = tears) as well as combinations representing collectives or abstractions, *ayam-itik* ("chicken-duck" = "poultry"), *kursi-meja* ("chair-table" = "furniture"), *tanah-ayer* ("land-water" = "fatherland"), and so on. Metaphors involving some form of comparison or metonyms involving, for example, *pars pro toto* (e.g. *redbreast, goldcrest*) rapidly become forms of conventional naming and lose their force of imagery, but at least initially present a different signifier-signified relation (as also in the Malay examples), that is, one which is partially motivated by either a key feature or a point of comparison (see Ullmann, 1972, pp. 218–220 for a discussion), as opposed to a "natural" connection in the case of clouds and rain or an "unmotivated" connection of form and content (e.g. *sparrow, hill*). Metaphors also involve a degree of conventionality. The indirect (comparative) nature of naming through metaphors can be seen as one of the ways in which language is divorced from reality; that is, it is not a direct representation of reality and involves selected imagery; we have an imaginistic reality.

The limitations of our metaphor model are obvious. There are simply too many recognisable environmental objects to which one might want to refer; the set of non-metaphors has to be very large. However, we could imagine languages in which a relation of resemblance, R^{like}, was used more systematically, for example, for expressing specific types of action, or for description. For example, we could have a set of animal metaphors formed from naming an animal with the relation, R^{like}, and another expression such as an adverbial or verb:

> R^{like} *{squirrel in a tree, squirrel watching, cat near birds, two stags one hind, duck with ducklings, wolf with cubs,...}*

To express respectively *rush around, alert, stalk, strife, protective, aggressive*,... or verb + noun:

> R^{like} *{go elephant, go cockerel, go worm, go bird, go fish, go spider, go wolf, go antelope, go ibex, go mole...}*

To express respectively *lumber, strut, slither, fly, swim, scurry, lope, leap, clamber*, *burrow*... So, there would be sentences such as: *He (like) squirrel in a tree* ("rushes around"), *They (like) two dogs one bone* ("are in dispute/strife"), *She (like) go antelope* ("leaps"), ...where the relation *(like)* need not be expressed or may have a morphological formant such as an affix.

In such a language, reality would be constructed in images rather than directly through the arbitrary combination of a form with a referent. We could expect the role of proverbs and allusions in such a language to be far greater than now. Thus, there would be far more expressions of the type – *snake in the grass, garden of Eden*, and so on, for example, *Nixon on Watergate* ("mendacious", "evasive"), *moon in autumn* ("radiant", "beautiful"), *pilgrims at the Tabard* ("chance meeting"), *for them-Darwin on the Beagle* ("they made discoveries"), *for him – Napoleon at Moscow* ("he suffered a terrible disaster"), and so forth. Imagistic communication would imply knowledge of a world of texts and history for points of comparison and reflection, and hence a rich reality of connections and imagination for insight– one would see reality as if through the experience of Darwin or Napoleon. The limitation might be a lack of factual directness.

Further possibilities

On the other hand, of course, one could imagine a language in which there were no metaphors at all, where the sense of reality would be devoid of impressionistic connections and images, and hence severely factual and a more direct representation of fact (a sort of ideal of logical atomism, perhaps). In such a language, all naming would involve the unmotivated connection of form and referent as well as relations expressing objective relations of causation, correlation, successivity, simultaneity, certainty, probability, desirability, and so on, with ordered variables. Such a language could be expected to lack some politeness strategies and features of interpersonal discourse. One might have sentences such as CAUSE <Fred, disease, death>, DESIRABLE <we, leave> and not, for example, *Fred passed away after an illness or It's time we said our goodbyes*, and so forth. One way of testing such a model language would be to convert texts or discourse with metaphors into non-metaphorical language and to assess the effects of register and social/emotional response. This would give some measure of the difference in one's sense of reality by changing parameters.

An even more extreme case, possibly similar to that of ant communication is a society in which individuals are programmed to act in the interests of the collective and to act cooperatively. In such a community, any communicative interaction would be a direction to act, but there would also have to be a means of identifying those inside the collective as opposed to those outside the community. The individual would cooperate with any member of the in-group and attack any outsider, or work with others to repair damage or remove obstacles. We could imagine a set of signals for changes in the environment– *threat, food, damage*,– and directions– *left, right, back, front, homewards*– and the rule that any (unordered) combination of signs, one from the first set and one from the second, is possible. Thus, we would have such signs as *threat left, food back, homewards damage*, and so forth. On receipt of a signal the individual would then proceed in the relevant direction and act in the interests of the collective cooperatively with others– whatever action that might be. Part of cooperation would be to transmit the same message to other insiders. The reality here would be a purely material sociality in constant interaction, and acting by means of communication as a single organism.[15] Presumably, there would be very limited awareness of reality beyond those interactions or of the nature of that

[15] Research on ants at the University of Wurzburg suggests that ant communication has such features, or similar ones (see e.g. Franck *et al*, 2017).

reality; there would be no specification of the circumstances or rationalisation of them– just an active response. One would expect no self-awareness or sense of individuality.[16]

A perhaps more controversial case might be one in which the "principle of cooperation" in language behaviour (Grice, 1975) either did not exist or was reduced, that is, where the social parameters of communication were changed). Thus, there might be no effort to tell the truth or expectation of truth in the utterances of others. It is difficult to see how there could be any sociality in such a case or how any form of social exchange involving trust (such as payment for goods) could work. Every assertion would require personal verification and there could be no trust in others or requirement to be trustworthy. A more restricted case would be that in which all statements from one's in-group would be accepted as true, but all statements from any out-group would automatically be viewed as false. One can see that this form of prejudice is operative in varying degrees on the basis of ethnicity, ideology, or belief system all over the world. The nature of reality for Professor Richard Dawkins and a creationist are differently constructed and matters of mutual disbelief. Supporters and opponents of President Trump are so divided that they automatically reject and disbelieve each other's pronouncements. These are "dialogues des sourds" which point to different senses of reality on the part of opposing groups and the difficulties of imagining reality from different points of view.

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The above imaginings involve communicationally created realities which are "less than" what can be achieved in real natural languages – they show us what we *can* do with language as well as how our sense of reality might be limited without the known functions of languages. We have also seen that natural languages include some of the possibilities such as the use of juxtapositional reasoning and metaphor as a form of naming. They highlight aspects of actual languages and their features. We can also *try* to imagine communicationally created realities which go beyond the capacities of natural languages, or the variation in perspectives due to varying verbal conventions. As these constructed possibilities involve possibilities beyond human capacities, they imply differences in semeiosis in the means of transmission as well as in systems of communication and social relations.

To do that, we have to identify the current limitations of languages. For example, the feature of temporal or spatial linearity in speaking and writing respectively, or the difficulty of processing and responding to more than a couple of verbal inputs simultaneously are current limitations. Linearity seems to be imposed by the sound medium (or its visual representation) –that is, the axis of time. That may also account for the importance of juxtaposition of signs, and the difficulty of processing simultaneous verbal inputs. One result is that any complex construction of reality involves *consecutive* components, which must be stored in short-term memory for processing and connecting into a whole. Thus, in a logical argument such as *All linguists are inquisitive; some Peruvians are linguists; therefore some Peruvians are inquisitive*, the component propositions are presented consecutively, and this little bit of verbally constructed reality involves bringing together and intuitively associating the juxtaposed component propositions[17]. The consecutive presentation of reality is necessary even where the reality in question is a simultaneous, non-analytical whole, as in Martinet's stock example of *I have a headache* (e.g. 1989, p. 18), where my current experience of a headache is analysed verbally and presented linearly (as opposed to an inarticulate cry of pain).

[16] Was this the sociality of early humans in the social brain hypothesis (Dunbar, 1998) and before the exponential development of language functions?
[17] For the role of intuition in reasoning, see Ewing (1951, pp. 48 *ff*).

An article, poem, or political speech obviously involves far more consecutively presented components. What is presented, of course, depends on the components brought together by the speaker or writer, which the receiver may, equally of course, add to. To compare and contrast the texts of different speakers or writers involves a further process of consecutive presentation, comparison, and analysis, all of which also depend on the selections of the person doing the comparison. No doubt, that accounts for the length of articles, theses, and books. There is a certain randomness in all of that. While the energy input to verbal activity maintains linguistic organisation and low entropy, the exponentially many potential associations of any set of utterances mean that *discourse* becomes more entropic, and our constructed reality less organised and controllable, at least without substantial additional energy input to maintain an overall picture. The proliferation of responses on social media or in news media, and responses to responses, or the enormous number of scientific papers on similar topics can serve as examples of how discourse can split up in multiple directions with less overall organisation– and ultimate dissipation of the initial topic when new topics arise.

Suppose, however, that we could have a medium in which there could be a *simultaneity* of information components, and that we could process different inputs simultaneously- we would also need significant changes to our cognitive processes, which would have to work much faster on immediate connections. Our constructed reality could look very different. For example, we might have packets of information, each containing a simultaneous cluster of components linked by bonds (rather like chemical bonds in molecules). There could be different types of simultaneity. In one type, we might have a bond of constituency and structural organisation: for example,

<plant R^c *{root, stem, leaf, flower, petal, stamen, anther:* R^s*}*, where R^c = the bond of constituency and R^s is the bond of ordered structure for the members of the set. This would be a simultaneous cluster:

{root

|

stem

|

<Plant ---- R^c ---- *leaf* R^s *>*

|

flower

|

petal

|

stamen

|... *}*

This kind of simultaneity would provide a reality in which the composition and structure of a plant would be communicated as a whole without consecutive connections, and we would not

"see" plants as vague impressionistic wholes. Effectively, meaning would be an organised cluster of information on real-world relations well beyond conventional semantic features of the sort *cow: "adult, female, bovine"* describing verbal conventions, but where it seems unlikely that any speaker actually thinks (consciously) in terms of semantic features. One thinks of the mooing creature. A simultaneous cluster would create a reality that would be immediately multi-dimensional and highly "textured"; we would be aware of all the semantic components. Such a possibility is rather rare and weakly represented in natural languages. The nearest possibility is the case of "amalgams" (as Martinet, 1989:101*ff* calls them), for example, *went (go + past), cattle (cow + plural), first (one + ordinal),* in which we cannot formally identify the components, and the two component meanings are simultaneous. A more extensive use of amalgams would demand significant memorisation without the aid of formal connections. Languages with formally analytic parts have advantages in regularity and learnability, although amalgamation is found in languages like Russian and Latin in case, number, gender complexes (in Russ. *žena* – "wife"- *-a* simultaneously conveys "nominative, singular, feminine") with advantages for juxtapositional connections.

However, there can be many conceivable forms of simultaneity. For example, we could have a simultaneous relation of mutual exclusion ($R^{a/b}$)– again perhaps morphologically expressed. This could be used in our earlier example as *rain* $R^{a/b}$*play outside*. As another example, the "bonds" could be ones of explanation (R^{e}), combination (R^{co}) and cause (R^{ca}). So we could have a cluster such as:

<plant

R^{e}

/

[water

R^{co} --- R^{ca} --- *growth>*

sunlight]

(= *water and sunlight make a plant grow*)

or

<came

R^{e}

[Fred

R^{co} --- R^{ca} --- *money>*

Mary]

(= *Fred and Mary came about the money*)

In this case, there would be an immediate explanatory reality. Similarly, one could imagine all of the ideas of a poem, relevant parts of a text (such as a play), or a rational argument presented simultaneously as a cluster in the same sort of way that the "message" of a painting is a simultaneous, multidimensional, visual whole. Thus, the link between, say, Anna Karenina and her suicide in Tolstoy's novel could be expressed as a set of simultaneous components

connected by R^e, *<Anna's suicide: {loveless marriage, gender inequality, love affair, ostracism, isolation, dependency on Vronsky, separation from her child, morphine addiction, despair}; R^e}*. Reality here would be a simultaneous burst of components and relations. The relations in question would be immediately intuited rather than expressed as part of a consecutive development. Time would be contracted to a point and there could be a massive increase in information per unit of time giving an immediacy of understanding. (Tolstoy's novels would seem somewhat shorter.) Our awareness would be hugely expanded. Each unit of time would potentially bring more simultaneous multi-dimensional packages of information. Thus, the simultaneous explanation of plant growth could be combined with simultaneous clusters of information on the components *water* and *sunlight*, as well a further clusters of causative or disposing factors such as heat or environmental conditions– such as *heat, soil*, and so on. We would live in a virtual 3d world of information. The possibility of consecutive connected simultaneities would give more rapid reasoning or insight. For example, in the syllogism above, we might have the simultaneity *all linguists + some Peruvians* followed by the simultaneity *are inquisitive + are linguists* with the direct links *some Peruvians + are inquisitive* and the vacuous *all linguists are linguists*. This would change the grammatical parameters by removing the constraints that one subject is associated with one predicate in any given structure and that structures are consecutive.

```
All linguists   \      ---------------  /  are inquisitive

    +                   /    \                 +

Some Peruvians   /  ---------------  \  are linguists
```

If one could process multiple clusters simultaneously, they could be compared and contrasted in real time. Thus, multiple speakers could communicate on the same topic simultaneously, and one could assess their positions in a multi-layered picture instantaneously, as if many voices in a network could be heard and compared at once. Parliamentary debates would have simultaneous speakers with immediate comparisons in real time – a merciful reduction in length and rendering obvious any "dialogue des sourds". But we would also have a simultaneous world of contrasting perspectives and issues. One would see a question "in the round".

```
Speaker¹ -     communication cluster^a

                    |

Speaker²-      communication cluster^b

                    |                          →     multi-dimensional comparison

Speaker³-      communication cluster^c

                    |

                    |

Speaker^n-     communication cluster^n
```

Finally, the ability to produce and process multiple simultaneous complexes could create a kind of 3-dimensional reality in which we could verbally construct a picture of synchronous but different events or states. For example, in *War and Peace* Tolstoy's account of the battle of

Borodino is presented through the experiences of a range of protagonists which are simultaneous but quite different in perspective. Thus, we see the battle as Napoleon, Kutuzov, Nikolai Rostov, Pierre Bezukhov and others experienced it. Of course, these simultaneous events and states are presented consecutively:

Napoleon's view...; Kutuzov's view...; Rostov's view...; Bezukhov's view...; and so forth.

What we are imagining is that the different perspectives could be communicated simultaneously to present multiple superimposed images of the battle. This would convey a reality where different perspectives were linked as a simultaneous whole.

Napoleon's view ─ *Rostov's view*

│ │

Kutuzov's view ─ *Bezukhov's view*

Conclusions?

Obviously, these possibilities are well beyond current human capacities[18] and impossible in our current (human) media, but give some idea of how alternative realities or experiences of reality could be *communicationally* constructed through simultaneity as opposed to linearity. We would have a more multi-dimensional, organised, and textured experience than we get from natural languages. Each individual would be more integrated into the totality of the communication community and into the totality of being, perhaps with a reduction of the subject-object dichotomy. They give some idea of how one might explore the construction of reality through language and the limitations of language for our experience of reality. The "misleading" part of verbal communication would be greatly reduced. The sense of reality in imaginary simultaneous communication can be related to evidence, processes, consequences and comparison as we find them in consecutive communication and to some extent tested by setting up and exploring models; especially differences between imaginary models and actual verbal behaviour and converting between the two. Naturally, one could further explore other possibilities, such as languages without discrete signs (e.g. with variations of tones or rhythms), or alternative relations between the signifier and signified, such as *unum nomen- unum nominatum,* that is, where there would be no indeterminacy of meaning.[19]

Humans, as we have said, have a very limited perceptual range; for example, we do not perceive light in the UV wavelengths, or infra-sound, and we are not sensitive to sonar or magnetic fields, as some other animals are. So, we can only imagine what it would be like to experience reality with those abilities, and what it might be like to experience continuously variable information from, say, manipulation of magnetic fields. However, there are often complaints that language is inadequate to convey with precision experiences such as pain or emotional response. This inadequacy arises from the discrete conventionality and indeterminacy of linguistic signs. Continuously variable communication could calibrate private experience with communicative means, and so create a direct experience of another person's reality. It could

[18] Of course, very powerful computers can collate, compare, and extract similarities from thousands of texts simultaneously, as is done to bring together research information on a given topic, such as dementia.

[19] Unique designation does exist for selected classes in natural languages in the naming of persons, pets, house addresses, times and dates. It also exists in unique bar coding, car registration or identification numbers, and so on. But indeterminacy of reference is helpful in reducing memorisation costs. Imagine having a different name for each leaf on every tree.

also be used in interpersonal relations; that is, our social communication could be more precisely calibrated to emotional and attitudinal states.

Insofar as we can draw any conclusions from this exploration, we can say that it is possible to change the parameters of communication through thought experiments and small model languages concerned with systems, and that different experiences of reality are conceivable as a result. In some ways, we might imagine a form of communication which is closer to what we know of physical reality and processes, and in others we arrive at something which is more imaginative using metaphors. The physical means of communication would have to be different for simultaneous information to be transmitted and received. In other cases considered above, social relations and the context of communication are affected by changing parameters as when Gricean conditions are contravened. In all cases, we see some of the limitations of natural languages and ways in which we are potentially misled by verbally constructed reality. The above ideas are exploratory and are concerned with only a few possible ways of changing the parameters of communication, and so invite further exploratory thinking.

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The Past is Present and Future: Recurring Violence and Remaining Human in J. K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* Series

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Abstract

J. K. Rowling's Harry Potter series of seven novels span the historical period immediately before and after 9/11. Although the series does not deal directly with the events of 9/11, the Harry Potter storyline provides a powerful psychological representation of both the accelerating threat of violence and the intergenerational trauma. These themes are expressed and explored both through a variety of symbols and themes within the novels as well as through metanarrative elements. Ultimately hopeful rather than nihilistic, Rowling's series explores the challenge, importance and promise of remaining human in the face of overwhelming challenge and loss, as well as the results of the fragmentation and loss of self that occur when ethical human virtues are abandoned. Through the creation of a magical world that both echoes and embellishes reality, Rowling shows her keen awareness of events and her orientation toward tolerance, equality and humanity.

Keywords: Harry Potter, Voldemort, Rowling, terrorism, 9/11, post-9/11 literature, trauma, fragmentation

Introduction

J. K. Rowling, best known as the author of the world-renowned *Harry Potter* series of children's novels (albeit with great crossover appeal for adult readers), has been unusually outspoken via social media on the subject of terrorism and the political and social response to it. Unusually, that is, for an author of fiction, but Rowling clearly does not limit her intellectual role to that of a creator of fictional worlds. Rather, she is firmly rooted in and highly opinionated regarding the instability and difficulties of the current, real world. For example, her Twitter comments on the recent Finsbury Park mosque attack criticized British media coverage and the initial reluctance to label the acts of a white man's attack on Muslims as "terrorism". Soon after the event, Rowling tweeted: "The Mail has misspelled 'terrorist" as 'white van driver.' Now let's discuss how he was radicalized" (pic.twitter.com/HPw2czZiV9[1] cited by Coleman).

Throughout what is now a 20-year publishing history and elevation to the status of a worldwide phenomenon, Rowling's books about the orphaned boy wizard have won acclaim, crafting stories of wizardry school and battles against a dark wizard who threatens both the magical and non-magical worlds. Perhaps because of the level of acclaim they have garnered – and, of course, their popularity with children – the books have also fallen under adult scrutiny, more so than most other children's literature. Christian and conservative groups have opposed the series because of its "occult" subject matter and liberal ideals. The quality and sheer entertainment value of these books precludes the idea that they are the vehicle for a political agenda; however, there is no doubt that certain social values are embraced and embedded in the novels. A fair assessment of Rowlings' social messages as transmitted by Harry Potter may be the following:

> J. K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* saga can be considered, in a contemporary political context, a liberal-slanted series with a setting that includes corrupt government, resistance to injustices, ideal characters, and underlying messages about how to treat people. (Iafrate, 2009, n.p.)

There are definite allusions to real politics and history within the *Harry Potter* series. For example, in an interview published as "J. K. Rowling at Carnegie Hall" (2007), the author answers a question in this regard:

> Q: Many of us older readers have noticed over the years similarities between the Death Eaters tactics and the Nazis from the 30s and 40s. Did you use that historical era as a model for Voldemort's reign and what were the lessons that you hope to impart to the next generation?
> A: It was conscious. I think that if you're, I think most of us if you were asked to name a very evil regime we would think Nazi Germany. There were parallels in the ideology. I wanted Harry to leave our world and find exactly the same

[1] Rowling later deleted this quote, but her point regarding unequitable reporting and the reluctance of the media to ascribe the label of terrorism on a white man attacking Muslims stands: "I deleted my tweet about *the Mail* not calling the #FinsburyPark attacker a terrorist because many rightly pointed out that the headline was written before charges had been brought against him," she later tweeted. "I was angry at what I saw as victim blaming in their immediate coverage (the mention that an Islamist had preached in the area three years ago)". She continued: "I'm still angry about that, but I fully accept that in the immediate aftermath, it isn't reasonable or responsible for a newspaper to rush into judgement without knowing the facts".
Read more at http://www.marieclaire.co.uk/entertainment/people/jk-rowling-finsbury-park-516290-516290#f2083cRH95kXI5HK.99

> problems in the wizarding world. So you have the intent to impose a hierarchy, you have bigotry, and this notion of purity, which is this great fallacy, but it crops up all over the world. People like to think themselves superior and that if they can pride themselves in nothing else they can pride themselves on perceived purity. So yeah that follows a parallel. (n.p.)

Specifically, the Death Eaters emphasize a sort of racial purity, and their views, once nearly extinguished, reemerge within the time frame of the novels. Moreover, the writing and publication of the series of books spans the period in history both before and after 9/11, and the increasing number of acts of terrorism in the West. While Rowling's fiction does not engage directly or metaphorically with the events of 9/11 *per se*, she does depict, particularly in the later books (written and published after 2001), a world in which peace is repeatedly and increasingly disrupted by acts of terror. This world of fiction has both familiar echoes of and overt references to the violation of the peace in real life that characterizes the post-9/11 era.

Harry Potter as Post-9/11 Literature

The identification of the Harry Potter series as "post 9/11" literature is of course open to debate. The series was begun before the events of 9/11, and the action of the whole cycle of stories had been planned by the author prior to writing. Therefore, one can assume that the plot of the novels had been created prior to the events of 9/11 and that similarities to real-life acts of terrorism in the books are coincidental or are the result of the universality of such acts and their aftermath. On the other hand, the dark tone of the later novels, the consciousness that the characters are living in a new world in which the battle between good and evil is coming to a showdown, and the clear messages regarding the antecedents and after-effects of violence, all of these characteristics suggest that the later Harry Potter books were indeed influenced by the events of 9/11 and the realities of a newly dangerous world. Moreover, JK Rowling's narrative cycle encompasses and embodies significant insight into the roots of violence, reactions to violence and the ways in which these can be overcome – messages as highly relevant to a post 9/11 society as are Rowling's topical and pointed tweets. It has been remarked with regard to the effects of 9/11 on literature that ". . . the event was such a fissure in the history of the world that it dates books in a particular way – it is immediately clear whether a book is set before or after 2001" (London, 2011, n.p.). Engaging only selectively with the real world and focusing on the magical world with which it co-exists, the Harry Potter series is not perhaps overtly "dated" by the events of September 11, 2001. Nevertheless, a shift in the tone of the books may serve as a similar marker. Moreover, Rowling stresses the continuity and cyclical resurgence of violence and terror. These occur both at a personal level, as an individual deals with traumas of the past and present, and more broadly, at the collective level.

Post 9/11 literature is not an academic term, but one used to describe the literature that emerged after the terrorist attacks on the USA on September 11, 2001 that deals directly or indirectly with these attacks and their aftermath. Post 9/11 literature may also include literature which specifically references the emergence of altered social and political realities after the 9/11 attacks. Several critics cite both the difficulty of grappling with topics related to 9/11, and the importance of doing so – the topic is "unpossessable" but ironically also "must be possessed" in order for society, collectively, to move on (Versluys, 2009, p. 3). Narratives that fail to grapple with the events and aftermath of 9/11 may, after the fact, seem inappropriate, just as "Writing poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric" (Theodor Adorno, qtd. in DeRosa, 2011, p. 607). The value of post 9/11 literature seems to lie in the promise of understanding or resolution of the horrifying and inexplicable event that has occurred. Thus, the discussion of post 9/11

literature almost inevitably (and appropriately) includes a discussion of the psychological effects of both the literature and the collective trauma that preceded it.

Literature, it is acknowledged, is useful in transforming and defining trauma. A traumatic event such as 9/11 leads to a "collapse of a network of significations" – that is, the world is suddenly changed, and familiar things have lost their accustomed connotations (Versluys, 2009, p. 4). As a remedy, "a narrative is needed to restore the broken link" – reassigning meaning (Versluys, 2009, p. 4). Moreover, narrative can restart emotional processing and experiencing, whereas trauma may stymie this process:

> Traumatic memory must be turned into narrative memory (French psychiatrist Pierre Janet cited by Versluys)…. Trauma makes time come to a standstill as the victim cannot shed his or her remembrance and is caught in a ceaseless imaginative reiteration of the traumatic experience. Narrativizing the event amounts to an uncoiling of the trauma, an undoing of its never ending circularity: springing the time trap. (Versluys, 2009, pp. 3–4)

Others echo this opinion regarding the importance of narrative in a post-traumatic situation or setting. Interestingly, narrative seems to play a healing role distinct from and more powerful than that of mere memory:

> Cognitive scientist Kitty Klein argues that for psychologists tracking the value of narrative for healing trauma, "the emphasis is on how developing a narrative produces a new version of the original memory as opposed to helping a person understand what 'really' happened" (65). That is, rather than recovering lost memories or seeking mimetic repetition—two approaches privileged in contemporary trauma theory—we might be better served by producing new versions of the original. (DeRosa, 2011, p. 607).

In the case of JK Rowling's *Harry Potter* series and the attempt to cast it as post 9/11 literature, an obvious additional factor must be taken into account, namely, the fact that the *Harry Potter* stories are fantasy literature, and even, ostensibly, children's literature. As such, even though they are set in part in a realistic world, the novels are bound to veer from the predictable understanding of the topic and construction of the post 9/11 narrative – one which, like Don DeLillo's *The Falling Man*, deals directly with the event. Moreover, as fantasy, Rowling's work occupies a different arena in which themes related to social and psychological reality may be explored. This does not make Rowling's work less relevant as post 9/11 literature, but it does mean that her willingness to deal with socially engaged themes within a fantasy context (and with the ultimate triumph of good over evil) gives her work an additional advantage which a strictly realistic narrative would not have. Bruno Bettleheim established the "uses of enchantment" in his famous work by that name. For Bettleheim, "fairy tales give children the opportunity to understand inner conflicts which they experience in the phases of their spiritual and intellectual development, and to act these out and resolve them in their imagination" (Vom Orde, p. 17). I would argue that JK Rowling's *Harry Potter* novels, with their occasionally mature subject matter, vast crossover appeal, and grounding in imagination and the ultimate triumph of the hero, occupy a unique and valuable niche in the realm of post 9/11 literature.

Inter-generational trauma; history re-embodied

Violence and trauma, as embodied in the *Harry Potter* stories, are not the result of a single event occurring at a discreet point in time. Rather, violence is something that emerges, subsides, reemerges, and is rooted in earlier generations. As such, it re-occurs throughout the generations until ultimately resolved. This element by no means weakens the relevance of the novels in relation to the resolution of a single, discreetly occurring traumatic event. Rather, it encourages its broad understanding. Trauma is generational and recurring. It does not spring out of nowhere, and understanding its origins is vital to combatting or overcoming it (this is consistent with Rowling's early tweet following the Finsbury Park attacks – "how was he radicalized?"). In the Harry Potter series, as well, this is the question that Rowling poses and answers. In the process, she also answers an accompanying question – how and why was the hero of the narrative cycle *not* radicalized.

The concept of generational trauma emerged from the effects of abuse in residential schools on consecutive generations of North American indigenous children. The children of those taken from their parents and subjected to abuse and forced cultural assimilation in residential schools did not experience that abuse themselves. They did, however, experience the results – being parented by parents who were raised without their own, and being raised by parents who were traumatized and therefore less emotionally available. Of course, there is also considerable evidence that children who were abused are more likely to be abusers themselves, and that generational abuse is likewise a feature of generational trauma.

The concept of generational trauma is, of course, universally applicable. It is implicit in the trope of the orphan as hero, which Rowling clearly makes use of in the *Harry Potter* series. However, it is also embodied and writ large, as it were, in the emergence and reemergence of terror in the *Harry Potter* books as experienced by their eponymous hero.

Terror is present in Harry's past and present throughout the narrative cycle, and finally resolved at its conclusion. The terror in question, the result of the rise of a dark wizard, Voldemort, has its roots before Harry's birth in an era characterized by discrimination, intolerance, violence, and the subjugation of others to one individual's narcissism and hunger for power. It affects the world depicted in the novels, as both the magical and non-magical spheres are affected by terrorist-like violence. (There are also suggestions that wizards were implicated in WWII.) It affects Harry directly and particularly, as his parents are killed by Voldemort when Harry was a small child. As Harry grows up, he must grapple directly with Voldemort and ultimately overcome his power, while recognizing similarities and differences between himself and his enemy.

Harry must also grapple with the residue of terror and trauma within himself. Through the use of symbolic, magical elements, Rowling shows herself to be well aware of the congruence and co-existence of recurring acts of terror in society and of their involuntary reenactment within the individual who has experienced trauma – namely, post-traumatic stress disorder or PTSD. Much as the experience of trauma symbolically "makes time come to a standstill" (Versluys, 3–4), the experience of PTSD catapults the individual into the earlier time through powerful visceral memories and flashbacks. Unsurprisingly, according to psychologists, PTSD is also implicated in the passing on of trauma through generations. For example, "adult offspring of Holocaust survivors showed significantly higher levels of self-recorded childhood trauma... The difference [being] largely attributable to parental PTSD" (Yehuda et. al., 733). Psychologists find, moreover, that the specific cause of the inciting trauma is largely irrelevant

with regard to the outcome. That is, the specifics of history all but disappear and the effects on the psyche remain constant:

> I have worked with patients whose communist families lived through the period of American state terror known as McCarthyism; with Vietnam war vets and the children of veterans; with survivors of state terror and torture in Bosnia, Iran, Africa and South America; and with children of survivors of the Shoah. In each of these instances, one recognizes the legacies of psychic and physical trauma. There are striking similarities in the generational transmission of these terrors through psychological structures...indeed, the tyranny of history is perpetuated through these transmissions (Katz, 200).

Rowling is never heavy-handed in the application and representation of these and other powerfully affecting psychological factors, though she does, clearly, engage with them. Moreover, through the power of fiction to employ symbolism, metaphor, and to unite realistic and fantasy worlds, Rowling also accomplishes something else – she powerfully weaves the continuity of trauma throughout a fairly defined and realistic historical period, in a bid to explain it and ultimately overcome it.

Within the last hundred years, citizens of Britain have lived through the First World War, the Second World War, the scarcity and rationing that followed WWII, IRA bombings during the "The Troubles", the knowledge of 9/11, the subsequent war in Afghanistan, the 7/7 attacks, and the most recent terrorist attacks on London Bridge and Finsbury Park – obviously, the list is not exhaustive. Terrorist incidents in England since the 1970s number in the hundreds. As in the stories, violence and terror are present in the history and the present reality of people in Britain. It is a violence that always lurks in the present as a memory of the past and a fear for the future. Violence is absent for a time and then there is another wave, and another. Those who have been marked by it recognize it. In history, however, the various incidents throughout the decades are linked to different events and sources. In the fictional world of JK Rowling, which echoes and represents the emotional reality of those living among and in the midst of recurrent waves of violence, all can be ascribed to a common source that can ultimately be overcome.

There is great value in such an approach. First, following Bruno Bettleheim's thesis, a fantasy tale in which a great challenge is overcome can act as a psychological "training ground" for reality. Second, the psychological truth regarding recurring violence is acknowledged – the trauma of one generation, regardless of what its source may be, does indeed lead to psychological damage and deprivation in the next generation. Third, the link between the individual and the larger society is established. Just as an individual may experience PTSD following a traumatic event, and therefore be subject to the seeming recurrence of the trauma through flashbacks – remaining, as it were, stuck in time – so, for society as a whole, recurring waves of violence may represent a sort of society-wide PTSD or re-traumatization. Resolution, therefore, must take place on both an individual and a collective basis. Finally, the similarities between victim and perpetrator are firmly established in Rowling's novels, the all-important distinction between them being choice and the voluntary retention or relinquishment of one's human qualities.

Rowling uses various devices to explicate and elaborate upon the above themes and messages, while consistently engaging and entertaining the reader. A full discussion of these would likely fill a volume as long as the latter three *Harry Potter* books. However, the flavour of Rowling's

accomplishment and contribution to post 9/11 literature can be experienced and tracked through the following elements. Some are internal whereas others are elements of metanarrative, transcending the writing itself and commenting on the role that the Harry Potter phenomenon has had in the world and in community:

> Harry Potter's scar
> Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry
> The Wizarding World
> The Real World, History and the `Harry Potter Generation'
> Dementors and Horcruxes – Loss of Soul

Harry Potter's Scar

It is Harry's early trauma and Harry's scar that is the metaphorical path that leads the narrative to its resolution, which is also, of course, the resolution of the trauma itself. The scar is a visible manifestation of the dark events in the protagonist's past, as he sustained it during the attack by Voldemort that killed his parents; it is his scar that, throughout the novels, aches when his nemesis is near, or is trying to control Harry's thoughts, much like intrusive thoughts and flashbacks intrude upon the emotional scars of PTSD. Harry, of course, functions as a microcosm for the entire world that he inhabits, a world that grows more expansive and complete as the narrative progresses. Whereas at the start there is just Harry, his aunt and uncle and cousin, and the strange inhabitants of the world into which he is inducted, eventually, it becomes clear that the events that have affected Harry have also defined the experience of a whole generation, and promise to do so for the following generation (Harry's own) as well. In other words, the generation of Harry's parents as well as his own generation have been or will be people at war. Ordinary concerns such as schooling fall away in the last novel as the young wizards are called upon to reassemble the Order of the Pheonix, to combat that evil that has infiltrated their world and that of the Muggles (non-magical folk). Harry himself, and more specifically Harry's scar, is a flashpoint – an epicenter, as it were, of the past and recurring threat. As Dumbledore explains to Harry:

> It is my belief that your scar hurts both when Lord Voldemort is near you, and when he is feeling a particularly strong surge of hatred [. . .] Because you and he are connected by the curse that failed [. . .] That is no ordinary scar. (OP 164–6)

To anyone with experience of PTSD, the significance of Harry Potter's scar is both apt and eloquent. It is a physical manifestation of a past trauma and its ability to influence the present. Just as people with PTSD are suddenly transported into the past through reminders or proximity with people or places that evoke the traumatic event, so Harry's scar remains a liability, but one that "sleeps" and does not bother him all the time. When it wakes, however, it pulls him back into the past event, showing that this event has become integrated into his being and will reemerge, never leaving him in total peace. Much like certain viruses lie dormant in the body for many years, flaring up suddenly and creating illness, trauma can lie dormant in the psyche, reemerging suddenly when one is triggered by a reminder or reference to the traumatizing event. This is why trauma tampers with one's sense of time, and can in fact appear to contract time or fold it in upon itself: "Trauma makes time come to a standstill as the victim cannot shed his or her remembrance and is caught in a ceaseless imaginative reiteration of the traumatic event" (Versluys, 3–4). In PTSD, the victim cannot move on because he or she is constantly vulnerable to being called back into the past – in fact, to the worst part of his personal past – at a second's notice. In much the same way, Harry's scar is a point of pain that can quickly take

him back to an association with the initial, traumatizing event in his life – the moment when Voldemort fails to kill Harry, but succeeds in killing Harry's parents. The connection with the attacker is maintained through that point of impact.

The idea that the scar is also a point of communication between Harry and Voldemort is significant. As Voldemort rises to power again, Harry is bothered by pain in his scar more frequently. In *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*, it is discovered that Harry can sense Voldemort's emotions through his scar, and that Voldemort may be able to hear Harry's thoughts. Ultimately, we discover that Harry himself holds part of Voldemort's fragmented soul, and that the pain in his scar when Voldemort is near (as explained by Rowling in an interview) is because that fragment of Voldemort is struggling to pull itself out of Harry and rejoin the rest of Voldemort. There are in fact many hints throughout the stories that Harry may, if he chooses or allows himself, become much like Voldemort himself (for example, in the first book, he is given the option of being sorted into Slytherin house, from where dark wizards emerge, with the indication that he would do well and become powerful there. Later, on hearing the history of Tom Riddle – who becomes Voldemort – we realize that, like Harry, he was a lonely, orphaned boy, who once showed great promise at wizarding school.)

Harry's scar and his identification with Voldemort being evidence of trauma and the vehicle by which it is perpetuated, the similarities between Harry and his enemy take on a more complex and, I would argue, dual meaning. The connection between the victim and the perpetrator of an assault remains strong, as the latter is a powerful source of embedded trauma. For as long as the evidence of trauma exists and is not resolved, the one who perpetrates it has a sort of power over the victim – whether or not that individual is actually present. The mention of one's attacker, for example, or the presence of someone who looks, speaks or acts similar, can evoke a long-past event, making it present once again. (It is interesting to note that Voldemort has a particular talent for doing so, sometimes by design. Harry's scar serves a similar function, in a way, to the marks on the arms of Voldemort's followers, the Death Eaters. He can summon them through these marks, which are part of their bodies. The dark power of Voldemort is such that marks the lives of many, and in some cases this is voluntary on the part of those who are thus marked – they chose the association with him and continue to be compelled by it.)

On the other hand, there is certainly a message implicit in the fact that Harry Potter and Voldemort/Tom Riddle are so similar to one another, while polarized on the scale of morality – one hero, one villain. It indicates that, as Andrea Kuszewski points out in her 2011 article "Walking the Line between Good and Evil: The Common Thread of Heroes and Villians", there may in fact be relatively little difference between a hero or extreme altruist (X-altruist) and a sociopath. Both, for example, show disregard for the rules in their desire to achieve their goals. Moreover, both Tom Riddle and Harry Potter survive loss, marginalization, and persecution. On the one hand this might seem to encourage a measure of sympathy for the villain while still condemning his actions. On the other hand, the idea of the inevitability of evil action – the determinism – is powerfully rejected, and individual choice affirmed. This underlying belief influences Rowling's thinking with regard to terrorism and other forms of evil.

Finally, even though Harry's scar is a mark of what has happened to him and an ongoing connection to his trauma – one that he will bear for a lifetime – it is also iconic, and holds an undeniable aesthetic appeal as evidenced by the prevalence of artwork, costumes and temporary tattoos that commemorate it. The fact that the scar is in the shape of a bolt of lightning indicates that it is magical, perhaps numinous – a symbol of the boy's particular power

as well as his vulnerability. In fact, it is a representation of his power as the one whom Voldemort could not kill with a murderous spell, as well as a legacy of the power that nearly shattered his life, killing his parents and leaving him vulnerable and inextricably tied to the evil power in his past. The ambiguity of this – the fact that the lightning bolt scar is both a liability and a symbol of magical power – orients the reader to a potentially transformative relationship with the wounds of real life. They can be a source of weakness or of power. And, in the end, they can lose their power and become a mere mark upon the skin – as is the case at the very conclusion of the story cycle, which revisits the characters as adults. The last line of the last book is: "The scar had not pained Harry in nineteen years. All was well" (DH, 607).

Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry – The Limits of Sanctuary

As the inciting, "call to adventure" aspect of the Harry Potter narrative cycle, Harry is summoned to Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry. It appears, at first, to be a refuge, even a happy conclusion to the early sequence of the story that takes place at the Dursleys' home, a place where Harry is mistreated. Upon being transported to Hogwarts, amid the protest and attempted interference of his aunt and uncle, Harry accesses important advantages of which he was previously deprived. He is welcomed, wanted, accepted and understood. He is free, to a large degree, of the threat of abuse, which has been prevalent at his uncle's home. Moreover, at Hogwarts (and in the period of time, in the first book, leading up to his first term at the school) Harry's previously deprived social condition is reversed. In the Dursleys' home, he is disadvantaged and impoverished, sleeping in a "cupboard under the stairs" rather than a bedroom, his only possessions being the poor remnants of his cousin's castoff possessions. In other words, in the Dursleys' home (and by extension, their community) Harry is materially and socially disadvantaged, while at Hogwarts, this reality is reversed.

Once at Hogwarts (and in the period leading up to his entry, after leaving the Dursleys' home) Harry has material advantages in the form of a bank vault full of gold, more than enough to cover his expenses. He acquires mentors and friends, and eventually a surrogate family. He finds, as well, what he has craved the most – a connection with his parents, who had both attended the school. Moreover, while his obscurity within the Dursleys' home and social circle was extreme, at Hogwarts he is well-known, and favoured – sometimes to the degree that this arouses jealousy. To put it simply, the difference is one of privilege. Before entering Hogwarts, Harry Potter enjoys no privilege at all, while after entering Hogwarts, he acquires or uncovers significant privilege. Not surprisingly, Hogwarts becomes Harry's true "home".

The interesting factor with regard to Rowling's social messages in the novel involves a revelation that takes place with regard to the more complex role of Hogwarts. While it initially appears to be a haven, in fact it shares the same hard realities as the real world. It is inhabited by characters that cover the gamut of human qualities, both virtues and vices. In creating privilege, it also fosters prejudice – and even the version of racism found in Rowling's story cycle, the discrimination against "mudbloods" (wizards with one or both parents being "muggles"). While Hogwarts is protected by powerful charms and is considered as near as possible to a "safe" place, it increasingly becomes clear that it is not, in fact, safe. As the narrative cycle progresses, outside influences invade Hogwarts – abusive teachers, infiltrators, and the Dementors of Azkhaban, the wizarding prison – who remove happiness and ultimately one's very spirit (a metaphor, perhaps, for depression). Moreover, Tom Riddle emerged from Hogwarts, where he was favoured; undoubtedly, his evil grew there as his powers developed.

Through this primary setting for her work, Rowling shows that communities and their influences are ambiguous and, perhaps, ultimately amoral. Evil can arise from a place that is "good", and where positive values are transmitted. Likewise, experiencing deprivation and abuse, as Harry does at the Dursleys', does not lead directly to a tendency to do evil. Within the context of a post-9/11 world, in which the antecedents to terrorism are inevitably a focus, Rowling's message is important. Radicalization, she may be warning us, cannot be simplified and ascribed simply to one's nurture within a specific setting. The same settings may produce both good and evil – and frequently do. Nonetheless, privilege and deprivation, and one's response to them, undoubtedly play a role, albeit not a strictly deterministic one. Moreover, as was found to be true in the post-9-11 era, places previously assumed to be safe, like Hogwarts, are vulnerable to invasion, and this invariably produces a sense of disbelief and grief.

The Wizarding World and Echoes of Realism

Unlike in many other fantasy novels, the wizarding world in the Harry Potter books coexists with the "real" world of Britain in the late twentieth and early twenty-first century. The wizarding world and the world of the "muggles", non-magical people, are defined as separate spheres, but they certainly connect interact and co-exist. While some elements are pedestrian, familiar aspects of everyday life for the reader, the magical world exists just in the background. Then, the scene can abruptly shift, causing the magical world to become the foreground of the action instead. The impression is one of an extra dimension added on to everyday life. The scenes in which the muggle world and the world activated by magic come into direct contact are very compelling and numerous. They engage the childlike sense in perhaps every reader that the world is a little more than one has bargained for, or can clearly see.

At the same time, in the later novels, it is from the wizarding world that acts of terror are perpetrated, some of which affect the realistic, "muggle" world of Britain. These acts have muggle victims and are reported upon in the non-magical, muggle media. Through their suddenness and barbarity, these acts of terror clearly call to mind some that have occurred in the recent history of Britain and beyond. The presence of the magical world and the suddenness of acts of terror have an important factor in common – namely, the fact that they both demonstrate clearly that the world we live in day to day may be illusory in its simplicity and predictability. Magic and acts of terror may be on opposite ends of the spectrum as elements of fantasy vs. realism, but both reveal that they lurk within convention and routine. The acts of terror in the Harry Potter narrative cycle, which emanate from disturbances in the wizarding world but are strongly reminiscent of contemporary newsworthy events, tend to weave more tightly the web of associations between the two worlds.

The Real World, History and the "Harry Potter Generation"

The Harry Potter series has a stronger and more intimate connection to a real historical time period and movement through that period than do most other works of fiction. This is because of the overwhelming and unexpected success of the books (the original print run was only 1000 copies, 500 of which were destined for libraries; Rowling was advised to get a day job) and the emergence of a generation of children who self-identify and are identified as what Gierzynzki and Eddy call the "Harry Potter generation".

With whom or what, exactly, are these now-young adults identifying? We meet the eponymous hero of the stories when he is almost 11 years old. For Harry Potter, life has been overshadowed by the events that happened earlier, when he was a year old. The death of his parents and the

events that led to it have left an indelible mark on Harry. His present deprived circumstances are the result of the same initial event.

As Harry grows older, his awareness of the ways in which the present affects the past grows concurrently. His parents reemerge through magic, multiple times throughout the seven-novel series, which follows Harry from the age of 11 to almost 18 (with a flash forward to 19 years later). The image of Harry's parents is revealed to him in the mirror of Erised, which shows one's heart's desire. Harry discovers his ability to hear his parents' voices multiple times during attacks by Dementors and is at one point convinced that the sees his father, though it turns out to be Harry himself. Lily and James Potter, Harry's parents, make various other appearances through the memories of other characters, made visible through magic. These events and sightings accelerate the development of Harry's character, backstory and growth to maturity, while he remains focused on fighting off and eventually conquering Voldemort. The social and political context within which his parents had functioned becomes tangible and present, returned to present life, as Voldemort comes back to power. This necessitates the re-grouping of the Order of the Phoenix, a counter-terrorist organization that Harry's parents were a part of.

The timeline of the events of Harry's life extend further backward through the necessary delving into Voldemort's past, and into the roots of evil that extend beyond the lifetime of Harry's parents. Harry's search for horcruxes (objects that hold a part of one's spirit) takes him back into a time that is several decades earlier, to the aged Dumbledore's youth. The fact that, unlike many fantasy stories (as Boucquet points out) these events take place in real historical time, the fantasy element being always melded to realism, builds a stronger sense of the tangible historical context of the Harry Potter novels.

There are few dates mentioned in the novel to root the action to historical periods. There are no references to events such as the world wars, or, indeed, the 9/11 attacks – however, there is a strong intimation that the traumatic events perpetrated in British society were the result of dark magic, or, at least, that dark magic contributed. In the past, the wizard Grindelwald is defeated in 1945, the same year as the end of WWII. In the present, non-magical citizens of England are affected by Voldemort's rise to power. For example, at the start of *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince*, the British Prime Minister (unnamed) is advised that a murder and the toppling of a bridge are the work of a dark wizard.

Despite the fact that no dates are mentioned, there is from the start of the series a strong indication that the time frame shares the same "present" as its readers. At the beginning of the first book, for example, Harry's cousin receives for his birthday "a cine-camera, a remote control aeroplane, sixteen new computer games and a video recorder" (PS, p. 17). When Harry arrives in London, there are references to escalators, the ticket barrier on the Underground, and other ordinary and familiar elements of the everyday landscape powerfully interspersed with the magical ("This was just an ordinary street full of ordinary people. Could there really be piles of wizard gold buried miles beneath them? PS, p. 58.) There is every suggestion, in short, that Harry Potter lives in a time and place familiar to readers of the books. Therefore, the references to Dumbledore's youth would carry one back to the 1930s, while the flash-forward scene that ends the series might carry the reader briefly to the mid-2020s (with the assurance that all is well).

The "Harry Potter generation" of children are roughly the age of Harry Potter or a little younger (born in the1980s or early 1990s) and effectively, grew up along with Harry. The sequential

release of the Harry Potter books and movies and their overwhelming, international popularity built a keen sense of anticipation of every new release. Book shops and movie theatres capitalized on this by releasing books and movies at midnight, and hosting events surrounding the launch of each. These events punctuated the lives of many children of the "Harry Potter generation" and increased their sense of identification with the hero. It was not uncommon for young readers to line up (with their parents) for the release of a new book at midnight on the release date, then proceed to read all night and the following days until the book was finished. The emergence of social media in the early 2000s made communication about the books and movies, and the emergence of fandoms, possible. Children of the 'Harry Potter generation' effectively grew up along with Harry and his cohorts. Harry is young at the beginning of the series – 11 years old – and the early books were shorter and lighter, more suitable for younger readers notwithstanding frightening elements. Harry grows up as the series progresses, to age 17 by the end, at which time he is, because of degenerating social circumstances, effectively living the life of an adult. Young readers who read (or were read) the first Harry Potter books while in elementary school were, likewise, teenagers by the time the series ended. Overall, the Harry Potter phenomenon was almost unprecedented in the history of publishing. The keen anticipation of every new book and the close identification of children of a particular generation with the Harry Potter books has subsequently been confirmed by various phenomena – for example, the fact that the books, though they remain popular, do not have nearly the readership with children born post-2000 as they did with those born a decade earlier. Also, one need only consider the popularity of Harry Potter themed tattoos among adults in their early or mid-twenties to gauge the impact of the books on the generation!

Like Harry Potter himself, British children of the "Harry Potter generation" are situated within a historical context of violence. Their parents may have come to adulthood at a time when IRA attacks were common in London. Their parents' parents, certainly, would have been marked by the effects of World War Two, even if they were born in the 1940s or 50s, as the effects and vivid memories of that war persisted throughout their childhoods. Then, for children of the Harry Potter generation, 2001 brought the 9/11 attacks and subsequent British and American involvement in the "war on terror". The typical child of the "Harry Potter generation" would have been 8, 9, or 10 years old at the time of the 9/11 attacks – old enough, certainly, to be conscious of the event, though their perception and understanding of it would be very much that of a child. Subsequently, of course, came the 7/7 attacks in London. These took place the same month as the release of the last Harry Potter book – too late to affect the writing of the book, but not the reading of it. The Harry Potter movies, moreover, became "convergent with events post 9/11" (Hartmann-Warren, p. 48).

The violent effects that the children of the Harry Potter generation witnessed or were influenced by generationally were seemingly unrelated. In contrast, the violence in Harry Potter has a continuity, being constantly from a common source that subsides and then reemerges. This portrayal of violence and its effects as a reemergence of a force that is rooted in society and must be repeatedly beaten down and finally overcome represents if not a factual truth, a psychological one.

The familiarity that follows violent events inter-generationally stems not only from the inherent similarity of such events – the fear, the sense of being under attack, the constriction of civil freedoms – but also from the fact that traumas of the past are, indeed, alive in individuals of subsequent generations. In this sense, violence in society does, indeed, subside and then reemerge, from a single source that is as embedded in an individual and family as it is within a society.

Dementors and Horcruxes – Fragmentation and Loss of Soul

The third book of the Harry Potter series marks a sort of transition to a darker, more mature consciousness. Harry (and the readers that have followed his story from the beginning) is getting older. The danger in the story is becoming more imminent – and the wizarding world is beginning to impact the muggle world, through the reporting of an escaped criminal, Sirius Black. Black's escape and the rumour that he is looking for Harry lead to the presence of Dementors at Hogwarts.

These are magical creatures with no pretense of humanity. Profoundly frightening, they pull the joy out of humans they encounter. Ultimately, they perform the "Dementor's kiss", designed to suck the life or the soul out of a person. This is understood to be a serious punishment, tantamount to execution, at Azkaban, the wizard prison.

Harry is more profoundly affected by the Dementors than are his friends – in fact, he is considerably bothered by the fact that whenever they appear, he passes out from the strain of their presence. We come to understand that this is because he has experienced darker events in the past. As a teacher explains to Harry, "The Dementors affect you worse than the others because there are horrors in your past that the others don't have" (PA, p. 140). In other words, Dementors affect those most strongly who have suffered trauma previously. This is confirmed by the fact that, during subsequent Dementor attacks, Harry hears his mother and father being murdered by Voldemort. He even recognizes that his desire to hear them, distressing though it is, is preventing him from being able to counteract the Dementors (PA, p. 180). The antidote to a Dementor attack – one which Harry must master through the course of the book – is to create a patronus, a spell composed of joyful thoughts.

Metaphorically, of course, Rowling is describing depression and its association with past trauma. The more one has suffered in the past, the more one may be subject to loss of pleasure (anhedonia), anxiety, re-traumatization, and ultimately the unwillingness to go on living (the Dementor's kiss). The immediate first-aid measure is chocolate – known to produce endorphins and serotonin. Ultimately, though, the only defense is cultivating positive, happy thoughts, manifested in the patronus. For Harry, the patronus has a close association with his father. Near the end of Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban, when he has mastered his fear of the Dementors, Harry produces a stag patronus. Time traveling, he thinks he sees his father on the other side of the lake, producing the patronus, but really it is himself. This is the beginning of an amelioration of his loss. If he begins to find the strength of the father he has lost within himself, then the loss is addressed and Harry becomes truly less susceptible to the Dementors and all they represent.

It can be no coincidence that the fate worse than death – the Dementor's kiss – and the mechanism that is ultimately revealed to have given Voldemort his power – the creation of horcruxes – both involve the loss of one's soul. In one case, however, it happens unwillingly and represents a loss of self, life, and all agency. In the other instance – namely, in the stories, Voldemort's rise to power through the creation of horcruxes, which hold elements of his split soul – this same loss of one's human soul is deliberate and a source of great power, even immortality. However, it comes at the cost of humanity and the proof of such.

The phenomenon of the man without a soul, or whose soul has become fragmented, is that of a powerful vortex of energy, drawing individuals to him and remaking them in his image – hat is, fragmented – while binding them to his bidding. The narrative importance of this is clear –

Voldemort provides what the story cycle requires, a compelling, powerful and complex villain. The psychological truth of this aspect of the narrative, at the same time, is undeniable.

The damaged, narcissistic person – the abuser – has the unique power or ability to exert power over others by causing similar to analogous damage to them as well. This, of course, occurs in families and in communities, as the bullied becomes a bully, and the abused becomes the abuser, always seeking to fill in parts of what he lacks, and in the process causing damage and dependence in others. The danger of fragmentation and loss of self is confirmed through the example of other characters, invariably ones who have fallen to the dark side. Peter Pettigrew, one-time friend to the Potters but turned traitor, loses his identity, spending years hiding in the form of a rat and in fact unrecognized by anyone throughout most of the narrative cycle. When finally returned to human form, Pettigrew is forced to sacrifice part of his body for his master, and then in turn loses his dignity by groveling for it to be replaced (Klemt 117).

Another iteration of the loss of soul and identity is through the character Quirrel and his peculiar symbiosis with his master. In the first book of the series, Voldemort is little more than a spirit, having not yet attained the power to "come back" corporeally. However, he is able to exert influence and agency through his follower, Professor Quirrel, a teacher at Hogwarts. Quirrel is hesitant, timid, and indecisive – a shadow of a man. The reason, as is revealed near the end of *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*, is the Voldemort has been living through Quirrel, even to the point of sharing his body. Quirrel is obviously terrified of his master, who, even without a body of his own, orders Quirrel to accomplish challenging tasks and punishes him when he fails. One critic describes Quirrel as the "abused spouse archetype", even drawing a fascinating comparison with Rowling's life:

> Prior to beginning the writing of the Harry Potter saga, Rowling was an impressionable young teacher who went to a foreign country to gain experience and teach. She fell in love, married and bore a daughter to a man who became an abusive and controlling master. She fled back to Scotland, and the rest is history…. Prior to the beginning of *Sorceror's Stone*, Quirrel was an impressionable young teacher who went to a foreign country to gain experience to improve his teaching. He was seduced by a dynamic stranger who became an abusive and controlling master. He returned to Hogwarts in Scotland, and the rest is history. (Miller, p. 128)

In the *Harry Potter* series, particularly the latter books, Rowling demonstrates the ways in which this simple mechanism – the perpetuating and spreading of individual harm, dehumanization and fragmentation – is identifiable on an individual level as what we would call abuse, and on a societal level as what we would call terrorism. Ideologies that encourage fragmentation of a body of people or of a community – for example, racism and discrimination in its various guises – are the vehicles through which the harm to society occurs, but would be simply abhorrent to one who had not already experienced fragmentation within himself. Thus, the metaphor of the horcruxes – the fetishized objects in which one deposits bits of one's life force, and the loss of integrity that results – are used to explain evil, on both an individual and a societal level. Whether or not horcruxes are involved, however, the fragmentation of the individual will, body or psyche, or of the community, is identifiable with evil and harm.

Conclusion – the Way Out

Among some First Nations communities, there is a belief that one's current actions affect the next seven generations. This also means that we are affected by the actions of those seven generations back. Generational trauma takes on a new importance if we accept that this is true. Actions as far away in time can impact the present and, through the present, the future as well.

What solution is then possible? What are Rowling's thoughts on solutions or methods of healing society– as, clearly, there is an optimistic rather than nihilistic tone to the narrative, however dark it may become. Perhaps the answer lies in the words spoken to Harry by Dumbledore upon the death of his godfather. In this scene, Harry is devastated and furious at experiencing yet another abrupt loss of a parental figure. Dumbledore consoles him: "Harry, suffering like this proves you are still a man! This pain is part of being human –" To which Harry responds: "THEN – I – DON'T – WANT- TO- BE- HUMAN!" (OP, p. 824). The sentiment is understandable, but the word choice is hardly accidental in relation to the core themes of the narrative cycle. At a basic level, the *Harry Potter* series is the story of not one but two orphaned boys. One remains human, the other does not. Rowling's development of both characters and their back stories provides one answer to the implicit question of how acts of violence and terrorism can be prevented, while reinforcing the close two-way association between violence and individual trauma.

Hogwarts, Harry's alternate and compensatory "home", in various ways ameliorates his early losses by meeting his needs for "mirroring" and identification with his dead parents. At the age of 11, he sees a reflection of himself at the heart of a loving family in the mirror or Erised. Later, memories of his parents are accessed through Dumbledore, Snape and others – it is essential, according to Hippard, that these memories are not uniformly positive, but are realistic – for example, through Snape's memories, Harry witnesses his father as a teenager bullying the unpopular Snape. Thus, Harry is able to avoid the trap of idealizing the deceased parent (Hippard, p. 92). Voldemort, on the other hand, lacks these advantages or any compensation for the early loss of his mother, and this early, unresolved loss leads to his dehumanization:

> Voldemort's family ... suggests a dysfunctional, tragic environment in which to raise a child. His mother's death and the absence of supportive caregivers predispose Voldemort to overwhelming feelings of loss and abandonment. Mastering his legacies of catastrophe, along with the resultant emptiness and insecurity, proves impossible. Harry suffers some neglect, to be sure, during his days living under the cupboard at the Dursleys, but he is not psychologically overwhelmed, even as additional trauma occurs (Hippard, p. 88).

As a result, Harry is capable of "… integrating the broken pieces and losses of his life, rather than enduring a fractured existence" (Hippard, p. 94). The results of a "fractured existence" are, as we have seen, devastating not only to the individual himself but to all those around him, extending, dependent on that individual's scope of power, to the broader community or even the world.

It would seem, then, that Rowling's own answer to the question she posed via Twitter regarding the Finsbury Park terrorist – "How was he radicalized?" – must involve a lack of influences as well as a surfeit. It must involve loss and deprivation, perhaps spanning generations, that has not been addressed. It must involve fragmentation and loss of one's self, or the extensions of self: family and community.

The power and the inherent appeal of the Harry Potter series lies at least in part in its ability to meld fantasy and realism. The humour and imaginative qualities of the series have hardly been touched upon here, though they are considerable. But at the root of the powerful appeal of the books for a generation of children (and adults) may have been the fact that they were *lived* rather than just read. Children and parents lined up at midnight at bookstores or movie theatres to be the first to experience the next installment of Harry's adventures. As the world changed on September 11, 2001, readers of all ages, in any country, found a true reflection of their experience in the darkening and increasingly dangerous world of Rowling's magical/muggle hybrid portrait of England. As readers became aware of how the world's challenges intersected with their own present and inherited traumas, Harry Potter, "the boy who lived", became a model of the way out, and of what it means to remain human.

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Locating and Relocating Cultural Engagements in a Transnational Age

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Abstract

How do the visual phenomena of Japan live in transnational communities today? How can they embrace international tropes, while retaining the distinctly local sensibilities of *Yamato-e* "Japanese picture", cursive *kana* calligraphies, or *ukiyo-e* "floating world pictures"? This paper examines the apparent paradox of these questions through the divergent projects of Katsushika Hokusai, Kusama Yayoi, and Masami Teraoka. It examines the ways each has developed their own synthesis of the conventions of local and international cultural currencies. It finds, within Japan's transnational sources and relocations of visual arts, the retention of distinct (and distinctly independent) sensibilities of Yamato pasts. It also argues that the significance of their projects reaches far beyond any Japanese location, finding purchase with viewers across the globe.

Keywords: *Yamato-e*, intercultural learning, creative practice, nationalist art, transnational art worlds

Art Historical Context and Questions

An intimate relation between "national character" and art history was first posited by Heinrich Wölfflin (1864-1945). In *Italien und das deutsche formefühl* (1931), "Wölfflin revisited well-established contrasts between northern and southern [European] cultural traditions, aligning them with innate differences in national character rooted in race" (McWilliam, 2008, p. 416). Since the 1868 Meiji Restoration, Anglophone accounts of the arts of Japan have repeatedly considered Yamato visual culture as a cohesive entity, framed in portmanteau constructs of "Japanese art history" or "Japanese art" still current in survey titles today (Stanley-Baker, 2000). In retrospect, Wölfflin's proposition seems problematic. It provokes multiple questions: is there a singular and homogeneous entity we can recognize as "Japanese art"? Where is Japanese art? When is Japanese art? Who makes it? Who does it belong to? Who or what does it represent? These questions generate more subtle issues: just what is it about any object of aesthetic or cultural significance that that might allow us to classify it as an "artwork of Japan" and how does one define what a "Japanese artist" might be?

More recent perspectives have situated these arts more discretely. Accounts of *ukiyo-e*, for example, situate the phenomenon securely in Edo period[1] *chônin* "townsman" communities, and acknowledge parallel threads of other Kanô and Rinpa studio modes. Also, since the nineteenth century fashion for "Japonisme", these arts have spread from Japan into international settings, especially in Western Europe and North America. The transnational presence and intercultural significance of the arts of Japan have become increasingly evident in more recent years, as art collections and exhibitions have manifested in public international settings. The outcomes have been richer intercultural appreciations of Japanese sensibilities, and reciprocally, opportunities for artists from Japan to travel and explore border-crossing and culturally hybrid art projects.

Craig Clunas argued that there can be no monolithic phenomenon of "Chinese art" – one might more reasonably refer to fields of "art in China" (Clunas, 1997). The same might be said for the diverse and heterogeneous fields of the arts of Japan. This article challenges the validity and usefulness of Wölfflin's paradigm, either for identifying psycho-geographic fields of aesthetic identity or character, or for explaining the projects of artists as different as Katsushika Hokusai (1760-1869), Kusama Yayoi (b. 1929), or Teraoka Masami (b. 1936). It argues that however these artists and their objects might be associated with Japan or Japanese cultural contexts, each individual's creative pathway operates within fields too complex to define in such singular, mono-dimensional terms. Their works are more multi-dimensional than narrow categories might suggest; they draw on sources more diverse than those of Yamato traditions alone; and they acknowledge the existence of these aesthetic phenomena in worlds both in, and well beyond, the Japanese archipelago. This article examines three specific questions of its artist case studies: in what ways are their art projects located within Japanese contexts? In what ways do they draw on conventions and sensibilities of more diverse origin? And in what ways have their projects become relocated into international settings today? It suggests that challenges to notions of national homogeneity are located not simply in the aesthetic diversity of arts in Japan but are embedded in the nature of the creative practice itself.

[1] The Japanese historical periods referred to include: Heian period (794-1185CE); Kamakura 1185-1333); Momoyama (1568-1600); Edo (1603-1867); Meiji (1868-1912); Shôwa (1926-1989); and the current Heisei period (1989-present).

Art Object as Transnational Phenomenon: Katsushika Hokusai's Fuji Pictures

Images located in place and time: The "Great Wave" as local emblem

A century before Wölfflin's claim of innately informed national art histories, their validity was belied by the eclectic projects of Katsushika Hokusai. Hokusai's mature work was clearly located within familiar geographic, temporal, and aesthetic settings, sustained both *ukiyo* "floating world" and precedent *Yamato-e* sensibilities, and was immensely popular with Edo viewers of the day. Simultaneously, however, it also drew on traditions from beyond Japanese shores and found broad international approval within 40 years of his death. Today, Hokusai's *Kanagawa-oki nami ura* – Under a wave off Kanagawa – is arguably the world's best-known example of "Japanese art".

For Hokusai's Edo public, his popular *Fugaku sanjûrokkei* – Thirty-six views of Fuji (c. 1830-1832), to which the Kanagawa composition belongs – were primarily representations of place. They were captivated by the convincing sense of "here and nowness" of these diverse views of the mountain. In fact, each composition fixed its view on two locations: the ubiquitous profile of Mt Fuji, and the geographic locality from which it is viewed. The work's title tells us we are viewing the mountain from a point just above the waters of the Sagami-nada Sea, looking north across Sagami Bay toward Kanagawa ken – Kanagawa Prefecture, located in the Kantô region south of Tokyo. The Sagami-nada Sea was a busy route and a rich fishing ground, and for Hokusai's Edo viewers, a constant reminder of the precarious relationship between the mainland coast and the open waters. Hokusai's public could situate the vista between the well-known towns of Kamakura to the east and Hakone to the south-west, both posting stations on the Tôkaidô highway between Edo and Heian-kyô (now Kyôtô), and popular subjects in the *ukiyo-e* art of the day. Hakone was celebrated for its *onsen* hot pools and clear views of Lake Ashi and Fuji; Kamakura was famous for its temples and shrines and historical associations. Both places evoked spiritual allusions and nostalgic social or historical associations in the popular Edo imaginary.

These Fuji compositions were *meisho-e* – pictures of famous places. Each composition was both temporally and geographically fixed (albeit shaped with a little artistic license) against both the distant mountain profile, and the viewer's own Edo world. Each work depicted iconographies, landmarks, or activities of the Edo hinterlands. The wave itself was a reasonably common pictorial subject – familiar on *ariso byôbu* "rough seas screen" paintings. In Hokusai's case its convincing majesty was enhanced by the many detailed studies of water movement that viewers could see in his popular *manga* sketchbooks. His viewers' attentions would have been sustained also by the *asobi* "play" of his inventive skills: the curving face of the wave and the stressed hulls of the sea-craft echo the smooth curve of the distant slopes of Fuji, and the shape and snow-capped peak of the mountain are repeated almost literally in the smaller wave at foreground left. Hokusai sustained that visual play between mountain and foreground forms in all but two of the forty-six views of the series. His public would have delighted at the way this lightness of wit acted against the obvious gravity of the scene. More importantly though, they would have celebrated them as recognisable emblems of a Yamato world in the early nineteenth century.

The Fuji compositions as intercultural phenomena: Hokusai and his cultural and artistic roots

In the past, psycho-geographic perspectives might have explained the nature of these works in arguments for regionalist causality that posited that geographic locations impacted on the psyche of artists and their publics in ways that informed geographically conditioned outcomes.

Hokusai's project is more complex than these determinist explanations might suggest. First, he was the most relentlessly independent, versatile and inventive of artists, and it was his innovative powers that appealed to his public, not his capitulation to geomorphic forces. Second, everything in the "Great Wave" composition, even the actions of the waves, is a construct, from its hovering viewpoint over the sea to its diminution of overlapping forms. Hokusai's many other representations of water, including "great wave" motifs in his earliest coastal landscapes, suggest that the artist was acting on his rich knowledge of coastal phenomena, and capitalizing on their potentials for inventive re-combination into a range of pictorial outcomes.

Besides drawing on the conventional subjects and devices of his own Edo art communities (Katsukawa studio figure constructions and Rinpa school rhythm, for example), Hokusai also embraced sources from earlier Japanese traditions. His closely observed genre scenes of ordinary people at work or play drew on *Yamato-e* practices established as early as the Heian era. His bucolic representations of the Edo hinterlands in the Fuji views maintain an air of nostalgia resonating the Imperial collections of verse that were to inspire his final, unfinished, series, the *Hyakunin isshu* – literally, "one hundred people, one poem each" (Bell, 2017a). In doing this, Hokusai was sustaining poetic allusions to sensibilities of *mono no aware* pathos still valued by his educated Edo patrons. These allusions sustained memories of rural life and values that, for many Edokko, were firmly established in their imaginary, rather than in daily urban experience. They juxtaposed poignant motifs of the fragile transience of life against the imposing fixedness, permanence, and unavoidably locating status of Fuji, a landmark associated with legends of immortality and timelessness.

While maintaining timeless themes from Japanese locations, each of Hokusai's Fuji views also embraced conventions of Chinese or European origin. From much respected Chinese precedents Hokusai adopted transparent tonal veils, corner-directed asymmetries, and stacked spatial devices interspersed by hazy layers of mist. The atmospheric suggestion of his monochrome compositions was much enhanced by his enthusiasm for Western technology in the adoption of *Berorin* (Berlin) Prussian Blue pigment. From his study of European landscape prints he also embraced a taste for the empirical perspective devices of diminution of scale and linear and aerial perspectives for constructing deep space pictorial projections, or for juxtaposing with the Chinese stacked devices to emphasise a tensional relation between suggestions of depth and the flat picture plane. Viewers from Hokusai's own world enjoyed the playful integrations of conventional devices, atmospheric allusions and representational potentials afforded by his assimilation of media devices from other worlds. This relocation of representational tropes of other cultures into his own multi-referential invention offered viewers in Hokusai's own milieu new insights into their own local settings, and enhanced their imagined engagements with more bucolic pasts.

From local to global icon – the "Great Wave" today

Today, Hokusai's ubiquitous wave has become an international phenomenon, its status transformed from "local to global icon" (Clark, 2011, p. 50). It is recognized by viewers in Paris, France, New York, or the Antipodes. It appears in cartoons and high art images alike, and in contexts as disparate as Fiji currency or Dutch porcelain designs. It is the only fine art work to have attained *emoji* status. The "Great Wave" was selected by the BBC and the British Museum as one of the 100 most significant objects in two million years of human history (MacGregor, 2010). Its composition has become something of a "readymade" motif (Guth, 2015, p. 180), the adopted subject of street art murals in Camberwell in London, Newtown in Australia, or Georgetown, Washington DC. The wave's flying foam lacework transforms into

a flock of 230 gulls in the TWA Flight 800 tragedy memorial at Stony Point Beach, New York (Guth, 2015 p. 195). Its global icon status is secured in guest appearances in popular media – towering over Herge's Tintin in a scene from *Les Cigares de Pharaon* (1934, Clark, 2011, p. 56) for example, or re-appropriated back into a Japanese context in Nara Yoshimoto's 1999 *Slash with a Knife* (Clark, 2011, p. 61).

Each of these "reconstructions" resituates Hokusai's wave into a new pictorial and socio-cultural location, imbuing it with new relevance to its different context. Simultaneously, each manifests sensibilities or culturally conditioned values that lay at the heart of Hokusai's own world, sustaining enduring reminders of the fragility of human achievement in the face of the overwhelming presence of natural forces. In Herge's composition, Tintin's cry of "Nous sommes perdu, Milou!" ("We are Lost, Snowy!"), and juxtaposition of fragile wooden craft against ominously rolling waves, echo Hokusai's theme, "that man is dwarfed by the elemental power of the sea" (Clark, 2011, p. 50). The sentiment is echoed in the words of Dominic Sword, resident and painter of the "apocalyptic mural" in Camberwell: the "Great Wave" is "something very primordial, something very powerful, something that just rises up from nature and wipes everything else away. And yet is just made of water…its here and then its gone" (Clark, 2011, p. 56). Hokusai would have appreciated the subtle irony of Sword's observation.

Nara's work explores triple layers of irony. Elements of Hokusai's original motif persist, re-inventing themselves into the falling locks of hair of Nara's threatening killer. Nara's re-appropriation of Hokusai's wave into the portrayal of his anonymous character employed American Xerox technology; subsequently, the series was copied into an edition of Fujifilm prints, and impressions of this reworked wave can now be seen in London's British Museum. Most recently, in January 2013, the global American Xerox Corporation was acquired by the Tokyo (formerly Edo) based Fujifilm corporation. The *kijin* "eccentric" Hokusai himself would have enjoyed the turn of events. In its synthesis of old and new worlds, the work retains a pictorial echo of Japan, though Nara's collection of original works is housed in in Santa Monica, California (Clark, 2011, p. 60).

The TWA memorial is perhaps the wave's most deeply affecting appropriation; the one that most fully relocates Hokusai's original sensibilities into a new context. For Hokusai's middle-class Edo public, the conflation of *uki* "floating" and *yo* "world" into *ukiyo* resonated a lightness of spirit, a careless attitude to the material matters of mundane life; in its earlier Buddhist context, *ukiyo* referred to a "fleeting, sad and sorrowful world" in this life. That sense of pathos, maintained elsewhere in the Japanese sensibility of *mono no aware*, a "sensitivity to the pathos of things", underpins the wave's transposition to the memorial. Its imposing granite wall is located on the coast, between John K. Fitzgerald airport and the Atlantic waters in which the aircraft was lost. Each of its rising gulls reminds viewers of the 230 passengers and crew members who died. Their bodies were never recovered. The granite wall stands as a permanent reminder of each ephemeral life: it "creates a visual and verbal narrative by a site-specific mapping that reflects the bereaved families' national backgrounds, perceptions of the event, its significance, and their own role as its guardians" (Guth, 2015, p. 198).

Beyond its spiritual, social, or cultural relationships with Fuji or the Japanese coast, the wave image is as likely to be seen on gallery walls in New Zealand, Australia, Boston or London as in Tokyo. The 2017 Hokusai blockbuster exhibition at National Gallery of Victoria in Melbourne drew daily queues of viewers lining out of the museum onto the street and enjoyed an extended season. The transnational presence of Hokusai and the wave is sustained in a near constant flow of publications on his work. One way or another, it has found its way to almost

every corner of the globe. In most instances, its identity has become melded into its new context, conditioned by the agendas, values or sensibilities of new viewers. But in almost every instance, its transpositions have sustained some quality of Hokusai's original concept, and some aspect of the work's original appeal. In their *asobi* playfulness or their humble gravity, each reconstruction carries traces of its original conception forward to engage new viewers as it did its Edo public in 1832. The "Great Wave" has become an object of global, cross-cultural, significance.

Kusama Yayoi: Artist as Transnational Identity

Locating Kusama in Japan

Like Hokusai, contemporary artist Kusama Yayoi is generally located as a Japanese artist by birth, by art education, and by early aesthetic inclination. Her early enthusiasms for the visual arts emerged during her childhood in Matsumoto, Nagano Prefecture. She studied *Nihonga* ("Japanese painting" drawing on conventional Japanese artistic devices, processes and media) at the Kyoto Municipal School of Arts and Crafts in 1948, then immersed herself into independent explorations of its affordances. Today, she is best known for colourful polka dot and architectural installations that find precedent in Japanese tastes for *kazari-e* decoration and Kamakura and Momoyama period ornamented interiors. These "Japanese-style" qualities are underpinned by an intensely self-reflective auto-ethnographic process informing sustained habits of artistic reinvention (Bell, 2017b, p. 11).

Kusama's Matsumoto works found early appeal with local collectors (Bell, 2017b, p. 10), and attracted the critical attentions of Japanese surrealist poet-artist Takiguchi Shûzô (1903-1979) and painter-photographer Abe Nobuya (1913-1971) (Bell, 2017b, p. 11). These explorations capitalized on the potentials of Japanese notions of *asobi* "play" and disinterested exploration "within the affordances and constraints of the media of painting, sculpture and performance" (Bell, 2017b, p. 13). Even in her New York years, Kusama's apparent unconventionality found sympathetic parallels in Japanese notions of *ki* "eccentricity" or *suki* "refined non-conformity". The obsessively repetitive, self-immersive, nature of her working process finds precedent in the meditation practices of Zen Buddhism. Like Hokusai, Kusama also sustains distinctly local sensibilities of earlier Heian period taste. A repeated titular theme in her mirror room works is the firefly. The motif finds rich precedent in Yamato pictorial arts, verse, and prose – most notably in Murasaki Shikibu's (c. 978 – c. 1016) Heian period court novel *Genji monogatari* "The Tale of Genji". Its brief but glowing existence provided a metaphor for the ephemerality of beauty, pleasure, and life that echoed Buddhist sensibilities consistent with Kusama's own poignant detachment (Bell, 2017b, p. 14).

Re-locating Kusama in the world

If Kusama's early projects were located within Japanese contexts, she has been even more widely appreciated in international circles. Her departure from Japan in 1957 was marked by her vocal rejection of her Japanese world as "too small, too servile, too feudalistic, too scornful of women" (Frank, 2017). From 1958 she immersed herself in the fertile, and surprisingly diverse, creative fabric of New York. She found a sympathetic world in New York modernism, in Greenberg's preoccupations with the painter's medium and the flatness of the canvas, and Rosenbergian tendencies to the theatrical alike. These tropes offered ways of capitalising on her *Nihonga* background and obsessive, immersive work habits to explore new directions in the construction of pictorial space and surface, scale, and mark-making. Kusama located supportive partnerships in New York – with the critic and minimalist artist Donald Judd, for example, and, on a more personal level, with the surrealist Joseph Cornell. The art-world

accommodated her shift to sprawling accumulations of gestural mark and paint executed on a huge scale. Many of the *Infinity Net* paintings covered entire walls. The endlessly repetitive surfaces of rhythmic networks emerging from her obsessive immersion in her practice offered viewers something of a parallel experience of hypnotic absorption in North America and Europe alike. As her successes blossomed she explored the self-refining potentials of modernist reductionism and minimalism, embraced increasingly overt feminist themes, and made excursions into the surreal, theatrical, and self-promotional. The works rapidly found a place in the New York, and subsequently European, art markets. To all intents, Kusama had self-consciously relocated into the New York, and the world, stages.

An artist in the interstices: Kusama, Tokyo and the world

From 1973, Kusama's health and career became increasingly fragile. Subsequently, her locational presence became more ambiguous. From 1977 she has resided in the Seiwa Hospital for the Mentally Ill in Shinjuku, Tokyo. After an apparent hiatus of several years, Kusama recommitted to her art practice with renewed energies from the 1980s, experiencing something of a creative rebirth and transnational "phenomenon" status. Though her workplace was situated in a local Tokyo studio, her work has become most publicly located in the theatre of the international art-world. She maintains management representation in London (Victoria Miro Gallery) and New York (David Zwirner Gallery) as well as with Ota Fine Arts in Tokyo. Through these corporate channels she maintains a close supervision of the public face of the Kusama identity in the public media and in her exhibitions and publications. The last three decades have seen a procession of international retrospective exhibitions from the Institute of Contemporary Art Boston, to Gagosian, Robert Miller, and David Zwirner Galleries in New York, Austria's Kunsthalle Wien, Tate Modern in London and the Centre Pompidou in Paris.

Kusama's international exhibitions profile has been complemented by a growing number of international public commissions, each of which has enhanced a more permanent public presence for her art in centres beyond Japan itself. Permanent *Infinity Room* installations can be visited at the Mattress Factory, Pennsylvania, Phoenix Art Museum, Arizona, HUMLEBÆK in Denmark, The Broad in Los Angeles, and the Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, in Rotterdam. Her works feature in public collections all over the world, in The Museum of Modern Art (New York), Los Angeles County Museum of Art, the Walker Art Centre Minneapolis, Tate Modern, Stedelijk Museum, Centre Pompidou, and the Utah Museum of Fine Arts.

Kusama's transnational presence has been enhanced even more profoundly by a carefully programmed representation of her work in print. Exhibitions are accompanied by beautifully presented catalogues, their content ranging from retrospective evaluation, through critical commentaries, to comprehensive pictorial representations. At time of writing, her New York distributor and publisher David Zwirner listed 29 separate publications about Kusama and her work (Zwirner, 2018). These high quality volumes offer specialist accounts of the mirror works, or the sculptures, for example, works by and about Kusama for children, autobiographies, or coffee-table picture books. Like Hokusai's wave, Kusama's networks, polka dot confections, and mirrored infinity rooms have attained a ubiquitous international presence, recognizable and accessible all over the globe. Her work is celebrated by critics in New York, Melbourne or London, and as enthusiastically by 4-year-old children in a small town New Zealand preschool (Bell et al., 2016). In her late 80s, Kusama's work remains transnationally popular.

Kusama's artistic presence is also maintained in Japan itself. Her achievements were celebrated in the awards of the Asahi Prize in 2001, Order of the Rising Sun in 2006, the Praemium Imperiale in 2006, and Person of Cultural Merit in 2009. She enjoyed a 2016 "homecoming" in the *Yayoi Kusama: The Place for My Soul* exhibit at Matsumoto City Museum of Art. In an even more substantial "repatriation", Kusama's life work, more poetically, her "eternal soul" (Betts, 2017), has found a home in a dedicated 5 story museum in Shinjuku, Tokyo, operated by the Yayoi Kusama Foundation. Even these phenomena reflect her transnational currency, however: the Matsumoto show was curated by Kusama's London dealer Victoria Miro, and media share these events with international audiences to cement her presence in the wider world. Kusama's work thus occupies transnational localities. It is enjoyed by global audiences, and, like Hokusai's wave, evokes sensibilities beyond those of their Japanese precedents. The works of both artists have made a major transition from the local to the global that challenges any representation of, or monolithic classification as, "Japanese art".

Inside Masami-za: Teraoka Masami and the Artist as Transnational Actor

Locating the artist in Japan

Teraoka Masami's heritage is Japanese. He was born in Onomichi, in Hiroshima Prefecture. At age 9 he witnessed the explosion of the atomic bomb in the skies over Hiroshima (Charisma, 2017), and subsequently experienced the presence of American and New Zealand occupation forces in the south. Though his early serial projects were completed after his arrival in Los Angeles in 1961, he consciously situated their themes and pictorial constructions within a Japanese context:

> My McDonald's Hamburgers Invading Japan and 31 Flavors Invading Japan Series in the 1970's and AIDS Series in the 1980's reflect my cultural heritage from Japan. The Ukiyo-e or wood block print tradition represents my cultural identity. Geisha and samurai images I use are a way to depict traditional-thinking Japanese people. (Teraoka & Hess, 2018)

For Teraoka, these *ukiyo-e* conventions represented a pictorial "format of my national identity" (Teraoka, in Charisma, 2017). For Japanese and American viewers alike, they firmly located his constructions in Japanese settings. In Teraoka's mind, he was drawing on resources familiar to him: the iconographies and pictorial devices of print conventions were local territory. If the motifs of kimono, *geta*, *shimada* coiffures, *kabuki* poses and *nirami* "crossed-eye" expressions in his *31 Flavours in Japan* and *McDonalds Hamburgers Invading Japan* seem clichéd, these works did deal specifically with issues of concern to Japanese communities: culture shock and the invasion of Western multi-national commercial institutions. How, for example, did one eat a hamburger with chopsticks? Or with one's hands? And what was the impact of changing consumption on the etiquettes, diets, and traditional ways of life? These were locally significant questions.

By the time Teraoka had arrived at his major HIV AIDS series, the issues transcended Japanese locations and assumed a more universal significance, but the pictorial locations in Edo period conventions had become even more fixed. Each of his large watercolour paintings assumed the compositional asymmetries, *bokashi* colour-fields, patterns and rhythmic linearity, figure-ground relations, or flowing fields of calligraphy of their woodblock precursors. Each adopted the seals and cartouche signatures, labels, and titles precisely as they appeared in the print medium. His subjects sustained Edo-period iconographies: languid *yûjo* "prostitutes", *kabuki* actors, or the "vehicles of the supernatural" (Kajiya, 2001, p. 86) of clouds, dreams, *yûrei* "faint

spirits", or *obake* "ghosts". Teraoka's adoptions displayed strong affinities with the theatrical style of Utagawa Kunisada I (1786-1865). His emblematic images of *bijin-ga* "beautiful woman pictures", *obake*, or *kabuki* actors locked in frozen *mie* poses suggested parallel themes between Edo period decadence and the apocalyptic narratives of HIV.

Significantly, in employing profoundly affective motifs of the gruesomely scarred Oiwa,[2] *mononoke* "avenging spirits", or the skeleton spectres of AIDS victims, Teraoka translated the Yamato themes and sensibilities of earlier eras into his own time, and for new audiences (Bell, 2014a, p. 12). He drew clear parallels between immediate transnational issues (international consumerism, loss of cultural integrity, or decadent hedonism and moral decay) and the provocative display of *kabuki* and resigned melancholy of brothel themes located in floating world sensibilities, reaching even deeper towards the "Buddhist notion of a final age of *mappô*, a lawless time of degeneracy and corruption" (Bell, 2014a, p. 14).

Relocating the artist in liminal territories

Alison Bing describes the underpinning sensibilities of these allusive vehicles in *kabuki* theatre terms, as *Masami-za*, the narrative art-theatre of Teraoka Masami (Bing, 2006, p. 22). Yet even in his student years, Teraoka's sensibilities had embraced broader Western conceptual frameworks. His early art education at Kwansei Gakuin University in Nishinomiya had focused on Western art history and Christianity. He left Japan in 1961 to live in Los Angeles and studied for BA and MFA degrees at the Otis Art Institute between 1964 and 1968. From 1980 he has worked in Oahu in Hawai'i. Today he defines himself as "Japanese-American", or more specifically, "Japanese by birth, a US citizen by decision, and international by inclination" (Bing, 2006, p. 25). This liminal status reflects in recurrent themes of outsider or alien status in his works. His preoccupations with those outsider figures of the floating world – prostitutes, actors, *rônin* "masterless samurai", or voyeurs – and self-representations of the artist as displaced person echo themes of alienation in the modern world explored also in the contemporary literature of writers like Haruki Murakami (Bell, 2014a, p. 12). These pictorial characters repeatedly reflect the liminality of his own status: "like the *ronin*, or masterless samurai, of post-feudal Japan, Teraoka seems to be out of sync with his place and time. One cannot imagine a more disparate juxtaposition of cultures than that presented by Japan and Los Angeles" (Kadvany, 1980, p. 26).

Despite their *ukiyo-e* guise, Teraoka's pictorial themes are globally situated rather than uniquely Japanese. Ironically, he employs the popular Edo device of *mitate* – loosely, "parody", or "thought-provoking metaphor" – to re-situate earlier Japanese motifs against these contemporary, and transnational, issues. Today, his observations on the "invasions" of McDonalds and Rocky Road on Japan describe broader themes of over a century of Western incursions into Japanese affairs, and of a reciprocal impact of Japan on the West, evident in the nineteenth century rage for "Japonisme", or in the Californian craze for sushi as a representative flavour of Japanese taste. His early critiques of the cultural impacts of globalization, consumerism, and the HIV crisis were underpinned by universal themes: timeless issues of the consequences and rewards of freedom and desire, of responsibility, action, and consequence (Bell, 2014a, p. 12). Through the 1990s, Teraoka's pictorial encounters between Caucasian and Japanese phenomena have become more densely layered, embracing emergent themes like the intrusions of digital technology into intercultural

[2] Oiwa is the central character in Tsuruya Nanboku IV's tragic 1925 *kabuki* drama *Yotsuya kaidan*, "ghost story of Yotsuya". Oiwa, wronged by her husband Tamiya Iemon, her face disfigured by a poisoned facial cream, dies a painful death. She returns as an *onryô* vengeful ghost to wreak painful retribution on her husband and his lover's family. (Sorgenfrei, 2015)

encounters. His work of the 1990s enhances Japanese sources with the sensibilities of Dante Alighieri (1265-1321), Picassos *Guernica*, or Goya's *Caprichos*, melded into a subversive "grim pageantry of the Inquisition" (Heartney, 2006, p. 157). In extending from *ukiyo-e* formats to Italian quattrocento altarpiece formats, Teraoka has also embraced a more densely packed syntheses of multi-cultural themes in the construction of Hieronymus Bosch inspired "dichronistic palimpsests" of the extremes of Christian and Buddhist hells revealed in layered motifs of war in the Middle East, burqa, Teraoka's "virtual inquisition" (Heartney, 2006, p. 181), the Buddhist "Chicken Torture", or spiritual or political corruption, in paintings conceived as "mirrors to society – and to ourselves" (Clark, 2006, p. 9). Increasingly, these complex compositions represent narratives of timeless significance in the actions and characters of the present. Motifs of Bill Clinton and Monica Lewinsky offer apposite counterpoints to the biblical narrative of Adam and Eve and construct of original sin (Bing, 2006, p. 146). Dante's purgatory is an appropriate setting for motifs of the "perversion of faith" of clerical abuse, human cloning, or pharmaceutical dependencies of the modern world (Bing, 2006, p. 150). Teraoka may use age-old conventions, but his art is very firmly in the present: his compositions serve to filter "a contemporary image stream through various past styles and approaches" as socially corrosive media of "astute satire" (Miles, 2008, p. 470). His discomforting phenomena provide hybrid signposts that have been able to sustain and transfer "the unconscious collective memories" (Assmann, 2011, p. 220) of metaphors, sensibilities and values deep within the Japanese cultural consciousness for new and globally situated viewers today.

The contrived realism of the *kabuki* popular stage has provided Teraoka with an appropriate setting for unpalatable narratives of moral chaos and sexual abuse (Bing, 2006, p. 20). It holds a theatrical mirror to pictorial constructions in which "the timeless themes of kabuki – insatiable desires, identity crises, unnatural disasters, and unchecked power – seem timely all over again" (Bing, 2006, p. 25). The spatial contrivance of the stage, its expressive *mie* "frozen pose" conventions and dramatic narratives provide appropriate settings for Teraoka's pictorial parodies, poignant reflections on appetite, desire, hedonism and the pervasive sorrow of the world, questions of intercultural understanding, moral degeneration, or *mono no aware* pathos and *sabi* reflections on impermanence and transience. The exaggerated gestures and wild-eyed stares of Teraoka's actors emphasise their detachment from real life. That detachment positions Teraoka's characters within the confusions, ambiguities, and compromises of the "permeable borders between East and West", reflecting Teraoka's own sense of the "inbetweenness" of "existing between and within American and Japanese cultures" (Inefuki 2007). Teraoka's childhood experience of occupied Japan is made more universally tangible for the present time in which the "anxiety of enjoining the global and the local, the dilemma of projecting an international space on the trace of a de-centred, fragmented subject, cultural globality is situated in the *in-between* spaces of double frames" (Bhabha, 2004, p. 309).

Perhaps the most remarkable quality emerging through Teraoka's project is the self-consciousness of his engagements with art historical traditions and their implications for the way viewers appreciate questions of cultural identity. He "is an artist who is inherently compelled to break barriers and push beyond borders – both through his medium and artistic style, as well as the heady subject matter" (Hughes, 2015). That risk-taking élan seems to fire his curiosities and inform the freedoms he brings to melding the threads of otherwise discordant art histories and cultural traditions into new, provocative, and "enticing historic aesthetic vocabularies" (Hughes, 2015). Those vocabularies inform the ways he has addressed new ways of recognizing, not a singular national character of a phenomenon of "Japanese art" so much

as a fluid, changing, "collectivity of cultures involved in a process of exchange and difference" (Sussman, 1993, p. 15) and reciprocal engagements with international art histories.

Conclusion

In retrospect, Wölfflin's argument for an innately informed national art historical character seems problematic for Japanese contexts. Certainly, each of these artists had lived and learnt in Japanese locations, and had intimate knowledge of the traditions of *Yamato-e*, *Nihonga*, Buddhism, *kazari-e*, or *ukiyo-e*. For all three, however, internationally located resources of Chinese, Dutch, New York, or Italian Renaissance origin inform their projects consistently enough to generate new, multi-dimensional, hybrid projects. For each, this synthesis of local and global means has generated aesthetic engagements that find meaningful purchase in communities across the globe. Thus, while embracing narrative themes and sensibilities of *Yamato-e*, Hokusai's resource to Chinese and European conventions melded new devices into his repertoire, and informed his syntheses of novel, complex, compositions. He was not unique in this. Chinese precedents had been much respected in Japan for over a millennium. By Hokusai's time, the Western devices of linear and aerial perspective and chiaroscuro were widely available (if not universally adopted) for *ukiyo-e* designers. Hokusai's compositions were not simply "Japanese" in character but hybrid syntheses of conventions of diverse cultural traditions. Within 40 years of their manufacture, his unique visions of his own world had found rapid popularity amongst West European collectors. Though today he is arguably the best-known of Edo *ukiyo-e* artists, his appeal seems universal, and even beyond the ubiquitous "Great Wave", his achievements enjoy global currency.

In a similar way, while Kusama Yayoi has built on elements of *Nihonga* and *kazari-e* decoration, her broader project depends more on its synthesis of New York School "all-over-painting", minimalist refinement, or surrealist allusion, and while her art has regained its place in Matsumoto and Tokyo alike, it obtains astonishing audience engagements all over the world. In Teraoka Masami's case the artist's personal and creative lives became completely embedded in the West. His assumptions of Edo period conventions have, exclusively since the 1980s, confronted universally significant questions of morality, decadence, and consequence. The artist occupies a liminal territory, between the culture of his early heritage, and that of his adoption. Each one of these artist's projects thus finds some common ground in the sustenance of culturally significant pictorial themes, conventions and iconographies of Yamato origin, relocated into their own or more distant worlds. Each also melds these qualities together with sources from diverse other cultural contexts, and each artist's oeuvre has found purchase with viewers in diverse global settings, building transnational appreciations of themes of Yamato origin, and finding new significance with viewers in new worlds.

The eclectic pathways of these artists have important implications for thinking about the perspectives of art history. Most clearly, the distinct differences between each artist's projects and the coherence of their syntheses of diverse conventions challenge Wölfflin's assertion of an innate national aesthetic character. More specifically, their diversities challenge any notion of a singular, mono-dimensional, or homogeneous field that might be conceived or categorized as "Japanese art". They challenge the essentialist foundations of a national art character. Beyond acknowledging a broader notion of "*Yamato* art" (an established category *within* the arts practices of Japan) they challenge any notion that artists and their activities might be defined or conditioned by some kind of psycho-geographic aesthetic force. Rather, they recognise the transnational currency of artistic phenomena, the temporal and geographic

border-crossing mobility of culturally significant media, and the ways both art works and their artists can exist in wider worlds than those of their birth.

These studies also have implications for thinking about questions of creative practice. First, each of these artists works through independently forged iterative processes of extended regenerative pathways. Within those pathways, each artist's individual moments of resolution and departure reflect the changing fabric of broad journeys, and a synthesis of ideas, motifs, themes, narratives, values and sensibilities from the past and present of each. Each artist has sustained culturally rich tropes from Yamato traditions – Hokusai's sensibilities of *mono no aware* sobriety and bucolic nostalgia, Kusama's *kazari-e* decoration or *kijin* eccentricity, or Teraoka's visions of Buddhist hells or *mappô*. For each, these local traditions and sensibilities manifested culturally significant artifacts of cultural memory (Shirane, 1998, p. 2). Their amalgamations of culturally charged iconographic, sensible, technical, or thematic "media of memory" (Assmann, 2011, p. 137) informed the crystallisations of art works that could mediate between aesthetic memory, cultural identity and taste in ways that could relocate these memories into new times and settings (Assmann, 2011, p. 119). Most importantly though, all three artists were melding these threads of the past into the fabric of their active investigations into the pictorial practices and morés of other culturally conditioned contexts. In synthesizing conventional Yamato media together with more diverse resources they empowered their own inventive capacities for transforming transcultural conventions into new, hybrid, pictorial outcomes for new audiences.

However pervasive the conditioning factors of sociocultural traditions, the differences between these three artist projects confirm that each is the product of the inventive disposition of an individual. None of them has simply, or unconsciously, absorbed the conventions that informed their works. They learned their trades in schools, and *acted* on their experiences, drawing from them, selecting, adopting, adapting, combining, reconnecting, rearranging, recontextualising, reconstructing or deploying them, to meld them into their own, individually conceived and fashioned, aesthetic enquiries (Bell, 2014b). In doing so, they were exercising what Michael Baxandall described as the *agency* of artists as active learners and independent constructors of pictorial projects *acting on* their cognitive stock and culturally conditioned sensibilities (1985, p. 59). That sense of *agency* explains how artists can sustain culturally significant, and often apparently incompatible, conventions while simultaneously forging new inventive pathways that can reach farther beyond their own traditions into new investigations. It also challenges the essentialist or causal assumptions of cultural or psycho-geographic determinist arguments for engagements in the visual arts, or the creative arts in general. For the viewers who engage with these works – in Japanese or more diverse settings – understanding this sense of creative agency may offer insights into the intellectual, sensate, and active dispositions to independent, innovative action as they inform the pervasive force of any artist's temperamental, intellectual, neurological, psychological, aesthetic dispositions as they inform and condition their artistic engagements.

The inventive projects of all three of these artists thus contribute to broader appreciations of how creatives practice can operate. They each reveal how artist's projects can be informed, inflected, or invigorated by their active response and selective resource to the significant values, practices, and pictorial precedents of their own historical, social, physical and aesthetic worlds. They also reveal the innovative power of connection-making, evident in the ways artists are able to meld the resources of diverse contexts to inform the conception of innovative practices.

As viewers encounter these projects in their pan-national settings, separated from their original socio-cultural contexts, they can embrace their own diverse viewpoints into appreciating the technical, auto-ethnographic, intercultural or socially conditioned art-worlds of each artist in ways that open insights into richer encounters with these works – how they are conceived, generated, developed, refined, regenerated, or changed, reframed, redirected or even terminated. They can better appreciate where they come from, why and how they come to be, and, most importantly, what their reshaped, or even new, significance might be for viewers in today's Japan, or elsewhere in the world. They have the opportunity to see a composition like Hokusai's "Great Wave" not just as a product of its geographic urban, social, or temporal worlds but as an active realization of Hokusai's own feelings, responses to, perceptions of, and interpretations of these worlds, and the intellectual, literary, and artistic phenomena he encountered within them. For transnational publics, understanding the significance of intercultural exchange itself can embrace new and more divergent nuances of response and appreciation of previously localized aesthetic phenomena in distant settings.

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W. B. Yeats' "September 1913" as an Elegy: Generic Deviation

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Abstract:

A literary work is most often characterised by formal, thematic and stylistic features. The distinction between these is never obvious, though. In a Petrarchan sonnet, for instance, the form is closely tied to the theme (tension in the octet and relief in the sestet). Similarly, the traditional ballad generally tells a tragic story in local history or legend in quatrains where the second and fourth lines usually rhyme. Stylistically, a ballad will tend to use simple language and occasional vivid dialogue. However, throughout history, many literary genres have undergone changes that would often free them from formal constraints, so much so that a modern reader might wonder why W. C. Williams's "This is just to say" should not be taken as prose or Martin Luther King's "I have a dream" as verse. Genre assignment has thus grown increasingly complex, an operation that will need to take into consideration the dynamicity of the creative literary mind and its resistance to submissive alignment with generic standards. In this context, the following paper will consult recent views on genre and genre modelling in an effort to elucidate how W. B. Yeats's "September 1913", by embodying prominent generic features of poetry and elegy, can be read as a model of compound generic deviations. This makes the work a modelled piece that resists generic categorization and testifies to the poet's strategic unwillingness to irretrievably engage with the nationalist cause.

Keywords: deviation, elegy, genre, romantic nationalism

Introduction:

Despite its 1913 original publication in the radical unionist newspaper The *Irish Times*, W. B. Yeats' "September 1913" has often been considered one of the poet's activist pieces, showing, to a considerable degree, what some critics have described as "Yeats' national fervour" (Jeffares, 1980, p. 64). In his "Yeats and Decolonization," Said (1990) even describes Yeats as "a poet of decolonization [struggling] to announce the contours of an "imagined" or ideal community, crystallized not only by its sense of itself but also of its enemy" (p. 86).

This reception was to a large extent fostered by Yeats himself. Feeling the urge, following the 1916 unexpected Easter Rising, to redeem the defeatist undertones inherent in the poem's refrain which admits the death and entombment of Romantic Ireland, Yeats republished the poem in 1916 and 1917 with an appended note that sought to reframe (or re-contextualise) "September 1913" in the new mood of the revived Romantic nationalism with the self-denial and blood-sacrifice it implies.

Such lizard-like quality brings to mind Yeats' theory of masks (Leavitt, 2007, p. 135). According to this theory, the poet will experience the need for some form of sceptic detachment. This detachment is reached when the poet assumes – as Yeats explains in his *Memoirs* – "the mask of some other self" and by so doing "hides from the terrors of judgment" (p. 191). Such urge to assume different masks may well be read in light of what York calls modern poets' tendency to avoid "undue commitment" (York, 1986, p. 21). Accordingly, the poet should see to it that his text be as flexible as possible for it not to bear the brunt of irretrievable position or dramatic engagement.

To show the repercussions of this strategy on the poem' affiliation(s) to the elegy genre and the extent to which manipulation of this genre through incessant deviation has guaranteed the text's adaptability to different contexts, including ones subsequent to its writing, the following analysis will briefly consult the literature on genre theory and measure the piece's alignment with the most salient features of the poem and the elegy genres. Assessing the Irish nationalist question in "September 1913," the article will conclude that the poem could read at will as nationalist, a position very comfortable to the poet of masks in the critical context of the Irish struggle for independence.

Genre Revisited

It might seem obvious that tackling a work of art from a generic perspective will have to go through assessing how representative of a specific genre the work is. Yet, if knowledge of genre is limited, generic categorisation will be necessarily fuzzy. To reach some consensus whereby genre could be academically handled, some definition of the word should then be adopted. Now, the word genre originates from the Latin word for order, type, class, or category of presentation that shares distinctive and easily identifiable features (Silverblatt, 2007, p. 3). Thus defined, genre would encompass a large array of possible signifieds, even "varieties of language uses" (Chandler, 1997, p. 1). The wide range of fields where genre can hold sway reminds of the kind of problems genre theory has always met: Problems concerning the essence (factual or fictional), taxonomy (finite or infinite), age (everlasting or temporary), sphere (culture-specific or trans-cultural) and nature (descriptive or proscriptive) of the so-called genre (Stam, 2000, p. 14).

However, literary works have always been classified, one has the impression, into different categories. Since Aristotle's *Poetics*, distinctions have, for instance, been made between tragedy, comedy, and the epic (Thorburn, 2005, p. 68). Yet, despite the kind of de facto divisions the world of literary analysis and criticism has made accessible, disagreement between specialists is such that what a theorist calls a genre may be but a mode or a sub-genre to another analyst, which proves Feuer's view (1992) that "a genre is ultimately an abstract conception" (p. 144). Styles, themes, and periods have not managed to be the solid bases of categorisation, either. Hans Robert Jauss (1982) emphasised the pleasure sought and found in reading various genres (p.85) and Fowler (1982) distinguished between kinds and modes by way of eschewing the classicists' evaluative hierarchy of genres (p. 16).

Interpreting genre, Fowler (1982) maintains, the critic should see how "genre operates in at least three ways, corresponding to the logical phases of criticism – construction, interpretation, and evaluation (p. 256). The construction phase will be, in part, the product of historical, biographical and literary contexts, the latter being perhaps best construed in the light of Husserl's "horizon of meaning" (p. 256). All in all, it is difficult to distinguish between genres since these may intersect, overlap or even know modulations. Specific features that characterise a given genre are not_necessarily typical of it and unique to it; only their relative standing, combination and functions are distinctive (Neale, 1980, pp. 22–23). Even in the mass media, mixed-genre texts are quite common (Fairclough, 1995, p. 89).

As Chandler (1997) defensibly argues, the striking limitations of the definitional approach to genre led contemporary theorists to adopt the so-called "family resemblances" approach where the theorist would have to illustrate affinities between some of the texts within a genre (p. 3). The approach has been criticized on grounds of partiality when it gets to choosing texts for illustrative purposes (Swales, 1990, p. 51) and the turn of the century theorists favoured an approach regarding the forms and functions of genre as a dynamic process based on permanent negotiation and change (Buckingham, 1993, p. 137) and allowing permeability (Abercrombie, 1996, p. 45).

Additionally, despite the prominence of the Marxist attitude to genre (Chandler, 1997, p. 4) which sees it as a means to position the audience and manipulate their attitude to social reality by reproducing and naturalizing the dominant ideology (Feuer, 1992, p. 145), reader-oriented critics, without negating the ideological side of genres, have managed to underscore the audience's capacity of reading against the grain and even negotiating shared beliefs and values (ibid). More recent critics inspired by Stanley Fish's writing see that reading requires understanding not of what the text shows or means but rather of what it does (Fish, 1980, p. 71). Thus, approaching genre from the vantage point of purpose opened the door for the new pragmatic approach that, in the words of John Swales (1990), accentuates a genre's communicative purposes (p. 46). This aim-oriented approach has attracted semioticians like John Hartley and Katie Wales who emphasised the "intertextual" nature of genre. This same attitude was defended by both Barthes and Derrida who saw that no text could be "genre-less" (Chandler, 1997, p. 6).

In his defence of genre, Chandler (1997) proceeds to compare the traditional Romantic attitude which disdains genre and sees it as a factor hampering authorial creativity to the contemporary vision considering genre a field where creative tension can address and even inflect generic conventions (p. 6). He quotes Sonia Levingstone who contends that

> Different genres specify different 'contracts' to be negotiated between the text and the reader... which set up expectations on each side for the form of the communication..., its functions..., its epistemology..., and the communicative frame (e.g. the participants, the power of the viewer, the openness of the text, and the role of the reader). (Livingstone, 1990, qtd. in Chandler, p. 6)

The latest genre studies have therefore all but quit old assumptions that knowledge of genre conventions might result in "a passive consumption" of generic texts. The new stance adopted rather maintains that making sense of texts within genres is an active process of meaning construction.

Such an attitude may be seen as the fruit of elaborate studies on the history and development of genres – basically literary ones – conducted by theorists like Fowler who as early as 1982 wrote:

> Every work of literature belongs to at least one genre. Indeed, it is sure to have *a significant generic element*. For genre has quite a different relation to creativity from the one usually supposed, whereby it is little more than a restraint upon spontaneous expression. Rightly understood, it is so far from being a mere curb on expression that it makes *the expressiveness of literary works* possible. *Their relation to the genres they embody is not one of passive membership but of active modulation*. Such modulation *communicates.* And it probably has a communicative value far greater than we can ever be directly aware of. (p. 20; emphasis added)

Genre is then not simply one aspect the text shows, not even a characteristic or feature thereof; it is somehow a frame that binds the text's writing and reception. To Fowler (1989), it is genre that "makes possible the communication of content" (p. 215).

Lately, in his 2008 book on the issue of genre, Whetter insisted on its vital importance in understanding a literary work; he equally criticised the justifications given by proponents of the modernism who wanted "to deracinate genre altogether" (p. 5). Here Whetter (2008) argued that

> [The] multiplicity of genre is, however, a strength rather than a weakness and we can solve much of the confusion of genre study by recognizing that pure or unmixed genres are in fact relatively rare … most genres naturally embrace generic mixtures by containing elements of one or more other genres. (p. 152)

Agreeing with Whetter, Fowler, Fish, and Duff – among others – the analysis to follow will then align with the post-modern valorisation of genre as a concept "signalling not prescription and exclusion but opportunity and common purpose" (Duff, 2000, p. 2). Endeavouring to read "September 1913" in relation to the elegy genre, it will seek to relate the poem's generic deviation to Yeats's poetics of "detached belonging" (Jaoua, 2016, p. 145).

"September 1913" as a Poem and Elegy: Generic Deviation

As the following study endeavours to explicate, Yeats's "September 1913" lends itself to a reading that would negotiate its being an elegy. Having grasped the significant generic elements binding it to the elegy frame, a discussion of the poem's generic affiliation will

follow. In this act of communication with the poem, the reader will have to recognize what the text *does.* The analysis will first attempt to investigate the piece's belonging to the poem, then to the elegy genres. Finally, it will show the extent to which the piece defies classification by deviating from norms typical of the elegy.

A Poem?

Approached from a generic perspective, "September 1913" yields various results (Jaoua, 2017, p. 170). Thus, to read it as a generic text requires a consideration of the extent to which this piece follows conventions typical of the genre assumed. The work is definitely a poem and this is a first frame – a selection of some aspects of a perceived reality to make them more salient (Entman, 1993, p.52) – the text can be perceived through. It is certainly so for it follows distinctive conventions of the poetic genre: It is written by a famous Irish poet. It has a special layout showing successive stanzas of equal length. It also has a title and a rhyme scheme. The four octets of the poem might hint at the importance of number 4 in a text written by Yeats the symbolist (Sarker, 2002, P.57). Such hypothesis gains ground as the reader realizes that the poem follows an alternate rhyme scheme making of each octet the blend of 2 quatrains. An ensuing thematic division of the octet into two parts is then suggested, yet soon discarded owing to the absence of punctuation at the end of the fourth line. The two hypothetical quatrains are thus blended through enjambment, a stylistic device used to defer closure and defy boundaries. Unity then emerges as substitute for division when the reader sees that all middle lines in the octets of the poem are but run-on lines.

Refrain is equally perceived by a poem's reader as an important generic feature. A figure of repetition, the refrain will generally emphasize ideas to be held crucial (*The Spencer Encyclopedia*, p. 561). In this respect, the lexis of the refrain is expected to trigger (a) central theme(s). Words like "dead", "gone", and "grave" activate the semantic fields of death, burial, mourning, and funeral, which best befits the elegy framework. The reader's attention is thus directed to some deceased figure. Who died? When? How? These are ensuing questions that a reader will justifiably ask. The presuppositions in the use of names seem to slyly push the reader to take it for granted that these names refer to people the poet assumes the reader knows. Irish readers of the time are then believed to know John O'Leary, the major Fenian leader, the Irish Romantic nationalist who spent most of his life either in jail or in exile for the sake of the Irish nationalist cause (Deane et al., 2002, p. 83). Such a presupposition could thus bear undertones of blame or reprimand for those who do not know him or even for those who could wonder as to the reason behind mourning him in 1913, six years after his death.

Another form of deviation is notable in the refrain: it does not accomplish any informative function. While seeming to inform, the refrain does not. In fact, throughout the first three octets, "Romantic Ireland" is assumed to have a referent. Yet, who/what is he/she/it? Whoever/whatever the referent, this presumable being is now dead and gone. Endeavouring to check the truth of such a statement, the reader realises that it cannot be logically true that some indefinite entity is dead; the Gricean maxim of quality (Grice, 1975, p. 46) is then flouted owing to the deviation from the referentiality of words. Romantic Ireland is (a concept? an idea? a dream?) given human identity through personification.

Now, if "Romantic" is just an attribute (a qualifier), then it could be dismissed to give way to an alarming statement to the effect that Ireland is dead and gone. The phrase Romantic Ireland Yeats coins in this poem thus acquires the quality of a proper name different from the real Ireland. To attribute the adjective romantic to a country is yet another aspect of deviation. Indeed, as Dworkin (2012) argues, Ireland entered the era of Romanticism following the 1798

rebellion and Romantic writers of the country freed imagination from the manacles of reason. The movement preached idealism at the expense of rationalism and showed admiration of sublime nature and idealisation of folklore and local culture (p. 49).

These features of the Romantic Movement were convenient to the mood of nationalism that characterised the years of the Irish Revolution (ibid). The Yeats of the twentieth century always believed in the unifying impact of Romanticism in Ireland (Powell, 2004, p. 145). The country in 1913 was not yet independent despite the immense sacrifices early nationalists had made. The presumable death of Romantic Ireland the poem proclaims starts, therefore, to read like a pessimistic warning to the Irish believing in Romantic nationalism, or like a desperate avowal of disillusionment with Romantic nationalism in the worldly Ireland of 1913. Yet, Romantic Ireland can be taken as the ideal/ised country for which much blood was shed, the blood of the Irish nationalists the poem will (incontestably?) praise. At this juncture, the reader grows increasingly aware of a complex issue the poem seems to tackle: the death of Romantic nationali(sts?/sm?).

An Elegy?

Doubtless, the prevailing theme of death to which the choice of lexis is inextricably related endows the poem with a sad/elegiac tone, a generic feature of the elegy. Indeed, *the Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*, defines elegy as "an elaborately formal lyric poem lamenting the death of a friend or a public figure, or reflecting seriously on a solemn subject" (p. 104). In the refrain, the reference to O'Leary, a landmark of Irish nationalism is neighboured on both sides by lexical items suggesting death. Preceded by "dead" and "gone" and followed by "the grave," O'Leary's name is lexically trapped in a death web. Understandably, since O'Leary is the sole human name in the line, the tone of bitter lamentation in the refrain would seem to mourn the death of this nationalist figure. However, it is Romantic Ireland that is said to be dead: "Romantic Ireland is dead and gone," says the refrain. O' Leary is already in the grave and the deceased Romantic Ireland seems to have joined him, or to have died with him. No one can tell whether Romantic Ireland died the very moment O'Leary did – which might suggest that Romantic Ireland is metonymically connected with O'Leary (i.e the death of O'Leary signified the death of Romantic Ireland, a closely related idea). In this case, the line would mourn O'Leary as representative of Romantic Ireland or mourn Romantic Ireland whose death is closely linked to O'Leary's since it is with O'Leary that Romantic Ireland is now engraved.

So, even though death which is a characteristic thematic feature of elegiac verse prevails over the poem, the subject mourned in the refrain remains ambiguous: O'Leary? Romantic Ireland? Or both? To this ambiguity is added further ambiguity as the refrain strikingly undergoes a change in the last stanza. "Romantic Ireland is dead and gone/ It's with O'leary in the grave" – the refrain repeated at the end of the first three stanzas – is substituted in the last stanza by "But let them be, they're dead and gone/ They're with O'Leary in the grave." Some variation in the refrain, though an aspect of deviation, is not necessarily a form of subversion. Yet, if the very subject of the refrain, the subject whose death the refrain proclaims and presumably mourns is the target of this change, then deviation is quite marked and consequential.

Now, this variation in the refrain has established parallelism between the initial subject (Romantic Ireland) and the last one (They). Very remarkably, the two references to the initial subject – first in the nominal form ("Romantic Ireland"), then the pronominal form ("It") – in the refrain of the first three stanzas are replaced by references to a new subject – now the plural "they" – in a pronominal form. Who then is/are mourned? Romantic Ireland? O'Leary? or they? Or all? And who are "they"? And if this structural parallelism which parallels "Romantic

Ireland" with "they" is meant to give pre-eminence to the new subject (they) whose death is made to parallel/substitute the death of Romantic Ireland, then is this not a way of image mapping? In the last stanza, the reader is obliquely told that "they" are the ones dead and gone and that "they" are with O'Leary in the grave. This structural pattern invites a perception of "they" as substitutes for "Romantic Ireland": The mental image of "they" is cunningly mapped onto that of "Romantic Ireland." Here, Romantic Ireland acquires human characteristics, which invites reconsideration of the initial refrain.

"They" happens to be the pronoun most prevalent in all stanzas but the first. Its cataphoric use in the first line of the second octet is later followed by different lexical items meant to disambiguate its referent. First comes the subject "The names that stilled your childish play", a complex noun phrase that depicts the referent of "they" in a peculiar way; "they" are no people, they are but names. Throughout the stanza, these are portrayed as some unique (stanza 2, line 1), breathtaking (stanza 2, line 2), ethereal creatures (stanza 2, line 3), that were deprived the right to save some leave-taking prayer since the hangman's rope was spun for them and could not wait.

In the third stanza, the brutal image of execution the second stanza suggests is further reinforced by explicit lexical reference to blood shed (stanza3, line3), and death (stanza3, line4). These expressions echo the "the hangman's rope was spun" of the second stanza and create what reads like a dreadful atmosphere of assassination and murder. Grief and lamentation for those whose blood was shed emerge as keynotes to this part. Starting from the fourth line, names of outstanding Irish nationalists are enumerated. The three of these died for the Irish cause the way national heroes do. As Ross (2009) argues:

> Fitzgerald died of wounds suffered during his arrest as a participant in the rebellion of 1798; Tone committed suicide while imprisoned for his part in the same rebellion, Emmet was executed for his part in the failed insurrection of 1803. (p. 225)

Stylistically, the third octet opens with a six-line rhetorical question which seems to assess the sacrifices of these figures and wonder if their blood sacrifice was really worthwhile.

The answer is implicitly negative: Neither the wild geese - Irish soldiers who were forced to live in exile and fight other wars (Ibid), the nationalists who died in prison (Fitzgerald and Tone), nor even the one publically executed (Emmet) brought about any considerable change, the successive lines suggest. They died and reaped nothing but meagre harvest that cannot compare with what they had given. The sixth line even describes their action as "delirium of the brave". Again, even though these lines seem to mourn the nationalists mentioned, the label given these acts of sacrifice ("this delirium of the brave") shows some indefinite attitude. You never know whether to construe the expression as a show of adoration, which the word "brave" communicates, or as a manifestation of discontent with the "foolish" blood sacrifice resulting from excess of zeal (delirium). Here, deviation is clear since while a traditional elegy would embody three stages of loss: grief and lament, praise and adoration, then consolation and solace (Blevins, 2008, p.138), in this special elegy the praise and adoration part is modulated as praise gives way to some latent criticism.

The last stanza opens with a regretful conditional expressing impossibility and imagining the years turned again and the exiles called back. This adds to the mood of melancholy and despair by hypothetically suggesting the ensuing reaction of the addressee. A shallow, ungrateful

response would come from the worldly addressee who would not believe the nationalists' act unworldly and would therefore read it as a crazy feat done to win some pretty woman's favours. Again, the sixth line seems to seek assessment and the reference to weighing suggests the literal weighing of commercially-minded merchants who would seek material profit as they weigh commodity. The image, while starkly contrasting with that of the generous nationalists, reminds the reader of the avaricious addressee in the first octet. As the refrain ensues, the reader and/or the addressee is/are urged not to do/say anything: "But let them be," says the refrain's beginning. The exiles are then said to be dead and gone and to be "with O'Leary in the grave."

Now, if this shift in the refrain is meant to accomplish the consolation stage of the elegy, then consolation is here dubious. Nothing could prove whether the poet thinks it not due punishment for the nationalists to meet such a fate; "Let them be" would, in this case, become synonymous with "It serves them right." After all, they are said to have grown madly brave and to have weighed so lightly what they gave. If there is any consolation in the final lines, it should be in the substitution of Romantic Ireland by "they", thus suggesting their having been the very embodiment of the ideal Romantic Ireland. Thus idolized, these dead nationalists are attributed the glory and magnificence of heroes. Yet, this remains only hypothetical as the lines, in feigning closure, resist any categorical commitment (judged) undue.

Conclusion

Whether read as a poem, an elegy (a melancholy poem comprising the traditional three stages of loss), or as a generic hybrid for the many aspects of deviation it shows – aspects which would often invite utter reconsideration of its generic identity – "September 1913" remains strategically sneaky. It materialises Yeats's will to stay both detached and nationalist, the very embodiment of his supple (nationalist) engagement. This strategy, so to speak, guarantees the pleasure of the distant/fake engagement Yeats the poet of masks prefers and the text's permeability as it sets out to fit in with a changing mainstream attitude to Romantic nationalism.

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The In-Between

Cedric van Eenoo

Abstract

A painting, a musical piece, a text and a film have in common an arrangement of distinct elements organized to produce the work and to generate meaning. However, when the focus diverts from what is perceptible in the composition to what is implied, a new dimension can emerge. By concentrating on what is missing, the mind has a different perception of the art. The message is not direct, but suggested, allowing for freedom of interpretation. Utilizing omission rather than addition enables the viewer to recompose the piece and be involved through personal emotions. In this regard, the exploration of the void leans toward inwardness, emphasizing introspection and reflection. A closer look at psychology and its use in the visual arts with the Gestalt theory examines how the human brain tends to close gaps in shapes that are unfinished. This mechanism creates an immersive experience. Additionally, the Japanese concept of Ma utilizes and manipulates the notion of in-between, shifting the center of attention, to enable an intensification of vision. The work can operate on a new level of awareness, where the attributes that are actually absent become quintessential.

Keywords: art, film, music, image, empty space, ma

Introduction

Intervals, gaps and pauses are fundamental constituents of a dimension that exists between the visible elements of a work of art, be it written, played, performed, screened or exhibited. These in-between segments remain generally unnoticed, but a closer examination of their integration in the entire composition reveal significant mechanisms that operate on subtle levels of perception. Their value goes beyond the peculiar and can considerably influence the work in its meaning.

Painting

As an introduction to the notion of the in-between in artistic expression, painting offers a straightforward and clear background that allows to better understand the uses and implications of white space.

For instance, Canadian artist Agnes Martin's minimal abstract expressionist creations are minimal but subtle and delicate compositions, emphasizing introspection as a mode of interacting with the art (Martin, 1981). Her work been described as an expression of "discretion and inwardness" (Spence, 2015). Empty space can stimulate observation and contemplation.

In an artwork, the relation between elements of structure and emptiness can be explored through the balance of positive and negative spaces. A picture generally includes what can be referred to as foreground against a background. The principles of visual hierarchy, movement and focal point arrange these different constituents to convey an intelligible message. This configuration be can achieved through the contrast of some parts of the image that stand out from the empty space. Positive areas generate shapes and signify active meaning (White, 20119), whereas the common conception is that white space appears passive (White, 2011). But with a different perspective, the background of the image can generate a new way of understanding the work.

In American artist Robert Motherwell's abstract work *Lament for Lorca*, dynamic black ink shapes create a unique relation with the white paper on which it is printed, manipulating and blurring the distinction between figure and ground (1982).

With this in mind, what is not present in the composition appears to carry as much significance as its visible counterpart.

Design

Psychology and its application in design theory offer significant insights into the processes of seeing images. The Gestalt theory applied to design describes how empty space in an image is perceived and interpreted (Behrens, 1998). The human brain tends to close gaps in shapes that are unfinished in a process termed "Law of closure" (Graham, 2008, p. 7). An ingenious mechanism is at play when some of the components are missing in the visuals. By looking at a picture that contains gaps, the mind will be involved in somehow co-creating the meaning of the image.

Minimalism

Minimalism, and more precisely, the reduction to the ingredients of an artwork, generates

unique mechanisms of perceiving, understanding and interpreting the piece**.** The minimalist art movement created a unique aesthetic that influenced a variety of fields, such as architecture, music, design and film. The original idea was that the work should be stripped to its essentials. The concept appeared as an attempt to discover the "essence" of the subject (Schapiro, 1937, p. 84). This approach assigns empty space a fine and predominant position, suggesting that what is invisible requires attention. The viewer is expected to be involved in the creation to appreciate its composition and find a personal interpretation.

As a development, and conceptually close to minimalism, the poor art movement shed light on a new aspect of the creative process. The term "Arte Povera" was coined by art critic Germano Celant to define the use of inexpensive and often raw materials to produce artworks (Celant, 1967, p. 1966). Arte Povera requires the impoverishment of gestures and materials (Christov-Bakargiev, 1999). It can be connected to minimalist concepts and will to divest the artwork from the ingredients that are not absolutely necessary. In doing so, it offers limited structural elements, and lets the spectator recompose the piece through individual experience and a form of creative implication. This mode of relation with the art can operate in diverse contexts.

On that account, Italian director Michelangelo Antonioni stated that he wished to approach filmmaking as a painter with a canvas (Chatman & Duncan, 2004). In *Red Desert*, his technique displays obvious references to painting and minimalist art movement. The aesthetic of the film reflects such concepts: reducing the elements to a simple but rigorously composed image, working with colors, utilizing architecture and nature for their visual attributes (Red Desert, 1964). In this mechanism, the organizational elements disappear, leaving an area of emptiness, for the audience to immerse themselves in the cinematic experience.

Music and Sound

Further to the consideration of empty space, it seems meaningful to examine its equivalent in music and sound works: rests and silence. In musical composition, pauses and gaps between notes tend to influence the pace of the piece, and often generate a reflective atmosphere.

For instance, the minimal compositions of Estonian musician Arvo Pärt utilize slow tempo and prolonged notes, offering time to concentrate on the duration of each sound, in an experience that likens itself to a meditative mood (Pärt, 1976).

According to musicologist Zofia Lissa, silence in compositions "fulfills various functions both in the listener's response to a musical work and in the work's construction" (Lissa, 1964). Structure, in this perspective, is based on intervals, as an architecture for the music to be build.

Besides, silent gaps in a musical piece can change the perception of tempo in a song. This correlation is primarily based on the removal of some of the constituents, approaching musical arrangement with absence.

A parallel with sound art can be drawn: John Cage's *4'33"* demonstrates that surrounding noise can be considered music (Cage, 1952). But it is not actual silence; it is the absence of recognizable sounds that can be interpreted (Cage, 2011). In addition, with *Empty Words,* the artist uses missing parts of a text, omitting words: part I omits sentences, part II omits phrases, part III omits words, and part IV omits syllables (Cage, 1981). Here, a poetic dimension emerges from the removal of sound. The invisible segments of the original work transcend meaning and generate a one-of-a-kind audio performance. Absence is transformed into an

interface, and what is missing becomes prominent in the creation, pointing to a new dimension of the piece.

Intermediary gaps exist in relation to the perception of the audience. Hiatus do influence the experience of the musical piece in regard to the perception of flow, where tension is still perceived during rests in the middle of a musical composition (Juslin & Sloboda, 2010). Rests play a significant role in the tone of the work: they influence how their audible counterparts are received and the way they connect to the overall configuration. They carry an important meaning for creating patterns, standing as pillars between segments: in this aspect, silence can become the basis of the music, on which the sound layout can manifest itself.

Film

As a first step into the examination of cinema, a look at literature seems necessary. It is primarily because, in most cases, a written piece – the script – precedes filmmaking. It is also because, in both disciplines, time has a crucial function in composition. And most importantly, narrative has similar aspects of construction in text and film.

With the notion of temporal development of a story, Paul Ricoeur's *Time and Narrative* offers an essential background for the study. Presenting storytelling as tied to the "extended duration between a beginning and an ending" (Ricoeur, 1990, p. 38), the study is rooted in the examination of the elements of a plot as they originate from one to another, and therefore, must be encountered in time (Dowling, 2011, p. 8). In this configuration, time appears as a frame in which the story develops. In this perspective, it is a structure, generated by events. But what happens between these events is not shown: it stands outside of the narrative. These gaps represent an invisible part of the story, as a raw element: the "fabula"—the story as it is before being told (Cobley, 2013).

Further to the notion of in-betweenness on the surface of an image, the use of empty space and the sense of equilibrium it generates can be applied to the pictures of a film, with the manipulation of depth of field, image composition and contrast, to achieve dynamic balance. This practice and parallel with painting echoes the practice of artist Stan Brakhage in his non-narrative experimental films with painting on celluloid (Brakhage, 1987).

In addition, the publication *Cinema II* by philosopher Gilles Deleuze, with the concept of "time-image", offered a valuable understanding of cinema and film narrative (Deleuze, 1989, p. 34). The author describes how a picture is perceived on screen and states that an image is infused with time and can therefore establish connections with points that are external to the story (Deleuze, 1989).

For instance, in David Lynch's film *Lost Highway*, non-linearity takes a leading role in the plot, to an extent where the audience becomes disconnected with the logic of the story, but immerse in its narrative delivery, creating an engaging and truly unorthodox film (Lost Highway, 2001). The segments of the film emerge as out-of-context pieces, as if they were extracted from another storyline. Developing his technique from surrealism, the director displays a singular artist approach – similar to painting – by using time as purely subjective, infusing dream-like mechanisms in the production. In this regard, the scenes operate as intervals, which eventually generate an uncommon experience.

On that note, the juxtaposition of scenes in a film can create meaning through contemplation, replacing the different segments in the specific context of the story, with the use of gaps in the

composition of the narrative. This method can modify the perception of the film structure. The concentration is re-positioned to empty gaps in the plot. These intervals do not necessarily require to be filled with action or dialogues. They emerge as in-between moments of the story. But they convey a subtle message, related to tonality and emotional perception. With this method, it is a sensuous experience of the movie that is at play.

Further to this notion, the meaning of a scene in a film results from the connections between the different shots and their arrangement. Sense is generated by the editing of a sequence of images that are not necessarily originally connected in their meaning, as demonstrated in the "Kuleshov Effect" (Mobbs, Weiskopf, Lau, Featherstone, Dolan, R. J., & Frith, 2006, p. 95). Context modifies the understanding of what is on screen. As a consequence, working with hiatuses as segments of the film repositions the essence of the original subject and generates a new level of experiencing the cinematic narrative.

For example, the movie *Chungking Express* by Wong Kar-Wai illustrates this approach: the characters' names are never pronounced; instead, it is numbers that are used. This choice adds to the mystery and ambiguity of the story; it blurs the atmosphere (Chungking Express, 1994). In addition, it ends without resolution, leaving the audience to find a personal interpretation. The work is not only based on telling, but allows for guessing and finding relations between the different events, characters, stories and the themes that emerge from the film.

Cinema can utilize minimal style to create tone, but in essence, it is a form of storytelling that is often explored in external aspects, such as isolated moments in the timeline – with B-rolls for instance – or as an aesthetic. It is in fact rarely the substance of the movie. Empty moments in the timeline disrupt the continuity of the plot, or interrupt its pace. But they also have the capacity to generate meaning.

With respect to this idea, the film *Koyaanisqatsi* by Godfrey Reggio is a visual poem with an abstract narrative that is built on audiovisual rhythm in an increasing intensity (Koyaanisqatsi, 1982). The film alternates time-lapse and slow-motion sequences to deliver its message of environmental awareness. There are no dialogues and no narrative per se, but the images and sound carry the story with a strong sense of visual and thematic consistency, and unity. Some segments appear to be outside of the narrative, as external parts of the story. But they participate in creating a unique film atmosphere. The element that allows the story to stay intelligible and coherent is the use of music and the pace it creates.

Additionally, Gilles Deleuze, in his examination of cinema through the discipline of philosophy, states that intervals in film carry as much significance as action (Deleuze, 1989).

Literature

How It Is, by Irish author Samuel Beckett is an original piece of writing that contains no punctuation (Beckett, 1994). The reader can interpret the sentences in different ways by recreating what has been removed through imagination: it can entirely modify the understanding of the story (Williams, 2012). Simplifying or impoverishing the writing generates a personal response – it relates to freedom of interpretation, where no precise direction is imposed to the reader. In this format, the anatomy of the text is entirely transfigured by absence. The characters of typography that generally indicate the end, the beginning, or the pivotal point of a sentence become invisible components of the work, but with a dynamic role. In this approach, the reader relates to the narrative through imagination.

Poetry

Japanese haiku are short, seemingly basic poems, which appear simple in structure, but are in reality extremely precise and subtle. The configuration presents three phases, relatively enigmatic, therefore open to interpretation. The short compositions illustrate natural phenomena by referencing them directly, but alluding to more profound matters. They employ meticulously devised lines of text, described as "pure and simple" (Morgan, 1961, p. 187). Punctuation plays the crucial role of creating a separation between the distinct parts of the work, allowing for rhythm to emerge naturally. In this design, the words inspire reflection, using metaphors to suggest, as opposed to signify.

In-Between

The Japanese concept of Ma describes how the space between two parts enables an intensity of vision, creating an immersive and unexpected experience (Arata, 1979). It is used in a variety of artistic expression.

Ma (間) can be translated to the space between two structural parts (Standaert, 2015). The earlier and primary meaning originate from the moonlight peeking through a door, suggesting an interstice: gate (門) through which the moonshine (月) peeps in.

In Japanese language, the character "ma" is one of the components of the word "duration" or "period" of time (Merriam-Webster's Japanese-English dictionary, 2010). In the arts, it designates the "space" or "pause" between two parts (Arata, 1979, p. 70). Present in a variety of forms in Japanese culture, it is also defined as the state of "non-action" or the position of "in-between" (Standaert, 2015, p. 91).

An extension of this idea can be found in Japanese philosophy, with the word "Mu" (無), which can be translated to "not have" or "without" (Merriam-Webster's Japanese-English dictionary, 2010).

As an echo to this concept, the idea of an "aesthetic of absence" is brought forward by scholar Jana J. Haeckel (2015, p. 45). The author describes the technique of creating images in film that appear as uninhabited spaces: with emptiness, the audience can project personal thinking and feelings (Haeckel, 2015).

Conclusion

The manifestation of emptiness in an artwork emerges essentially from the recognition of its contrasting opposites: the structural parts – shapes and lines in painting, characters in literature, scenes in film, notes in music.

The in-between ingredients have several functions: linking, separating, causing interference, or modifying sense. In every scenario, gaps primarily appear as secondary – or invisible, but they play a fundamental role in giving the composition its form, tone and meaning. This approach to creative expression reveals itself through observation and contemplation: it requires attentiveness, focus and time.

By focusing on what is absent, implied, or invisible in the configuration of the art, perception becomes immersive, sensuous, and closely related to personal experience. The message is not

direct, but implied, allowing for freedom of interpretation, emotional connection and intense but subtle involvement with the work.

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Wallace Stevens's "Flawed Words and Stubborn Sounds": Poeticizing the Imperfect?

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Abstract

Contradictions and paradoxes are characteristic features of Wallace Stevens's poetry; these traits prompt judgments of him as a "difficult" poet and of his poems as all but approachable. Among other things, this difficulty in approaching Stevens's poems may stem from the meta-poetic dimension of poems such as "Of Modern Poetry", "The Poems of our Climate", "The Man with the Blue Guitar", and so on. And yet, Stevens remains one of America's most remarkable poets, tackling themes pertaining to identity, loss, estrangement, hope, despair and, above all, the intractable paradoxes that inform national life in the United States. In this sense, his poetry presents a recognizable pattern of pairings of real vs. imaginary, reality vs. poetry, history versus art, consciousness of fact versus imagination, and poetry as synonymous with individual freedom versus politics as possibly evolving into a totalitarian system. The issue of the tension between politics and poetry, between an imperfect, bitter reality and a delightful poetic release seems to be a core component of his poetic output.

The objective in this paper is to chart the course of this tension, assess the antagonistic pulls of consciousness and imagination, perfection and imperfection that take place within what Stevens describes as "the never-resting mind". This is primarily achieved through a reading of "The Poems of our Climate".

Key Words: poetry, politics, imagination, reality, imperfection, restless mind

Poetry and the Actual World in Wallace Stevens's Aesthetic Imagination

It has to think about war
And it has to find what will suffice.
—Wallace Stevens, "Of Modern Poetry"

The relationship between literature and politics has traditionally been a troubled one. Some would argue that literature is political no matter how personal or even visceral it might read, while others firmly believe that literature should not be political; when it becomes so, it ceases to be literature. In "Literature and Politics", John D. Lindberg (1968) offers an answer to the question of whether literature and politics can possibly cross paths without having literature reduced to a second-hand artistic expression, holding that "the relationship between literature and politics is a multilane freeway with traffic flowing freely in both directions" (p. 163). In this sense, literature is, by no means, a mere rehash of political, social, and economic discourses; otherwise, the writer would overlook artistic expression *per se* and would instead indulge in producing pseudo-literary works. For his part, Juan Goytisolo (1999) rightly observes that "Politics . . . lends its coloration to art, and the writer, willy-nilly, becomes spokesman for the forces that struggle in silence against the oppression of a social class or the monopoly of an ideology that has been turned into dogma" (p. 38). He appositely adds that, "once it is published, [literature] is a social fact and as such, fulfils a political function" (p. 38).

Alain Robbe-Grillet, by contrast, argues that "writers are not necessarily political brains. … The writer can't know what end he's serving. Literature isn't a means he's to place at the service of some Cause" (qtd. in Goytisolo, p. 38). In a similar vein, Robin Peel (2004) aligns himself with poet Robert Graves's view that public life, with all its organizations, institutions, and bureaucracies is "[the enemy] of creativity [that should be] avoided by any poet wishing to preserve their artistic integrity" – an observation that is the basis of many a definition of "pure art"(p. 16). However, as I have suggested earlier, Graves's and Peel's contention is challenged when it comes to understanding the poetry of Wallace Stevens, notably the social and political realities that both motivate and shape his writings. Michael Dowdy (2007) more appropriately maintains that "poetic form is wrongly considered as a yoke that must be rejected if one is to write a politically engaged verse" (p. 16) – a statement that suggests that political purpose may reside in all forms of poetic expression. Probably, too, no other statement dovetails with the political vein in Stevens's poetry than Kenneth Burke's (1969), in which he posits that, "whenever you find a doctrine of 'nonpolitical' aesthetics affirmed with fervour, look for its politics" (p. 28).

In "The Irrational Element in Poetry", Wallace Stevens (1979) stresses this interconnectedness between poetry and politics, arguing that:

> There can be no thought of escape. We are preoccupied with events, even when we do not observe them closely. We have a sense of upheaval. We feel threatened. We look from an uncertain present toward a more uncertain future. One feels the desire to collect oneself against all this in poetry as well as in politics. If politics is nearer to each of us because of the pressure of the contemporaneous, poetry, in its way, is no less so and for the same reason. (p. 55)

In this regard, Wallace Stevens preferred to write poetry that speaks to people's contemporary concerns, refusing to be placed at "the edge" or to hanker after a transcendent reality that would displace him out of the centre, as he once put it in one of his letters to Simons (1966):

> I began to feel that I was on the edge: that I wanted to get to the center: that I was isolated, and that I wanted to share the common life… People say that I live in a world of my own: that sort of thing. Instead of seeking therefore for a "relentless contact", I have been interested in what might be described as an attempt to achieve the normal, the central. (p. 352)

Nevertheless, far from piling on the agony, poetry – according to Stevens – is saturated with a capacity to alleviate the dire conditions endured by people and to disentangle them from life's inconsistencies. Stevens felt the urge to deal with those realities because he increasingly felt their pressure upon him and upon the world as a whole, and only through poetry could he find release from the stultifying social, economic and political circumstances of an anxiety-ridden world. He realized that such bitter reality had, indeed, taken a heavy toll upon art and culture. He observes, again, in "The Irrational Element in Poetry" (1979):

> The subject that I had in mind was the effect of the depression on the interest in art.... If I dropped into a gallery I found that I had no interest in what I saw. The air was charged with anxieties and tensions… I wanted to deal with exactly such a subject and I chose that as a bit of reality, actuality, the contemporaneous… I wanted to apply my own sensibility to something perfectly matter- of-fact. (p. 50)

Poetic truth, Stevens contends, should never be divorced from factual truth; that is to say, it should always chime in with reality. In this respect, Stevens contends that "the great poems of heaven and earth have been written and the great poem of the earth remains to be written" (1951, p. 142). That is exactly the prerogative of a poet in time of disorder. Furthermore, stressing the significance of art, he eloquently argues that "the world about us would be desolate except for the world within us" – the world of our imagination, "the inward eye", to borrow Wordsworth's phrase from "Daffodils" (p. 169). Put simply, it is art and poetry in particular that endow life with meaning, despite the odds.

Poetry, according to Stevens, helps people clear up the mist of imperfection and, at other times, helps them appreciate imperfection itself, recognizing its benefits. Poetry makes people see things just as they are, marred with imperfection, and allows them to see them anew, under new lights and from auspicious vantage points. It invests the chaotic world one lives in with some order that is, paradoxically enough, teeming with antagonistic harmonies. In *The Palm at the End of the Mind*, Stevens holds that poetry is "a process of arranging, deepening and enchanting", of leavening reality, no matter how leaden that reality might get (1967, p. 98). He adds: "We find an order in things. This is not an order that is given, but one that we give it. Poetry reorders the order that we find in things. It gives us back things exactly as they are, but beyond us, 'a tune beyond us, yet ourselves,'" (p. 133) referring here to the audience's response to the "man with the blue guitar" when he says: "Things as they are/ Are changed upon the blue guitar" (*CP*, p. 165).

A sort of an antagonistic harmony that helps reconcile all the contradictions and paradoxes prevalent in post-war America characterizes much of Stevens's poetry. In another letter to Simons, one in which he includes a commentary of the Statue poems, the poet writes "what this poem is concerned about is adaptation to change" (1966, p. 366). He describes this change

as "a process of passing from hopeless waste to hopeful waste. This is not pessimism". He explains that "The world is completely waste, but it is a waste always full of *portentous lustres*" (emphasis added, p. 367). And in a way, through his poetry, he tries to show people how to live contentedly with inadequacy.

As regards poetry and politics and their somewhat shadowy relationship, Stevens hails ambiguity as a positive artistic and political value. According to him, ambiguity fosters flexibility and promotes change. Whether in politics or in poetry, he contends that "the search for a tranquil belief" must never cease since the world is anything but tranquil. He writes:

> If ever the search for a tranquil belief should end,
> The future might stop emerging out of the past,
> Out of what is full of us; yet the search
> And the future emerging out of us seem to be one. (*CP*, p. 151)

What is more, the intermingling between poetry and politics seems to be "a constant desire", as he tells Barbara Church in 1966:

> The close approach to reality has always been the supreme difficulty of any art: the communication of actuality, as [poetics?], has been not only impossible, but has never appeared to be worthwhile because it loses identity as the event passes. Nothing in the world is deader than yesterday's political (or realistic) poetry. Nevertheless the desire to combine the two things, poetry and reality, is a constant desire. (p. 760)

It follows then that the turmoil fomented by both the war and the depression greatly informs Stevens's poetic style in the sense that it becomes replete with contradictions and conjectures. Just as nothing is settled in time of war, nothing seems to be final in his poetry. Stevens asserts in a 1966 letter to Bernard Heringman that "[he has] no wish to arrive at a conclusion" (p. 710). He avers that incessant new beginnings are sterile, and that conclusions are, as it were, lethal since they thwart any attempt at change. In "The plain Sense of Things", he goes so far as to say that even "the absence of the imagination had/ Itself to be imagined" (*CP*, p. 502).

Ambiguities, then, should hover unresolved; and the mind should offer fresh ways of ordering the world through creation, destruction and recreation. The same holds for the war, which is "a mode / Of destroying, as the mind destroys", as he puts it in his poem "Man and Bottle" (*CP*, p. 239). Interestingly, in a 1966 letter to Samuel French Morse, he claims: "Some people know exactly what they think. I am afraid that I am not one of those people. The same thing keeps active in my mind and rarely becomes fixed. This is true about politics as about poetry. But I suppose that it is really true about everything" (p. 641).

Throughout his artistic career, Stevens has endeavoured to place the power of poetry, the extraordinary, at the service of the recovery of life, of the ordinary. In "The Well-Dressed Man with a Beard", he comes to the conclusion that "it can never be satisfied, the mind, never", which further enhances Stevens's paramount concern with the real (*CP*, p. 247). Commenting on "Examination of the Hero in a Time of War", Stevens (1990) states that:

> In the presence of the violent reality of war, consciousness takes the place of the imagination. And consciousness of an immense war is a consciousness of fact. … The poetry of a work of the imagination constantly illustrates the fundamental and

> endless struggle with fact. It goes on everywhere, even in the periods that we call peace. But in war, the desire to move in the direction of fact as we want it to be and to move quickly is overwhelming. (p. 165)

In the light of this statement, I will also try to examine the workings of real life on poetry and to explore what Stevens's has probably meant by saying, in "The Poems of our Climate", that "the imperfect is our paradise" (*CP*, p. 193).

"The Imperfect is so Hot in us": Bitter Realities and the Promise of Poetry

In compelling lines from "The Poems of our Climate", Stevens (1971) states that:

> The imperfect is our paradise.
> Note that, in this bitterness, delight,
> Since the imperfect is so hot in us,
> Lies in flawed words and stubborn sounds. (*CP*, p. 194)

The imperfect, here, could be one's ordinary life, coupled with all the residual bitterness incurred by the war and the attendant economic depression experienced during Stevens's time. To find paradise while standing on the rubble of lives destroyed and lives yet to be sniffed out by the atrocities of the war is what poetry – Stevens's in particular – strives to achieve. Poetry provides an aesthetic release from the world's imperfections, and it behoves one's imagination to address these problems. As he avers in *The Necessary Angel* (1951):

> It is the vista a man sees, seated in the public garden of his native town, near by some effigy of a figure celebrated in the normal world, as he considers that the chief problems of any artist, as of any man, are the problems of the normal and that he needs, in order to solve them, everything that the imagination has to give. (p. 156)

Reading the last lines of "The Poems of our Climate" against the above statement, we might infer that the poem's "flawed words and stubborn sounds" are clear reflection of the ordinary that governs our lives. And probing even more into the poem, we can easily discern the afore-mentioned contradiction that characterizes many of Stevens's poems. In fact, in this poem, Stevens eloquently creates a "perfect" image of poetry, and almost instantly, expresses his desire to get rid of it, believing that it is poetry that ceases both to please and to satisfy. Along these lines, we can say that this poem is built upon the dichotomy between perfection and idealism versus imperfection and incompleteness.

To put it simply, in the first part of the poem, Stevens presents the reader with a perfect, flawless, simple and simplified image of "pink and white carnations" submerged in "clear water" inside "a brilliant bowl" (*CP* 193). Taking into account the meta-poetic aspect of this particular poem, the carnations can be perceived as allegorical representations of perfect, "pure" poems – that is to say, poems that provide the readers with little short of ideal images of beauty and the ensuing peace of mind. Such clean and cleansing image, as it were, is made even purer by the light inside the room, reflecting the "newly-fallen snow" (*CP*, p. 193). Again, "the newly-fallen snow" and the "snowy air" endow this "beautiful" tableau with an even fresher outlook and more vigorous feel. All these elements contribute to the creation of a

"simplified day", the speaker says, which takes one away from the ennui of every day life – an idea that runs through the following lines:

> The day itself
> Is simplified: a bowl of white,
> Cold, a cold porcelain, low and round,
> With nothing more than the carnations there. (*CP*, p. 193)

In this first part of the poem, Stevens manages to create a tangible, almost flesh-like image of a sort of poetry that "strip[s] one of one's torments, conceal[s]/ The evilly compounded, vital I,/ And [makes] it fresh in a world of white" (*CP*, p. 193). To the reader's surprise (and probably to his reassurance, for someone who is accustomed with Stevens's style and the paradox that governs his poetics), Stevens soon qualifies his statement about the beauty inherent in such simplicity and perfection, saying that "one would want more, one would need more,/ More than a world of white and snowy scents" (*CP*, p. 194).

This image, Stevens adds, fails to accommodate the "never-resting mind" (*CP*, p. 194). Perfect and ideal as it might seem, it fails to satisfy, for the mind "would want to escape, come back/ To what had been so long composed" (*CP*, p. 194). If we extend this metaphor to poems and readers, we can infer Stevens's insinuation that readers would desire to find more than a la-la land, as it were, in poetry. Readers would desire poetry that speaks to the imperfection within which they live and that shows them, paradoxically but intriguingly enough, the merits of such imperfection – a point on which I shall dwell with more details later in my analysis.

If we go back to the porcelain containing the white and pink carnations, it is very intriguing to note that the speaker repeats the word "cold" twice while describing that porcelain. The "snowy-air", once agreeable and soothing, now confers to the scene a cold atmosphere – one that is almost freezing. The "restless" mind, according to Stevens, could not endure such frozen state, neither could it put up with this "complete simplicity", on such a "simplified day" (*CP*, p. 193). This "world of white", no matter how "fresh" it gets, is not gratifying any more (*CP*, p. 193). The repetition of "more", three times in the last lines of the second stanza, further reinforces the mind's ardent desire for more than this naked world and, by association, this blank poetry. And should we pay closer attention to the different sound devices deployed in this first stanza, we may find a pertinent correspondence between musicality and the general mood conveyed by such a "perfect" tableau. The alliterative /b/ in "brilliant" and "bowl;" the alliterative /k/ in "cold" and "cold;" and the consonant /k/ in "pink" and "carnation" – all these plosive sounds compound the harshness of such a lifeless, almost bleak image even more.

The "never-resting mind" finds this image too perfect and too spiritless to bear. Stevens accounts for this attitude by stating that "the imperfect is so hot is us", which runs counter to the cold porcelain that he describes in the first stanza. The imperfect is so vivid and fervent inside us that our mind would ultimately shy away from this cold perfection regardless of the beauty inherent in it. Most importantly, Stevens concludes his poem by putting forth a verbal and an auditory imagery that lies in sharp contrast to the visual imagery dominating especially the first part of the poem. Delight, he contends, does not lie in those perfect and ideal images that some poems impart, but rather resides in those "flawed words and stubborn sounds" that both speak to and echo the world's imperfection and, almost magically, make the reader content with it (*CP*, p. 194).

Therefore, in its restlessness, the mind "would want to escape, come back/ To what had been long composed", says the speaker, which points out to the mind's constant desire to recapture the past and its perpetual longing for a more promising future (*CP*, p. 194). This idea leads me to my final comment on the implications as well as undertows of the word "imperfect". My own understanding of Stevens's "imperfect" here is the lack of completion and want of finality, which conveys man's hankering after a perfect world, albeit with the knowledge that such a world will always remain unattainable. This is probably what Stevens means by saying that "the imperfect is so hot in us" (*CP*, p. 194). To put it simply, the imperfection that characterizes our lives is what makes us, actually, live our lives. And this is what makes life, despite its bitterness, paradise-like. Being submerged in imperfection, in the world's flaws, is what motivates our search for perfection and what invests life with meaning. This is exactly what makes ordinary, imperfect life so paradisiacal.

"The Poems of Our Climate", Stevens proposes, should never shun imperfection but rather fully embrace it. They should contribute to the search for conclusions without necessarily providing them. And in so doing, yes, they truly poeticize the imperfect.

Conclusion

Nothing can better conclude the present paper than the following statement where Wallace Stevens defines poetry:

> It is a violence from within that protects us from a violence without. It is the imagination pressing back against the pressure of reality. It seems, in the last analysis, to have something to do with our self-preservation; and that, no doubt, is why the expression of it, the sound of its words, helps us to live our lives. (1951, p. 36)

Stevens's poetry presents, indeed, the mind as restless, always "in the act of finding/ What will suffice" (*CP*, p. 239), what will satisfy. And this satisfaction may be "of a man skating, a woman dancing, a woman/ Combing" (*CP*, p. 240). In the eyes of Stevens, poetry could and should actually be as simple as that, and not as frigid and perfect as the "pink and white carnations" in "clear water in a brilliant bowl" (*CP*, p. 193).

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New Naturalism of Herzog and Deleuze

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Abstract

This article reviews distinctive elements of Werner Herzog's naturalism and endeavors to analyse it within a philosophical framework that has Gilles Deleuze's ideas as primary referent. Deleuze's discussion of Stoic philosophy, specifically the concept of quasi-causality, will be a critical mainstay for this reading of Herzog. The axial objective is to determine how an immanent construction of reality, or what I will call genesis, is the subject matter of both Herzog's speculative and imaginative naturalism and Deleuze's pluralistic realism. This notion demands that we direct our attention to the manner in which Herzog's protagonists are all mad in a way, all the while focusing on how this madness helps to forge the distinctive characteristics of his aesthetic creation. As a result, we find in Herzog a peculiar kind of agency, different from rational or causal agency. Here, drives and impulses inform decisions and incite the characters to take action. Consequently, I aim to demonstrate the existence of an affinity between this agency in Herzog and the notion of quasi-causality in Deleuze's reading of the Stoics.

Keywords: Herzog, Deleuze, naturalism, quasi-causality, destiny

Herzog's Naturalism

Nature is one of Herzog's most obvious obsessions, so ascribing a kind of naturalism to him is uncontroversial. It's also not difficult to find that nature for Herzog is not a spectacular scene to be watched from a safe distance. It is not beautiful but cruel, chaotic, and out of our control. He has an unequivocally non-romantic, which is to say practical view of nature.

To give just a few examples, let us consider the films that have Klaus Kinsky as the leading actor. The characters Aguirre and Fitzcarraldo are each in some way dissolved in the Amazonian jungle, which is depicted as extremely wild and infinite. In these movies (*Aguirre, Wrath of God* and *Fitzcarraldo*) violence is also essential, a devastating violence that is depicted as basic, organic and natural. The cruelty of Aguirre, for example, is entwined with the irrational cruelty of jungle and nature. These films picture a conflict, but it would be inappropriate to characterise it as one occurring between human and nature, as some commentators propose.[1] It is nature that is unconsciously and indiscriminately brutal, so no one can reasonably be held responsible for its violence. The death of individuals is part of the life of nature, that's why the Herzogean heroes never fear death.

This view of nature is prevalent among the Hellenistic philosophers, from whom I want to borrow the concept "living in harmony with nature". For Epicureans, Cynics and Stoics, naturalism is a way to eliminate the fear of death. To do this, instead of assuming the life/ death dichotomy, they postulate only one power that encompasses both, so death is just one of the aspects of universal life. Stoic naturalism is a kind of materialism in which the body itself is alive. This goes against the Platonic tradition, which includes Aristotle, that believes in bodily inertia and that life and movement come into the body from without. Epicureans and Stoics reject all incorporeal causes because, in their view, it is the body that is animate and dynamic. We will see that for them "the incorporeal" originates in bodies and is the result of the actions and passions of bodies. While for Aristotle there should be an incorporeal, unmoved mover as the true cause of all corporeal causalities, for the Stoics bodies are true causes. But according to Plato and Aristotle, who search for a stable foundation to explain the changing being, true causes are incorporeal and bodies are effects. According to the Stoics, who deny this, bodies are causes and the incorporeals are effects. In each case there is the underlying idea that the world is, in fact, alive. Emile Brehier, in his reading of the Stoics in *La Theorie des incorporels dans l'ancien stoïcisme*, says:

> The whole world, with its organization, the hierarchy of its parts, and its evolution that flows from one conflagration to another, is a living being. Even the mineral, with the cohesion of its parts, possesses a unity analogous to the unity of a living entity. So, one can say, the change in being is always analogous to the evolution of a living entity. (Brieher, pp. 4–5; my translation)

Viewed through such a lens, the death and life of one living entity such as an individual is merely a negligible fragment of a much greater life. This makes Stoics and Cynics somewhat indifferent toward the death of relatives. They are apathetic and cruel in accordance with nature. Nature is a thoughtless, indifferent animal. In their view, when one is passive regarding

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[1] Cf. for example, Noys, B. (2007). Antiphusis: Werner Herzog's Grizzly Man. *Film-Philosophy*, *11*(3). Retrieved from http://www.film-philosophy.com/index.php/f-p/article/view/122/82 11.3. In this paper Noys proposes the concept of "anti-nature" to explain Herzog's view. I prefer to retain the concept of nature, because I believe that Herzog's view is a continuation of a line of thought in the history of naturalism.

nature, this does not make one apathetic. This passivity actually provides human beings with passion, as will be seen.

Herzog's protagonists also look cruel in the way that they are in harmony with nature. This cruelty is tied to madness. Madness is an aspect of the wildness of nature, and not only are Herzog's heroes all madmen in this positive sense, what is more, Herzog's art itself is a kind of madness.

Now the question is: what do cruelty and madness have to do with art and artistic creation? To deal with this question, we first need to consider that if we live in harmony with nature, our artistic activities should be part of nature's arts. But what is this natural art? For this, let's take a look at *the Cave of Forgotten Dreams*, which is a documentary about 28,000 year-old cave paintings. Herzog tries to prove that these paintings have all the requisite elements to be considered as art in the modern sense. The question that arises during the movie is: who painted the cave walls? Was it human or animal? Interestingly, there seems to be no such distinction for Herzog. In the documentary, an interviewer says: "The painter is the spirit's hand" (Herzog, 2010). And the spirit is nothing other than nature. Herzog also explains this point in the documentary with a reference to the concept of dreams. The narrator describes the ancient paintings as "dreams from 28,000 years ago" (Herzog, 2010). So, ostensibly, we can see their dreams as works of art in the cave. In the quasi-documentary *Where the Green Ants Dream*, the native Australians put forward an idea that we live in the dreams of green ants. One can conclude that it is the spirit or nature that is dreaming, and the world is the realization of its dreams.

To see how this natural art is related to madness, we need to consider the creativity and passion of a critical Herzog protagonist, Kaspar Hauser, in *The Enigma of Kaspar Hauser* (in German: *Jeder für sich und Gott Gegen Alle*). This film is a cinematic version of the story of a boy who lived the first seventeen years of his life in a cellar and had no contact with humans, except a so-called father who fed him and taught him a few things. Bruno S., a non-actor who spent much of his youth in psychiatric hospitals plays the role of Kaspar. He came directly from non-human to human life, and so can play, quite appropriately, the role of intermediary between internal and external nature. The film mainly aims to depict Kaspar's sensitivity as a replacement for his absent rationality. He didn't learn to concentrate with his mind, and so he thinks with his body, his impulses and drives. His way of using language is specifically a sensible or poetic one. This film is about the creative power of madness and its relationship with the poetic way of thinking, set against the stupidity of scientific rationality. Madness is a genuine pathway to *poesis*, to creation. Therefore, mad nature and rational culture have the same essence, which is life and creativity. Kaspar says in the movie: "I have only life. There is nothing else in me" (Herzog, 1974), which can be translated as: I have only drives and impulses in me. For Herzog, like for Nietzsche, reason is set against life, as it is a reduction of life's powers. He wants to emphasize bare impulses through the repetitive movements of Kaspar's body. Displaying Kaspar's inner nature together with external nature leads us to consider the latter as a force endowed with the capacity to propel human beings. This power shows itself in language, which seems to be a continuation of the character's corporeal drives.

Consequently, there is no essential distinction between body and language, because a "word" is a "thing" that we internalize as our own, even though it has arrived in us from the outside. But language only works in the medium of a favourable "outside". We can see this symbolically in the last speaker of a language in *Where the Green Ants Dream*, who gives a testimony in a

court. No one can understand or translate his talk, and what he says is incommunicable. But communication, as we shall see, can occur with corporeal drives and impulses.

Herzog also internalized this view in his career as a filmmaker. He made both documentary and feature movies, but his documentaries are famously fictional and his feature movies are somehow documentary. Here, we can see how the border between reality and fiction blurs. Fiction belongs not only to the human culture but also to nature. What we can do is part of what nature can do. Our obsessional phantasms and dreams are counterparts of the mad power of repetition in nature. A documentary is, like a feature film, the realization of a dream, and more radically, reality is the realization of dreams. This point is interestingly noticeable in the use of the term "*einbildung*" in the German version of *Aguirre; Wrath of God*, when someone sees a ship on the top of a tree. *Einbildung* means imagination but it contains the morpheme *bilden*, which means creation or construction. Herzog, later in *Fitzarraldo*, actualized this unity of imagination and construction.

In all his work Herzog constructs reality as film. His productions are true stories, but not in relation to pre-existing facts. They are true in and of themselves. The filmmaker is not a passive sensor before reality, but constructs reality out of his dreams and phantasms. Observation is intervention, in the sense that it makes something new, so that a documentary adds something new to reality and so modifies it. So, filming a natural event adds something to the event. This is the dialectic of nature by which it constructs itself infinitely. Reality itself is fictional and imaginative, because it is restless and productive. The infinite diversity of nature comes from its fictional attributes.

Sense and Genesis in Gilles Deleuze's *The Logic of Sense*

In the history of philosophy, this view of naturalism can be found amongst others in ancient Hellenistic philosophy, Spinoza (one can also think of Schelling), and Nietzsche. In contemporary philosophy, Gilles Deleuze provided a synthesis, so that we can find in his works a complete and complex philosophical version of naturalism that is appropriate to this discussion. The most apposite text for our purposes is Gilles Deleuze's *The Logic of Sense,* where I will focus on his reading of Stoic philosophy.

Deleuze's central discussion in this text has to do with the genesis of reality, not its essence. The logic of sense, set against the logic of essence, deals with genesis, not existence. This genesis is considered to be immanent, which according to Deleuze means that there is no pre-existing pattern for the genesis of reality. Cosmos comes to existence out of chaos. This view of genesis or "*chaosmosis*" should help explain the "immanent" construction of reality or nature.

To consider the genesis of reality instead of its essence as the subject of philosophy, Deleuze needs to add a new category to the realm of things. He borrows an ontological distinction from ancient Stoic philosophy between corporeal bodies that exist and incorporeals that subsist. If beings are bodies, incorporeals are not beings, even if they are somethings. Following the Stoics, Deleuze states that incorporeals are the way of being, or the mode of presentation of being.

Now, one important incorporeal is the sayable (*lekton*)[2], which is the linguistic sense. When I say something about something, the sense of my statement is neither the object that I'm talking about nor my statement itself. An utterance is a body which says something about another body. The sense of the utterance (sayable) is not itself a body, but is a way of being of a body.

In *The Logic of Sense*, Deleuze develops this Stoic theory to define sense as the way of being as well as effect. Referring to an ancient example, when the scalpel cuts the flesh, the first body produces upon the second a new attribute, that of being cut[3]. The attribute is always expressed by the verb, which means that it is not a being, but a way of being. Being cut is the effect of the meeting of scalpel and flesh. Here there are two bodies and one incorporeal effect, like in linguistic communication in which there are two bodies and incorporeal sense. So, sense is a kind of effect of the meeting of two bodies.

In other words, bodies are causes and the relation between bodies is causality. Senses are not causes, but effects. Bodies are causes in relation to each other, but they are causes of somethings of an entirely different nature, namely incorporeal effects. Effects are the effects of causality. And since they have ontological status as somethings, Deleuze calls them event-effects or simply events that can be expressed only by verbs. They are the change that occurs when two bodies meet together.

Sense is different from common sense and good sense, which are the *products* of sense. Sense first is nonsense and then becomes common or good. Deleuze in *The Logic of Sense* provides a reading of logical and literary works of Lewis Carroll to show the role of nonsense in the constitution of sense. When something remains identical with itself, it has a pre-existing meaning. When it changes, it attracts our attention and so produces a new sense. That's why Deleuze makes an identification between sense and event, and use the term sense-event. Events have priority over substances, so that sense has priority over meaning.

The result is that ontological nonsense is the origin of sense. Things make sense when they suffer or enjoy change, and this change is the effect of actions and passions of bodies, which expresses the internal relationship of bodies, or what Deleuze calls the mixture of bodies. A body affects another body, and there is an effect with a different nature as a result of this corporeal affection. Deleuze uses topological terminology to explain this interaction; bodies are depths and incorporeals are at the surface, where the becoming and change occur. The changes occur at the surface of things.

Considering the relationship between sense as nonsense and changes at the surface of the bodies, we can say that reality becomes (or grows), with the help of superficial dreams or what Deleuze calls phantasm. They are not bodies but the effects of their becoming. So, phantasm is another name for event, where meaning finds its origin in sense as nonsense. Deleuze states,

> The phantasm . . . represents neither an action nor a passion, but a result of action and passion, that is, a pure event. The question of whether particular events are

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[2] In the contemporary standard literature about the Stoics, the English translation of *Lekton* is sayables (Cf. Long and Sedley, 1987, for example). Emile Brehier in his influential study, *La Theorie des incorporels dans l'ancien stoicism* (Paris, Vrin, 1928), translated it to "exprimable" and Dleuze follows his terminology. The English translation of *Logique du Sens* considers "expressible" and not "sayable" for this term. Here, I follow the standard terminology.

[3] This example comes from Sextus Empiricus; Cf. Long and Sedley, 1987, pp. 333 and 340.

> real or imaginary is poorly posed. The distinction is not between the imaginary and the real, but between the event as such and the corporeal state of affairs which incites it about or in which it is actualized. Events are effects . . . Freud was then right to maintain the rights of reality in the production of phantasms . . . (Deleuze 1990, p. 210)

The result of the interaction of bodies is not itself a body but an effect or an image. Bodies are always in interaction and so produce images tirelessly. In this way, reality produces phantasm without stop. Without this phantasm or ontological dream, reality is something still and dead, and so is an illusion. Dreaming is the way reality constructs itself endlessly. Construction and making sense are the same activities. Changes occur on the points where the things make sense, and are the ontological communication between bodies. Phantasm as the production of obsessional images is a natural instrument of communication and making sense.

Causality and Destiny

As mentioned above, the origin of this realism of sense is the Stoic ontological distinction between bodies and event-effects. Stoics, in Deleuze's reading, provide a naturalist ontology that has ethical consequences, and this combination of ontology and ethics is crucial for understanding Herzog's thought. The key concept here is quasi-causality and its relation to destiny. Bodies are causes and the relationship among them is causality. They are causes in relation to each other, but causes of somethings of an entirely different nature, namely incorporeal effects. Effects are the effects of causality. The relationship between effects, which are events, is not causality, but is called by Deleuze quasi-causality.

Now, the question is that what is this link between effects or events? It is not a causality because causality is the link between bodies and effects or events are not bodies. It is not also necessary in a way in which an individual necessarily belongs to its general class, because events are singular. Deleuze with a reference to Clement of Alexandria states that the link between the effects is not a causality but is like a causality: "The Stoics say that the body is cause in the proper sense, but the incorporeal in the metaphoric sense, and like a cause" (Clement of Alexandria, *Stromates*, VIII, 9; Deleuze, 1969, p. 115, my translation)[4]. This "quasi-causality", which is Deleuze's translation of "like a causality" or causality "in the metaphoric sense", is the causality of incorporeal sayables, and is the subject of logic which deals only with the sayables. Deleuze emphasizes that quasi-causality "*assures the full autonomy of the effect*" (Deleuze, 1990, p. 95), and irreducibility of sense. The quasi-causality is essentially different from causality. It shows the power of production (via pretention) in the realm of sense. Although events are effects of bodies and so dependent on them, they hold a relation among each other which assign a kind of independence to them. Events are effects of bodies but the logical connection among events is not the effect or the image of causality. Quasi-causality is an "ideal cause", or as Clement calls it, a "metaphoric" cause.

But why it is "like a causality" (quasi-causality) and what kind of relation is it, if not a causality? Here, Deleuze refers to the Stoic view about fatalism and co-fated events in Cicero's *De Fato*. The relation between events or effects is independent from corporeal causality and can be understood by what Cicero calls "*confatalia*". Deleuze discusses this concept in "Twenty-Fourth Series of the Communication of Events" in *The Logic of Sense*, where he states, "the Stoic paradox is to affirm destiny (*le destin*), but to deny necessity" (Deleuze, 1969,

[4] . The English translation contains an unfortunate mistake in this case, to translate "mataphorique" to "metaphysical" (Cf. Deleuze, 1969, p. 115, and Deleuze, 1990, p. 343).

p. 198; 1990, p. 169). Destiny is what makes the events compatible or incompatible one another, which one is co-fated with the other and which one is not. So, there is a double causality at work here. The relation among bodies is causality which is a necessary relation. There are effects as the results of this causality, and these effects enjoy a kind of autonomy, regarding the internal link among themselves.

To show that this quasi-causality is destiny or co-fatality, Deleuze refers to how Chrysippus in the Cicero's text transforms "hypothetical propositions into conjunctives or disjunctives" (Deleuze, 1969, p. 199). Hypothetical or conditional propositions are about concepts, while conjunctives or disjunctives are about facts or events. Chrysippus transforms Chaldean astrological propositions because he believes that astrology deals with events not concepts. Hence, instead of "if it is day, it is light", we have, "this is not the case both that it is day and it is not light". The first proposition expresses causality while the second denotes quasi-causality in the form of incompatibility. Chaldean astrology is confused in considering the relation between facts and events as causal. Stoic astrology in Deleuze's reading is a modification in introducing quasi-causality and co-fatality instead of causality and necessity. In consequence, we have Stoic astrology as a philosophical attempt to think of a different and new relation between events. Deleuze states that

> the relations of events among themselves from the point of view of an ideational or noematic quasi-causality, first expresses noncausal correspondence, alogical compatibilities or incompatibilities. This was the strength of the Stoics to follow this path: according to what criteria are events *copulata*, *confatalia* (or *inconfatalia*), *conjuncta*, or *disjuncta*? Astrology was perhaps the first great attempt to stablish a theory of alogical incompatibilities and non-causal correspondences". (Deleuze 1969, p. 200; 1990, p. 171)

Quasi-causality is a relation like causality between co-related events (*copulata*)[5]. In the relation of causality, there is an internal necessity. Fate (in Chaldean astrology, for example) comes from somewhere exterior, from someone who makes the decision to relate the events, someone like God. In this sense, fate is a special kind of causality. But the Stoic co-fatality considers God as an internal, immanent decision maker. The events are fated, because they are co-fated by each other.

This brings us to the discussion of Stoic epistemology and the problem of knowledge. The necessary relation between bodies is the subject matter of Stoic physics. Here, one can possess a complete knowledge of the relation that is causality. Physics deals not only with bodies, but also concepts, because causality occurs between bodies considered in a closed system. On the contrary, logic deals only with the facts or events. There is no complete knowledge about the totality of events, so the knowledge here is always partial. Thus, the Stoic astrologer *feels* something like causality between events, a quasi-causality, and has to suggest a decision based on this feeling. Michael Bennett, in his study about quasi-causality, referring to another study by Suzanne Bobzien, considers quasi-causality as a relation in which an event (being cut) causes (partially, say "quasi") another event (being in pain) (Bennett, 2014, p. 10). He uses also the term conditioning for the relation among events. Some events condition the others without defining them. He concludes that the causality of language to set a contract is nothing

[5] Deleuze relates this Stoic concept of compatibility to the Leibnizean concept of compossibility, and takes use of his own peculiar reading of Leibniz to understand the Stoic concept of quasi-causality (Deleuze, 1969, pp. 200–202).

else than this quasi-causality, like when "a judge's statement transforms the accused into the convict, or attaining the age of majority transforms a child into an adult" (Bennett, 2014, p. 16). Hence, quasi-causality means to establish a relation through a decision (made by a judge, for example), in the condition in which there is no physical ground to make the decision. Now, we can understand how the quasi-causality of events has priority over the causality among bodies. All necessary rules are established arbitrarily, but not by an all-knowing agent. They are established by a singular aleatory point, a paradoxical element, what the Stoics call "*blituri*". This exercises a kind of activity (quasi-causality) to the incorporeal events, which according to Michael Bennett, puts Deleuze's reading of the Stoics against the dominant view in the Stoic scholarship that incorporeality depends on corporeality (Bennett, 2014, p.5).

The ethical aspect of this conception is about the will of the Stoic sage to do something or to make a decision. In a closed system of concepts or objects there is no need to make a decision, because it's organized by necessity. In the open system of events, lack of knowledge necessitates decision-making. Stoic logic is in a very close relation with ethics, because it deals with making decisions in the condition of lack of complete knowledge. The Stoic sage is different from a philosopher or a wise man. Instead of being profound and serious, he or she plays joyfully on the surface and makes decision with the paradoxes: "The Stoic sage 'identifies' with the quasi-cause: he sets up himself at the surface, on the straight line which traverses it, at the aleatory point which traces or runs through this line . . . The sage waits for the event, that is to say: he *understands the pure event* in its eternal truth, independently of its spatio-temporal actualization . . . Identifying with the quasi-cause, the sage wants to 'corporealize' the incorporeal effect . . ." (Deleuze, 1969, pp. 171–172; 1990, p. 147).

This embodiment is what I referred to with the will and making decision. The event comes through the decision of the Stoic sage. He or she is the quasi-cause of the embodiment of the event. This is a move from one will to another, from "I will" to "it wills in me". The Stoic sage is not a director, but an actor who makes his actors act. There is no all-knowing element, in this system.

So, the quasi-causality is the causality of event as not-known, as something "yet-to-come". Conceptually, it's in a place between contingency and necessity. It is not pure not-knowing, but a knowledge of not-knowing. It is a will, but not against the event or what the Stoics call "nature". "The quasi-cause does not create, it 'operates', and wills only what comes to pass" (Deleuze, 1969, p. 172; Deleuze, 1990, p. 147). It is not a director, but an actor, an actor who acts without direction: "This is how the Stoic sage not only comprehends and wills the event, but also *represents it and, by this, selects it*, and that an ethics of the mime necessarily prolongs the logic of sense" (Deleuze, 1969, p. 173; Deleuze, 1990, p. 147).

We can find the best examples of the Stoic sage in Herzogean heroes, Aguirre for instance, or better yet, Kaspar Hauser. Apart from the fact that for many reasons Kaspar is very far from being a *person*, here I'd like to focus on a dream-like story Kasper recalls at the end of the film on his deathbed:

> I see a caravan coming through the desert . . . across the sands. And this caravan is led by an old Berber tribesman. And this old man is blind. Now the caravan stops . . . because some believe they are lost . . . and because they see mountains ahead of them. They look at their compass, but it's no use. Then their blind leader picks up a handful of sand . . . and tastes it as though it were food. My sons, the blind man says, you are wrong. Those are not mountains you see . . . it is only

> your imagination. We must continue northward. And they follow the old man's advice . . . and finally reach the City in the North. And that's where the story begins. But how the story goes after they reach the city, I don't know. Thank you all for listening me. I'm tired now. (Herzog, 1974)

The leader is the so-called decision maker. He should not make decision based on something, if so, that base is the decision maker, not the leader. Making decisions based on nothing is just like throwing dice, and this is exactly what a Stoic sage does. He makes decisions based not on knowledge, but on not-knowing, or in a Socratic way, knowledge of not-knowing. He believes in destiny, and is sure that his decision, whatever it is, is consistent with it. He is the actor who plays a role, but not based on a prescript. This is the meaning of documentation, specifically Herzogean documentation in his feature films. In this sense, Herzog is not a director in a conventional way, but is an actor who makes his actors act. Deleuze states, "The actor is always acting out other roles when acting one role" (Deleuze, 1969, p. 176; Deleuze, 1990, p. 150). Herzog is a professor, but not a professional. He, as a Stoic sage, is an amateur in the whole period of his career as a filmmaker. It is in this sense that he is our teacher. In *Difference and Repetition*, Deleuze describes a teacher in terms of heterogeneity:

> We learn nothing from those who say: 'Do as I do'. Our only teachers are those who tell us to 'do with me', and are able to emit signs to be developed in heterogeneity rather than propose gestures for us to reproduce (Deleuze, 2004, p. 26).

The teacher should act together with the pupil and makes him act. The actor is one who stimulates another actor to act, an event who makes other events act, or rather they are the other events which act in him and through him. It is neither active nor passive, but a positive force which can be called passion.

Herzog and Deleuze, in different ways, make an infinite ontology based on this not-knowing. There is no all-knowing element in Herzogean and Deleuzean systems. We know just what we know, so what we don't know is absolutely not-known. The conclusion is that the cosmos is a layer in the chaos. Any order comes into existence out of a disorder and is itself a disorder for another order. One can consider this temporally or topologically. From the topological perspective, each layer is composed of infinite layers. We know things just on our scale, and there is an infinity of scales in both directions, inferior and superior.

From Sense to *Dissensus*

In *The Logic of Sense*, Deleuze explains the relationship between events, also as a vibration or resonance between series. The series of events are in a kind of tension, vibrating in phase with one another. This relationship is very different from causal relations between bodies. In a vibration or resonance, the bodies manipulate or intervene in each other, what is called in physics the interference of waves. In "Plato and the Simulacrum", which is an appendix to *The Logic of Sense*, Deleuze states:

> There is indeed a unity of divergent series insofar as they are divergent . . . it {chaos} is the power of affirmation, the power to affirm all the heterogeneous series – it 'complicates' within itself all the series . . . Between these basic series, a sort of *internal resonance* is produced; and this resonance induces a *forced movement*, which goes beyond the series themselves" (Deleuze, 1969, p. 301; Deleuze, 1990, pp. 260–261, italics in original)

Deleuze's ontology is based on the priority of events over substantial bodies, or destiny over necessity. Reality or nature is an infinite series of events vibrating or resonating with each other. There is always violence in vibration and resonance, "a *forced movement*", which makes decision-making possible in an undecidable domain. The organization of nature is dynamic and disorganized compared to the previous organization. There is no harmony in nature, if we define harmony as a pre-existing pattern. The Stoic notion of living in harmony with nature involves violent, because nature itself is disharmonized. Cosmos is originally chaos, and the harmony of nature turns out to be the unity of divergent series or heterogeneous elements.

At this stage I'd like to recall Simon Critchley's characterisation of David Bowie as another madman who transformed his mad dreams into art:

> Music like Bowie's is not a way of somehow recalling human beings affectively to a kind of pre-established harmony with the world. That would be banal and mundane, literally. Rather, Bowie permits a kind of deworlding of the world, an experience of mood, emotion, or *Stimmung* that shows that all in the world *stimmt nicht*—i.e., is not in agreement or accord with the self. (Critchley, 2014, p. 38)

And elsewhere in the same work,

> The sound of Bowie's voice creates a resonance within us. It finds a corporeal echo. But resonance invites dissonance. A resonating body in one location— like glasses on a table—begins to make another body shake and suddenly the whole floor is covered with broken glass. Music resounds and calls us to dissent from the world, to experience a *dissensus communis*, a sociability at odds with common sense. Through the fakery and because of it, we feel a truth that leads us beyond ourselves, toward the imagination of some other way of being. (Critchley, pp. 40–41)

Herzog, in a documentary about the production of *Fitzcarraldo* called *Burden of Dreams*, says:

> There is no harmony in the universe. We have to get acquainted to this idea that there is no real harmony as we have conceived it. But when I say this I say this full of admiration for the jungle. It is not that I hate it. I love it, I love it very much. But I love it against my better judgement" (*Burden of Dreams*, Les Blank)

Or could we say against his common sense?

The Stoic way of living in harmony with nature is to join the vibration of series in the chaosmos and betray the rule of nature, because nature is not in agreement or accordance with itself. Aguirre, when he kills a traitor, says "I am the great traitor. There can be no greater" (*Aguirre, Wrath of God*). Betrayal is the new rule of nature, if power governs. Convincing is a lie, power is the truth beneath it. Accordance between forces is nothing but the internal conflict of nature, or natural *dissensus*. This is the meaning of Aguirre's essential disobedience. He lives as he rebels until death. To be heathen is to experience the wrath of God, while to believe is to experience his mercy.

This is how reality constructs itself, and Herzog, in his way of filmmaking, tries to be part of this immanent construction, someone like a Stoic sage. Reality constructs itself violently, in

the resonance and vibration of its parts. Immanent creation is necessarily violent. And Herzog's cinema is violent, as nature in his movies is violent. It's not in harmony with us, and we love it. There's no depth or height in nature, no reason for this love of nature. This love is the Nietzschean *Amor Fati*, which is willing the event as well as love of fate.

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