

Edited by JAN PARKER AND
TIMOTHY MATHEWS

TRADITION, TRANSLATION, TRAUMA

The Classic and the Modern



CLASSICAL PRESENCES

OXFORD

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General Editors

Lorna Hardwick James I. Porter

CLASSICAL PRESENCES

The texts, ideas, images, and material culture of ancient Greece and Rome have always been crucial to attempts to appropriate the past in order to authenticate the present. They underlie the mapping of change and the assertion and challenging of values and identities, old and new. *Classical Presences* brings the latest scholarship to bear on the contexts, theory, and practice of such use, and abuse, of the classical past.

Tradition,
Translation,
Trauma

The Classic and the Modern

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JAN PARKER
TIMOTHY MATHEWS

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Contents

<i>List of Illustrations</i>	xi
<i>Notes on Contributors</i>	xii
Prologue <i>Susan Bassnett</i>	1
Introduction: Images of Tradition, Translation, Trauma . . . <i>Jan Parker</i>	11
Part I. Handing on, Making Anew, Refusing the Classic	
Proemion: Translating a Paeon of Praise <i>Frederick Ahl</i>	29
1. Fuzzy Connections: Classical Texts and Modern Poetry in English <i>Lorna Hardwick</i>	39
2. Pope's Trojan Geography <i>David Hopkins</i>	61
3. Sophoclean Journeys <i>Pat Easterling</i>	73
4. Cicero: Gentleman and Orator: Metaphors in Eighteenth-Century Reception <i>Matthew Fox</i>	91
5. Eating Eumolpus: <i>Fellini Satyricon</i> and Dreaming Tradition <i>Richard Armstrong</i>	109
6. After Freud: Sophocles' Oedipus in the Twenty-First Century <i>Rachel Bowlby</i>	129

Part II. Modernity and its Price; Nostalgia and the Classic

7. The Price of the Modern: Walter Benjamin
and Counterfactuals 143
Christopher Prendergast
8. Composite Cultures, Chaos Wor(l)ds: Relational
Poetics, Textual Hybridity, and the Future of Opacity 155
Jonathan Monroe
9. Time, Free Verse, and the Gods of Modernism 175
Ian Patterson
10. Lost in Nostalgia: Modernity's Repressed Other 191
Wen-chin Ouyang

Part III. The Time of Memory, the Time of Trauma

11. No Consolation: The Lamenting Voice
and Public Memory 211
Gail Holst-Warhaft
12. The Abject Eidos: Trauma and the Body
in Sophocles' *Electra* 229
Jane Montgomery Griffiths
13. What's Hecuba to him . . . that he should weep for her? 245
Jan Parker
14. Modernism's Nostalgics, Nostalgia's Modernity 263
George Rousseau
15. Mediating Trauma: How do we Read
the Holocaust Memoirs? 283
Piotr Kuhiwczak
16. History as Traumatic Memory: *Das Áfricas* 299
Helena Buescu
17. Reading the Invisible with Cees Nooteboom,
Walter Benjamin, and Alberto Giacometti 317
Timothy Mathews

Contents

ix

Conclusion: Can Anyone Look in Both Directions at Once? <i>Timothy Mathews</i>	333
Epilogue <i>Derek Attridge</i>	347
<i>Index</i>	353

This page intentionally left blank

List of Illustrations

16.1. Furtado and Velho da Costa (1991), 93	300
16.2. Furtado and Velho da Costa (1991), 47	303
16.3. Furtado and Velho da Costa (1991), 75	304
16.4. Furtado and Velho da Costa (1991), 76	306
16.5. Furtado and Velho da Costa (1991), 63	306
16.6. Furtado and Velho da Costa (1991), 90	310
16.7. Furtado and Velho da Costa (1991), 89	312
16.8. Furtado and Velho da Costa (1991), 78	313
16.9. Furtado and Velho da Costa (1991), 45	314
17.1. © succession Giacometti, ADAGP / DACS 2010	330

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Prologue

Susan Bassnett

We are all translators, in one way or another, even those of us who only live with one language in our heads. Engaging with different people in our daily lives, we also engage in acts of translation, as we shift linguistic registers, edit and adapt what we choose to communicate, reshape narratives in different contexts for different people. We may tell the same story to close friends and distant relations, but the telling of it will be different, the ways in which we choose to articulate the story will not be the same, because we are not always able to rely on the same degree of intimacy, the same kind of understanding, the same empathy. Some of us cope with tragedy in our lives by transforming the painful and the grotesque into comic anecdotes, some of us exaggerate or play down incidents in the retelling, and all of us interpret the unknown by filtering it through the familiar, all of which can be viewed as forms of translation. Translation in the widest sense of the word is an endless process of reshaping, retelling, reworking and we all, to some extent, engage in versions of that process in our daily lives.

So central is translation in the day-to-day that for centuries the word encompassed not only the idea of metamorphosis, but extended to death itself. 'Bless thee Bottom, bless thee, thou art translated!' cries Peter Quince when he sees his companion transformed into an ass, but an Elizabethan audience would have picked up a double meaning here—Bottom is 'translated' into another creature, and 'translated' in the sense that he has ceased to exist as Bottom. Translation to the sixteenth-century mind could also mean the translation of the body into the celestial realm. The field of meaning of the word 'translation'

diachronically is far wider than the restricted sense of translation as the transfer of a text written in one language into another.

Associating translation with death is a far cry from how we conceive of translation today, for since Walter Benjamin's superb, thought-provoking essay, 'Die Aufgabe des Übersetzers', (The Task of the Translator) published in 1923, we have come to accept his defence of translation as a means of ensuring the survival of texts that would otherwise be lost to us. Translation offers an afterlife to works that are at risk of vanishing forever, it is a form of resurrection of the dead. Being able to translate the runes scratched into the stones inside the great tomb of Maes Howe on Orkney gives us a glimpse into a society that has vanished from the face of the earth, even though we have no sense of who the carver might have been, and so, in one sense, he lives on. Through translation we are enabled to peep beyond the curtain that holds back the distant past.

Yet any notion of an afterlife, be it reincarnation or resurrection, is wreathed in mystery, reliant on negotiations with the unknown, on intuitive understanding, on fleeting instants of enlightenment, on faith. Translation may be a means of recovering the past, of bringing the dead back to life, but what it recovers must remain forever incompletely known and understood. Translation is always *troué*, there are gaps across time and space that can never be fully bridged, and translation is a literary act that is destined to be incomplete, always in the making, always in motion, never reaching a final point of stillness.

The unending nature of translation is fascinating and problematic. We have only one *Iliad*, but there are countless *Iliads* in circulation and will be countless more in the future. There are no limits to the number of translations that can be made. In his essay on translation, 'The Homeric Versions', Borges suggests that translations of Homer are 'merely different perspectives on a mutable fact, a long experimental game of chance played with omissions and emphases' (Borges, 2002: 15). Translations are a reminder of the absurdity of assuming there can ever be a definitive text, a concept which, as Borges reminds us, can only belong to religion or to fatigue.

In his essay, Benjamin touches upon a conundrum: a text that is of low quality or distinction, one in which content is all does not lend itself easily to translation, indeed in Benjamin's view it is untranslatable, by which he means that a creative translation that will be a work of art in its own right will be impossible. On the other hand, the

greater a work, the more translatable it is, even if, as Benjamin suggests, 'its meaning is touched upon only fleetingly'. He cites Hölderlin's translations of Sophocles as perfection: 'In them the harmony of the languages is so profound that sense is touched by language only the way an Aeolian harp is touched by the wind' (Benjamin, in Schulte and Biguenet, 1992: 82).

The greatness of Sophocles is filtered through the greatness of Hölderlin. But in this perfection is a great danger: the translation may be a creative act so incomparable that the writer may find himself trapped in an endless spiral of generating meanings. A translation is never final, and Benjamin uses the image of meaning plunging down into one abyss after another, 'until it threatens to become lost in the bottomless depths of language'.

One of the developments of the decade of academic contestation that began in the late 1960s was the systematic study of translation. In the immediate aftermath of the Second World War universities struggled to return to some kind of normality, and curriculum reform was a low priority. But by 1968 it was clear that the old order no longer held; knowledge of classical languages had been in decline for some time, new fields of study were springing up. Students shifted their attention away from philology and New Criticism towards film studies, cultural studies, women and gender studies. In the field of literature, formalism begat structuralism, which begat the renegade deconstruction. Where in my undergraduate days Modernism was the cutting edge, by the late 1970s Postmodernism had taken centre stage. And into this vortex of new ideas, theories, and methodologies came translation studies, a minority field that demanded critical attention be paid to translation as one of the major shaping forces in literary history.

Early translation studies produced a set of important questions which included asking why some cultures translate more than others, why there are periods of intense translation activity followed by fallow periods, why cultures in different stages of development translate more or less.¹ Such questions offered a radical way of rethinking traditional literary histories: instead of studying a literature from within a given national boundary, attention should be paid to the movement between literatures that transcends such borders. For the

¹ For a survey of the origins of Translation Studies, see Susan Bassnett, *Translation Studies*, 3rd edn. (London and New York: Routledge, 2002).

history of any literature is all about movement, writers glean from here and there, and the study of any literature needs to take into account patterns of transfer, borrowing, and translation. Once we start considering translation as a serious literary endeavour, we can move beyond nationalistic frameworks and ideas about great native traditions and think more openly about the past. The twelfth-century shift from epic to romance, the Reformation, the Enlightenment, European Romanticism, Modernism—all these labels that we apply to facilitate our understanding of the movement of texts in other times have involved translation. Pan-European literary shifts happen because texts travel, so it seemed logical for translation studies as an emergent field to reassess the role played by translation.

Such reassessment was sorely needed, not only because there was no systematic study of translation in academia, but because there was a prevalently negative attitude to translation. Translation, so highly prized in the Middle Ages, had come to be seen as secondary and derivative by the seventeenth century, the age that saw the rise in importance of the concept of the Original. The idea of the powerful Original, reinforced by the practicalities of copyright law, pushed translation ever more firmly into the shadows. Translation by the eighteenth century was being described as copying, as imitative, as merely a mirror held up to the Original which was, by that very originality, of higher status and hence more precious. André Lefevere sums up the situation aptly: 'Literary histories, as they have been written until recently, have had little or no time for translations, since for the literary historian translation has had to do with "language" only, not with literature—another outgrowth of the "monolingualization" of literary history by Romantic historiographers intent on creating "national" literatures preferably as uncontaminated as possible by foreign influences' (Lefevere, 1992: 39).

Lefevere's analysis makes sense, but rereading his book, *Translation, Rewriting and the Manipulation of Literary Fame* two decades after it was written is a stark reminder of how little has changed. Research in gender studies and postcolonialism has challenged old canonical hierarchies and made some inroads into the framework laid down by those Romantic historiographers, but translation studies has had far less impact. There may be several reasons for this: one is surely that though the canon of 'dead white males' has been set aside to some extent, it has been replaced by new female or postcolonial canonical figures, for the desire to have a canon remains unchanged.

In the case of translation, however, it would be difficult to construct a canon of translators, because the criteria for selection are so hard to determine. Some translators have devoted their lives to translating, while translation for many other writers has been a vital stage in their literary development. Pope did not translate Homer because he felt he needed to practise his translation skills, he translated because it was a huge challenge and offered him so many writerly possibilities. Similarly, Seamus Heaney translated *Beowulf* because he was caught up by the possibilities that making a thousand-year-old text accessible to contemporary readers offered him as a poet.

But the failure to engage in large-scale reassessment of the role played by translation in literary history may also be due to the very nature of translation. Since there is no end to the number of times a text can be translated, this exposes the frightening possibility of limitlessness and it exposes also the rapidity with which norms and conventions change. The study of translation is therefore disconcerting, because it takes us out of the comfort of knowing that the text we have in our hands is the final, definitive version published in the language in which it was written—a copy of *David Copperfield*, for example, or *Le rouge et le noir*—and forces us out of our safe space of familiarity. Writing this chapter, I find I have a dozen different versions of *The Iliad* on my bookshelf, very different from one another, and that is merely a tiny few of the myriad translations of that work that exist in the world.

But though a radical reappraisal of translation has been slow to happen, nevertheless interest in translation at the present time has probably never been greater. Many factors are contributing to this: the increased movement of peoples around the world, hence an increase in multilingualism, concerns about the dominance of languages such as English in a global context and the need for less well-known languages to assert themselves or even to fight for their own survival, the abyss of understanding between Christian and Islamic cultures that was laid bare with the tragedy of 9/11 and has led to so many deaths, and a reconsideration of relations between cultures, north and south, east and west following the end of the Cold War and the rise of China as a major world power.

As ever, these great changes are reflected by creative artists. Hundreds of writers now use more than one language, some have abandoned their birth language and have chosen to write in an adopted language, some seek to deconstruct the certainties of what they see as

a dominant language by producing texts in what would once have been considered patois or Creole. There is a whole genre of Chinese-American literature, a growing number of migrant writers across Europe, in Canada and Australia, innumerable writers engaging in forms of cultural translation. In the future, when the literary history of the early twenty-first century is written, this polyglottist tendency will be seen as highly significant. What will also be seen as significant is the way in which so many contemporary writers are re-engaging afresh with the Ancient World. As the twentieth century drew to a close, Seamus Heaney and Ted Hughes published translations of ancient poems that entered the list of best-sellers, Derek Walcott transposed Homer to the Caribbean, and there were dozens of performances right across Europe of *Medea*, a work that spoke with as loud a voice to the displaced nations of post-1989 as *Antigone* had spoken to European states sinking beneath the yoke of fascism in the 1930s.

This book takes up aspects of the excitement that multilingual writing is generating and draws together readings from very disparate sources. In so doing, it offers a further indication of the astonishing wealth of the ways in which texts are related to one another, through a process of what Lefevere termed refraction, as distinct from reflection, using the scientific metaphor of the diffusion of light from multiple angles.

Metaphors of translation and light have been prominent in translation discourse. The translators of the Authorized Version of the Bible wrote about translation opening windows to let in the light, and certainly translation does enable us to see things we could never have seen otherwise. Travelling also enables us to see with different eyes, hence it is hardly surprising that there should be so many metaphors linking translation to a journey. The very etymology of the word implies movement, across, over, between; different languages have the translator leading the text across a boundary (*tradurre*), placing it across (*übersetzen*), bringing it across (*transfere*). The process of textual journeying also involves crossing a threshold from one world into another, and here we should pause and reflect on the highly charged nature of the threshold in so many cultures and the rituals surrounding the moment of stepping across it. The twelfth-century traveller in Central Asia, Friar Odoric relates how even accidentally stepping on rather than over the threshold of one of the Mongol yurts

meant death. The threshold is a liminal space, filled with mysterious power and this is the space inhabited by translators.

Benjamin talks about translation opening up the gates of language, and the liminal has often been represented as a gateway. Gates, of course, serve a dual purpose: they admit and they exclude, hence they can be symbols of great power. When Dante and Virgil come to the gates of hell they pass through a gate over which is inscribed:

Per me si va ne la città dolente,
per me si va ne l'eterno dolore,
per me si va ne la perduta gente,

culminating in the final terrible line:

lasciate ogni speranza, voi ch'intrate.²

Dante's Hell, of course, is a refraction of the ancient Underworld; not for nothing is his guide the great Latin poet Virgil. The journey through Hell and Purgatory has been powerfully refracted in so many other writers' work, recently and notably in Seamus Heaney's poetry. But for me, the strongest and most disturbing refraction of all is in the inscriptions over the gates of concentration camps such as Buchenwald, where there is written 'Jedem das Seine', which roughly translated means 'To each their deserts' or Belsen, with the savage irony of 'Arbeit macht frei', 'Work gives freedom'. These grotesque slogans wrought in iron are forms of translation of what is inscribed in the gates of Dante's Hell, composed in Italian eight hundred years ago, though serving a completely different purpose and emanating from a totally different ethics.

Both Borges and Benjamin saw translation as highly creative. In his essay, Benjamin stresses kinship between languages, not, he reminds us through facile similarity or adaptation, but rather as a dialectical process of creative exchange on multiple levels. Translation, he states, is not the 'sterile equation of two dead languages', but 'Of all literary

² Through me, into the city full of woe;
through me, the message of eternal pain;
through me, the passage where the lost souls go.

All hope abandon, ye who go through me.

Cieran Carson, trans. *The Inferno of Dante Alighieri* (London: Granta, 2002), Canto III, ll.1-3 and l. 9.

forms it is the one charged with the special mission of watching over the maturing process of the original language and the birth pangs of its own' (Benjamin, 1992: 75).

This is a view that Borges would surely have agreed with, for he too did not see translation as a sterile act, he saw it, as Efrain Kristal points out, as a literary act comprising patterns of emphasis and omission:

Time accumulates experiences on the artist, as it does with all men. By force of omissions and emphasis, of memory and forgetfulness, time combines some of those experiences and thus it elaborates the work of art. (Borges, in Kristal 2002: 34)

The study of translation is the study of textual voyages. Some of those voyages have led to extraordinary discoveries, for translation has so often been a force for innovation and renewal; other voyages have been journeys of rescue, ensuring the salvation of abandoned or lost works, while others have been transformative and life-enhancing. Translation is extraordinary in that it always involves a relationship that spans time and space: there is always by definition a refracting original, otherwise the translation could not exist. That relationship reminds us that all texts are in a way connected, that the world we live in is a vast network of connecting threads, so many of which began to be spun aeons ago.

Let us give the final word to Seamus Heaney, great poet and translator:

So the twine unwinds and loosely widens
backward through areas that forwarded
understandings of all I would undertake.

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Introduction

Images of Tradition, Translation, Trauma . . .

Jan Parker

Seamus Heaney, interviewed in many fora in May 2009 on the publication of his *Henryson*, quoted Enzensberger's happy advice to him that he should turn to the 'task of the translator' for refreshment, both personal and textual. And many of the chapters engage directly with such refreshments: those of Pope, Walcott, Cavafy, Seferis, Ritsos; of Ahl on his *Aeneid*, and, not least, Heaney's own, compared by Hardwick with Kavanagh and Longley. Others are concerned with how Classic texts achieve presentness while being simultaneously and dialogically rooted in, drawing on, and forming intertexts with the past. And with exploring how that achievement is translated: passed on, received, affecting subsequent cultures, setting up the question of what this says about the processes by which texts affect over time and over space.

This book, however, grew out of initial international colloquia which asked troublesome as well as refreshing questions. Questions about the Classic and the Modern: about tradition and 'traditional texts'; about Modernist poets' intertextual incorporation of the past; about the disruption, price, and pain of dislocation from tradition the Modern (necessarily?) entails . . .

The Classic texts that run through the book do so in their own immediate right, away from their position in tradition, because they are, as Pat Easterling has said of Greek tragedy, 'extraordinarily open and adaptable, [offering] structures and stories that are good to think

with, functioning as imaginative models, or metaphors'. Some of the contributors to this book are concerned with why this is so, and some with the imaginative models or metaphors that are used to 'think with'.

For at the first colloquium, where the speakers had been invited to explore various new-forged encounters between the Classic and translator as reader and disseminator, Susan Bassnett challenged us to develop unconstricting models of translation. The images, questions, metaphors, and themes raised there were explored in subsequent colloquia, generating the resonances and dissonances that run through this book.

TRADITION, TRANSLATION, AND TRAUMA

The conversations at those colloquia started with images of translation: translation as movement (trans-latio/meta-phor) of a text over time, space, language, and culture. It turned out that many of the images were resistant, even violent (tradition as silencing, translation as decapitation, cannibalistic reception). These may disturb some of the 'Grand Tradition' models of the Classic but are congenial to those who define Modernism as entailing a necessary oblivion and rejection of the past, a necessary dislocation from what Gadamer called 'the traditional text'. For as Ian Patterson says, 'parallel with the work of destruction and renewal in [Modern] free verse, there is a desire, spoken or implicit, for something more stable, traditional, and above all "lost".' Likewise, Christopher Prendergast initially raised one of this book's underpinning texts, Benjamin's *Theses on the Philosophy of History*:

Two interrelated questions arise from the Theses: first what is entailed in 'The Price of the Modern'? The second question engages 'modern' and 'modernity/modernism' as a semantic question but also, and inextricably, a temporal one, a 'when' as well as an 'is' question, namely 'when was/is modernity?'

His current chapter answers them!

And yet, there were many resonances between the Classic and the Modern that we may dare to put back to Bassnett and indeed Heaney. The relationship of poetry and time explored in Ian Patterson's 'Time, Free Verse, and The Gods Of Modernism':

The poem [and as argued in this book, drama] will always have more than one temporality: the historical temporality of its composition, the temporality of its sources and originals, especially if it's a translation, the temporality of its performance in each reading, and the temporality of its memories, conscious and unconscious.

is as true of Homer, Sophocles, Virgil, as of Ezra Pound and T. S. Eliot, complexly and consciously situated as all are within tradition. Such complexity of situation may seem formidably hard to communicate, transfer, translate. Indeed, one of the heated arguments from the start was with the contributing poet-translators such as Ahl, Bassnett, Holst-Warhaft, Mathews, and Patterson, as to whether translation could ever deal with works so sophisticatedly located without having the 'footnotes reaching to the sky' which Nabokov thought necessary to a tolerable translation of *Eugene Onegin*.

The colloquia asked for new models and new metaphors of the translation of defining texts, from any period, in later cultures. The questions Ouyang's chapter raises run through the book: What does it mean to say that 'modern' (sc. Western twentieth-century) ideas are discussed in a 'classic' ninth-century CE Islamic text? What does this contribute to our (?postmodern?) ideas of Modernity, Classicness, and Cultural Tradition? Are such terms richer or redundant when translated across time, space, and culture?

From the start the question was not so much a celebration of great and humane texts passed down (tradition) and reinvented in/ incorporated into other cultures (translation) but of the potentially rebarbative, politically dangerous, irritant, painful, or at least challenging nature of such texts (trauma): a painful, ongoing marking effect of such texts sometimes lost and sometimes made potent in reception.

Two challenging figures stand over the narratives in this book: Rilke's Archaic Torso and Benjamin's Angel of History. Both are directly, personally challenging; if the latter stands as an icon of 'Modernity's project' the former denies absolutely the necessary mediation of tradition.

The Archaic Torso is a damaged fragment of the past, separated from his creating culture and from context. It is vestigial, a remnant of the past, impossible to know or, through retrospection, have known:

We cannot know his legendary head
with eyes like ripening fruit. And yet his torso

is still suffused with brilliance from inside,
like a lamp, in which his gaze, now turned to low,
gleams in all its power.

... for here there is no place
that does not see you. You must change your life.¹

(‘Archaic Torso of Apollo’, by Rainer Maria Rilke, trans.
Stephen Mitchell)

Heaney’s comments about refreshing the text key into the model that translation rebuilds ruins, completes fragments . . . but this book questions that very process: witness, Richard Armstrong’s chapter, ‘Eating Eumolpus’, where Fellini’s cannibalization of Petronius is signified by the very freedom the ‘hero’ enjoys, a product of his thorough ingestion and digestion of the Roman original’s fragments.

And yet, and so, the Archaic Torso’s challenge is radical: we can never have known his eyes yet ‘there is no place that does not see you. You must change your life.’ The authority of the remnant is immense but not because it has been hallowed; rather its challenge is direct and needs no intermediary. His eyeless gaze is difficult to avoid.

Meanwhile, as Timothy Mathews writes, ‘Walter Benjamin’s Angel of History rushes forward into the future taking with it the ruins of the past which can only show and not see.’ This speaks of Benjamin’s rejection of the historical progress-narrative and its relation to the projection of a future based on teleological accounts of the past . . . sometimes fetchingly called second-guessing the past. Benjamin ‘shows an angel looking as though he is about to move away from something he is fixedly contemplating. His eyes are staring, his mouth is open, his wings are spread. This is how one pictures the angel of history. His face is turned towards the past. Where we perceive a chain of events, he sees one single catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage and hurls it in front of his feet’ (Thesis IX).

¹ Wir kannten nicht sein unerhörtes Haupt,
darin die Augenäpfel reiften. Aber
sein Torso glüht noch wie ein Kandelaber,
in dem sein Schauen, nur zurückgeschraubt,
sich hält und glänzt.

... denn da ist keine Stelle,
die dich nicht sieht. Du mußt dein Leben ändern.

Both images disrupt the historicist paradigm, of the proper and complete sealing of a text into its producing culture, handed on and handed down to variously receiving cultures. The images also proclaim the special nature of the Classic and the Modern respectively: both in definite if complex relationship to tradition itself; a relationship which *constitutes* tradition—and its obverse, reception.

Reception Studies trace the impact and, yes, reception of Classic texts in subsequent cultures. A fruitful, fast-developed area of research, Reception is itself at least a double image, offering and connoting on the one hand ‘welcome’ and on the other that the Classic, like the Big Bang, sends signals through time and space, picked up [translated/distorted?] by the receivers. Lorna Hardwick in ‘Fuzzy Connections: Classical Texts and Modern Poetry in English’ highlights a dichotomy at the heart of reception studies: that between focusing on and theorizing the reader and audience as the ‘hub of reception and construction of meaning, [as against] scholars’ tracing of textual migrations and adaptations which maps a complex series of interlocking historical and aesthetic processes’. She answers by her call for a bridge, a fuzzifying of the boundaries, herself mapping the encounter of the reader-translator with the Classic text and culture resulting in adaptations which impact on both readers and culture.

Over colloquia and conversations, during writing and revising, in addition to our basal themes of ‘tradition’ and ‘translation’, one further theme emerged that bound us, our readings, and our concerns together: that of ‘trauma’.

Tradition

Some contributors look to the receptions of Classic texts—Fellini, Pope, Brecht—to posit models of reception that are anything but ‘traditional’: that is to say bound in a historical and historicizing chain of translations. There are many violent images in the book—translation of the classic as cannibalism, as mutilation—and there are also powerful accounts of the pain of being separated from tradition: one ‘Price of the Modern’ is to be orphaned from the Classic root stock. Another is to exchange contact and dialogue with, and perhaps emulation of, the past for a grand triumphal narrative: rewriting of history into a trajectory. (The book starts with an account of the problematics of translating a text, the *Aeneid*, that tradition *and* popular contemporary reception

deem to be such a triumphalist and modernity-proclaiming text.) How can modernity face the Angel of History?

There is an image in Plato's *Ion* of a magnetic text, which inspires later performances and readings, and 'not only attracts iron rings, but also imparts to them a similar power of attracting other rings; and sometimes you may see a number of pieces of iron and rings suspended from one another so as to form quite a long chain: and all of them derive their power of suspension from the original stone. In like manner the Muse first of all inspires men herself; and from these inspired persons a chain of other persons is suspended, who take the inspiration' (*Ion* 533d, trans. Jowett).

This book can be said to have been conceived to challenge such an image of the transmission of classic texts, be they Greek, Latin, or Arabic: of the inspired and inspirational translator seamlessly spreading the magnetic text through space and time, to individuals and to cultures. Which is not to deny the Classic text a special effect: after all the 'Classic' denotes a receiving culture's judgement that it is so called because it is perceived and received as a *classis*, a benchmark . . . but all dialogues in this book see such texts as radical, as challenging subsequent cultures rather than part of a magnetic tradition.

For, as Hardwick says of Boland, Fugard, Harrison, Heaney, Hughes, Kane, Longley, Okigbo, Osofisan, Soyinka, Walcott, and Wertebaker . . . 'such receptions derive literary or theatrical vitality from the refracted but intense relationship that they have with the ancient texts. This also adds an ambivalence to their relationship with the modern literary traditions of which the contemporary writers are a part but which they aim in their different ways to transcend in order to "make it new".'

Ion's rings analogy posits a central magnetic force flowing one way. But for Modernists, the process was two-way. As Patterson says: the most influential literary argument was perhaps T. S. Eliot's claim that tradition was more like consciousness than like archaeology: 'Whoever has approved this idea of order, of the form of European, of English literature, will not find it preposterous that the past should be altered by the present as much as the present is directed by the past'. Likewise, or perhaps conversely—it is for the reader to decide—Armstrong argues that Fellini's *Satyricon* sets out to liberate a *visual* text of Petronius, of the classical world, from the grasp of Hollywood's 'epic' tradition. And Matthew Fox argues that only an understanding of the metaphors of translation can release Cicero from the tradition of the gentleman rhetor.

Translation

Part of Bassnett's original challenge to us has rung in our ears throughout this venture: that Translation Studies, when first initiated, questioned the processes by which established texts were stabilized in the cultures of others. That, thirty years on, it is time to release 'translation' from its disciplinary home into an interdisciplinary questioning: of how a text affects over time and space. For the metaphorical power of translation embraces travel between cultures and between times; embraces personal experience and active transformation of self by a text.

We hope we have addressed this in two ways. Firstly by developing a sustained dialogue throughout the contributions about the nature of translation, locating some of those metaphors in textual and historical instances. But more, all the contributors address the process by which their texts—Classic and Modern texts, self-definedly located in time—*affect*: affect culture, readers, tradition, over time. And *effect*: effect change, paradigm shift, cultural renewal, and intercultural integration. Out of the specifics of each text's reception comes either a model of cultural transmission or a disruption of the very idea of transmission. For this book is also about how time affects the reading of texts; about the understanding of history that is transmitted through texts; about what the temporality of texts tells us about those powers of transmission. Not only do many of the texts themselves meditate on the nature of time; but their forms also represent the temporality of transmission, of knowledge, and of witness. Whether presenting or problematizing trajectories of time, whether encapsulating or rejecting the complexities of tradition, the texts discussed here bear witness to what Eliot in *The Dry Salvages* calls the 'intersection of the timeless | With time'.

But for all the contributors the answer to such large questions was to keep a vital thread of encounter between text and translator and/as reader: in Part I with the author's translation of the *Aeneid*; Irish poets' reshaping of their contact with the Classical past and Fellini his; reading Homer with and through Pope and Cicero, with and through tradition; Pat Easterling's long-meditated engagement with *Oedipus at Colonus*; Rachel Bowlby's with and beyond Freud's *Oedipus the King*. Part II has several encounters with Benjamin, especially his *Theses on the Philosophy of History*; probing accounts of Glissant, T. S. Eliot, and the complex situating of the discourses of poetry of

Abu Tammam and Adonis. Part III starts with lamenting voices from Classical and Modern Greece and beyond, leading to Cavafy, Seferis, and Ritsos. The section considers the point when lament becomes traumatic or traumatized, when grief becomes excessive ('why seems it so particular with thee?', as Sophocles' *Electra* anticipating *Hamlet* asks). And the point when translation's task is to bear witness to trauma: Furtado and da Costa's *Das Áfricas*; Holocaust [partial] records and renewing translation into other genres; Nooteboom, Benjamin, and Giacometti's complex witness.

The second way we have addressed this is in conversations about translation developed in colloquia, circulating drafts, with the process of redrafting in the context of emerging themes linking us, Classicists and Modernists, alike.

In Part I three clusters of ideas emerged. Firstly, the ever problematic and dynamic terms of engagement and re-engagement with Classic texts through translation and, on occasion, through the reception of translation: offering 'fuzzy connections' rather than any bounded schema from translation and reception studies. The Classical Greek and Latin texts of Part I bring the issue of translation—translation as process and as product—sharply into focus. Their processes include affect and effect: change, in the cultural tradition, in ideas and language, the creation of intertexts. For such texts are sharply reflective and conscious of their relationships with the culture and the tradition. Greek tragedies like Augustan poetry are full of replays of every kind: of pitiful effects arising from the doubling and the ironizing of source material, tradition, and myth. Their reception is troubling, disturbing: troubling the immediate receivers, their very sense of immediate, lived experience; disturbing attempts to account for them, to stabilize analysis and knowledge. Perhaps only translation, recreation, by poets and creators such as those considered here—Pope, Ahl, Heaney, Longley, Kavanagh, Fellini—can take on and deal with the disturbance.

In that way, the problems posed by these texts highlight the problematic explored in this section as a whole: how texts that are the result of translation, in the sense of drawing on and exploring mythic and traditional versions, achieve presentness while being firmly and simultaneously rooted in the past of that source material. It also explores how that achievement was itself translated: passed on, received, affecting subsequent cultures.

The overarching translation issue becomes: what does this say about the processes by which texts affect over time and over space? The answers suggested, concerned as the section is with the translation of Classical culture, come via Freud and beyond Freud; through the poetic idioms of Pope, Heaney, Walcott; adumbrate imagery of journeying and consumption, to address how tradition is both perpetuated and challenged in different generations' performances of these texts. Fox starts with the decapitation of Cicero by/in translation. He sees Cicero's textual identity transformed, first through writing, then through reading, and later, through translation from Latin into a modern language to meet the demands of a modern culture. The transformation affects Cicero's stability of representation as the cornerstone of Roman identity and so has a determining effect upon the place of Roman civilization within the Western educational tradition. But perhaps only by decapitation—translation's severing of text from authority, reception's severing of opera from their author's controlling presentation and persona—could Cicero survive. Fox ends with Cicero's transformation into a gentleman's gentleman.

The second theme came from contributors looking to the receptions of Classic texts—Fellini, Pope, Brecht—to posit models of translation that are anything but 'traditional': bounded and conveyed by their historical culture. Thus translation emerges here as elsewhere in the book in tense metaphors: as cannibalism, mimetic transmission, archaeology of consciousness; as re-construction of knowledge and memory and of intercultural affect. There are implications for the problematics and uncertainties of controlling one's [text's] reception in the future, one's posterity, be it Iliadic hero or Cicero preparing for publication. For by disruptive, dismembering translation, Classical material can be wrenched from its original historical world and used to animate or express political discourses in cultures alien to it.

The third theme concerned translation's obligation to and revelation of Classic texts' 'deep truth'. This recurrent theme runs against the 'pre-cultural turn' tendency to hierarchize translations according to the level of linguistic closeness achieved, claiming rather Translation's—or translations'—duty to deeper structures. The reception of Classical texts (e.g. Pope, Freud) has itself been received as conveying the truth of the texts, be it the historicity of Homer, the Roman authority of Cicero, or the psychological validity of Greek tragedy. Contributors are interested in why this should be so: the expectations set up in tragedy's use of mythic archetypes; the expectations of

alterity and alienation; the expectations associated with Homer's situation of Troy. Frederick Ahl's introductory essay provocatively questions the role of translator in supporting or subverting the receiving culture's expectations of such 'truths'.

Bassnett's challenge resonated with both 'Classicists' and 'Modernists'—indeed it was that reaction that drew us together into a common project. The use of translation—both interlingual and intercultural, together with mythology, quotation, allusion, and other forms of encounter with earlier texts or other cultures—is again and again shown to be intrinsic to European literary Modernism. Although these uses have been widely recognized as complicating the relations between texts and time, temporality and form, progress and reaction, it was in bringing these concerns to Classicists that certain processes came to seem vital and vitalizing. Ezra Pound's ambition to write an epic as 'including history', and Stephen Dedalus's vision of history as a nightmare from which he is trying to awake, suggest something of the difficulty in controlling and managing their awareness of the shaping presence of the past. The result, says Patterson, is that the translation process is both foundational and destabilizing, both locating and disturbing temporal awareness (which sometimes results in, or from, a decidedly ahistorical consciousness). For the

modernist poem is also critiquing its time and critiquing time itself in the experience of the poem which is, like music, a form cut out of time, and, like translation, a time cut out of its time.

Trauma

The third part of our book considers not only what is lost but what is traumatized in and by translation. Translations of lament and in performance, it is argued by Holst-Warhaft and Montgomery Griffiths, convey rather than exorcize pain. Buescu and Kuhlczak describe two terribly cogent examples of the translation of witness: Buescu how an ekphrastic translation—text and photography working together—record *Das Afrikas*, the 'inhuman history' of colonialism in Africa; Kuhlczak how the Holocaust trials, in denying the witnesses access to their languages and disseminating testimonials in English, in some sense denied their experiences.

In the former, translation (linguistic and ekphrastic) serves a 'transformation of paralyzing guilt into productive shame', linking

the occasions recorded with a traumatic history also shared by Europe. Translation specifically highlights ‘issues relating to trauma, a specific situation in which repetition and blockage of representation are paradoxically intertwined. . . . *Das Áfricas* belongs to that family of texts that bear witness to history under its violent manifestations, and offers a revision of history that fuses past and present in the experience that Walter Benjamin termed the “Now-time” (*Jetztzeit*). Only by bringing history into the now-time may one have access to discourse and representation.’ In the latter, Kuhiwczak untangles the life in translation of one witness memoir, *Śmierć Miasta* (*Death of the City*), disseminated in German and much later back/pseudo-translated into Polish. To simplify a nuanced argument, Kuhiwczak suggests that the final translation, into film—Polanski’s *The Pianist*—may recover and recuperate aspects of the original Polish memoir.

One answer to Bassnett, one challenge to the now well-established academic field of Translation Studies which runs throughout the book, is accounting for the affordances of translation: the exploiting of the gaps in intercultural exchange; the expressing of cultural identity through or despite translation. Ahl, Hardwick, Holst-Warhaft, and Ouyang all in different ways reflect on the poetics and politics of translation: on the formation of cultural or poetic identity in the face or in transcendence of the other. The arguments in all chapters about the complex situation of texts in culture and in tradition face the translator with one overarching question: should s/he recover, witness to, or alienate the past?

The colloquia which lie behind the chapters asked for new models and new metaphors of the translation of defining texts, from any period, in later cultures. But from the start the question was not so much a celebration of great and humane texts passed down (tradition) and reinvented in/injected into other cultures (translation) but of what is found—new wrought—as well as lost—new wrenched, damaged and damaging—in translation. Holst-Warhaft and Parker both look to what the transmission of trauma entails: Holst-Warhaft goes from the unconsoling lament to the unassuaged loss integral to Modern Greek poets’ identity. Parker similarly looks at the process of transmitting trauma—*Electra*’s—using Brecht’s objections to ‘portable pathos’ to distinguish contained from potentially dangerous dramatic effect.

It was perhaps not surprising that as the book’s dialogues developed, the final term of our book’s title became ever more resonant:

trauma, again a term of transmission, again an image. The metaphor underlying trauma is of untreated, subsuperficial wound: that which is not dealt with, cauterized, anaestheticized in the present but which comes back later, expressed on the body in a different form. Some contributors deal with this literally—the text's damage inscribed on the body of actor, anorexic, or hunger striker as Electra's damage is inscribed in the text (Montgomery Griffiths' title term 'Abject Eidos' links back through Kristeva, Orbach, Ellmann, and others, to Bowlby's Freud); some the weft of damage recorded in war photos and text (Buescu); some Modernity's traumatic dislocations. Mathews asks the crucial question of all translations of witnessing: 'Are we reading a form of resistance to the commodification of suffering? Or watching someone simply standing and looking? This indeterminacy is formal as well as affective.'

Our final contributor, Attridge, in his *Singularity of Literature*, has a striking image which illuminates all three themes. Talking of the impact [*sic*] of the singular text, he describes it as puncturing the reader's protective 'carapace' of cultural and intertextual expectations. Whether rejecting or being impacted on, all the textual encounters described here leave their mark [again, *sic*] on readers and their cultures.

THE CLASSIC AND THE MODERN

The book is called the Classic *and* the Modern. Ouyang, however, describes a powerful model of the necessary polarization of the Classic and the Modern, instancing eighth-, ninth-, and nineteenth-century Arab culture. For some, that is a necessary opposition: the Modern has to define itself against the Classic, the epistemologically and hermeneutically innovative against, literally, the canonical. She traces the polarization over time, over the politics of otherness and colonialization, and through poetics, noting that the translation of key terms and discourses is itself an issue. She sets a resonant agenda for all those concerned with (Greek and Latin) Classic texts and the (Western) tradition.

Nostalgia, and dislocation, are key themes throughout: themes of exile, personal and cultural; of loss and dislocation of self and tradition. These propel accounts of translators and translations and indeed suggest translation itself can be both a process and a model of reintegration.

The need for *nostos*—physical and psychological—runs through accounts of Greek texts from Homer to Cavafy. (As, argues Mathews, it does through Nooteboom's *All Souls' Day*, made as it is from mental, geographic, cultural and psychological, as well as historical, journeys.) Sophocles' Oedipus—doubly dislocated in *Oedipus the King* from Corinth and Thebes—ends that play denied a return to the mountain, Cithaeron, which he should never have left. In *Oedipus at Colonus*, reluctantly revisiting but also revising the earlier play's account of his responsibility for his actions, he is also dislocated from his previous, agential persona. Easterling's chapter takes Oedipus' journey—literal, ontological, metaphorical—as motivating and linking discrete parts of the *muthos*. She discusses the multiple resonances of theatrical journeyings: motivating and linking—but also disturbing and dislocating—exile and return. For the *nostos* is never the welcomed return and reintegration promised by the motif; the entrances as suppliant or disguised avenger are destabilizing, the exits, whether to death or exile, are rarely consummations devoutly to be wished. Other metaphors of life's journey involve *hodoi*: ways with choices, adumbrations of paths not taken or leading to trackless deserts, wastelands where the paths to expiation or proper end peter out . . .

This chapter ends with the figure of the wanderer in 'A Santa Cruz Quartet', Walcott's meditation on memory, the past, returning to places and writing poetry. Holst-Warhaft similarly journeys, following the lament tradition of East and West from the Epic of Gilgamesh to the poetry of 9/11. The focus of her chapter is Greek poetry of *nostos* and exile: Cassandra, Asian refugee *amane* singers, the 'permanently displaced Greek' Seferis, and of course Cavafy.

Cavafy reimagining Ithaca as always a place to which to journey, best seen as an imaginary *telos*, is set against Modernists' 'nostalgic fantasies of returns to the home and homeland' analysed by Rousseau. The anxiety and traumas of the new dislocations, both physical and psychological, were seen as the price the Modern writer—so frequently and characteristically an exile—had to pay:

Embedded in these anxieties of the 'Modern' were labyrinths of memory of recent and distant pasts reifying themselves as a longing for return: a migratory poetics.

That chapter attempts 'to gauge the pathological way the past continued to weigh down on—and even obsess the Modern'. This most

modern of topics resonates in this book with two iconic Classic texts: *Oedipus the King* and the *Iliad*. For Bowlby, it is time to reassess Freud's pathologizing of Oedipus; for Hopkins it is the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century's need to establish and stabilize 'the truth' of the *Iliad*—roaming 'Troy' with Pope's translation equipped with maps—that is poised between a burden and the imaginary possibilities of the past.

These last two question the truth claims made of, not in, the Classic text. Bowlby looks to Oedipus as refracted through Freud; a text and reader situated strongly yet complexly in his culture, their cultures. She argues that it is time to release, not the text, but the tradition of Freudian reading into the contemporary world of shifting and plural family bonds and conceptual and genetic possibilities.

FINAL IMAGES

The book starts with an instance of translation's counteracting a triumphalist narrative of the Classic. Running through the book, like his *Theses on the Philosophy of History*, is Benjamin's Angel of History. 'Benjamin has invented this Angel, invented a knowledge of history, and in history, which allows us to think what we cannot know, and see what is beyond the places of our telling.' It ends with three charioteers: the multireferential statement of triumph which is the Brandenburg Gate's Quadriga of Victory, Giacometti's Chariot, and its archetype, the Delphic Charioteer.

The fifth-century BCE Charioteer of Delphi is poised, the moment before the action, eyes alert, fixed on what is to come. A victory statue (presumably), he is shown totally absorbed in the moment and stands now, as ever, for the celebration of that moment. Of the same period are the pediments of the great temple at Olympia with, as is traditional, one peace and one war side. The 'war' side depicts the chaos at the wedding of Pirithoos, when the centaurs got at the alcohol. The 'peace' pediment has a set of perfectly still figures: we, the viewers, make a narrative from the standing central figures, who look straight forward, of what will happen to Hippodomeia, her lover Pelops, and her murderous father. But to one side is an older, balding man, hand on chin, looking into the future. He sees, as no one else, that the chariot race prefigured on the pediment will lead to betrayal, death,

and a curse that will resound down the generations: in myth (the foundation of the Peloponnese) and in drama (the curse on the house of Atreus replayed in the *Oresteia* and on to today).

Unlike the Archaic Torso, he does not challenge the viewer; unlike the Angel of History, he turns his back neither on the past nor future. He, the Seer, is charged with the responsibility of knowledge of past and future. He, like the translator, is part of onward transmission but has to reflect that he is not in control of the forces of history or of reception . . .

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Part I

Handing on, Making Anew,
Refusing the Classic

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Proemion

Translating a Paeon of Praise

Frederick Ahl

Approaching the *Odyssey* or *Aeneid* in translation is less like visiting a famous site or museum than visiting a gallery of casts and copies of varying qualities or Nashville's replica of the Parthenon. Yet things were not much better when we read parts in the original. For progress was slow. Our teachers weren't fluent in Latin and Greek and could not make us fluent. The ancient languages were not real the way French was; we were like holiday makers with phrase-book Spanish trying to read Lorca or Neruda aloud; but no one told us how silly we sounded. But we were told what the *Aeneid* meant (and why it was written) and were prepared for questions sure to arise on national exams. 'No one fails for declaring the *Aeneid* a paeon of praise to Rome and Augustus,' my teacher observed. 'But don't say it isn't, or they'll think you're perverse and lower your marks.' We were too busy struggling with vocabulary and declensions to worry about finer points of criticism. The word 'paeon' was lost on us.

Authors become classical when chosen to exemplify privileged ideas, perspectives, or styles. Once chosen, they remain models even after the reasons for privileging them are forgotten or irrelevant. In Gilbert's *Princess Ida*, a female student at a women's university asks: 'Pray what authors should she read who in Classics would succeed?' Her principal responds with a list including Aristophanes, Ovid, and Juvenal. But, 'if you are well advised,' the principal continues, 'you will get them Bowdlerized.' What Ida's ladies should learn from these

writers (other than success in exams) is not mentioned. What they should avoid is 'understood', not stated explicitly.

Victorians did not argue that sexuality was absent from recommended authors; only that it was unseemly to read or translate into English passages where it was prominent. Ker's Loeb edition of Martial used Italian translations for the saltier poems. But Victorians would have turned blue if one had suggested there was sexual innuendo in Virgil's *Aeneid*. They presented the *Aeneid* as a mostly sexless, solemn (and therefore humourless) work teaching piety and the Roman equivalent of loyalty to queen and country.

Executive power lay in different places in Victorian England and Virgil's Rome. England has always been a monarchy (apart from Cromwell's two decades). But in the nineteenth century, power lay with Prime Ministers and Parliament, not with Victoria, a disempowered equivalent of the Britannia on the reverse of her coins. Victorians were free to love or hate real rulers and their parties, because England's symbol was not its real rulers, but its ceremonial monarch. Virgil's Rome, in contrast, had been governed by elected officials, not kings, for half a millennium. Traditional loyalty was to government by publicly elected representatives (*res publica*): to freedom and country. But public government was ending. Octavian's usurped monarchic power was as real as Victoria's was symbolic. Octavian's official fiction, that Rome was still a republic, was the opposite of the Victorian ruling-class fiction of England ruled by a queen. It was disingenuous of Victorians to set loyalty to Octavian on a par with loyalty to Victoria.

The Victorian ruling class exploited the myth of queen and country as Octavian exploited the myth of the restored republic. The Victorian analogy between Roman imperial power and British imperial power in the proclamation of Victoria as Empress of India (unconquered by Romans) and in the notion of the *Pax Britannica*, was construed with the dead potentate Octavian as Victoria not with the living, disempowered Victoria as Octavian.

Victorians expropriated the *Aeneid* as the principal text for patriotic imperialism in England because no other poetic masterpiece could be shaped to that ideological end. Greek epics defied conversion into imperial propaganda. Iliadic heroes, though formidable in battle, were peevish, mutinous, and non-patriotic. The *Odyssey* had too many feminine touches; Samuel Butler argued that the *Odyssey* had to be a woman's composition. Lucan's *Pharsalia*, proclaiming the

incompatibility of monarchy and freedom, was the antithesis of everything Victorians wanted taught. Statius' *Thebaid* sang of an unlovely civil war between unlovely sons of the unlovely Oedipus that ruined Thebes. No one cared about the *Argonauticas* of Apollonius and Valerius. For Anglican patriotic values Dante was too religious and too Catholic, Milton too religious and too Protestant. That left Virgil.

To make the *Aeneid* a model for patriotism one had to represent it as a paeon of praise for imperial Rome. Not until the heyday of fascism in 1935 did Francesco Sforza argue in print that the *Aeneid* attacked Octavian and imperialism. And though taboos against construing Virgil as critical of imperialism weakened as the British Empire and teaching of imperial values faded, the *Aeneid* is still generally represented in translations as a paeon of praise.

Bowlerization of sexual references, in short, was not the only 'editing for content' done on Classical texts. It was never more than the conscious suppression of what was undeniably present, but unwanted, in the original. The representation of Virgil as a 'patriotic' writer has proved harder to dislodge. Many scholars do not want to see, and emphatically deny the existence of, such elements as would argue against reading Virgil as a model of literary patriotism.

Midway between advocacy and opposition lies ambiguity whose art, from sexual innuendo to political subversions, is grounded in puns and wordplay that pluralize meaning. Scholars, until recently, passed over wordplay in commentaries and removed it when translating. No literary convention requires that wordplay be acknowledged or translated; and it's hard and time-consuming to transpose it to another language. Besides, not everyone appreciates wordplay. William Empson thought puns unmanly and wished Shakespeare had liked them less.¹ George Krapp thought them blemishes to be removed when translating Chaucer into modern English. Chaucer wrote:

Calkas . . .
 Knew wel that *Troye* sholde destroyed be . . .
 So whan this *Calkas* knew by *calculinge* . . .
 For wel wiste he, by sort, that *Troye* sholde
 Destroyed ben . . .

(*Troilus and Criseyde* I, lines 66–77)

¹ Empson (1973), 110–11. See also Redfern (1985), 46 and Culler (1988).

Krapp translated:

Calchas . . .
 knew what the *fate* of *Troy* would be . . .
 When *Calchas* found his priestly *computation* . . .
 For by his divinations well he knew
 That *Troy* was *doomed* . . .²

Krapp resisted bowdlerizing Chaucer: 'It cannot be denied that there are several moments in the progress of the narrative when one would gladly omit passages of the text. . . .'³ But it never occurred to him that removing Chaucer's wordplay was also omitting parts of his original.

Ancient epics are arguably, like operas, complex polyphonic scores; in epic, ambiguity and wordplay provide the pivotal chords. To strip away the wordplay is like reducing an orchestral score to a single musical line. Nor is there an Englished *Republic* that conveys Plato's wordplay. Yet while philosophers are too concerned with stabilizing canonical texts to acknowledge pluralizing figured usages in them, they take fewer liberties with what is left when wordplay is removed. They would never countenance a version of Plato's *Parmenides* rewritten as Ted Hughes rewrote Seneca's *Oedipus* or the transferral of verbs from answers to create leading questions in a dialogue, as Robert Fagles does in his translation of Sophocles' *Oedipus*.

Because prose translations of prose originals are usually more reliable than poetic translations of poetry, readers might conclude, falsely, that prose translations of poems are also more accurate than verse translations. But the *Odyssey* and *Aeneid* are, like it or not, poems. To translate them into prose is to destroy all sense that they are poems. The 'no-nonsense' tone of Jackson Knight's *Aeneid* conveys the false impression that Virgil wrote a chronicle, like Geoffrey of Monmouth's *History of the Kings of Britain*, not an epic. Chronicles construct concepts for readers to accept. Ancient poetry designed for public performance more often describes or deconstructs the concepts readers have accepted. Translating ancient poets into prose, then, usually reverses their rhetorical poles. Poets who challenge readers' beliefs are transformed into instructors who tell readers

² Krapp (1932), 5.

³ Krapp (1932), xii-xiii.

what to believe. A prose *Aeneid* gives exactly the effect Victorian educators wanted.

Teachers of literature, following Aristotle in the *Poetics*, cannot resist prescribing what poetic forms should be while trying to describe what they are. Their goal is to define genres for student audiences, not to write tragedies or epics for public performance. Student audiences are youthful, inexperienced, often coerced and unwilling. And they have no prior investment in or knowledge of, say, either ancient Rome or Octavian. We teachers are empowered and required to shape their thoughts and to instil the habit of orthodoxy if only because we know that student and teacher alike are held to account by examiners who reward orthodoxy and often punish heterodoxy.

Poets, particularly ancient poets, had less predictable and homogeneous audiences. Sophocles wrote for thousands, from philosophers to illiterate peasants. They were his assessors, not he theirs. Virgil's post-civil war audience included veterans who had fought for Octavian, farmers Octavian had ruined, partisans who had fought for Julius Caesar but against Octavian, or against both. There were Epicureans who believed in free will, deterministic Stoics, various kinds of Platonists, and sundry others. They were not Anglican schoolboys whose lives were affected by Roman politics only in the classroom and in exams.

Ancient epics and tragedies are not fully realized until other voices and minds, whether individually or collectively, are involved in their creation. A dramatist knew his words would be divided among, and expropriated by, three actors and a chorus, then taken in by thousands of different minds with different experiences and varied knowledge. Virgil could assume his audience's familiarity with variants of Roman myth and poetic fiction. When he introduces Dido's sister Anna in *Aeneid* 4, Anna is no newcomer unfamiliar to tradition even though Virgil has given no previous hint of her existence. Varro's Anna was a Carthaginian princess and herself Aeneas' lover. So, when Virgil's Aeneas breaks off contact with Dido but keeps visiting and confiding in Anna, we wait, but in vain, for Virgil's editorial explanation. He leaves us to write our own.

The *Aeneid* is as complex as a computer game, thriving (and making us thrive) on interaction. Each episode is rich in verbal prompts that send us into areas his narratives do not explore, but whose mention affects our understanding of those narratives and fuels our creative interests. But we are not Virgil's target audience

scarred by war and learned in Roman history and myth. Can the translator Romanize the modern audience while Englishing Virgil and situate it close to where the ancient audience sat? If so, perhaps the translated *Aeneid* won't emerge as a dull novel, a symphony re-scored for a tin whistle. I attempted something like this in my translation, hoping Virgil's thoughts could be reformulated to trigger comparable prompts in a different language, much as Juno tries to reformulate Jupiter's thoughts before they become words in *Aeneid* 12.

Translators often re-write Greek and Latin poems. Ted Hughes substituted his own choruses for those of Seneca's *Oedipus*. The result is a fine poem; but it is his, not Seneca's, *Oedipus*. I assumed my readers were looking for Virgil, not me. Unfortunately our cultural acquiescence in taking literary works, suppressing parts or substituting our own compositions, and calling them Seneca's *Oedipus* or Bram Stoker's *Dracula* makes insistence on the integrity of the original useless. I am beginning to accept, reluctantly, that the original sense of ancient tragedies and epics is wholly lost, even when it is, theoretically, partially retrievable.

The most prized ancient authors fare worse than those barely remembered. Summaries of such works as Sophocles' *Oedipus* are drilled into our minds before we read them. Then translators make tiny, but devastating, adjustments to accommodate Sophocles to the myth of Oedipus as taught. One word shifted from an answer given to Oedipus into the question he asks eliminates an awkward contradiction. Sophocles' Oedipus asks: 'How did you come by the child?' and Sophocles' Corinthian answers: 'I found it in the folds of Cithaeron.' Several translators transpose the verb of finding into Oedipus' inquiry, creating a leading question: 'Where did you find the child?' They then substitute some less definitive verb in the answer: 'I came upon it', 'I stumbled upon it.' Why don't they let the Corinthian say what Sophocles has him say: that he found the child? Because a few lines later the Corinthian claims he was *given* the child by someone connected with Laius. He didn't find it. So he is lying now, later, or on both occasions.

Oedipus, as taught in our schools, requires the Corinthian (like Oedipus' other interlocutors) to tell the truth. When Sophocles' characters lie or contradict one another commentators talk of flaws in his composition and translators simply smooth them away. The core meaning of *Oedipus* is, in our culture, the same for those who know only the catechism as for those who read the play, even though

slight expansion of the catechism, as marked in angled brackets in the paragraph below, outlines a more richly complex play.

Oedipus came to Thebes from Corinth, solved the Sphinx's riddle, married Jocasta, widowed queen of Thebes. He is now tyrant and Thebes is suffering from a plague. Oedipus, asked to save the city again, says he has sent his brother-in-law Creon to Delphi. Creon, returning, reports that <his interpretation of> the oracle indicates they must find the killer of Oedipus' predecessor, Laius. A blind seer accuses Oedipus of killing Laius and committing incest. Oedipus suspects Creon, who denies ambition to be tyrant, is plotting against him, but Jocasta persuades him not to kill Creon.

Oedipus tells Jocasta he left Corinth after an unnamed drunk at a party called him a bastard <child passed off on his unknowing father Polybus>. Despite reassurances of his legitimacy from father and mother, he left home and consulted the oracle, which declared he would kill his father and marry his mother. Afraid of harming his parents <whom he had left because he doubted they were his parents>, he refused to go home but travelled to Thebes. He dimly remembers killing five men at an intersection en route in a dispute over right of way and worries that <if one proves to be his father> he may have committed a crime.

An unnamed Corinthian <hoping for a reward when Oedipus returns to Corinth> reports Polybus' death <which delights Oedipus> and <a rumour withheld from Oedipus by Jocasta> that Oedipus is <possibly> to be named tyrant of Corinth. When Oedipus says fears of harming his parents keep him from Corinth, the Corinthian claims Oedipus is not the child of Polybus but a child he himself <found, well> was given and that he gave <directly> to the childless Polybus. When an unnamed herdsman <whom Oedipus, briefly, thinks might be his father> identifies <under torture> Oedipus as Laius and Jocasta's child <if, he says, Oedipus is who the Corinthian says he is>, Oedipus, convinced the oracle is fulfilled, blinds himself as the blind prophet <whose blindness he insulted> said he would. <Creon takes over as tyrant of Thebes.>

A translator's first concern in translating a famous Classical poem is not loyalty to original wording, but conformity with the consensus interpretation. The second is to simplify or remove 'unnecessary complexities'—a duty interpreted broadly if poetry is, as some believe, over-elaborated prose that can be pruned without loss. Abbreviation is good. *Oedipus* or the *Aeneid* will occupy only two or three class

sessions: enough to convey the canonical meaning, not enough to question or modify it. We lower the masterpiece to suit the needs of its least demanding readers since we despair of raising readers to the level of the masterpiece. We rarely use translation to encourage readers to raise *themselves* to the masterpiece. The more intricate the computer game, the more attractive it is to players. So why do we think literary works more attractive when dumbed down?

I suspect that we fear the status of cultural masterpieces is so much a by-product of convention that they are classics only if we leave the convention intact. And if the convention goes, we classicists go too. Nonetheless, after years listening for, and attempting to convey, the multiple resonances of Virgil's poetry, the subtleties of thought and diction that make the *Aeneid* my favourite epic, I prepared an introduction, translation, and notes. I took special care not to impose on the *Aeneid* any assumption that it was an exercise in either political Augustanism or anti-Augustanism. Virgil seemed reluctant to look beyond Octavian into the future, except in hyperbolic generalities; and, when he looked at Octavian, he seemed unsure of what he saw. In Anchises' parade of future Romans in *Aeneid* 6, the only Roman still alive as Virgil writes is the emperor himself. Indeed, one of the closing montages of *Aeneid* 6 reminds readers of the death of Marcellus, Octavian's designated successor.

I realized, too late, that traditional Augustanism would not be shaken. My publisher worried that if my translation did not, at least overtly, conform with (or at least not confront) traditional expectations, adoptions by schools would be affected adversely. I agreed, therefore, to let the press substitute an introduction by my friend Elaine Fantham for my own, since her view of Virgil was closer to the conventional than mine. No objection was raised to my notes. Few readers, apparently, look at the notes.

But I was surprised a year ago to read the following: 'Virgil's supreme achievement is not only to reveal Rome's imperial future for his patron Augustus, but to invest it with both passion and suffering for all those caught up in the fate of others.' What the second half of the sentence means eludes me. I disagree entirely with the first half. But the words cited are on the dustcover of my own translation. So even there the paean for Rome and Augustus is sung as it was in my classroom more than fifty years ago.

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Fuzzy Connections

Classical Texts and Modern Poetry in English

Lorna Hardwick

‘Homer’s ghost came whispering to my mind’¹

It is increasingly accepted that classical texts, in various kinds of translations and rewritings, have returned to the centre of contemporary cultural activity and that they are catalysts in the work of internationally influential writers such as Eavan Boland, Athol Fugard, Louise Glück, Tony Harrison, Seamus Heaney, Ted Hughes, Sarah Kane, Michael Longley, Christopher Okigbo, Femi Osofisan, Linda Pastan, Wole Soyinka, Derek Walcott, and Timberlake Wertenbaker.² Such receptions derive literary or theatrical vitality from the refracted but intense relationship that they have with the ancient texts. This also inscribes ambivalence in their relationship with the modern literary traditions of which the contemporary writers are a part but which they aim in their different ways to transcend in order to ‘make it new’.³ Putting the stamp of the ‘star’ poet or dramatist on the new work implies that the work is both grounded in and runs counter to traditions (classical, classicized, and post-classical). Yet this contribution to the ‘transmission’ and ‘adaptation’ of classical texts also involves

¹ Patrick Kavanagh, ‘Epic’: (2005 [1951]), 184.

² This chapter has grown out of a larger investigation of the relationship between classical texts and recent drama and poetry in English. I am grateful to the British Academy for a Larger Research Grant which supported the work on poetry in 2006–8 and to the Open University which supported research on theatre receptions.

³ See for example Harrison (2009) and Rees (2009).

the priority of the (modern) poet's or dramatist's voice, which is expected to become audible and visible. This may harmonize with literary status, for example that of a Gavin Douglas, a Pope, or a Dryden. It also implies a degree of competition and conversation with the ancient, perhaps of *aemulatio*.⁴ Furthermore, the priority of the (re-) writer's voice differs significantly from modern approaches to the (precarious) invisibility or (contested) visibility of the translator. There is also a degree of disjunction from the categorizations and valuations that arise from the use of the ancient text as the pre-eminent measure for judgements about content, formal qualities, and technique.⁵

Current research in translation studies generally accepts that the emphasis is on the target language rather than on the source language.⁶ This implies conflict with those classicists who see the source language as the arbiter. There are many variations on that approach. For example, J. M. Walton, although a theatre studies academic as well as a classicist, uses closeness or otherwise to the ancient text together with the modern writer's knowledge of the source language as a basis for seven categories of translation and adaptation, ranging from literal 'cribs' to 'translocations to another culture'. The literature scholar Cashman Kerr Prince, also classically trained, follows Baudrillard's theory of the simulacrum which identified four levels of relationship based on the actual or illusory presence of the ancient text or its absence.⁷ It is significant, however, that in his discussion of Homer in twentieth-century poetry in English, Kerr Prince's typology is mainly shaped round examples that are compatible with reductions in readers' or writers' knowledge of the texts and a resulting change of emphasis in the constructions of meaning towards general ideas about content. Thus Homer might be characterized and used in modern poetry as a 'poet of war' and a 'poet of journeys' or in terms of a loose association with the titles *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey*, rather than as a poet who created certain kinds of similes. Such moves away from close textual referents and rewordings also point to

⁴ For discussion of the negotiation between ancient text and subsequent writer, see Hopkins (2008) and (2009).

⁵ See Venuti (1994), which opened the way to analysis of the shaping role of the translator, and Lianeri and Zajko (2008), which explored the aesthetic, cultural, and ideological impact of translation in its widest sense.

⁶ See for example Bassnett (2009).

⁷ Walton (2006), 182–3; Prince (2007). For discussion of the interrelationships between 'reception' and 'tradition' see Budelmann and Haubold (2008).

changes in the range of meanings associated with the word 'translation'. Translation studies has taken what is generally called a 'cultural turn'.⁸ That involves a focus on the relationship between source and target cultural contexts and as such necessarily implies 'rewriting' rather than merely 'rewording'. It insists that linguistic and literary approaches to translation could and should be intertwined.⁹ I hope to show in this discussion that the polarities between source and target languages and cultures need not be crudely drawn and that a creative tension between the two positions can actually yield literary insights. Furthermore, the 'extra-textual' aspects that were given a higher profile by the 'cultural turn' in translation studies can actually be attached and carried into the new text by the formal and linguistic aspects that are linked more obviously with the source text. Their persistence and adaptation can provide an index for inter- and intra-cultural comparisons.

Nevertheless, issues in the transmission and translation of ancient texts and the creative practices involved in rewriting raise some knotty problems for researchers. If, as the conventional wisdom now has it, meaning is created at the point of reception and if we are dealing with classical texts that are actually diasporic texts, physically and culturally uprooted from their contexts of original nurture and production, then in reception research we have to engage with a multiplicity of moments of reception, sometimes *overtly* connected, sometimes *covertly* connected and sometimes *unconnected* other than through an apparently chance convergence of resonances with an ancient text.¹⁰

Julia Gaisser has vividly described how the classical texts themselves, or rather perceptions of them and their meaning, are altered through time. They become 'pliable and sticky artefacts gripped, moulded and stamped with new meanings by every generation of readers and they come to us irreversibly altered by their experiences'.¹¹ The metaphor of accretion is especially helpful, but we also have to deal with repressions and with the fact that the generations of

⁸ Bassnett and Lefevere (1990).

⁹ Bassnett (2007).

¹⁰ For seminal work on the dynamics of classical receptions, see Martindale (1993). Martindale and Thomas (2006) contains essays exploring various theoretical positions including, for diasporic models, Hardwick (2006), and for textuality and meaning, Haynes (2006).

¹¹ Gaisser (2002), 387.

readers (and of writers) are not necessarily part of one homogeneous continuum. One of the challenges is therefore how to 'connect' receptions that are part of different traditions and do not seem to talk directly to one another. They may represent different and sometimes mutually uncomprehending or even antagonistic strands within a tradition or use the Greek or Roman text itself as part of a conversation that does not necessarily recognize the classical text itself as foundational or as having any kind of exceptional authority; it is just a participant in the creative process. Indeed, it may be the writer or reader who is the connector, bringing the classical text into a relationship with others on the basis of the connector's own sensibilities and horizons, perhaps derived from accidents of juxtaposition or encounter.

Recent theoretical work has placed readers and audiences at the point of receptions and of constructions of meaning. Yet when scholars trace textual migrations or construct models of intertextuality or adaptation, they map a complex series of interlocking historical and aesthetic processes of which not even the most erudite reader or spectator would be aware at the moment of reception (or perhaps at all, even in the recollections permitted by tranquillity). The effect has been to place readers and spectators as dominant agents in a process of which they are mostly or even totally unaware. They themselves are active as connectors but they 'connect' without consciously treading the conventional scholarly paths of spotting allusions or historical, contextual, and literary comparators, let alone tracing the trajectory of 'philological fundamentalism'.¹² My notion is of the reader/spectator as someone who 'arrives' without necessarily having taken the obvious path or even the same path as others making the journey. Furthermore, he or she may arrive in a rather different place from other travellers who set out with similar intentions.

These distinctions are not necessarily the same as those between the 'knowing' and 'unknowing' reader (terms which are themselves problematic). Rather, they are a comment on the immediacies and contingencies of the interaction between the reader/spectator and the text/performance. There are, however, pertinent questions about how the presence of the ancient text, or of an impression of it, is communicated and about whether and how 'recognitions' are triggered in the

¹² Hinds (1998).

minds of the receivers. Where the history of translation, mediation, and poetic and popular allusion is very long and deep-seated, the ancient text itself, or sometimes representations of the author, may be transformed into a kind of palimpsest, with successive receptions intermingling to create a tradition of their own.¹³ Theatre productions raise additional problems, both about the non-verbal aspects of translations from page to stage and to different stages, and about the ephemerality of theatrical experience as a point of reference. To discuss these would require a more multifaceted theoretical framework, so here I shall confine the discussion to poetry.¹⁴

These are just some of the challenging issues raised by the reflexive gap between the experiences of the reader and the histories of reception. Do they mean that scholarly research and analysis of classical receptions is meaningless other than as an agreeable occupation for academic clubs (symptotic or otherwise)? Do they mean that 'any reception goes' and that criteria for comparison or aesthetic judgement are arbitrary? The reluctance of many reception scholars to make judgements on aesthetic value (as opposed to historical or linguistic analysis) has certainly been noticeable, although there is (at the time of writing, 2008) an emerging interest in getting to grips with the challenges of describing and assessing the transhistorical impact of classical texts.¹⁵ Should alternative models be considered? One example might be the 'rhizome' that emerged from the collaborations of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari. They used this concept from botany to image an underground stem that sends out shoots but whose source root is impossible to identify. This is a system without a centre and so challenges the model of a tree with roots and branches that gives a more secure image of development. It also makes it more difficult to take territorial (or indeed cultural) control.¹⁶ For the purposes of my discussion the 'rhizome' model has some heuristic value because it recognizes the possibility of diverse points of entry to what is nevertheless an active network of connections.

The aspects I want to explore here focus on two 'entry' points in such a network. The first is the modern poet, who is only rarely a

¹³ For discussion of examples of how Homer might be regarded, see Prince (2008).

¹⁴ I consider performance aspects in chapters in Hall (2010), 192–207 and Bakogianni (2011).

¹⁵ See, for example, the topics discussed in essays in Brown and Silverstone (2007).

¹⁶ Deleuze and Guattari (1987).

classical philologist, let alone knowledgeable about the contexts of the origin of the texts.¹⁷ So I will be asking *how* the modern poet comes to connect with the ancient text or image in the first place, how he or she perceives its potential and what are the poetic circumstances in which new meaning accrues to it. Secondly, I want to look at how the modern poet communicates these processes to the reader, who is also only rarely a classical philologist or an expert in reception.¹⁸

My chosen examples each relate to rather different 'entry' points in the rhizome model. All are from modern Irish poets. One of the reasons I have chosen Irish writers is that, because of the diversities of Irish literary and cultural history, they bring into the discussion the question of overlaps between different kinds of classical tradition. This precludes monolithic generalizations, allows for multiple entry points, and feeds directly into the organizing themes of this collection: Tradition, Translation, Trauma.

The first examples are from the poetry of Patrick Kavanagh (1904–67). His father was a cobbler and small farmer (initially of nine acres). The farm was in the parish of Inniskeen, County Monaghan, and Kavanagh left school at the age of 13 to work the land and to learn to be a cobbler. However, with the growth of shoe-shops cobbling ceased to be an option and the farm was expanded to 25 acres. For over twenty years Kavanagh's life was that of a low-paid farm worker and a note on one of his early manuscript collections describes the conditions under which his poetry was written: '... sitting at the end of the day upstairs in a cold corner by the light of a candle. A mother's voice calling every now and then, "Come down and throw a lock of turnips to the unfortunate cows".'¹⁹

Kavanagh did not have a classical education, or indeed a literary education. He was self-taught from school and library books and Palgrave's *Golden Treasury* until one day in 1925 when he was at the grass-seed market he went into a newsagent and discovered the *Irish Statesman*, the weekly journal of arts and ideas edited by George

¹⁷ For changes in the classical background of writers during the 20th cent., see Taplin (2002) and Cox (forthcoming).

¹⁸ An important area which I cannot explore here is the interaction between scholarship and creativity. For example, the research of Richard P. Martin and Egbert Bakker has related the linguistic and structural aspects of Homeric epic to transplantation across genres; see Martin (1997). Confluences that are separated in time, place, and culture are discussed in Thomas (2006).

¹⁹ MS 3215, National Library of Ireland, quoted in Quinn (2005).

Russell (A.E.). Through this he learnt of the work of James Joyce and W. B. Yeats. A.E. lent Kavanagh books and introduced him to other writers. He began to contribute to journals such as the *Spectator*, *John O'London's*, and the *Dublin Magazine*. Initially he was regarded (and patronized) as a 'peasant poet'. Antoinette Quinn comments in her introduction to the *Collected Poems*: 'peasantry, made fashionable by Literary Revival writers such as Douglas Hyde, J. M. Synge, and Lady Gregory was still a modish literary property in Dublin, abbreviated in Abbey Theatre jargon to "PQ" (peasant quality)'.²⁰ A farmer turned poet was a curiosity and Kavanagh's first collection was published by Macmillan in 1936 as *Ploughman and other Poems*. In 1937 Kavanagh decided to go to London. He was commissioned to write an autobiography *The Green Fool*, which he subsequently criticized (in *Self Portrait*, 1964) because it pandered to the expectations of the two different metropolitan readerships—that of London, which thought of Irish peasants as comic buffoons, and that of Dublin, which saw them as primitive but authentic symbols of Irishness. Kavanagh's long poem *The Great Hunger* (1942), which is probably his best known work, effectively demolished the myths associated with Irish pastoral (both poetic and social). In this sense he is part of a tradition of subversive pastoral, a tradition of which Virgil is a prominent member.²¹

This background is important for understanding how Kavanagh moulds Greek and Roman material. There are in fact several poems by Kavanagh that deal directly or indirectly with classical texts and material culture. In part they demonstrate the way in which he seized on classical images and texts as part of his struggle to emancipate himself from the patronizing stereotype of the self-educated peasant farmer. In part they braid his voice, sometimes harshly, into the tradition of Yeats. Yet the dominant effect is of Kavanagh's capturing these images to use as talismans that enabled him to preserve the authentic force of his rural experience, and yet also to make it connect directly with the wider world. In this sense he is in geographic and social spatial terms close to the transhistorical practices of oral poetic tradition, in which memories may cluster round early times and the recent past with very little attention to what comes in between (the 'hourglass' model, as opposed to the palimpsest one).

²⁰ Quinn (2005), xiv.

²¹ See for example Thomas (2001).

His poem 'Plough-horses' was first published in 1938. In his notes Kavanagh refers to his unglamorous personal experience of working with a rusty plough and a kicking mare, but here the moment is reminiscent of Hopkins (for example, in 'As kingfishers catch fire'). In 'Plough-horses' Kavanagh seizes what he views and touches in the present and images how its shape connects it with the past:

And I saw Phidias' chisel there—
An ocean stallion, mountain mare.²²

The image of Phidias' chisel evokes, perhaps, the horses of the Athenian warriors on the Parthenon sculptures, and also converges with Yeats's allusion in his poem 'The Statues' to Phidias as the shaper and mover of dreams—'when Phidias | Gave women dreams and dreams their looking-glass'.²³

There is a poem called 'Pygmalion' in the same collection as 'Plough-horses' (1929–38), although it was not published until 1964. In this poem Kavanagh writes:

I saw her in a field, a stone-proud woman
Hugging the monster Passion's granite child,
Engirdled by the ditches of Roscommon . . .
No Grecian goddess, for her face was poor,
A twisted face, like hardships' face, to me . . .
I said: At dawn tomorrow she will be
Clay-sensuous. But they only smiled at me.²⁴

The poem brings together two aspects of Kavanagh's early work—the images hewn out of rock and hard soil to unite present hardship and mythical transformation and the sometimes bitter sense that such imaginings attract scorn. Both 'Plough-horses' and 'Pygmalion' need to be read alongside Kavanagh's poem 'The Irony of It', also published in 1938, in which he confronted his sense of irony at his marginalization from both his worlds, worlds of the land and of the poet:

The complexes of many slaves are in my verse . . .
I should have been content to walk behind,
Watching the mirror stones
It was not right

²² Kavanagh (2005), 26.

²³ Yeats (1940).

²⁴ Kavanagh (2005), 28.

That my mind should have echoed life's overtones,
 That I should have seen a flower
 Petalled in mighty power.

The 'flower petalled in mighty power' images the incongruous energy that flashes in both directions between what Kavanagh sees on the land, in spite of his virtual serfdom, and what his imagination invests in it.

It is that kind of agency that underlies his referential use of classical images. Kavanagh's most influential classically orientated poems date from 1951. These are 'Epic' and 'On Looking into E. V. Rieu's Homer'. (Rieu's translation of the *Iliad* had been published the previous year.) The title of the latter resonates with Keats's 1817 poem 'On first looking into Chapman's Homer'. Kavanagh situates himself alongside Keats, and in so doing justifies the transhistorical leap that he himself makes from his own sensory experience backwards against the flow of time:

Like Achilles you had a goddess for a mother
 For only a half-god can see
 The immortal in things mortal;
 The far-frightened surprise in a crow's flight,
 Or the moonlight
 That stays for ever in a tree.²⁵

In her meditation on Keats's response to Chapman and to Homer, Elizabeth Cook had the poet comment:

Is it the same song—though sung by another nightingale—that I hear now as Ruth heard, sick for home? Different lungs and larynxes to be sure. Different ears too. But is there enough the same?

A game of Chinese whispers. A hot word thrown into the next lap before it burns. It has not been allowed to set. Each hand that momentarily holds it, weighs it, before depositing it with a neighbour also, inadvertently, moulds it, communicates its own heat.²⁶

So the 'connection' between ancient and modern is moulded, reshaped by successive recipients. Each link is infused with the energy of the 'handler', and the 'whispers' neither attempt nor achieve the transmission of the exact words that arrived in the previous hand.

²⁵ Kavanagh (2005), 184.

²⁶ Cook (2001), 104.

Kavanagh's sonnet 'Epic' makes just this kind of brilliant leap to shape connections, between the parochial and the transhistorical, but this time more specifically via Homer and the *Iliad*.²⁷ The poem begins with a local dispute:

who owned
That half a rood of rock, a no-man's land
Surrounded by our pitchfork-armed claims.

Yet: 'That was the year of the Munich bother. Which | Was most important?' At first the poet inclined against the parochial dispute, but then:

Homer's ghost came whispering to my mind.
He said: I made the '*Iliad*' from such
A local row. Gods make their own importance.

Kavanagh does not reword or rewrite text or even episode. In using Homer to make connections he appeals both to his own sense of Homer as a poetic guide and to a generalized popular conception of what Homer represents and what he sang about in the *Iliad* when the Greeks tried to wrest Helen back from the Trojans and in the midst of it all Agamemnon and Achilles quarrelled about who should have and keep the most coveted and prestigious cattle, weapons, and women, the spoils of war. Kavanagh's poetic memories of Homer are based on these generalized settings rather than individual lines or structured sequences.²⁸ However, in this particular poem he also draws directly on a simile that occurs towards the end of *Iliad* 12 at lines 421–5, in which there is a stalemate between the two opposing sides. In the translation by E. V. Rieu which Kavanagh had so recently read:

Divided by the battlements between them, they were like two men quarrelling across a fence in the common field with yardsticks in their hands, each of them fighting for his fair share in a narrow strip. (tr. Rieu, 1950, p. 232)

²⁷ Kavanagh (2005), 184.

²⁸ The 'importance' that links local and mythical is conferred by the poetic imagination. Kavanagh's poetic insight here marks a significant variation on the opposition between ordinary life and art that is imaged by Auden in his 'Musée des Beaux Arts' where the ploughman in the painting hears the splash as Icarus falls into the sea but 'for him it was not an important failure'. See further the discussion in O'Neill (2007), 126.

In his poem, Kavanagh's movement is from the local situation in the rural Ireland of his experience straight to the world situation. The polarity seems absolute until he invokes Homer to validate the connection that he himself has already embedded in the poem through his associative use of the simile in *Iliad* 12. This functions as a kind of reverse simile that is buried in the poem, or at least hidden from the unknowing reader. Homer used similes from ordinary life and the natural world to bring enhanced understanding and resonances back into his poems. Kavanagh keeps Homer covertly beneath the surface of the rural image and then names the poet only at the end, using the associations of the name to validate the link between rural and world stages that he had already, through the poetic agency of Homer's simile, braided into the earlier part of the poem.

In his 1985 essay on Kavanagh, 'The Placeless Heaven: Another Look at Kavanagh',²⁹ Seamus Heaney describes this sonnet as 'pivotal' and as 'more in praise of Kavanagh's idea of Homer than of Kavanagh's home'. Heaney also comments on the influence of Kavanagh's poetry on someone like himself who came from 'a comparatively bookless background. . . . Kavanagh's genius had achieved single-handedly what I and my grammar-schooled arts-degreed generation were badly in need of — a poetry that linked the small-farm life which had produced us to the slim-volume world we were now supposed to be fit for. . . . Kavanagh gave you permission to dwell without cultural anxiety among the usual landmarks of your life'.³⁰ For Heaney, Kavanagh moved between the parochial and the universal without being trapped in the provincial. Indeed 'The Parish and the Universe' is the title of one of Kavanagh's essays in which he discusses how 'the local can be winnowed by the boundless and set free within it'. He uses the images of the ancient world to move beyond what he regarded as the stultifying cult of 'Irishness' while retaining the energizing force of local place and experience. 'Epic' is a poem that breaks 'the official grammar of association' (a term sometimes used with reference to the comparably lateral-thinking and feeling of Isaac Rosenberg).³¹ Kavanagh is unafraid to use an overt roughness of situation and image as the trigger for an imaginative leap into metaphor. The classical allusion in the image is integrated

²⁹ Reprinted in Heaney (2002), 134–44.

³⁰ *Ibid.* 139, 140.

³¹ See Das (2007), 92 and nn. 78, 79.

into and transforms the localized situation in which it is embedded but in this example the liberating force is not the plasticity of visual form but of poetic memory.

Significantly, the protean part of the sequence in 'Epic' is actually 'year of the Munich bother', which when first published was 'year of the Yalta meeting'. There are other significant variations between the text of the poem printed in *Collected Poems* and that first published in *The Bell* in November 1951, which also included an additional two lines at the end ('I asked forgiveness of the moment's sin | And walked along the headland of a field'). The 1951 version is rougher, perhaps more anguished. The poet hesitates momentarily in his commitment to his own place and people and is 'rescued' by the larger vision offered by Homer ('And Homer's ghost came whispering *in my doubt*', italics added). Whether the later substitution of Munich for Yalta was an editorial intervention is not known.³² Perhaps Munich was thought to provide a better associative trigger after the passage of time, invoking the background knowledge of the assumed reader. Possibly the Yalta betrayals of the small Eastern-European countries were too politically contentious and had to be repressed from contemporary sensitivities. What is clear is that the two anchor points of the poem are local detail and the idea of Homer. It is these that the poet uses to frame the linguistic and imaginative experience of the reader and to ensure that the capacity of the reader's imagination to shape judgements is not impoverished by mediation through the constraining and marginalizing prism of metropolitan perspectives.

I have emphasized that Kavanagh is not in conventional terms a 'learned' poet and that his use of classical material is received via general ideas, popular translations, and poetic mediation, especially from the work of Keats and Yeats. Yet Kavanagh's importance in Irish poetic tradition means that he himself becomes a 'carrier' of referents and images from the ancient world that pass into the poetic memory without necessarily being given attributions by the reader who hears and views and feels them. The impact of this kind of 'classical connectivity' can be seen in the work of Seamus Heaney. Heaney might well be described as a 'learned' poet. Although he does not work directly from Greek, he uses scholarly translations and commentaries

³² I am grateful to the staff of the Kavanagh Archive in the Special Collections in the Library of University College Dublin for granting me access to relevant papers and to versions of Kavanagh's poems.

and he certainly is competent with Latin in both classical and religious contexts, as well as with Dante. In an interview recorded in 2007, Heaney described his schooling: 'I was as they say, good at Latin, so I had this, I had Virgil, Livy, a little bit of Horace and so on. Then, in my own particular case, I guess the Latin language had hieratic foundational quality because I grew up as a Catholic in the age of the Latin mass, so Latin was a kind of ratified sacred tongue in that way.'³³ He occasionally includes direct quotation from Latin in sequence with a close translation, for example in 'Bann Valley Eclogue' (2001), a classically based poem that in addition draws on and subverts Yeats. The poem also assimilates the 'Augustan reception' of Virgilian pastoral into Heaney's reflections on the violence of Irish rural history—'and [Virgil] manages to let the world of civil war and danger and history into these things'.³⁴

Heaney is conscious of the formal and generic aspects of these connections. In his 2003 essay 'Eclogues *in extremis*: On the Staying Power of Pastoral', he commented that 'what keeps a literary kind viable is its ability to measure up to the challenges offered by new historical circumstances', noting that Virgil himself in his first *Eclogue* was testing a genre he inherited from Theocritus.³⁵ Testing the elasticity of pastoral and the scope of localized allegiances by means of classical referents and in the light of historical and cultural circumstances is part of Heaney's relationship with Kavanagh. In *Electric Light* these connections are made possible not only by textual inheritance and classical learning, but crucially by the spatial and imaginative leaps embedded in Kavanagh's 'Epic'.

This aspect of Heaney's palimpsestic writing extends to Greek material. In one of the 'Sonnets from Hellas' in the same collection, *Electric Light*, he follows a sequence that inverts Kavanagh's approach in bringing together myth, place, and personal experience. Unlike Kavanagh, Heaney is at home in the Greek landscape as well as the Irish, and in this sonnet 'The Augean Stables' he begins with the visual image of a bas-relief of the goddess Athene who shows Heracles where to divert the river Alpheus to clean the Augean stables. Heaney

³³ Heaney (2007).

³⁴ Heaney (2001); source for quotation, Heaney (2007). For Heaney's reception of Virgil, see Harrison (2008), and for Heaney's use of scholarly translations, see Hardwick (2007*b*), 320–3.

³⁵ Heaney (2008), 247.

uses that ekphrasis to move to his response to violence in Ireland via his experience of the purifying environment of a Greek religious and athletic site:

And it was there in Olympia, down among green willows,
The lustral wash and run of river shallows
That we heard of Sean Brown's murder in the grounds
Of Bellaghy GAA Club.

Heracles' 'sweet dissolutions from the water tables' are imagined as:

Hose-water smashing hard back off the asphalt
In the car park where his athlete's blood ran cold.³⁶

Heaney's sensibility in this poem, and in others in the sonnet sequence, brings together the confidence in leaping to connect local and global that he absorbed from Kavanagh, but there is a remoulding here, heated by his own sense of poetic place. The rural watery places in Greece both resonate with and chafe against the rock-hard image of Ireland.

It is, however, in the poetry of Michael Longley that classical learning and the approaches imbibed from Kavanagh are most abrasively intertwined. Longley is a confidently and unashamedly learned poet. He exploits this both to claim poetic status and, crucially, in the ways that he informs and communicates with his readers.³⁷ Unlike Heaney, who in 'Bann Valley Eclogue' (2001) refers to Virgil as his 'hedge-schoolmaster', Longley places himself on an equal footing with the Roman writers. His sonnet 'Spiderwoman' proclaims in the first line: 'Arachne starts with Ovid and finishes with me'.³⁸ The statement claims a direct relationship between the two works, intensified by Longley's use of a close translation of lines from the Arachne sequence in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* 6. 5–145 to situate the reader, who needs barely to have heard of Ovid or be more than dimly aware of the cultural persistence of Greek and Roman myth in order to understand the poem.

³⁶ Heaney (2001), 41.

³⁷ For Longley's reflections on his working methods, see his essay in Harrison (2009).

³⁸ 'Spiderwoman' was commissioned for and first published in Hoffman and Lasdun (1994) and subsequently published, without changes, in Longley (1995) and (2006).

In Longley's poem 'A Poppy', rather more classical knowledge is expected from the reader.³⁹ Here, he transplants Homer's image of the death of Gorgythion into the slaughter of modern wars, aligning himself with Homer, *Iliad* 8. 303–8 via an allusion in Latin to Virgil's treatment of the episode in *Aeneid* 9. 436ff.: 'an image Virgil steals . . . and so do I'. However, Kavanagh is present too. The closing lines of Longley's poem allude to a poem by Philippos of Thessalonika (c.40 CE) which links Demeter, the corn goddess, to the blunting of the sickle used in harvesting. This was used by Kavanagh as an epigram to an essay that he wrote just after the outbreak of the Second World War.⁴⁰ Kavanagh used the image as a Blakean metaphor for threshing 'the stars of bright truth' from the 'husks of material words'; Longley applies it to the harvest of dead soldiers.⁴¹

Longley's history of engagement with Greek and Roman poetry and myth is very different from that of Kavanagh and this has moulded the different poetic and translational techniques that he has developed. Born in 1939, Longley is classically educated, having moved from his birthplace, Belfast, in 1958 to read Classics at Trinity College, Dublin. Longley's published collections all use Greek and Latin poetry to ground his own explorations of the processes of recognition and cultural memory. Seamus Heaney has commented on Longley's 'trust in the viability of classical techniques' and on his frequent use of the single-sentence poem that shows 'all the syntactical reach, ramification and suspension of a classic Latin period'.⁴² However, like Kavanagh, Longley delights in transposing scenes, words, and resonances from one historical and cultural context to another, often disrupting or inverting chronology to create a moment of insight that jolts the reader into an unexpected realignment of present, past, and future.

Nowhere is this more apparent than in his short poem 'The Horses' (2000). The poem starts in the present, alluding to contemporary calls for a memorial to animals killed in war. Longley then disrupts chronology by locating the contemporary memorial in the past and in relation to another conflict. The conjuring of the *kleos* of the

³⁹ First published in 1998 and then included in Longley (2000).

⁴⁰ Kavanagh (1939).

⁴¹ Longley's poetic technique in these poems is discussed with closer reference to the classical texts in Hardwick (2009).

⁴² Heaney (2008 [2003]), 246.

(immortal) horses in Homer (*Iliad* 17) becomes the axis for turning the focus onto the death of the human. The mourning horses become a memorial for humans; their stillness is in itself monumental. Homer's vocabulary attributes to the horses qualities that are associated with heroes while their emotions and tears recall episodes of human lament in both the epics. Longley's poem ends with lines that follow closely the prose translation by E. V. Rieu.⁴³ The inclusion of the translation informs the reader who may not know the precise details of the episode of Patroclus' mourning horses. The poem is an example of apparently simple and direct lyric that exploits diverse intertextual resonances in a very sophisticated way, disrupting chronology with its play on allusions to the poetry of Wilfred Owen as well as Homer.⁴⁴ Yet Longley supplies the reader with the information that is needed to make sense of the conceits of the poem. The allusions are reflective rather than integrative in that they bring images and poetic techniques into dialogue rather than embedding them in an unquestioning way.⁴⁵ The poem is almost a ring-composition, beginning and ending with descriptions of horses in battle and using as its turning point the image of memorial in Homer. This is communicated to the reader through the inclusion of a few lines of close translation that then return the reader to the opening idea of the poem in a way that has transformed expectations and sensitivities. Longley's technique also implicitly invokes Kavanagh's 'Homeric' poems to communicate and to validate the associations between humble and heroic, and between history and myth; and the debt is acknowledged in the unspoken allusion (rather like a half-rhyme) to Kavanagh's 'On Looking into E. V. Rieu's Homer'.

I referred above to how Kavanagh's allusions to Homeric material focus on setting and impression rather than on text. Longley goes further than Kavanagh and braids the lexical with the image. The techniques that he uses to achieve this without excluding the reader who does not share his extensive repertoire of ancient reading depend heavily on his use of translation devices that embed excerpts from the ancient text into the new poem. This technique includes the transplantation of the poetic devices of the source poet. For example, the

⁴³ Rieu (1966 [1950]).

⁴⁴ For a detailed analysis, see Hardwick (2007a), 59–61.

⁴⁵ Compare, for instance, Conte's discussion of these terms (1986 and 2007), with commentary by S. J. Harrison in Conte (2007), 1–22.

embedded simile is a distinctive aspect of Longley's response to the *Odyssey*. A significant example is his poem 'A Bed of Leaves'.⁴⁶ This is a sonnet of thirteen lines plus a double-edged enjambement set between the second and third lines. It draws on Homer's account at the end of *Odyssey* 5 of Odysseus' experiences in coming to land on the shores of the Phaiakians, aided by Athena following the wreck of his raft at the hands of Poseidon after he left the island of Calypso (*Odyssey* 5. 382–493). Longley's response starts at Homer, *Odyssey* 5. 475, in which Odysseus, having staggered ashore, decides that he must find a place to rest that is safe from the elements and from wild animals. Longley uses a short disrupted line combined with enjambement to begin his relocation of Odysseus' 'domestication' of the wild landscape of Greece to that of rural Ireland:

And crawled under two bushes sprouting from one
stem (olive
And wild olive), a thatch so close neither gale-force winds
Nor sunlight nor cloudbursts could penetrate.

The language at first contrasts with that of the epic tussle with the sea. Odysseus 'snuggled' down and made 'an eiderdown' of leaves. The vernacular takes over the scene: Longley's Odysseus 'smoors' the fire and 'hides a turf-sod in the bed of leaves to save an ember'. Longley picks up Homer's simile and sets it in the rhythm of Irish orality: 'So was his body in the bed of leaves its own kindling'.

Longley's poem is both sensitive to Homer in its allusions and yet appropriative in its shifts of environment and language. He picks up Homer's foreshadowing of the image of Odysseus and Penelope's bed, carved *in situ* from an olive tree, the knowledge of which is the final confirmation of Odysseus' identity (*Odyssey* 23. 190–204). Longley also uses the image of Odysseus' bed in his 1991 poem on the 'Tree House', which draws on the interplay of the crafts of carpenter, poet, and lover, while in his 1994 poem 'Baucis and Philemon' he also follows Ovid in playing with the image of a poor woman reviving the fire and represents a tree as the image of the mutual love of a man and wife.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ Longley (1995), 33.

⁴⁷ Longley (1991) 'Baucis and Philemon' responded to Ovid's treatment of the myth in *Metamorphoses* 8. 612–724. It was first published in Hofmann and Lasdun (1994) and subsequently in *The Ghost Orchid*, 1995.

here receive, 'translate', and communicate classical material in very different ways. Kavanagh used Homer to connect the parochial and the wider world. He became a distinctive voice in transfusing into Irish literary tradition classical material that he received through other poets and through popular translation. This in turn became one aspect of the classical receptions that Heaney and Longley internalized, even though Heaney (to some extent) and Longley (to a greater extent) could also access the classical poets directly and both had a substantial formal literary education. Heaney responds to the links between Kavanagh's localism and his sometimes ekphrastic communication of the shapes of myth and feels liberated by his work. Longley's response to Kavanagh is less visceral, not rooted in a shared cultural memory and even less in the experience of actually working with the contours of the land and its associations that is sometimes evident in Heaney. Nevertheless, he infuses his poems with close translations and plays with temporalities in order to trigger moments of recognition in the previously unknowing reader in a way that draws on Kavanagh's practices as well as his own textual knowledge.

In some respects Longley is the most palimpsestic of the poets discussed here. He writes across the ancient text and inscribes a new one in ways that partly obliterate and partly reveal the underlying texts. Yet in his use of closely translated excerpts he also aligns his writing with the 'hourglass' model, bringing together ancient and modern writing without assuming the reader's conscious awareness of what has gone between. Thus in Longley's poetry his translation techniques bring together textual familiarity and poetic memory. They incorporate into the new work the imagist and local/global connections that Kavanagh had made part of the classical poetic tradition in Ireland but they also fulfil an integrative function allowing the reader to hear the ancient text without previous knowledge of it. Thus allusion, intertextuality, and poetic memory coalesce through the activating force of translation.

All these connections can be traced through the geographies and histories of transmission, but they are also connections that the poets seize and communicate directly to readers who may be unknowing in terms of the scholarly and literary maps and staging posts. Such 'fuzzy connections' are an important part of creative practice, triggering readers' affective responses and shaping their constructions of meaning. These rhizomic relationships demand

our attention and a place in methodologies of reception and translation research.⁴⁹

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⁴⁹ Some of the material in this essay was developed from papers given in the Current Debates in Classical Reception conference held at Milton Keynes in May 2007 and in the Classics and Modernism seminar series at Corpus Christi College Oxford in 2008. I owe a great deal to participants in both for their criticisms and suggestions.

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Pope's Trojan Geography

David Hopkins

The first readers of Alexander Pope's translation of *The Iliad of Homer* (1715–20) would have noticed a number of striking features which differentiated Pope's version from all that had preceded it. In addition to a substantial Preface, an Essay on the Life, Writings, and Learning of Homer, and extensive Notes on each Book commenting both on the meaning and beauties of Homer's text and on the challenges presented by the task of rendering it into English, Pope offered the reader detailed help in determining both the general physical layout of Homer's Trojan plain, and of the precise location within that terrain of each of the battles which comprise the bulk of the poem's action. In the course of his notes on the Catalogue of the Ships in book 2, he included a specially engraved fold-out map of 'Graecia Homericæ' (comprising mainland Greece, the Aegean islands, and the west coast of Asia Minor), showing the locations from which each contingent in the Greek and Trojan armies had come. And a second map, or rather illustrated panorama, of the Trojan plain itself—'the only chart which has hitherto attempted to illustrate the principal scene of the action of the Iliad' (Wood, 1775: 89)—was prefixed to 'Essay on Homer's Battels' which begins volume 2. In addition, the 'Index of Arts and Sciences' included in the last volume included a section on 'Geography': 'A TABLE of those Places, whose Situation, Products, People, or History, &c. are particularized by Homer' (Pope, 1939–69: VIII. 611–12). Pope clearly took a personal interest in the details of his maps. On 24 August 1714 he wrote to his friend Edward Blount from Oxford:

I find still more reason to complain of the negligence of the Geographers in their Maps of *old Greece*, since I look'd upon two or three more noted names in the publick libraries here.

In issuing instructions to the engraver, Pope continues, he has had to modify existing maps to accommodate them to Homer's poem. This has involved the exercise of creatorly powers of the kind normally associated only with God:

I have been forced to write to him in so high a style, that were my epistle intercepted, it would raise no small admiration in an ordinary man. There is scarce an order in it of less importance, than to remove such and such mountains, alter the course of such and such rivers, place a large city on such a coast, and raze another in another country. I have set bounds to the sea, and said to the land, *thus far shalt thou advance and no further*. (Pope, 1956: I. 246)

Pope's map of the Trojan plain, together with the 'Essay on Homer's Battels' and the 'Arguments' prefixed to each Book make it possible to reconstruct with some precision his sense of the location of Homer's action in both time and place. Pope's map views the plain of Troy from the sea. The Aegean sea is in the foreground, and into it flows the river Scamander, which has been joined by the river Simois a little distance inland. The two rivers form a figure 'Y', the arms of which enclose the bulk of the plain and the city of Troy. The Greek ships, with the tents and wall in front of them, are ranged along the shore, with the bulk of the ships on the left side of the Scamander. The Scamander itself emanates from two fountains, visible to the left of Troy, with the fig tree (mentioned by Andromache in book 6 as the likely scene for any assault on the city) near by. Dispersed across the plain, in front of the city, are the sepulchre of Myrinne, the monument of Ilus, and the tomb of Asietes, all landmarks that witness key events in Homer's action. The town of Callicolone (towards which Ares urges the Trojans in book 20) is identified beyond Troy to the right. The Scaean Gate, the main gate of the city, is clearly visible facing the plain, with the beech tree, sacred to Jupiter, near by. The mountains of Ida form a distant backdrop to the whole scene. Homer's Troy, Pope observes in the 'Essay', must have 'stood at a greater Distance from the Sea than those Ruins which have since been shewn for it' (Pope, 1939-69: VII. 261) since, had the Greeks been encamped so near the city it would have been imprudent of them to have left the building of their fortifications till the tenth year of the

siege. Anyway, a large space between the city and camp has to be assumed, to accommodate the 'many various Adventures and Actions of war' that Homer describes.

Pope is as precise about the temporal duration of Homer's action as he is about its geographical location. The events of the *Iliad*, Pope calculates in his 'Arguments', encompass fifty-seven days *in toto*. Book 1 occupies the first 22; the events of Day 23, containing the *aristeia* of Diomedes, occupy books 2–6, and conclude in book 7, which also encompasses the truce, the funeral rites, and the building of the Greek fortifications (3 further days). The second battle, in which the Greeks are driven back and send an embassy to Achilles (books 8–10) occupies Day 27. The third and fourth battles (books 11–17) and Patroclus' death at the hands of Hector occupy Day 28. Day 29 and the ensuing night witness Hephaestus' forging of Achilles' arms. Day 30 sees Achilles' return to battle, his fight with the river, and his killing of Hector. The rest of the action (books 23–4; Days 31–57) is taken up with the cremation and funeral games for Patroclus (3 days), the lying of Hector's body in Achilles' tent (12 days), and the truce for Hector's interment (another 12).

Each of these events is tied to a precise location within the larger scenario. In his 'Essay on Battels', Pope specifies, at considerable length, the exact positioning of each episode in the epic, from the opening setting 'in the Greek camp' to the city walls under which Hector meets his death in book 22 (see Pope, 1939–69: VII. 262). Despite such precise and extensive delineation, however, Pope's Homeric geography was to come increasingly under attack during the century that followed the publication of his translation. The first and most celebrated onslaught came in Robert Wood's influential *Essay on the Original Genius and Writings of Homer*, published posthumously in 1775. (The *Essay* was a book-length elaboration of material first contained in a letter to Wood's friend James Dawkins of c.1755 which had been published privately in 1767 and 1769.) Wood, a seasoned traveller and accomplished classical scholar, had visited the Troad with two associates in 1750, and had recorded how, delighting in 'poetic geography', they had 'spent a fortnight with great pleasure in making a map of the Scamandrian plain with Homer in our hands'. In his *Essay*, Wood admits that 'of all the languages we know, in which Homer has hitherto appeared, it is in English alone that he continues to be a Poet', and that Pope was 'the only translator who has, in a certain degree, kept alive that divine

spirit of the Poet, which has almost expired in other hands' (Wood, 1775: 77–8). But, though conceding the poetic excellence of Pope's translation, Wood goes on to insist that it will be a disappointment to 'those, who wish to be thoroughly acquainted, either with the manners and characters of Homer's age, or the landscape and geography of his country'. Pope's 'accommodations' of Homer 'to the ideas of those, for whom he translates', Wood maintains, caused him to obscure the scrupulous accuracy, with which, Wood was convinced, Homer had described the landscapes and customs of his day. Pope, Wood alleged, had added details from post-Homeric sources, and fatally confused the positioning of Homer's rivers. Wood's essay was, however, itself soon under attack. In a series of lectures translated and published in 1791 as *Description of the Plain of Troy*, the French diplomat and traveller Jean-Baptiste Lechevallier criticized Wood's analysis of the Trojan landscape, and proposed his own identification of Homer's Troy with Bali Dagh, a hill above Burnarbashi (now Pinarbashi) about ten miles from the coast of the Hellespont, the site, Lechevallier thought, of the springs said by Homer (*Iliad* 22. 147–56) to be the sources of the Scamander.

Lechevallier's work was, however, soon itself vigorously attacked by Jacob Bryant, the quirky and cantankerous Fellow of King's College Cambridge who had edited Wood's *Essay* for publication in 1775. In 1795 Bryant published his own *A Dissertation concerning the War of Troy, and the Expedition of the Grecians, as described by Homer; shewing that no such Expedition was ever undertaken, and that no such city of Phrygia existed* (a work itself later criticized by Wakefield (1797) and Morritt (1798); Bryant replied to his critics in Bryant (1799a) and (1799b); later contributions to the controversy were Falconer (1799), Francklin (1800), and Morritt (1800); on the controversy, see further Spencer (1957)). Homer's whole story, Bryant argued, has self-evidently implausible elements, if regarded as historical 'fact'. Nevertheless, Bryant insisted, the *fictional* scenario of Homer's Troy is imagined in remarkable detail and with remarkable consistency. Nothing he has said about the unhistorical nature of the *Iliad*, Bryant asserted, should be taken as designed in any way to denigrate Homer as a *poet*. The 'improbabilities' of the *Iliad*:

do not affect the Poet. On the contrary, if they are well conducted, they add to his reputation. The whole being a figment will not prove any obstacle. The Poem of the Fairy Queen is an allegory; and the history of

La Mancha's Knight is a fiction. Yet did either Spencer or Cervantes suffer in their character? or was the reputation of their works diminished? Why then are we so blindly solicitous about the truth of any poetical work, if it was designed to be a fable? Many fictions serve to illustrate the subject matter and to lead to truths in disguise. If we admit nothing, but what is literally true, all tropes and metaphors must be given up: and analogy laid aside. The greatest beauties, and most useful ornaments in writing must be sacrificed. Let then the war of Troy be either real or feigned; to what does it amount? The Ilias will in all respects be the same, and its excellence unimpaired. (Bryant, 1799b: 90)

The action of Homer's poem, Bryant insists, has its own kind of consistency and coherence. But it is the consistency and coherence of a work of fiction, not of a documentary record. Homer's power to convince us of the 'reality' of the places and events he portrays derives from the imaginative plausibility of the fictional world he has created, not from any quasi-photographic accuracy with which he has described an independently accessible geographical locale.

But Bryant's arguments did not persuade the world to abandon belief in 'the real Troy'. Lechevalier's identification of Troy with Bali Dagh held sway until, after the archaeological excavations from the 1860s by J. G. von Hahn, Frank Calvert, and Heinrich Schliemann (later extended by Wilhelm Dörpfeld, Carl Blegen, and Manfred Korfmann), it was supplanted by Hissarlik, six miles north, a site in fact first identified in 1822 by the Scots journalist Charles Maclaren. But modern scholars have generally been reluctant to go much further in identifying particular locations in Homer's poem with the landscapes of the region. Indeed, the author of a recent book on Homer's Troy has specifically warned against any attempts

to wander, *Iliad* in hand, through a Troy which has been reconstructed in virtual fashion on the basis of recent excavations, equating a gateway here or a bastion there with some 'counterparts' in the text, or referring to Homer to conclude that this is how Troy appeared in its heyday in about 1200 BC, that here stood Agamemnon's headquarters tent, or that there Helen pointed out to Priam the heroes of the Achaian army from the wall of Troy. (Latacz, 2004: 170)

Precisely such an approach, however, was adopted in 1998 by J. V. Luce in *Celebrating Homer's Landscapes: Troy and Ithaca Revisited*, a book which marks a full-dress return to the spirit of Wood (who is specifically cited as the principal inspiration behind Luce's endeavour)

and Lechevalier. In his first chapter, Luce dismisses the assumption 'that poetic creativity has absolute licence to disregard geographical fact' as the manifestation of 'a modern aesthetic' which 'is not the way to approach Homer'. 'Where landscape and locality were concerned,' Luce maintains, Homer 'aimed at fidelity to fact' (Luce, 1998: 10). But if Luce's general assumptions about Homer's accurate depiction of geographical realities are similar to those of Wood and Lechevalier, his specific conclusions are very different. Recent geophysical surveys of the Trojan plain, he notes, have demonstrated that, as a result of long-term silting of the alluvial plain, the modern coastline of the Troad differs greatly from that of c.1250 BC, the putative date of the Trojan War. At that date, the geophysical evidence suggests, a substantial bay lay to the west of Hissarlik, stretching c.2½ miles south of the modern coastline. Previous sitings of the Greek camp near the coast, north of Troy, must, therefore, be erroneous, since such a camp would, at the time of the war, have been under water. The Greek camp, Luce argues, must have been situated to the west of Hissarlik, across the bay, near the modern Kesik Tepe on the Aegean coast. Luce follows through the logic of his hypothesis, attempting to identify the various landmarks mentioned by Homer with features of the modern landscape and excavations. The geophysical evidence that underpins his argument, however, presents Luce with at least one serious problem: in Homer (*Iliad* 5. 774), the rivers Scamander and Simois meet before entering the sea. But according to the new evidence on the former positioning of the coastline, they would have entered the sea separately, both at the putative date of the Trojan War, and at the likely date of the composition of the Homeric poems.

Luce's account might seem to stand at such a distance from the modern scholarly consensus on the historicity of Homer's Troy that it may be wondered why I have dwelt on it, and on the tradition of interpretation of which it represents the *ne plus ultra*. I do so for two interrelated reasons. The first—which may seem only to be expected from a specialist in English 'Augustan' literature—concerns the way in which the depreciation of Pope's Homer by Robert Wood, the initiator of that tradition, has been conscripted into a larger literary-historical narrative which depicts the triumph of 'Romanticism' over the weaknesses and inadequacies of 'Augustanism', and according to which anything apparently pre- or proto-'Romantic' in tendency is hailed as an 'advance' over what went before (see, further, Perkins (1992)). The second is the larger question of why readers, in many

different periods and circumstances, have been drawn to identify the 'realities' (whether in terms of 'real persons', 'real events', or 'real locations') 'behind' works of fiction.

The notion that Wood's *Essay* represents an unequivocal 'advance' on Pope was most explicitly and crudely formulated by Gilbert Highet:

A decisive step towards the better comprehension of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* was made by Wood's *Essay on the Original Genius of Homer*. The nobility and gentry of the baroque era had claimed that the Homeric epics could not be good poetry because Homeric society was in some ways less polished and precise than their own. This was a fault in their historical perspective. Wood, by describing the scenery which Homer knew, and by evoking from the life of the Near East the kind of life he described, primitive but not barbarous, simple but noble, helped to show lovers of poetry what they should really look for when they read the *Iliad*. (Highet, 1949: 383)

This passage contains a number of serious misrepresentations. Pope (who neither lived in 'the baroque era', nor was a member of the 'nobility' or 'gentry': his father was, as Jane Austen would have said, 'in trade') emphatically did *not* 'claim that the Homeric epics could not be good poetry' because of the nature of Homeric society—or indeed for any other reason. The Preface to Pope's *Iliad* is, in fact, a paean of praise to the poet who 'is universally allow'd to have had the greatest Invention of any Writer whatever' (Pope, 1939–69: VII. 3). Robert Wood, to be sure, deserves credit for an aspect of his *Essay* not hitherto mentioned in this chapter: his pioneering recognition of the oral traditions which lie behind the Homeric poems. But in other respects Wood's *Essay* seems seriously misleading. Wood's attempts to draw 'parallels' between Homeric society and that of modern conditions in Asia Minor were, in fact, imprecise and singularly *lacking* in 'historical perspective'. In his comments on 'the manners and characters of Homer's age' (Wood, 1775: 78) he constantly blurred the 'age' *depicted* by Homer (now generally thought to be a composite of conditions drawn from the eighth century BC with memories of older traditions and institutions reaching far back to Mycenaean times) with that *inhabited* by Homer—and blurred both with conditions that Wood had observed at first hand in eighteenth-century Asia Minor.

Wood's claim that 'the *Iliad* has new beauties on the banks of the Scamander' (Wood, 1753: sig. a^v) was, interestingly, shared by Lord Byron, who rhapsodized about the difference between reading the

Iliad ‘in a snug library’ and ‘at Sigaeum and on the tumuli, or by the springs with Mount Ida above, and the plain and rivers and Archipelago around you’ (Byron, 1980: 310), and who denounced ‘the blackguard Bryant’ for ‘impugning the veracity’ of the Trojan War, declaring:

I still venerated the grand original as the truth of *history* (in the material *facts*) and of *place*. Otherwise, it would have given me no delight. (Byron, 1973–82: VIII. 22)

In some moods, Byron seems to have believed that, in Stephen Cheeke’s words, ‘historical places . . . were sites in which direct connection with the buried subjectivity of the lived experiences associated with those places was somehow (supernaturally) possible’ (Cheeke, 2003: 13), and his conviction of the historical veracity of the *Iliad* seems to have been, at least in part, connected with such a belief—even though the ‘tumuli’ that he claimed made such a difference to his reading of Homer were in fact of Hellenistic date (Cheeke, 2003: 65).

But Byron was also a passionate devotee of Pope’s *Iliad*, and, in a letter to Leigh Hunt, defended Pope’s translation of Homer’s celebrated ‘Moon’ simile (*The Iliad of Homer*, 8. 685–708), which Wordsworth had attacked in his *Essay Supplementary to the Preface* (1815) for its supposed insensitivity to ‘the phenomena of nature’ (Wordsworth had remarked that ‘A blind man, in the habit of attending accurately to descriptions casually dropped from the lips of those around him, might easily depict these appearances with more truth’). The simile, Byron affirmed in a letter of 30 October 1815,

is no translation I know—but it is not such *false* description as asserted—I have read it on the spot—there is a burst—and a lightness—and a glow—about the night in the Troad—which makes the ‘planets vivid’—& the ‘pole glowing’ the moon is—at least the sky is clearness itself—and I know no more appropriate expression for the expansion of such a heaven—over the scene—the plain—the sea—the sky—Ida—the Hellespont—Simois—Scamander—and the isles—than that of a ‘flood of Glory’. (Byron, 1973–82: IV. 325–6)

Byron is here not so much responding to the ‘buried subjectivity’ of ‘lived experience’ preserved directly—as he supposed—in the landscapes of the Troad, as projecting onto the night sky in Asia Minor an imagining of that sky by a favourite poet who had never been there,

but who had evoked the scene so vividly that it seemed to ring true to Byron's direct experience on the spot.

Pope, as we have seen, displayed a very precise sense of the landscapes of the *Iliad*, and of the locales in which its various battles take place. 'What chiefly pleases him,' he says, when commenting on Homer's description of the twin fountain-sources of the Scamander, 'is to see the exact Landskip of old *Troy*, we have a clear Idea of the Town itself, and of the Roads and Countrey about it; the River, the Fig-trees, and every part is set before our Eyes' (*The Iliad of Homer*, 22. 196 n.; Pope, 1939-69: VIII. 463). And he also admired Homer's preservation of a plausible unity of time and place. But Pope's interest in Homer's landscapes is an interest in an *imaginary* time-space dimension. Homer's scenario, he thinks, is worked out in such richly specific detail that a map can be drawn of it, and the course of his action is conceived with such precision that it can be assigned precisely to a specified duration, in days and weeks. But, apart from the Catalogue of the Ships, which, he believes, is 'purely Historical, founded on the real Transactions of those Times, and by far the most valuable Piece of History and Geography left us concerning the State of *Greece* in that early Period' (Pope, 1939-69: VII. 173), the precise time-space dimension of the *Iliad* is not one that can ultimately be 'checked off' point by point against some independently verifiable 'real life' scenario 'behind' or 'beyond' the poem. In his famous first note on book 1 of his *Iliad*, Pope noted how Homer's commentators have been 'Voluminous in explaining those Sciences which he made but subservient to his Poetry, and sparing only upon that Art which constitutes his Character'. Such commentators, Pope says, 'were fonder of showing their Variety of Learning in all Kinds, than their single Understanding in Poetry. Hence it comes to pass that their Remarks are rather Philosophical, Historical, Geographical, Allegorical, or in short rather any thing than Critical or Poetical' (Pope, 1939-69: VII. 82). It might seem that Pope was himself guilty of precisely the same display of 'Geographical' pedantry that he here castigates. But Pope's Trojan geography, it must be emphasized, is a specifically *poetic* geography, which, whatever historical realities may lie behind the *Iliad*, or made their contribution in the process of its composition, functions in the finished poem as a device for making the poetic narrative fully plausible to its readers and listeners. One can be confident that Pope would have endorsed Jacob Bryant's judgement that Homer's circumstantial details, whether of place or time,

are there not for their own sake, nor as a documentary record of some independent 'reality', but for the contribution they make to the poet's larger fictional scheme, and to his ability—unrivalled in European literature (with the possible exception of Shakespeare) to involve the reader in his action:

If a Council be call'd, or a Battle fought, you are not coldly inform'd of what was said or done as from a third Person; the Reader is hurry'd out of himself by the Force of the Poet's Imagination, and turns in one place to a Hearer, in another to a Spectator. (Preface to *The Iliad of Homer*; Pope, 1939–69: VII. 4)

Pope's sentiments were to be echoed over two centuries later in Erich Auerbach's celebrated account of Homer's narrative art:

So long as we are reading or hearing the poems, it does not matter whether we know that all this is only legend, 'make-believe.' The oft-repeated reproach that Homer is a liar takes nothing from his effectiveness, he does not need to base his story on historical reality, his reality is powerful enough in itself; it ensnares us, weaving its web around us, and that suffices him. And this 'real' world into which we are lured, exists for itself, contains nothing but itself. (Auerbach, 1968: 13)

Accordingly, Pope's re-creation of Homer's moon simile (so passionately admired, as we have seen, by Byron), is to be remembered not merely as an accurate record of 'the sky at night' over the Aegean, or as a free-standing 'Night Piece' (though it was often quoted and anthologized as such), but for its portentous foreshadowing of the larger tragedy of Troy. It fulfils an integral function, that is, within a coherent overall narrative which, in Pope's eyes, clearly manifests the hand of a single, unifying, poetic genius. Thus the 'Flames' which (with even more circumstantial precision in Pope's rendering than in Homer's original) 'lighten glimm'ring *Xanthus* with their Rays' (*The Iliad of Homer*, 8. 700) also 'Gleam on the Walls, and tremble on the Spires' of Troy (ibid. 8. 702), ominously anticipating the city's imminent destruction.

Such was the persuasiveness of Pope's recreation of Homer's fictional 'reality' that it seems to have convinced Byron that what he 'saw' on the Troad accorded with what Pope, in his poetic recreation of Homer, had imagined—though he had never visited that region himself. The quest for 'the real Troy' can surely be attributed, at least in large part, to Homer's (and, for English readers, Pope's) capacity to

create an imaginative scenario and action so precise and vivid that it *must*—or so people were convinced—accord with some independently verifiable ‘reality’. But the ‘reality’ of Homer’s Trojan geography, I would submit, exists ultimately in one place, and one place only: in readers’ minds encountering the twenty-four books of the *Iliad*, whether in the Greek original or in its greatest English reincarnation, that of Alexander Pope.

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Sophoclean Journeys

Pat Easterling

Journeying is everywhere in Sophocles, as a structuring element of plot, as a motivator of dramatic action—linking seen with unseen and present with past and future—and above all as a metaphor with an extraordinary range of resonances. The journey of life, the journey to the beyond, the wanderings of the exile, the quest, the path of destiny: all are potentially tragic images, and I want to suggest that the lasting ‘translatibility’ and pervasiveness in modern culture of Sophocles’ surviving plays owes much to the complex power with which such seemingly simple images are invested. My test case will be *Oedipus at Colonus*, where the idea of the journey informs the whole action with particular intensity, but there are many parallels in the other plays.

I begin with a brief typology. Not surprisingly, Sophoclean tragedy is not the place to look for ‘straight’ travel, for profit, say, or pleasure, or the fulfilment of religious obligation, such as attending festivals.¹ The only merchant we come across in extant Sophocles is a fake, and his ‘journey’ is a sham designed to trick Philoctetes into leaving Lemnos for Troy.² Orestes, Pylades, and the Tutor in *Electra* claim to be emissaries of the king of Phocis, who has charged them to bring home the ashes of Orestes, supposedly killed in a chariot accident at the Pythian Games. But their real mission is revenge, a familiar

¹ Travelling to consult an oracle might seem to come into the ‘straight’ category, but when characters in tragedy go on such journeys one can be pretty sure that the oracle’s response will only multiply their problems, as Oedipus finds in *OT*.

² *Philoctetes* 123–31: Odysseus prepares Neoptolemus for the deception of Philoctetes, which is played out for the knowing audience at 539–627 (the ‘False Merchant’ scene).

motive of tragic travellers, on their way back from war or exile to put things straight at home—a tall order, as it usually turns out.³

Indeed, some variant on the *nostos* ('return') story is a favourite pattern with all the tragedians who draw on the epic tradition;⁴ and in surviving Sophocles the return is typically threatened, prevented altogether, or only temporarily fulfilled. Ajax does not survive to go home to Salamis (while his brother Teucer, we suspect, will get back only to be thrown out by Telamon).⁵ In *Electra*, Orestes makes a seemingly successful return, but his 'liberation' of the house of the Pelopidae is left with a great question mark hanging over it.⁶ In *Women of Trachis*, Heracles gets only as far as Euboea on his triumphant return from his labours before he puts on the poisoned tunic and is carried home dying in agony (and in any case Trachis is a mere stopping place for his exiled family, hardly 'home', the final objective of the wanderer's return).⁷ Philoctetes is faced with the choice of going home unhealed or returning to the hated Greek army for a cure; in *Antigone*, Polyneices gets his return only in the form of burial in Theban soil; Oedipus in *OT* has returned to Thebes without knowing that this is where he belongs, and when he discovers who he is he begs to go into exile, though the decision is left in suspense.⁸

A related pattern repeatedly used by the tragedians, which—like the *nostos*—has its roots in epic, is the story of the exile or wanderer seeking protection as a suppliant (or sometimes seeking military support in a bid to regain lost power). What is dramatically appealing

³ *Electra* 32–58: Orestes outlines his plan for getting access to the palace, which is elaborated by the Tutor at 660–803 and followed up by Orestes and Pylades at 1098–1125.

⁴ For this and other influential plot patterns see Lowe (2000).

⁵ Teucer's post-Iliadic story, adumbrated at *Ajax* 1006–20, must have been familiar from cyclic epic and its re-working in Aeschylus' *Salaminiiai*, and would at some point (date unknown) be dramatized by Sophocles himself in his *Teukros*.

⁶ *Electra* 1508–10; for the problematic interpretation of Orestes' return and revenge see e.g. March (2004) for a summary of the opposing points of view.

⁷ *Women of Trachis* 749–806: Hyllus describes what happened when Heracles put on the tunic; from 962 the audience witnesses the poison's disastrous effects, though the play ends with a procession taking Heracles on his enigmatic last journey to Mt Oeta.

⁸ The end of *Oedipus Tyrannus* is marked by notorious uncertainty. See Dawe (2006), 192–203 for the view that most of the text from 1424 is spurious. Other approaches have been less drastic; for a full review see Budelmann (2006), who persuasively reads the scene as offering a 'mediated' ending after the horrors culminating in Oedipus' self-blinding. Burian (2009) takes the discussion forward by setting it in the context of other open endings in Sophocles.

about this kind of situation is the potential conflict of interests that it prompts: the clash between the religious duty to protect asylum-seekers and the danger there might be in harbouring wanted criminals or runaways, since they might bring pollution, or attract attack on their protectors from hostile forces trying to reclaim them. In surviving Sophocles it is of course the Oedipus plays in particular that use this model, with interesting differences of emphasis: in *OT* Oedipus imposes exile on himself (from Corinth, his supposed home) after he has visited Delphi, and he is a wanderer or adventurer rather than a suppliant when he arrives at Thebes, whereas in *OC* he has been exiled and reduced to beggary, but paradoxically he now has a goal, to find the place prophesied by Apollo,⁹ and his story is one of a specific quest as well as of wandering in search of asylum.

As a kind of counterpoint to these large plot patterns there is the stage action, particularly the entrances and exits, often marked by journey language, and creating a dynamic which always has a complicating effect. In *Ajax* the disgraced hero's failed *nostos* has to be understood in the context of the final sequence, where the honorific funeral procession, leading out of the play, implies a future continuity, through Ajax's son Eurysaces, with his home island Salamis, with Athens itself, and with what we know of cult for Ajax and his family in both places.¹⁰ *Electra*, by contrast, ends with a disturbing piece of unfinished business: Aegisthus remains to be killed, and Orestes hustles him back into the house as he foretells its future troubles. In *Women of Trachis*, Heracles' funeral, it turns out, is to take place at a pyre on the top of Mt Oeta, and the play ends with a procession of mourners going together to witness it. Here, as in *Ajax*, the link with a mysterious future in cult and memory is clinched by the final stage picture. In *Philoctetes*, the journey prescribed for Philoctetes by Heracles *ex machina* is both to Troy and back home, thus seemingly resolving the irresolvable, but with a dark reminder of what the sacking of Troy is likely to entail in terms of impious outrage.¹¹ At the end of *Antigone*, Creon makes repeated requests to be 'taken away', but there is no clear prospect of his going anywhere, and *OT* ends with the tragic sufferer longing for exile, but meeting with a deferral which forces him back into the house.

⁹ *OC* 84–95; see 79 below.

¹⁰ See especially Henrichs (1993).

¹¹ *Philoctetes* 1440–4. See Segal (1977, repr. 1995); Roberts (1988).

Endings, of course, are an obvious place to look for journeys, particularly as Greek theatre relies on the convention that all characters leave the stage at the end of a play. But there is nothing routine or conventional about the way the final departures are handled, and it is obvious from the samples I have just given that they don't necessarily (or even typically) have the function of effecting closure. We could equally well be looking at arrivals into the action of people with missions from elsewhere: Orestes and Pylades, for example, or the many varieties of newsbringers, who link off-stage happenings with what the audience sees and hears. This quickly takes us to issues of space and time, and the enormous imaginative range that a drama can cover by linking the acting area with an invisible off-stage world.¹²

The language that Sophocles uses to express the idea of the journey is just as flexible, fluid, and versatile as the idea itself, though typically unflamboyant. So far I have been using the term 'journey', but in fact 'way' would be a better translation of *hodos*, the commonest and most adaptable word used in the relevant Greek contexts, supported by a great range of 'coming' and 'going' verbs. Thus in *Electra*, when the only distance to be travelled by Aegisthus is the few steps from outside to inside the house, to where he killed Agamemnon, Orestes can say to him, when he starts to answer back and plays for time, 'You have a lot to say in return, but the way/going is slow (*hē d' hodos Bradunetai*). Get moving!' (1501–2). The point about a 'way' is that it can refer with equal propriety to a feature of the physical landscape—the road from Delphi to Thebes or from Colonus to Athens—and to a dynamic action, as when the reluctant Guard in *Antigone*, describing his terrified reluctance to come and report the burial of Polyneices' corpse, says his 'short *hodos* becomes a long one' (232), and because it connects people and their histories it can easily and without strain be felt to symbolize more abstract ideas and processes, such as a journey through time, a journey of discovery or education, or more broadly the journey of life. And as soon as we think about a way as travelled by people with a destination we can see how it can be a figure for destiny: individuals may be trying to control their travelling, but the way is often more powerful than they are, and they may be set self-destructively on a path leading straight to disaster, as Polyneices says in *OC* of his failed attempt to enlist Oedipus' help against Eteocles:

¹² See Rehm (2002), especially ch. 5, for many important insights.

‘Alas for my coming [the word he uses is *keleuthos*, ‘path’] and my misfortune . . . ; what an end has come for our *hodos* from Argos!’ (1399–1401) and ‘I must take charge of this *hodos* [he means the expedition against Thebes, to which he remains committed] made ill-fated and evil by my father and his Erinyes’ (1432–4).

People on journeys may also meet branches or splits and be forced to choose an option: finding the way can become a deeply challenging experience, as Oedipus notoriously discovered in *OT*.¹³ The worst experience of all is having no path to follow and being forced to wander without landmarks or guides—and the transition from life to death may be figured in terms of new horrors, as the dead person makes the journey to the underworld. No wonder that ritual was often designed to make connections, whether between living and dead or between the community and its deities, through processions with landmarks to give the participants, who themselves mark and create the route, a sense of their identity and often of their history and even of their future.¹⁴ No wonder, either, that mystery cult involved notions of the initiate’s wandering in darkness replaced by ‘treading the sacred path’ to the beyond, armed with directions designed to make safe links with that other world in which time and space had a different definition.¹⁵ Echoes of such language can be felt in some tragedies, though their significance is never unequivocal.

What then can we say about *OC* and the multiple associations of Oedipus’ journey?¹⁶ The play opens with the stage picture of two figures, an old man and a girl guiding him; they are clearly on a journey, and they are at once identified as Oedipus and his daughter Antigone, famous names from famous plays.¹⁷ They bring baggage

¹³ *OT* 794–813. Cf. more generally Becker (1937), 199–202 on *Aporie* in Sophocles; Taplin (1983), 166–74.

¹⁴ Processional endings in tragedy (like those of *Ajax* and *Women of Trachis*, or Aeschylus’ *Eumenides*) are always potentially leading to the beyond, however that is to be defined.

¹⁵ For texts and bibliography see Graf and Johnston (2007), especially ch. 4.

¹⁶ See Segal (1981), 368–70 for reflections on the links between the road, as ‘the single most dominant metaphor of the play’, and the repeated references to notions of stationing (or sitting in a fixed place) and boundaries. The related insistence on details of topography has often been discussed; cf. Winnington Ingram (1980), 339–40; Kirkwood (1986); Edmunds (1996); and many others.

¹⁷ Neither *OT* nor *Antigone* has a firm date, but most scholars would put *Ant.* early among Sophocles’ surviving plays, perhaps in the 440s, and *OT* in the 420s. The house of Laius, famous from the epic tradition, had long been a source of tragic themes

with them in the shape of their stories—what Oedipus has already done to his parents and himself—what Antigone will do when she gets back to Thebes. Plainly they are refugees, wandering without resources, and dependent on the charity of others: ‘asking for little and receiving less’ (5–6), and while Oedipus is blind, old, and decrepit, Antigone, being unmarried and unprotected, is dangerously exposed, as Creon later (751–2) insensitively observes. It has not been an aimless journey, though, however desperate: Oedipus has been in search of something more than day-to-day support, looking, through the agency of Antigone for an *end*, for the place where he will find not only a close to his suffering and his life but also some mysterious posthumous function—‘having settled (there) with profit to those who received me and ruin to those who drove me out’ (92–3).¹⁸

The insistent question of the opening lines is ‘Where are we?’ Antigone can tell from the look and sound of the place that it is sacred—the vegetation, and the nightingales she hears singing, suggest a grove of special sanctity; she finds a seat for Oedipus on an uncut (or unpolished) rock.¹⁹ Oedipus asks again: ‘Can you tell (teach) me where we have sat down?’ (23). Antigone knows they are in the general vicinity of Athens, but she cannot name this particular spot; she asks if she should go and try to find out (learn) what the place is (26). Before she can set off she sees a local inhabitant approaching, and Oedipus begins asking his question once again, but the Stranger interrupts: ‘Leave your seat; you are in a place too holy to tread upon!’ (36–7). ‘But what is the place?’ asks Oedipus, and knowing now that it is indeed a holy site he adds, ‘To which of the gods is it held sacred?’ The Stranger’s answer ‘The Eumenides’ precipitates the play’s first climax, a great surprise (44–6). Oedipus seems

(Aeschylus staged his *Laius*, *Oedipus*, and *Seven against Thebes* in 467), but Sophocles’ plays, with their many innovations, evidently made a profound impact. Euripides later composed an *Oedipus* and an *Antigone*, as well as the extant *Phoenician Women*, staged only a few years before Sophocles’ death in 406, and there were Oedipus plays by their contemporaries Achaëus, Philocles, and Xenocles. OC was performed posthumously in 401; the date of its composition is not known.

¹⁸ The language here evokes powers typical of those associated with cult heroes, as has often been noted. See e.g. Méautis (1960); Burian (1974).

¹⁹ The point of Antigone’s choice is that in a place close to a sacred grove one might expect to find sacred stones, marked as such by being worked, smoothed, or polished and periodically anointed with oil by worshippers. A reverent traveller would avoid choosing such stones as seats, to avoid giving offence to the divinities of the place. Cf. Budelmann (2000a) and n. 21 below.

suddenly sure that this is the right place for him, a 'seat' that he must never leave: the Stranger's words have given him a clue, which he describes as the 'watchword of my fate' (46, Jebb's translation).²⁰ His response seems to suggest that he has grasped something momentous. Apollo had told him long ago (as he explains, 89–90) that after all his misfortunes his end would come in a place sacred to 'dread/venerable deities' *semnōn theōn*—the genitive plurals do not specify whether they are masculine or feminine—and if (unlike the Athenian audience) he did not know that in Attica 'Semnai Theai' was a cult title for the ancient female divinities worshipped elsewhere as Eumenides or under other euphemistic titles, he would have to make an intuitive leap in order to recognize this place as the right one. The intense excitement of the scene comes from his claim that he has indeed found the right place and time for his journey's end.²¹ At this stage, of course, it can hardly be more than a hope and a prayer, vulnerable to threats of all kinds.

But is the journey over, in any case? Oedipus has said he will never leave the seat he has taken up at Colonus (43), and he speaks now of his journey (and his life) as coming to an end here, using a series of words suggestive of closure (87–91), but in praying for an end to his life one of the terms he uses is 'passage', 'crossing' (*perāsis*, 103);²² whatever form his 'last journey' will take, it has yet to be made. And he also mentions signs—earthquake, thunder, lightning—that are still

²⁰ *xumforās xunthēm' emēs*. These enigmatic words suggest special insight on Oedipus' part: *xunthēma*, 'watchword', 'password' implies that now at last he is able to 'decode' the words of the oracle. On passwords in mystic texts see Graf and Johnston (2007), 130–3. 'Fate' may be too loaded a term for *xumforās*, and the whole phrase may be better understood as something like 'the clue to what is happening to me'. Oedipus certainly takes Apollo's oracles seriously—and in tragedy oracles are always fulfilled, but they carry more weight as shapers of plot than as explanatory moral or religious messages. Apollo can look ahead and see the way events will turn out, but human beings are at the same time free agents and yet under compulsions of every kind: they must make painful choices, carry responsibility for their own or other people's actions, and ultimately grow old and die.

²¹ See n. 22 for a translation of 87–91. At 100–1 he claims it as a corroborating sign that the ordinary-seeming rock on which Antigone sat him down turns out to be special, *semnon* (venerable, like the Semnai Theai) and—as it were—ready and waiting for its 'true' occupant, Oedipus.

²² The other term is *katastrophē*, 'end', recalling the language of 87–91: 'For he (Apollo) told me, when he prophesied the many evils (that I had to suffer), that this would be my respite (*paulan*) in the fullness of time, when I came to my goal, a land (*chōran termian*) where I should find a seat of venerable deities and a hospitable shelter: there I should end my unhappy life.'

to come (94–5). Moreover, there is no certainty that he will be allowed to stay in this place: the Stranger has said that it will be for the people of the locality to decide whether he is to stay or to leave (79–80).

A large part of the play's action turns out, in fact, to relate to this question of the journey: will he stay here in Attica, will he go back to Thebes? Most immediately, there is Oedipus' own choice to move from the spot he said he would always occupy, so as to hide from the old men of the neighbourhood and try to gauge their reactions (113–16). They will first make him come out of the grove, then, when they discover who he is, try to drive him away altogether for fear of being polluted by him, though eventually they are persuaded to consult Theseus as ruler of Attica, and allow him to decide whether or not to offer sanctuary. Next there is the news brought by Ismene that the Thebans are eager to take Oedipus back to Thebes, followed by Creon's attempts to do so by force, and finally the appeal by the suppliant Polyneices, another refugee on his own journey, with the peculiarly embarrassing mission of apologizing to his father for ill-treating him, at the same time as asking him to take his side against Eteocles, the brother he is about to attack.

The mirroring of Oedipus' journey by those of Antigone, who shares his wandering, Ismene, who endures hardship in order to locate him,²³ Creon and Polyneices with their different kinds of threats, Theseus with his experience of past exile, which makes him sympathetic to this new suppliant, forces us to keep the image of the journeying of Oedipus in our minds. And repeatedly there are reminders of the helpless situation of Oedipus and Antigone, as the various newcomers arrive and comment on it in pity or disgust.²⁴

The journey is also threatened in other ways: there is the moral/political/quasi-constitutional contestation of Oedipus' position: Creon's admittedly specious claim that the Thebans (who exiled him) have a right to take him back, and Antigone's much more powerful argument that Oedipus owes it to her and to Theseus to listen to Polyneices, and that as a father he should show mercy to even

²³ Much is made of the image of Ismene the traveller when Antigone describes for Oedipus the figure she suddenly sees approaching. A woman on horseback, wearing a wide-brimmed travelling hat which screens her face: can it be Ismene? (311–15). This is more than picturesque detail to build up the excitement of the surprise arrival; admittedly Ismene is not a helpless wanderer like Antigone, but she has only one attendant with her (334), and she has had a long and painful search for Oedipus (361–4).

²⁴ 551–9 (Theseus); 744–54 (Creon); 1254–63 (Polyneices).

the worst of sons (1181–1203).²⁵ So the ‘rock-like’ immovability of Oedipus imagined by the Chorus in their picture of him as a headland lashed by winds and waves (1239–48) is not a certainty, and when the end comes it is marked, precisely, by movement on his part, the magnificent moment of theatre when he leads his daughters and Theseus with his retinue into the grove.²⁶ As we hear later from the Messenger who followed them, the blind Oedipus somehow knows the sacred spots within the grove at which the right ritual acts (washing and dressing in clean clothes) should be performed. All this closely echoes the Chorus’s earlier instructions to Ismene to perform the rite of purification to the Eumenides on Oedipus’ behalf: the topography of the grove is evoked in the audience’s imagination,²⁷ and it is in this setting that we are to imagine the divine sounds—claps of thunder, the voice of the god calling Oedipus: ‘Why are we waiting? Why do we hesitate to go?’ (1627–8). It is an invitation to join a ritual procession—there are followers and witnesses, but only Theseus is allowed to see its final stage, and no one sees what he saw. There is a gap or a mystery—the journey’s end cannot be known. All that the Messenger knows is that it was peaceful, after being so problematic: marked by no natural disaster, no signs of lamentation or disease—it was a miracle of some kind, and Oedipus just vanished.²⁸

²⁵ Especially 1189–94: ‘You are his father, so that even if he had committed the most impious of crimes imaginable against you it would not be right for you to return evil for evil. Show respect for him! Other people have bad children and a sharp temper, but they let themselves be won over by the persuasion of their nearest and dearest’ (*philōn*). Antigone’s use of *philōn* at 1194 covers both herself and Theseus, who has shown himself to be a true friend of Oedipus by rescuing her and Ismene when Creon has kidnapped them; at 1201–3 her stress on Oedipus’ moral duty to listen to their joint appeal leads to Oedipus’ grudging consent, though he turns out to be unable to forgive Polyneices, or even to let him go without a curse.

²⁶ At 1520–1 Oedipus prepares Theseus—and the audience—for the action to come: he will lead the way himself, without a guide, to the place where he must die. Then his departure itself is elaborately choreographed (1540–52), as he calls his daughters to follow him: he needs no one now to direct or support his steps, led as he is by ‘Hermes the escort and the goddess of the dead’.

²⁷ See Burkert (1985) for the importance of the link between the two scenes. The last image that we are given of Oedipus in relation to this setting (1592–7) is of pausing on ‘one of the many branching paths’, positioning himself in relation to four landmarks of the grove, and *sitting down*: his ‘last journey’—like that of all mortals—has been ‘without moving a foot’, as the Nurse says of Deianeira, *Women of Trachis* 874–5.

²⁸ Cf. Easterling (2006) for a fuller discussion of this scene and its implications.

This narrative is in marked contrast with the Chorus's imaginings of the solitary traveller going to the underworld, when they pray (1574–7) that Cerberus will keep out of his way and give him a 'clear path'. But his passing does mean severance from his daughters, Antigone in particular; as well as creating a gap, his disappearance leaves a strong sense of loss, expressed in their desperate lyrics at 1670–1717. The final paradox, of course, is that having made his transition to the world beyond he will stay 'here', wherever that is: in so far as Oedipus will have continuing power after his death as a presence to help or harm, it will be here at Colonus in Attica (like the Semnai Theai of the cult)—and Colonus, incidentally, might serve as an image in later times for wherever the play is being performed. But that continuing power is a matter for hope and prayer, not for literal certainty: the secret of the place of his passing, known only to Theseus, has to be handed on from one generation to another, and the fragile faith of human promises is all it has to protect it.²⁹

We are not allowed to think about the implications of Oedipus' journey without thinking of the journeyings of his family and what they might mean. The play ends not with a procession, but with great emphasis on the desolation of Antigone and Ismene as they confront their loss and fear their future journeys without Oedipus: they had been his eye, his staff³⁰—but now they are ones in the dark, adrift, helpless, and denied the ritual of lament; they must not try to find what Theseus describes as Oedipus' 'sacred tomb' or utter any words over it (1760–3). The unmistakable intertextual reminder of precisely what the cost is going to be, when Antigone asks to be allowed to go back to Thebes in the hope of reconciling her brothers (1768–72), has left many readers with unanswered questions.³¹ Then there is the path on which Polyneices sees himself as set—the inescapable doom to which he is rushing.

²⁹ Oedipus' instructions to Theseus at 1518–39 are quite explicit about what has to be done. I am strongly tempted by the idea that in ancient productions the part of the messenger was played by the actor (namely the *prōtagonistēs*) who took the part of Oedipus; if this is right, the sense of Oedipus' continuing presence (his reported speech of farewell to his daughters would be spoken, after all, in his own voice) will have been reinforced, and the paradox felt more strongly. Cf. Kaimio (1993).

³⁰ 866–7, 848–9, 1109.

³¹ See e.g. Winnington-Ingram (1980), 274–9; Taplin (1983), 158–63; Parker (1995), 32–40; Rehm (2004), 50–1 with further bibliography. The staging of the final scene could have underlined the sense of problems to come, if Antigone and Ismene left in the direction of Thebes, while Theseus and his attendants returned to Athens, as many critics have suggested, but there is no certain indication in the text.

He can't turn back, he says, and his march from Argos must end in a disastrous march to Thebes (1418–36).³² Like the Chorus (1397–8), we may deplore the journeyings of Polyneices, but we can't evade the knowledge that it is Oedipus who has cursed him: we have heard the father's curses and the son's response. Here is a sample of a common modern reaction, a quotation from a book by T. R. Cole, *The Journey of Life: A Cultural History of Aging in America*: 'Rather than forgive even one of his sons, he allows them to slaughter each other in battle. His daughters live out the mystery of undeserved fate. We are forced to wonder: Did Oedipus' children pay the price for his glory? Did he put his own spiritual welfare above obligations to their future lives? Does successful culmination of life's journey require undue sacrifices from those like Antigone who make it possible?'³³

Scholars have often turned—in perplexity or embarrassment—from the family to the individual in order to give a meaning to Oedipus' journey, and at one time—a generation or two ago—critics used (not very successfully) to try to appropriate for *OC* such terms as victory over death, redemption, divine recompense, transfiguration, spiritual salvation, even apotheosis.³⁴ But there are more reliable clues within the text itself to ways in which we might look both at Oedipus' journey and at the journeys of Antigone and Polyneices.

At the level of narrative structure, where I started, this is a story of a suppliant received with honour, an outsider made an indweller, achieving the object of his quest, with the implication that his journey has meaning for the community that receives him. In this case the sacred associations of *Colonus* and the *Semnai Theai*, the ritual patterns of hero cult, and even the Eleusinian mysteries, all alluded to with more or less elaboration in the play,³⁵ contribute to the creation of a rich

³² But Antigone at 1413 ff. makes a good case for giving up the expedition, and Polyneices' main reasons for persevering seem to be the shame of being an exile and fear of his brother's mockery; when Antigone asks if anyone will dare to follow him after hearing of Oedipus' curses he says he will keep them secret from his comrades. The text thus draws attention to the notion that Polyneices is making his own choices.

³³ Cole (1992), xxxv.

³⁴ See e.g. Whitman (1951, repr. 1983), with a critique of earlier scholarship; Markantonatos (2002) for later bibliography. The 'redemptive' potential of the text is strongly suggested in some of the later works inspired by *OC*, especially Lee Breuer's *The Gospel at Colonus*; see Goff and Simpson (2007), ch. 4.

³⁵ See Burkert (1985); Seaford (1994); Jouanna (1995); Calame (1998); Ferrari (2003).

context for the ‘decoding’ of Oedipus’ journey in terms of good things wished for Athens and Attica.³⁶

The particular complications come from the handling of the narrative in the action. I have noted some already, but there are other related considerations. Early in the play, when the old men first see Oedipus emerging from the grove, they accuse him of ‘going too far’, ‘crossing’, ‘transgressing’, into places not to be entered.³⁷ It is hard not to see the language here as a sort of replay or re-enactment of Oedipus’ story in *OT*³⁸—and later, when they ask him who he is and question him about his terrible past, the language is full of journeying words: ‘Speak because you are going to the brink’ (217).³⁹ This deeply painful recall is more than a re-run of the events of *OT*: the new note is Oedipus’ insistence on his ignorance (and therefore innocence) as transgressor of boundaries, which I would like to link with the function of the journey as a *process of learning*. Or, one might say, a process of dealing with the past in order to cope with the present and the future.

All through *OC* the idea of teaching and learning is as much emphasized as the idea of the journey: the two are closely interwoven from the start, when Oedipus talks about what he has learned from his experiences and sufferings, and they converge when he makes his final speech, because the secret lesson which Theseus is to learn, and on which the safety of Athens will depend, is precisely the place where Oedipus’ journey will end. The great sequence (1518–55) when he leaves the acting area, in what takes on the character of a procession, suggests that an important connection is being made with something (or somewhere) beyond, but the revelation is strictly limited to Theseus; neither the Chorus nor the audience see what Theseus saw, or even share the vantage point of Oedipus’ daughters, the Messenger, and the rest of the king’s followers, who at least witnessed the effect on him, as we are told at 1645–57. By contrast, Oedipus has a lesson to teach that is accessible to everyone, drawn from his travel on the journey of life and from the experience of ageing, the lesson that all things, particularly all human things, are vulnerable to time

³⁶ Good things appropriately wished, because the Athenians have shown themselves, under Theseus’ guidance, able to receive and protect the suppliant. Cf. Slatkin (1986) on the moral and political issues.

³⁷ Especially 117–27; 155–64. Cf. Segal (1981), 364–5.

³⁸ For the many intertextual links with the earlier play see Seidensticker (1972).

³⁹ Better understood as a prompt from Antigone than from the Chorus.

and change;⁴⁰ but he shows by his own example that it still makes sense to pray for the continuing welfare of the city and its land.

Antigone's role has been deeply implicated both in the journey and in the learning and teaching process: she is the blind Oedipus' guide, supporter, and interpreter—literally identifying (for him and us) almost all the people who come near him—but she is also more active than simply a reporter. It is her song appealing for pity that persuades the old men to listen to Oedipus, and her pleading with Oedipus that makes him agree to receive Polyneices, and when Polyneices gets no answer from Oedipus it is she who prompts him to say more (1280–3). After Oedipus has denounced him she tries to persuade Polyneices to give up altogether his project of attacking Thebes. When Oedipus hears the thunder she is the one who asks questions, trying to make sense of what he thinks is happening, and after his disappearance she articulates the meaning of his loss and initiates the return to Thebes. She is there throughout as the person closest to Oedipus, dedicating herself entirely to his welfare, offspring of an incestuous union it may be, but representing in words and action an image of what Oedipus might mean when (as reported by the Messenger) he takes his daughters in his arms and says: 'Children, today your father's existence is over. Everything is at an end for me, and you will no longer have the wearisome task of caring for me: hard, I know, but a single word puts an end to all these pains. Love you had from no one in greater measure than from me—and you will now spend the rest of your lives without me' (1611–19).

This, if we take it seriously, is important for our reflections on Oedipus' journey. It has been shown throughout as a shared experience, and Antigone's participation in that journey, and her learning of all that it means, can be read as a preparation for being Antigone in 'her' play. Polyneices' words at 1411–13 predict the fame of that celebrated tragedy of more than thirty years before: cursed by Oedipus, he asks his sisters to give him burial, if he is killed in the attack on Thebes. 'The praise you will get from doing that will be no less than what you are earning now by caring for our father.'⁴¹

Unlike Oedipus, Antigone, or Theseus, Polyneices himself has learned nothing from his journeys, but his function is to be something other than

⁴⁰ Especially in his speech to Theseus, 607–28; cf. Budelmann (2000*b*), 78–80. The 'wisdom of Oedipus' evidently had a place in the poetic tradition earlier than Sophocles; see Pindar, *Pythian* 4.263–9, with Slatkin (1986), 210–11.

⁴¹ 'Polyneices promises his sisters a fame that they already have', Edmunds (1996), 74.

the mere obverse of his father. Antigone's challenge to Oedipus to forgive even the most errant of sons is a genuine one to which Oedipus—rightly or wrongly—cannot respond. Oedipus, we might say, as paradigmatic doer and sufferer, blind yet a seer, suppliant and saviour, outsider and indweller, learner and teacher, can *begin* to fulfil the role of interpreter, but what he is able to offer is (at best) a tentative reading of the meaning of his journey, and he can curse as well as bless: the 'little word', whose power is so often invoked in the play, can destroy as well as transform. This is what opens *OC* to political and psychoanalytical as well as philosophical or religious interpretation and makes it a lastingly suggestive text, at once alarming and uplifting.⁴²

In the last few years research on the long history of reception has demonstrated the play's extraordinary imaginative appeal from a range of perspectives, illustrating the ease with which it 'translates' into different cultural contexts.⁴³ Of the many works that have drawn their inspiration from *OC* there are two striking recent examples that take the ambiguities of Oedipus' story, and especially his journey and its mysterious 'end', as a central theme. One is Henry Bauchau's novel *Oedipe sur la route* (Paris, 1990), which elaborates on the idea in inventive ways by imagining in detail the journey of Oedipus and Antigone between Thebes and Colonus (although in its final chapters the narrative stays remarkably close to the play's account of his passing).⁴⁴ The other is Derek Walcott's long poem 'A Santa Cruz Quartet', a meditation on memory, identity, writing poetry, and returning to familiar places—in this case the island of St Lucia where the poet grew up and still has a home. Oedipus and his story have not appeared earlier in the poem, but its crucial features, compressed in the imagery of this final section—the plague at Thebes, Oedipus' blindness, and his wanderings accompanied by the tormenting memory of his past, and finally the paradoxical stillness and mystery of what happened at Colonus—are all integral to Walcott's own logic. These closing verses also offer a powerfully concentrated evocation of at least some aspects of the potential meaning and value of

⁴² Some sample different readings: Segal (1981), 406–8; Seaford (1994), 130–7; Del Corno (1998), 82–5.

⁴³ Hall and Macintosh (2005), ch. 7; Goff and Simpson (2007), ch. 4; Rodighiero (2007).

⁴⁴ The novel's last words are given to Antigone: 'Le chemin a disparu, peut-être, mais Oedipe est encore, est toujours sur la route'.

Oedipus' Sophoclean journey, and indeed sum up most of what I have been trying to suggest in this chapter:

After the plague, the city-wall caked with flies, the smoke's amnesia,
 learn, wanderer, to go nowhere like the stones since
 your nose and eyes are now your daughter's hand;
 go where the repetition of the breakers grows easier
 to bear, no father to kill, no citizens to convince,
 and no longer force your memory to understand
 whether the dead elect their own government
 under the jurisdiction of the sea-almonds;
 certain provisions of conduct seal them to a silence
 none dare break, and one noun made them transparent,
 where they live beyond the conjugations of tense
 in their own white city. How easily they disown us,
 and everything else here that undermines our toil.
 Sit on your plinth in the last light of Colonus,
 let your knuckled toes root deep in their own soil.
 A butterfly quietly alights on a tyrant's knee;
 sit among the sea-eaten boulders and
 let the night wind sweep the terraces of the sea.
 This is the right light, this pewter shine on the water,
 not the carnage of clouds, not the expected wonder
 of self-igniting truth and oracular rains,
 but these shallows as gentle as the voice of your daughter,
 while the gods fade like thunder in the rattling mountains.⁴⁵

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⁴⁵ Walcott (1997), 78.

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Cicero: Gentleman and Orator

Metaphors in Eighteenth-Century Reception

Matthew Fox

The theme of this chapter is the rupture between Rome and modernity: a rupture that concerns relationships between life and text, and which has at its heart a problem with metaphor. Cicero is not just the expression of this rupture: as the best preserved figure from Classical antiquity, the most widely read Classical author, and the most popular model for composing elegant Latin prose, he was the linchpin of all school, and much university, education in Europe until well into the twentieth century. As such, the readings of his works, more than any other author, have generated those discourses of education, political duty, and even literature and philosophy, which have, in their turn, shaped our understanding of him. Cicero is not just a *paradeigma* for the workings of Classical reception, nor simply a figure who is remade by each generation of readers: he demonstrates uniquely the manner in which concepts and disciplines (history, philosophy, rhetoric, the orator, style) have been nourished by a reading of Classical texts, and then how those concepts have in their turn transformed the manner in which those texts are read. This chapter explores the role of metaphor in Cicero's afterlife, and the way in which approximation and false comparison have obscured vital elements of his thought and writing.

THE NATURE OF THE PROBLEM:
DISEMBODIMENT AND SURVIVAL

When, in 1712, John Toland, the controversial but respected philosopher, set out to explain the need for a new, Enlightenment, approach to Cicero, one of his complaints about the current state of understanding of the great orator was that Cicero's letters, the day-by-day record of the collapse of the Roman Republic, and thus one of the most remarkable historical documents to survive from antiquity, were viewed by the Gentlemen readers of his own day as the kind of work that they themselves might produce from the shelter of their country studies.¹ These Gentlemen, motivated by a sense of Cicero's traditional importance, draw too strong a comparison between Cicero and their own world, and as a result, misjudge the conditions in which Cicero wrote his letters, and underestimate his political significance. In the process of reading, a distortion occurs: a mis-identification. The urgency of Cicero's failure to negotiate the factional politics of his day has become refracted into the leisure pursuit of a country Gentleman. Toland was perceptive: productions such as Lord Chesterfield's *Letters to his Son* (1774), a hybrid of Cicero's *On Duties* and his correspondence, express how problematic the nexus between authorial *persona*, projected audience, and political context could be, and how temptingly similar the discourse of the Gentleman was to that of the ex-consul.² Interestingly, for Toland, such misreading is as yet unconnected to the process of translation: his remedy for the shortcomings of contemporary readings of Cicero is a new edition, with interpretative guides to help the great and the good get a better grasp of Cicero and his relevance to public life. But in 1712, readers do not require a translation. The metaphorical problem is the transmission of the reality of Cicero's life through his writings: reduced to a text, Cicero's travails are read in a metaphorical manner. Instead of being taken as an account of the drama of a life unfolding, readers occlude that reality by substituting a different kind of experience, and by understanding that he is referring to something else: a world of letters, of education and literary production, the Gentleman's library

¹ Toland (1712), ch. 7.

² On Chesterfield, see Dean (2005).

rather than the world of politics. Toland's pamphlet begins with a dedicatory paean to one of the greatest statesmen of his day, Eugene of Saxony/Savoy. The main aim of this new edition is to mediate Cicero to the politically active, getting him out of the country-house library, and making him relevant to public figures and politicians.

In this chapter, I shall explore this process of misreading through metaphor, and look at some examples where that process is exacerbated by changes that occurred once Cicero underwent extensive translation, primarily in the eighteenth century. In Cicero we see in a powerful form the problems of transmission, reception, translation, and distortion: processes which have acted to obscure the original character of Cicero's experience, while nevertheless guaranteeing him a central place in the development of all historiography of the late Republic. The topic is enormous, and touches upon a number of important questions in the history of Classical reception. My aim here is to outline the main constraints facing a historicist reading of Cicero: the mutable nature of the metaphors through which Cicero appears to us; the changes over time in the significance of rhetoric; the strain of thinking beyond our own reading practices to those of earlier, different reading cultures; the pressure felt by scholars to resist the endless transformation of the text. Cicero's textuality has made him central to all conceptions of Roman identity; but it also raises intractable questions about how a life lived in particular historical circumstances is transformed, first through writing, then through reading, and later, through translation from Latin into a modern language. It is a transformation that, in Cicero's case, has a determining effect upon the place of Roman civilization within the Western educational tradition, but which holds at its core a contradiction: Cicero's power depends upon his ability to adapt to new historical settings, as a form of historical example or inspiration. But that transformation necessarily works against the attempt to preserve the unique character of his place at Rome. Because Cicero's own justification for his work as a writer rests upon his position in the centre of Roman political life, the authority that grants his writings their place as models of civic duty or public life itself threatens to deprive him of that position, translating him from a Roman politician, albeit one with a marginal political impact, to a central place in an educational system, but one in which education has become divorced from political practice, in a manner quite inconceivable to Cicero himself.

In the second edition of one of the earliest translations into English of Cicero's *De officiis*, the work that, in some estimates, plays a role in forming Western cultural norms second only to the Bible, there is a frontispiece depicting a fantasy tomb: Corinthian columns support a corniced roof, on which rests a sarcophagus. In the foreground, a mourning figure looks sorrowfully down at a headless and handless corpse: those appendages are visible on spikes on the top of the sarcophagus, and a winged victory, elegantly hovering, holds a palm frond in her right hand, while delicately lowering a laurel-wreath onto Cicero's head with her left. The walls of the temple contains the title of the book, *Tully's Offices in 3 Books Turned out of Latin into English by Roger L'Estrange: London, Printed for Henry Brome*.³ The removal and display of Cicero's extremities were a potent symbol of his enemies' too late attempt to silence him. But Victory here is also the muse of translation: the frontispiece advertises this translation as the rectification of murder and mutilation. But in a different metaphor, we must consider whether the success of those texts, surviving in spite of the mutilation of his body, has not depended too much upon Cicero's disembodiment: upon severing the text from an authority that depended upon the unity of life and work. In the discussion that follows, Cicero's own struggle to insist upon the integration of theory and practice provides a useful thread: it is a struggle that has rarely been understood, since it is precisely by severing theory from practice, particularly in the realms of style and rhetoric, that Cicero's readers have been able to appropriate his writings to their own cultures.

The decapitation of Cicero can be read alongside other peculiar moments of corporeal history at Rome: the re-enactment of mythological scenes as methods of execution in the arena.⁴ These present a remarkable challenge to the same modern sense of the arrangement of life and literature that struggles to bring the reality of Cicero out of the pages of his texts. The idea that mythological narrative, particularly narrative of a refined, literary quality more reminiscent of Ovid than of any primitive ritual-based religion, could provide the scenario for executions seems to us a misjudgement on the part of the protagonists, who have forgotten that poetry and mythology do not belong to the same realm of experience as the public spectacle of judicial

³ L'Estrange (1681), frontispiece.

⁴ Coleman (1990), cf. Coleman (2005) with Barnes (2007).

execution. On the other hand, this discourse only comes down to us as part of a literature of outrage: the sources who report such events are themselves incredulous, suggesting that the barbarity of the punishment is exacerbated by the deliberate act of misreading that underlies it. The challenge is not only that Romans themselves were, as a historical society, unable to distinguish effectively between literature and life, or between poetic and political; it is more that we are unable to assimilate Roman ways of reading to our own, and our approximations leave a gap: Romans beyond comprehension, the reality of their literary and political experience as baffling as trying to understand the conception of poetry that lay behind those executions. The removal of Cicero's hands and tongue, likewise deplored by those who recount it to us, do for rhetoric what the staged executions do for poetry: Antony was unable to judge appropriately the scope of Cicero's rhetorical power. He mistook the metaphorical quality of Cicero's own assertions of the power of his writing. Or perhaps, like the poetic executioners, he was just demonstrating the extent of his own power by insisting on taking Cicero's threats literally. What could he, with tongue or hand, have possibly achieved against the armies and the hired assassins? Rhetoric in this context is, crucially, only a metaphor for political power, not power itself, and it is an almost impossible task to find an understanding of it which comprehends Cicero's mutilation as more than gratuitously symbolic. The redemption of Cicero's mutilation by translation, however well-meaning, does not extricate us from this anxiety, it simply substitutes one domain of reference for another. Metaphors are, it seems, an inevitable part of the process of reading, and it is perhaps the evolving struggle to find the most appropriate metaphor that characterizes the quest for a better interpretation. Cicero's decapitation may have been a misreading that harmonized with Roman tradition, but how will translation act to restore a more appropriate relationship between body and text?

TRANSLATION AND METAPHOR

The Latin word *translatio* is the term used for metaphor in technical texts concerning rhetoric or style: the carrying (*...latio*) across (*trans*) of the language developed in one semantic context to another

one, alien to the original meanings of the words. When Cicero himself describes the use of *translatio* in *Brutus*, he focuses upon the degree of success achieved in this process of transplantation: in a good *translatio*, the language used will seem entirely appropriate to its new context.⁵ Metaphor aims, in other words, at fitting in with its context, in occluding the process that produces it. A good metaphor will have lost the foreign quality, and will appear as a natural adornment in its new environment. As both ancient and modern theorists of metaphor stress, the natural, invisible quality of metaphor is one of its defining characteristics: we speak in metaphors without knowing that we are doing it.⁶ Indeed, the growing recent interest in metaphor as a structuring principle in cognitive processes depends precisely upon the idea that metaphor creates whole environments where this naturalization has already taken place. The so-called ‘domains’ of metaphors are ways of structuring thought about particular aspects of society or experience that refute the need for the reference to the other semantic domains in which those metaphors originate to be understood.⁷ We talk about the ‘structure’ of an argument in almost wilful ignorance that ‘structure’ is a metaphor, but this does not prevent the metaphor from being an essential element in a by now quite sophisticated repertoire of related images used to discuss argument and logic (flawed logic; weak foundations). The success of the metaphor is that only by a process of almost perverse self-reflection are we able to appreciate the fact that arguments only possess a structure because of the existence of this metaphor: the product of useful linguistic approximations, rather than any intrinsic validity in the image itself.

The translation of a text from one language to another is similar: the process of translation is one of naturalization. The task of translation is to transform the original, foreign, item, into something familiar and comprehensible. The text, rather than being the main point of reference in the process of translation, is rather some sort of vehicle. Powered by translation, it brings its cargo from one culture to another. The parallel with metaphor theory is that, just as in the discursive use of metaphors, so in translation, there is an element of mismatch: love is not, in reality, a journey, but if you attempt to

⁵ *Brutus* 274, see Innes (2003), 7–9.

⁶ Demetrius 86, taken from Innes (2003); cf. Kövecses (2002), 3–9.

⁷ Lakoff and Johnson (1980).

discuss love without that metaphor, your discourse will be greatly impoverished. The process of metaphor, however, means that metaphorical terminology becomes concretized: the terms and character, albeit derived from the original, acquire a coherence in the translation which they do not necessarily possess in the original. If we think of Cicero as a politician, or Cicero as a statesman, or Cicero, the defender of the Republic, then these abstractions become easier to grasp. Each of these characterizations of Cicero is only loosely based upon a Latin equivalent, equally loosely do they relate to a detailed reading of Cicero's own works. But they are nevertheless an essential part of the identity of Cicero in his English incarnation. The process of reading, like the process of translation is not one that simply produces metaphors: it is also, to an extent, predetermined by them, and if we approach Cicero as a Gentleman, or as an Orator, we will find a different way to translate him. I shall now explore these two vital facets of Cicero's afterlife in more detail.

CICERO THE GENTLEMAN

The emergence of the English Gentleman, and of Cicero as a central model in his elaboration, occurs in the eighteenth century, the same period in which large-scale translation of whole bodies of Classical literature into English, as into other modern languages, gained enormous ground. At the start of this century, European intellectuals are still conversing freely in Latin, though with French developing as an international language. By the end, it is a different world: that familiar from the library collections of English stately homes, where beautifully appointed wood-panelled rooms were stocked with translated classics, and where the mementoes of the Grand Tour provided the decorations.⁸ That situation is uncannily foreshadowed by Cicero's own library: books provided in bulk by Atticus to furnish the newly established residence in Tusculum; sculptures imported from Greece in ships provided by Cicero's rich friend Lentulus.⁹ In the

⁸ The considerable significance of translations of Cicero in this period is signalled by the publication at the end of the century of a survey by a German scholar: Brüggemann (1795).

⁹ For a discussion of this correspondence, see Fox (2007), 30–2.

evident ease with which Cicero's country house can mutate into that of the English Gentleman, we have an emblem of the problem before us.

For Thomas Cockman, translator of *De officiis* at the end of the seventeenth century, Marcus Cicero, Cicero's son, and addressee of that work, was 'a young gentleman', just like the two young charges to whom he was acting as director of studies and to whom he dedicates his translation.¹⁰ In his preface he also acknowledges the leap that this involved: 'As to some things that are of little or no consequence toward understanding the Author, as if I have translated *Caena Dinner; Hominis honorati & principis*, a Gentleman, or a Person of Honour; *Convivium*, sitting at a Table, and over a Glass of Wine &c . . .'.¹¹ At the end of the nineteenth century, we can see that, far from being harmless, Cockman's language has become habitual. Thus Shuckburgh summarizes the value of his selection of thirty-five of Cicero's letters: 'From them we can gather a picture of how an ambitious Roman gentleman of some inherited wealth took to the legal profession as the regular means of becoming a public figure'.¹² Church, in his biography aimed at the school market, is interestingly deliberate in his use of the term: 'knowledge of [Greek] was at least as common at Rome as is a knowledge of French among English gentlemen'. 'Fifty senators and a thousand knights (peers and gentlemen we should call them).'¹³ Shuckburgh's translation of *Ad fam.* 16.21, a letter from Marcus Junior to Tiro, shows how ingrained the vision of the gentleman could be, even near the start of the twentieth century: 'You have become a Roman gentleman' is his rendition of *rusticus Romanus factus es!*¹⁴

The Gentleman no longer has much currency; but he was so recognizable as a character cast in Cicero's image that scholars have even argued that the core values of the Gentleman represented an unbroken line based on Cicero's understanding of *humanitas*,

¹⁰ Cockman (1699), dedication, i.

¹¹ Cockman (1699), preface, viii.

¹² Shuckburgh (2001), 'Introductory Note'. (1st edn. 1899–1900).

¹³ Church (1884), 11, 44.

¹⁴ Cicero Jr. is congratulating his father's former slave on the purchase of a country estate, and draws a contrast between city and country. The Latin translates literally as 'you have become a roman country-dweller'. *Rusticus* suggests rural simplicity and virtue, as opposed to the sophisticated values of the city, and really has none of the class connotations of *gentleman*.

reaching through Renaissance reworking, into its modern incarnation.¹⁵ Likewise a collection of Cicero's correspondence was published in 1926 under the title *Letters of a Roman Gentleman*.¹⁶ The Gentleman may seem to be a harmless reinterpretation of Cicero, but it is, of course, an extreme form of a translation/metaphor, and is today barely recognizable as a valid historical interpretation, our own investment in gentility itself having diminished. Nevertheless, there is one persistent quality to the Gentleman where Cicero's eighteenth-century legacy is still with us: that of style. And in the history of Cicero's translation, particularly of his letters, the style of the Gentleman has had a powerful influence.

The most recent translator of Cicero's letters, D. R. Shackleton Bailey, made the following remarks concerning the translators of that period:

The high sentiments, stately flatteries, and courteously veiled rebukes might have transposed naturally into eighteenth-century English, but put a modern translator at a disadvantage. (1978: 7; repr. 2001: 3)

In spite of the generalizing tone of this comment, he is in fact referring only to one translation, the first complete translation of any Cicero *corpus* into a modern language: William Melmoth's *Ad familiares*, published first as *Cicero: Letters to Several of his Friends* in 1753. The translation was so successful that it was thought worth a reprint in its own right as late as 1908; its success must in large part explain why Shackleton Bailey imagines so many other translations from the period. It ran into many editions in its author's lifetime (Melmoth died in 1799), but had if anything a more prominent afterlife as part of a single-volume collection that joined the *Ad fam.* to William Heberden's 1825 translation of the letters to Atticus, and Conyers Middleton's 1741 *Life of Cicero*, a work that itself may have motivated Melmoth to undertake his translation.¹⁷ These

¹⁵ Schwalb (1950); cf. Hayes (1939).

¹⁶ Patch McKinlay (1926).

¹⁷ Melmoth's earlier works were a translation of Pliny's letters and set of moral epistles written in the *persona* of Sir Thomas Fitzosborne. A nice example of his influence is the presence of extracts from these letters, alongside some from his translations, in *The American spectator, or Matrimonial preceptor. A collection (with additions and variations) of essays, epistles, precepts and examples* (Boston, 1797), where matrimonial advice, in the form both of educative texts and discourses on relevant themes, is dispensed to the married couples of the newly independent republic. In his *Sketches of a History of Literature*, Robert Alves points out the contribution of Melmoth's work to the improvement in the grammar and rhetoric of written English, as well as the raising of the standard of literary culture more generally: Alves (1794), 151–2.

convenient single-volume collections (one was first made in 1854)¹⁸ played an enormous part in sustaining a thoroughly eighteenth century picture of Cicero well into the twentieth century. It is worth speculating how far Melmoth's translation is responsible for a particular image of Cicero that endured so far beyond its era. Most of the projects to provide complete translations of Cicero's speeches, philosophical works, or letters are in fact nineteenth-century productions. Even translations of *De officiis* are considerably less numerous than many think: two translations dominate, and were frequently republished between the last decades of the seventeenth century and the end of the nineteenth: one by L'Estrange (1680), one by Cockman (1699). There is an important lesson here: in pursuit of unifying narratives, we should be careful of deducing trends on the basis of isolated texts.

Melmoth's Cicero is very much an archetypal Gentleman, although surprisingly, the word itself is not frequently used, and occurs more often in Melmoth's notes than in the translation itself. The senate, however, is regularly described as 'the house', and the vocabulary of parliamentary divisions, parties, ranks, and estates assimilates Cicero to the caste to which Melmoth himself, and his readers, belonged (or aspired to belong). Melmoth's notes to individual letters make clear, however, that if he is opening up Cicero as a figure with whom his readers will have no difficulty identifying, this is not the result of an uncritical adulation on his part.¹⁹

The translation is still highly readable, but we should be wary of accepting this rendition of Cicero as faithful or accurate. The project of a large-scale translation was still new in this period, and it is worth exploring what other texts Melmoth's readers might have enjoyed alongside their Cicero. From one perspective, we can look at Melmoth's copious annotations: most of them inform the reader about the circumstances referred to in the letter, and point to references to the same events in Cicero's speeches, and other ancient sources. Here, the frame of reference is the annotated edition: the kind of thing envisaged by John Toland, in his prospectus (1712) for

¹⁸ Cicero (1854).

¹⁹ e.g. the discussion of Cicero's reaction to exile in *Ad fam.* 14.4, Melmoth (1772), 25–6 n. 6; his self-serving attitude regarding the restitution of his property after exile, *Ad fam.* 14.1, Melmoth (1772), 35–7 n. 1; his self-justification to Lentulus, *Ad fam.* 1.9, Melmoth (1772), 168–9 n. 1.

the never-executed new edition of Cicero's complete works, with historical elucidation and paraphrases. But from another, there is a close physical resemblance between Melmoth's work and contemporary collections of fictitious letters. Some of these can easily be set aside as forerunners of the novel, but not all. Melmoth himself published a highly successful collection of moralizing epistles under the *nom de plume* Sir Thomas Fitzosborne. Lord Chesterfield's letters I mentioned above: although seemingly the posthumous publication of an actual correspondence, they suffered a similar deracinating treatment to Cicero. Excerpted for their moral precepts, Chesterfield's achievements as a politician were eclipsed before a readership keen on universalizing stylistic and moral instruction.²⁰ More troubling is a collection such as that purporting to be the correspondence of a Persian agent residing at Athens during the Peloponnesian war; texts discovered through an Arabic translation found in the Royal library at Fez.²¹ Similar, and more widely circulated, was *The Travels of Anacharsis the Younger*, a work first published in French in 1788 and translated swiftly into English, which seems to be an autobiographical travel diary dating from the fourth century BCE, illustrated with maps, numismatic illustrations, and other antiquarian paraphernalia; in short, a scholarly history of Greece, but marketed as ancient fictional autobiography.²² Even from this brief glance at the epistolary publishing context, it is clear that Melmoth's early readers were working in an environment very different from that of the late nineteenth century, when, as we have seen, Cicero was still very much the Gentleman. The familiarization which is the most obvious result of Melmoth's careful style must be balanced against the sense that his readers had scanty grasp of the historical contexts of the letters, but at the same time, may have been unconcerned about their own ignorance: the great success of the edition due, perhaps, to the skill with which Melmoth produced a volume that could take its place easily alongside the fictitious epistolary productions which were showpieces in the literary

²⁰ See Dean (2005). ²¹ [Yorke] (1741).

²² Barthélemy (1794). The work was reprinted many times, gave rise to supplementary publications by other authors, and was even abridged for use (possibly as a history textbook) in schools. A translation into Greek was published in Vienna in 1819. The editor of the 1793 2nd edition suggests that Barthélemy may in fact have been inspired by Yorke's *Athenian Letters*—a suggestion then repudiated: Barthélemy (1794), v–vi.

market.²³ So is this Cicero as fiction, or Cicero as a historical figure? The question cannot readily be answered. What is beyond dispute is that Melmoth's creation of a Ciceronian epistolary style in English played a vital role in ensuring the longevity and popularity of his translation, and in making Cicero into a literary model for a gentlemanly style. Toland's anxiety about the misconstruction of an epistolary Cicero that mirrored the intellectual culture of his day was indeed prophetic.

THE ORATOR AS METAPHOR

The success of Cicero's style, first in Latin then rendered into English, has been central to that demarcation between style and substance that enables the orator to be thought of as a separate entity from the historical protagonist. Like the Gentleman, the image of Cicero as the orator or stylist hinges on a metaphor: in this case, it is metaphorical accretions around the term *rhetoric* that have obscured Cicero's consistent interest in the unity of theory and practice: a unity which offers his best chance of resistance against being interpreted as a complacent self-publicist, with little concern beyond the perpetuation of his own image, or as a marginalized scribbler, with no appropriate sense of the way in which Roman politics really functioned.²⁴ Just as the Gentleman can work as a reasonable approximation of the *equus*, so Rhetoric can function as an approximation of a range of Latin terms. Crucial to all modern connotations of this vocabulary is the same problem that characterized Cicero as a Gentleman, and the same difficulty in bringing to bear modern metaphors on Roman concepts of literature: rhetoric is seen at best as a repertory of accessories to the work of politics, and at its worst, the antithesis of responsible political practice.²⁵ It is the same gulf which makes

²³ Cf. the work of Brown (1702), whose selection of Cicero translations (only four letters from the *Ad fam.*, only two of which are actually by Cicero, alongside other Greek (fictional), Latin, and recent French epistles), is aimed at promoting the English literary letter through translations from more established traditions in other languages.

²⁴ See Drumann (1929) and Fuhrmann (2000) for the influence of the 'scribbler' tradition in the highly influential 19th-cent. historical interpretation of Cicero.

²⁵ On the tradition of Cicero reception based around negative visions of the orator, see Fuhrmann (1989).

Cicero's mutilation such a compelling image: the gulf between a concern for the style of public discourse, and the realities in which that public discourse operates.

But Cicero's interest, in his theoretical works, was not the abstract discourse which facilitated his work as a lawyer: rather, it was the figure of the orator himself, as explored in *De oratore*, *Orator*, and *Brutus*. There is plenty of detailed theoretical material on style in all of these treatises. But for Cicero theory is always grounded in a vision of the work of the orator in the Roman context; theoretical reflections are gleaned from his own experience, even if the desire to give an exhaustive account of the theory will then lead to more abstract discussions that centre upon the internal logic of the theory itself. So although at times theoretical expertise is important, as with his philosophical writings more generally, there is always an insistence upon the indissolubility of theory and practice. The position of Cicero as a pioneer, introducing Greek rhetorical theory to a Roman readership for the first time, leads him at some points to lay out rhetorical method in a form that might be applicable transcendentally, beyond any one cultural context. But the major rhetorical works all include large amounts of material that anchor any theories specifically to Rome, interweaving pure theory with reflections upon particular historical events, legal and political situations, or personages. This is especially obvious in *Brutus*, the work in which Cicero provides a history of rhetoric at Rome that takes the form of a genealogy of orators (a genealogy that in a rather imperfect way, provides ancestry for Cicero himself).²⁶ Roman history, in this unique work written near the end of his life, takes the form of a history of oratory, and although the work is unimaginable without its theoretical dimensions (particularly the critical language used in the evaluation of the different orators), the main thrust of the work is that rhetoric cannot be divorced from history, and that it is the practice of rhetoric that defines any one individual as an orator, rather than the possession of particular stylistic capabilities.

In his insistence on the inexorable bonds between theory and practice, and between oratory and history, Cicero in effect elaborates a way of talking about public life that refutes any neat distinction between impersonal, absolute rules of behaviour or self-expression,

²⁶ Fox (2007), 177–208 presents my views on *Brutus* in more detail.

and concrete examples of that behaviour. Although rhetorical handbooks promote a kind of educated discourse that could work in any setting, they are, particularly in Cicero's hands, documents of particular rhetorical occasions and particular kinds of style. In *De oratore*, indeed, Cicero not only anchors rhetorical theory to Rome: he also, in the figures of Crassus and his colleagues, presents the reader with a double vision of Rome: even when Crassus (as Quintilian thought) is working to propound Cicero's own views, there is still careful dressing and dialogic manipulation to produce ambiguity about the speaking voices. A fictionalized Cicero wearing the mask of Crassus provides a complex picture of Roman political culture: complex enough to suggest that in talking about the practice of rhetoric at Rome, Cicero was not working with the clear aim of identifying himself as the only model for rhetorical imitation.²⁷

The eighteenth century saw the transition from a philosophical culture centred around enquiry and critique, to one in which philosophy devoted itself to the provision of totalizing theories about knowledge, experience, and perception. The growth of idealistic philosophies (represented in most accounts by the figure of Immanuel Kant), led to an entirely different idea about how theory and lived experience could be related to each other. By the standards of Romantic conceptions of how theory and practice coalesce, Cicero's pragmatic but ill-defined approach to rhetorical theory looks inadequate. His polemical insistence on grounding theory in practice merely serves to emphasize this inadequacy, and it is easy to read works like *Brutus* or *Orator* as acts of self-promotion in the face of political marginalization.²⁸ The louder Cicero insists upon the usefulness of the grand style in *Orator*, the more modern readers suspect that theoretical considerations are being used as a specious mask to conceal the fact that Cicero has nothing to back up his theories apart from his own personal history; and this seems to be a position that wilfully ignores the theoretical problems that his failure to scrutinize his own position with sufficient rigour brings with it. *Brutus* too can be read as providing a genealogy of Cicero: a work in which all the inadequacies of Rome's rhetorical heritage are ways of foregrounding the enormous achievement of Cicero himself.²⁹

²⁷ Quintilian, *Inst.* 10.3.1.

²⁸ To a certain extent, the angle taken by Dugan (2005).

²⁹ Central to the approach of Rathofer (1986).

But such a response to these works is a misreading: one, moreover, facilitated by changes in the value of theory. Cicero assumes that for his readers, familiar with an Isocratean vision of philosophical rhetoric, references to specific political conditions, and theory elaborated upon the basis of an individual's experience, were unlikely to alienate: anecdote *was* justification for theory. For the first eighteen centuries of his afterlife, reading of his works was motivated first by admiration for his achievements, and in this regard, Cicero's failure to explore the theoretical underpinning of his own importance cannot be faulted. But even to impute the roots of such a failure to Cicero's own manner of writing is a mistake: his blend of theory and practice can be read as a deliberate reaction against over-idealizing trends in philosophy in his own day; but they should not be read as an attempt to prevent the critics of the future, equipped with sharper theoretical tools, from interrogating the unity of theory and practice which for Cicero, and most of his readers, was not just assumed, but was his most deliberate contribution to the creation of a theoretical discourse in Latin.

CONCLUSIONS

Cicero's orator is always grounded in a particular history, however disputed the facts of that history may be, and however amenable to dialogic interpretation. Metaphor, as a product of thinking through language, will always have at its core an approximation, even a misunderstanding, which will generate further images in a quest to validate its own applicability. These two poles do not hold out much promise for stability in the translation of Cicero from the production of his own writings to their modern reincarnations. I explored the role of the Gentleman at some length, because his influence can still be felt in the manner in which Cicero's political relevance, and interest in style, are rendered; and I have drawn attention to the metaphorical dimensions of rhetoric, in order to suggest that it requires a particular emphasis in reading if we are not to lose sight of Cicero's insistence on the unity of theory and practice, and in the process, forget the extent to which we ourselves are still implicated in that history. The style of the Gentleman and the very idea of style upon which the separation between rhetoric and history/politics depends are two aspects of the same problem: the manner in which

a conception of Ciceronian style has been at the heart of any reading. Cicero's letters make a good model for the Gentleman of letters, and in Melmoth's translation, he can improve his knowledge of the past, acquire a new model for literary self-expression, and simultaneously form a slightly superior view of Cicero's political and personal failings. The appropriation of the rhetorical works as manuals of style produces a similar result. Cicero emerges as a figure who misjudges the realm of history and literature, and privileges style over action.

Our demands on theory require a different image of the speaker-in-community than Cicero's, but by misjudging his orator, we not only misread him, but also lose the opportunity to learn about ourselves from his works.³⁰ To understand the origins of this evolution is to gain in self-knowledge, and also access to these writings. In particular, Cicero's interest in dialogue, and in the unresolved juxtaposition of competing visions of speaker and community can be a useful antidote to the more monologic versions of such discourses that took root in the post-Enlightenment conceptions of theory. And this is why, in the end, it matters to consider the role of metaphor in Cicero's translation. We can do more, in my view, than accept the inevitable mantra of Reception theory that there are as many Ciceros as there are readers of Cicero. The process of reading is always a process of translation, but that does not mean that we cannot focus upon the places where our own metaphors let us down, and look harder to confront directly those moments, like Cicero's posthumous mutilation, where our conceptions of the relationship between life and writing are most strikingly challenged.

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³⁰ See Connolly (2007) on the contemporary relevance of Ciceronian rhetorical theory.

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Eating Eumolpus

Fellini Satyricon and Dreaming Tradition

Richard Armstrong

Fellini Satyricon represents a brilliant moment in the visualization of antiquity. Anyone who has seen the film might find that a surprising statement, but I argue here that we can learn much from the film if we see it as a consubstantial nexus of translation, refragmentation, oneiric imagining, and pure creative fantasy. I clearly do not mean ‘visualization’ in the usual sense of archaeological illustration, or ‘making a picture’ that will render us a gratifying illusion of wholeness and presence. The film does not ‘project’ a coherent image of Petronius, but rather projects in a more dynamic, psychological sense—and that is not a bad thing here. Fellini’s project from the start deliberately estranges us from the previous visual styles and narrative strategies that filled the screens before—and after—its debut in 1969. But it is wrong to think this film was merely an effort at estrangement in order to ruin the sacred truths of antiquity—or rather, to ruin the boring postures and facile appropriations that comprised the filmic repertoire of ‘antiquity’.¹ While it snakes around Roman themes and characters, it ultimately shows us that visualization can be a way of releasing powerful new creative energies, thus putting ancient culture at an even greater value. But one must dare to dream.

Fellini Satyricon was a reaction, from within the director’s own creative turmoil, to a reception of antiquity that was oppressively in

¹ Relevant overviews of antiquity in film are Solomon (1996 and 2001) and Wyke (1997).

evidence by the time of the film's making, especially in Italy. 'The first time I ever saw a picture,' he recalled, 'it was one of those Roman epics, *Ursus* or *Tiberius*. The first time I was at Cinecittà, I saw a Roman film being made and there were gladiators running over to the bar.'² Antiquity was a going concern for the powers that were. On the one hand, Mussolini's Italy had piled up decades of dubious neo-Roman appropriations, which seeped into the cinema, a medium Il Duce valued highly enough to create the massive production studios of Cinecittà.³ In Carmine Gallone's swollen epic *Scipione l'Africano* (1937), Scipio Africanus emerged in a full-bodied nationalism, conveniently in tune with the Dictator's interests, just as Eisenstein's Alexander Nevksy did for Stalin a year later.⁴ Outside the nationalist camp, on the other hand, Hollywood bankrolled gargantuan spectacles, some of which were filmed in the same Cinecittà studios as later would be used for *Fellini Satyricon*. Films such as *Ben Hur* (1959), *Spartacus* (1960), *Cleopatra* (1963), and *The Fall of the Roman Empire* (1964) said more about the high-capitalist stratagems of the American movie industry in its war against television than any real interest in Jewry, Egypt, or the plight of slaves in antiquity.

Fellini Satyricon did not aim merely to dismantle the blockbuster approach to antiquity, nor was it meant to ventriloquize social satire, though one might think that a logical move for the maker of *La Dolce Vita* (1960). Fellini had given up the idea that the *Satyricon* could be adapted as a satire of the Fascist era, and he could not make it a satire of ancient Rome, which he did not know well enough to ridicule.⁵ The project was a creative escape from the torment of his greatest failure, *Il Viaggio di G. Mastorna*, 'the most famous film in Italy that was never made'.⁶ In a sense, *Fellini Satyricon* was an act of creative healing—one could even say it cured him of an artistic impotence. The film still retains its power to shock for the violence and bizarreness of its images, and for its fragmented narrative. To critique this work solely from the standpoint of 'putting Petronius on

² Hughes (1971), 15.

³ For Mussolini and Rome, see Bondanella (1987), ch. 7.

⁴ On *Scipione l'Africano*, see Landy (1986), 194–200; Hay (1987), 155–61.

⁵ As Fellini confided to Dario Zanelli (1970), 8.

⁶ Alpert (1986), 190. *Fellini Satyricon* was actually the second of two films based on literary texts, the first being *Toby Dammit*, very—very—loosely based on Edgar Allen Poe's story, 'Never Bet the Devil Your Head'. In contrast to that film, *Satyricon* remains much more tied to the literary original.

screen' is certainly to miss vital truths about the translation of texts into films.⁷ But to understand the film solely as a rebellion against film conventions would also lose a valid connection between the *Satyrica*'s textual threads and themes, and *Fellini Satyricon*'s digestion and reconfiguration of them.⁸

Fundamentally, I want to argue that *Fellini Satyricon* still has considerable value as a kind of allegory of reception—beyond the simple fact that it is itself an instance of reception, one that captures quite well something of the late 1960s' cultural upheavals. It represents a clear case of aggressive fantasy freed up by engaging the fragments of the ancient past in their opacity and irreparable loss as much as in their vital retention. It was a help that the *Satyrica* is a highly fragmented text—all sense of responsibility to a unified plot with an evident thrust was easily jettisoned (imagine what *Fellini Aeneid* would look like). Modern artists are easily seduced by fragments. A prime example from Italy is Salvatore Quasimodo's influential translations of Greek lyric, where fragments are subjected to further lyrical fragmentation.⁹ Fragments suggest so much and yet never seem to menace, bore, or overwhelm us. Fellini himself waxed quite eloquent on the process of fragmentation.

Are not the ruins of a temple more fascinating than the temple itself? An amphora patiently put together again fragment by fragment is invested with meanings and resonances which the new-fired amphora certainly could not have had; it is an object which has been dipped in the river of time, and thus emerges with a metaphysical aura that makes it more mysterious, more ineffable. The surrealists, at least, are well aware of this: corruption, the leprosy of time makes everything more ambiguous, indecipherable, obscure, and thus full of enchantment.¹⁰

⁷ Not surprisingly, initial reactions tended along these lines. See Highet (1970) and Segal (1971). Sullivan (2001) is a useful corrective to this simplistic view.

⁸ I will use the title *Satyrica* for the Latin work ascribed to Petronius, and *Satyricon* and *Fellini Satyricon* for the film. For convenience, I shall use the Latin names of characters when referring to the *Satyrica*, and the Italian names when referring to *Fellini Satyricon*.

⁹ Quasimodo, *Lirici Greci* ([1944] 1967), which stands behind Mary Barnard's famous edition of Sappho (1958). See also the curious bilingual Sapphic *pastiches* of Odysseas Elytis ([1984] 1997).

¹⁰ Zanelli (1970), 4. Fragmentation also fits well with the 'Fellini manner' of the open form, where more attention is paid to the parts than the whole; see Stubbs (1993).

But the very nature of what still glows amid the *Satyrica*'s scattered embers—its picaresque structure, homoeroticism, highly visual quality, overt theatricality, and pervasive obsession with eating—worked wonders against Fellini's fermentive imagination.¹¹ Its unruly style and scattershot agenda were good models for a deconstructive sword and sandal flick. Petronius' work runs against the grain of classical aesthetics and established genres, subverting the social and literary world typically presented in epic, tragedy, or—to think perhaps anachronistically—prose romance.¹² But rather than trying quixotically to illustrate such a literary text through film, Fellini met the text on a different field of representation: his dreams.

As he explained to Alberto Moravia, he was fundamentally trying to express an intimate sense of alienation towards the ancient world.

To express it, I've tried first of all to eliminate what is generally called history. That is to say, really, the idea that the ancient world 'actually' existed. Thus the atmosphere is not historical but that of a dream world. The ancient world perhaps never existed; but there's no doubt that we have dreamt it. . . . *Satyricon* should have the enigmatic transparency, the indecipherable clarity of dreams.¹³

In place of the bourgeois naturalism endemic in historical film, Fellini adopted a kind of oneiric realism, where there is a wealth of striking detail but only flickering recognition.¹⁴ The sense of the real is more uncanny than depictive, and it moves well beyond the cognitive pleasure tied up in Aristotle's mimetic moment of 'this is *that*'.¹⁵ Fellini's technique required both impassioned imagination—as so much of the detail in this filmic world was pure invention—and utter detachment with regard to the fruit of that imagination, 'in order to be able to explore it afresh from a disquieting viewpoint, to find it afresh both intact and unrecognizable'.¹⁶ The parallel with the dream was clear to Fellini, since dreams

¹¹ For a detailed structural comparison between the text and the film, see Sütterlin (1996).

¹² Zeitlin (1971). On the question of Petronian intertextuality with the Greek novel, see Courtney (2001), 12–31; Bowie (2008), 35–8; and Harrison (2008), 227–36.

¹³ Moravia (1970a), 26.

¹⁴ See Barthes ([1957] 1972), 26–8.

¹⁵ Aristotle, *Poetics* 1448^b10–19. The oneiric realism is also a new twist on what Auerbach ([1946] 1974), 27 highlights as the Petronian technique of achieving objective ends by subjective means.

¹⁶ Moravia (1970a), 26.

contain things that belong to us deeply, through which we express ourselves, but in the light of day the only cognitive relationship we can have with them is of an intellectual, conceptual kind. That is why dreams seem to our conscious selves so fugitive, alien, and incomprehensible. So in order to give the film this feeling of alienation, I have adopted a dream language, a figurative cipher which will have the allusiveness and ineffability of a dream.¹⁷

So in this project, historical drama ceded to oneiric representation, or 'the documentary of a dream'.¹⁸ Any melodramatic reliance upon plot was tossed aside, and the *mise-en-scène* was ruthlessly purged of classicizing clichés. Fellini even mischievously dismantled an economy of the gaze that had safely ruled cinema for decades. One of the film's impertinent features is that its figures have an astonishing tendency to stare back at us, to challenge what *we* are doing by gawking at them. We are not allowed to feel always certain this spectacle is there *for us*; for all we know, perhaps we are there *for them* to stare at. At times, the glances in our direction quote Fayyum portraiture's quiet earnestness, the look that bores into you with inexplicable but subtle insistence. At other times, the look is itself bored, as if the tedium of this antique life (particularly at Trimalcione's banquet) has become overwhelming, and performing it for us is no longer interesting. Throughout the film, Fellini quotes, copies, toys with, and parodies the ancient representational styles of mosaic, encaustic portraiture, wall frescoes, graffiti, masks, *imagines maiorum*, and statuary—in forms that vary from the august and official to the pornographic and crudely ridiculous. He was a film-maker whose creative impulses for casting were largely driven by faces (he sorted through mountains of head shots to find the right person, even for minor parts), so it is understandable that he took from ancient art whatever had the highest face value.

FELLINI BY THE POUND

Since the film was not intended to 'project the text' of Petronius, we must look elsewhere for the logic behind its *mise-en-scène*—or rather,

¹⁷ Moravia (1970a), 26.

¹⁸ This was Fellini's final characterization of the film, Moravia (1970a), 27.

mise-en-rêve. As a work modelled upon dreaming, *Fellini Satyricon* performs a constant *regression* to the visual, and its poetics are therefore imagistic, understood in the proper modernist vein.¹⁹ ‘An “Image”’, Ezra Pound stated, ‘is that which presents an intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time.’ Pound meant ‘complex’ in the full psychological sense, and added, ‘It is the presentation of such a “complex” instantaneously which gives that sense of sudden liberation; that sense of freedom from time limits and space limits; that sense of sudden growth, which we experience in the presence of the greatest works of art.’²⁰ But liberation through the image for Fellini does not lead to a cult of facile, *beaux-arts* beauty. Fellini’s imagery is often unforgivably ugly, and when it is beautiful, it is usually a whore’s beauty—suspicious, undermined, and tainted.

It seems fitting, for example, that an early scene is set in the degraded theatre of Vernacchio, where the gorgeous Gitone (played by the highly androgynous Max Born) appears in a ludicrous theophany as Eros descending from the clouds. Soon he is being auctioned off, and his beautiful face betrays an obscene satisfaction at the skyrocketing price he is fetching. Fellini has mixed together here some themes and techniques of theatricality that run through the *Satyricon* with what he read about the debased theatre of imperial times in Carcopino’s *Daily Life in Ancient Rome*.²¹ But neither literature nor history is illuminated by Vernacchio’s stage, which bodies forth instead an amalgam of cruelty, venality, and political farce, from which we are hardly redeemed by Encolpio’s passion for the boy-whore Gitone. The audience is no disciplined throng of citizens, but a random mix of neurotics (some of the extras were literally taken from an asylum). The image of this dismal theatre quickly dismantles what we think we know about the glories of Rome (so tied to toga dramas as our ‘knowledge’ is) or the ennobling passions of beautiful, star-crossed lovers. Gitone is no Eros, no Ganymede, and the wretched

¹⁹ The notion that dream imagery is regressive is foundational to Freudian dream theory, which assumes the visual is more indicative of ‘primary process’ thinking than the verbal. See Freud ([1900] 1999), 346–59.

²⁰ Pound (1913), 200–01.

²¹ On Fellini’s reading of Carcopino, Zanelli (1970), 3–4; Alpert (1986), 201. For the imperial theatre, see Carcopino ([1940] 1960), 221–31. Cf. his judgement, ‘As the mime reached the height of its achievement, it drove humanity as well as art off the Roman stage’, 231. On theatrical elements in the *Satyricon*, see Bartsch (1994), 197–9; Panayotakis (1995); Plaza (2000); and Rimmel (2002).

man whose hand is severed for the amusement of a half-crazed audience is no Mucius Scaevola (whose name is shouted tauntingly at his entrance). Through this grotesque vision of the ancient theatre, we are freed of our theatrical illusions about antiquity's being the perennial stage of noble actions, tragic grandeur, or 'sweetness and light'. All the same, the scene is highly functional. The stunning Gitone makes a literally dramatic entrance into the film, and we learn all we need to know about him: he must be had—he *can* be had. It is perfect character exposition, and yet Gitone utters not a word; he is a smile, a glance, a luminous body in a sinister world.

To cite another example of ugly but liberating imagery, Fellini intrudes a sequence that allows for a visually arresting location for the amorous escapade of Encolpio and Gitone as well as the later confrontation with Ascilto that leads to the break-up of the happy couple (scenes taken from the *Satyricon*, see 9–11). Fellini framed these scenes in an expressionistic rendition of an enormous ancient tenement, the *Insula Felicles*—about which he had also learned from reading Carcopino—because of its uncanny parallel with modern urbanism.²² One instantly recognizes urban poverty and the sad lives pigeonholed by the massive architecture—the background to this is Italian Neo-Realism, like the tenements of *The Bicycle Thief* (1948). Yet one cannot *really* recognize this urban life, given the bizarre vignettes and neurotic rituals that glide by, glimpsed through thresholds unguarded by any door. People argue, ail, burn, eat, pray, and shit right next to meandering animals. As the camera pans up the full interior of the building towards the open *compluvium*, we sense a totality being presented to us: a full gallery of urban life, we know not where. Yet the building's sudden collapse—a common occurrence in antiquity, as Fellini knew from Carcopino—has nothing to do with Petronius or archaeological accuracy. It enacts the literal *ruina* that is antiquity, and is a kinetic mix of Pompeian and earthquake imagery.²³ The *insula* morphs into a nightmare, intruding on the terrified

²² Carcopino ([1940] 1960), 23–30. Note especially the observation, 'Height was its dominant characteristic and this height [...] still astounds us by its striking resemblance to our own most daring and modern buildings', 24. Nethercut (1971), 56–7, is quite off the mark here in wanting to make this an allusion to the Colosseum (for one thing, the building's aperture is square, not round as he claims).

²³ The Pompeian parallel is explicit in the screenplay, where it says the fleeing inhabitants will appear 'all as if already immobilized and reminding the spectator of the famous figures of those who died in the ruins of Pompeii', Fellini (1970), 215.

sleepers and evoking the tell-tale fear of suffocation, while horses run madly through the scene.²⁴

But nothing is explained by this event, nor does it motivate any action. Encolpio is caught in the middle of this catastrophe, yet mysteriously reappears seconds later in a picture gallery, dapper and unharmed, but still bitter about his break-up with Gitone. There is a visual surfeit to the *insula* sequence that speaks to more than voyeurism or special effects. It seems powered by an underlying dread, not orchestrated by the plot but by the very world of the film itself. The camera has peered far too intimately into a dirty corner of antiquity, and now the image has crumbled away, and we are whisked off to a museum that consists only of pretty fragments of ancient art—something more like our conventional experience of antiquity. These visual fragments quote everything from Minoan wall-painting to Byzantine mosaics. At the centre of the gallery, a large bronze head appears bandaged, as if recovering from the previous scene. It is as though the gallery is a visual hospital, a recovery room for what we just saw and experienced—the grotesque theatre, the seething colony of whores, a world of hopeless indignities.

Poverty is now nobly reconfigured in the guise of the ascetic artist, the poet Eumolpo. His diatribe about the decline of culture traces social ills to a simple inattention to artistic masterpieces. Through this aestheticism, we transition from sheer terror and estrangement to mild cultural guilt. We too are being enrolled in a recovery programme as we reflect on our own desire to *see* this ancient, fragmentary masterpiece, the *Satyricea*. There is a surreal moment in the scene, when a huge wheeled scaffold full of immobile spectators whisks by in the background without comment. Perhaps we are being cued in to our role as the moving spectators of this moving picture. Perhaps we are being ridiculed for wanting a quick and effortless glimpse of the ancient world, like tourists on a whirlwind tour of Rome. But like the bolting horses, the scaffold also seems to say: *this film will make your eyes fly*.

²⁴ As Dick ([1981] 1993), 136 points out, this is one of many self-quotations Fellini makes in this film, this time of the riderless horse from *La Strada*. At the filming, the horses bolted spontaneously as the collapse happened in the studio; Hughes (1971), 22–3.

FELLINI REFRACTOR

Besides oneiric realism, Fellini significantly reshaped Petronian material through a process of refragmentation. This technique is quite apparent in the manner in which he created a remarkably coherent ending, compared at least with the shredded Latin text. Originally, the death of Ascilto was to shift the film into a new key towards the end, introducing an enigmatic theophany. The screenplay states, 'Among the trees, in the bushes, on the sea, transparent visions have appeared, dazzling in the luminous air. They are the gods. Gigantic heads, with serene smiles; or minuscule, uncertain, slightly mocking.'²⁵ They were then gradually to vanish; the film's treatment reads, 'The gods no longer flit out of hiding; the sun has risen in the sky and dispersed them, fused them once more with the nature whence they sprung.'²⁶ This theophany did not make it into the final version, and the film thus remained true to the nature of religion in the *Satyricon*, where the gods are only present in discourse and ritual, not in person as in epic. The one exception in the film is the episode of the Hermaphrodite, an alleged demigod whose squalid death debunks his divinity and makes his cult appear foolish superstition. This sickly creature seems a weak imitation of the stage-god Gitone, another divinely androgynous, luminous figure, but one radiating a lubricious vitality. As with Gitone earlier in the theatre, the trappings of divinity fall away and the Hermaphrodite becomes simply something worth stealing—again, a bathetic erosion of religious sincerity, but a closer approximation to the gritty local cults and attitudes in the *Satyricon*.

Instead of the flickering image of a divine chorus towards the end of the film as originally planned, we see Encolpio intoning a brief elegy over the dead Ascilto against an empty sky. Here we see Fellini's strategy of refragmentation keenly at work, since Encolpio's words are based on the archly rhetorical elegy for the drowned Lichas from the *Satyricon* (115.12–19), now transformed to give some emotional substance to the two young men's relationship. It matches in emotional intensity the vehement tirade against Ascilto that opens the film, where Encolpio rails melodramatically against a graffiti-scarred wall. Fellini often uses melodrama to echo the rhetorical moments of

²⁵ Fellini (1970), 268, shots 1202–4.

²⁶ Fellini (1970), 89–90.

the *Satyrica*, but his careful reduction of the Petronian dialogue always points beyond verbal fireworks and endows it with oneiric resonances. For example, Petronius' Encolpius uses the death of Lichas as a jejune moral *exemplum*, expounding upon it to observe how, 'If you add it up right, shipwreck is everywhere' (115.16). But where Encolpius rhetorically launches out with 'Go now mortals, fill your hearts with grand schemes', Fellini's Encolpio shifts this tellingly to, 'Come on now, mortals, fill yourselves *with dreams*.' The last line of the scene, 'Great gods, how far he lies from his destination!' is taken almost *verbatim* from the *Satyrica* (*dii deaeque, quam longe a destinatione sua iacet*—115.15), yet is now used to suggest that Encolpio will keep travelling toward *his* destination, but utterly alone. This is followed by a shot of him heading off among the dunes, starkly silhouetted against a menacing sky (which moments before was blue and empty).

Here we see how much craft emerges from the refragmentation process in the film. Though Petronius' Encolpius seems to remain enmeshed in relationships throughout the extant text, Fellini's protagonist gradually loses his attachments and becomes a kind of social fragment. His 'spouse' Lica is decapitated by soldiers after the child Emperor is deposed; his lover Gitone disappears from the film (taken away by soldiers, it seems); his friend and rival Ascilto is wretchedly murdered by a boatman; and finally Encolpio discovers that Eumolpo, who has been an important figure of continuity throughout the film, has died an apparently natural death. The gradual isolation of Fellini's protagonist makes this plot seem far less episodic and picaresque than that of the *Satyrica*; the film's plot tapers down the *dramatis personae* to fewer and fewer known characters.²⁷

Observe also the careful crafting of the final sequences. Eumolpo has engineered Encolpio's escape on a ship, which will carry him outside the action of the film to further adventures.²⁸ Though we do not know his final destination, it is clear Encolpio now at least has the capability of going *somewhere*. We see the image of an island fluctuate before us far in the distance as Encolpio relates a story he heard from a Greek . . . but here the voice-over stops, literally creating a narrative

²⁷ The film's plot has been given a thorough mythic analysis *à la* Joseph Campbell in Prats (1979).

²⁸ It is often overlooked that the ship at the end had been promised to Encolpio in the Garden of Delights, after the young man's failure to find his cure for impotence.

fragment. By way of a final gesture, Fellini has Encolpio complete his fragmentation by becoming a visual fragment: his smiling face dissolves into a fresco on a wall, and the camera pulls back, revealing various other painted figures from the film, caught in tell-tale poses on the crumbling surface of a ruin by the sea.²⁹

The real crux of this dream-film is revealed in the penultimate scene, just before the total fragmentation of Encolpio is complete. It is a scene of marked contrasts, both syntagmatic and associative, involving two groups of men. In one group, young men are leaving on a ship, happy—even elated, as if newly freed. Another group comprises the heirs of Eumolpo—older, graver characters (their costumes seem a fantastical riff on senatorial attire). The heirs have been enjoined by Eumolpo's will to cut his body into pieces and eat it; they slowly convince themselves to do this, citing historical precedents. Aware of the great fortune that is at stake, they set about with lugubrious determination, unwrap the mummy-like corpse, and are seen stolidly chewing on the shore. The joke, it seems, is on them, and the young men are rightly laughing at them. The ship's Captain, who reads out the will for Encolpio, suggests as much when he remarks: 'È impossibile! È uno scherzo!' The young men, who we assume comprise the ship's crew, set off towards the ship lightheartedly. Encolpio initially looks on the grim rite with a quiet smile, as does the Captain of the ship. The Captain then invites him to go with them, and they depart.

It is easy to read this scene against the turmoil of the 1960s and to conclude the youth culture of the times is being given Fellini's blessing to depart from the old Judaeo-Christian world.³⁰ After all, Fellini deliberately soaked up the hippy energies of his young lead actors, who were cast as ancient 'drop-outs' from the university. Max Born (Gitone) was a 17-year-old flower child Fellini plucked from a commune in London. Hiram Keller (Ascilto), was in the original Broadway cast of *Hair*. The film also broke free of the old European frame in that it was very open to the bodies, beauties, sights, and sounds of the non-Western world. African Xalam, Javanese gamelan, Balinese Monkey Chant, and other exotic music all flowed together to make up

²⁹ The sea often appears at the end of a Fellini film; see the comment in Hughes (1971), 136 on the filming of the final scenes of *Fellini Satyricon*; also Grossvogel (1971), 53–4.

³⁰ This is the conventional reading by such Fellini experts as Peter Bondanella (1992), 248–52, reflecting some of Fellini's own comments (Hughes, (1971): 130–1).

Nino Rota's vibrant palette in the soundtrack. But to reduce *Fellini Satyricon* to a simplistic endorsement of the Age of Aquarius or a declaration of *Terzomondismo* is to mistake day residue for the deep thinking of the dream. Petronius is not being updated here; rather, certain cultural contrasts are being backdated.

FELLINI CANNIBAL

To get finally at the kernel of the dream thought that lies behind *Fellini Satyricon*, we must unwrap Eumolpo. Fellini has made him a far more structural figure than the *poeta callidus* in Petronius. Eumolpo first appears as in the *Satyrica* in a picture gallery, expounding theories of art (cf. *Satyrica* 83–4); but he then leads Encolpio into the world of Trimalcione, guiding him like Dante's Virgil through the inferno of the freedman's bad taste. We know the poet is morally dissolute and a self-conscious parasite; yet he is passionate enough about real art to risk Trimalcione's wrath and is consigned to the roaring ovens of the freedman's kitchen over a literary dispute. Eumolpo later reappears, beaten nearly to death by the cooks and kitchen boys, the demons of infernal gluttony. Lying in the furrows of a field in the early morning light, the poet makes his *first* will and testament to Encolpio. Poets die, he tells the young man, only poetry remains. Then he says, 'If I were as rich as Trimalcione, I'd leave you some land or a ship'—which is ironic, since he does leave behind a ship Encolpio uses. 'I can only make you heir of that which I have had. I leave you poetry. I leave you the seasons, especially spring and summer. I leave you the wind and the sun', Eumolpo continues, bequeathing to Encolpio all that poets love and value—the good sea, the good earth, mountains, rivers, clouds, trees, birds.

This scene suggests that Encolpio has an intimate bond with Eumolpo; he is heir to the poet's mission and world-view, which owns nothing and yet encompasses everything. It seems telling that Eumolpo later reappears only when Encolpio, now styled *studente* and *poeta*, has utterly failed to perform his role in an archaic ritual. He is thrust into the position of playing Theseus against a massive Minotaur in a gladiatorial combat staged before a large audience. He begs for mercy and claims he is an unworthy Theseus for such a Minotaur, and the combat melts away into a joke, performed by the

Roman Proconsul in honour of the God of Laughter (this episode is partly lifted from Apuleius, *Metamorphoses* 3.1–11). But now another ordeal begins, as Encolpio is awarded the role of Theseus once more, obliged to consummate a *hieros gamos* with an Ariadne in front of all assembled. Here the crisis of his impotence erupts, the laughter melts to sadness and disgust, and Eumolpo alone appears to help the young man. We should pause a moment to see where this plot is taking us: Encolpio fails twice to perform a mythic role; he lacks the fighting and sexual power to become the traditional hero. The labyrinth is an accessible symbol for the unconscious, and the ritual setting adds to the nightmarish feel that this is an exposure or even an examination dream. And only the poet Eumolpo shows him sympathy, saying, ‘il tuo Eumolpo ti guarirà!’

But *quantum mutatus ab illo!* Eumolpo now has acquired all the trappings of great wealth, including that status symbol he so conspicuously lacked before: the litter, which now ironically bears him aloft through his life of gouty excess. His sudden wealth seems a cosmic joke, even to him; in a sense, he has *become* Trimalcione. It is easy to see why Fellini identified so strongly with this rascally artist, whose wheeling and dealing ultimately build him a considerable fortune and a flock of pesky *captatores*. In Eumolpo’s conflict between true art and hard business, we can readily see a figure like a great film director, who must balance the demands of creativity against the vulgarity of the movie industry—something Fellini had already brilliantly explored in *8½* (1963).³¹ In contrast, Petronius’ Eumolpus remains a man of empty air to his heirs; he *fakes* being rich in order to get the legacy-hungry people of Croton to fête and entertain him (*Satyricon* 116–17). He tells them a ship laden with riches is coming soon from Africa, but this ship does not exist and its non-arrival clearly makes the *captatores* very annoyed (*Satyricon* 141.1). The whole business of the will in which Eumolpus requires his heirs to eat him was most likely supposed to put them off, though it is difficult to know what was happening at this point in the increasingly fragmentary text (*Satyricon* 141.2–5). When one of them appears ready to

³¹ Fellini remarked that the picture industry ‘is still so vulgar that if the film author tried to oversee what happens to his work he would quickly die of a broken heart. Between censorship, the vulgarity of the advertising, the stupidity of the exhibitors, the mutilation, the inept dubbing into other languages—when I finish a picture it’s best to forget I ever made it.’ Alpert (1986), 208. See also Hughes (1971), 129.

engage in this cannibalism, this may have constituted a kind of comic catastrophe (*Satyrica* 141.5).³²

But Fellini's Eumolpo undergoes a *real* transformation into a wealthy man of business; his ship is also real, only it is headed *for* Africa, not from it. His death is also quite real, and we see him laid out on a bier by the sea with an enigmatic smile on his face. The will in the film reads very much like the one in Petronius (141.2), and the assembled heirs immediately interpret it quite literally. Once again we see how Fellini's oneiric realism works to transform the verbal tartuffery of the Petronian world into powerfully ambivalent images. These images work by careful contrast: whereas Trimalcione was a languid mummy at the centre of his gluttonous world and played at being dead in his mausoleum, forcing his parasites to mourn him, Eumolpo becomes a literal mummy and makes himself the main course for his parasites, as if in perverse competition with the freedman. While the heirs are dressed alike and act grimly together in their unholy communion, Encolpio sets off with a motley, joyous crew, made up of social fragments like himself. Such studied contrasts suggest powerful ambivalences at work behind the images.

And ambivalence inheres in Eumolpo's last act of wit. The cannibalism at the end of this film can certainly be taken as a polemic with Christianity. The dying culture of the old Europe with its dreary rituals and cultural re-mastication is left behind by the young and groovy, who have no myth, no plan save for adventure and escape. Indeed, some scholars, like G. W. Bowersock, have argued the cannibalism in Petronius was already meant to be a comic allusion to Christianity and its myth of the edible god—the first such mention of it, in fact.³³ In this regard, Fellini would be revisiting a primal scene to make fun of the same ritual but from a different perspective. Moreover, oral aggression permeates this film, and is often oddly coupled with literature, as when the Homerists appear at Trimalcione's banquet.³⁴ One diner with a vulgar accent comments directly into the camera, 'mi piace il greco a tavola', stuffing his peasant face. One could also argue that Eumolpo's will aptly plays a very Petronian joke on his heirs. Just as Petronius, the condemned man, allegedly

³² For attempts to understand the *Satyrica's* ending, see Sullivan (1968), 75–8; Slater (1990), 133; Courtney (2001), 210–13.

³³ Bowersock (1994), 134–9.

³⁴ For oral aggression in Petronius, see especially Rimmel (2002), ch. 3.

implicated the Emperor Nero in a huge list of vices and crimes and revealed the hypocrisy of the times (Tacitus, *Annales* 16.18–19), so here the poet trumps the voracious materialism of his philistine heirs in a perfect *contrapasso*: you have no taste for art, so fine: *eat the artist*. This is oral aggression turned on itself: ‘I exhort my friends not to refuse my invitation, but to devour my body with that same ardour with which they sent my soul to hell’, the will cleverly states.³⁵ And if they comply, the heirs will ironically give Eumolpo the ultimate Orphic *sparagmos*, a fine end for a poet.³⁶

But this regressive, oral-aggressive image encodes something else about the economy of art and the dynamics of tradition. Ingestion is a powerful metaphor for cultural reception; through eating, the eaten and the eater are both transformed. In fact, it is an *ancient* metaphor, one used by Romans such as Seneca and Quintilian to explain how one must properly read and digest tradition. What we ingest in our reading will remain alien, burdensome until it is transformed and can pass into our bloodstream. ‘Let us digest these things’, says Seneca, ‘otherwise they will go into our memory, but not into our ingenuity (*ingenium*).’³⁷ The metaphor of intellectual rumination was further explored in Renaissance Humanism by Petrarch, Erasmus, and Montaigne. As Petrarch put it in reference to his own reading of the classics, ‘I ate in the morning what I would digest later; I swallowed as a boy what I would chew over when older. These things have become so thoroughly ingested and fixed—not just in my memory but in my very marrow—and made one with my creative mind (*ingenium*), that even if I read them no more for the rest of my life, they shall hold fast with their roots driven deep into my soul.’³⁸ So, although the eating of Eumolpus seems violent and regressively cannibalistic, it does body forth a perennial truth about the reception of ancient culture: art really is a dog-eat-dog world, a world in which eating your ancestors bestows great wealth and freedom.

³⁵ Fellini clearly interpreted the Latin text, which he follows closely, in a manner that punitively highlights the *captatores*’ eagerness for the poet to die and forces them now to muster the same eagerness to do away with his body. For more on textual problems here in Petronius, see Bowersock (1994), 135 n. 37.

³⁶ I am indebted to Branham and Kinney (1996), 151 n. 141.1 for this observation.

³⁷ Seneca, *Epistulae Morales* 84.3–8; Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria* 10.1.1; see Fantham (1978), 110–11.

³⁸ Petrarch, *Epistulae ad familiares* 22.2.12–13. For a general discussion, see Greene (1982) and Jeanneret (1995).

Here I depart from a conventional reading of the film. Fellini scholars like Peter Bondanella are convinced that in the final moments Encolpio rejects 'the verbal culture of his own time', represented by the poet and orator Eumolpo.³⁹ Encolpio runs off freed from all cultural baggage—baggage literally lines the shores in the final scene—and open to a new, unscripted adventure. For Bondanella, it can only be ironic that Fellini freed up his imagination and cured his own creative impotence by a return to an ancient masterpiece, since the 'message' of the film seems to be one of flat out rejection of tradition, of moving beyond all hallowed myths, plots, styles, and cults. But I think Bondanella has not taken seriously enough the nature of the dream-text that this film presents. Eumolpo and Encolpio are in fact two sides of the author, something suggested to Fellini early on by the eminent Petronian scholar, Ettore Paratore, whom Fellini had visited when dreaming up the film.⁴⁰ Eumolpo may seem very much like the self-ironic film director, but Encolpio becomes a vital, creative force on his own, one clearly in league with and in need of Eumolpo. The end of the film shows Encolpio freed of impotence, thanks to a cure enacted through coupling with an earth mother, Enotea, who bears Virgilian fire in her loins (the story of her punishment by a magus whom she tricked is one of the widespread medieval legends about Virgil).⁴¹ The scene is a literal rendering of the Virgilian injunction: 'seek out the ancient mother' (*antiquam exquirite matrem*—*Aen.* 3.96). Encolpio does not need to join the *captatores* in their grim ritual, because *he has already inherited the world* from Eumolpo in a previous scene. Only now with Eumolpo really gone is he ready to embrace it.

Here lies the secret to Encolpio's enigmatic smile at the end. As described in the screenplay, Encolpio was to follow the heirs' actions seriously, then break out in 'a weary laugh, and rather crazier than the usual one. A laugh of understanding, of comprehension, of acceptance.'⁴² By the final filming, the crazy laughter is displaced onto the crew, and Encolpio's smile remains a placid understanding and acceptance of what is going on as he is released from his last bond. Through this film, Fellini opened up his psyche to a radical freedom; he dismembered and devoured his *auctor*, Petronius, and released a powerful imaginative force that saved him from crippling self-doubt

³⁹ Bondanella (1992), 252.

⁴¹ Spargo (1934), ch. 5.

⁴⁰ Zapponi (1970), 35.

⁴² Fellini (1970), 273, shot 1242.

and impotence. Rather than an act of arbitrary appropriation, Fellini's film was the ultimate act of sincerity. As Robert Frost once said, "There is such a thing as sincerity. It is hard to define, but it is probably nothing more than your highest liveliness escaping from a succession of dead selves. Miraculously."⁴³ *Fellini Satyricon* was just such a miracle.

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⁴³ Frost (2006), p. 456.

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After Freud

Sophocles' Oedipus in the Twenty-First Century

Rachel Bowlby

A century ago, Freud dramatically reinterpreted the figure of Oedipus, translating Sophocles' tragic hero, the unwitting perpetrator of unique and horrific crimes, into a modern name for Everyman—or Everyboy. Oedipus moved out of Greek tragedy to begin a new life as part of the modern family. The most unexpected of twentieth-century guests, this ancient character became a household name, the 'complex' familiar enough always to elicit a knowing (or unknowing) nod or titter. But today, with far-reaching changes in the norms and forms of sexual and familial relations, this Oedipus may have moved on again, no longer subject to such grand, universal, or consistent determinations as Freud accorded him. At this juncture, Sophocles' first *Oedipus*, where Freud found his inspiration, is once again open to new interpretations for new times.

FREUD'S OEDIPUS AND AFTER

In terms of demographic history, it is striking that Freud's minimalist family of father, mother, and child projected a social reality that, in his own time—at least in his youth and middle life—was yet to be. The theory anticipated a specifically twentieth-century historical moment in which for a few decades, for the first and perhaps the last time in history, the typical reproductive pattern in Western industrialized

societies involved a lifelong parental couple with a limited number of children, and no additional family members living with them. In this mid-twentieth-century world, contraception within marriage was acceptable and available; divorce had not yet become ordinary; life expectancy was rapidly increasing. The tendency today is to think of second marriages and serial families as characteristically contemporary phenomena. But prior to this twentieth-century nuclear moment of both marital and spousal longevity, the frequency of early death, particularly as a result of childbirth, meant that more than one marriage, and more than one family, were commonplace, as they are now. There were the accompanying complexities, again as today, of step-parents and half- and step-sibling relationships. The one crucial difference between the periods before and after the heyday of the nuclear family is that children then acquired step-parents only, or almost always, after the death of a birth parent.

This brief twentieth-century period of small families and continuing married couples is now fast receding into history. The past two or three decades have seen extraordinary changes in sexual and family lives and their associated ideologies. For the sake of description, I'll separate these changes into the social and the biological, but the overlaps and mutual influences between them will be obvious. First, then, social changes. The kinds of parenting regarded as possible or ordinary have gone forth and multiplied, to the point that the previously normative and usual unit of a married heterosexual couple, both first-time partnered, who raise two or three children to adulthood may now seem not just not assumed but not even particularly common. Parents may be single by choice, or gay, or cohabiting but not married. The stigma of illegitimacy has all but gone, with the term 'single parent'—a man or a woman, and often post-married—bearing almost no ideological relation to the now obsolete and culturally meaningless 'unmarried mother'. And where previously the new cultural focus was on the right not to have babies, it is now, and not only for women, much more on the right and the positive wish to become a parent. The question of where that wish might come from, or how it might differ between women, or between men and women, is rarely mentioned in any kind of discourse: where before it might have been seen by many as a normative ideological imposition on women, now it is almost always presented as a natural desire, sometimes bordering on a right, and not only for women. More broadly, in place of the old sexual division of labour—men as breadwinners,

women as homemakers—the assumption has been shifting towards regarding all men and women as both workers and parents, potentially, whose needs in performing both of these roles should be met as far as possible with the help of various kinds of enabling legislation, from maternity (and paternity) leave to flexible work-time. All these developments are related to another, equally prominent social change, which is the dramatic rise in serial families and, concomitantly, in the break-up of co-parenting relationships. No permanence in the parental couple is to be assumed—as it was before, when marriage was the parenting norm, and divorce was unusual.

On the biological side, the changes are equally striking. Alongside the proliferation of new family forms are the new reproductive technologies; there could be no more spectacular illustration of the difference of emphasis from a few decades ago, when the technological and medical news was all about reliable birth control, about how you didn't have to have children, as opposed to now, when it is about how you might be helped to do so. In general, the new reproductive technologies have the effect of separating sex from reproduction, just as contraception did in a different way: in IVF, as with donor insemination, there is no two-body sexual act prior to conception. Conception outside the female body also undermines one essential difference between the two sexes as parents, bringing the contribution of each down to a neutrally named 'gamete'. In other ways too, that difference between mothers and fathers is seen to diminish. Previously, it rested upon a fundamental dissymmetry, mentioned by Freud in his 'Family Romances' paper and elsewhere, whereby the identity of the father is always open to doubt—*pater semper incertus est*, in the Latin legal tag, which Freud quotes—whereas the mother visibly and palpably isn't uncertain in this way: from her the baby is seen to be born.¹ Now, DNA testing has made it possible for the first time in human history to know a biological father with scientifically proven certainty. Yet at the same time, biological motherhood has taken on an equally unprecedented degree of potential doubtfulness. A child now may have two 'biological' mothers, the one who provides the egg and the one who is pregnant and gives birth. This is true of some cases of surrogacy (where the future mother provides the egg

¹ See Freud (1959 [1909]), 239.

for a child conceived outside the womb) and in all cases of egg donation.

The mutability, at present, of those supposedly given conditions or 'facts' of reproduction also reveals the contingency in a part of the old reproductive story so well engrained as rarely to be spelled out: that a child is assumed to be the child of two parents and two only, one of each of two sexes. Here technological invention is amplifying and reinforcing the changes that are going on in the social forms of parenting. Now, biologically as well as socially, it is possible to have two parents of the same sex; socially, it is also common to have three or more active parents—when the first parental couple has split up and one or both of them has a new partner.

The multiplication of parents and family forms is inseparable from other changes, of incalculable significance—the loosening of social constraints on acceptable forms of sexual relationship, and a lessening of the social divisions between the sexes such that women, who may well positively choose to have children, are no longer seen as primarily meant for a maternal and domestic role (so that that's no longer the argument that feminism needs to be having). Looking positively at these changes, it might seem that today, it is possible to live out and choose identities and behaviours that the first Freudian patients could only dream of. At one level, that's true. At another, of course, there's no evidence to suggest that the limits and conflicts in people's lives, in their identities as parents or offspring or lovers or anything else, have diminished—or that the surrounding ideologies of sexual and family identities are progressive in some absolute sense.

SOPHOCLES' OEDIPUS

I have been stressing how much has changed since Freud's time, and especially in the shorter term since a few decades ago, but also suggesting how these changes can point us towards hitherto unnoticed aspects of earlier or continuing family formations. Taking this in another direction, I would now like to go back to Sophocles' *Oedipus the King*, Freud's source-text for the Oedipus complex, which, read in the light of recent changes in the social and biological conditions of identity, can I think seem surprisingly contemporary—and surprisingly un-Oedipal. At the surface level of the story—before the

revelations of incest and parricide—the play involves a second family, a problem of infertility, and an adoption—and a transnational adoption at that. Baby Oedipus, born in Thebes to Jocasta and Laius and abandoned to die because of the oracle saying he will kill his father, is adopted across the borders to parents in Corinth, Polybus and Merope; linked to this is their situation of childlessness. The second family is Jocasta's four children with Oedipus, following the death of the husband with whom she had had one child. None of these features is mentioned by Freud.

In addition to these open data of the legend, the buried story also concerns more than the classic Oedipal—Freudian Oedipal—double parental violations of incest and parricide. A further point, also unspecified by Freud, is that the incestuous children bring about a blurring of the generations and of relational categories. Sophocles, though not Freud, lays stress on the intolerable confusion of identity that this entails, and he makes the point like a structural anthropologist, by way of the unbearable impossibility of naming that ensues when incompatible relational terms overlay one another, mixing fathers, brothers, and children, and brides, wives, and mothers.² Freud's ignoring of this issue of blurred generations and overlaid identities is all the more intriguing in the light of his own family history. He was the son of his father's second wife, the first having died in childbirth, and had two elder half-brothers who were around twenty years his senior; his mother, 21 when he was born, was the same age as the half-brothers, her stepsons. When Freud was born, the first son of his younger half-brother was a year old: the two generations were on a level, horizontalized. And this was a lived actuality for little Sigmund: the other child, technically his own nephew (or rather half-nephew), was a near neighbour and a regular playmate for the first years of his life. So the generational conflation was not just some piece of family knowledge he might only have acquired at a much later stage; it was there as his own given world from the very beginning. The core intergenerational Oedipal unit is in

² See Sophocles, *Oedipus the King*, ll. 1405–6. Oedipus is both father and (half-) brother to his four children, and son of their mother; Jocasta is bride, wife, and mother—all three—to Oedipus. Oedipus speaks of the *haima emphulion*, intra-family or incestuous 'blood' or kinship, produced by these crossed relationships, which represent 'the most shameful things for people' (l. 1408). Throughout the play, the horror of incestuously engendered children is the most prominent fear in Oedipus' utterances about the oracle pronouncing his incestuous and parricidal future.

Freud's own case bordered at home by the evidence of other possibilities which, like the presence or arrival of siblings, challenge its stability and complicate the identity of the child. In today's world of second families, often a generation apart, this common pre-twentieth-century situation has again become normal.

It has often been said that Oedipus cannot himself be thought to have had an Oedipus complex, for the simple reason that the Jocasta he married and the Laius he killed meant nothing to him emotionally; they were not the parents with whom he grew up, and he had no idea, when he murdered and married, that these were his birth parents. That Freud never mentions the fact of Oedipus' adoption is all the more bizarre in the light of his own claim, in another context (the 'Family Romances' paper, again), that every child at some point fantasizes that they were adopted, thereby 'replacing' their existing or present parents with better ones, and perhaps displacing a sibling or two along the way—if they alone derive from the superior source. What happens to Sophocles' Oedipus in fact bears a striking resemblance to some contemporary practices of transnational adoption which may involve an interim period of fostering after a baby's abandonment; in Britain, 'local' adoptions too are usually preceded by a period of fostering. Oedipus is cared for initially by two shepherds, the first of whom, Laius' servant, does not leave him to die as instructed, but gives him to a second one who then in turn gives him to the childless Corinthian royal couple. The 'giving' is highlighted in both cases, and defended by the first shepherd against the adult Oedipus' angry accusation that he might have 'sold' the baby.

The legendary Oedipus does in one way exemplify the Freudian Oedipal scenario, since he grows up as the only child of two parents. But there the comparison ends, and in any case those parents are not the ones in relation to whom Oedipus commits his 'Oedipal' crimes. Another significant feature of the Freudian interpretation is that it ignores those aspects of Sophocles' tragedy which concern not the son's emotions but those of the parents—all four of them, plus the shepherd foster-fathers who take the baby from Thebes to Corinth. In Freud's account, the Oedipus complex is generated as if by nature; it comes from the child. To have let the parents have a hand in it (as Freud does occasionally allow, only to pull back and reassert the other perspective) would have let in too much scope for the intervention of contingent historical factors: only infancy guarantees (or at any rate suggests) innateness and inevitability. But in Sophocles' *Oedipus*, the

baby's parents, or at least Laius (it is not clear what part Jocasta played) determined to have their baby boy killed: the violence starts with them, if not just with him. The adoptive parents, on the other hand, give their son love that is said, at least in Polybus' case (Merope, the adopting mother, remains in shadow in the same way that Jocasta does), to be all the stronger because of the childlessness they had endured until they had him. 'Did he still love him a lot even though he had received him from someone else?' asks Oedipus. 'He was convinced by his former childlessness [*apaidia*]', says the Corinthian shepherd, directly (ll. 1023–4). Infertility and childlessness are significant issues in the play. Polybus and Merope are childless before they gain Oedipus, and childless once again after he abruptly leaves home; Laius and Jocasta have understood the oracle to mean that they should remain childless.

Childlessness is also a theme in many other Greek tragedies, but is not one explored by Freud in this connection, and rarely in others. In terms of tragedy, there is a brief, unelaborated mention of the subject in relation to *Macbeth*, right after the crucial passage on *Oedipus* and *Hamlet* in *The Interpretation of Dreams*.³ Generally, Freud stays with the hypothetical fantasies of the child, or the childhood-derived fantasies of the adult. A woman's wish to be a mother is a secondary formation; it is the normal way of finding something to make up for the lack of masculinity, which is her lifelong unconscious preoccupation. As for men, Freud never analyses their wish (or not) to be fathers; it does not figure in his discussions of masculine development. Yet, on the other hand, it can be seen as radical on Freud's part, in his time, to have seen maternity as a problem for women, not something to be taken as a natural instinct, and this is the positive reading of his myth of maternal desire as a secondary formation, and a compensation for non-masculinity. It could be argued that fatherhood in Freud's time impinged much less on men in its psychological and practical demands and pleasures than it usually does today, whereas for mothers, even more than now, it was at the centre of their lives. But it is still intriguing that Freud did not turn his attention to the meanings of fatherhood for men; here, it is as if he did take the

³ 'Just as *Hamlet* deals with the relation of a son to his parents, so *Macbeth* (written at approximately the same period) is concerned with the subject of childlessness [*auf dem Thema der Kinderlosigkeit*]', Freud (1953 [1900]), 266.

socially normal masculine-paternal development for granted, if not for natural.

Sophocles' *Oedipus*, then, is much concerned with parental, or pre-parental, desires and fears in relation to possible children; it is not at all about the desires or hatreds of a small child in relation to its parents. It is, however, about an older or grown child's need to know his origins. It is often pointed out that Oedipus fulfils the oracle's warnings only as a result of the evasive action taken against them—first by his birth parents, who try to kill him, and later by Oedipus himself, at the point when he leaves his home in Corinth, or rather fails to return there, after he has himself heard the oracle's bad news: he decides he must stay away from his mother and father in case he should accidentally murder one and have sex—and children—with the other. But behind Oedipus' departure lies a story of parental withholding which has nothing to do with avoiding the oracle. A drunken man had insulted young Oedipus at a dinner, by saying that Polybus was not his real father. This gets to Oedipus, who then goes and questions his parents; they are angry at what has been said; Oedipus is relieved, but then still, he finds, disturbed. It is at that point, in his later retelling of this turning point in his life, that he goes off to consult the oracle—crucially, without telling his parents, *lathrai* (l. 787), 'in secret', as if picking up on the parents' own secrecy as well as, overtly, feeling the need to get information for himself. The oracle's extreme and seemingly unrelated response about his destined incest, incestuous children, and parricide then implicitly does away with the earlier doubt about who his father is; he runs away from those he knows as his parents. But if those parents had communicated what they knew of his origins from the beginning, and all the more at the point when Oedipus questions them, then once again, as with the acts that were meant to evade the oracle, the 'Oedipal' events would never have come about. From this point of view, Oedipus' downfall arises from the parents' wish or need to conceal from the child his unknown beginnings. And their denial of there being anything to tell—their failure to say that Oedipus' origins are not only the ones he knows—then has its counterpart in Oedipus' own secrecy and his clinging to a fantasy of knowing, without any possible doubt, where he comes from, his country and his parents.

Oedipus' birth parents do what they do, in abandoning him, out of fear (of the oracle); no motive is given for Polybus and Merope's failure to tell Oedipus that he is adopted. But the episode now speaks

to discussions about the disclosure of origins in relation not so much to adoption—where that is usually now taken for granted—as in cases of sperm or egg donation or both, where it is a highly contested issue. In most cases, a donor parent will never have known that they engendered this particular child, who may well, in addition, have unknown biological half-siblings, perhaps many of them, all raised by different parents. What we might call the proto-parent is a different kind of parent for the child to know of or come to terms with, and all the more so when the eventual, postnatal parent or parents wish to forget this other origin, as used to happen in most cases of adoption. The donor parent is someone who, again in most cases, has never had a sexual or other relationship with the eventual parent of the other sex (the one with whose second gamete the baby is conceived) and who may, as in the so-called 'reproductive tourism' of those who seek IVF treatment abroad, have a different cultural origin from the future parents. Or else, at the other extreme, the donor may be confusingly close to home, a friend or someone who is already part of the family, but whose position in relation to the new baby is to be understood as other than that of a parent. The peculiar status of donors also raises the question of just how many parents a child can imagine or seek, now that both biologically and socially the old assumption has broken down that in the beginning there must have been two, who once had sex, and to whom the baby was born.

In the wake of the radical changes to the social and scientific modes of reproduction, a further question arises about what differences remain between mothers and fathers. I mentioned as shadowy the figures of Jocasta and Merope. Jocasta's account of the exposure of her baby is icily controlled, and ostensibly designed only to prove the uselessness of oracles rather than to express any feelings of hers about having, or losing, let alone killing babies—and in her case for a reason which, she believes, turned out to be mistaken. She assumes that that baby did die, and that it was not he who murdered Laius; she doesn't mention a prophecy of mother-marrying and incestuous children. On the Corinthian side, Merope is only represented as an obstacle to peace of mind: when the shepherd reports that Polybus is dead, Oedipus points out that even if the father-murdering issue is out of the way, what he crudely calls 'the one alive' or 'the living woman' (*tēs zōsēs*, l. 988) is still a source of fear. It is Polybus who is given some psychological interest: in the shepherd's report, he loved his son to bits because that was the lesson of his childlessness. And Oedipus

wonders, when told of his death, whether the oracle might not have been fulfilled after all, if Polybus died from grief at his son's departure, out of 'longing for me' ('*tōmōi pothōi*', l. 969). For Sophocles, it is only ever the fathers' emotions that are marked.

In our own time, perhaps the seeming neutralization of parental difference as the contribution of two separate but equal gametes, together with the new ascertainability of paternity and vagueness of biological maternity, have taken attention away from the dissymmetries that remain or that now appear in new forms. At the basic biological level, women have just a few hundred eggs, men an infinity of sperm; egg donation is a complicated and protracted process, while sperm donation is not. Pregnancy, whichever mother is doing it, is quite different from biological fathering. It is perfectly possible for a man to be unaware of being a father (and until DNA, arguably, it was impossible for him to be sure that he *was* a father); a woman cannot not know that she has given birth.

Sophocles' *Oedipus* touches on yet another issue in relation to the new ways of begetting, and getting, children in which, once again, some given differences between the sexes appear to be reaffirmed. I mentioned *Oedipus*' rush to surmise that the abandoned baby must have been used for profit. After the Corinthian messenger has spoken of the baby as a 'gift' to the childless Polybus (l. 1022), *Oedipus* suspiciously asks whether he had bought him (l. 1025). Indignantly, the shepherd denies this and points out that he was 'your rescuer, child, at that time' (l. 1030).

The new forms of transnational adoption and the new reproductive technologies almost always involve issues of money: babies, or the ingredients to make them, or the means of gestating them, can be bought. Private IVF clinics, as Sarah Franklin (1997) has argued, trade on the purchasability of an indefinite 'hope' that in reality is not usually fulfilled. In the past ten years, the internet has greatly facilitated processes of personal selection and research; surrogacy services, eggs and sperm, as well as ready-made babies, can be sought and found and paid for. Sophocles' dialogue between the shepherd and *Oedipus* is on the same ideological side as the standard modern revulsion against the mixing of babies with profit, but the (equally traditional) image of the woman or couple 'desperate' for a baby tends to override the monetary issue: the internet has had the effect of bringing down moral as well as national boundaries in this connection. Apart from the specifically financial aspect, some of the new

practices, some of the time, involve new forms of exploitation of women's labour (in both senses).⁴ As in sexual tourism, so-called, so in reproductive tourism, so-called: here the differences of women's bodies from men's determine what they can be used for or paid for; the technologization and depersonalization of baby production at one (scientific) level is matched at another by an age-old reliance on the bodily contributions of individual women's often painful work.⁵

Payment for reproductive services also makes them into an area of consumer choice. Potential parents can shop online for possible donors or surrogates, with different qualities emphasized or visible in each case: the donor's education and attractiveness, the surrogate's health and sturdiness. Here two newly separable bits of the mothering process may be divided not just between two individuals, but along class lines too (professional, educated women are not normally the ones who do surrogacy). While the argument about 'designer babies' has focused on the selection of embryos in IVF and the kinds of preference or requirement that should or should not be considered, such selection is seen as quite natural for the purpose of choosing donor parents, part of the process of 'sourcing' suitable pre-mothers or pre-fathers.

Oedipus' situation as one who was adopted from one country to another has the further effect of blurring his origins geographically, as well as parentally. The two are given equal weight in the characteristic ancient Greek identity question, put to every new arrival, every stranger who turns up, in tragedy or epic: *tis kai pothen?*—'Who are you and where do you come from?' With four parents and two countries of origin, this is another aspect of the confusions and multiplications of identity to which Oedipus is involuntarily subject.

⁴ I say 'women' because of the disparity mentioned above. With sperm donation, the oldest and simplest reproductive technology, which occurs in another form in IVF, there is no long-term labour involved. Egg donation, on the other hand, requires disruptive hormone injections and a sometimes painful process of extraction; while surrogacy takes pregnancy's full nine months and involves the woman in all its risks but few of its pleasures: she must consciously avoid the emotional bonding of a mother-to-be with the growing baby. In this regard, it is striking that many women are willing to offer their services as egg donors or surrogates as a gift; in some countries, including the UK, surrogacy is only permitted on an 'expenses only' basis.

⁵ Wet-nursing—whereby ladies' babies were given to lower-class women to be breastfed—is an earlier, postnatal version of surrogate mothering; but in that case the practice occurred not because the mother's own body could not do the job, but because the too bodily job was not thought to be socially appropriate for her.

Today, the growth of transnational adoption has made this once unusual situation seem characteristically modern and even ordinary. It occurs in another form when IVF babies are conceived abroad using sperm and eggs from local donors, and then born in the mother's home country; in this case the place of birth is set apart from the place of genetic origins.

Yet we should also remember that origin has always been—at least—double: two parents, and sometimes two places. When Oedipus gives his own life-story—as he knows it—he begins: 'My father was a Corinthian, Polybus; my mother Merope, a Dorian': no single origin even in the simple story. Similarly, a baby's parents always have two separate lives prior to their becoming that unit that 'had' him or her.

Sophocles' *Oedipus* continues to speak to issues of contemporary identity, just as it did for Freud. The play, like Freud's own theories, becomes like a buried source or origin, but one whose meanings change all the time, in each generation as it is unearthed and reinterpreted in the light of our new day—so like and so unlike the old days.⁶

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⁶ This chapter is a shortened version of an article that appeared in *Textual Practice* (2007) under the title 'Generations'. I thank the journal's editor for permission to reprint. Parts of the chapter also appear in my book *Freudian Mythologies: Greek Tragedy and Modern Identities* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

Part II

Modernity and its Price; Nostalgia and the Classic

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The Price of the Modern

Walter Benjamin and Counterfactuals

Christopher Prendergast

The title—‘The Price of the Modern’¹—both permits a degree of interpretative play and demands a degree of historical clarification. We could, first, coax the term ‘price’ a little. Beyond the obvious meaning of that which is lost in the triumph of modernity (understood politically as the victory of the Party of Egoism), there are other meanings, tied in particular to the exchange relation, the topic thus framed (and possibly compromised) by a commercial term intrinsic to the project and ideology of modernity itself. Might this then mean that a whole way of thinking—including critical thinking—about modernity has its origins in the fifteenth-century invention of the practice of double-entry bookkeeping (often posited as the very ground of modern commercial society)? Certainly the logic of pluses and minuses informs the notoriously brutal entry in Walter Benjamin’s bookkeeping ledger: ‘There is no document of civilization which is not at the same time a document of barbarism’ (1970: 258). I shall return shortly to Benjamin in more detail.

But what of our other term ‘modern’ and the famous pair ‘modernity/modernism’, a semantic question, to be sure but also, and inextricably, a temporal one, a ‘when’ as well as an ‘is’ question, namely ‘when was/is modernity?’ (my hesitation over tenses, past or present,

¹ The original version of this chapter was given at *The Price of the Modern* colloquium, in the strand *Tradition and the Modern*, AHRB Centre for Asian and African Literatures, May 2005.

itself an index of a major unresolved issue). The question of identity-definition is thus also a historical question, linked to origins and endings. Is modernity best understood as the 'project' described by Habermas issuing from the secular energies of the Enlightenment or, as in the French usages described by Antoine Compagnon's *Les cinq paradoxes de la modernité*, centred on the post-Enlightenment discourses of 'nihilism'? Is there a 'good' and a 'bad' modernity, along the lines sketched by Marshall Berman in *All That is Solid Melts into Air*, the adventurous makings of the later eighteenth century and the nineteenth century, as against the hollow, anaemic forms of the later twentieth century? Is 'modernism' most appropriately dated from somewhere in the late nineteenth century through to the onset of the Cold War, after which we enter, however variously defined and evaluated, the phase of 'postmodernity', or should it be taken further back, as Raymond Williams suggested, into the moment of 'realism' (as well as outwards to everything marginalized by the marketed image of the 'avant-garde')? Where you begin and end depends on the kind of story you want to tell. In the case of beginnings Fredric Jameson lists, in his recent book, *A Singular Modernity*, fourteen possible entries for a narrative *incipit*, adding mischievously that 'many more are lurking in the wings' and that, whatever we do with them, 'the "correct" theory of modernity is not to be obtained by putting them all together in some hierarchical synthesis' (2002: 32).

However most would agree—following Marx and Weber—that the birth, development and putative end of 'modernity' is bound to a set of historical processes that would include: the scientific revolution, the industrial revolution and the emergence of a market society, the spread of secularism, the hegemony of technology-based instrumentality, the encroachment of bureaucratic rationality, and the invention of the individual along with new forms of reflexivity. One thing that informs nearly all these processes is a triumphalist ideology, although the forms of self-consciousness inhabiting the modern construction of the individual also bore within them experiences of alienation and stances of contestation, in a trajectory from romanticism to modernism. But if existential and historical self-consciousness constantly reminds us of our own contingency, of the historically situated nature of the concepts by which we make sense of ourselves and our world, the relevant story is by and large buttressed by a very powerful vindicatory narrative. To take but one—though very central—example: the scientific revolution as a Kuhnian history of

paradigm-shifts is generally grasped not just as the replacement of one paradigm by another, but its replacement by one that is better, richer in explanatory power. This vindictory assumption, as Bernard Williams argued in a very remarkable paper (2006: 'Philosophy as a Humanistic Discipline') is what enables us to be 'modern' in the dual sense of remaining alert to our historical situatedness while at the same time escaping the trap of relativism.

As it happens, where the particular case of science is concerned, I think the vindictory story has a great deal to recommend it and that the social-constructionist case, however plausible in other regards, simply eclipses these vital epistemological challenges. But elsewhere the vindictory story is clearly in many ways suspect,² and it is in that connection that we do well to turn once more to those densely enigmatic ten pages or so by Benjamin, 'Theses on the Philosophy of History'. Commentary on this strange text now constitutes a veritable corpus. What I would like to do with it is to move from some brief remarks of a largely presentational sort to an aspect of it which the exegetical corpus often overlooks.

In the 'Theses', Benjamin attacks the classic forms of historicism. He does so on largely two fronts: first, the claim that the past can never be seen solely from the point of view of the past ('the way it really was', in Ranke's well-known formulation). The past is always something interpreted from the point of view of the needs and priorities of the present, although there are real constraints on just how far one can push the thought inherited from Nietzsche's *On the Uses and Abuses of History*, according to which the 'historicist' illusion (for Nietzsche a symptom of cultural 'sickness') must yield to the myth-making forces that promote

² Williams was fully alert to what was deeply suspect in vindictory versions of the enterprise of philosophy itself. The strong link made by his later thinking between history and philosophy was designed rather to encourage a certain humility before the historical contingency of our own conceptual framings of the world, however compelling the latter might seem to us. The history of philosophy was not simply the formal procession through time of the grand philosophical ideas. Nor was it a series of influences or translations whereby the terms of earlier philosophical questions could be readily translated into the terms of our own philosophical questions, with the almost invariable consequence of seeing our own answers in the vindictory mode, as vastly superior to earlier ones. The point of history of philosophy or historicized philosophy was to emphasize difference, in such a way as to enable an *estranging*, and thus questioning, relation to our own concepts and values. It is in this sense that we could reasonably describe Williams as a 'modernist', his philosophical approach and style as cognate with the modernist project of 'making it strange'.

not the cause of truth but that of 'life' (in *Truth and Truthfulness* Williams pithily summarizes this constraint anecdotally with the response of the Belgian Foreign Minister to the speculations of a German diplomat as to what future generations will make of World War I: 'one thing they will not be able to say is that Belgium invaded Germany').

Nevertheless, the present—and thus to a very great extent our view of the past—reflects a play of interests commanded by relations of social power. These relations determine both what is retained from the past and what is consigned to oblivion, history as winners' history (part of 'the spoils which fall to the victor'). Winners' history, when not just blatant myth-making, rationalizes its victory by means of two interconnected stratagems. The first is to cast history on the model of a linear continuity (what Benjamin calls 'homogeneous empty time'). History is succession, but succession governed by the second rationalizing principle, namely a continuity constructed also as a progress-narrative. Winners favour Whig narratives, the notion that not only do things get better, but do so because history is causally programmed to produce such benign outcomes. Causation in the structure of history is providential and teleological, even when understood in purely secular terms: 'Historicism contents itself with establishing a causal connection between various moments in history. But no fact that is a cause is for that reason historical. It became historical posthumously, as it were, through events that may be separated from it by thousands of years. A historian who takes this as his point of departure stops telling the sequence of events like the beads of a rosary' (Benjamin, 1970: 265).

This is a critique of a version of history that—to revert to a term I used earlier—is nakedly vindicatory. It is no surprise that it goes hand in hand with the celebration of modernity as unambiguously emancipatory, the modern as without price. The self-serving complacency of this view Benjamin exposes from a 1930s point of view, the point of view of revolutionary Marxism and the class war. It translates with a fair degree of ease, however, to some of our own debates about modernity and globalization, in connection with which the Whig narrative is so often touted (for example, Fukuyama's notorious end of history thesis so expertly dismantled by Jacques Derrida in *Spectres of Marx*). Benjamin's alternative to winners' history is a complex and multidimensional affair, engaging some of the densest pages of the 'Theses on the Philosophy of History'. Here I will highlight just two aspects, both relating to our more general topic (the price of the modern) and which turn on two of the central images of Benjamin's

text, the Angel of History (its back facing a future which is absolutely not providentially pre-written), and the Heliotropic (in which the past may burst utopically like a flashpoint into the present).

The first of these, based on the Klee painting, *Angelus Novus*, is the truly famous one, reflecting Benjamin's rejection of the historical progress-narrative and its relation to the projection of a future based on teleological accounts of the past (what is sometimes fetchingly called second-guessing the past). The latter, Benjamin writes, 'shows an angel looking as though he is about to move away from something he is fixedly contemplating. His eyes are staring, his mouth is open, his wings are spread. This is how one pictures the angel of history. His face is turned towards the past. Where we perceive a chain of events, he sees one single catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage and hurls it in front of his feet' (259).

The second image is the one I want to foreground here, namely the link between this emphasis on the past as debris and ruins and the motif of the Heliotropic, a turning to the sun that rises over an extinguished past, the buried aspirations of history's losers, history from the point of view of the historian 'who is firmly convinced that *even the dead* will not be safe from the enemy if he wins'. So far the enemy has always won, but an alternative way of historical thinking will resurrect the buried aspirations of the dead and the losers 'as flowers turn towards the sun, by dint of a secret heliotropism the past turns towards that sun which is rising in the sky of history' (257). This is generally taken to refer to a potential resurrection, the flashpoint at a moment of danger which recovers lost utopian dreams, 'blast(s) open the continuum of history' (264), and turns the key of the 'strait gate through which the Messiah might enter' (266)—in short, an image for Benjamin's linking of historical materialism and revolutionary politics. But I take it also to mean, along with a projection into a future framed by the radical concerns of the 1930s, a very particular way with the past that in recent times has received a great deal of attention, both negative and positive: namely a stress on the value of counterfactual historical thinking, on the might-have-beens of history that, under certain conditions, could become again its might-bes, a redemption of the high price of the dominant form of the 'modern' colonized by the ideologies and practices of the victor.³

³ Reinhart Koselleck has also championed a version of history from the point of view of losers rather than winners ('If history is made in the short run by the victors, historical

Historians and philosophers have, on the whole, not been kind to counterfactual speculation. It has of course proved more congenial to writers of fiction, to, for example, that other exile from Nazi Germany, Robert Musil, who cast his fictional ‘as if’ experiment in terms of the ‘sense of possibility’ and the ‘subjunctive mood’. But if fiction can provide a home to ‘possibilitarians’ (as Musil put it), history has been jealously guarded as a preserve in which the subjunctive mood has no place. In *What is History?*, that apologist of the iron laws of historical necessity, E. H. Carr, dismissed counterfactuals as ‘parlour games with the might-have-beens’ (1961: 97). It is certainly true that counterfactuals can be merely silly, and that hindsight history is not merely ideologically motivated winner’s history, but the only enabling position for a proper causal understanding of how and why it is that history has come out in this way rather than that. As Eric Hobsbawm (2006) has summed up this debate: ‘Counterfactual history can tell us in principle that history has no predetermined outcomes, but nothing about the likelihood of any other than the actual ones’. Hypothesizing about the counter-to-fact does nothing to alter the facts themselves. Yet, as Geoffrey Hawthorn has argued in a powerful defence of counterfactual thinking, the logical structure of historical explanation not only implies but entails *alternatives*. If X can be said to have caused Y, then, on the reasonable assumption—given the contingencies that accompany human decisions—that X was not preordained, had X not been present things would indeed have turned out differently.⁴

gains in knowledge stem in the long run from the vanquished’). Koselleck, however, is less interested in losers’ history in terms of the political energies released by the recovery of historically pulverized aspirations than in terms of its power to generate causal understanding of the past, which arises from the need to reflect on why things did not turn out as intended, expected, or hoped (as distinct from the far less taxing assumption of the winners that historical outcomes were foreordained). Koselleck (2002), 76.

⁴ Hawthorn (1991). One of the problems with counterfactuals is that they cover two linked yet very different kinds of question: the ‘might have’ and the ‘would have’ questions—is it plausible that X *might have* happened, and, had it happened, what *would have* ensued as a consequence? The first scenario is investigable to the extent that it rests on a determinable set of counter-to-fact possibilities. The second, however, is less readily investigable in that it opens onto an indeterminable sequence of long-range effects; it is in this second scenario that counterfactuals can readily become indistinguishable from fruitless speculative games. One can for instance get a fairly steady grip on the counterfactual proposition that the United States *might not* have entered the Second World War (there were strong reasons for it not to have done so), but it is quite impossible to get a correspondingly steady grip on what, in the longer run, *would have* ensued had it not done so.

Someone who in recent times has been notably sceptical of this way of looking at the past is Slavoj Žižek, and, since Benjamin's 'Theses' make an appearance in his case, it is worth dwelling on the terms on which it is made. Žižek (2005) takes a dim view of counterfactual history in the form of what-if narratives, as merely reflecting the idle fantasies that accompany historically unrealized preferences; the typical concern is not so much with what might have happened as with what one would have liked to have happened, the 'what if' as the 'if only'. It is, however, germane to this critique of preference-fantasies getting in the way of historical realism that Žižek's own preferences seem also to be in play. The target he has in his sights is not the imagining of alternative historical possibilities in general, but a very particular way of imagining them. The real objection is directed less at the 'what if' question than at the point of view of those asking it, namely (the example under discussion) the musings of the right-wing historian, Andrew Roberts, as to how things might (more happily) have turned out if Lenin 'had been shot on arriving at the Finland Station'. This is merely a partisan objection in a contest of views as to the meaning of the Russian Revolution. The next step taken by Žižek is, however, of an altogether different order of generalization: 'Why is the flourishing genre of "what if?" histories the preserve of conservative historians?'

Well, one answer is that it isn't, and indeed Žižek himself immediately retreats from his own generalization: 'I would rather question the premise that Marxists (and leftists in general) are dumb determinists who can't entertain alternative scenarios'. His consideration of alternatives goes by way of Benjamin, or more specifically Eric Santner's reading of the 'Theses', which posits attempts to 'redeem' the failed aspirations of losers' history as a field of symptomatic traces, the belated symptom as the expression of a missed opportunity: a present revolutionary intervention repeats/redeems failed attempts in the past. These attempts count as 'symptoms', and can be retroactively redeemed through the 'miracle' of the revolutionary act. They are 'not so much forgotten deeds, but rather forgotten failures to act, failures to suspend the force of social bonds inhibiting acts of solidarity with society's "others"'. Žižek glosses this in a variety of ways, some of which—as in the following example—can come out as might-have-beens of counterfactual thinking: 'And is not the ultimate source of *Ostalgie* (nostalgia for the Communist past) among many intellectuals (and ordinary people) from the defunct German

Democratic Republic also a longing not so much for the Communist past, but rather for what that past might have been, for the missed opportunity of creating an alternative Germany?’

This sketches the lineaments of a psycho-historical constellation made from an original hope, a frustration, a repression, and a later explosion in the form of a symptomatic displacement of the original aspiration (sometimes obscenely perverse, as, according to Žižek, in the case of *Kristallnacht*, though August Bebel’s harsher view that ‘anti-Semitism is the socialism of fools’ might seem more apposite). Nevertheless, while a close neighbour, this mode of *Nachträglichkeit* is not quite the same as the horizons of counterfactual thinking. Two quite different temporal grammars are involved. The latter calls for an imagining oneself in the position of the original actors confronted with a range of possible options, as distinct from an *après-coup*, hindsight perspective on the delayed (symptomatic) effects of missed opportunities. Let us briefly consider an example more congenial to those of radical left persuasions: the case of the (limited) Jacobin commitment to a version of direct or participatory democracy during the French Revolution.

It is a commonplace that what Robespierre and his closest colleagues stood for even in its most abstract form has been consigned to the dustbin of history because, in addition to the repugnant character of its tactical means of implementation, the project itself was fundamentally unworkable. Bernard Williams once referred to the intellectual underpinnings of the catastrophe-strewn Jacobin moment as ‘Saint-Just’s illusion’ (1995). The notion of ‘illusion’ he took from Marx and Engels (their discussion of Saint-Just in *The Holy Family*) and superimposed on it Constant’s view of the radical Jacobins as the embodiment of a ‘mistake’, namely the doom-laden attempt to map the ancient or classical-republican idea of liberty onto conditions for which it was wholly unsuited; however noble the pedigree of the classical-republican version of democracy, it did not constitute a plausible option for the modern world. The illusion or mistake consisted in believing that it did. There are of course some compelling reasons for indeed considering it to have been a non-starter. Even the arch-theoretician of the inalienability of sovereignty, Rousseau—a major influence on Robespierre—pointed up one such difficulty himself: given the physical size of modern polities, it was not possible for citizens to assemble on the public square after the manner of the Athenian polis.

On the other hand, categorically ruling it out as a non-starter may to a large extent be simply to assert an under-examined premise, a *parti pris* masquerading as a self-evident given. When Williams writes that ‘Saint-Just’s conception was alien to late eighteenth-century French society, just because it was drawn from a world in which the social structures, economic forms and people’s needs were very different’, we might perhaps be struck by the rashness of assuming access to the ‘needs’ of dead historical actors, especially when the—for this context—loaded term ‘people’ is invoked. The dead cannot speak to us, but a counterfactual history situating itself within the range of possibilities conceived by the historical actors themselves might ask those latecomers who judge their claims as implausible, why so? There are standardly two answers on offer: first, what they had in mind did not prevail; secondly, its attempted instantiation produced all manner of horrors, so awful as to suggest that the Jacobin episode was not just a ‘mistake’ but, more forcefully (the full sense of ‘illusion’), entailed some kind of cognitive derailment.

Neither answer is persuasive. The first is hindsight history as winners’ history in the sense of simply wiping out retrospectively all competitor options; the fact that one option prevailed, and that there were good reasons for its doing so at the expense of others, does not of itself mean that the others were necessarily implausible, it only means that they didn’t prevail.⁵ The second displaces history into psychopathology, and fails to give a satisfactory account of how it was that so many others also fell prey to the same ‘illusion’. If what made it an implausible option is history itself (the history that produced modern society and both the experiential forms and mental horizons of actors within that society), then Rousseau, Robespierre, and Saint-Just were themselves products of that same history. Their thinking was not the thinking of ‘aliens’, in some way radically unintelligible to the thought-space of modernity. Williams acknowledges that, however different from one another, modern and ancient conceptions also belong to a common history of thought: ‘Yet although it was alien to

⁵ We should not, however, confuse the attractions of counterfactual thinking with idle seductions. If what Hilary Mantel (2000) says is true (Robespierre believed ‘that if you could imagine a better society, you could create it’), this was clearly an ‘illusion’. There has to be some doubt, however, that, in this very bald form, this is what Robespierre actually believed. He may have entertained a political dream, but was not merely a dreamer. His enemies have of course often cast him in this role, the form of the dream typically characterized as nightmare.

that society, it was connected to it by an historical story . . . a picture of a past . . . that could be represented as modern Europe's own past'.⁶ The concession, however, puts pressure on the initial claim it allegedly modifies. Perhaps it was not such an implausible option after all; at the very least it cannot be dismissed as a mental aberration; it demands and deserves serious historical attention, as distinct from being merely brushed to one side in the name of the 'vindicatory' model of historical development that Benjamin sought to discredit.

The 'Theses' certainly lend themselves to the reading proposed by Santner and repeated by Žižek, but they also lend themselves to what I here construe as the proper sphere of the counterfactual. They may also help us deal with the question of the relevant tense for the history of modernity, present or past, as well as encouraging the exercise of what Raymond Williams (1983) once called the multiple tenses of the imagination.

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⁶ Williams (1995), 140. A spirited defence of the appeal of the idea of participatory democracy, along with a soberly realistic account of its prospects in the modern world, is to be found in Dunn (2005).

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Composite Cultures, Chaos Wor(l)ds

Relational Poetics, Textual Hybridity, and the Future of Opacity

Jonathan Monroe

Questions of postcoloniality are at their core, as Édouard Glissant of all writers consistently understands,¹ questions of representativeness and representation, of transparency and opacity, of the *how* as well as the *what* of cultural production, of the cultural locations and positions of writers and readers as well as the means of verbal interaction. Given the convergence of aesthetic, cultural, political, and economic concerns that drive inquiry into what is called the postcolonial, a convergence that has tended to privilege prose over poetry, explicit narrative, critical, theoretical exposition over obliquity, Glissant's work poses particular challenges. How are we to understand his movement between prose and poetry, between so-called 'critical' and 'creative' modes, terms his work reminds us require careful unpacking? What movement or directionality in the means of representation can we identify as representative in an oeuvre that reaches back to the early years of the Cold War, a frame of reference one might expect on first examination to figure far less centrally in Glissant's Caribbean imaginary than in a more narrowly American, European, francophone context?

While *métissage*—'The curse of this word,' Glissant writes in *L'Intention poétique*, 'let us inscribe it enormous on the page' (1969: 213)—has come to be understood as a representative postcolonial concern, there is a danger of interpreting what Jahan Ramazani has

¹ This article was written before Glissant's death on 3 February 2011; also before the publication of *Philosophie de la relation* in 2009.

called the 'hybrid muse' more as a matter of theme than form, of identity more than modality. In this respect, postcolonial poetry, Glissant's in particular, may play a special role in helping us 'sharpen our eye for the modalities of literary hybridization in other genres of postcolonial writing, making us more responsive to the specific aesthetic strategies and idioms through which writers creatively articulate their postcoloniality' (Ramazani, 2001: 184). To the extent that readers of postcolonial literatures may seek out texts that appear to open more explicitly, more transparently onto the political, they may tend to refuse more oblique, opaque modes of textuality, setting these aside as of only marginal interest to the task of calibrating the aesthetic, cultural, political, and economic to greatest advantage, in effect refusing or neglecting, with consummate irony, more 'marginal' or 'minor' modes in favour of a more instrumentalist approach to postcolonial concerns. While such an approach may appear to promise greater effectiveness, it risks compromising, in the process, the very diversity in the name of which it claims to proceed.

Diversity, as Glissant reminds us, not only through his explicit claims but in the multiple, hybrid modalities of his writing, is not a matter of fixed, stable identities but of ways of moving and being in the world, and in the word. While prose fiction and theory have tended to be privileged sites in postcolonial studies, Glissant's work occupies a special position, not only among such comparably influential Caribbean writers of the past half-century as Aimé Césaire, Derek Walcott, and Kamau Brathwaite, but among the most influential writers since the middle of the twentieth century generally in the equal weight his work gives to poetry and poetics—in verse and prose—as well as to fictional and theoretical modes. Although Glissant is best known in the Anglophone world for *Caribbean Discourse* and *Poetics of Relation*, which have tended to identify him more as a theorist than poet of postcoloniality, the development of a self-reflexively contemporary poetry and poetics has remained at the heart of his writing practice throughout his career. One of the great strengths of his approach to *Antillanité*, and by extension to the field of the postcolonial for which the Caribbean may serve as a privileged example, is that he understands both the reductiveness of generalizations of all kinds and the importance of moving between and among different discourses. Advancing in his consistently meta-reflexive, heterogeneous discursive practices an understanding of the Caribbean as, in Antonio Benítez-Rojo's words, a 'meta-archipelago'

characterized by a 'metarhythm' of 'discontinuous conjunction' at once 'excessive, dense, uncanny, asymmetrical, entropic, hermetic' (1996: 2, 4, 18, 23), Glissant has produced a body of work that is virtually without parallel, and not only in the Caribbean. Recalling in his particular context perhaps most closely the German cultural critic and poet Hans Magnus Enzensberger, Glissant interweaves poetry, poetics, cultural, historical, political, philosophical, and theoretical reflection. Placing these deliberately and consistently *in relation* to one another, he challenges efforts to hold them apart in separate spheres of mutually exclusive and autonomous, mutually unconcerned and uncomprehending discourse communities.

Like translation, 'which must in large measure refrain', in Walter Benjamin's words, 'from wanting to communicate something' (1969: 78), the hybridizing *discursive* force of Glissant's work takes place not only *between* but *within* particular works. As self-consciously, thoroughly *translational* acts in the fullest sense—at once intercultural, interdiscursive, and interdisciplinary—his poetic practices and reflections on poetics, his theoretical positionings and poetics of theory interanimate, interrupt, complicate, and destabilize one another. Exemplifying what Homi Bhabha has called 'disjunctive sites' that refuse to surmount 'the incommensurable meanings and judgements that are produced within the process of transcultural negotiation' (1994: 162), they resist the reductions of language, of discourse, as well as all understandings of identity, including ethnicity and race, to fixed, immutable categories. The questioning of identity, including but not limited to Caribbean identity, is inconceivable, in Glissant's understanding, apart from questions of discourse. Accordingly, the *forms* of Glissant's works merit more sustained attention if we are to understand the ways in which they envision the future of representation, representativeness, opacity, and hybridity. Developing a fundamentally translational understanding of poetry and poetics as a future of *oppositional* practices, they encourage what Jan Nederveen Pieterse has called 'a multifocus view on struggle' that 'transcends the "us versus them" dualism that prevails in cultural and political arenas' (2004: 117).

What, after all, is the locus of translation, of hybridity? Is it in textual matters, first and foremost, a matter of race, ethnicity, culture, nationality, socioeconomic standing? Hybridity is first and foremost, as Peter Hallward has observed, in keeping with Benjamin's and Bhabha's understanding of the term, 'a difference "within", a difference

without binary terms' (2001: 24). As such, as the 'nec-plus-ultra of any limit', it is also, as Alberto Moreiras has argued, 'the limit of the limit, an impossible possibility. As impossible possibility, it marks the constitutive split of any (hybrid) subject position' (2001: 295). While Gayatri Spivak rightly cautions against what she calls 'the triumphalist self-declared hybrid' of the 'postmodern postcolonialist' (1999: 361), Glissant's complex deployment of a specifically *discursive* hybridity has tremendous force in helping us understand that poetry, as thinking-language, is a potential laboratory where, as Lyn Hejinian has written in 'The Quest for Knowledge in the Western Poem', knowledge is produced and articulated 'in and amid the interconnections . . . between grammar and semantics', where 'meaning and its concomitant knowing abides' (2000: 227).

Whatever assumptions about authorial identities readers bring to any text, the inextricably intertwined questions of opacity and diversity in Glissant's work reveal themselves most consequentially in texts of every form and genre; in other words as specifically *textual* features—features that invite what Emily Apter has called a recentering of the aesthetic within the postcolonial (2006: 58). Whatever biographical background an author brings to his or her work, the author's specifically textual (including also aural) identity—his or her author function, *Wirkung*, or textual effect—is ultimately less a matter of ancestral lineages than of the textual strategies presently employed: whether to write, for example, in the anecdotal, narrative style of a Robert Frost, or in the deliberately dissociative, surrealist mode of an André Breton. While questions of diversity, hybridity, representativeness, and opacity may apply with equal urgency to a Derek Walcott or an Aimé Césaire, their relation to questions of Caribbeanness and of their representativeness *as writers* has less to do with their identity, in the current sense of the word, than with specifically textual decisions about how to deploy language, and with the kind(s) of texts these decisions generate. Although such decisions have no inherent political valence, as Peter Hallward has observed (2001: 125), whatever 'indirect political effect' they may have depends on the capacity 'to invent new ways of using words (new in either form or practice, or both), at a disruptive distance from inherited norms and expectations'—the capacity, as Glissant understands, 'to provoke people to think, rather than merely recognize, represent or consume' (Hallward, 2001: xix).

As anyone who has taught advanced seminars on postcoloniality can attest, clear distinctions between *personal-biographical* and *authorial-textual* identities cannot be automatically assumed, even among the most sophisticated of readers. Particularly in literary studies within a postcolonial frame of reference, confusions surrounding this fundamental distinction seem to be, if anything, even more pronounced than they might be in, say, theoretically informed seminars on poetry and poetics. Ironically, the prevailing orientation among readers of postcolonial literary texts, at least initially, and despite an otherwise keen interest in ‘theory’, tends rather to align them, when it comes to questions of identity, not with reductions of complex historical, political, contextual questions to what Ania Loomba has referred to dismissively as ‘linguistic interchange’ (1998: 150); but with the identity-based (dis)identifications that tend to characterize the perspective of so-called ‘creative writing workshops’. In their development over the past decades in the United States, and in marked contrast to the idea and practice of the ‘seminar’, with its ancient provenances, such workshops have tended to regard theory with antipathy and encourage approaches to writing—for example in courses at my university called ‘Writing for Readers’—that seek not so much to *translate* more or less manifestly ‘hybrid’ selves, as to *transcribe* them into more ostensibly transparent narratives, whether in verse or in prose.

THINKING, IMAGINING, POETICS

How profoundly foreign Glissant’s thinking, questioning poetry and poetics continue to be, in that regard, both for postcolonial readers—readers of and writers on the postcolonial within the academy—as well as for the reading and writing of poetry itself. This is perhaps particularly true of the United States, where the study and practice of writing throughout higher education tends still to be cordoned off from other disciplines, as well as divided within and often against itself. Over the past several decades, this compartmentalization has yielded three areas of specialization that have developed in tandem yet are seldom in sustained conversation with one another: (1) composition (the teaching of first-year writing, a peculiarly American phenomenon if not a uniquely American problem from a UK

perspective), (2) literary, cultural criticism and theory, and (3) creative writing (likewise a more American category and concern, though with some relatively recent inroads in the UK, as for example at the University of Warwick). In the context of this now thoroughly institutionalized disciplinary divide, from a US perspective, the irrepressibly hybrid, cross-genre, multi-disciplinary, trans-discursive, a- or anti-, or prospectively post-disciplinary character of Glissant's relational, translational poetics is as breathtaking as it is rare and inspiring. Such a poetics, as distinct from a predominantly biographical, anecdotally based poetics of diversity as personal memoir, has become progressively more difficult to imagine as competing understandings of writing and the production of knowledge within the American academy have become increasingly specialized and territorial.

'The highest point of knowledge', Glissant writes, 'is always a poetics' (1997: 140). Yet what kind(s) of knowledge does it offer? If it is a kind (or better, many kinds) of 'thinking', what distinguishes it from the kinds of thinking that characterize other disciplines? In Lyn Hejinian's provocative formulation, 'What does a poem know?' Is poetics a 'discipline'? How do different approaches to reading, writing, teaching, and learning in what are called 'workshops' and 'seminars' shape our understandings of diversity and hybridity? Are both equally well sites of 'thinking'? Are what is called 'thinking' and what is called 'imagining' the same? Are they somehow opposed to each other? Glissant's answer is decisive:

IMAGINARY

Thinking thought usually amounts to withdrawing into a dimensionless place in which the idea of thought alone persists. But thought in reality spaces itself out into the world. It informs the imaginary of peoples, their varied poetics, which it then transforms, meaning, in them its risk becomes realized.

Culture is the precaution of those who claim to think thought but who steer clear of its chaotic journey. Evolving cultures infer Relation, the overstepping that grounds their unity-diversity.

Thought draws the imaginary of the past: a knowledge becoming. One cannot stop it to assess it nor isolate it to transmit it. It is sharing one can never not retain, nor ever, in standing still, boast about. (1997: 1)

Imaginaire:

Penser la pensée revient le plus souvent à se retirer dans un lieu sans dimension où l'idée seule de la pensée s'obstine. Mais la pensée s'espace réellement au monde. Elle informe l'imaginaire des peuples, leurs poétiques diversifiées, qu'à son tour elle transforme, c'est-à-dire, dans lesquels se réalise son risque.

La culture est la précaution de ceux qui prétendent à penser la pensée mais se tiennent à l'écart de son chaotique parcours. Les cultures en évolution infèrent la Relation, le dépassement qui fonde leur unité-diversité.

La pensée dessine l'imaginaire du passé; un savoir en devenir. On ne saurait l'arrêter pour l'estimer, ni l'isoler pour l'émettre. Elle est partage, dont nul ne peut se départir ni, s'arrêtant, se prévaloir.

As these first words of *Poetics of Relation* make clear, the condition of possibility of a relational poetics depends, first and foremost, on the recognition that thinking and imagining—or what we might call in today's academic currency 'critical thinking' and 'creative writing'—must not be understood separately. Exemplifying his emphatic pursuit of non-dualistic modes of thought and imagination, *Poetics of Relation* begins with a powerful paratextual challenge. The text is prefaced and thus framed with the self-reflexive, meta-discursive 'Approaches'. The first of its five major sections, 'Imaginary' pre-empts any and all efforts to block the interanimation and interpenetration, the mutual understanding and cultivation, of a thinking imagination and an imaginative thinking. At once prose poem and *Denkbild*, it understands the importance of developing, as a way out of current impasses, a fundamentally translational, *appositional* logic and poetics, a poetics informed by the view that aesthetic and politics are ineradicably interrelated and mutually consequential. Understanding that language and translation are always embedded, as Susan Bassnett and Harish Trivedi have argued, 'in cultural and political systems' (1999: 6), Glissant draws on the 'imaginary of the past' to think-create a 'knowledge becoming', a complex dialectic that moves through but does not remain trapped in negation: 'It is sharing one can never not retain, nor ever, in standing still, boast about' (1997: 1). Glissant stands on the edge of this abyss of 'com-prendre', of under-standing (1997: 141)—comparable to what Jacques Derrida has called the *Abgrund* or 'falling away of/from knowledge'—toward

radical inquiry into what Glissant calls the ‘chaos-monde’. This is neither order nor disorder but a hidden (dis)order. Glissant proposes a vision of writing as a shared ‘chaotic journey’ that would dismantle, as an act of subversion through translation, the discursive, disciplinary, institutional compartmentalizations that separate ‘thinking’ from ‘imagining’, both inside and outside the academy.

‘Imagine’, ‘Imagine’, and again ‘Imagine’, Glissant writes in ‘The Open Boat’ (1997: 5 and *passim*), the first section of ‘Approaches’. Glissant extends this invitation, which is also an imperative, throughout the *Poetics of Relation*, from ‘The Open Boat’ to the book’s midpoint in ‘The Black Beach’, the fourth and final text of the book’s third section, ‘Paths’, to ‘The Burning Beach’, the fourth and final text of the fifth and final section, ‘Poetics’. Thinking-imagining in ways that both spiral outward and circle back, Glissant traces an intricate, simultaneously aleatory yet symmetrical procedure. Like *Le Discours antillais*, which is symmetrically arranged into four books of four sections each (following the initial eleven texts of the prefatory ‘Introduction’), *Poetics of Relation* pursues a symmetrical strategy consisting of five parts (‘Approaches’, ‘Elements’, ‘Paths’, ‘Theories’, ‘Poetics’) divided into four texts each. While all five parts and all four texts in each part have non-italicized titles, each part but the first begins, in turn, with an italicized paratext similar in form to ‘*Imaginary*’. Significantly, in contrast to the four remaining single-page, prose-poem, *Denkbild*-like texts of this kind (‘*Repetitions*’ in ‘Elements’; ‘*Creolizations*’ in ‘Paths’; ‘*Relation*’ in ‘Theories’; ‘*Generalization*’ in ‘Poetics’), ‘*Imaginary*’ immediately precedes the title-page of ‘Approaches’ (rather than immediately following), a position that underscores the exceptional, privileged, even ‘transcendent’ role of ‘thinking-imagining’ as point of departure and return.

COLD WAR CONTEXTS, POSTCOLONIAL FRAMES

In ‘A partir d’une situation bloquée’, the brief opening text of *Le Discours antillais*, Glissant writes: ‘The same H bomb is for everyone’ (1989: 1; Michael Dash’s English translation, ‘From a Dead-End Situation’, first appears in *Caribbean Discourse* in 1989, ironically, the year the Cold War comes to a close). Nearly three decades since its initial publication in 1981, *Le Discours antillais* remains one of the

most ambitious, consequential efforts of any writer anywhere in the world, not merely among Caribbean or postcolonial writers, to come to terms with what Arjun Appadurai has called imagination's 'projective sense', especially 'in its collective forms' (1996: 7). Yet for readers approaching Glissant's work through the lens of postcoloniality, especially those whose first language is English, and given its delayed reception in the Anglophone world, it is a work that no longer quite so obviously belongs to our present moment. Nonetheless, foregrounding questions of translation and what constitutes the modern, *our* modern, in a time of 'increasing acceleration', it raises as many questions as it answers about how we are to understand current impasses and discover possible solutions. To what extent is the 'blocked' situation addressed in 1981 by Glissant—who turned 80 in 2008, the year of Aimé Césaire's passing—still our own? To what extent is his writing still a guide to a present and future poetry and poetics?

It is important in approaching such questions to avoid what Frederick Cooper has recently called 'ahistorical history, which purports to address the relationship of past to present . . . without interrogating the way processes unfold over time' (2005: 17). Echoing the open, aleatory, associational mode of *Le Discours antillais*, yet less intent on invoking explicitly disciplinary frames of reference and even less subject to their constraints, *Poetics of Relation* both deploys and destabilizes, embraces and dismantles its pivotal terms in an attempt to move with and against, beside and beyond dialectical 'binarities' (1997: 199), a complete catalogue of which Glissant offers in the important final discursive footnote with which the book ends. Situating the book's trajectory from pieces written at the height of Cold War tensions in the early 1980s through the post-Cold War perspective that so suddenly and unexpectedly became available in the year before the book's publication, Glissant's catalogue of binarities registers as a kind of valedictory to frame-locked patterns of mistranslation, to ingrained Cold War habits of oppositional thinking-imagining, and along with these to the failed promises, entanglements, implications, limitations, and (im)possible legacies, the reductive, failed translations of capitalist as well as Marxist thought as well as political practice in postcolonial contexts.

One of the challenges of reading Glissant now, and one of the difficulties of communicating the realities of the 1980s to those currently studying postcoloniality, is to remember—that is, to

translate—how intractably blocked and frame-locked the Cold War horizon appeared at the time, in Glissant's words, from a 'planetary perspective' (1997: 162)—a perspective which is far removed from the post-1989 frame of reference to which that horizon has since given way. Acute remembrance of the Cold War context is essential for any reading of *Le Discours antillais* that seeks to understand its pivotal importance while avoiding the (ultimately diminishing, distorting) trap of a static, 'timeless' canonization and recuperation of the work as a Monument in the history of postcolonial thinking. Without historicization of this kind, readers risk a nostalgic, reductive celebration of probative questions of difference and diversity that have become immensely more complicated and unsettling after 9/11, and after the second Iraq war, than they may have appeared to many, especially in the American university, in the context of 1990s multiculturalism and identity politics.

As the Glissant of *Le Discours antillais* understood from within the Cold War frame—with essays extending across the full decade of the 1970s from the height of the Vietnam War in 1969 (the collection's second earliest contribution, the only earlier one reaching back to 1962) to 1979, and to the publication of the whole in 1981—that frame's 'blocked situation' placed limits for the Caribbean writer, as for virtually all writers from a 'planetary perspective', on what are called 'thinking' and 'imagining'. Working against dualistic ways of conceiving these terms as well as other starkly *oppositional* Cold War 'binarities', Glissant moved in the 1980s toward what he would subsequently call, in one of the *Poetics of Relation's* pivotal, neglected passages, a poetics of *opposition* (1997: 165, italics mine).

Le Discours antillais moves systematically through a capacious series of disciplinary perspectives incorporating elements of what have since come to be called diasporic and trauma studies, as well as the more established fields of anthropology, ethnography, historiography, sociology, poetics and literary criticism, psychoanalysis, linguistics and discourse analysis, geology, political science, political economy, and cultural criticism. In its more asystematic selection, organization, and presentation in English as *Caribbean Discourse: Selected Essays*, *Le Discours antillais* loses in translation something of the original's systematically multi-disciplinary character. In the US and more broadly Anglophone context, especially among readers and writers with a more formalist orientation toward poetry and poetics, this loss has no doubt proved consequential for the work's reception.

Making available in English the complete text of *Poétique de la relation* (*Poétique III*, 1990), Betsy Wing's translation as *Poetics of Relation* (1997) allows Anglophone readers to experience, by contrast, the full structure and force of Glissant's attempt to work through the conceptual and political aporias of the 1980s—the decade that would culminate with the sudden, unexpected dismantling of the Cold War frame—toward a hybrid, a-disciplinary (or anti-, or trans-, or post-disciplinary), appositional poetics.

TOWARDS A POETRY AND POETICS OF APPOSITION

Glissant's fundamental project in the pivotal two decades of his work of the 1970s and 1980s was to move through and beyond the legacies of the colonial past that remained frozen within the Cold War frame, and towards the thinking-imagining of a liberated 'new world' on the other side of the Cold War's binary structures and hegemonic powers. Applying the Benjaminian model of a constellation between present and past to *Le Discours antillais* (1981) and *Poétique de la relation* (1990), and at a distance of roughly three decades from the former and two decades from the latter, how might we translate the blocked situation that gave rise to Glissant's work to our own current context? After 1989, after 9/11, after/during the Iraq and Afghan wars, after Katrina, after the tsunamis, cyclones, earthquakes, can poetics still lay claim to being, in the age of information, the age of Facebook and the World Wide Web, the age of suicide bombings and the endless war on terror, the age of global warming, 'the highest point of knowledge', as Glissant claimed it could in 1990, one year after the fall of the Wall? I believe it is the multiple, virtually infinite asynchronicities shaping Glissant's reception which call for the "'Dead-End" Situation' that generated his work through 1989 to be reappraised in the light of a Benjaminian constellation and translation of present and past, both 'within' and 'between' diverse temporal, linguistic, cultural contexts, each of which is itself non-unified, heterogeneous, subject to continual interpretation and reframing.

Where *Le Discours antillais* records Glissant's efforts to come to terms with the 1970s, *Poétique de la relation* carries forward this

process through the 1980s to the final year and immediate aftermath of the Cold War period—yet only appearing in English in 1997, seven years after the original—that had to that point provided a hegemonic frame for roughly two-thirds of Glissant's life (b. 1928). As overdetermining as the Cold War had been for the (im)possibility of developing a relational, cross-cultural, appositional poetics, one of Glissant's crucial contributions to questions of postcoloniality has been his understanding of the extent to which the Caribbean, specifically Martinican context could help dislodge and transform reductive patterns of mistranslation and the habits of ideological thought, particularly the constrained and limiting ideological thinking-imagining that came with four decades of Cold War antagonisms. Glissant's reference to the 'H bomb' calls us back to that frame of reference which has receded with increasing acceleration in the face of other pressing realities since 1989, the twentieth anniversary of which a no-longer bilateral world celebrated in 2009. Yet what is most decisive about Glissant's interventions in the 1970s and 1980s is the understanding that from a non-Western perspective the bipolar, binary structure of 'planetary consciousness' (1997: 202) during the Cold War was always equal parts illusion and reality. For beneath the patterns of misinformation, mistranslation, and domination perpetrated and perpetuated by the Cold War's hegemonic powers lay the 'hidden order' (1997: 94), which was also the structure of disorder, of the 'chaos-world', a world always already there which his work as much as any other succeeded in articulating, in both prose and verse, while the dominating powers worked their way through the aporias of their own construction. While the potential devastation of a global nuclear war might have been 'the same for everyone'—fear of which, before 1989, lest we forget, could make today's fears of an endless war on terror pale by comparison—Glissant understood that the 'dead-end', frozen conflicts of the hegemonic powers scarcely allowed them to see, much less effectively translate, the realities of Martinique and the other 'small countries' (1989: 3) in the Caribbean and elsewhere—the pasts, presents, and futures of which Glissant sought to affirm.

Shaped by his recognition that Martinique and the Antilles were largely invisible to the United States and the Soviet Union, at the margins of their hegemonic projections of linguistic, social, economic, and military power, Glissant's relational, translational, appositional poetry and poetics lay claim to a 'right to opacity' that is at its core, as Celia Britton has observed, an 'active, positive form of

resistance' (1999: 8). Less a form of critique than an 'alternative model' (20), opacity is a form of discursive *maronnage*, a way to evade and survive if not escape the binarities that structured and informed virtually all thinking-imagining of that era. Given our current version of Glissant's 'dead-end situation', with all it has revealed in the way of failed transparencies and destructive opacities, how are we to conceive Glissant's demand for the 'right to opacity for everyone' (1997: 194), in company with the demand for a right for everyone to an apposite, oppositional poetry and poetics? What kind of a poetics does Glissant's 'discourse on discourse' exemplify, insofar as it resists and refuses exemplarity altogether (as the 'generalizing universal'), both in its verse form and in its aleatory, philosophical, theoretical prose, for which Montaigne's essays serve as prototype?

In nine books of poetry published over four decades, between 1954 and 1993, Glissant pursues a remarkably programmatic strategy. Moving freely between verse and prose both within and between collections, he alternates as well between two dominant procedures which, though best understood along a continuum rather than as either/or choices, create an ongoing dialectical rhythm from the first book to the last across his entire oeuvre. The first of these procedures, more hypotactic, narrative, epic, expository, theatrical, and oppositional, characterizes especially *Un champ d'îles/A Field of Islands* (1952), *Les Indes/The Indies* (1955), *Pays rêvé, pays réel/Dream Country, Real Country* (1985), *Le Sel noir/Black Salt* (1960), and *Les Grands Chaos/The Great Chaoses* (1993). The second, more paratactic, disjunctive, lyrical, fragmented, associational, and appositional, characterizes *Le Sang rivé/Riveted Blood* (1947–54), *La Terre inquiète/The Restless Earth* (1954); *Boises/Yokes* (1979), and *Fastes/Fastes* (1991). Here are examples from each of these two procedures:

THE CALL [From *The Indies/Les Indes*, 1955]

1492. *The Great Discoverers hurl themselves upon the Atlantic, in search of the Indies. With them begins the poem. Also all those, before and after this New Day, who have known their dream, lived off it or died from it. The imagination creates ever new Indies, for which men quarrel with the world. . .*

I

Upon Genoa the field of adventure-bells shall open.
O lyre of bronze and wind, in the lyrical air of departures,
The anchor is in order! . . . (69)

L'Appel

1492. *Les Grands Découvreurs s'élancent sur l'Atlantique, à la recherche des Indes. Avec eux le poème commence. Tous ceux aussi, avant et après ce Jour Nouveau, qui ont connu leur rêve, en ont vécu ou en sont morts. L'imagination crée à l'homme des Indes toujours suscitées, que l'homme dispute au monde . . .* (109)

I

Sur Gênes va s'ouvrir le pré des cloches d'aventures.
O lyre d'airain et de vent, dans l'air lyrique de départs,
L'ancre est à jour! . . . (111)

Africa [From *Black Salt / Le Sel noir*, 1960]

I saw the distant land, my light. But she belongs only to those who make her fruitful; within me, not I in her.

The tribes waged war for the custody of salt, nations raise armies, to learn to savor. May the tillers of night also drink at this morning's spring.—Another land calls me.

It is Africa, and it is not. For me it was a silent land. Listen. Everyone is dancing, in the just ways of his body and his voice, in honor of the eternal fire. (118)

J'ai vu la terre lointaine, ma lumière. Mais elle n'est qu'à ceux qui la fécondent en moi, et non pas moi en elle.

Les tribus guerroyèrent pour la garde du sel: les nations lèvent pour apprendre la saveur. Que ceux qui ont houi la nuit boivent aussi à la fontaine de ce matin.—Une autre terre m'appelle.

C'est Afrique, et ce ne l'est pas. Elle me fut terre silencieux. Ecoutez. Chacun danse, dans la justice de son corps et de sa voix, en l'honneur de l'éternel feu. (203)

Country [From *Yokes/Boises*, 1979]

In the passageway south of lands. In the morning's salty frost. In the vigor of clay digging this fate. In the decrepitude of the flat palm of hands. In the voice of the infinite through deserts and waterspouts. In an echo with neither wave nor din. In the begging. In a wound deep within somber greens . . . (159)

Pays

Dans l'allée au sud des terres. Dans le gel salé du matin. Dans l'énergie d'argile à terrer ce destin. Dans la caducité des plats de paume. Dans la voix d'infini par les déserts les trombes. Dans l'écho sans onde ni fracas. Dans la mendicité. Dans une laie au profond des verts sombres. . . (264)

Poetic [From *Yokes/Boises*, 1979]

Understand heat time

Rock heat

wedded sorrow

vaporous cry

vowel by vowel

made concrete. (167)

Poétique

Comprendre temps chaleur

Roche chaleur

douleur mariée

cri vaporant son mot

voyelle à voyelle

concrétées. (274)

Gît-le-Cœur [From *Fastes*, 1991]

Fallen Destinies devised the chessboard

And Paris has lost the victor's chalice.

It is a marble, it is like Rock, we mesh

La Tarantule with *L'An Deux*, mortality, *L'Ange à Tobie* (206)

Gît-le-cœur

Les Destins dévalant dérivaiient la table d'échecs

Le hanap du vainqueur n'est ores dans Paris, hélas.

C'est une bille. C'est comme Roche, nous emmélions

La Tarentule avec *l'An-deux*, la vie, *l'Ange à Tobie* (359)

[From *The Great Chaoses/ Les Grands Chaos*, 1993]

... *The echo-world speaks indistinctly. The language of the island promises to harmonize with that of the continent, the archipelagic with dense spread-out prose. A disarticulated song in rigid stones, on the trace that leads from story to poem.* (225)

... *L'écho-monde parle indistinctement. Le langage de l'Île promet de s'accorder avec celui du continent, la parole archipélique avec la dense prose étalée. Un chant désarticulé en roches raides, sur la trace qui mène du conte au poème.* (399)

These contrapuntal juxtapositions suggest that what Sandra Bermann and Michael Wood have called the 'difficult suturing' of the 'body politic' is, for Glissant, a matter of 'linguistic ligatures . . . the lexicon and syntax of a given language' (2005: 2–3). On the one hand, the passages above from *The Indies* (*Les Indes*), *Black Salt* (*Le Sel noir*), and *The Grand Chaoses* (*Les Grands Chaos*) are more likely to satisfy

readers of postcolonial texts looking for an effect of transparency in which the oppositional political/historical stakes of postcoloniality (as trauma) are immediately manifest. On the other, the more oblique, opaque, appositional strategies of *Yokes (Boises)* and *Fastes* register a potentially generative, productive gap between Glissant's representations of disparate, multiple locations (as experience and as discourse) and those a given reader might recognize, whether through general knowledge or from first-hand experience. While the former 'add up' to more readily graspable narratives, the latter leave the reader at once more disorientated, perhaps more frustrated, yet also, potentially, for that very reason, should the reader take up the invitation, more actively engaged. While the former offer hypotactic, narrativizing enactments of historical trauma that are at once individual and collective, the more paratactic, appositional strategies of the latter point towards the development of a post-oppositional poetry, poetics, and politics. Refracting rather than opposing the oppositional dynamics and dialectical closure of his more hypotactic, epic-narrative poems, which remain subject to the traumatic past they seek to transcend, paradoxically frame-locked into the traumatic history and conceptual structures they contest, the paratactic incompleteness of the appositional points to a poetics of the future.

Such an appositional poetics depends, not for its completion or realization, but for its furtherance, on the active reader's commitment to be a co-producer of the text's meanings. Understood in this way, apposition, at once syntactic and semantic, has something approaching the liberty of free (though not unconstrained) play, the play of the imagination to take up and become other than, not simply to oppose, past poetic practices, to inflect them in new, as-yet-unforeseen directions. Resisting the closure of past practices, appositional poetics thus refuses pre-ordained roles and frame-locked connections in favour of more open-ended juxtapositions, the directionality of which depend on the reader's as much as the author's capacity and interest in moving *elsewhere*. Although the two procedures may be said to complement and even require each other, particularly from a non-static, properly historicized perspective, the more appositional strategies of *Le Sang rivé/ Riveted Blood* (1947–54), *Boises/Yokes* (1979), and *Fastes/Fastes* (1991) especially provide a glimpse of a 'future of opacity' that respects and encourages diversity as a *textual* as well as a political matter, with implications which in that way are both individual and collective, personal and social.

Paradoxically, as Michael Dash has observed, *Poétique de la Relation* is 'most interesting in its pursuit of the concept of opacity . . . could perhaps just as easily be called *Poétique de l'opacité*' (1998: 154). As the acts of thinking-imagining-translating evoked at the beginning of *Poetics of Relation* remind us, Glissant's emphasis on the right to opacity reaches centuries back behind the immediate Cold War frame to its historical roots in the trauma of the Middle Passage, the inaccessibility of Africa to Africans, the rootlessness of the Caribbean experience, and the particular internal, individual and collective opacities that resulted from the Slave Trade. Interwoven with this ineradicable historical trauma, one of the enduring values of Glissant's work resides in its recognition that the right to opacity, specifically as aligned with the thinking-imagining project of a relational, oppositional poetry and poetics, has been with us in the West at least as far back as Plato. That right and that demand, Glissant reminds us, will not easily go away and merits (re)claiming anew with every generation, according to each person's, each community's 'situational competence', which cannot be assumed—much less desired—to be 'universal'. For Glissant, the right to opacity manifests itself above all in the demand for genuine textual (as well as aural) diversity and singularity, the irreducibly particular *poetics* of a 'nongeneralizable Universal'. Accordingly, nothing is more characteristic of Glissant's writing practice than the questioning and mixing of genres, a discursive *métissage* and *maronnage* that is both medium and message. As his poetry is as likely to be in prose as in verse, so his more theoretical prose places the analytical and the imaginative, the critical and the creative, on equal footing, interweaving these to the point of dismantling distinctions among them in ways that underscore and contribute as well to the dismantling of essentialist understandings of ethnicity and identity, where miscegenation of the *what* and the *how* of a text go hand in hand, and where these are understood to be in fact inseparable from each other. 'There is nothing to apologize for', Robert Young has written, 'in the idea of cultural politics—it has always been central to the practice of liberation, and radical activists still have much to learn' in developing 'new forms' that contribute 'to the creation of dynamic ideological and social transformation . . . forms of emancipatory politics' (2001: 11). While Young assigns that task to 'theory's intellectual commitment', Glissant understands it as a task for poetry as well. Valuing poetry's importance as, in Hejirian's words, a 'language of inquiry', Glissant encourages a

thinking-imagining that moves beyond oppositional aesthetics and politics to an emphasis on multiplicities, and alternatives to dualistic thinking in all its destructive manifestations. Inquiring into the continuing development of relational, translational, appositional approaches to knowledge-making and the sharing of knowledge remains, as Glissant understands, one of the current century's greatest challenges, a challenge with implications far beyond more conventionally narrow approaches to that vast, heterogeneous, mobile, diverse, opaque field of inquiry known as poetry and poetics.

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Time, Free Verse, and the Gods of Modernism

Ian Patterson

We live as did the ancients when their world was not yet disenchanted of its gods and demons, only we live in a different sense. As Hellenic man at times sacrificed to Aphrodite and at other times to Apollo, and, above all, as everybody sacrificed to the gods of his city, so do we still nowadays, only the bearing of man has been disenchanted and denuded of its mystical but inwardly genuine plasticity. Fate . . . holds sway over these gods and their struggles . . . Today the routines of everyday life challenge religion. Many old gods ascend from their graves; they are disenchanted and hence take the form of impersonal forces. They strive to gain power over our lives and again they resume their eternal struggle with one another. What is hard for modern man, and especially for the younger generation is to measure up to workaday existence . . . it is weakness not to be able to countenance the stern seriousness of our fateful times.¹

CONTINGENCY

The early years of the twentieth century are marked by a new freedom to reshape and re-voice poems in translation. Complexities of national and international allegiance, theories of history that

¹ Weber (1991 [1919]), 148–9. ‘Wissenschaft als Beruf’ was first delivered as a lecture in 1918.

foregrounded cyclical or periodic patterns of change rather than consistent forward progress or slow degeneration, and an acuter sense of the international inheritance of anglophone prosody, all meant a more urgent focus on the philosophical potential of prosodic as well as semantic temporalities. If the task of the philosopher was critically to expose the forms of thought, the task of the poet was equally to expose, in the microcosm of each poem, the critical forms of poetic thinking. And as philosophy, at least in Nietzsche's view, is always investigating the nature of time, and always against its own time, a philosophy of the future, so the modernist poem is also critiquing its time and critiquing time itself in the experience of the poem which is, like music, a form cut out of time, and, like translation, a time cut out of its time. The poem will always have more than one temporality: the historical temporality of its composition, the temporality of its sources and originals, especially if it's a translation, the temporality of its performance in each reading, and the temporality of its memories, conscious and unconscious, will all be encoded in its words, its topoi, its tropes, and its engagement with its generic antecedents. Johannes Fabian's argument for 'a theory of culture that would assign crucial epistemological significance to temporal relations' (2002: 51) may find an echo in the investigation of these poetic temporalities, especially where they themselves reflect, or reflect on, cultural alterity.

Use of translation, mythology, quotation, allusion, and other forms of encounter with earlier texts or other cultures are a familiar feature of Modernist writing, and they have been widely recognized as complicating the relations between texts and time, temporality and form, progress and reaction. Ezra Pound's ambition to write an epic as 'including history', and Stephen Dedalus's vision of history as a nightmare from which he is trying to awake, suggest something of the difficulty in controlling and managing their awareness of the shaping presence of the past. Here I want to look at the different ways they are used in the work of three writers, Ezra Pound, Mary Butts, and T. S. Eliot, in each of whom the fantasy of a destructively self-absorbed modern culture stimulated a conservative literary impulse which nevertheless in each case took a radical literary form. Counter to that self-absorption they created something deliberately indigestible against which the organism of a culture could redefine itself in discomfort. In their work a version of the historical past haunts or constitutes or defines a dense and inadequate modernity through

synchronic (poetic) re-presentation (Pound), by the pathos of lost moral and existential coherence (Eliot), and by the continuing but underestimated presence of powerful forces (Mary Butts).

Less commented on than that, but underlying it, is the coincidence of the cultural conditions in which free verse emerged at the end of the nineteenth century with an unprecedented range of uncertainties about time. The operations of the financial market, developments in physics and statistics, the superannation of Euclidean space, the impact of the city and new transit systems, demographic and political changes, and the implications of untamed chance for the human subject, all contrived to create a new primacy for the place of anticipation, both pleasurable and acutely anxious. This anxiety is visible in the operations of cultural memory. Parallel with the work of destruction and renewal in free verse, there is a desire, spoken or implicit, for something more stable, traditional, and above all 'lost'. Often this is played out in an ambivalence about the lyric and its capacity to transcend time, but it also bleeds into a wider ambivalence about modern time, contingency, and nostalgia.

This is a period in which poems which enact or incorporate translation and quotation take on almost the character of *Doppelgänger* in their uncanny doublings of temporal awareness. The French vogue for free verse, which inspired the anglophone symbolist and imagist poets, stems from Laforgue's translations of Whitman into French, an event almost as significant as Baudelaire's translations of Poe. It is therefore particularly fitting that the development of free verse in English should derive from the French example as much as from the native tradition; the process of translation being as much a part of this moment of cultural redefinition as the relaxation of attitudes to prosodic form. Aptly, the first poem of Whitman's which Laforgue published in French translation alludes to this moment of cultural conflict and crisis: 'One's-self I sing, a simple separate person, | Yet utter the word Democratic, the word En-Masse.' Christopher Prendergast has described Baudelaire's earlier 'experience of the crowd' as an unmediated struggle with language, 'involving discontinuity, improvisation, uncertainty and encounter with the incalculable',² and this now reveals a new uncertainty about the self, as well.

² Christopher Prendergast, 'Baudelaire, Benjamin and Modernity', unpublished paper.

The subjective phenomenology of urban experience is symptomatic of issues to do with chance as a consequence of which the experience of lived anticipation takes on a new and anxious character; this is reflected in the emergence of free verse, as the *form* of poetic knowledge best capable of adequation to this changing world. But while this new liberated verse form is an articulated structure of anticipation, it is not merely a response to or a reflection of modernity, but an expression of a new historical epistemology, a need to be situated in an open relation to futurity. At the same time, translation and the cadences of translation being intrinsic to its practice (especially in Imagism and, as we shall see, in Pound), these poems are simultaneously concerned to voice, or to appear to be voicing, a historically earlier consciousness. There seems to have been a felt need for a kind of historical or mythical ventriloquism, the sort of thing which reached more extended and elaborated configuration in *Cathay*, Pound's collection of (indirect) translations from the Chinese, and in his *Homage to Sextus Propertius*, where the creation of a poetic voice is even more layered and complex.

The most decisive conceptual event for science in the twentieth century was, Ian Hacking suggests, 'the discovery that the world is not deterministic', and that the structure of causality is changed so that 'the past does not determine exactly what happens next' (1990: 1) (similarly, the most influential literary argument was perhaps T. S. Eliot's claim that tradition was more like consciousness than like archaeology: 'Whoever has approved this idea of order, of the form of European, of English literature, will not find it preposterous that the past should be altered by the present as much as the present is directed by the past').³ The progress towards this discovery was one of the most significant changes of the nineteenth century. The shift from an Enlightenment psychology based on rationality to a normative one based on social science and statistics encompassed a vast programme based on the emergence of probability theories. But there was another side to this: the more statistical science developed, and the more that norms appeared to control the social world, the greater grew the emphasis placed on random factors, on chance itself. Chance, in its metaphysical starkness, was an ineradicable residue, and instead of being—as it had previously been—the preserve of the vulgar or the superstitious, it took on a more atavistic and intractable character.

³ Eliot (1928), 50.

In this aspect, its spokesmen are Nietzsche and Mallarmé. Creation itself, in Nietzsche's reading, is the necessity of chance figured in the divine dice throw, the 'most ancient nobility of the world' which Zarathustra 'restored to all things: [delivering] them from their bondage under purpose'.⁴ Necessity and chance are thus intimately linked, neither can exist without the other. One throw of the dice, however fully incorporated into theories of statistical probability, will never abolish chance.

The epistemic confusion generated by urban living, by crowds and seemingly random movement, and by the deracination of forms of reassurance provided by the more manageable pace of pre-urban life effectively banished regularity and totalizing systems, relegating them to an increasingly fictional or ideological realm of sentiment and nostalgia. The increased domination of the market was itself an instantiation of gambling, of the operations of chance and of attempts to control it. The vast network of systems of social relations that underpinned the workings of the stock market, for example, was sufficiently unstable to require the establishment of defence mechanisms such as the limited liability company and the modern insurance business: the depredations of Fortune to which mercantile capital had traditionally been subject came increasingly to be replaced by an interplay of speculation and self-defence, in another significant example of the operations of chance. This is the context in which the figure of the gambler is foregrounded as what Baudelaire regarded as the modern type of the 'archaic image of the fencer',⁵ as both of them meet in the compositional struggle with the incalculable in the sphere of the improvisatory and the discontinuous. The gambler lives in (and lives out) a perpetually expectant relation to the future; his temporality is perverse in that his desired future is always out of his control and simultaneously seems almost within reach: it's just a question of finding the right moment.

Where is this moment, and what relation does it have to time? The principal feature of the new form of free verse, in Clive Scott's words, was to act 'as a release of the present from its assimilation by the past and the future, and into its own changing instantaneousness, into its own self-generating processes' (1990: 14–15). The emancipation called for new techniques, and new relations with the body's temporalities of breath and inflection. The past—in the shape of regular

⁴ Cited in Hacking (1990), 148.

⁵ See Benjamin (1973), 135.

poetic forms, predictable metre, and rhyme—was to be replaced by experimentation, including new and revived verse forms, use of the conversational, monologic voice, unpoetic rhymes and a new interest in subjective psychology, all pointing to a relation between inner and outer voice, matching a complex, growing, cognitive field. We can think about the emergence of free verse epistemologically, in terms of the incapacity of regular verse to carry out the intellectually innovative work necessitated by modernity. We can speculate about ways in which the search for new ways to think about temporality and space in the years around 1900—via multidimensional geometry, imperial cartography, metaphysics, or Bergsonian philosophy—shaped avant-garde aesthetics. But poetry has to be able to articulate the world: its compositional moment is the intersection of a perceived objectivity with the resources of the poetic, as mediated through the being and consciousness of the writer. And the resources of the poetic enter into difficult and only potentially productive relations with the psychic measure of the poet's time.

RETURN

It is better to perceive a god by form, or by the sense of knowledge.
(Ezra Pound)

Free verse, in its opposition to regular forms, is not so much anti-metrical as metrically undetermined: its rhythmic structure requires a constructive collaboration between the poet and reader which has to be renewed with each poem. In this sense, it is a constant renegotiation and re-evaluation of its own constitutive features. Like Nietzsche's philosophy which (in Deleuze's reading) becomes *genealogy*, and its task 'the evaluation of the value of values, which means, questioning our ways of being, our modes of existence',⁶ free verse embodies this endeavour by opening up the rhythmic field of the poem to its own engagement with its future, its becoming. But making it new, to use Pound's phrase, is not always enough.⁷ Modernity exacts a price, opening up the present to

⁶ Olkowski (1995), 28.

⁷ Gestures of complete rupture with the past, on the other hand, like those of Marinetti or the Dadaists, are parallel to the problem itself, attempts to ignore or

unexpected returns of the past. The disenchanted urban world may become disenchanted with its new gods and want the old ones back.

Curiously enough, this seems to be the condition of most of the first wave of anglophone free verse, as soon as its ambitions rose above the impressionistic. The influence of Frazerian thought on readings of classical literature and mythology reveals a strong urge to re-enchantment and re-imagination. One of Ezra Pound's earliest free verse poems, 'The Return', demonstrates this effectively, at the same time offering an explicit consideration of the nature of free verse. He described it as possessing 'an objective reality and . . . a complicated sort of significance'. The claim to 'objective reality' is gnomic, but its significance is certainly complicated.

The Return

See, they return; ah, see the tentative
Movements, and the slow feet,
The trouble in the pace and the uncertain
Wavering!

See, they return, one, and by one,
With fear, as half-awakened;
As if the snow should hesitate
And murmur in the wind,
 and half turn back;
These were the "Wing'd-with-Awe,"
 Inviolable.

Gods of the wingèd shoe!
With them the silver hounds,
 sniffing the trace of air!

Haie! Haie!

These were the swift to harry;
These the keen-scented;
These were the souls of blood.
Slow on the leash,
 pallid the leash-men!⁸

transcend the anxiety of historical continuity by simply denying it. At their most productive, such gestures refigure the compositional process itself by incorporating randomness, experiments which parallel similar movements in statistical theory. The same is true of cut-up, of collective poems, automatic writing, and other methods popularized by the surrealists. Statistics and poetry can then be seen as two sides of a single coin: how to cope with chance.

⁸ Pound (1912).

The title locates the poem's occasion within a temporal sequence we have no access to, and an original being or going which is not explained. A return can be in one of two directions: homeward, like *Odysseus*, or away from here, back to wherever 'they' came from. In either case, a return is an aftermath and a repetition. In this poem we are not told directly what may have occurred; only the poem itself enacts its narrative. This is the more forcefully so since the key terms of the opening section of the poem apply equally well to questions of prosody: 'return', 'movements' 'slow feet', 'pace'. It is clear from the second half of the poem that we are dealing with the figure of a returning party of huntsmen, once swift and merciless but now pallid and hesitant to unleash the hounds. The degeneracy isn't, I think, in the prosody, though, which foregrounds the poem as dealing with the movement of verse and literary history.

We can begin by distinguishing the temporalities of and in the poem. The implied present of the poem's opening lines already contains an earlier time, as we have seen, by virtue of the very idea of a return, and this is played out explicitly in the use of tenses. The first six lines are in the present, lines 7–9 move out of the present into imagined space in the figure of the snow and its improbable semi-stasis, lines 10–18 occupy a remembered past, and the final two lines return to a contrasting and degenerate present. As far as the poem's own movement is concerned, it goes from the hesitant variation of the first 9 lines, based if anything on the choriambic foot, to a forcefully reiterated dactylic metre for 7 out of the next 9 lines, before closing with a return to the metres of the first line. The apparently Homeric epithet in line 10, 'Wing'd with Awe', is bogus, and the 'Gods of the wingèd shoe' remain unnamed, suggesting the communicative *Hermes* less than some classical equivalent of *Herne the Hunter*, chasing across the sky. The figure of the 'silver hounds | sniffing the trace of air' recalls Swinburne's chorus from '*Atalanta in Corydon*', 'When the hounds of spring are on winter's traces', and the movement of the verse itself deliberately recalls Swinburne's 'surging and leaping dactyllics'.⁹ And it is hard not to sense a ghostly presence of the myth of *Actæon*, subliminally dramatizing Pound's fascinated observation of Swinburne's metrics.

⁹ Pound (1960 [1918]), 293.

The figures returning are 'leash-men', hunters whose job it is to hold the hounds back, to control them, running with them and only releasing them when the moment is right. At some point in the past they were 'inviolable', 'swift to harry', 'keen-scented', and 'souls of blood': now they are tentative, slow, wavering, hesitant, and pallid. The keyword has shifted from wing to leash, from freedom to restriction, as the feet drag. If there is an allegorical dimension to the hunt it is pointed up through the echo of Swinburne. The hunters hunt the past as the hounds of spring hunt winter: they are figures of time, and now, in their return, they are troubled, half-awake, afraid, and half-turning back. Their encounter with the edge of the present is indeterminate, lacking in conviction. Yet the poem itself is far from indeterminate. It is rhythmically unpredictable while at the same time overdetermined. The 5-syllable, single-word line 11, 'inviolable', occupies its centre, its stressed phoneme the only (and occluded) occurrence of the personal pronoun in the poem (although it is probably echoed in the repeated cry of line 15), but there is a pervasive network of acoustic connections running through the poem and operating against its linear temporality. The long 'e' of 'see', for example, moves through 'feet' to 'fear', is recuperated in the deixis of 'these' in line 10, given new life in 'keen' and reined in again in 'leash'. And the shift from 'slow' to 'snow' to 'souls' and then back to 'slow' is similarly transfigurative.

The appeal to vision (and recognition) with which the poem begins opens the poem's field simultaneously to the image and the ear; the deictic pronoun that follows, and the assumption of foreknowledge predicated by 'return', are both intensified by the pathos of the exclamatory 'ah!' and the subsequent repetition of 'see'. Then there is the foregrounding of hesitancy and uncertainty enacted in the enjambement, and the whole enacted within the non-propositional structure of the sentence, the consequence of which is that the propositional sense is present without immediate reference, therefore able to cover both the figures returning, the returning rhetorical 'figures', and the movement of the verse itself. Thus the reader is immediately invited to turn the gaze of the first word, 'See', inward on himself. 'See, they return': the pronominal deixis doubles the implications of return that we have already considered, intensifying our uncertainty as readers, while affirming the object of our mental vision in a forceful choriambic foot. The invitation to vision and the way it is taken up by the operations of the ear are both converted into the almost overt reference to metrics in the terms that follow, and their stumbling, unpredictable

metric pattern. It is perhaps noteworthy that this, the only pentameter in the poem, the only line with ten syllables, slips in the word 'ten', within 'tentative'. The keynote is present hesitancy, in contrast to a regular, defined past, sniffing the trace of air with swift, keen, blood.

The implied narrative is unmistakable: some terrible fall has occurred, resulting in the transformation of Godlike hunters into bloodless, slow, leash-men. The term leash-men, with its anagrammatical suggestion of measure, seems almost to lose its dogs and suggest that the men themselves are leashed, without the guts or the spirit to sniff things out on their own. But what has this got to do with free verse? If anything, it looks as if the opening section is a condemnation of its wavering uncertainty, its 'trouble in the pace', and the movement of the verse is certainly a brilliant mimesis of this. But it is a *return* that is being described, while the poem itself is strikingly original. So what is returning? Not metre itself: the key must lie in the figure of the snowflakes, hesitating in the wind, half-turning back; rather they are the phantoms of metre, no longer capable of hunting the past to the death by virtue of their capacity to harry the present, but lagging and bloodless, half-turning back to an earlier time when the expectations of metrical verse were equal to the unknown. It is in fact only in free verse, with its trouble in the pace, its unpredictable irregularity, that poems can be made that are equal to a world without gods. The leash-men, the men of half-hearted measure and constraint, can only produce pallid returns of yesterday's verse. The utterance of the present, including its awareness of the pressure of the past, requires a new experiential and existential dimension, the only knowledge of which lies in the movement of the poem's rhythm. Faced with the unpredictability of a world based on and ultimately reducible to chance, return is impossible, in either direction. Only a verse form that incorporates both the desire for a remembered stability and the recognition that its epistemological possibilities are numbered can go forward. The 'slow feet' of regret are poised in a new movement, one that claims the boldness of the fallen gods to regenerate the everyday world.

CRACKS AND REFORMS

Nonetheless, Pound's poem is far from aggressively modern in its tone. Set against the seductive bricolage of *The Waste Land*, written

only ten years later, it looks mannered and uneasy. But Eliot's poem, a shanty town that became a new capital city by redefining poetic reality, has its own unease, caused by its need to keep an equilibrium between loss and reconfiguration, incorporation and rejection.¹⁰ The drive to aesthetic order which finally characterizes the poem reflects a need to use the abject to reclaim, even if reshaped, a European, or Indo-European order. The hooded horde that threatens the 'unreal' city is kept at bay by the veiled hoard of quotations and allusions shored against the ruins of the poem's present; the spatializing metaphors impel the reader to frame the encounter with earlier periods of its culture within a new anthropological geography deriving from ideas of the 'primitive' mind. The concept of ritual which Eliot takes from Cornford and Jane Harrison haunts the poem's use of free verse; and there is hardly a strophe that doesn't contain a more or less overt allusion, parody, pastiche, citation, dramatization, or else a substantial or stylistic echo of some other matter or form. The shores of matter and memory hold the verse back from the 'awful daring of a moment's surrender' to the unknown. At the end of the poem, a composite edifice has been constructed out of its 'osmoses, exhalations and porosities' which may indeed 'stage the ritual of its own destruction'¹¹ but which also defends the poem from the productive uncertainties to which its encounters with the dead, other cultures, other beliefs, and other styles might otherwise leave it open to. It is a poem that for all its novelty demonstrates deep ambivalence and deep anxiety about the new.

Where Eliot's version of the new anthropology of the classical world revived his Eurocentric perspective by refiguring time, power, and the primitive, Mary Butts (who tended to claim that Eliot followed her thinking) was using the same set of ideas to refashion the relation between the modern world, the psyche, and the sacred; the ambivalent modernity of her anti-democratic modernist pastorals stems from her narrative insistence on the ontological presence of magic and sacred concepts of *mana* and *tabu* as a deeper or older reality through which to critique the modern world and its developing consumer culture. Like Ezra Pound, whose concern for the clarity of poetic language was motivated by his awareness that language was the medium of law, of the sustentation and regulation of

¹⁰ For a brilliant reading of abjection in the poem, see Ellmann (1990).

¹¹ Ellmann (1990), 181; 198.

the social world,¹² Butts was also driven by her conviction that the modern world required a renewal of the connection between the ethical and metaphysical realms. In her novels, essays, and short stories she attempts a triangulation of the soul, power, and the sacred in which the secular arrogation of the second is challenged by the continuing presence of a timeless past capable of irruption into the ethical life of the modern world. At the same time, the self-conscious surface of her writing enables her to ironize the different forms of modern consciousness upon which these irruptions may impinge. Pondering her first novel *Ashe of Rings* on the eve of its first publication in England in 1933,¹³ she wrote: ‘Some very curious things went on, in London and elsewhere, about that time; a tension of life and a sense of living in at least two worlds at once’, and described the novel as ‘a fairy story, a War-fairy-tale, occasioned by the way life was presented to the imaginative children of my generation’ (Butts, 1933: 312).

Consciously or not, she is echoing Eliot here; in a review of Durkheim’s *Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* he wrote that ‘the “savage” lives in two worlds, “the one commonplace, practical, a world of drudgery, the other sacred, intense, a world into which he escapes at regular intervals, a world in which he is released from the fetters of individuality”’.¹⁴ They share aspects of the cultural approach of F. M. Cornford, James Frazer, and Jane Harrison, but Butts is, perhaps surprisingly, the more aggressively inventive. Her ‘sense of living in at least two worlds at once’ provides the double focus that is largely responsible for the achievement of *Ashe of Rings*. One world is phenomenal, a social world of scarcity and anxiety, whose inhabitants are cold and never have enough to eat, the world of artists, bohemians, and war resisters in 1917 London and Dorset; the other is noumenal, metaphysical, the world of warring powers, of

¹² e.g. ‘[T]he governor and legislator cannot act effectively or frame his laws, without words, and the solidity and validity of these words is in the care of the damned and despised *litterati*. When their work . . . the application of word to thing goes rotten . . . the whole machinery of social and of individual thought and order goes to pot.’ Pound (1931), 17–18.

¹³ *Ashe of Rings*, revised from partial publication in *The Little Review*, was first published by Contact Editions in Paris in 1925, and shortly afterwards in New York (A. & C. Boni, 1926). The text was revised again for its first English publication in 1933. The revisions are consistently concerned with removing the text’s elisions, ambiguities, and idiosyncrasies: the final version, though still strikingly characteristic, loses some of the extreme condensation of the original.

¹⁴ Quoted in Menand and Schwarz (1982), 312–13.

'the panic that was all over the earth' seen not in the direct form of military hostilities but as it affected the lives of men and women in England. Yet they are not separate, there are no mysterious doors into a parallel world; they abut directly on to each other, interpenetrate each other, operating within the text as unproblematized explanatory resources. The psychology and the various overt and covert forces evoked in her narratives are transparent at the level of her idiosyncratic and attentive prose style, in which fragments of popular song and older verses perform a central function. The epistemic reality of the everyday world may cover a temporal movement that is not forward-linear at all: 'I mean that we are spectators of a situation which is the mask for another situation, that existed perhaps some remote age, or in a world that is outside time.' (Butts, 1933: 59) Her conceit of a world outside time encodes a desire that mortal history should not weaken the primitive forces she encountered in myth and legend, in the Classics, and through her idiosyncratic reading of anthropology. Part of the force of her writing derives from her awareness that this is, indeed, a fiction; but that some such fiction is required to create a proper sense of the scale involved in imagining the scope of the conflicts shaping the modern world.¹⁵

Her own convinced belief in magic (and her resistance to Freud, despite occasionally surprising similarity) is a symptomatic corollary of the literalness that makes her prose so powerful. Her approach is somewhat domesticated, or at least regularized, in Eliot's claims that 'the prelogical mentality persists in civilised man, but becomes available only to or through the poet' and that 'one might say that the poet is *older* than other human beings' (1933: 148 n., 155). But this only restages the questions implicit in this ambivalent moment. What is 'new' and what is 'old'? Where do they come from? Can translation or quotation genuinely renew the old? Does novelty have to be imported from somewhere else? And if it is, is it imported from another place or another time or both? Does one need a perception of futurity to access the present? Why is the disconnection which Eliot finds in the present such a cause for fear? If poetic resources are found in another culture, what is the nature of the act of translation or appropriation that naturalizes them and how effectively can they resist it?

¹⁵ For an extended treatment of this idea see my essay, Patterson (1998).

These are all questions operative in one way or another in the modernist writing associated with the moment I've symbolized by the emergence of free verse in Britain. In that particular case, there is a relay of appropriation, British and American writers taking from France what France had taken from America, and America from England, in a process both cultural and temporal. *The Waste Land's* time is also ragtime, in which more complex processes of racism, ritual, and recuperation gesture towards Picasso's use of West African masks and fetishes, and John Rodker's psychoanalytically aware depictions of black jazz bands. As the co-option of Tiresias ironically proclaims, the skilful ways in which *The Waste Land* occludes its Others eventually vitiate its prosodic presence to itself.

ON THE SAME GROUND

A poet's translation or adaptation of the practice of another culture is an encounter which will be most successful if it enables the strange to shape the articulation of a voice and body of work which is equal to the exploratory demands of the always-new present, which is simultaneously never free of chosen and involuntary pasts. Similarly, the tension peculiar to English free verse in early Modernism—which derives partly from its origins in translation—derives its potency, as the affective force of the moment of intense feeling occupies (or 'invests') the space of memory, while its search for a form adequate to the requisite novelty of its expression has to be exploratory. Pound, Eliot, and Mary Butts in their different ways are all centrally concerned with elucidating the implications of writing a non-synchronous present, writing the texts of *Ungleichzeitigkeit*. Their attempts to voice, conceptualize, theorize, or exorcize a complex temporal subjectivity are implicitly committed to the idea that, beyond its manifest content, a poem, or a modernist novel, emerges in accordance with a latency of the page to come, or in other words, in the light of the content of a future which has not yet come into being, and indeed of some ultimate resolution as yet unknown. That they do this through renewed appeal to superannuated gods, imperialist anthropology, and the voices of dead or foreign writers only points to the complexity of the historical moment. Pound went on to develop the embryonic practices of 'The Return' in his *Cantos*, to try to recreate a pantheon in history; Eliot's conscripted voices

were soon to be sacrificed to the gods of music and redemption; Mary Butts's fiction rapidly becomes more paranoid and menacing. But they remain profoundly marked both by their nostalgia for a more animist universe and by their determination to enlist an up-to-date refigured enchantment, and by a willed modern rejection of stylistic determinism, as their most powerful means of cultural and temporal critique through attention to the conditions of imagined beauty.

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Lost in Nostalgia

*Modernity's Repressed Other**Wen-chin Ouyang*I. ARABIC POETICS IN NARRATIVES
OF MODERNITY

The problematic of poetic modernity (*hadatha*) in Arab Society goes beyond poetry in the narrow sense and is indicative of a general cultural crisis, which is in some sense a crisis of identity.

(Adonis)

Since the beginning of the modern era in the cultural history of the Arabs, poetry has been one of the central issues of debate in discourses on modernity and modernization. Napoleon's Egyptian campaign (1798–1805), as explained in standard political, economic, literary, cultural, and intellectual histories of the Arab world, initiated a process of self-examination followed by projects of cultural transformation, of modernization, that were and continue to be under the influence of a trauma. An unexpected cultural encounter with the 'super powers' of the West shocked the Arabs out of their complacency, of their taken-for-granted notion of superiority. This 'traumatic' experience of a cultural other is paradoxically the catalyst for another modernity, a renewed opening up of culture and, more importantly, an opportunity for cultural revival, rejuvenation, and perhaps even revolution. Arabic poetry, the hallmark of 'Arab' identity for the past fourteen centuries since the emergence of Islam, has been embroiled in debates on cultural change and its directions.

Adonis, an avant-garde Arab poet, literary critic, and cultural architect today, speaks of the Arab 'experiences' of modernity like this:

The retreat of Arab society from the ways opened up by modernity began with the fall of Baghdad in 1258. With the Crusades came a complete halt, prolonged by the period of Ottoman domination.

From the beginning of the nineteenth century to the middle of the twentieth—the time of Western colonialism and of contact with its culture and its modernity, the period known as the *nahda* (renaissance, a name which merits a detailed study in itself)—the question of modernity was revived and the debate resumed over the issues which it provoked. (Adonis, 1990: 77)

The terms in which Adonis articulates the ebb and flow of Arab attitudes towards cultural change, whether one speaks of it within the confines of poetry, literature, music, lifestyle and thought, as 'issues provoked and debated' within modernity, and 'the ways opened up' by it, seem to straddle the two poles of a duality already perceptible in this passage. This duality is set up in terms of a cultural self and other, which in turn spawns more dualities, such as internal and external, traditional and modern, religious and secular, ancient and modern, orality and literacy, fixed and variable, all complexly woven into an overall web-like canvas that we may call culture. More important, modernity habitually manifests itself as both affect and effect at moments of, and on sites of, tension pertinent to the social, cultural, and political context of, in this case, the Arabs.

'Foreign powers', in Adonis's analysis, play a key role in trajectories of transformative cultural movements centred around the idea of modernity, freezing Arab culture in 'traditionalism' and in the three historical moments quoted above (the invasion and occupation by the Mongols, Crusaders, and Ottomans); or, on the other hand, generating change, innovation, and transformation in two historical moments, the first of which Adonis locates in the eighth, ninth, and tenth centuries, and the second in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. 'The problematic of poetic modernity', he asserts, 'is linked both to an internal power struggle which has many different aspects and operates on various levels, and to an external conflict against foreign powers. It would appear that the return to the ancient has been more eagerly pursued whenever the internal conflict has intensified or the danger from outside has grown more acute' (1990: 76).

The 'internal power struggle' referred to here is, from the particular perspective of Adonis's project for modernization, relevant to the inherited Arab world-view that is inextricably woven into religion. Islam was the foundation of a state constituted as caliphate and formed as a single community in which unanimity of opinion was an essential requirement. Politics and thought were religious; religion was one and permitted no divergence (1990: 75). Modernity, from the perspective of religious and political authority, was necessarily rebellious and involved revolutionary movements the proponents of which were heretics and apostates. 'Those in power designated everyone who did not think according to the culture of the caliphate as "the people of innovation" (*ahl al-ihdath*), excluding them with this indictment of heresy from their Islamic affiliation' (1990: 76). Philosophers who denied revelation the role of knowledge and claimed it for reason, for example, were marginalized. And the mystics who rejected the literal (evident) reading of foundational Islamic texts (including the Qur'an) for a notion that truth and knowledge resided in the hidden, allowing for a kind of union or unity between the divine and existence, or God and man, were undermined if not persecuted.

The development of Arab modernity in the eighth century, Adonis contends, 'was . . . closely connected with the intellectual movements engaged in a re-evaluation of traditional ideas and beliefs, especially in the area of religion' (1990: 75). These movements were equally responsive to 'external struggles with foreign powers' and 'bound up with the revolutionary movements demanding equality, justice and an end to discrimination between Muslims on grounds of race or colour' (1990: 75) as the Islamic empire complex expanded, and incorporated the people, religions, and cultures of former Persian and Byzantine empires. Arab modernity in the nineteenth century, part and parcel of a grand project of decolonization, similarly involved a variety of intercultural encounters, articulated in the form of 'the shock of modernization' sparked off initially by the colonial 'Western' intrusion. It too demanded equality, both in ethnic and cultural terms, not only among the diverse ethnic groups in the Arab world but also between 'East' and 'West', here premised on civilizational achievements, and a fundamental right, predicated on cultural transformation, to progress, to modernity, to integration in the modern world.

Here, again, it is the encounter with a cultural other, a difference, that kindles a desire for change and initiates a series of movements

that would attempt to chip away at the hold on 'the Arab mind' of the 'traditional way of knowing', always constructed in and through the Arabic language, giving both shape and authority to an established, familiar way of living, thinking, and speaking: tradition. 'Opinions were divided' with regards to modernity 'into two general tendencies', Adonis tells us, 'the traditionalist/conformist (*usuli*) tendency, which considered religion and the Arab linguistic sciences as its main base; and the transgressing/non-conformist (*tajawuzi*) tendency, which saw its base, by contrast, as lying in European secularism' (1990: 77). In the estimate of 'the philosophy of the first',

[T]he ancient—be it in religion, poetry or language—is the ideal of true and definitive knowledge. This implies that the future is contained within it: nobody who is a product of this culture is permitted to imagine the possibility of truths or knowledge being developed which would transcend this ancient ideal. According to this theory, modernity—as established in the poetry of Abu Nuwas and Abu Tammam, in thought by Ibn al-Rawandi (d. 910), al-Razi (d. 1210) and Jabir Ibn Hayyan (d. 815), and in the nature of visionary experience by the mystics, and which assumes the emergence of new truths about man and the world—is not only a criticism of the ancient but a refutation of it. (1990: 78)

This ideological priority, enmeshed in the language-based Arabic epistemology, explains how the terms *ihdath* (innovation), *muhdath* and *hadith* (modern, new), and *hadatha* (modernity or modernism) used to characterize poetry which violated the ancient poetic principles, were carried over from the religious lexicon into literary criticism. The modern in poetry appeared to the ruling establishment of the eighth, ninth, and tenth, centuries as a political or intellectual attack on the culture of the regime and a rejection of the idealized standards of the ancient. For the 'traditionalist culture is embodied in the uninterrupted practice of an epistemological method which sees truth as existing in the text, not in experience or reality; this truth is given definitively and finally and there is no other. The role of thought is to explain and teach, proceeding from a belief in this truth, and not to search and question in order to arrive at new, conflicting truths' (1990: 78). Acceptance of anything new opens up the Islamic religious vision and its cultural and intellectual apparatus to doubt, and disrupts the process of continual actualization of the past.

In this summary of Adonis, of his lifelong career as literary and cultural critic, and his enormous modernization project centred on

Arabic poetics, I have for the sake of convenience resorted to quoting from an English translation of a lecture series delivered in French at the Collège de France in 1984,¹ which represents only a tiny fraction of Adonis's intellectual output² and misrepresents the subtlety, urgency, contentiousness, and significance of his intervention in Arabic discourses on modernity. There is at the outset the double semiological slippage located in translation first from Arabic into French then English, and the subsequent transmutation of concepts in the process of transfer between epistemological systems. The significance of these concepts is in addition subject to their attendant migration from one field of cultural production to another, each with its own membership, intellectual agenda, and ideological bent: the meaning and importance of Arabic poetics cannot but differ in the three divergent fields, as well as sub-fields, of the production of knowledge delineated by the Arabic, French, and English languages respectively. I have chosen to overlook the conceptual difficulties arising out of the slippages of translation, especially in the form of intercultural transaction, because of my own intellectual agenda for this chapter. I want to explore the conceptual category constructed around the figure of the cultural other in narratives of modernity, and look at the ways in which its presence and absence are entangled in the politics of cultural construction, or reconstruction. My representation and inevitable distortion of Adonis are intentional here.

¹ Adonis (1990). Originally published in French as *Introduction à la poésie arabe* (Paris: Sindbad, 1985). The Arabic version of this work appeared as *Al-shi'riyya al-'arabiyya* (Beirut, 1985).

² Adonis, a self-styled pseudonym for Syrian poet and critic, Ali Ahmad Sa'ïd (b. 1930), born an 'Alawite Muslim, has been a key figure, albeit controversial, in Arab intellectual life in the past fifty years. He is not only a major 'modernist' poet, but also a leading advocate of modernity in Arabic letters and Arab culture. His four-volume revisionist project on the Arabic literary tradition and intellectual heritage, *Al-thabit wa l-mutahawwil: bahth fi l-ibada' wa l-itba' 'ind al-'arab* (the fixed and the variable: a study of innovation and imitation among the Arabs), 1973–78, together with his revisionist three-volume anthology of classical Arabic poetry, *Diwan al-shi'r al-'arabi* (1964), set the tone and agenda for subsequent discussions of Arab modernity. His views are found in: *Muqaddima li l-'shi'r al-'arabi* (an introduction to Arabic poetry, 1971), *Zaman al-shi'r* (the era of poetry, 1972), *Fatiha li niyahat al-qarn* (the beginning of the end of a century, 1980), *Siyasat al-shi'r* (the politics of poetry, 1985), *Kalam al-bidayat* (discourse on beginnings, 1989), *Bayan al-hadatha* (declaration on modernity, 1993), *Al-sufiyya wa l-suryaliyya* (sufism and surrealism, 1992), *Ha anta ayyuha l-waqt* (on time, 1993), *Al-nizam wa l-kalam* (system and discourse, 1993), and *Al-nass al-qur'ani wa afaq al-kitaba* (the qur'anic text and horizons of writing, 1993).

My first purpose is to highlight that modernity is not merely what Adonis asserts throughout his writing as the desired state of a conveniently transformed reality, but also a narrative trope,³ a site of focalization where cultural change, or transformation of world-view and lifestyle, is interrogated, debated, articulated, legitimated, and perhaps even universalized.⁴ Modernity is, like modernisms, responsive to the condition of modernization and the consequences of progress.⁵ Above all, it is an imaginary construct subject to strategies of cohesive inclusions and exclusions that are familiar features of (grand) narrative(s) of both civilization and empire. Modernity in these grand narratives is commonly situated at a point of departure in a linear account of the present, sandwiched between a past that is object of nostalgia and a future that is subject of fantasy.⁶ My second objective is to show that the cohesion of this linear narrative of modernity may be unravelled with the introduction as a conceptual category of the figure of cultural other, which takes several forms, each according to the argument being made and position legitimated. The continuous shape-shifting of the cultural other has conceptual consequences. It exposes the untidy details surrounding any thinking and articulation of cultural change and, more significantly, it underscores the need for 'othering' in any conceptualization of identity, and of subject, in spite of the conceptual problems it generates rather than solves.

II. OTHERNESS AND MODERNITY

In Adonis's narratives, amalgamating eventually into a grand narrative, Arab modernity is seen as born out of an identity crisis set off by a shocking encounter with Europe and its modernity, which disrupts an assumed linear progression of Arab history from the past to the present and then future. The rude intrusion of this simultaneously cultural and racial other into the flow of Arab history, or time, though not necessarily unwelcome, opens up the Arab cultural landscape for

³ See Jameson (2002).

⁴ See Butler (2000).

⁵ See Boym (2001).

⁶ See Benjamin (1999).

reconfiguration. Arab history, according to Adonis, has been given the shape of a linear narrative and has served as the source of legitimacy for a particular view of Arab civilization, locking its past and future development in a pre-determined trajectory. Even this history may be, or must be re-written, taking the figure of the cultural other into consideration. The structuring of new narratives around a cultural other, freshly envisioned, makes it possible for Adonis and like-minded modernists to trace the roots of modernity in a re-imagined past, history, and tradition. The shape the cultural other takes depends on the consequence it will have in the role the past is to play in the present, and in the narrative of modernity produced in support of a particular agenda for cultural change.

While the Crusaders, Mongols, Ottomans were the 'foreign powers', who halted modernity between the thirteenth and eighteenth centuries, the Persians and Byzantines were some of the key contributors to modernity in the eighth, ninth, and tenth centuries, just like the Europeans and Americans in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. There is a clear asymmetry in Adonis's construction of Arab's other. Throughout Arab narratives, the Crusaders and Mongols were considered the others of the Muslims more on the basis of religion and their military ambitions in the Islamic empire and less on the ground of ethnicity. The Mongols who eventually settled in Central Asia, converted to Islam, and established the Ilkhanid dynasty are considered members of an Islamic empire even today. The Ottomans may be vilified as lying at the root of Arab backwardness in Arabic nationalist narratives today—this view is all too pervasive—but their role in the flowering of Islamic civilization is undeniable, and their importance as leaders of the Muslim community during the fifteenth to the nineteenth centuries continued to be recognized, even revered until the beginning of the twentieth century. Otherness in Adonis is constructed as the opposite of Arabness. Arab is defined, in this instance, primarily on the basis of vaguely comprehended notions of ethnicity (shared language, culture, and history) but also of the political ideology behind a new imagining of community; an Arab world that came into existence and took shape only in the second half of the twentieth century.

The introduction of this fuzzily and problematically fabricated other allows for previously marginalized cultural moments to be shown up as instances of modernity suppressed by past narratives—narratives of canonization driven and sanctioned by, in this case,

religious/political authority. The other, just like modernity itself, is a narrative trope, and in this instance, it is one around which narratives of modernity are woven. Pushed into centre stage on some occasions and relegated to the background on others, the other changes from one drama of modernity to another. The starring role Adonis gives the cultural other in his narrative of 'Arab' modernity in the eighth, ninth, and tenth centuries is, in comparison with, for example, ninth-century narratives of Arabic poetic modernity, a new element introduced into a new dramatization of past events, but now cast in the light of contemporary experience, ideology, and epistemology. For this other, as I have already intimated, is identified as the catalyst for modernity.

Abu Nuwas (c.757–815), one of the heroes in Adonis's Arab poetic modernity, famous especially for his wine songs, was a leading poet of his time.⁷ He was of Persian origin and received 'a thorough grounding' in the religious sciences and secular learning in both Basra and Kufa, the two major centres of learning in the eighth century. He moved to Baghdad in 796 and soon became an intimate member of the Abbasid court. 'The high point of his career was the period during which he was the close confidant and boon-companion of the caliph al-Amin; the caliph died in 813 and Abu Nuwas himself soon after' (Schoeler, 1990: 290). He was canonized as a modernist (*muhdath*) poet as early as the ninth century, for example by Ibn Qutayba (d. 889), and his poetry was frequently collected into a *diwan*, the most famous of which was by al-Suli (868–946). However, his canonization was not entirely uncontroversial, even though the details of the debates surrounding his poetry are at present unavailable, either buried in the unpublished manuscripts or lost to us.

Ibn Qutayba's short 'encyclopaedia' of *Arabic Poetry and Poets (Al-shi'r wa l-shu'ara')* does give us a glimpse of the issues at stake. In the Introduction of a work that is primarily an anthology of Arabic poetry up to the turn of the ninth century, though none of the poets was his contemporary, he speaks innocuously of aesthetics (*jawda*) as one of the key criteria in the selection of poetry for preservation, for anthologizing. In this Introduction, he further alludes to the practice of some 'scholars' as biased towards the ancient (*qadim*) at the expense of poetry 'composed' in their time (1977:1.68).

⁷ See Kennedy (1997) and (2005).

He points out that there is no monopoly in poetry, either historically (*zaman duna zaman*) or 'nationally' (*qawm duna qawm*), and what is modern becomes ancient in time (*ja'ala kulla qadimin hadithan fi 'asrihi*); for example, Jarir, al-Farazdaq, and al-Akhtal, poets of the first century of Islam (seventh century of the Christian era), were considered modern (*muhdathin*) in their time but are now accepted as ancient, and the same goes for Abu Nuwas (1997:1.69). There is no discussion of Abu Nuwas's 'ethnic' origin or its role in the emergence of new Arabic poetics, though the word *mawla*, meaning a non-Arab client of an Arab tribe, is keenly inserted in the poet's 'biography' (1997:2.800). In fact, Ibn Qutayba, himself of Persian origin, makes no issue of cultural otherness in his standard narrative of modernity, even as he consistently, albeit subtly, points out the ethnic origin of his subjects.

By contrast, Adonis situates modernity in the opening up of cultural landscape that takes place with the arrival and integration of the cultural other. 'The *mawali* began to master the Arabic language once they settled in Islamic cities. When they used it for their self-expression, they gave it the features of their heart and mind, therefore, new dimensions. In addition, a new generation of poets of Arab stock who grew up in cities, far away from the original homeland of the Arabic language, acquired new dimensions in their expression as well' (Adonis, 1994: 2.112). In the process of the Arabization of Persians and the Persianization of Arabs, modernity was born. In fact, by the eighth century, those we may call 'cultural hybrids', such as Abu Nuwas himself, dominated all areas of the production of knowledge (1994: 2.114). Abu Nuwas's poetry embodies four new elements: sensibility (derived from the presence of new things), event (based on reality), experience (grounded in lifestyle), and poetic language (producing expression). 'This was how he transgressed the boundaries of tradition (from imitation, *taqlid*) and its ancient symbols, such as the ruined abode, she-camel and desert, mocking Bedouinness, in other words, rejecting Bedouin lifestyle and the modes of expression it required. Instead, he invites [us] to [partake in] an urban lifestyle that necessarily demanded a new mode of expression' (1994: 2.118).

The poets, critics, and thinkers Adonis gives as examples of Arab modernists are, one way or another, figures of the other, though not always the ethnic other represented by Abu Nuwas himself. As seen in the quotation above, otherness is defined by transgression of a

tradition which supports the authority and legitimacy of a world-view that comes with established political institutions. At this juncture, the ethnic other—rather than the cultural other—overlaps with a transgressor who would be deemed other from the perspective of an authoritative tradition. Adonis insists that Abu Nuwas is simultaneously insider to and outsider of ‘traditional’ Arabic poetics. He transformed Arabic poetry from within an established tradition of Arabic poetics, the dominance of which is still felt today. His bicultural background is, however, instrumental in his ability to transcend the norm, to pump new blood into the life of ‘monolithic’ Arabic poetry. Adonis himself, as a poet, works to ‘modernize’ Arabic poetry from within. Modernity is neither equivalent to nor divergent from the ‘West’—either would be blind imitation—but it is rather the transformation of vision, structure of composition, and poetic language, regardless of their sources. Contact with the ‘West’ may have brought winds of change, but the root of modernity remains solidly grounded in the Arabic poetic tradition itself, which gives it singularity (*khususiyya*), as well as difference (Adonis, 1995: 22–54).

Tradition, including the historical context of this tradition and the sense of the past it provides, is strategically divided into that which is stagnant and resistant to change, and that other which is full of vitality and ever changing. There is polarization of the past in this account. The part identified as stagnant, or fixed (*thabit*), is thrust aside as an unwanted past against another desirable variable part (*mutahawwil*), a repressed memory, dug out of an archaeological site to serve as a model trajectory for the movement of present into the future. The ethnic other brings with it a temporal other, through which the ethnic other is integrated into the uninterrupted movement of history, now made up of a series of moments of modernity, all triggered by encounters with ‘foreign powers’. Modernity is arguably continuity in history, rather than the disruption of history, of the continuous flow of time from the past to the present and into the future, of tradition. There is no rejection of tradition in modernity; on the contrary, it consists in observance and preservation of tradition. The authority of tradition, and its power to legitimate, remains palpable even in narratives privileging change, as well as difference. It appears that in these narratives of modernity, change needs to be legitimized as springing from the very tradition it seeks to erode, and difference must be presented and represented as sameness. Adonis may disagree with my account, but his history of modernity consists

precisely in the 'continual actualization of the past' he objects to in traditionalism. This construction of difference as sameness, it seems, comes into being under the distortive shadow of nostalgia, of longing for a repressed tradition, a forgotten past.

III. NOSTALGIA AND UTOPIA

In *The Future of Nostalgia*, Svetlana Boym explores and eloquently describes the longing for homecoming, for a place left behind—connoted from the two roots in Greek, *nostos* (return home) and *algia* (longing)—as 'actually a yearning for a different time' that goes beyond 'individual psychology' today (2001: xv). Nostalgia is a 'historical emotion', coeval with modernity, and the result of a new understanding of time and space (xvi). It is simultaneously 'a sentiment of loss and displacement' and 'romance with one's own fantasy' (xiii), an 'affective yearning for a community with a collective memory, a longing for continuity in a fragmented world' (xiv). Adonis's narrative of modernity is what Boym calls 'transhistorical reconstruction of the lost "home" that thinks of itself as truth and tradition', symptomatic of a 'restorative nostalgia' that betrays a hegemonic utopian impulse directed at both the future and the past. The very modernity of his reflection on history and cultural memory resides in his contradictory, critical, and ambivalent meditation on time, and on the mediation between past and future; and, crucially, on the combination of fascination for the present with longing for another time (Boym, 2001: 22), or for a future 'swollen' with dreams of the past (27–8).

In Adonis's history of Arabic poetics, Past, Present, and Future come across, as Benjamin also imagines it, as superimposing times, whereby every epoch dreams the next one, and in doing so revises the one before it. In conceiving time as pearls of crystallized experience, Benjamin does not entertain an ideal scene of nostalgia; instead he plays with a 'fan of memory' that uncovers new layers of forgetting but never reaches the origin. It is only possible to 'fan a spark of hope in the past', to fashion historical tradition anew from an empty continuum of forgetting.⁸ Adonis's constellations, akin to Benjamin's,

⁸ See Benjamin (1986), 6: quoted in Boym (2001), 27–8.

are instances from a past that Adonis wishes to see actualized in the present, so as to result not only in 'profane illuminations' but also revolutionary collisions. Adonis's archaeology of the present—for like Benjamin, it is the present and its potentialities for which he is most nostalgic—entails wilful remembering and forgetting at the same time, a process that alienates one part of tradition from another. In his eagerness to remember and remind the Arabs of the 'enlightened' instances of the past, he practically 'demonizes' the parts of the past he wishes to forget, and to repress in Arab collective memory.

There is, it seems, no escape from a simultaneous process of marginalization and canonization in narratives of modernity. An ethnic other may be privileged in one instance, and a temporal one in another. In either case, this is a cultural other in the perspective of a modernity narrated to fulfil a fantasy of homecoming, of resolving the cultural crisis—which way forward?—precipitated by modernity itself. This other, identified from reality but reconstructed in narrative, plays a key role in modernization, even if this role is unacknowledged. The modernity Adonis imagines is predicated on an opposition between tradition—handed down doctrine—and revolution—cyclical repetition and radical break—that is in turn effected as an opposition between a stagnant tradition and a revolutionary one, both invented to legitimate his own version of modernity. For Adonis, the modern and anti-modern in tradition, like Bruno Latour's notion of 'modern time of progress and anti-modern time of tradition', 'are twins who failed to recognize one another' (quoted in Boym, 2001: 19). In Adonis's narratives of modernity, in *Al-thabit wa l-mutahawwil*, his revisionist history of 'Arab' civilization as well as all his works on Arabic poetics, one other (ethnic) is recognized, and another (a part of tradition) is repressed. Repression is a part of a memory game that does not uncover new layers of forgetting in Benjamin's play with 'fan of memory' discussed earlier. It is rather a wilful forgetting strategically deployed to tinker with collective memory for the purpose of rewriting history. What is repressed is, upon close scrutiny, set up as a foil to what is expressed, their opposition highlighted to promote an agenda. It targets the symbolic order and the ways in which it organizes the conceptual categories underpinning and structuring historical narratives, including narratives of modernity, wilfully re-mapping it so as to open up a new vista for cultural change. This agenda seems to determine the rules in the game of othering and of repressing the other simultaneously. The difference between Adonis

and Ibn Qutayba, as I will show, can tell us a great deal about the ways in which these rules are inextricably connected to the agenda of narratives of modernity.

IV. MODERNITY'S REPRESSED OTHER

Adonis is entirely ambivalent towards Ibn Qutayba. Ibn Qutayba may on the surface be neutral in the contest between the ancient and the modern in his time, but he belonged to the 'conservative' forces of culture. He would be considered one of the critics who, I have pointed out elsewhere,⁹ privileged 'traditional' poetics to the detriment of the modern. Even as he canonizes a modern poet, often of Persian origin and an advocate of Persian superiority like Abu Nuwas, Ibn Qutayba frequently slights their compositions as derivative and, on occasion, as pale imitation of the poetry of the ancient. His position towards Arabic poetry is defined by what James E. Montgomery terms 'philological thought', as well as by his 'socially driven and ideologically motivated, rhetorical strategies of persuasion'—which are both discernible throughout his works (Montgomery, 2004: 4).

[H]is works . . . essay a conciliation between the cultural dictates of the exclusivity typical of Iranian-inspired elitism, the 'official' principles of outlook and style characteristic of the *kuttāb*, many of whom were Nestorian Christians coerced under al-Mutawakkil to convert to Islam, and the majority of whom, were educationally, under Iranian influence, the austerity of the *kalam*, which prior to al-Mutawakkil had enjoyed huge appeal among the ruling classes, and the demagoguery of the 'people of Hadith', the post Mihna Hanbalites. The essences of this religio-cultural appeasement are the Qur'an, the Sunna of the Prophet Muhammad, the 'speech of desert Arab' (*kalam al-'arab*) as exemplified in poetry, and the *'arabiyya* itself, common to all three loci of authority, the very language of Allah . . . [For] what is at stake is the very future of the Islamic community, riven asunder by schism . . . Ibn Qutayba's mission, itself presumably a continuation of al-Mutawakkil's enlistment of jurists and traditionalists in a religious campaign against the Jahamiyya and the Mu'tazila (848 C.E.), is to bring the Islamic community back from the brink of credal anarchy to within the fold of

⁹ See Ouyang (1997), 105–10.

unanimity. This ambition is not limited to his theological works alone. The Arabicisation of knowledge is fundamental to Ibn Qutayba's mission.¹⁰

Montgomery's nuanced and multidimensional reading of Ibn Qutayba's 'normative' view of poetry, within a more fully reconstructed context of the religio-dynamics of the time, is effectively an elaboration of what he describes (2004: 5) as my 'simplistic, un-nuanced and misconstrued' assessment in *Literary Criticism in Medieval Arabic-Islamic Culture* of Ibn Qutayba's discourse on poetry as a stratagem in his anti-*Shu'ubi* polemics. There is clearly a need to revise our understanding of the racialized discourses of the ninth century denoted by the term *shu'ubiyya*. However, Montgomery and I have the same understanding of the cultural politics of Ibn Qutayba that is implicit in his works. Even his repression of otherness—here, the ethnic other—is part of his broader agenda for communal harmony. But this explanation of Ibn Qutayba's approach overlooks his tacit role in promoting a form of Arabic poetics Adonis would find problematic. We must return to the repressed other in Ibn Qutayba's narratives of modernity, here, as a narrative of present communal cohesion (from anarchy to unanimity) that dances around the figure of the cultural other in its reconstruction of the past.

The poets included in *Al-shi'r wa l-shu'ara'* are all ancient in the temporal perspective of Ibn Qutayba. He is separated from them, such as Abu Nuwas, by at least-three quarters of a century. The coverage of the work does not extend beyond the generation of Abu Nuwas. Major contemporary poets, such as Abu Tammam (d. 845 or 846), who too is one of Adonis's heroes of Arabic poetic modernity, and al-Buhturi (818–97) are excluded. His 'literary biography' of Abu Nuwas follows the blueprint of a 'normative' biography, beginning with his name and origin, followed by a sketch of his education and career, and ending with examples from his poetry, those considered as straying from the right path and the 'correct use' of Arabic language and poetic tradition, and those praised for their innovation or improvement of a familiar theme, motif, or image. His 'anthology' of Abu Nuwas's poetry,¹¹ compared

¹⁰ Montgomery (2004), 36–7. I have deleted the dense notes annotating Montgomery's work. Those interested in the secondary literature on Ibn Qutayba are referred to the original publication.

¹¹ Ibn Qutayba (1977), 2. 800–30.

with Adonis's¹² and with the complete *Diwan of Abu Nuwas* compiled by al-Suli,¹³ is organized according to an agenda of his own. While Adonis pursues the instances of modernity he finds in Abu Nuwas (see above)—and he does not include any of Ibn Qutayba's selections—Ibn Qutayba chooses from Abu Nuwas instances that would show him as falling in line with the ancients, subordinating his innovations—i.e. his difference—to an overarching framework of a continuously flowing history of the Arabic poetic tradition—i.e. sameness. Abu Nuwas's parodies of the 'classical' Arabic 'ode', exuberantly vociferous in mocking its 'Bedouinness', are understandably silenced. This position seems to square with Ibn Qutayba's stance in his long treatise (1998) in refutation of the contemporary racialized *shu'ubi* rhetoric against the 'Arabs'. Montgomery and I agree that his defence of Arab superiority in a number of areas of knowledge, evidenced by the Arabic poetic tradition, is driven by an ideology of communal cohesion. Difference is suppressed, as Adonis observes, for the sake of an Islamic vision of community.

'Other' is here defined not on the basis of ethnicity but rather of ideology (community is religious not national), and it generates a duality of difference and sameness within the Arabic poetic tradition—the preferred sameness and the repressed other. Adonis reverses Ibn Qutayba's order of preference. Sameness in Ibn Qutayba is highlighted as difference in Adonis and, conversely, difference suppressed by the former is celebrated by the latter. Ibn Qutayba and Adonis seem diametrically opposed in their attitudes towards modernity. That much is certainly true, but perhaps only in relation to the kind of poetics they identify as part of 'the tradition' and that would best serve as a source of legitimacy for the 'home' they imagine for themselves. This home, which inhabits the present, must have roots in the past. In their respective narratives of modernity, of willed transformation of the present, Ibn Qutayba and Adonis resort to similar strategies. As literary critics and cultural architects, they write essays on Arabic poetics and 'anthologize' Arabic poetry as part of a broader project of modernization and of cultural transformation. They turn to the past for moments that may serve as the major plots around which they would string together an uninterrupted history to support the ideal community each one envisions—be it Ibn Qutayba's religious *umma*,

¹² Adonis (1996), 2, 74–113.

¹³ Ed. Bahjat 'Abd al-Ghafur al-Hadithi (Baghdad, 1980).

or Adonis's Arab nation. (I have addressed the paradigmatic role of the 'imagined community' in Arabic narratives extensively elsewhere.)¹⁴ In their reconstruction of the past, the cultural other, whether spotlighted or repressed, has an undeniable role in the unfolding of the drama of cultural transformation. Put differently, cultural change and intercultural exchange are twins who, on occasions, fail to recognize one another. The absence of other in these narratives is less a statement about the cultural other—for the other is ever present—than a statement about a desire for a cohesive self. What, then, can the recognition of the repressed cultural other in Western narratives of modernity, such as those of T. S. Eliot, tell us about divergent cultural politics surrounding the modern in the West?

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¹⁴ See, for example, 'The Imagined Modern Nation in *Al-farafir* by Yusuf Idris', *Modern Languages Quarterly* 60:30 (Sept. 1999), 379–408; 'The Dialectic of Past and Present in *Rihlat Ibn Fattuma* by Naguib Mahfouz', *Edebiyat* 14: 1&2 (2003), 81–107; 'Romancing the Epic: 'Umar al-Nu'man as Narrative of Empowerment', *Arabic and Middle Eastern Literatures* 3:1 (Jan. 2000), 5–18; 'The Epical Turn of Romance: Love in the Narrative of 'Umar al-Nu'man', *Oriente Moderno* 19:1 (2002), 485–504; and 'Text, Space and the Individual in the Poetry of Badr Shakir al-Sayyab', *Sensibilities of the Islamic Mediterranean: Self Expression in a Muslim Culture from Post-Classical Times to the Present Day* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2008), 330–42.

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Part III

The Time of Memory, the Time of Trauma

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No Consolation

The Lamenting Voice and Public Memory

Gail Holst-Warhaft

Public monuments to catastrophe are frequently controversial and the monument to the victims of the 2001 attack on the World Trade Center in New York is no exception. A feature of the design for the memorial is an ‘installation’, a stream of poetic texts created by Jenny Holzer and projected onto a glass wall of the monument. The announcement caused poet and literary scholar Sandra Gilbert to reflect on the role of poetry as a memorial to the dead. Could poetry, she wondered, offer consolation to a grieving public? Is consolation what we seek in a memorial to mass murder? Wilfred Owen, she noted, had rejected the notion of consolation in his posthumously published poems about the First World War, prefacing the collection with the words: ‘These elegies are to this generation in no sense consolatory.’ If not consolation, then, is poetry useful as a public statement of grief? If so, what sort of poetry could shoulder the burden of representing the grief of millions?

Together with the editors of the journal *Poetry*, Gilbert invited responses to such questions from a group of poets and scholars who had written on grief. They were published as a forum on the online site of the American magazine *Poetry*.¹ Several of the respondents referred not to

¹ Gilbert (2005): an online forum on the 4th anniversary of 9/11 in New York organized by Sandra Gilbert. In her rich analysis of modern death and grief (*Death's Door*, 2006), Gilbert analyses a wide variety of literary lament and elegy in American and British poetry.

written poetry but to a more elemental poetic response to death: the lament.

Too young to have heard the traditional Irish *caoine*, or *keen*, the poet Eavan Boland said that on a trip to Connemara in the 1920s her father had seen old women *keen* as they bade farewell to an emigrant boat about to leave for Liverpool. It was an experience that he remembered for the rest of his life:

As the passengers disappeared on board and the boat drew out—or so my father told me—the old women put their shawls over their heads and began to *keen*. He remembered it as eerie, powerful, terrible.

Boland thought that her father remembered the *keen* all his life not so much ‘as an expression of grief; more likely as a theater of it. It was a ritual that neither resolved nor diminished the anguish of the Irish losing their sons and daughters. But it noted it’ (Boland, 2005).

I believe Boland is correct in saying that the Irish laments did not resolve or diminish the anguish of grief so much as pay attention to it. She is also shrewd in saying that the laments her father heard, performed by professional mourners, were a ‘theatre of mourning’. Laments, whether traditional or literary, often have a strong element of theatre to them. In Ireland, as in many other parts of the world, laments were performed by women who were professional or semi-professional mourners; they were intended to evoke a strong response in the community gathered at the funeral. Making pain audible through their wept songs, and visual, through their dishevelled hair and lacerated cheeks, lamenting women orchestrated a spectacle of mourning that was part theatre, part spontaneous response to the anguish of grief. For however mercenary or ‘professional’ the lament-singers may have been, they were generally older women who used their personal experience of grief as a stimulus to perform communal grief. As a Greek lament reminds us: ‘Who doesn’t know death, doesn’t weep for the dead.’² Pain, then, is the passport to grief’s theatrical representation, but if it is not refined by skill, it will not produce the desired response in the listener.

Reflecting further on lament, Boland is reminded of Yeats’s essay ‘The Galway Plains’ (1903), where he said: ‘There is still in truth upon these level plains a people, a community bound together by

² Lament taken from the archive of Sotiris Chianis, collected in Kandyli, Arcadia, 1959 and used with his permission.

imaginative possessions.’ ‘If the poet can stay close to the idea of *imaginative possessions*,’ Boland concludes,

then he or she can . . . represent their loss. . . . If poetry does not address public grief in some way, it runs the risk of abandoning one of its great roles and one of its great genres, which is elegy. The origins of elegy are not private: they are sacred and public. . . . I, as an Irish poet, would certainly want to be there on that dock with the keeners. I would want to feel that those people—on both sides of those farewells—could count on a language for their loss. And if there’s some aspect of poetic imagination, craft, or art which is compromised by that, it’s not one that I recognize or understand. (2005)

When Yeats or Boland write about Irish traditional poetry, they are conscious that they are speaking of something dying or dead, something that nevertheless sustains them as poets. They may not be standing on the dock with the keeners, but they can draw on an older, communal art that binds them together as members of a community. In Greece, where the traditional art of lament is still practised, it may be easier for poets to use the tradition of lament as a stimulus to compose elegaic verse, but in both cases the sacred and public origins of such verse included elements that are missing from the poetry inspired by it: the musical tone of the human voice alternating between chorus and soloist, between articulate verse and inarticulate cries, and the spectacle of the active, grieving body.

It is tragedy, not elegy, that best incorporates the elements of funerary lament into a self-conscious, public form. The epigraph to Nicole Loraux’s essay on Greek tragedy *The Mourning Voice* (2002) is from Victor Hugo’s *Les Misérables* (IV):

What can be done in a hell? They sang. For where
There is no more hope, song remains.³

Like Charles Segal (1989: 341–2), Loraux takes song, in its fullest sense as a musico-poetic genre, to be a core element of tragedy. For a genre that concerns itself with grief and mourning, it is not surprising that the songs we hear in tragedy are often forms of lamentation. What is surprising is that Classical scholars took so long to make the association between songs and grief. In asserting that ‘tragedy made weeping itself a sort of song’, Segal suggests that what has been

³ The title of the section is ‘Saint-Denis and the Idyll of the rue Plumet’.

demonstrated as a universal practice by anthropologists and folklorists, was an invention of the tragedians of Athens.⁴ And when Loraux talks of Aeschylus combining the elements of threnody: 'cries, tears, wailing, and song' (2002: 59) it seems, to scholars of ritual lamentation, that Athenian tragedy, when it staged mourning, did so as a deliberate mimesis of the most common form of lamentation: the wept song. Even in the musical instrument that accompanied tragic performance, the *aulos*, Loraux asserts that tragedy 'hears a weeping voice'.⁵ If she had translated the word as 'oboe' rather than flute, Loraux might have made an even stronger case, for the *aulos* is, in some ways, the musical antithesis of the breathy, lyrical flute.

Why should the sharp sound of the high woodwind (*aulos*, *hautbois*, *oboe*) be associated with lamentation and with Dionysos? Like its modern Balkan folk equivalent, the *zurna*, the *aulos* was usually played outdoors where its sharp tone carried. It seems perfectly appropriate that Dionysos, the god whose followers gathered out-of-doors should be associated with such an instrument. Aristotle states that Athena rejected the *aulos* because it contributed nothing to the mind. Both he and Plato concurred with the goddess (Problems 19. 43, *Republic* 3. 398–9) and rejected the use of the instrument in tragedy.

The confusion of wailing instrument, wailing voice, and sung text offended the god of clarity and light, Apollo, as it did Plato. Yet it may be that this very indistinct, 'barbarian' sound at the heart of tragedy represents something essential about the nature of Athens. For I suggest that the subtle confusion created by the merging of the lamenting voice with the *aulos*, the mood created by the 'oriental' modes, the tone of the 'foreign' instrument, and its imported deity are all necessary to an understanding of what seems contrary in tragedy. The Greeks were often uncomfortable with that part of themselves they saw as coming from the orient. They objected to the extravagant mourning dirges of the east and yet employed women to perform them. Tragedy is full of the dark, of the unclear. What is seen on stage is always less important than what is hidden from view, what occurs

⁴ The recent volume of ancient lament studies by Ann Suter (2008) casts doubt on Segal's claim. In particular, Mary Bacharova's article on Sumerian *gala* priests' laments (19–52) and Ian Rutherford's account of Hittite female lament (53–69) suggest an earlier origin for the 'wept songs' of tragedy.

⁵ Loraux (2002), 59. I am surprised to see the *aulos* being described by Loraux as a 'flute'. An instrument with a double-reed, the *aulos* must have sounded more like an oboe than a flute.

in the interior of the house, the domain of women. Tragedy is also full of the female and the foreign. It is the oriental voice of Cassandra that describes the brutal murder of Agamemnon, and if the men of Mycenae are too dense to comprehend her words, they are quick to catch her mourning tone.

Nowhere in tragedy is this voice more difficult to distinguish from inarticulate cry than in the *Agamemnon*. Arriving at the palace of Mycenae, Cassandra declines to speak. Incensed by her silence, Clytemnestra mistakes it for incomprehension, wondering if Cassandra is mad as well as foreign. Only after the queen leaves the stage does Cassandra speak, or rather cry. The sound she makes is the unmistakable ululation of lament: *ototototoi . . . popoi da . . .* but oddly, it is combined with the name of Apollo. The chorus respond, as the audience would expect, with surprise.⁶ The exchange with the chorus is dramatically highlighted by the difference between Cassandra's lyric—sung—lines, and the chorus's iambic trimeter—spoken or intoned. Her mode as well as her matter place her in another world from the men of Mycenae.

Even when she speaks, the old men of Aeschylus' chorus fail to understand Cassandra's words and, in Loraux's version of the text, they take her prophecies to be 'many *modulations* of ill-omen' (2002: 72). But what exactly does their rare word *melotupeis* have to do with modulation? The chorus speak of Cassandra's howls or cries⁷ being difficult to utter (*dusphato klagga*) and follow this with the words *melotupeis omou t' orthiois en nomois*. The latter phrase seems to mean in a high pitch.⁸ But *melotupein* contains within it both a musical phrase and the action of striking. Does Cassandra's voice 'strike' the ear as she sings in a high pitch? Or does she cry in a high-pitched voice or a mode associated with the breast-beating that accompanies lament?

⁶ The blurring of speech or use of special language in laments is something that has been noted by observers in many societies. This may make them obscure to some members of the community, so that intense concentration is required to understand them. This has been observed, for example, in Ireland by Angela Bourke (1993) and in the Karelian region of the former Soviet Union, by Elizabeth Tolbert (1990). By straining to understand the words of a lament, the community of listeners, like the performers, enters into a particular relationship with the lament.

⁷ The word is used of sharp sounds, both the twang of a bow and the scream of cranes in Homer, the hiss of serpents in Aeschylus, but also of song in Sophocles (Loraux 2002: 72).

⁸ The phrase also seems to mean straight or correct. See Loraux (2002), 73.

We are reminded of Eavan Boland's father's words as he hears the sound of the women singing the *caoine*: 'erie, powerful, terrible'. The male chorus of the Agamemnon are convinced, as much by the *sound* of Cassandra's cry—its vocal quality—as by the words she utters, that they are listening to something dire and powerful. They recognize the sound of a lament when they hear one although they are puzzled by the context.

It is in the realm of ritual rather than logos that Cassandra will finally break through the chorus's obtuseness, as she turns from her visions of the King's murder to her own fate, and laments that her prophecies will soon be heard on the river Kokutos, or Acheron (1160). The river's name is enough to wake the sluggish chorus: suddenly everything is so clear a child could understand it (*Neogonos an brotōn mathoi*, 1164). What Cassandra is talking about is her own grief, her own death. *Kokutos*, from as early as Homer's day, was a word especially associated with women's wailing over the dead, and here, following close on Cassandra's adoption of a particular high-pitched register, it is the key to clarity. When a woman wails of death, grief, and the underworld in a certain tone of voice she invokes a ritual context that is unmistakably funeral.

The lamenting voice, in ancient and modern times, is associated primarily with women. Men may weep for their dead, but women are, in most cultures, the ones who weep louder and longer; they also tear their hair and scratch their cheeks in surprisingly similar ways.⁹ That does not mean that men will not adopt the gestures and tone of lament in some circumstances, but they will do so conscious of the model established by grieving women. In the *Epic of Gilgamesh*, the hero makes clear the connection between women and lament when he says:

I weep for Enkidu, my friend
bitterly moaning like a woman mourning
.
.
.
and the young men your brothers
as though they were women
go long-haired in mourning.¹⁰

⁹ In a study of seventy-eight cultures, Rosenblatt, Walsh, and Jackson (1976) found that it was common for women to weep openly and tear their hair. Since their study there have been a number of important studies of lament that reinforce the prominence of women in lamentation and the common repertoire of gestures that accompanied lament. They include Saunders (2007), Suter (2008), and Wilce (2009).

¹⁰ Sandars (1960), 94.

In the Bible God commands Jeremiah: 'Call the lament-singing women (*mekonenot*), let the wise women come' (Jeremiah 9: 16–17). In the early Jewish tradition, professional women were prominent in the mourning process, not only wailing and tearing their hair, but composing the sung poetry that was considered necessary for mourning the dead, and was characterized, like the laments of Greece, by a form of call and response, soloist and chorus.¹¹ Literary laments, usually composed by men, respond to and acknowledge the prominence of women in the social and ritual activities of mourning. The gestures of lament: the loosening of hair, the scratching of cheeks, the moans and sobs, are easier to capture than the tone of the lamenting voice. Tragedy is endlessly fascinated by this voice and what it provokes. While I concur with Loraux that lamentation is a social practice, I disagree that it necessarily relieves suffering, redirects excess, or that its songs are neatly codified.

Like tragedy, the laments of women mourners are as varied as the context demands. A repertoire of gesture, verse-form, even tone-quality exists, but within that patterned framework the individual lamenter and her chorus will improvise. The death of a young man killed by treachery may turn her lament into a call for revenge; the death of a child may provoke a string of curses on Death, the death of an old person after long illness generally occasions a lament of praise and restrained sadness. Laments are the creation of individuals, mostly women, and, judging by their lyrics, laments are not comforting, except, perhaps, to those who sing them ('I'd rather lament than eat or drink', a Greek lament claims).¹² Nor are laments lugubrious, despite the tears, wails, and sobs that punctuate their verses. They may be powerful, but they are not wild, in the sense of being out-of-control. On the other hand they may be the means to stir wildness in the listener.

In vendetta societies, or those torn by civil strife, laments often provoke revenge;¹³ in other circumstances they may provoke the civil or religious authorities. The lament's provocation may take the form of presenting an alternative view of death and the afterlife. The contradiction between Orthodox Christian teaching and the rhetoric of modern Greek laments is striking. Paradise and resurrection are rarely mentioned in the folk laments, nor is the word 'God'. Instead,

¹¹ Adler (2006), 17.

¹² Passayiannis (1928).

¹³ See Holst-Warhaft (1992), 75–97.

the grave is a place of bleak finality, of worms, marble slabs, and spidery darkness.¹⁴

No wonder the Church of Greece, Ireland, Romania, and most of the countries of Europe condemned women's laments.¹⁵ Not only does the iconography of traditional laments not conform to Christian teaching but the practice of addressing the dead directly, a practice confirmed across cultures and continents, is often taken to be a form of possession that has associations with the occult. When they lament, women are transformed into spirit mediums who communicate with the world of the dead.¹⁶ This may be viewed as transgressive; it is also dangerous for the lament-singer.¹⁷ The way back from the land of the dead is, it seems, as hard to find as the way there.

The singer of laments creates a temporary bridge between two worlds,¹⁸ but she also directs her language to the community of the living. Practitioners of what is generally regarded as an art rather than a spontaneous expression of emotion, lament-singers (and their listeners) claim that laments speak the 'truth' about the dead. Laments are sung for an individual, but frequently not by his or her next-of-kin who are regarded as being too emotionally affected by loss to perform with the correct degree of restraint. It is crucial that laments be performed 'right' so that they can become both the artistic embodiment and the construction of communal memory.

The highest compliment one can pay to a woman lament-singer among the Warao people of Venezuela is that she has created 'strong words' (Briggs, 1992: 341). Among the strong words women use in their laments are obscenities and graphic descriptions of sex. Briggs regards this extraordinary rhetoric as part of the special privilege accorded to the women who perform laments to appropriate various types of discourse: laments 'allow women to take perspectives that are known to some community members alone or known to all but never discussed openly and to put them on record for the community as a

¹⁴ This apparent contradiction has been noted by many observers including Alexiou (1974), Danforth (1982), and Holst-Warhaft (1992).

¹⁵ On the suppression and condemnation of lament by the Church throughout Europe see Holst-Warhaft (2000a), 20–53.

¹⁶ Cf. Alexiou (1974), 36–42, Danforth (1982), Holst-Warhaft (1992), Seremetakis (1991), Caraveli (1986), Tolbert (1990).

¹⁷ Tolbert (1990) discusses the warning to Finnish lament-singers not to lose themselves.

¹⁸ This phrase was first used by Caraveli-Chaves (1980).

whole' (1992: 352). Laments provide a rare opportunity for women to address the community at large as well as the dead. Through their hard, terrible words they may expose abuses of power, criticize male relatives, or complain about abusive mothers-in-law, but by their controlled expression of emotion, they also transfer individual grief to the sphere of the community.

Both the rhetorical and the musical form of laments locate them in a particular collective cultural memory. Their combination of conservative structure, collective performance, and individual improvisation makes them a powerful stimulus for the particular culture that produces them. It is the recognition of the familiar, the shared knowledge of a tradition, that makes laments so effective as a stimulus to collective memory.¹⁹ The lament-singer who draws on a repertoire of appropriate verse and melody, tone and rhythm to improvise a lament has already evoked, in her audience, the memory of numerous other deaths; her work is to go beyond this general mood of mourning and create a dialogue with the individual dead. This dialogue, if it is judged effective, is then folded back into the communal memory to be reused with minor alterations on another occasion.

Laments are performed for an 'audience' of relatives and fellow-villagers in the context of the rituals of mourning. They are addressed both to the dead and to the members of the community. How 'well' they are performed is judged on the basis of assumptions about a desirable relationship between affect and control. Formal and consciously constructed musical and poetic discourses, they do not so much 'remember' the dead as summon him or her to the presence of the living. Obviously the lament affects the community as a whole, causing a strong emotional reaction in those who are gathered to hear it. Nevertheless, as lament-singers freely admit, they use the pain of their own personal loss to create the affect they need to 'perform grief' at the funeral of another. Similarly the mourners gathered at the village funeral may share feelings of grief, but each individual mourner may focus on the memory of her lost child or husband. The dead body at the centre of the funeral is a trigger for private memory at the very moment when her/his life is being inscribed into the communal

¹⁹ Pierre Nora (1989) and James Young (1993: xi) speak of 'collective' memory and the monuments and landscapes that claim to represent it. Whether there is such a thing as collective memory in modern societies, laments seem to serve both as a stimulus to communal memory and as a means of shaping that memory.

memory in the form of a lament. This is not necessarily an inconsistency—we may experience grief as individuals but it is perhaps only those who have experienced bereavement personally who can empathize with the grief of others.

Even if the expression of grief may, to some extent, be globalized these days, it is the particularity of its local expression that gives to Irish poetry, Greek tragedy, or the folk laments of Mani, an ability to move the listener. Both Yeats and Boland's father, removed by class and generation from the tradition of the *caoine*, recognized something strange, terrible, and important when they heard it. The obtuse chorus of the *Agamemnon* failed to comprehend Cassandra's message but recognized its ominous tone. Modern Greek poets, close to the source of traditional laments, draw on their imagery and tone when they want to move their readers.

It is surprising how long the association with lament of the female voice, especially the oriental female voice, has continued in Greek literature. At least until the twentieth century, Greeks still thought of themselves as straddling two worlds, making a distinction between themselves and the East, yet valuing the eastern in themselves, and associating that oriental strain with the female and with lamentation. Greek writers who came to maturity before the Second World War, including the Asia Minor-born George Seferis and the Alexandrian Constantine Cavafy insisted that the best of Greek thought and culture was a synthesis of west and east, and that it was from its eastern margins that the centre drew its strength. Cavafy's 'new and great Greek world', a cosmos created by Alexander, was, he boasted, a superior one:

We: the Alexandrians, the Antiochians,
the Seleucids the countless other
Greeks from Egypt and Syria
from Media and Persia, and all the others.
With our far-flung empire,
our ability to make prudent adaptations.
And the Common Greek Speech
we carried to Baktria, even to India.²⁰

²⁰ Cavafy (1963), «Στα 200 π.Χ.» ('In 200 BC'), *Ποιήματα* (1919–33), B, 88 (my translation).

Cavafy's poems are a series of laments for the lost greatness of Greece, but it is a glory never centred on Athens. Even when he looks back to the Classical period, it is the eastern, Homeric fringe of the Greek world he yearns for:

Even if we broke their statues,
even if we drove them from their temples,
in no sense did the gods die.
Oh, Ionian earth, they love you still;
it is you their souls remember still.
When an August morning breaks over you
the vigor of their lives suffuses you.²¹

The East is a source of the three things Cavafy admires most: youthful vitality, sensuous beauty, and learning that can be acquired abroad but must be expressed in Greek speech. This is what the protagonist of his early poem 'An Old Man' mourns. Sitting alone in a café, he realizes:

How little he relished those years
when he had strength, speech (*logos*) and beauty.²²

And in another early poem, 'Ithaca', we are enjoined first not to fear the angry monsters and gods we may encounter on our journey, but to indulge in the sensuous pleasures to be found in Phoenician ports (particularly perfumes). Having satisfied our senses, we are to 'learn and learn again from the wise' who are to be found in Egypt. When the poet himself grows old, his protagonists, like the old man in the café, regret not the indulgences of their youth but the loss of sensuous possibilities, and of the eastern centres of Hellenism that produced them:

If only he could find a way to reach the East,
manage to escape from Italy—
all the strength in his soul
all that drive would be
communicated to his people.
If only to find himself in Syria!
He left it so young he remembers
only vaguely how it looked.

²¹ «Ιωνικόν» ('Ionian'), A, 53 (my translation).

²² «Ένας Γέρος» ('An Old Man'), A, 98 (my translation).

But he always dwelt on it in his thoughts
 as something sacred that you approach
 like a pilgrim, like a vision
 of some lovely place, like the sight
 of Greek cities and harbors.—²³

Like Cavafy, George Seferis was born outside the borders of Greece and despite becoming one of the central figures of modern Greek literature, the loss of his home in Smyrna (Asia Minor) gave the poet a sense of permanent exile, a nostalgia that pervades much of his writing:

The houses I had they took away from me. It happened
 that the times were unpropitious: wars, disasters, exiles;²⁴

The lines come from Seferis's most ambitious poem, 'Thrush', written after his return from exile during the Second World War. In the poem he dreams:

that a woman with curly eyelashes, deep-girdled,
 returning from southern ports,
 Smyrna, Rhodes, Syracuse, Alexandria,
 from cities closed like hot shutters
 with perfume of golden fruit and herbs—
 climbs the stairs without seeing
 those who've fallen asleep under the stairs.²⁵

Despite his attraction to the exotic sensuousness of the East, Seferis does not celebrate the diaspora of the Greeks. For him, the loss of his home in Asia Minor is one of a series of losses and exiles Greeks have come to expect as part of their tragic fate:

Because we knew this fate of ours so well
 wandering among broken stones for three or six thousand years
 searching in ruined buildings that might have been our homes
 trying to remember dates and heroic deeds;
 will we be able?

Because we were bound and scattered,
 and struggled, as they said, with non-existent difficulties,
 lost, finding a road again, full of blind regiments,

²³ «Δημητρίου Σωτήρος (162–150 π.Χ.)» ('Dimitrios Sotiros (162–150 B.C.)'), *B*, 12.

²⁴ *Κίχλη*, Athens, 1947. (This and all following Seferis translations are my own.)

²⁵ *Ibid.*

sinking in marshes, in the lake at Marathon,
will we be able to die properly?²⁶

Continually travelling by necessity or choice, Seferis was always haunted by this vision of his damaged homeland. 'Wherever I go, Greece wounds me', as he says in the poem 'In the Manner of G.S.'

In the meantime Greece is traveling
we don't know anything, we don't know we've all disembarked
we don't know the bitterness of harbors when all the ships are at sea;
we make fun of those who feel it.

Seferis was a permanently displaced Greek, with a nostalgia for the 'rich order' of an earlier and better Greece. By contrast, the Cretan Nikos Kazantzakis was proud of the mixture of eastern and western influences that had formed him as a writer.²⁷ In his description of the Greeks he encountered on his travels in southern Greece (*O Μοριάς*, translated into English as 'Journey to the Morea'), Kazantzakis makes this privileging of the oriental (and the feminine) in the modern Greek character clear:

What has the dual-descended modern Greek taken from his father, what from his mother? . . . He is clever and shallow, with no metaphysical anxieties, and yet, when he begins to sing, a universal bitterness leaps up from his oriental bowels, breaks through the crust of Greek logic and, from the depths of his being, totally mysterious and dark, the Orient emerges . . . (1937: 326, my translation)

When he sings, it seems, the modern Greek draws on the maternal strain, on the oriental, the dark and mysterious side. And what are these songs he is singing? They are a type of vocal improvisation popular in the late Ottoman Empire that, at least in Greece, was associated with lamentation. The musical form of the *amané* may be an appropriate symbol of what many observers have seen as the contrary nature of modern Greek culture. The musical cafés where Asia Minor-style music, including the *amané*, was sung, were patronized heavily by refugees from Asia following the expulsion of Greeks from Smyrna in 1922.²⁸

²⁶ «Μυθιστόρημα» ΚΒ' ('Mythistorema' 22), in Seferis (1972).

²⁷ A full articulation of his view of the synthesis of east and west in forming 'the Cretan glance' can be found in the introduction to *The Odyssey: A Modern Sequel* (1958).

²⁸ On the *café aman*, *amané* as related to lament, see Holst-Warhaft (2000b).

It may seem a long way from the so-called *cafés aman* to ancient tragedy, but the discussion surrounding the *amané* and later forms of modern Greek music, will, I hope, cast light on what Nicole Loraux is talking about when she ponders the ambiguities of the mourning voice of tragedy, a voice that hovers between singing and crying out: ‘between the song that becomes a crying out and the crying out that is a song, readers of tragedies can become lost . . .’ (2002: 67).

Born in the small town of Monemvasia in the Peloponnese, an area of Greece noted for its laments, Yiannis Ritsos claimed to have only had to listen to the voices of his childhood—Church Hymns, folk song, lament—to compose his poems. His long poem *Epitaphios*, inspired by the shooting of a young man in a workers’ strike in Salonika in 1937, takes the form of a lament by a mother for her son, and draws on the sacred and secular tradition of lament.²⁹ The mother/narrator refers to her own voice as if it were a disembodied instrument which alone can give her pleasure: ‘and I delight to hear it, rising like a spring | rising from its root in me, a shriller cry’ (1936: 12, my translation). We are reminded of Cassandra’s high-pitched cry, of the piercing sound of the *aulos*, strains that disturb and tear the air.

Epitaphios was a monument to the martyrdom of Greek workers who dared to strike, and more broadly to the Left who had been defeated in the Civil War and suffered torture, imprisonment, and exile for a decade. Using the voice of a mother, the poet wrote a series of laments that praised the young man for his beauty and goodness and mourned his loss. Set to music by Mikis Theodorakis, *Epitaphios* became a revolutionary song-cycle. Its aim was not to console the public, but to stir. And yet it did so in a perfectly ordered, controlled manner. By using the voice of a working-class popular singer backed by a strident bouzouki to perform the songs, Theodorakis broke down the barrier between ‘high’ and ‘low’ art and began a new movement in Greek music. Like Cassandra and her *aulos*, the singer and his song eschewed consolation. Anger and provocation are often the hallmark of lament, even when the mourner addresses God: ‘See, O God, look well | at whom you have treated so badly’, says Zion, the female speaker of the Book of Lamentation (2: 19). Lamenting herself, Cassandra also rails at Apollo, the god she has served faithfully, calling him her ‘destroyer’ (1089). Her high-pitched voice expects

²⁹ Prevelakis (1983), 71. I have written about this poem more extensively in Holst-Warhaft (1992), 179–84, and (1980), 57–70.

no mercy and resolves nothing. It is an eerie sound that we can imagine the chorus will carry with them forever. 'Bear witness to this horror,' Cassandra seems to say, 'Pay attention!' Perhaps this is all that can be done in the face of death and great sorrow: it should be noted. And if the one who notes has sufficient art, the witnessing will be remembered, provided it is expressed in a form that the society understands.

When Theodorakis set Ritsos in a popular musical idiom, he chose the best interpreters of the day to perform it, just as the villagers choose the best lament-singer to perform their laments. Bearing witness to tragedy is recognized as an art, not an outpouring of emotion. It has its rules, its expertise. In the Greek world, both ancient and modern, the orient was linked to lamentation, but also to sensuous pleasure. The lost worlds lamented and admired by Seferis and Cavafy, are not at the centre but the periphery of the Greek universe. What makes them attractive is the combination of virtues that both admired, and that Kazantzakis felt he embodied: strength, beauty, and *logos*—that is, the ability to express oneself in the Greek language. Ritsos's grieving mother hymns her son's praise in a high voice that gives her pleasure as it rises, bearing witness to her loss. Different as their voices are, they remind us that these poets can count on a language for their loss, one that has served the Greeks long and well.

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The Abject Eidos

Trauma and the Body in Sophocles' Electra

Jane Montgomery Griffiths

I am haunted by *Electra*. I have been for a long time now. The play troubles me. It aches in my imagination, with that final word, *teleōthen* (*it has been completed*), viciously reverberating like a mockery of the lack of resolution the play makes me feel. The line that hits me most, that disturbs me most, is Orestes' recognition of his sister:

e son to kleinon eidos Ēlektras tode? (1177)

Is this here image of yours that of the famed Electra?

My translation is clumsy and deliberately so, for the Greek is odd and disturbing. Most commentators focus on the transferred epithet, but I am troubled by something else: by the strangely alienated quality of the words themselves. These should be words of recognition approaching reconnection, but instead they give only a sense of the gulf between expectation and realization. For the loving brother freshly reunited with his dearest sister, Orestes' question is at best ironic and at worst, dispassionately surreal. Orestes dissects and deconstructs the 'image' and 'appearance' of his sister. She is not the gendered woman, but is neutered in *son to kleinon eidos*. She is not the subject: her *eidos* is. She is de-humanized, objectified, categorized through the gaze of another. And in answer, Electra's words are equally telling: *tod' est' ekeino* (1178)—'This here is that there'. She exiles herself in the geography of her language and robs herself of identity. Even more objectified, she moves beyond the *eidos* to the

further alienated neuter demonstrative; *tode* (*this near me*) becoming *ekeino* (*that over there*), in a reflexive phrase that puts her both near to and away from herself as subject.

Contrast that with Fiona Shaw's words, as she describes watching herself as Electra in the RSC's production of the play:

I saw a clip of *Electra* on television. There's a bit where she was throwing herself down on to the circle and so I stopped the machine to see what happened when the body just fell. I was very entertained by it but I felt it was somebody else completely. . . . Very few actors really feel the emotions. I think tragedy is expensive. After the *Electra* run, I was in a terrible state for many months, utterly worn out. . . . I didn't realize it was going to be like that. I was very depressed and upset, like going to the moon—it's very hard to know what has meaning afterwards.¹

'Very few actors really feel the emotions', says Shaw; yet her comments demonstrate that the actor in, and after, performance constantly deals with the confusion of what is genuine sensation, what is mimetic. The actor who has 'been' Electra, sharing her body with a fictional character in mimetic possession, now becomes the spectator of herself as Electra, and is unable to identify her self with the replayed body she is watching. It is 'somebody else entirely', and she chooses the third person to express this: not 'my body', but '*the body*'; a conscious negation of personal somatic identification, much as Electra does with *tod' est' ekeino*. As Shaw/Electra falls, the/her face becomes a surface splattered with the bodily excretions of sweat, spittle, and tears. Mucus runs from the/her nose, and blood freely flows from a cut on the/her knee; a 'reality' of physical excretion mirroring the mimetic representation created by the baby-oil she had smeared on herself pre-show and the scratch-blood scars she had applied to temple, chest, buttock, and thigh. The inner fluids of the actor's body become the external manifestation of the character's

¹ Woodis (1991), 132. Sophocles' *Electra*, directed by Deborah Warner for the Royal Shakespeare Company, was first produced at The Pit in December 1988, and then revived for the Thelma Holt Company for a substantially recast and redesigned tour in 1991–2. For a factually flawed but nonetheless fascinating analysis of the semiosis of Shaw's performance, see Melrose (1994). For the political and social currency of the production (particularly on tour to Derry), see Shaw (1996); Hall (1999); Hardwick (2002); Walton and McDonald (2002); McDonald (2003); Goldhill (2004); Wilmer (2005); Griffiths (2008). For performance practice/place in theatre history, see again Shaw (1996) and in *Didaskalia* 5(3) (2002); Woodis (1991); Covington (1996); Hazel (1999) and (2002); Garland (2004); Goldhill (2007).

being, and show Electra written on the actor's body, whose skin and flesh become the site of trauma.

Brecht sententiously claimed that the actor's use of his/her own grief over Electra's urn was an example of the 'barbaric'; but at the 'phenomenological seam' (States, 1992) where performance and reception meet, there are no simple definitions of what is 'real', what is mimetic, and what is signified; nor of *who* is more subject to the affective operations of performance: the actor, the spectator, or the strange chimera that is melding of the two. Where do the parameters of emotion lie, and how does the actor, whose affective memory and imagination conjure up the liquid tears that flow, differentiate between real and fake?² How does the actor define her fall as mimetic, when her body feels the pain and carries the scars of nightly physical trauma decades after the event? The discomfort of witnessing Shaw's exposed and vulnerable body—a real body, with skin that would bruise and rip with the fall, and tears and mucus that would be excreted with emotion—takes the spectator into the confused and disturbing world of the dramatic Electra's physical predicament: a place where easy recognition is confounded, where the correlation between inside and outside no longer fits, and where the body is an unstable signifier of identity.

Literary analyses of Greek tragedy tend to ignore the correlation between the text that is performed and the actor's performance of that text, but this chapter will take that interconnection as its starting point. The actor's reconfiguration of the body image runs parallel to Electra's own, and provides the pathway to a reading of the play that places trauma at its centre through its protagonist's somatic response to suffering. *Electra* is a play of *performative* trauma, inextricably linked to the 'meaningfulness' (Grosz, 1994) of the body as a contested site of power and control. This is not to impose a psychoanalytic reading on Electra's character, but rather to draw one from the text through the exploration of the corollaries between play and performative experience. Any actor who has played Electra and experienced her on and in her body would recognize the significance of the body image to Electra.³ It is the mechanism through which she

² See Padel (1990), 84, for the similarity between the 'liquifaction' of emotion and tears.

³ I say this from personal experience, as an actor who was understudy in the Thelma Holt revival of Shaw's *Electra*, and who played Electra for six months with

constructs identity, and on which can be read the abusive systems which have brought her to the condition of being a *sōm' atimōs k'atheōs ephtharmenon* (1181), 'body dishonourably and godlessly corrupted'. For both actor and character, the body operates performatively; and as such, performs in a constantly fluctuating oscillation between subjectivity and objectivity. Identification is created through the shifting, ever mutating entity of the body image. It is this *eidōs* that, as Grosz argues, defines the subject in relation to the other, in both corporeal and environmental terms:

The body image establishes the distinctions by which the body is usually understood—the distinctions between its outside or skin, and its inside or inner organs; between organs and processes; between active and passive relations; and between the positions of subject and that of object. (Grosz, 1994: 84)

Electra's use of her body is highly 'meaningful'.⁴ Her *sōma* is an endlessly malleable and confusing signifier. It is the physical seat of the active passivity, the willing suffering, and the masochistic fortitude, that give both her and her *eidōs* a claim to be *kleinon*. It is also the corporeal shell housing her identification with the dead. As such, Electra uses her body as a victim to be pitied, an enemy to be disciplined, and, under the regime she defies, a tool for *realpolitik*; and it is through her use and abuse of her body, that we see how closely linked her somatic performativity is to her condition as melancholic and sufferer of trauma.

WRITTEN ON THE BODY

Drawing a distinction between mourning and melancholia, Freud builds this painful list of symptoms:

The distinguishing mental features of melancholia are a profoundly painful dejection, cessation of interest in the outside world, loss of the capacity to love, inhibition of all activity, and a lowering of the

Compass Theatre Company in 1999. I have interviewed most of the actors who have performed *Electra* in Britain over the last twenty years, and all of them single out her use of her body as a specific characterizational focus.

⁴ See especially Grosz (1994), 32 for an exemplary analysis of the libidinal body.

self-regarding feelings to a degree that finds utterance in self-reproaches and self-revilings, and culminates in a delusional expectation of punishment. (Freud, 1991: 252)

The similarities with Electra's condition are striking. Trapped in the stasis of melancholia, she lives out her life focused only on the microcosm of her grief and suffering; her 'capacity to love' operating only for the dead and absent; active only in words and impotent in action; bearing the weight of the constant (though perhaps not so 'delusional') 'expectation of punishment'. Buried further in the list, Freud also notes 'sleeplessness and refusal to take nourishment, and—what is psychologically very remarkable—. . . an overcoming of the instinct which compels every living thing to cling to life' (1991: 254). Here too parallels resonate. Electra's sleeplessness is stated in her opening anapaests: *ta de pannuchidōn ēdē stugeraí | xunisas' eunai mogerōn oikōn* (92–3), 'the all-night vigils well-known to my hateful bed in this wretched house'. And as we shall see, the 'impoverish [ment] of the ego' of which Freud speaks is a potent and insistent characteristic of Electra; recognizable in both the abnegation and self-denial of her life-drive, and also in the physical impoverishment of her condition: her denial of food, her refusal and inability to sleep. She punishes her body, and positions her body to be punished: the victim of circumstance and of self.

This use and abuse of her body is remarkably similar to the symptoms of trauma noted in victims and survivors of violence. In *Trauma and Recovery*, Judith Lewis Herman constructs a detailed analysis of the somatic and psychological implications of trauma on the survivor of the event. Connecting strongly with Freud's description of melancholia, Herman notes, is 'survivor guilt': the self-reproach inherent in the victim of trauma's ambivalent response to survival:

No matter how brave and resourceful the victim may have been, her actions were insufficient to ward off disaster. In the aftermath of traumatic events, as survivors review and judge their own conduct, feelings of guilt and inferiority are practically universal. . . 'survivor guilt' . . . Feelings of guilt are especially severe when the survivor has been a witness to the suffering or death of other people. To be spared oneself, in the knowledge that others have met a worse fate, creates a severe burden of conscience. (Herman, 1992: 53–4)

There are clear analogies with Electra's own 'self-reproaches and self-revilings' (Freud, 1991: 252). Feeling the blame for her inability to

stop her father's death (1021–4), for the inefficacy of her threats of revenge (604–5), and later, for the inadequacy of her rescue of Orestes, and the good but failed intentions which prevented father and son from sharing a grave (1131–5), her survivor guilt introjects upon the body. It prevents her from moving on from the relived nightmare of what she has experienced, perpetuates her envelopment in melancholia, and, with the news of Orestes' death, plunges her into a state of such 'impoverishment of the ego' that she loses completely 'the instinct for life' (818–22, 1164–70). The fantasy of righteous revenge she tries to spin to Chrysothemis (947–89) is just that: a fantasy. Her words are infelicitous: they fail to take effect. And when handed the urn, her dreams and promises of becoming the avenger disintegrate with the ash she holds. One short-lived dream of action crumbles into the ongoing stasis of trauma.

The introjected guilt that creates in Electra such an ambivalent response to her 'instinct for life' demonstrates one of the uncanny operations of trauma: its profound ability to alter perceptions of self, of one's environment, and of one's relationship to time. Woodard once magnificently described Electra at the end of the play as being 'thrust toward infinity in a finite world' (1966: 144), but I would suggest she inhabits that endless, timeless condition throughout the play; in sharp contrast to her brother whose success is so dependent on *kairos*. She lives in a never-ending, always coming-into-being condition of trauma; rewitnessing events that she herself might not have been able to process at the time of *patros thnēskontos* (1022–3), 'when father died', when her mind was less able to understand the event (1024), but that haunt her continually now (201–9, 444–6). And as she re-sees them, so she must speak of them. The recounting of these events is the driving imperative for Electra. She must retell what she has witnessed and what she has suffered to fulfil her dual roles as mourner and as victim of trauma.⁵ This is a compulsion to review the death that alters linear chronology and makes each memory ever more vivid, preventing her from both processing her loss, and connecting to the present:

⁵ Cf. Loraux (1998), 104–5: 'Encompassing time and space completely, nonoblivion is everywhere, active at every stage of the process . . . she lets what wants to speak inside herself speak repetitively.'

Trauma is described as the response to an unexpected or overwhelming violent event or events that are not fully grasped as they occur, but return later in repeated flashbacks, nightmares and other repetitive phenomena . . . The repetitions of the traumatic event—unavailable to consciousness, but intruding repeatedly on sight—thus suggest a larger relation to the event that extends beyond what can simply be seen or what can be known, and that is inextricably tied up with the belatedness and incomprehensibility that remain at the heart of this repetitive seeing. (Caruth, 1995: 89)

This peculiar paradox, of, as Caruth says, the 'belatedness' of seeing the trauma connects the body and the waking dream to the realm of language. Agamemnon's death is *arrēton* ('unspeakable'), yet must be spoken, and in the speaking, is relived repeatedly; the moment of death being more real in its belated repetition than in this historical reality. This repetition is the only means to achieve restoration and reparation:

The ordinary response to atrocities is to banish them from consciousness. Certain violations of the social compact are too terrible to utter aloud: this is the meaning of the word *unspeakable* . . . Remembering and telling the truth about terrible events are prerequisites both for the restoration of the social order and for the healing of individual victims. (Herman, 1992: 1)

Simultaneously, however, this reliving is also an involuntary effect of trauma; one that has the destructive and melancholic potential to disrupt the restorative process:

They cannot resume the normal course of their lives for the trauma repeatedly interrupts. It is as if time stops at the moment of trauma. The traumatic moment becomes encoded in an abnormal form of memory, which breaks spontaneously into consciousness, both as flashbacks during waking states and as traumatic nightmares during sleep. (Herman, 1992: 37)

Here we see the paradox of the traumatic condition: the event must be relived to effect resolution, but the reliving has the power to place the survivor in an altogether depersonalized state of otherness. She has no power over the traumatic memory: only over her use of it.

Electra's use of this traumatic memory links fully her voice and her body's performance. The physical action of speech stretches the boundaries of somatic demarcation, extending its borders as it pushes

out the breath of words from the hidden interior of the body to the revealed exterior of its environment. In the necessity of speaking out, of crying out to the world the injustice of the relived trauma, Electra's voice becomes one with her body. She must speak, must tell her suffering to the world, and must make the unspeakable into the speakable:

Through the act of survival, the repeated failure to have seen in time—in itself a pure repetition compulsion, a repeated nightmare—can be transformed by, and transmuted into, the imperative of a speaking that awakens others. (Caruth, 1995: 102–3)

This act of speaking becomes therefore a process of coming into being—a revisiting of the moment that makes memory reality, and forces the enactment of the traumatic moment in the immediacy of the freshly lived instant. In its immediacy, it creates meaning for the body for the speaker who has lost all else. The voice of mourning, of melancholy, and of trauma rewrites the boundaries of somatic recognition, inscribing on the flesh and sinews of the person who cries out the parameters of the vocalic body.

Electra's compulsion to speak her trauma both creates and destroys her: each reliving giving her further need to keep speaking, to keep enduring; but also causing her further pain. Connor refers to this traumatic, performative voice in terms of the 'vocalic body': the 'body-in-invention, an impossible, imaginary body in the course of being found and formed' (2001: 80). In *Electra*, this is a powerful construction. It is particularly significant that the cry from the mouth is created in response to the mother's actions: a perversion of the original vocalic body, where the baby's cry is designed to provoke maternal comfort and nourishment. Electra's voice, of course, elicits quite the reverse of motherly love, and for her, the mouth and the cry are potent symbols of a total perversion of mother/daughter roles. The voice, paradoxically, gives Electra plenitude in her emptiness and fulfilment in her hunger. Desperate to make the unspeakable speakable, she fills her mouth with the words which will tell her suffering, and empties her mouth of the compromised platitudes that, though providing her with physical sustenance, would make her an accomplice. The voice, having already defied the stability of external somatic boundaries, now opens up the possibility for internal space, filling interior emptiness with endless spatial possibility.

Electra's voice, crying out the unspeakable in the endless always of *aei/aiai* (Loraux, 2002), constructs in her mouth her strongest somatic symbol of empowerment in impotence. She redefines the performativity of her language, and reformulates the physicality of its emanation. Her mouth is a tool of active aggression and passive resistance. The crying voice fills the void with the words which relieve her trauma, while simultaneously creating a deeper void, emptying Electra of the possibility of somatic satiation.⁶ She cannot receive fulfilment from her body. She is dissociated from it, and, as the melancholic and the trauma survivor, she has moved away from the normal processes of physical sensation to the condition noted by Herman in which she is 'able to disregard hunger, fatigue or pain', her nervous system 'disconnected from the present' (1992: 34–5). Speech and hunger must go hand in hand for Electra. If she is physically satiated with food, there can be no place for her vocalic body: if she is hungry, her words will be forced to come from her. In other words, as Maud Ellmann writes in her study of hunger strikers:

Since language must compete with food to gain the sole possession of the mouth, we must either speak and go hungry, or shut up and eat. (Ellmann, 1993: 46)

This raises important issues about Electra's attitude to the deprivation that has been inscribed on her 'body dishonourably and godlessly corrupted'. At five places in the play, Electra describes her physical privation and/or her attitude to her indigence,⁷ and her relationship to food is symptomatic of her domestic and ontological power-struggle. Herman has noted the use of deprivation as one of the formative features of the captor/captive power struggle. It is a powerful weapon, but there is an obverse side to its coercive power: the victim can turn that very tool back on the perpetrator:

One form of resistance is refusing to comply with petty demands or to accept rewards. The hunger strike is the ultimate expression of this resistance. Because the prisoner voluntarily subjects himself to greater deprivation than that willed by his captor, he affirms his sense of integrity and self-control. (Herman, 1992: 79)

⁶ Cf. Kitzinger's (1991) brilliant interpretation of Electra's loss of language, and hence identity, as the male world silences the female *logoi*.

⁷ At lines 192; 264–5; 361–4; 818–19; 1195–6.

By subverting the tools of physical deprivation, Electra can preserve autonomy and integrity. As even the smallest compromise could erode her sense of identity, Electra chooses 'to speak and go hungry'.

Through this denial of her need, Electra manages to *perform* her body as a subversion of the dominant culture of her mother and Aegisthus: a visual signifier of her resistance and will. Her very appearance is 'action', one made all the more telling because the main object of her resistance is her mother. Electra joins together the role of the hunger striker and the anorexic in a wilful demonstration of her insistence on autonomy and integrity. Food plays a crucial part in this battle: as a mechanism for love and cruelty and a token of power and impotence, its importance is manifest on the body of Electra. Her emaciation is an assault on the senses;⁸ a disconcerting affront, challenging the gaze of characters and audience alike; creating objectification, not recognition (1177). But it also forces the audience to watch with a strange fascination. Perhaps it is our questioning of whether this starvation is inflicted by self or other: is Electra anorectic? Is she starved as punishment? The question is part of the performance of emaciation which in turn emphasizes the theatrical performativity of the body:

Self-starvation is above all a performance . . . [I]t is staged to trick the conscience of its viewers, forcing them to recognize that they are implicated in the spectacle that they behold. Anorectics are 'starving for attention': they are making *a spectacle of themselves*, in every sense. And because their exhibitionism cannot be content with any lesser nakedness than disenfleshment, they starve until their skeletons are scarcely 'clad with skin' . . . Thus its emaciation, which seems to indicate a violent rebuff, also bespeaks a strange adventure in seduction. (Ellmann, 1993: 6)

Ellmann's use of the word 'seduction' is highly charged and brings to mind Freud's ideas on the mother who, by her care of the child's body, is its 'first love object' (Freud, 1977: 371). To eroticize the starving body is both to accept with arousal the ravages of deprivation, and to overturn the pre-Oedipal eroticism of the mother's breast. The anorectic constructs an autoeroticism that can do without the mother. She refuses the mother and spits the mother out. She

⁸ Cf. Seale (1982), 62–3 for an analysis of the performative force of 'the spectacle of [Electra's] wretched figure'.

conflates sexuality and power with food, acceptance, and rejection. It is hardly surprising, then, that *Electra* should have such a problematic relationship to eating the food provided by her mother. 'A mother's presence is always implicit in food',⁹ and by rejecting food, *Electra* rejects and refuses Clytemnestra. Disgorging words instead of ingesting nourishment, she puts herself in the Father's realm, that place of symbolic language, where power is vested in the linguistic register of the patriarchy, not in the semiotic anarchy of the maternal realm. And yet that interplay between hunger and speech also places her at the extremes of existence: teetering on the edge of abjection, the Kristevan haunt of the melancholic, where borders slip and slide, where mother's milk is vomited in the Name of the Father, and where the sufferer treads the threshold between life and death. It is a visceral and erotic realm, where abjection and arousal meet in *jouissance* and where the body's libidinal investment is inextricably entwined with the ecstasy of the death-drive.¹⁰

With such a distorted libidinal attachment to her body, it is hardly surprising that physical deprivation has become such a formative factor in *Electra's* character, and her embracing of hunger and suffering signifies how rooted she is in abjection and melancholia. Freud notes the 'refusal to take nourishment' as one of the symptoms of the condition. It is the sign of the 'death drive' (Freud, 1991), which places the sufferer closer to the dead than the living. In *Electra*, we see the protagonist's descent from one who is trapped in melancholia, to one who goes beyond it, embracing 'the death drive'. As *Electra* hears of Orestes' death, the delineation between life and death becomes painfully tenuous. Herman notes the phenomenon of despair in victims of trauma who are so trapped in their situation that the death drive has overtaken their will to live:

Prisoners who had reached this point of degradation no longer attempted to find food or to warm themselves, and they made no effort to avoid being beaten. They were regarded as the living dead. (Herman, 1992: 85)

⁹ Orbach (1987), 54. 'It is almost as if food, in its many and varied forms, becomes a representation of the mother . . . Food is a statement of her love, her power and her giving in the family. Food personifies the mother and she is rejected or accepted through it. In this way food, divorced from its biological meaning, takes on a prism of reified projections.' See also Bruch (1973), Chernin (1985), and Deutsch (1991), for theories of the anorexic's relationship with the mother figure.

¹⁰ See Kristeva (1982), 3–4.

In just such a way, Electra becomes 'the living dead', not caring if she dies of starvation, exposure, or from her enemies' punishment (817–22). Significantly it was at this moment that Shaw's Electra would fall each night: a moment of such abjection that identification with the body became meaningless. Lost beyond despair, longing only for communion with the dead, she embraces her 'brutish suffering... sublime and devastated, for "I" deposits it to the father's account: I endure it, for I imagine that such is the desire of the other' (Kristeva 1982: 2).

Kristeva's analysis of abjection is highly useful in understanding the levels of liminality to which Electra's uncompromising extremeness has taken her. As we have seen with Fiona Shaw's performance, the somatic representation of Electra blurs the boundaries of inside and out, actor and character. This corresponds with the blurring of borders inherent in the embracing of the abject:

No, as in true theater, without makeup or mask, refuse and corpses show me what I permanently thrust aside in order to live. These body fluids, this defilement, this shit are what life withstands, hardly and with difficulty, on the part of death. There, I am at the border of my condition as a living being. (Kristeva, 1982: 3)

We are here shown an interesting paradox—the mask, in all its theatrical, mimetic connotations, is made redundant in the process of abjection, because the identifying lines of mimetic demarcation are gradually eroded. Electra does not just embrace poverty and abjection; she becomes it: an assumption of identity that takes her to the borders of the living and the dead, the human and the sub-human, the gendered and the sex-less. In the extremity of her condition, she finds identification not through the usual mask of gender (as represented by her mother, and gendered expectations of 'modesty'), but in the trauma survivor's anti-cathectic attachment to the dead and absent. One might equally say that the actor playing Electra undergoes a similar liminality in blurring the real and the representational: the embracing of the abject. Shaw is quoted as saying that playing Electra was 'physically and mentally very dangerous. I was physically wrecked from it—lame, thin, ill. You're psychically playing with illness, starvation and burning up enormous intellectual energy' (Covington, 1996).

In Electra's body and in its shifting, mutating *eidos*, we see the interrelationship of space, time, and voice working together to

construct new, but never concrete, identity. This is an identity that calls on the audience to witness. As Herman states,

It is very tempting to take the side of the perpetrator. All the perpetrator asks is that the bystander do nothing. He appeals to the universal desire to see, hear, and speak no evil. The victim, on the contrary, asks the bystander to share the burden of pain. The victim demands action, engagement and remembering. (Herman, 1992: 7–8)

The traumatized and victimized body of Electra also has crucial importance as the site on which the play's theatrical and interpretational meaning is centred. Her body, combining as it does words and deeds, has the power to 'demand action, engagement and remembering'. She forces us to watch even when we want to turn away; she seduces us with her suffering and makes us engage with the complicity of our bystanding. And when we have finished watching, she compels us to confront the emptiness of the image, and ask ourselves, just as Shaw did after playing Electra, 'what has meaning afterwards?' This is the power of the play, forcing us from the comfort of secure recognition; and in the bitter irony of that final word, *teleōthen*, we know that for Electra, the trauma will never be over.

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What's Hecuba to him . . . that he should weep for her?

Jan Parker

'What's Hecuba to him?', asks a wondering Hamlet seeing the Player cry 'real tears' at the plight of this long-dead queen.

Ay, that's the question, or several questions: How does this tragic queen affect over time, culture, and language? Why does he (the actor, the rememberer, the witness) weep? Should he (the Player) weep? Or, using Brecht's terms, is that 'barbaric' because the pathos should be bounded rather than being made 'portable'?

The communication of the plight of this long-dead queen affects the player and seems to set up, in Hamlet's mind, the Mousetrap: a re-enactment with a pre-designed affect/effect. Hamlet comments on the player's achievement of real emotion from a fiction; a fiction designed to entrap one at least of the audience into betraying emotional recognition. The trap is designed to work by collapsing the distance between the past and present: if no one weeps, the trap fails to spring. . . .

A similarly designedly metatheatrical and complex performative layering surrounds one of the most 'pathetic' scenes in Greek tragedy. Electra weeps over the ashes of her brother, over the urn that has just been brought as a token of his death. Rather than the avenger for whom she has lived her life in waiting, rather than a protagonist for her revenge tragedy, she has as a substitute an object (always a powerful, quasi-shamanistic focus in Greek tragedy—cf. Hektor's sword which 'kills' Ajax). Cradling the urn in her arms as if it were a 'transitional object', or the baby she cared for, she laments her sudden and complex loss—a lament of sister for brother; of powerless woman for the loss of her avenger; of woman for the kin she should have physically cared for

at his marriage and/or at his deathbed. But the urn is an empty 'prop': Orestes stands witnessing his own funerary lament.

This scene is, famously, a theatrical *tour de force*. But it is an uneasy one, not least in that it must cement Electra's new-found resolution to take on herself the role, the identity, the *telos* of avenger, in Orestes' stead. But the audience knows that the avenger is watching, though an avenger who like Hamlet seems quicker to take up stances than action. Both Hamlet and Orestes are pretenders, in both senses (of laying claim, and being ready to improvise and take up roles as if 'really' in a theatre). In this scene, as in the Mousetrap, there is theatrical spotlight on the effect of role-playing, on the very fictiveness of the pathos that makes this scene one of the most instantly communicating in tragedy.

It was this scene that brought out one of Brecht's most swingeing attacks on what I term the 'fallacy of the pathetic':

I have here Horace's *Ars Poetica* in Gottsched's translation. He really expresses a theory that often concerns us, one that Aristotle proposed for the theatre:

You must enchant and conquer the reader's breast.
 One laughs with those who laugh and lets tears flow
 When others are sad. So, if you want me to weep
 First show me your own eye full of tears.

In this well-known passage Gottsched cites Cicero writing on oratory, describing how the Roman actor Polus played Electra mourning her brother. His own son had just died, and so he brought the urn with his ashes on to the stage and spoke the relevant verses 'focusing them so painfully on himself that his own loss made him weep real tears. Nor could any of those present have refrained from weeping at that point.'

I must say there is only one word for such an operation: barbaric.¹

What is wrong with such an operation: is it the ready communication of suffering of character and actor to audience? With narrowing the distance between actor, classic role, and modern audience? With the actor

¹ Brecht (1974), 270. The Horace quotation is from *Ars Poetica*, 99–103. The anecdote about the Hellenistic actor Polus is from Aulus Gellius, *Attic Nights*, VI.5: 'The plot of the play is so constructed that Electra, thinking that she carries her brother's remains, bewails and bemoans his supposed death. Therefore Polus, clad in Electra's mourning garb, took his son's urn and bones from the tomb and, embracing them in the pretence that they were Orestes', filled everywhere around, not with imitations and feignings, but with true and living grief and lamentations. Thus, while it appeared that a play was being performed, what was performed was his pain' (Gellius, 1946: ii.34–7).

mediating past pain over and through temporal and cultural difference? With re-enacting a Hecuba or Electra and showing that 'even here are tears in the heart of things': *sunt lacrimae rerum*? After all, Aeneas' tears which Virgil formulated into one of the most frequently quoted statements of the continuously available plangency of the human condition, are similarly aroused by the communication of pain through time and over distance: what moves him is to see the Trojans' past woes depicted on a door in a faraway 'barbaric' African kingdom.

Brecht seems to be objecting to the collapsing of the proper distance between actor, persona, and audience and also, this passage goes on to say, to an improper generalization of suffering, divorcing affect from the particularity and specificity of character and context.

I want to explore this objection by looking at various 'mournings for Electra'. I would like to suggest that the collapsing of temporal, cultural, and [meta]theatrical distance can be seen as more than improper: as potentially traumatic. That pathos and trauma originate and communicate differently. And that the difference between Hecuba and Electra is one of specificity of dramaturgy—crying for/with Hecuba is a very different matter from grieving over Electra.

PATHOS AND TRAUMA

Hecuba is a pathetic character—a figure of pathos, a character whose suffering communicates immediately, the paradigmatic example of the turn of the wheel of fortune. Hecuba in *Trojan Women* starts the play on the floor with grief; the greatest Queen, presiding over a household of fifty sons, has now lost everything. Or so it seems, but the play delivers this ruined queen an even greater blow, one so devastating that the Messenger whose job it is to communicate between the off-stage superpower and its on-stage victims, cannot bring himself to deliver it. The Greeks have decided to kill her surviving infant grandson, so that Troy really will have no future. As the buildings have been torched, so the possibility of a new generation has to be eradicated. His mother Andromache has been torn away and loaded onto the slave ship; so it is left to Hecuba to lament the death.

Such suffering, of parent for lost child, of would-be mother for barrenness, of grandparent for loss of potency, hope, or heirs, can be transferred with immediate affect to an audience. *Sunt lacrimae*

rerum—that there are tears in the heart of things, that the human condition contains devastating clauses, can be communicated directly and needs no translation by director or audience.

Schopenhauer's distinction between *Leid* (pain) and *Mitleid* (sympathetic pain) was developed as a therapeutic model by Freud and Breuer (while Charcot's extraordinary display of hysterics narrowed the distance between theatre and psychotherapy).² The simplest theatrical effect is to elide the two, conflating the character's pain with the audience's self-identification with the pain. As watching a dentist drill brings twinges in the root canal, so a character's pain can be conveyed 'sympathetically', affecting all watchers at all times and in all places because of the identification of any *homo* with any other (*homo sum, humani nihil a me alienum puto*, as Terence, translating a previous culture's play into Latin, has it).³

An account of the action of such pathos comes from the *Iliad*. The women gather round the corpse of Patroclus, each crying 'for a common assumed reason (*prophasis*) but each for her own woes' (*Il.* 18. 302). That is to say, the stage can provide a channel for an audience to grieve in common for their own specific situation: the trajectory of the pathos goes from action to actor to audience, increasing in impetus, losing specificity as it gains in impact. Each audience member mourns not for Hecuba but with Hecuba, not for Electra but for himself and his own.

What is wrong with that? Brecht seems to say that the emotion is detached from the specific cause. Dramatic theatre—as opposed to epic theatre, the mode he advocates—consists, he says elsewhere (1974: 71), of 'weeping when he weeps'; the tears replace the ability or desire to change things—yes, that's the way it is, that is the way it *always* is.

Hecuba grieving over her grandson's body is such a piece of 'pathetic' dramatic theatre. Her grief over the broken body of her grandson is that of all parents and grandparents railing against the child leaving them to bear their grief—yes, that's the way it is, that is the way it *always* is—aggressors will always trample the weak, men women and children. If the aggressive men in the theatre, sitting in the same formation and groupings as in the Athenian Assembly where treatment very similar to that meted out by the Greeks to Troy had been recently voted to be imposed on the Melians, cry for

² See Armstrong (2006), 142.

³ *Heauton Timoroumenos* (*The Self-Tormentor*), line 25.

the victims of war, perhaps that is enough. Portable anguish *is* the point—the creation of a sensibility to suffering: that of the Trojans, Melians, and the next victims of war (the Athenians themselves, as it turned out) and recently women not so much of Troy as of Croatia, Palestine, or Iraq.

Yes. But (or: and) no Greek tragic character *is* a 'homo like any other': Hecuba is a *prosopon*, a tragic persona standing as a figure of myth and tradition, bound to a past story being temporarily re-enacted and revived within the bounded playing space. Troy is not Baghdad, Gaza, or Darfur—it is a city of epic whose fate is to fall: hence the ironic and metatheatrical effect of Giraudoux's title for his play *La Guerre de Troie n'aura pas lieu*. Hecuba's pain is not continuously present—it is theatrically resurrected, revived, replayed.

The pathos the mask-wearing actor evokes is a theatrical one: extremely difficult to define but impossible to deny. It precisely is not in Konstan's terms 'compassion',⁴ the general and generalized 'suffering with'. Hecuba is a particular instantiation. Hamlet's question is, rather, dramatically inept. What Hecuba is to the player and to us, is the paradigm, the simultaneous instantiation and emblem of suffering, more affecting in some way because distanced, bounded, and framed. She is *bound* to suffer.

This is to argue that the pathos rests, not in the continuity and simultaneity of experience (I cry because the actor and/or because the character is crying), but in distance—pathos through, or in the teeth of, alienation (in Brecht's sense), through discontinuity. ('Brecht always liked people to be aware that they were in a theatre. I said to him more than once, but, Brecht, what makes you think they think they're anywhere else?')⁵

Benjamin in 'Theses on the Philosophy of History' VII (with an epigraph from Brecht's *Threepenny Opera*) talked of the unique ability of the past to generate pain *because it is past*.⁶ Nostalgia is

⁴ See Konstan (2001).

⁵ Horvath in Hampton (1983), 24.

⁶ 'Consider the darkness and the great cold
In this vale which resounds with mystery.'
(Brecht, *The Threepenny Opera*)

To historians who wish to relive an era, Fustel de Coulanges recommends that they blot out everything they know about the later course of history. There is no better way of characterising the method with which historical materialism has broken. It is a process of empathy whose origin is the indolence of the heart, *acedia*, which despairs

literally the (unrealizable) ache to return to one's roots. Meanwhile a Hecuba can, perhaps momentarily, act: 'the past can be seized only as an image which flashes up at the instant when it can be recognized and is never seen again' (Benjamin, 1970: 247). In any case, it is important that Hecuba is a figure of myth, to the first audience as much as twenty-first century ones, and that recognition of her pain is a flash across temporal and cultural distance—perhaps rendered the more intense because it can only be such a theatrically created flash?

Both Electra and Hecuba mourn over the pitiful remains of their beloved kin; both lament the turn of fortune that has prevented them as women attending on their men (nurturing them, tending and decking them out for their wedding or, as things have turned out, their funeral); both grieve at and rail against the fate that has deprived them of a saviour of the house—Hecuba for Hektor's son, named the protector of the city (of Troy), Electra for the boy she cared for and sent to safety, so he could come back to be the avenger. Both scenes are star parts.

But whereas Hecuba's grief is over her grandson's body, the recognition of Electra's pain is both facilitated and problematized by being focused through a 'material correlate': the urn, which *multum in parvo* contains her hopes and needs reduced to dust and ashes. It is well documented that actors from at least the time of the Hellenistic actor Polus have found an unsurpassed immediacy in this metonym for her grief, an immediacy that can most effectively be communicated if the actor first recognizes the pain personally: Polus touched his own child's ashes, Fiona Shaw a fragment of the motorcycle on which her brother had been killed, Zoe Wanamaker wore her recently dead father's greatcoat.

of grasping and holding the genuine historical image as it flares up briefly. Among medieval theologians it was regarded as the root cause of sadness. Flaubert, who was familiar with it, wrote: '*Peu de gens devineront combien il a fallu être triste pour ressusciter Carthage.*' [Few will be able to guess how sad one had to be in order to resuscitate Carthage.] The nature of this sadness stands out more clearly if one asks with whom the adherents of historicism actually empathize. The answer is inevitable: with the victor. . . . Hence, empathy with the victor invariably benefits the rulers. Historical materialists know what that means. . . . According to traditional practice, the spoils . . . are called cultural treasures, and a historical materialist views them with cautious detachment. . . . There is no document of civilization which is not at the same time a document of barbarism. And just as such a document is not free of barbarism, barbarism taints also the manner in which it was transmitted from one owner to another.' (Benjamin, 1970: 247 f.)

Electra addresses the urn with words of grief, anger, loss, and regret: a speech that rings so true that it is regularly set in Classical Civilization collections as evidence for Greek women's way of mourning; and so universal that actors, from the Hellenistic actor with whose 'method' Brecht so disagreed, to Zoe Wanamaker and Fiona Shaw, have recorded accounts of the power and affect of the scene.

This most immediate of roles is seemingly communicable 'in all times and in all places'; the translation of such pain is seemingly of the most univocal kind—the pain of the words Electra uses to describe her state, how she got there, her relationship with her mother, her 'golden' sister, and her forever absent brother, Orestes, the 'felt absence' of the avenger of the family. Likewise the universal need for revenge, with all its attendant damage. So translatable, indeed, that this is one play that, it seems, transcends cultural specificities and speaks as if broadcast by the Babel Fish—an automatic transmitter of meaning.

Actors from the time we first have 'performance notes' have for this play suffered extremes; no one who saw an emaciated, bruised Fiona Shaw batter herself against the scenery, reopening wounds still caked with blood from the previous performance, could forget its embodied, physical immediacy.

Yet this scene is known to audience and actor to be as far from 'true' as drama can be. The urn does not contain Orestes' ashes—Orestes is looking on, a hidden voyeur of his funerary rites, as previously he has been a dramaturge arranging the false report of his death. The urn is, rather, Orestes' metatheatrical device, Electra's pain is theatrically produced. The fact that Orestes could step forward or the audience yell 'Look behind you' makes the pain less transparent than inflicted, inflicted out of the situation that has victimized and rendered Electra passive, though not pathetic, from the start of the action.

Whereas Hecuba's first words are broken sounds of grief at her loss, Electra's first words are a demented and bloody dirge, of hate and grief at the past, of anger and frustration at Orestes' long continued absence. And whereas Hecuba grieves over Astyanax's broken body, Electra's pain is centred on an empty urn. So, yet, or rather, necessarily, the scene is also one of the most metatheatrical in world drama. Orestes is double-edgedly now a felt presence—for Electra, present in his ashes, and for the audience, present on stage, witnessing the mourning at his own death. The emotion may flow seamlessly from actor to audience but the emotion is not exactly 'sympathy'—suffering with; it is something more disturbing. One mourns for but

not with Electra: the metatheatrical setting seems to stop the trajectory of the emotion. We know that the urn will not bring closure, as Astyanax's body so dreadfully did for Hecuba: it is but another twist in the tale that is Electra's story.

This is to suggest that Electra is a figure not of pathos (if pathos is communicated recognition of common pain) but rather of trauma (shaped by undealt-with past pain, the trauma the presenting sign of damage done in the past but appearing and demanding attention in the present). Electra is a traumatic character . . . to play, and to watch. She, the 'unbedded one', is bound by her story as one inescapably traumatized by the murder of her father and at the hands of her mother. The Greek plays in which she features are about trauma, about the damage done by indigestible intergenerational violence, bloodshed which can be compensated for only by more blood; the effect that greeted their playing in, for example, the Derry of the Troubles, witnesses that such affect is recognizable and receivable today.

This is to argue that whereas Hecuba is a figure of pathos—directly affecting by her emotional situation, a situation recognizable as having been endlessly repeated down the generations, an emotional experience which forms the emotional outcome of the play—Electra is, rather, a figure of trauma: likewise directly affecting the outcome of the play, traumatizing actor and audience alike.

DRAMATIZING ELECTRA

In all three Greek tragedians' plays, Electra and Orestes are damaged by their 'foundation myth'. Orestes as a child was sent away from the formative and normalizing influences of city and family, Electra grew to hear of the sacrifice of her sister Iphigeneia by their father Agamemnon and to be a witness to—if not of—their mother's killing of their father on his return from the triumphant and perhaps triumphalist conquest of Troy.

In all three Electra plays—Aeschylus' *Choephoroi* (Libation Bearers), Sophocles' and Euripides' *Electra*—her story is bound to what her name suggests, 'unbedded/unbeddable'. She has many of the characteristics discernible to a Greek doctor's eye of a 'woman of a certain

(Greek) age⁷—prey to the damaging hormones and blood in the body of a virgin not 'tamed' by marriage.⁷

So we have, before the play starts, two sketched out psychopathologies: for Electra, that of an unmarried virgin, prone therefore to emotional turbulence and bloody hysterical ideas, and for Orestes: he who in Aeschylus' play has blood on his hands which, say the chorus, has affected his brain and given rise to delusions. He has at the start of Sophocles' play yet to kill, but both he and Electra have been rendered feral by their mother—he sent away from the home's formative influences by Clytemnestra, she cast out of doors (never a healthy place for a woman!), rejected and abused. (The word *hubris* runs throughout the first half of the play, not in its later English sense of overweening pride but in its fifth-century sense of vicious, damaging abuse.)

In Sophocles' play both Orestes and Electra are dramatized as alienated and unstable figures. Orestes 'staging' his return, like the embedded dramaturge that he is, is able to change both persona and story as directed by the Paedagogos or as freely improvised; Electra is always self-projecting on stage and rarely allowed to go 'inside the house', where a woman's identity is established. She defends herself but the charge running through the play, that words have become divorced from deeds and rhetoric and self-representation from 'reality', sketches both an Electra and an Orestes rendered unstable and with what could be called a personality disorder.

What it means, what it affects to replay, re-enact, translate Electra's trauma is a question that has drawn critical and therapeutic attention from Cicero, Horace, and Aulus Gellius through Renaissance and Neoclassical poetic theorists⁸ to Freud, Jung, Klein, Riviere⁹. . . : what does, can, and should affect a modern audience? And affect the actor—in 'hysterical theatre', the replaying is literally therapeutic, and audiences were invited to come at noon on Sundays to see 'Electra' 'acting out' her part. Modern actresses have found the acting out to be, rather, literally traumatizing: Fiona Shaw has written of her emotions on her famous tour of *Electra*, one that went to Derry just after seven retaliatory killings and so affected the audience that there

⁷ Women not married and impregnated at puberty, and subject to monthly bleeding were described in the Hippocratic corpus as tending to hysteria (womb disease), whereby blood escaping through the body's cavities from the womb of women neither pregnant nor breastfeeding could affect the brain.

⁸ See Holford-Strevens (2005).

⁹ See Jacobus (2002).

was complete silence at the end.¹⁰ Jane Montgomery, her first chorus member, has spoken of the pain at watching a friend and fellow actor nightly subject her body, mind, and voice to the repeated battering. Montgomery's own student production, the Triennial Cambridge Greek play, had an Electra who lost her voice; supposedly scrabbling on the ground for worms, she was actually scrabbling for throat sweets. It took two years before she got over it physically; an experienced student actress, she had played Hecuba three years before and went on to play Oedipus and Medea. 'Losing her voice' when Electra, was a real trauma, to herself and to herself as an actress: a voice therapist might diagnose a deep shrinking from the words which turned into a real inability to voice them.

WHAT'S . . . HE TO HECUBA?

Perhaps the masked protagonist of the original production would have felt that to do such a thing naked, with his own face and self, was not only wrong and improper but dangerous.

For underlying Greek tragedy's conventions and the play's dramaturgy is a series of distancing effects . . . *Verfremdungseffekte*. The trauma is carefully bounded, carefully circumscribed, for maximal or perhaps, proper effect. And/or for safety, safety of re-enacting actor and witnessing audience? For this is a play about damage passed through the generations; for later actors to revivify the bearers of such trauma, bring them to the present stage, is to resurrect potent and dangerous carriers of experience of horrors. There is a Greek word applied to Oedipus and which applies to other Greek tragic protagonists—he, as they, is *deinos*: awe-ful, extraordinary, superhuman, out of nature clever. To bring such a character to stage, someone who has pushed the boundaries of human experience, should be done within dramatic parameters. It seems from red-figure vases that before the actor assumed his mask, he communed with it, possibly making a small offering. For he is about to re-enact a *deinos* story, revive a *deinos* character. Such a revivification was bounded—the playing space

¹⁰ See for exploration and development, Jane Montgomery Griffiths's chapter in this book, 'The Abject Eidos: Trauma and the Body in Sophocles' *Electra*'.

cleansed and rededicated, the words spoken through the mask, potentially distancing and protecting the actor from the awe-ful.

This is not, I think, what Brecht meant when he condemned actors' techniques that narrow the 'reality gap' between actor, role, and audience; nevertheless this chapter argues that there may be risk in the breaking of the Greek play's boundaries.

For the action of the play is to do with damage passed down the generations, needing to be dealt with in the present. The intensity of the emotional effect of the play derives from the presentness of that damage: a presentness that is achieved throughout the play by metatheatricality rather than realism: by plays within a play. Orestes acts as a dramaturge and watches the effect of his representation on his audience. False messenger speech, false recognition scene, a corpse taken to be somebody else—of such things are farce or very disturbing tragedy made. The two principal characters are traumatized—damaged, not just saddened—by their mother's treatment of them: Orestes has no stable identity and can play a range of roles and have others play his death, Electra has been forced to 'act out', to live outside the norms of the household, to present and account for herself and her actions, or lack of them. The play ends with the long-planned death of Clytemnestra, set up as a re-enactment of her killing of Agamemnon—in Aeschylus' play—with a dialogue between the on-stage Electra and the off-stage victim: Electra at one point seeming to guide the murder weapon telekinetically. Or rather, it ends with a murder still to happen, with the victim Aegisthus being told to go off-stage (so he can be killed while obeying the convention that violence is off-stage).

Such are, in fine, *Verfremdungseffekte*, alienation effects in the technical sense of effects that distance—while focusing the audience on and constraining the audience's emotions within that theatrical distance. It is perhaps ironic that Brecht of all people should have gone to this play for an instance, rather, of empathy-generating theatre.

PLAYING THE OTHER, PLAYING THE SELF, PLAYING THE OTHER PLAYING THE SELF . . .

When Rosencrantz and Guildenstern ask themselves what brought them 'here', they question both their role in the play (*Rosencrantz and*

Guildestern are Dead) about a play (*Hamlet*) and what it is for a character to have an identity. For, why are they there, wherever 'there' is? 'We were sent for' . . .¹¹ What is their role in *Hamlet*? Minor characters who are for some reason the subject of a plot by Hamlet, a Hamlet who for most of the play failed to perform the revenge killing demanded of him at the start. This is, however, comedy—the comedy derived from the incongruity of such presently presented characters having existential doubts.

Pirandello's *Six Characters in Search of an Author* derives tragedy from metatheatre, creating a double pathos of a character formed of a tragic story but unable to carry it through to closure. Does Sophocles' Orestes have such a 'character'? In this most metatheatrical of plays¹² he seems to call attention to its absence. Despite the Paedagogos' appropriatingly patronymic introduction (the first eight words of the play) he seems to have a provisional sense of self, ready to be sketched in by other actors, notably the Paedagogos, who coaches him in his role as messenger of his own death (44-50). This is a double mark of alienation from the self, a transgression both theatrically—messengers bear witness, i.e. to real action off stage—and homoeopathically: reporting one's own death is to narrate one's own end and, like burning one's own photograph, is felt to be a performative act. His purpose appears to be directed first by the Paedagogos and eventually by Electra ready to play any part that suits his purpose. Such metatheatre destabilizes the congruence of character and action: Orestes, like Hamlet, seems not to be identified with and so given closure by the completion of his given role.

When *The Seagull's* Masha replies to the question, why do you always wear black? with, 'I'm in mourning for my life',¹³ she is 'theorizing' her life (to take a term from queer and gender studies): rather than accepting a shaping social role, she is (per)forming herself: forming a self in 'theoria'—in others' sight, in performance. Electra, unlike Orestes but like Masha, excluded as she is from 'normal' gender and sexual roles, in this sense, also 'theorizes herself'.

For, to live in the Electra world one must play a role—the exterior can never reflect the inner self (as Orestes warns her, do not let a smile give the game away to Clytemnestra). Deception and subterfuge are

¹¹ Stoppard (1968), 13.

¹² A quality analysed extensively in Ringer (1998).

¹³ Chekhov (2002), 83.

necessary for survival for all Clytemnestra's children: Chrysothemis has learned to play the role of obedient daughter.

Electra learns of the plan to kill Clytemnestra and Aegisthus very late in the day—the focus of the play is her traumatizing enforced passivity, waiting for the Orestes who never comes except in words (170). Meanwhile she has learned to operate in a world where things are not what they seem, where, like the degraded post-plague Athens Thucydides described in the second book of his history, words have become split from their meanings or, as we would say of an autistic, words have become divorced from their emotional and ethical affect. She is convincingly portrayed as traumatized not by the sexual element of an 'Electra complex' (despite such powerful contemporary performances in the role as that of Zoe Wanamaker, who played the part just after her father Sam Wanamaker's death, wearing Agamemnon/Sam's great coat;¹⁴ Agamemnon is a barely felt absence and the killing of Clytemnestra only one of many traumatic interactions), but by the need to self-present, self-validate, constantly remake herself. This, though, is the result of conflict with her mother. Surviving Greek tragedy presents two primal curses—the father cursing his sons to bestial or incestuous death (Oedipus or Theseus) and his daughters to sterility (Oedipus, cf. Lear). But here we have a mother's curse. Electra has to perform being herself, describing rags, empty table, and trauma, being kept outdoors, being denied the integrity of accepted individuation within the *oikos* that any mother who is not Clytemnestra must provide.

ELECTRA'S URN AND PATHOS: 'RECOGNIZING AND FEELING THE INCIDENT'S DOUBLE ASPECT'

This chapter suggests that Brecht's objection to the Polus anecdote is not (just?) that he was breaking, sentimentally, with the tight bounds within which Greek tragedy's pathos is contained; nor that the actor was breaking down the protective distance between self and role,

¹⁴ Though Clytemnestra could be said to have a complex about Electra. See Jacobus (2002).

allowing the face, not the mask, to take the damage; nor, perhaps, that such affect was against the metatheatrical structure of the play.

Brecht objects to Polus because:

The object is to fob us off with some kind of portable anguish—that's to say anguish that can be detached from its cause, transferred *in toto* and lent to some other cause. . . . We must be able to surrender to her sorrow and at the same time not to. Our actual emotion will come from recognizing and feeling the incident's double aspect. (1974: 271)

Plato's early dialogue the *Ion* has a vivid and condemnatory portrait of the famous Homeric rhapsode, who magnetizes his audience as he himself has been magnetized: 'When I speak anything pitiful, my eyes fill with tears, and when something scary or uncanny, my hair stands on end in fear and my heart pounds' (535c). Plato's *Ion* is proud to produce the simple empathetic effect: role—actor—audience transmission of affect that Brecht labelled as that of dramatic theatre: 'I weep when they weep, I laugh when they laugh' (1974: 71). What does Brecht mean by the need, rather, to 'surrender to her sorrow and at the same time not to. Our actual emotion will come from recognizing and feeling the incident's double aspect'?

To go back to *Hecuba*, it is difficult *not* to surrender to her sorrow. But, *Electra* with her urn? The 'double aspect' comes from the metatheatrical setting, from the cradled urn that is in fact an empty prop and from the absent brother looking on, such that the viewer must indeed surrender to her sorrow and at the same time must not. Likewise, it is this self-aware perspective that complicates the sense in which *Orestes*—like *Hamlet*—is a pretender: both one who lays claim and one who is ready to improvise and take up his role as if 'really' in a theatre, when the cue for his big moment comes. One aspect of the complication is that, in the 'theatrical *tour de force*', the big moment of theatre has been pre-empted, in a way that threatens to expose the dramatic as the merely histrionic ('theatrical' in modern usage, like 'playing' and 'acting', stands on the fault-line of ambivalence here, of the double aspect). Meanwhile by the very fact of presence the pretender remains, with the audience, in the position of onlooker (if not altogether unmoved, then certainly not 'caught up in the action', in the terms of the Player's offer to *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern*).¹⁵ Both on- and off-stage audience, by their physical and verbal

¹⁵ Stoppard (1968), 17.

marginality in the scene, mark a limit to (or, dis-locate) the tremendous pathos of expression by placing us remorselessly in its fictive double aspect.

METATHEATRICALITY, PARTICULARITY,
AND TRAUMA

Why seems it so particular with thee?

(Gertrude to Hamlet)

Happy families are all alike; every unhappy family is unhappy in
its own way.

(Tolstoy, *Anna Karenina*)

But, more, taking a clue from Brecht's earlier line about portability: Electra's is a very singular sorrow. The drama and trauma of her situation are that she has become alienated from herself, from her natural role as daughter, wife, and mother. Likewise Hamlet, who with 'thinking too precisely' cannot view his mother and avenge his father 'naturally'.

For, one effect of the *Electra's* intense metatheatricality seems to be, *contra* Brecht, to prevent absolutely any generalizability of character and thus of any portability of emotion. Perhaps because they are constantly acting and enacting their situation, alienated as both are from their *oikos*, Orestes and Electra are peculiarly and intensely particular on stage: Orestes improvising, Electra questioning the 'natural measure of my sorrow' (236) and confessing 'I am ashamed of appearing too much the mourner' (256).

'Why seems it so particular with thee?' is therefore as much a non-question to Electra—voiced in the chorus's 'Not alone to you, child, is this grief' (153) and Clytemnestra's reported 'Are you the only one who lost a father?' (289)—as to Hamlet. 'Seems, Madam? Nay, it is.'

Perhaps this chapter is suggesting that pathos in some way—through sympathy or empathy, through feeling the dentist's drill or through crying in common for one's own ills—communicates and joins role and audience into a commonality: *sunt lacrimae rerum*. Hecuba is a cynosure of all aspects of pathos: she is pathetic, is suffering, is passive, is a focus of emotion. Electra's speech over the urn is not one of loss but of frustrated inaction—of the loving actions

she could not perform and of the murderous action that Orestes promised but (seemingly) with empty words. The emotion does not, cannot, pass directly from action to actor to audience—the action is entangled with the emptiness of the urn; the actor and the audience are aware that Orestes is witnessing Electra's 'performance' and that the deed that Electra is committing herself to do is very particular indeed. Electra's pain seems to have no release. Indeed, Electra's pain will have no release: Orestes does the killing, and the play ends with the violence promised but not completed, with Electra's last words asking for Aegisthus to be killed and left unburied (cf. 'not shriving time allowed' in *Hamlet*) as a 'restoration' for her past sufferings.

This play is a *deinos* one—no one sympathizes with Electra. Whereas *Hamlet* ends in a riot of on-stage violence with poison, stabbings, and theatrical deaths, *Electra* ends with one killing off-stage with on-stage performative utterance from Electra (who, as ever out of doors, visualizes and enforces the bloody act within) and with one still to come. As in many Greek tragedies, the anticipation, foretelling, and recounting of the central act of off-stage violence frame that act in a way more dreadful than any on-stage enactment could. But the violence cannot be contained off-stage, it has to be recognized and incorporated into the stage action. But in this play especially, that violence is misincorporated: the *ekkuklēma* bringing into the light what has happened in the interior is, transgressively, misrecognized by the on-stage witness: the shrouded corpse is greeted with delight by Aegisthus as that of Orestes. His dreadful, corrective recognition precedes his exit to be killed in his turn by that Orestes. 'The rest is silence' for Hamlet, who has received his quietus. Strauss/Hofmannsthal's *Elektra* closes with her dying in an ecstasy of long-hoped-for revenge. Not so in Sophocles; part of the play's disturbing effect is that there is within this play no closure and no healing for this damaged figure.

Unlike for Hecuba, there is no mourning for Electra. She and Hamlet are personae for whom one cannot cry, whose pain has led to incapacity (both actually are 'unbedded'), neither has found a role in the palace or in the family vengeance. Shakespeare, though, offers what Sophocles does not—a culminating bloodletting; whereas Electra's play offers her no outlet. Unlike the communicated pathos of the *Trojan Women*, the *Electra* offers the audience no outlet either—no closure at the end of the play. Could it be that what Brecht was objecting to was the actor's offering of pathos, of a sympathetic way out for the audience? Finally

what is traumatizing about as well as traumatic in the play is that there is no such way out, closure, for Electra or audience. That trauma recurs because the violence from the past and from off-stage, because the pain, is not dealt with; it is expressed but not incorporated and instead threatens to escape the stage.

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Modernism's Nostalgics, Nostalgia's Modernity

George Rousseau

The dawn of ancient Greek culture brought the birth of the *Odyssey*, the founding epic of nostalgia. Let us emphasize: Odysseus, the greatest adventurer of all time, is also the greatest nostalgic.

(Milan Kundera, *Ignorance* (1962), 7)

I

Ludwig Boltzmann, brilliant Viennese physicist and theorist of chemical gases, one of the founders of thermodynamics and pillars of the Academy of Sciences in Vienna, colleague of Ernst Mach and Helmholtz, was no Odysseus. He killed himself on 5 September 1906 while on a summer holiday in Duino, near Trieste, at a spot close to the one where Rilke experienced the emotions expressed in his *Duino Elegies*. Boltzmann had reflected on his life a year earlier in memoirs, and remembered how his lectures in Vienna had been so packed with students they streamed down the staircases into the university courtyards. He recalled the far-flung places—the 'Eldorados'—he had visited and calibrated their culinary resonances to nostalgia for his childhood:

No one who has traveled a lot will be surprised if I talk about food and drink. This is not only an important factor, but a central point. The essential aspect when traveling is to maintain the body's health so it can

confront a multitude of foreign influences, and especially to preserve the stomach, the fastidious Viennese stomach. Do not tell me I think this way because my age has returned me to my childhood; I believed this even as a child. No Viennese man can eat his last *Gollasch mit* [goulash with everything on it], including *Nockerl* [noodles], without contemplating the way nostalgia is aroused in the Swiss by the memory of *Kuhreihen* [songs of nostalgia] and bells. In parallel the Viennese think of their *Geselchte mit Knödeln* [food with noodles]. (Hüflechner, 1994: 365)

Boltzmann's analogy of bells and food is unoriginal. Poets across Europe invoked it, as Dante had long ago when noting how 'salty another's bread tastes' in exile (*Paradiso* XVII: 57–8) and more recently Thomas Hardy; the English novelist having turned poet at the turn of the century who now immersed himself in *Kuhreihen*—'songs of nostalgia' forming a pillar of his own nostalgics. Boltzmann's passage suppresses the death of his father when he was an adolescent boy, his upset in the ongoing rivalry with the prominent physicist Ernst Mach destined to become the voice of scientific positivism, and—most poignantly for Boltzmann's inability to understand it—his riveting sense of outsiderdom in incessant migrations from pillar to post. He had migrated from his native Vienna to Heidelberg, Berlin, Leipzig, Munich, and many other universities. Even in staid, *bürgerliche* Graz, where he met his future wife, raised their children, and remained longest in any one place, the sense of exile tortured him. Mach's disgust 'poisoned' him viscerally, as acidulously as the Viennese goulash he remembered near the end of his life. So he abandoned Vienna yet again, while Mach remained in post. But when Mach—a world-famous man—retired in 1902 owing to poor health, Boltzmann returned to his students in the hope he would at last be free to lecture, teach, and research in his native university laboratory. But he could not rival Mach, so the old depression hounded him even in Vienna. Unable to contain his trauma, he shot himself in the temple, too close to his troubles to recognize that exile had become the condition of the modern.¹

Boltzmann did not use the word *traumatisch* (traumatic) or its nervous cousins to describe his condition but his Middle European culture was infected with the concept. Trauma, based on memory as its epistemological pillar, had arrived in the 1880s, and wiped away the old depression (technically *niedergedrückt*) and obliterated the

¹ See Blackmore (1995).

old nostalgia (*Heimweh*; *Sehnsucht* was even older): that medical condition of longing with which Boltzmann was intimate. The new trauma theory challenged simplistic notions of defective memory on which so much earlier neurosis had depended. Nostalgic conditions like Boltzmann's could still evoke the old medical diagnoses claiming—for example—that it was owing to defective anatomical organs and overworked digestive systems; but in Middle Europe, especially in scientific centres at the forefront of the new psychology, much depression was now 'traumatic'—traumatic paradoxically because it implicated *non-organic* memory. For Boltzmann, the recollection of places he craved (Vienna) and relationships he loathed (his academic feuds, especially with Mach) proved to be near-primal wounds.

II

The old Enlightenment nostalgia was an illness of mobility *devoid* of memory—this was its oddity. The nostalgic glowingly remembered the old country—its sounds and smells and especially its foods, as Boltzmann quipped—but the malady itself was thoroughly grounded in anatomic pathology and diseased imagination; said to be lodged in the patient's body, his organs and physiology, which polluted his mind.² It was also based on undivided subjectivity in an undivided society: selves and societies integral and unsplintered. Transplantation's depression was specifically *nostalgic* for the ways it punctured both self and society, in Boltzmann's case owing to unrelenting academic migrations and lingering feuds: the first spatial, the other psychological, but combining to confound his sense of space and time.

In the Middle European scientific centres the old nostalgia diagnosis had practically disappeared by the 1880s. It had been a condition rife among sailors and soldiers; scientists could suffer from it but their memories were rarely implicated.³ The new nostalgia diagnosis centred on memory's *absence*; separation from the pre-Romantic notion of memory as neurophysiological, conveyed through nervous

² Rosen (1975); Roth (1991). For nostalgia's historical niche see Shklar (1965); for a useful general approach see Turner (1984).

³ See Enlightenment physician Samuel Tissot (1768, trans. 1772) on literary types and sedentary people.

pathways, subjected to anatomical differentiation and existing wholly in linear time.⁴ If they could have debated nostalgia, both versions would have agreed it was rampant—a disease of civilization—but they would have disagreed about its causes, the old placing everything in defective neuroanatomy, the other on wounded memory that was anything *but* anatomical.⁵ Comb the old treatises and the word (*memory* in any language) rarely appears; in the new it is ubiquitous. Its most profound Enlightenment source—David Hartley’s *Observations on Man* (1749), gospel to early Romantics for its associationist theories of vibrating memory—never glances at nostalgia. He has not made the connection.⁶

Trauma did not exist in the vocabulary of the old nostalgia, which invoked other words—agony, blow, collapse, derangement, disturbance—for its physical effects and concepts of shock, upheaval, and wound to describe the psychological realm. Nostalgic types functioned in the old model by association in the memory: this object or place producing those disturbed passions *by association* in the sympathetic nervous system. The new nostalgia retained the somatic symptoms, operating as an uncanny sympathy (*unheimliche Sympathie*) between bodily organs, lorded over by a non-associationist, non-physicalist memory. The new version was somatically coordinated but existed in psychological rather than linear time. The delayed reaction, as Freud would demonstrate, was crucial.⁷ Deranged memory was a response to *prior* trauma; not merely spatial trauma—transplantation, migration, loss of homeland—but any disturbance, especially interpersonal, emotional, sexual, or aesthetic. Immersion in a painting, musical composition, sculpture, or novel could prompt traumatic response as acutely as geographical transplantation.

The primary theorists were Europeans: Pierre Janet, Freud, and Karl Jaspers. The British will not even use the word (trauma) in the psychological or psychoanalytical sense until the 1880s, when they import it from American William James who writes that ‘certain reminiscences of the shock fall into the subliminal consciousness, where they can only be discovered in “hypnoid” states. If left there,

⁴ Sutton (1998); in relation to nostalgia see Roth (1991).

⁵ Hacking (1995).

⁶ For nostalgia’s decline during this interlude see Roth (1989).

⁷ By the time Freud described the delayed reaction on the eve of the First World War its neurophysiology had been charted in his letters with Fliess; see Bronfen (1998), 273–5.

they act as permanent “psychic *traumata*”, thorns in the spirit . . .’ (1894: 199). In Britain there had been anticipations of this new trauma, but its formulation was Middle European, as in Walter Benjamin’s historical *traurigkeit*. Temporally the *fin de siècle* proved decisive: the moment Boltzmann could have located the trauma theory, if he wished, to explain to himself his suicidal impulses.

Janet expounded his version in the *Mental State of Hystericals* (1894) whose disturbance he believed originated in traumatic events. The cure was dislodgement of the *idée fixe* that the event had occurred, and it had to be eradicated rather than merely brought into the consciousness. Remove memory—of the distant event, even if the event had *not* occurred—or transform the state of the unconscious, which also depended on memory, and Janet’s system unravels. Critic Elizabeth Bronfen, writing with Ian Hacking in mind, adroitly notices this centrality and relates it to *false memory*: ‘Janet would cure his patients by telling them a so-called lie and getting them to take these false memory traces as truth’ (Bronfen, 1998: 281). For Freud, memory and trauma are so prevalent and function so centrally in his development of hysteria and psychoanalysis, that it would require another essay—or two—to explicate their interplay. Suffice it to say here that even in the early Freud, trauma is paramount. But it was Jaspers, writing in 1904–5 just as Boltzmann’s nostalgia was driving him to suicide, who gives us pause.

Like Freud before him, Jaspers wrote famous ‘psychoanalytical lives’: of Leonardo, Descartes, and Max Weber.⁸ But Jaspers began life as a law student in Heidelberg and transferred to the vibrant new psychiatry upon becoming disenchanted with law. He would have become a prominent ‘alienist’, like Janet and Freud, if his ‘nostalgics’ had not failed. In Heidelberg he worked at the hospital where the influential psychiatrist Emil Kraepelin had been, and here he wrote a well-received medical dissertation on nostalgia and crime in servant girls.⁹ Before his analysis no psychological explanation existed for the incidence of their crime: what Jaspers terms ‘pathological nostalgia’. He located his nanny-murderers in *dual* trauma: (1) the girls remembered their deprived

⁸ Jaspers (1965). Later Jaspers psychoanalysed with his pen Goethe, Strindberg, and Van Gogh (Jaspers, 1949).

⁹ Jaspers entered medical school in 1902, at 19, and wrote his dissertation on the ‘nostalgia diagnosis’ in relation to crime in 1904–8, publishing it in 1909, when he sent a copy to Freud: see Jaspers (1909), a scarce work never translated into English.

childhoods and (2) recollection of their separation from their families added such strain and stress to the trauma that they were prepared to kill for it. At a much later—'distant'—time, in a strange new house far away from their own, they throttled infants in their care no differently from our nanny-killers. This was Freud's 'delayed reaction' among nostalgic servants.

Jaspers' theory was stillborn. First, he seemed to evoke the *old* nostalgia by grounding their crime—*Verbrechen*—in a *physical* malady without treatment of hysterical (i.e. sexual) symptoms. Hysteria was the buzz-word he had overlooked. Second, he seemed to be resurrecting nostalgia's forgotten pathology. By 1906 the new hysteria of Charcot (who had recently died in 1893 and whose disciples were now exalting him more than ever as the apostle of the hysteria diagnosis—Napoleon of the neuroses) had superseded the old nostalgia. So when Jaspers reintroduced nostalgia *sans* hysteria the gesture appeared oddly regressive.

Janet's and Freud's nostalgics were submerged in hysteria but they rarely invoked the term *Heimweh*. Jaspers himself rarely used it but nevertheless makes clear it is 'nostalgic murder' he courts. Bronfen locates Jaspers' theory within the developing nineteenth-century 'family romance' as performing a 'turning of nostalgia' (1998: 271–8), and astutely observes that *both* Jaspers' pathologically nostalgic servants and Janet's and Freud's hysterics suffer from memories raging out of control. Yet more than excess is at work. 'While the hysteric', Bronfen notes, 'suffers from *painful* memories, whose conflicted affect she would like to shed but cannot because a proper abreaction has not occurred, the nostalgic suffers from pleasurable memories she would like to reenact, but which she cannot because she has been displaced from the one site promising such a satisfying fulfillment' (1998: 272). All three versions entail 'memory trouble' but the uses to which the memories are put diverge: for the hysteric, the fantasy following the original traumatic event is capable of repairing it, while the nostalgic, already tantalized by pleasing memories of lost home, converts her trauma, as did Apollonia and her servant sisters, to crime and violence. 'Conversion' was the operative term in the new diagnosis, but Jaspers suggested no equivalent process for his nostalgics. How did Apollonia's sweet memories turn to murderous actions? How can such discrepancy between psychological reparation and criminal action exist?

Bronfen locates both versions in 'the *lost home*' (1998: 275); in memories of the ways that home had once seemed perfectly intact. Put otherwise, Jaspers' killer nannies are traumatized by their fantasies of the

complete—flawless, happy, loving, warm—home they have left, while Freud's hysterics remember only incest, sacrifice, and violence there. Historically the past homes of *both* were unhappy but Jaspers' nostalgics never modulated *home* in the abstract; he presented it as integral, unblemished in the way pretty rose-clad cottages had been intact among sickeningly Romantic landscape painters. To Modernists like Yeats and Eliot such bygone prettiness and facile sentimentality were politically and aesthetically empty—historically collusive too.

Jaspers' discounting that *all* homes are unhappy ensured his failure and constituted the quintessential corrective Freud would make: his hauntingly new concept was composed in the same few months when Jaspers was putting finishing touches on his dissertation in Heidelberg.¹⁰ Freud called his essay *Der Familienroman der Neurotiker*, literally 'the family romance of neurotics', embedding his idea from a decade earlier (1897–8) that dysfunctional homes—violent and sexually transgressive—were limited to the *severely* neurotic. But now, in 1908–9, just at the time he was organizing the first international congress in psychoanalysis in Salzburg, he broadened it to include *all* families. He wrote without knowledge of Jaspers but dances around nostalgia's (*heimweh*) new profile without invoking the word.¹¹ Careful perusal of his essay, however, allows no doubt it is his subject. And he crescendoes to the main point that nostalgia is a form of exaltation: 'an expression of the child's longing for the happy, vanished days when his father seemed to him the noblest and strongest of men and his mother the dearest and loveliest of women' (1977: 224–5).

His collaborator, Josef Breuer, had also rendered unhappiness the basic attribute of the bourgeois family. The consequence for his and Freud's nostalgics must not be minimized; yet even when it is not, it can be overlooked how both systems—hysteric *and* nostalgic—embed *memory* of the rupture in recollected affect. Jaspers had emphasized that the girls do not remember the physical home and its literal ambience but the trauma they had experienced upon separation.

¹⁰ It appeared in the same month of 1909 as Jaspers' work. See Freud (1977). The concept is discussed in Gilman (1993).

¹¹ At the end of the Great War Freud published an essay called "The 'Uncanny'" whose German translation is *unheimlich*, literally the 'unhomely'; noting the links between the uncanny as a frightening foreign place, and the 'unhomely' as a terrifying precinct lying outside the familiar, friendly home; his emphasis is philological to address these adjustments of translation. See Freud (1990), especially his lexical discussions on 341–7.

Their murderous response to their wards arises not through literal dislocation from home, but from their memories of that harrowing separation onto whose index the trauma has been displaced. Displacement required a new theory of experience accounting for the nostalgic's failed symbolism in retrieving the past, their inability to construct new experience flexibly. Jaspers did not see it this way. But by recognizing it Breuer and Freud transformed the old empirical memory into its new, displaced indices.

III

The advance of nineteenth-century systems of memory was insufficient in itself to align these developments with nostalgia's *longue durée*.¹² So far the analysis omits the rise of 'traumatic memory'. Specifically, despite Jaspers' precocious insights in his nostalgics, he had not elaborated the complex symbolism of memory in his killer servant girls, nor grasped how neurosis was the displacement of the original event lodged in a traumatized memory. Jaspers presented the girls' memories of warm, loving homes but omitted the *mechanisms* by which their traumas were replaced by a new, defectively recollecting, affect. This is why he intuitively suggested that they 'uncannily' commit infanticide to 'save' themselves *and* the children—this idea of salvation is his. By murdering children they rescue them from a repetition of traumatic separation they themselves endured. Their murderous crime guarantees they will never again return home—double jeopardy en route to prison.

Jaspers recognized that his local German girls were exiles (most were from Baden-Württemberg, interviewed while he was writing up in Heidelberg) but omitted any linkage of their transplantation to Bismarck's *Realpolitik* and implicit war culture. By 1915 Freud would gaze deeply into the ways that the recent European conflagration had traumatized an entire civilization.¹³ Yet even before then Freud intuited how the intact bourgeois family was being punctured by

¹² A full study of the *longue durée* would describe how the myth of undivided micro-societies at home—in the valley, in the village—combined to provide the nostalgic with a sense of having been plunged into a hostile, foreign, fragmented milieu incapable of becoming intact.

¹³ See the opening pages of Freud's *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1961), originally published in 1919–20.

militarism: soldiers called up, local surges of protest in fires and looting, families uprooted in the dark night, waves of migration crossing oceans in desperate attempts to avoid being blown to pieces.

Freud's famous passage about war trauma at the beginning of *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* aims to assess this sweep. His conclusion was the production of 'war neuroses' in which memory loses its ability to process experience symbolically, instead compulsively indexing it as repetition. If Jaspers could have read Freud's 1919–20 essay in 1906, he might have understood why his servant girls mutilate out of compulsive repetition. The girls have lost the ability to interpret 'old home', with its memories of emotional warmth, and 'new home' symbolically. They have forfeited the lambency that subtle experience needs if it is to be reflected upon and understood.

The old nostalgia diagnosis began life as a military condition, at least as a response to the transplantation necessitated by war for its recruits. As such, nostalgia's old underpinnings were strong, if exclusively physical (lodging in organic parts), and remained intact while war endured through the French Revolution and Napoleonic eras. Plot the curve of nostalgia theory and its profile intensifies between 1760 and 1830, having peaked around 1800. But once the perception of peace sets in after the 1820s nostalgia theory wanes: it is repeated as the old dressed up anew, or left to ossify in medical school dissertations. Nicholas Dames has astutely observed that 'the great period of medical nostalgia was over by the early nineteenth century, and the term's entrance into a more literary register was well underway' (2001: 257 n. 68). And historian Michael Roth confirms that 'the vibrancy of the pathological version of nostalgia persisted much longer in France than in Britain, where it was not until the 1870s—when Charcot's hysteria took precedence—that the *depathologization* of nostalgia began in earnest.'¹⁴

Vaguer and more 'literary' indeed, but Middle Europe retained another relation to the old nostalgics. Democratic revolutions set in motion by idealistic Romantics had failed, as had the revolt of 1848. By 1871 new 'wars' commenced from Paris to Prussia. Throughout these developments the old nostalgics endured, yet reluctantly surrendered its anatomic bent: a propensity buttressed by accentuating the differences of war and peace for the nostalgia diagnosis. Even *sans* war the 'West'—Britain, France, Scandinavia—continued to recollect pretty landscapes

¹⁴ Cited in Dames (2001), 253 n. 36.

during peacetime. The geographical difference in Europe, east and west of the Rhine, owed much to the rise of the new psychology that was so sceptical of anatomical explanations for mental conditions.

Linda Austin (2007) calls this phase 'nostalgia in transition' and extends its chronology to 1917. Her treatment consolidates two transitions: 1830–70 and 1871–1914, the later period when Charcot, Janet, Freud, and Jaspers were transforming nostalgia's horizons. Austin's account demonstrates how nostalgia's effects were represented in British literature, although she never probes how the nineteenth-century nostalgia diagnosis was transmitted to canonical English writers.¹⁵ Roth and Dames also trace its 'literary register' before the rise of the Third Republic and in Victorian literature. Still, crucial questions about nostalgia's decline endure: was the *old* Enlightenment nostalgia simply played out—Darwinian maturity sunk into mid-nineteenth-century senescence and now evolving out of existence? Or had something else occurred during nostalgia's chasm 1830–70? We find clues by glancing backward from the *later* transitional period: nostalgia's curious pathway from 1871 to 1918. The medical pith is not merely that disease theories, such as nostalgia had been, have social consequences or, more generally, that social culture and its representations cannot be separated, but that factual history, however routine it may appear, also plays a role.

Chart the decades of Europe in the nineteenth century in any statistical sense, and it becomes evident that the surge in migration intensifies as the century evolves: if not flight from famines and religious oppression, then from uprising—as in the Russian Revolution of 1905—and as German militarism extended its claws into the Balkan and Mediterranean trenches. Southern Europe crumbles as ominous clouds form as far East as the Ottomans, the disintegrating 'sick man of Europe'. This is not the place to chart these claims; historians have done so eloquently, especially those documenting colonial displacement 1890–1914.¹⁶ The point is that war cannot be

¹⁵ The *old* theory, as Austin, Dames, and others have demonstrated, was principally *British* and exported from *British* medical theory; imaginative writers heard about it that way but were not likely to have pieced it together medically. The *new* theory, concurrent with the rise of aesthetic Modernism, was Middle European, geographically emanating in the axis from Paris to Vienna, and imported into the English-speaking world via America (William James) after Charcot's and Freud's ideas were assimilated into British culture.

¹⁶ See Rodriguez and Grafton (2007).

deleted from the matrix, and it is myopic to imagine the new nostalgia diagnosis arising without heightened surges of migrations.¹⁷ After the 1890s these were westwards to the New World and across the vast ocean. Read the diaries of this generation from 1890 to the end of the Great War and you need no nostalgia diagnosis to substantiate the desideratum for one. Longing for home has exponentially augmented, as in Vasil Vasilich's outburst at the conclusion of this chapter.¹⁸

If the epoch 1830–70 amounted to a transition in nostalgia's fortunes, the later period—1870–1914—marked the instauration of a new nostalgics, codified in Jaspers, and based on memory and trauma in ways astonishing to the older diagnosis. Even before the Great War ended, Freud prophetically claimed in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* that the shock effects of the last decade had necessitated a new trauma. His explanations applied proleptically to Jaspers' servant girls who were just as murderous as soldiers in the trenches. Modernity's paradoxes are noteworthy: the *old* nostalgia thrived on physical geographical distance—no distance, no nostalgia; and even Jaspers' nanny killers were physically separated from their homes in 1906, yet the new post-1870s theories of trauma, in Janet, Freud, and company, required no physical home. The family romance is a region of the mind. The traumatized were as likely to encompass those who had never left home as those who had.¹⁹

IV

Aesthetic Modernism, like its tortured analogue in 'modernity', is too conceptually disparate to succumb to definitions. Yet aspects of its chronological development are apparent. Although faint anticipations arose before the period we have been calling transitional (i.e. Modernism's first

¹⁷ See Claassen (1999); on more recent exile, with reference to Joyce, Cixous (1972).

¹⁸ Brettell and Hollifield (2008) demonstrate how difficult it is to tie this 'knot' in Bronfen's (1998) sense.

¹⁹ Charcot's and Freud's hysterics had not: the original traumatic event was displaced into a recollected affect independent of *where* it 'remembered' its pain. Felt distress was 'recollected affect' and constituted the basis for the new affective exile. Put otherwise, the new exile, like the new hysteric, need never have fled, migrated, or resettled.

wave: 1890–1910), its rise coincided with the generation flanked around the turn of the century. High Modernism flowered in the arts in a second wave between the two wars, but its gestation and birth occurred earlier. Martin Jay has isolated a main characteristic in ‘psychologism’ and written that ‘no genealogist of the complex and heterogeneous cultural field we have come to call aesthetic modernism can fail to acknowledge its multiple intersections with that other richly articulated field known as modern psychology’.²⁰ The predicament is less the semantic valence of ‘psychologism’ than the myriad ways each development interacted with the other.

In ‘Modernism and the Specter of Psychologism’, Jay comments on psychology’s broad tentacles in the period of nostalgia’s transition—1870–1914—but as one reads further he might be pronouncing on the new subjects of the psychologists. ‘In both cases, an unprecedented preoccupation with the interior landscape of the subject,’ Jay claims, ‘a no longer self-confident self functioning with increased difficulty in the larger world outside its threatened and vulnerable boundaries, led to voyages of scientific and artistic discovery whose endpoints have not yet been reached.’²¹ Both old and new nostalgia fulfilled several of these criteria; the difference after the 1870s is that the subject remembers and forgets in new ways. Whether this ‘inner psychological life’ was approached narratively or through the new *fin-de-siècle* aesthetics (not yet the Modernism of the first wave before the Great War but anticipating its innovations), its forms of alienation and destabilization could no longer be discussed without recourse to memory and trauma.²²

The word *trauma* and its cognates had been medical terms during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and delimited to medical texts. As late as 1870 they are still being applied to eye cataracts, brain wounds, and the injuries of body parts.²³ Concurrently, memory as an index of personal cognition was ignored, even regarded as untrustworthy. Only when memory became ‘organically’ tied to the body’s larger functioning at the end of the century, as Laura Otis (1994) has demonstrated, did its capital rise, but even then only when

²⁰ Cited in Micale (2004), 352.

²¹ Jay (1988), 165; for Jay on Boltzmann see 167.

²² Mercer (2008) claims that memory and the trauma of displacement cannot be omitted from this first wave of Modernism. For the pathology of displacement through travel more generally, see Wrigley and Revill (2000).

²³ Lawson (1869), 57, for example.

imported into trauma theory such that its relevance could no longer be overlooked.

As previously noted, William James, the Harvard professor, made the point in a seminal didactic passage linking them: 'Certain reminiscences of the shock fall into the subliminal consciousness, where they can only be discovered in "hypnoid" states. If left there, they act as permanent "psychic traumata", thorns in the spirit, so to speak' (1894: 199). This is the English version of Charcot's 'psychic traumata', launched in America in the first issue of the newly published *Psychological Review*, whose editors commissioned James to epitomize his system of mnemonic classification published four years earlier in his *Principles of Psychology* (1890). In England Doctor Thomas Dixon Savill, an avid translator of the new French hysteria diagnosis, was presenting Charcot's lectures in English to doctors, aiming to introduce them to his 'hysteria in trauma': 'The existence of traumatic psychosis [*psychose traumatique*] adds still more to the gravity of the prognosis [of hysteria]' (1890: III. 388).

By 1895, while Oscar Wilde is defending himself in court, the threads have been tied: memory, trauma, the psychoses, hysteria, and the new nostalgics woven together, even if the vernacular usage of 'trauma' to denote disturbing events does not enter colloquial German and English until the mid-twentieth century.²⁴ Aldous Huxley, who was born in 1894 when these theories were brewing, writes that he was later in touch with 'memories of *traumatic* events in childhood' (1969: 935). He means around 1900 and pauses on the new word as if a child limping over her dolls. Yet if the new trauma required memory for its existence, so too did the geographical transplants of the 1890s and first decade of the new century.²⁵ The fundamental trauma homology for modernity was that *alienated selves*—those fractured interior lives Jay had captured in the heartland of Modernism—were not delimited to war. Migration also took its toll, and there was a huge increase at the century's end.

Why, every probing historian asks, was there no equivalent spiritual fracture in the transplantations of the early modern period,

²⁴ Recently released trial reportage of Wilde's 1895 case suggests that 'sexual exile' was being constituted as yet another version; see *Trials* (2001).

²⁵ Transplantation was often the result of forced migration after war. For the global picture see Nafziger *et al.* (2000); for its traumatic effects, Castelnovo *et al.* (1986). For nostalgia as a military illness see Flicker and Weiss (1943).

especially in eighteenth-century trans-Atlantic migrations from Africa? There was, but psychology—or what Jay has more correctly termed ‘psychologism’ for its broad inclusivity of the new fields of neurology, psychiatry, and psychoanalysis—had not yet produced its explanations.²⁶ David Trotter has further located these displacements in a developing ‘paranoia’ new to the culture of Europe around the turn of the twentieth century.²⁷ Others have extrapolated the waves of ‘collective madness’ overtaking society before, and during, the Great War from personal to collective paranoia.²⁸ Yet all reiterate that ‘aesthetic Modernism’ was being stimulated to revolt against its antecedents by the insecurities of the new forms of exile, especially the war neuroses feeding into Modernism’s second wave after 1930.

It requires no leap to the traumatic ‘displacements’ in the new psychiatric sense delineated in this chapter. Even the Victorian novelists, especially George Eliot, had anticipated this wave, in the dramatic forms in which they represented forgetting and remembering. The new ‘exile’ did not necessarily traverse geographical distances; it was an ‘exile’ of the mind. Both forms, geographical and mental, combined to produce anxiety and ambivalence in the creating artist. As T. S. Eliot—the Eliot who transplanted himself across an ocean as an émigré in the company of other writers living, like Henry James, in exile—would prophetically write during the Great War in a paradigmatic work, the new landscape of life was menacing, ‘breeding memory and desire’ (Eliot and Pound, 1971: 23).

A link also exists between migration—loss of homeland—and the sense of the past. Modernism, in whatever genealogy, was an *anti*-romantic predisposition—with both lower- and upper-case R: anti-personal and anti-nostalgic in the *old* sense. It abjured cults of personality (Wordsworths and Byrons), repudiated hero-worship (Carlyle and company), renounced feeling for feeling’s sake, with the effect of nullifying the reification of old genres for the sake of mere ‘beauty’ (the Pre-Raphaelites and Decadents). It opposed art that glorified the self and music drenched in cadences of sentimental self-indulgence (the tradition from Schumann to Liszt and Wagner). Simultaneously it embraced

²⁶ The distinction reduces to the philosophy of history, i.e. whether or not one believes that explanations can be given before the theoretical basis for the explanation exists. The question has vexed philosophers of history from the time of Vico.

²⁷ Trotter (2001), which opens with a sixty-page ‘Brief History of Paranoia’. For paranoia’s relation to nostalgia, see Rousseau (2010).

²⁸ Barham (2004).

exile and its often primitive conditions as underpinnings for the transformation of experience: not merely as the natural consequence of emigration and the aftermath of war but within the contexts of modernity's new artistic struggle to innovate and reform.

Modernism rarely forgot its innovative aesthetic goals or misremembered its relation to the past: both *together*. The zeugma is admittedly tortured for the juggling required. It did not sweetly remember rose-clad cottages in favour of the far more fiercely historical—one must say it—*traumatic past*. This latter originated in painful memories but soon discovered it could be assuaged by coming to terms with the reality of what had transpired:²⁹ that much prior Romantic art was dishonest and hypocritical, that much nineteenth-century writing had been derivative and fed a monied bourgeoisie, that certain poets had been greater than others, some voices sentimental, some literary forms vulgarizations, much painting counterfeit, and so forth.

This first wave, in contrast, aimed to be accurate, factual, in touch with an historical past: engaging with events and explanations because it could not forget them any more than the nostalgic could forget the daunting events that launched her servant's trauma. If aesthetic Modernism renounced the derivative, it also announced a new crusade for historical veracity. Nor could the Modernist, no matter how rebellious against the recent past, fail to concede that prior eras had produced *greater* artists than they (the new Modernists) were capable of. No wonder Pound chastised Eliot when the latter resisted expunging the lines parodic of Pope's *Rape of the Lock* in the opening passage of 'The Fire Sermon' in *The Waste Land*. 'You are not as good a poet as Pope', Pound ranted, red pen in hand.³⁰

Memory for the early Modernists included war trauma and was also *authentic*: worthy of being lodged at the base of a new aesthetic that broke with this sentimentally fraudulent past. In parallel, the *new* nostalgia was no longer merely an illness but an ethic and aesthetic—ethic because it possessed an epistemology and semiotics, aesthetic in view of its way of gazing at the world—and it enabled some Modernists to experience history in ways impossible under the regime of the old sentimental nostalgia.³¹

²⁹ Students of second-wave Modernism have commented on the point; see Pchov (2002) and Boym (2001), 19–32.

³⁰ Eliot and Pound (1971), 23 and Eliot (1988), 86.

³¹ Shaw and Chase (1989). For the *old* nostalgia see Kramnick (1968).

By connecting with a *real* past, however harrowing, the Modernist could reify Romantic longing in more authentic ways than merely affectively. Perhaps this sense of affiliation adds bouillon to E. M. Forster's ultra-Modernist pronouncement in *Howard's End* (1910): 'only connect'. Nostalgia had encouraged the 'connections' by bringing the past into the present in ways the old paradigms of space and time could not. Little wonder that the new aesthetic required art forms—Symbolism, Impressionism, Surrealism—that collapsed these temporal and spatial elements. Time and space would be reconfigured in the late twentieth century when Postmodernism elevated the fake to the niche of the original: when you can be anything you wish, and refashion yourself in ways that sever you from your past, nostalgia—whether old or new—has no place. It is not our *postmodern* exiles who long for their geographical homeland but others. Furthermore, in postmodernism the condition of the nostalgic will be ancillary: exile and migration remain but not the steady state of the self. More fluid than water, it has largely disappeared.

In 1906, while Richard Strauss was presenting his wildly avant-garde opera *Salome* to the world, with its dissonant tones, outlandish costumes and dances, and freakish rewriting of the account of St John the Baptist,³² and while the first wave of Modernism was bursting forth in the new century's first decade, Boltzmann found himself at the end of his rope. He had no artistic outlets to channel his alienation, nor any Ulyssean impulse to adventure. His nostalgia for Vienna, the convenient container of his past, was all-consuming—he was lost. Neither symbolist nor impressionist, not surrealist nor avant-garde, he was a world-class chemist who had become isolated in professional life and traumatically estranged from himself: his will negated in high Schopenhauerean degree, his Bergsonian Life Force lost in the optimistic milieu of Mach's positivism: a nightmare from which he wished 'to scream' no less than Edvard Munch's lost soul overwhelmed by existential angst in *The Scream* (1893).

Did Boltzmann 'scream' at Duino before shooting himself?³³ Perhaps not, but he may have moaned as Vasili Vasilich does to Nikki Dushka in Anton Chekhov's short story, *Der Schwanengesang*,

³² See Kramer (2004).

³³ While Boltzmann was at Duino, Ernst Haeckel, another world-famous German chemist, was launching the 'International Monistic Alliance' to disseminate the view that every organism is 'sacred' and intrinsically bound to the mysterious universe. Even if Boltzmann had known about Haeckel's theory, it would probably not have alleviated his suicidal nostalgia.

which everyone in Vienna seemed to be reading that summer when Boltzmann shot himself: 'I have no home to go to, no home, no home . . .' (Chekov, 1905: 14).

By 1900 the new nostalgics were widespread and expanding. Since that fateful day in 1906 some scholars have purported, perhaps too pedantically, that Modernism itself began with Boltzmann's statistical thermodynamics in 1874.³⁴ The claim is bizarre and contested, as are theories pinpointing Modernism's earlier rise in France in the mid-nineteenth century: with Baudelaire in poetry, Manet in painting, Flaubert in the novel. Modernism's origins are tortured and form another story that cannot be explored here, but there should be no doubt that the new versions of trauma, whether as hysterical or nostalgic, also played a significant part in its first wave up to the Great War.

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³⁴ See Everdell (1988), 532, claiming that 'Modernism began with Richard Dedekind's division of the real number line in 1872 and Boltzmann's statistical thermodynamics in 1874'. The point is developed in Everdell (1997). For an alternative view see Blackmore (1995).

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Mediating Trauma

How do we Read the Holocaust Memoirs?

Piotr Kuhiwczak

Holocaust memoirs share a lot of features with all other memoirs, and yet there are reasons why we should consider them as a special case. Like all other memoirs they have a wide readership comprising common readers, literary scholars, and historians. Each readership group is interested in a different aspect of the works. Historians see them primarily as evidence that helps to reconstruct the facts surrounding the extermination of European Jews. Literary scholars read the memoirs to study the relationship between memory and writing, while common readers may have a variety of motivations that includes a seemingly simple desire to understand the unique personal story as well as wider historical context.

My claim that the Holocaust memoirs constitute a special case, is built on two premises. First of all, unlike any other type of autobiographical writing the Holocaust memoirs have been incorporated into a wider debate about the extermination of the Jews during the Second World War.¹ They are called upon to support, or disprove, a whole gamut of political views and interpretations of those past events.² As a result, this often instrumental treatment of memoirs has had some impact on the

¹ The case of a forged memoir by Benjamin Wilkomirski is an example of a memoir involved in the historical debates and legal disputes about the Holocaust. See Maechler (2001).

² This issue is discussed in detail in Lipstad (1994) and addressed by Paulsson (2005).

popularity of some authors but has also contributed to the fact that other, perhaps equally interesting but less 'useful' writing has sunk without trace. Each newly published memoir carries a possibility of being interpreted as an authoritative statement on 'how things really were then', rather than as yet another account of a strictly personal nature that makes a small contribution to the larger whole.

The second premise is that to many readers, including professional historians, Holocaust memoirs are available only in translation. The vast majority of the Second World War memoirs were written in a variety of European languages, including Yiddish. While the texts written in German or French were much more widely known and disseminated, those in less known languages had a smaller chance to be noticed and translation was often the only way of ensuring that they reached a wider readership. As a result our 'memoir map' is skewed and incomplete. This is important, because many of the yet unpublished and untranslated memoirs were written in Eastern Europe where the concentration of Jews used to be very high, and where the Final Solution was applied with much more brutality than in the West. The post-Second World War memoirs published in English pose another problem. Written, or co-written by authors for whom English is the second or third language, they are often viewed as unproblematic and original writing,³ and the role of translation as a mediating factor is rarely considered as an important issue. By downplaying the importance of translation we obscure a fundamental issue, namely that the Holocaust was a multilingual event, and that paradoxically, the English language which dominates the Holocaust discourse today was one of few European languages that was not important when the Final Solution was taking place in Europe. In his book *Sounds of Defiance*, Alan Rosen highlights this ambiguous role of English in narrating the Holocaust:

In the past few decades, writing on the Holocaust has turned with increasing frequency to English, reaching a point where in most types of literary production the majority of material on the Holocaust appear in English. Moreover, paralleling this escalating production, claims have

³ Anne Frank's diary is a rare case when edition, translation, and adaptation for the stage became controversial issues. These complex and not always disinterested transformations have contributed to the production of different translations and editions of the diaries in English and many other languages. The 2008 production of the diaries as a musical by a Spanish theatrical group *Fecce* has reignited the controversy.

been advanced that English is the preferred language in which to write about the Holocaust. (2005: 16)

Looking at a variety of literary genres Rosen develops a balanced argument about the gains as well as losses that English language is responsible for in the process of writing about the Holocaust. But Rosen's voice is rather a rare case, not only in the United States, but a rare case in general. One would expect that languages and the Holocaust would be a central issue if not in the United States, then at least in Europe where multilingualism is a much more common and familiar phenomenon. We have an excellent but narrowly professional knowledge about the pre-Second World War diverse and multilingual Jewish communities in Europe, but the destruction of these communities left a large vacuum in our knowledge of the past, in our sensibility as well as in popular imagination.⁴ There is also little awareness of the role the diverse languages and cultures played in both the annihilation and the survival of the Jews.⁵

Of all the scarce available sources of our knowledge about the Jewish cultures in pre-1939 Europe, memoirs constitute perhaps the best remaining proof of the multifaceted nature of what happened in Europe between 1933 and 1945. So far though, there have been few attempts to look at this issue systematically. Few Holocaust scholars recognize the problem at all, and even fewer try to address it. Barbara Engelking's statement in her *Holocaust and Memory* is a rare case when the communication is highlighted as an important aspect of the Holocaust:

In my view, the language of communication is exceptionally important. In what language should accounts of wartime experiences be told? The literature on the subject was written on the basis of communications in different languages. The survivors often had to tell of their experiences in languages they learnt only after the war (e.g. English). Could they find the right words in these languages to describe events of which they thought in another language? Were they able to communicate emotions and nuances of meaning, as well as elements of wartime life, in languages which had no words which could precisely convey these meanings? Every language determines an appropriate area of meaning and emotions; it determines ways of naming and communicating the world. (2001: 15)

⁴ Eva Hoffman's (1998) *Shtetl* is probably the most accessible written account of Jewish life in pre-Second World War Poland.

⁵ See Kuhlitz (2007).

Even a cursory glance at Holocaust memoir will confirm Engelking's view. If we succeed in tracing a Holocaust memoir from the manuscript to the published copy, we can often discover that the original text has often gone through a complex operation of radical editing, rewriting, and translation.⁶ The task of translating and editing has been additionally complicated by the fact that many memoirs, particularly those coming from Eastern Europe, are complex at the point of origin. Were they written in the language in which they were published, that is Polish, German, Romanian, etc., or were they perhaps first written in Yiddish and then translated into one of the other languages? If it was Yiddish, then the question is, how did the text pass into a modern European language and then into English? Were the markers of the Jewish author's level of cultural and linguistic assimilation left untouched or edited out by the translators, editors, and perhaps censors, as was often the case behind the Iron Curtain?

These questions become even more pertinent when we look at English editions of the memoirs. Here a range of options gets multiplied and includes what we can call collaboration or perhaps even 'ghost-writing'. In a majority of cases these radical editorial interventions are well meaning. They arise from the desire to give the narrating subject an authoritative voice in English,⁷ but the price is rather high because a lot of what constitutes the actual circumstances is reflected in the author's style, his or her use of language, or often several languages.

One and perhaps the best way of explaining the effect of this linguistic and cultural mediation of the Holocaust is to look at examples. Władysław Szpilman's memoir is perhaps a good case study, because the book rose from total obscurity to prominence at the time when Roman Polanski turned it into a film entitled *The Pianist*.⁸ Szpilman's original memoir, *Śmierć Miasta* (Death of the

⁶ The memoir written by a Jewish policeman from Otwock, Cael Perechodnik (1996) has been a cause of an international controversy about editing and translating memoirs. See Engel (1999).

⁷ For instance, in the introduction to Greenspan (1998), the author tells the readers that the interlocutors' language is very important in communicating the past, but the narratives are presented in standard English where the interplay between language and the narrative remains invisible.

⁸ Polanski's film was released in 2002. Czesław Miłosz and Jerzy Andrzejewski wanted to film Szpilman's life story as early as 1945. The communist censorship insisted on too many alterations and the project was abandoned. A film *Miasto nieujarzmione* based on the book was filmed in 1950, but this version was a product of vigorous censorship and ideologically motivated script rewriting.

City) appeared in Warsaw in 1946.⁹ Contrary to what is often written about Holocaust writing, silence was not a standard response to the Holocaust just after the end of the Second World War.¹⁰ Memoirs and accounts were collected, filed, and published in many European countries and Szpilman's book was not an exception. What we call today 'Szpilman's' book is not, however, a simple case of one author and his creation. The Polish original was the fruit of collaboration between Szpilman and his friend Jerzy Waldorff, an eminent music critic. Waldorff edited the manuscript and wrote an introduction in which he said: 'At some point my friend suggested that I put his war memoir on paper', which implies that Waldorff's role might have been larger than just editing a previously written text.¹¹

What distinguishes Szpilman's story from other stories of a similar kind, was that towards the end of his hiding among the ruins of Warsaw he was helped by an officer in the German army, captain Wilm Hosenfeld. This was a most unusual episode, and the publisher, probably prompted by the censor, decided that it would be much better to present Hosenfeld as an Austrian. Because of good relations between the Poles and Austrians under the Austro-Hungarian empire there was a possibility to tap into a belief, also widely disseminated by the Austrians themselves, that Austrian members of the Nazi forces were perhaps unwilling collaborators rather than committed carriers of the Final Solution. Having a German in the role of a good Samaritan saving a Jew was not acceptable to the Polish communist authorities in 1946, but casting an Austrian in this role was just about possible. But it was not only the communist censors who had a problem with Hosenfeld's nationality. It was also very likely that after the terrible war experiences, Polish readers in general would find this episode rather unwelcome.

Before Polanski's film, few people outside Poland had heard of Szpilman. In 1998 the memoir appeared in German and was vigorously promoted by his son, Andrzej. This German edition entitled

⁹ The first Polish edition indicates Waldorff as an editor. Szpilman's name is in the subtitle. In the 2000 interview for *Gazeta Uniwersytecka* Szpilman stated that he was not entirely satisfied with the outcome and wanted to introduce some changes at a later stage.

¹⁰ The controversial issue of the post-war Holocaust silence has been discussed both by therapists and cultural historians. See, for instance, Felman and Laub (1992), Kestenberg and Gampel (1983) and Segev (1991).

¹¹ *Smierć Miasta*, Szpilman (1946), 7. My translation.

Das wunderbare Überleben included fragments of a recovered memoir by Hosenfeld, and the afterword to the book was written by a high-profile German writer Wolf Biermann. Shortly after that, the memoir now called *The Pianist*, *Der Pianist*, or *Pianista*, became a global bestseller. The English language edition appeared in 1999 and the Polish one a year later. This chronology raises a question that is not uncommon for the Holocaust memoirs. It is a question about the relationship of the original, or *originals* to translations as well as about the translations themselves. The English *Pianist* is the work of a distinguished translator, Anthea Bell. However, Bell did not translate from Polish, although the copyright entry in the book indicates both the Polish 1946 edition as a 'compilation' and an unspecified 1998 edition by Szpilman. The new, 2000 Polish edition is not less ambiguous. It was published *later* than the German and English translations but is called an *original*. The relationship to the 1946 Polish text is acknowledged, but with an addition of a line about 'substantial revisions and supplements'. In a preface to this edition Wadysaw's son, Andrzej Szpilman wrote: 'This book appeared originally in Germany, fifty years after its first edition... Now it is being published in Poland. The text has been substantially reworked in relation to the 1946 version.'¹² This aspect is further elaborated in Andrzej Szpilman's preface to the English translation:

My father wrote the final version of this book in 1945. The book was never reprinted, although a number of Polish publishing firms tried to make it available for a younger generation. Their efforts were always thwarted. No explanation was given, but the real explanation was obvious: the political authorities had their reasons.¹³

A detailed textual analysis of the 'new' Polish original does not confirm what Andrzej Szpilman tells the English readers. There is little evidence that the text was truncated by the communist censors. The only major change is that in the new version Hosenfeld gets back his German origins. After *Schindler's List* there is no need to avoid Germans cast in the role of saviours.¹⁴ Other revisions are stylistic,

¹² Szpilman (2000), 7. My translation.

¹³ Szpilman (1999), 9.

¹⁴ By the 1980s such attitudes towards the Germans ceased to matter. Andrzej Szczypiorski's novel *The Beautiful Mrs. Seidenman* published in 1986 was a bestseller in Poland as well as many European countries and won several international prizes including the Austrian State Prize for European Literature.

and as an expert Polish literary critic says, unnecessary, because they undermine the authenticity of the original text:

If we decide that this text is an autobiographical fiction, then we should respect the author's right to introduce changes into his own text. But if we see this book as a document recording the unique personal experience, then one should carefully preserve it in its original pure shape. (Leociak, 2001)

To support this statement Leociak undertakes a detailed analysis of the changes. The subsequent and rather emotional response of Andrzej Szpilman to this analysis further complicates our thoughts about what translation is and what it is not.¹⁵ Andrzej Szpilman claims that in order to produce a modern German text the archaic Polish style had to be altered and modernized. Then in order to provide the Polish reader with a new original that would match the quality of the translations, the new Polish edition needed to be as modern as the translations are. If we follow up this train of thought then we get the situation where the German edition required a modernization of the Polish text, and then the new Polish edition needed to be aligned with all the translations in order to be modern. Surely, this is not a normal logical procedure. A modern German translation could have been easily made out of the existing Polish text, and the 1946 text could have been left as it was.¹⁶ And this is the point that Leociak made in his review.

One could say that on the surface the debate here is not about the relationship of the translation to the original but about two other issues—our understanding of what translation is and our acceptance of what it means to change, or edit, the text. What often gets forgotten when such textual transformations take place, is that the text is translated for the reader who has no access to the original but trusts that everybody involved in the production of the translation has made an effort to produce as credible a version of the original as possible. This credibility does not mean that every word of the original must find its way into the translation. It means, however, that the readers of the translation will expect that their reading experience will be as enriching,

¹⁵ Andrzej Szpilman created a large website about *The Pianist* at <http://www.szpilman.net/framepolski.html>.

¹⁶ In the 2000 interview for *Gazeta Uniwersytecka* Wadysaw Szpilman stated that he was not entirely satisfied with the 1946 text and always wanted to introduce some changes. His son Andrzej often quoted his father's words.

and perhaps as difficult as the reading of the original. In the case of traumatic memoirs this difficulty consists of editorial disruptions, partial amnesia, late recovery, and linguistic complexity. Like many other Holocaust memoirs, Szpilman's book gives an account of individual traumatic experiences linked to a collective trauma of the whole ethnic group. The tension between writing one's own life and preserving the memory of the whole community has a strong impact not only on the structure of the work, but also on its very linguistic texture. Under such pressure an individual story takes on the characteristics of an archaeological excavation where a seemingly insignificant detail may have a decisive impact on the interpretation of the past. There is no doubt that a translation of such a memoir amounts to a painstaking selection of the elements that allow us to understand the workings of the individual memory against the background of the destruction of a collective life. A temptation to sacrifice this archaeological method for the sake of fluency or modernization, as proposed by Andrzej Szpilman, diminishes the challenge that the reader of the translation expects to face.

But such complex textual transformations are not limited to Holocaust memoirs. In the 1980s Gideon Toury researched many cases of translations that did not conform to the usual pattern where a translated text is a result of a straightforward interlingual operation. Subsequently he developed a useful concept of pseudotranslation, which is a text we consider to be a translation, not necessarily because it has been translated, but because it is presented to us as a translation. According to Toury (2005), the declaration that a text is a translation seems to constitute a sufficient condition to convince us that the text has been translated, although there is no original in another language. Simply, we tend to believe what is stated on the cover. In the same way translation can be presented as an original text if the writer or the publisher decide to conceal the fact that the text has been derived from an original written in another language. This kind of operation has a long tradition in European literatures.

James Macpherson's 1765 'translations' of the ancient Gaelic works of Ossian and Vaclav Hanka's 1818 manuscript containing old Bohemian poems, are perhaps the most prominent cases of a pseudotranslation.¹⁷ But more recently André Makine's prize-winning novel *Le Testament français* received a lot of attention because, according to

¹⁷ See Gaskill (1996).

the author, the novel was published only because the publishers believed it was a translation from Russian.¹⁸ Jerzy Kosinski's controversial *Painted Bird* and Binjamin Wilkomirski's (Bruno Grosjean) Holocaust memoir *Fragments: Memories of a Wartime Childhood 1939–1948* are perhaps more relevant examples of forgery or manipulation related to Holocaust writing. While Toury takes a broad view on how pseudotranslation may impact on literary culture, Susan Bassnett looks more closely at what we as readers are prepared to accept:

For as readers, we collude with the usages of the term 'translation', a term that distinguishes one type of textual practice from others. By pretending that we know what translation is, i.e. an operation that involves textual transfer across a binary divide, we tie ourselves up with problems of originality and authenticity, of power and ownership, of dominance and subservience. But can we always be certain that we know what a translation is? And is the object we call a translation always the same kind of text? (Bassnett, 1998: 27)

Bassnett refers largely to literary works, where the principle of historical authenticity and documentary record does not apply, but we can clearly see that when used with intent, pseudo-translation, and also pseudo-editing, can have an impact on texts that are not fictional and have a more palpable referential link to the external world.

If such is the complexity of the Polish and German originals and translations as indicated earlier, then where does that leave us when we reach for the English text? Although the English translation of *The Pianist* acknowledges the 1946 Polish version as the original, there are doubts whether this text was at all used for the English translation. *The Pianist* was translated by Anthea Bell, a distinguished translator from German and French. But as mentioned earlier, Bell has never translated from Polish, so it is very unlikely that she took the trouble to learn Polish for this one case. There are good reasons to believe that the book was translated from German. On the title-page there is a curious note from the publishers stating that 'the compilation of the first edition of this book' is by Jerzy Waldorff, but altogether, there is no clarity either as to how many source texts there are or from which one the English original was created.

¹⁸ See Knorr (1996).

Looking at the larger structural features we notice that the English translation has a different order of the chapters in relation to both Polish editions. Also the titles of some chapters have been altered. The most conspicuous difference is that chapter six in the Polish text becomes the opening chapter in English. It is difficult to see any reason why the change should be introduced. Szpilman's memoir is a traditional chronologically based narrative. It has no artistic ambitions, because as Leociak suggested, it is rather a document than a narrative fiction. The shift of chapter six to the beginning undermines this intended simplicity. The Polish memoir begins on 31 August, 1939, just a day before the outbreak of the Second World War. The English *Pianist* takes us straight to November 1940 when the Warsaw Ghetto was sealed off from the rest of the city. We are immediately *in medias res*, plunged straight into the horrors of ghetto life. Only after this initial shock, do we go back to the original chapter one when the narrative begins.

What does this do to our perception? Quite a lot. Szpilman, as well as many other authors of the Holocaust memoirs, tends to stick to the chronology because he wants to demonstrate what it meant to be deprived, first of all daily comforts, then of all basic civil rights. The process was fast—an unstoppable degradation of daily life. This is how the witnesses felt and how they wanted to tell us about this unprecedented event, because the aim of the Holocaust memoir was to let us know about what was never expected to become public knowledge. The creation of the ghettos in the cities, the establishment of the concentration camps in secret locations in Eastern Europe, and the use of euphemisms to describe the extermination had one aim—to keep the brutal reality away from ordinary Germans, the Allies, and the few international organizations that were allowed to inspect selected concentration camps. Towards the end of chapter one, when Warsaw was systematically bombed for several days, Szpilman writes: "The dignity the city suddenly lost could not be restored. That was defeat."¹⁹ This sentence marks the passage from normality to a new phase of life, the shape of which at that point was as yet uncertain. Szpilman conveyed what all inhabitants of Warsaw saw with their own eyes and felt at this particular moment. The removal of the original order of the events undermines the purpose of this

¹⁹ Szpilman (1946), 20. My translation.

narrative. The text becomes unnecessarily 'artistic' and this is precisely what the author and his co-author wanted to avoid.

The chapter structure brings us to another problem—the use of the German language in the narrative. Chapter four entitled in the 1946 edition *Ihr seid Juden?* becomes *Getto* in the 1999 Polish version and *Are you Jews?* in the English translation. In contrast, the chapter heading *Umschlagplatz* remains in its original version. But it is not only the chapter titles that display traces of the linguistic metamorphosis. Szpilman's original memoir contains a number of passages where German language is used. Chapter four, which I mentioned above, has a scene in which the Szpilmans find themselves in the street during the curfew. They try to get home before the Nazi patrol stops them. Unfortunately they fail to reach their destination and the German soldiers stop them in the street. This scene is constructed in the following way:

We just stood there in the dazzling light of their torches, each of us trying to think of some excuse, when one of the policemen marched straight up to us and shone his torch in our faces.

'Are you Jews?' The question was purely rhetorical since he did not wait for us to answer. 'Right, then . . . ' There was a note of triumph in this statement of our racial origin.²⁰

In the 1946 Polish text the spoken lines are left in German.²¹ Apart from the fact that it has been a convention in Polish to leave crucial elements of foreign phrases when it really matters, in this particular case it is the first eye to eye meeting of Szpilman with the Nazis. The fact that the Szpilmans were not shot on the spot depended solely on the fact that one of the Nazis was a musician and took an interest in the instruments the family were carrying. The Szpilmans were allowed to go home, which was an exception rather than the rule. The immediacy and drama of this cross-linguistic encounter was so

²⁰ Szpilman (1999), 51–2.

²¹ Staliśmy w oślepiającym blasku elektrycznych latarek, szukając w myślach, każdy na własną rękę, jakiegoś usprawiedliwienia, gdy nagle jeden z zandarmw zbliżył się i oświetlił twarze nasze z bliska.

—*Ihr seid Juden?*

Pytanie to miało zresztą character czysto retoryczny, gdyż odpowiedział na nie sam sobie, nie czekając, czy przytakniemy.

—*Na, schön . . .*

W tym jego stwierdzeniu naszej przynależności rasowej brzmiał triumf, że taką zdobyli właśnie zwierzynek, i zadowolenie, i groźba i szyderstwo.

potent that Szpilman and Waldorff must have decided that the only way of conveying the experience would be to leave the German words in. In the new Polish edition the German words are not there, and the text in English is also normalized. What was dramatic and immediate in the original, became more ordinary in translation. The drama of unpredictable survival was transformed into an event toned down by the use of a translatorial reported speech.

The chapter entitled *Umschlagplatz* is another case. The German name designates the deportation point in the Warsaw Ghetto from which hundreds of thousands of Jews were sent to their death in Treblinka. The original memoir uses two terms: the ordinary Polish name for this place, *Plac Przeladunkowy* which could be translated the 'reloading square', and the German word *Umschlagplatz* but in inverted commas. This is not inconsistency, but evidence of how the reality of the Ghetto was modifying the language. *Plac Przeladunkowy* used to be an ordinary place where goods brought to the station were loaded on trains and sent off to different destinations. Now the goods were replaced with people, whom the Nazis treated like the material designated for recycling. Towards the end of the chapter one of the guards looking at the train says: 'Das alles geht auf Schmelz!'²² In the translation this becomes 'Well, off they go for meltdown.'²³ It is the same statement but in the English text the place is called *Umschlagplatz* from the very first sentence, and the previous name of the place is never mentioned. It is true, that like Auschwitz and Holocaust, *Umschlagplatz* has become one of the Holocaust symbols and does not require explanation. However, the careful positioning of the old and the new names by Szpilman allows us to see the transition of the ordinary Polish 'reloading square' into something entirely different. It is yet another transition of an ordinary life in Warsaw into the life with an apocalyptic dimension.

There is also a political aspect of the book that invites a commentary. In Roman Polanski's film there is a poignant scene, where Szpilman looks out of the window of the house where he was hiding, and sees some soldiers and a military vehicle. The soldiers are neither Russian nor German. They have green uniforms and are holding white and red flags. Polish viewers could immediately see the irony

²² Szpilman (1946), 114. The significance of the word *Smelz* increases because the Polish has a phonetically perfect equivalent spelled *szmelc*

²³ Szpilman (1999), 107.

of this scene. Warsaw was destroyed because Stalin prevented the Red Army from taking the city until the Nazis squashed the Warsaw Uprising in the autumn of 1944. The soldiers in the film are the Polish army units under Soviet command. For Polanski, and probably Szpilman as well, this is the liberation from the Nazi oppression, but it is a bitter liberation because the Soviet system is going to replace the Nazi occupation. In the memoir this effect is achieved by the use of specific terms and names, such as *Armia Żymierskiego* for the Polish forces allied with the Soviets, and *AK* for the independent Polish forces fighting against the Nazis in Warsaw. The translation leaves the first name out, and does not explain the other, thus removing the original political subtext and introducing a certain amount of confusion.

If we go back to the initial question about the source for the English translation, we may perhaps risk a hypothesis that this disappearance of German language is not a deliberate attempt to domesticate or normalize the English translation but simply a proof that the book was translated from German. The German lines that stood out in the Polish text and played the important stylistic and symbolic role, became entirely subsumed into German. Not knowing Polish, the English translator did not recognize the fact that some lines in German were supposed to stand out. As a result they were translated into 'ordinary' English.

On the surface all the editorial and translatorial changes do not look like a major intrusion—removal of a few lines in a foreign language, minor alteration of the order of chapters, toning down of elements that bring too much of the local politics and culture. None of that prevented *The Pianist* from becoming an international best-seller. Or perhaps we should say that without these 'minor textual operations' it would not have been possible to turn *Śmierć Miasta* into *The Pianist*—an international bestseller? If this is the case then what is the difference between the original *The Death of the City* and its translated others? And can we genuinely claim that this 'intensive editing' may have an impact on our understanding of the Holocaust? Obviously, the 'sanitized' text is more fluent and accessible, and concentrates on what apparently the contemporary reader likes so much—a good story with a happy ending and a redemptive element, which is probably responsible for the book's immense success, particularly in Germany. The English translation carries a significant subtitle, *The Extraordinary Story of One Man's Survival in Warsaw, 1939–1945*, while the subtitle to the Polish original reads *Władysław*

Szpilman's Memoir, 1939–1945. This change in the subtitle reflects the general direction of the editorial intrusions. The translated memoir reads more like an adventure of a single man surviving against all odds: a familiar genre originating in nineteenth-century colonial travel literature. Whatever does not help to prop up the romantic and heroic image of a single man's survival, becomes superfluous. There is no doubt that such a version of *The Death of the City* would appeal to many readers. It will not, however, help the reader whose interest is in following the case of individual survival as a part of a major cataclysmic event that happened in the centre of Europe. It will not help those who want to know not only the shocking death statistics, but the mechanisms that led to mass murder and rare cases of rescue and survival. And finally, it will make it difficult to understand that individual survival came often at the price of extreme loneliness and alienation. If looked at from this perspective, the specific elements that were edited out of the text were those that could help to contribute to the better, and what I would not hesitate to call, the intended understanding of the memoir. What this neatly packaged version of *The Pianist* does not have, is the original's immediate authenticity reflected in the freshness of the idiom and closeness of the author's style to the war experiences. Perhaps what is also missing here is what Jerzy Waldorff described as the 'emotional content of the story, which my friend related to me'.²⁴

Paradoxically, it seems that Roman Polanski attempted to put back into the screen version of the memoir what the editing and translation had taken out. Perhaps this was possible because of Polanski's own childhood experiences in Nazi-occupied Krakow. If this is true, then we have a case where the film adaptation manages to recover what was lost in multiple translations.

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History as Traumatic Memory: *Das Áfricas*¹

Helena Buescu

I may have been flighty. The photographs frighten me. This is what I must work on. All the more so that other gazes have not felt the same. They are beautiful. Yes, they are. But that which may be exorcism for some, or for the author himself (*Auctor, actor, remember?*, truer still for the photography which must be set up, and in former times was set up literally, *on a tripod*), may be torment for others.²

My point of departure coincides with this statement, one of the first of the work entitled *Das Áfricas*, a volume published in 1991, and jointly authored by José Afonso Furtado (photographs) and Maria Velho da Costa (text). It also constitutes the problem that I want to address here: why does Velho da Costa tell us that she is afraid of these photographs in particular? What do they stir in her that might account for this kind of feeling and therefore explain what would otherwise seem an unreasonable reaction to a group of apparently peaceful, even tranquil pictures?

¹ A previous English version of this text has been published: 'History as Traumatic Memory: *Das Áfricas* by Maria Velho da Costa and José Afonso Furtadó, in Stephanie A. Glaser (ed.), *Media inter Media: Essays in Honor of Claus Clüver* (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2010), 293–307. A special emphasis has been given in the present volume to re-appraising postcolonial experience in the light of the trauma at the heart of memory.

² Furtado and Velho da Costa (1991), 25. All references will be to this edition of *Das Áfricas*.



Fig. 16.1. Furtado and Velho da Costa (1991), 93

I will try to show that the traumatic events at the source of this text belong to that same sombre family that a certain inscription of history and cultural memory has tried to express in recent years in relation to events such as the Holocaust. They both have to do with how history ('inhuman' history, so Velho da Costa would say) is inscribable in photographs that do not show violence in itself, yet represent the remnants of that historical violence in an apparently tranquil way. It is my contention that precisely the 'inhuman' character of this history accounts for the materialization of fear, born out of a traumatic representation that one should be able to locate and try to understand as such.

One of my main concerns will therefore be how to address questions of representation, transmission, and transfer. These are especially significant when one is facing issues relating to trauma, a specific situation in which repetition and blockage of representation are paradoxically intertwined. I will try to show that *Das Áfricas* belongs to that family of texts that bear witness to history under its violent manifestations, and offers a revision of history that fuses past and present in the experience that Walter Benjamin termed the 'Now-time' (*Jetztzeit*). Only by bringing history into the now-time may one have access to discourse and representation.

Das Áfricas tackles two different forms of representation of the past, through literature and photography. This means that I am also concerned here with questions of intermedia relations, between discourse and visual representations. From this point of view, the concept of translation offers us a significant tool, and has done so ever since Roman Jakobson proposed to consider the relations between different media as a legitimate form of translation. In this sense, *Das Áfricas* offers us a perfect example of how two different media address the same question: the ruins of a past, simultaneously imperial and colonial, in a present that overtly manifests abandonment and loss. Trauma and translation are therefore two of my main topics here, as I examine how trauma is linked to a dimension of bearing witness to the violence of history, and of being able to communicate it. How are these to be engaged in? What conditions, limits, and possibilities of representation are there to be dealt with? Bringing the past into the now-time entails problems of translating that past into the present, through the means of the traces it has left, and which are to be interpreted. Literary text and photography are therefore two different means of interpreting that past, translating it into a communicative event, and therefore bearing witness to a colonial history that is still to be recognized in many parts of 'the Africas'.

The title itself seems therefore a good place to start our inquiry, for it brings out a significant set of problems: the title is Portuguese, *Das Áfricas*. How could we try to translate this into English? More precisely, how should we understand the preposition 'de' in it? These questions seem all the more pertinent when we consider that in the published volume the Portuguese text is accompanied by its full English translation, with the telling exception of the title. What then does this absence of translation mean?

My point is that it is intimately connected to the unsolved ambiguity contained in the Portuguese title and to the inaugural sense contained in the preposition 'de': is it the genitive, which would underline the awareness of a belonging or of an origin (texts and photographs *of* the Africas, as well as *from* the Africas); or does it have altogether a quite different sense, contained in the Latin ablative used with the preposition 'de': *about* the Africas, concerning them? And what kind of sense should we make out of the use of the plural in the name 'Africas'? It is precisely through these questions, as well as in the hesitation between the two options mentioned (genitive/ablative), that we should locate the dialogue between text and photographs in

this volume. A further observation could perhaps be brought to bear upon our inquiry: in a volume which is double-authored by a photographer and a writer the traditional subordination of the image to the written word might be expected (a verbal text asking for an iconic or photographic 'illustration'), but here it is totally undermined; indeed the photographs are the root of the verbal text:

For weeks now I have felt disturbed by the presence of the *Agfa* box which contains the proofs of the photographs. My readings, and some daydreaming, have taken shape around that object, circumnavigating, we might say, the pictures on (on?), or next to which, I have agreed to write. (1991: 25)

The volume's initial movement consists therefore in the subversion of the traditional ekphrastic connection between literary text and image. In my view, this may be put in relation to the clear narrative scarcity that the pictures signal by the total absence of any human figure. This volume does not aim at 'telling' or 'illustrating' something, but precisely at speaking about ('de' in Latin): 'These photographs do not make comments. Nor do they tell stories. They fix some of the desolation of history, precarious and *Common*' (1991: 37).

There is a further striking question implied in the relation between text and images, for the photographs are not identified in the course of the book, as if the reader could do without an immediate connection to a definite spot, and this loosens up their representational function. They are identified only in a list at the end of the volume, arranged in the order in which they appear in the book. This list indicates the region and the country in which the pictures were taken: 'Sul de Luanda, Angola'; 'Tiznit, Marrocos'; 'Maputo, Moçambique'; 'São Tomé, São Tomé e Príncipe', a significantly laconic statement that we must take into account in relation to the narrative scarcity that I mentioned earlier.

We may draw some conclusions from this sequence of observations:

1. The plural *Das Áfricas* suggests not only the plurality of the regions and the countries to which it refers, but also the fact that it is not the *picturesque and the exotic* that are here sought and photographed. Maria Velho da Costa expresses precisely this feeling when she states: 'Though they are about the Africas, they are about a lost continent. Shining with absence. Afflicted. And this vision contradicts those who care only for the colours of the continent, for the—*picturesque*' (1991: 25). With



Fig. 16.2. Furtado and Velho da Costa (1991), 47

only a few exceptions, these pictures signal *human remnants, traces and vestiges* that human history has impressed upon the places; either because a fort or a prisoner's camp is photographed, or because a human trail around a tree can be made out, or even because an abandoned boat (Fig. 16.2) or a small path of stones show that man, although not directly portrayed in the photographs, is everywhere present through the *vestiges*. And yet, there is a quality of *silence and abandonment, or neglect*, to which I will return, that Velho da Costa emphasizes in her opening remarks:

There is no human figure, and yet the absence of others in the chosen landscape is always an illusion. The image has been *captured*. (And captivity is ever ambiguous.) But the images suggest that nobody, no living soul, has ever walked that landscape. It is this contradiction, this capturing of silence, or that which has been silenced, that hurts my eyesight. And my hearing. . . . I shall see whether it is this that disturbs me: that they are images of that which has been abandoned for good. Or a vision of the *revenant*, that which returns to haunt. (1991: 25)

2. The book is thus not about taking pictures of *one* particular place, making a kind of documentary; instead, it is about setting up a

slashed narrative, built from the convergence of two different elements: the *fragment*, which both constitutes a picture and is exposed by it, and the *allusion* to a whole which is unattainable precisely *as* a whole. *Das Áfricas* is only made possible by the awareness of the impossibility of *one single* Africa, except through a stereotype: the *picturesque* that Velho da Costa mentions.

3. What is being photographed then is mainly the outcome of an encounter whose history has in fact been a mis-encounter: from the clash of two very different cultures and civilizations emerged the enduring and repeated traumas to which we now (historically) refer to as *colonial* or even *postcolonial* events. The photographs span a long and heterogeneous history, which bears out the memory of various cultures, different times and presents which would at first sight seem incompatible, but which photography registers as compatible: isolated in the pungent landscape of Mindelo stands a Portuguese fortress, with a name, 'Celso', inscribed on one of its walls (Fig. 16.3). Who is this Celso (or someone representing him), who has been there and who wanted to inscribe his name on the wall? What does it mean to inscribe a stranger's name on the walls of an abandoned fortress? In



Fig. 16.3. Furtado and Velho da Costa (1991), 75

this mis-encounter Europe meets Africa. The volume is thus the paradigmatic record of such a mis-encounter: not only the record of a tour through the Áflicas, but of the desolate observation of a common history that Portugal, and Europe, share with Africa.

These are *Tristes Tropiques*, with that deadening of emotion brought about by great losses.

Also, we expect a more immediate pleasure from pictures of Africa. . . . We are not all given that maturity in which sensuality can exult, relieved merely of sentimentality, of the ornamentation of (good) sentiments. It comes only to those who have been through tragedy, or who have remained in a tragedy transfigured. Example: Pasolini and the *Áflicas* of *Oedipus Rex* and *Medeia*, which are no less functional for being mythical. I think of this because I was pondering on these photographs when I saw *Medeia* two days ago. And I remembered Pasolini's line on Callas: *uccellino con potente voce de aquila*.

Those who believe in eternal death because they are familiar with *disaster*, or because they find it difficult to breathe in the world as it seems, are frugal. (1991: 31)

There is still another element that, almost without exception, emerges from all these photographs, and which we might also link to the scarcity and abandonment mentioned above. I am referring to the choice of almost static moments in the photographs. Nothing seems to move or even budge, as though time has been suspended and condensed, all of it, in that precise moment-in-space (as in Fig. 16.4). I would like to match this kind of vestigial suspension with the pictorial tradition of the *still life*, whose semantic echo in the expressions *still photography* and *still camera* is worth noting here. In all of these instances, what is at stake is the emphasis on how this world, which surrendered itself to stillness (in which there seems to be no wind at all), and where the waves themselves seem more to unfold than to rage, condenses the vestigial dimension of history: not a pure present moment from which temporality has fled, but, on the contrary, a present able to preserve and re-enact the long duration of history in its contradictions and, often enough, in its painful moments (Fig. 16.5).

Fragments of ruins, deserted dwellings (pathetic white cloths over roofs of huts, shroud sheets), ancient trees and the remains of trunks, empty or useless canoes, their prows nevertheless pointing somewhere, deserted seaside esplanades shining in the drizzle, sections of fortresses,

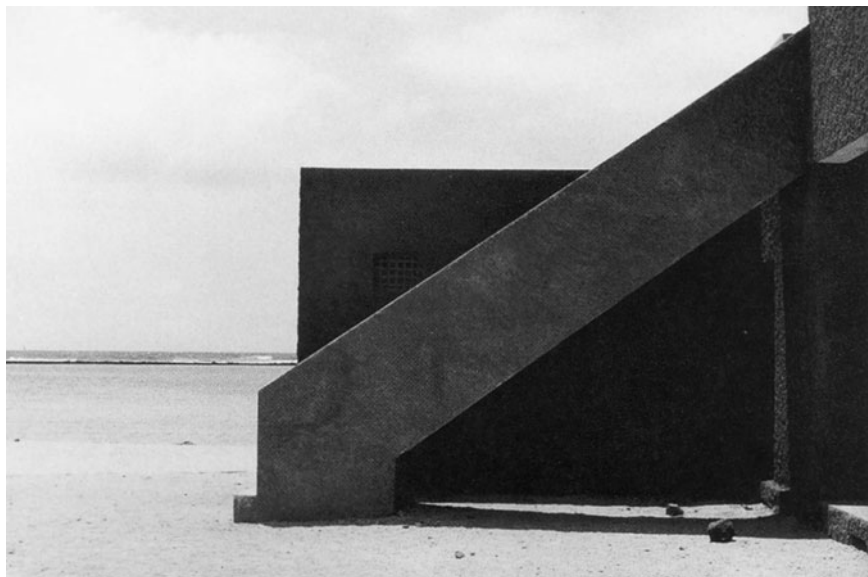


Fig. 16.4. Furtado and Velho da Costa (1991), 76



Fig. 16.5. Furtado and Velho da Costa (1991), 63

disfigured pontoons, the path for horses in the Cidade Velha, with the melancholic echo of hooves forever absent . . .). And now and again corsairs would come looting until the time when the lords of the land moved away and the stones of the ruins and the tombstones became intertwined with the hamlet that is there today, transmigrated with the souls and the bodies that sought shelter in another *colour*. There is a tumbled down wall, a thicket in the background, above it the same lowering, high, sky. The only human figure is a tumular Lachrymosa with an urn under an acacia overspilling on to sandy soil. To check that it really is a human figure and a funereal ornament, at least in this very dark proof, it is necessary to strengthen the light on the picture. (1991: 28–9)

What is at stake here is that human vestiges seem to be superimposed on a Nature that always finds a way of coming back, of invading that which had previously seemed to expel her—an interpretation of the vestigial and shifting character of photography that Barthes, in his *La Chambre claire* (1980), profusely emphasized.

This being so, *Das Áfricas* might also be read as one of the multiple sites of historical *trauma*, to which cultural memory resorts in order to simultaneously recall what has occurred and to be able to talk about it, living with (and in spite of) it. Read from this point of view, it stands out as a perfect example of what Paul Gilroy has recently termed ‘postcolonial melancholia’, that special state through which the loss of an empire is appreciated in all its consequences and accepted as a condition of discomfort not to be forgotten:

The multilayered trauma—economic and cultural as well as political and psychological—involved in accepting the loss of the empire would therefore be compounded by a number of additional shocks. Among them are the painful obligations to work through the grim details of imperial and colonial history and to transform paralyzing guilt into a more productive shame that would be conducive to the building of a multicultural nationality that is no longer phobic about the prospect of exposure to either strangers or otherness. (2005: 99)

Das Áfricas would therefore stand as one instance of this ‘transformation of paralyzing guilt into productive shame’, through a revisitation of past and present that enables us to detect, in Africa, a traumatic history that is also shared by Europe. It is this common history that must be acknowledged and, so to speak, exposed, so that memory is not lost and history may still linger as part of a common, though disenchanting, inheritance. This connection between memory and trauma could also be paralleled

with quests such as that of W. G. Sebald, who, in novels such as *The Emigrants* (*Die Ausgewanderten*, 1992) or *Austerlitz* (2001), articulated a tense dialogue between literary text and photography in order to 're-count' the overpowering narrative of those exiled and persecuted by history. This vestigial awareness, which in my view connects Furtado's and Velho da Costa's work to inquiries such as Sebald's, consists in that which Stephanie Harris calls a 'quality of neglect', which, in her opinion, characterizes the verbal text as much as the photographic image in Sebald's work,³ and which I think we might also recognize in *Das Áfricas*. As I will now try to show, their aim is not mainly to bear testimony to a time past; instead, it is all about bringing time past into the present in its neglected (abandoned) figuration, therefore accounting for the way this present is built from the precarious shreds of the numerous pasts it contains and to which it points. I will return to this last question when I discuss the value of photography as *shifter*.

The multiple tonal character of this work, especially in Maria Velho da Costa's texts, in which her use of the narrative component does not hide the awareness that the work always exceeds it, may be better understood if we consider that we are here dealing with an emblematic example of what W. J. T. Mitchell designated in his classic study *Picture Theory* as the 'photographic essay'. Mitchell considers that such essays perform 'the dramatization of [the relation of photography and language] in an emergent form of mixed, composite art' (1994, 281). Though *Das Áfricas* appears to be multimedia text, which, as defined by Claus Clüver, 'comprises separable and individually coherent texts in different media', it is in reality a mixed-media work in which neither of the components, neither literature nor photography, is subordinated to the other, but in which they both manifest their dialectic interdependency (Clüver, 2001: 333–59).

Das Áfricas thus re-enacts a traumatic memory revisited by both photography and literature. It is worth noting that in 1983 José Afonso Furtado translated Susan Sontag's highly acclaimed *On Photography*, in which she declared:

One's first encounter with the photography inventory of ultimate horror is a kind of revelation, the prototypically modern revelation: a negative epiphany. For me, it was photographs of Bergen-Belsen and Dachau that I came across by chance in a bookstore in Santa Monica in

³ Harris (2001), 379–91. On W. G. Sebald and photography, see also Long (2003).

July 1945. Nothing I have seen—in photography or in real life—ever cut me as sharply, deeply, instantaneously. Indeed, it seems plausible to me to divide my life into two parts, before I saw those photographs (I was twelve) and after, though it was several years before I understood fully what they were about. (1989: 19)

The problem Sontag referred to finds echoes in *Das Áfricas* in the photographs as well as in the literary texts, and may be linked to the tonality of *stillness* that is one of its foundations—a stillness that, as we have seen, is in fact the opposite of all tranquillity.

This motionless tone has another consequence: the perception of an almost obsessive gesture of *repetition* in the framing as well as in the *mise-en-scène*—the presentation of an architectural object in ruins or in utter desolation within a natural setting which is culturally alien to it. This entails the total absence of the human figure as the major strategy for its totally allusive implication. The repetitive gesture, which creates the argument and the overall architecture of *Das Áfricas*, could be correlated to some of Marianne Hirsch's observations regarding the connections between trauma and memory:

What I attempt here . . . is a more general reading that locates repetition itself in a specifically generational response to memory and trauma, in what I call *postmemory*—the response of the second generation to the trauma of the first. Postmemory offers us a model for reading both the striking fact of repetition, and the particular canonized images themselves. I will argue that for us in the second generation, cognizant that our memory consists not of events but of representations, repetition does not have the effect of desensitizing us to horror, or shielding us from shock, thus demanding an endless escalation of disturbing imagery, as the first generation might fear. On the contrary, compulsive and traumatic repetition connects the second generation to the first, *producing* rather than *screening* the effect of trauma that was lived so much more directly *as compulsive repetition* by survivors and contemporary witnesses. (2001: 8)

So, and in the wake of Hirsch's acute observations, what *Das Áfricas* produces is the perception of the substance of this postmemory, located in the repetitive *mise-en-scène* of images that bear testimony to a double fact: that the events portrayed belong to the past, yet nevertheless cast their shadows upon the present. We therefore face a traumatic memory that the postcolonial present reconfigures in its own way, and which is figured in numerous other works by Maria Velho da Costa from *Missa in Albis* (1988) to *Irene ou o contrato*

social (2000) as well as in the work of other Portuguese authors, most notably António Lobo Antunes. Yet, these authors are not engaged in the act of pure postmemory as Hirsch defines it—and we shall see why:

The term ‘postmemory’ is meant to convey its temporal and qualitative difference from survivor memory, its secondary or second-generation memory quality, its basis in displacement, its vicariousness and belatedness. . . . The work of postmemory defines the familial inheritance and transmission of cultural trauma. (Hirsch 2001: 9)

It is not hard to see that Maria Velho da Costa and José Afonso Furtado, as well as António Lobo Antunes, belong to this state of precarious transition between the memory of that which was lived and the memory of that which is merely represented—in the sense that none of them was able to live the colonial experience in an easy and peaceful state of mind. Thus for them, and for the generation to which they belong, Africa is part of memory as well as of postmemory, for they simultaneously experience Africa as present *and* past. Their reminiscences and experience are therefore not displaced in Hirsch’s sense, but are concurrent. It is this equivocal and threatening oscillation that seems to be distilled from Velho da Costa’s texts and Furtado’s photographs:



Fig. 16.6. Furtado and Velho da Costa (1991), 90

When the Portuguese arrived in Luanda the Africans take them to be living dead, the *Vumbi*:

*Our parents lived comfortably
On the Luabala plateau. They had cows
And crops, salt-pits and banana trees.
All of a sudden they saw a boat appear
On the great sea. This boat
Had white wings, glinting like knives.
The white men came out of the water
Saying words that they did not understand.
Our ancestors were frightened
And said they were Vumbi,
The spirits come from another world.*

(Quoted by A. L. Ferronha in *O Confronto do olhar*)

It seems that not only the first group of humans but also the first language came from Africa, *Ur-Sprache*. If this is so we are all Africans, and Africa is where one *returns*, the primeval mother, chimerical mother. And as for racism, incompetent postures that ignore the genetic and climatic vicissitudes of melanine. Not only are we all *juifs allemands*, we are all black in our origins, blanched by the desertion to the cold. The rest is history, and also inhuman. (1991: 36–7)

The traumatic memory of the Holocaust can be understood therefore to belong to the same family as that affecting what we call colonialism and postcolonialism: it is this awareness that supports the whole political and symbolic architecture of *Das Áfricas*. In the book, the traumatic cultural memory is presented through the recognition of a monumental past that in the present takes on a vestigial or ruined dimension. And, for those who are now under 30 years old, the book will undoubtedly have to be read from a perspective where only the work of postmemory can guarantee the necessary frame of interpretation. These Africas are those that, once revisited, speak as much of/about Africa itself as of/about Portugal (or of/about Europe at large, as colonial powers): in both spaces the silenced and phantasmagorical condition (that of the *revenant*, as Velho da Costa remarks) stands out, thus superimposing two places, two histories, two cultures.

As Hirsch notes, postmemory makes the ‘retrospective testimony by adoption’ possible (2001: 10), guaranteeing that history will not be encapsulated within the individual memories of those who



Fig. 16.7. Furtado and Velho da Costa (1991), 89

witnessed and lived it. It can be prolonged and transmitted beyond the measure of what constitutes the scale of human time (a lifetime) by a discourse that revisits and represents it. This is precisely what *Das Áfricas* is about: a revisited representation of a space that, in the wake of a mis-encountered encounter, becomes the palimpsest of its own history. Taking into account due historical differences, we might therefore consider Walter Benjamin's observations on the absence of the human figure in Atget's photos equally valid for Furtado's photographs:

To have pinpointed this new stage constitutes the incomparable significance of Atget, who, around 1900, took photographs of deserted Paris streets. It has quite justly been said of him that he photographed them like scenes of crime. The scene of a crime, too, is deserted; it is photographed for the purpose of establishing evidence. With Atget, photographs become standard evidence for historical occurrences, and acquire a hidden political significance. (1968: 226)

It is therefore this 'political significance' that is revealed to us in the overall architecture of *Das Áfricas*, as well as in the way it proposes



Fig. 16.8. Furtado and Velho da Costa (1991), 78

the interplay between literary text and photographic image. The 'loss of the aura' inaugurated by mechanical reproduction, which Benjamin associated with such means of representation as film or photography, demonstrates here its inevitable melancholy⁴ (see Fig. 16.8), which corresponds to the awareness of how time and history affect human, social, and spatial bodies.

Das Áfricanas is therefore a complex meditation on what Barthes underlined as the value of photography as *shifter*, as distinct from its iconic value: photography bears witness to the past presence of what has been. In this sense, it brings to us the phantasmagorical present that has been captured on film and which has left its trace on it. In this context, I would like to stress again the extent to which the subversion of the traditional relation between visual image and text, in which the former is a figurative illustration of the latter, becomes particularly interesting in *Das Áfricanas*. The challenge that Maria Velho da Costa faced (and whence her fear proceeded) consists in the capacity of the verbal text to find a way to produce an effect similar to that *value of shifter*. If so, both media will be able to show how a past presence is able to make visible simultaneously what is and what has been—where the quality of *presence* supports and

⁴ About the relationship between photography and memory in Walter Benjamin, cf. Darby (2000) and also Krauss (1999).

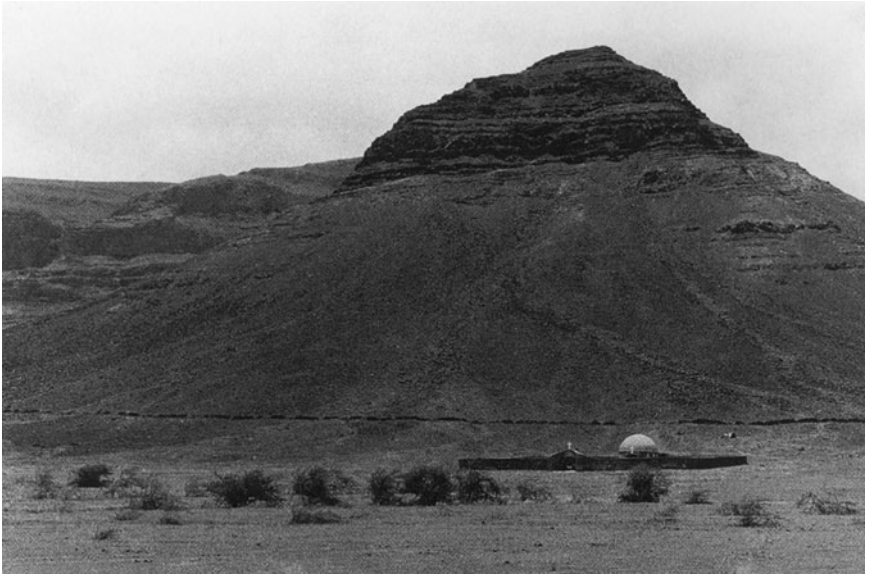


Fig. 16.9. Furtado and Velho da Costa (1991), 45

enters into dialogue with the quality of *melancholy*, still another name for the *critical reappraisal* that we, as heirs to a testimony, may negotiate with that very past.

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Reading the Invisible with Cees
Nooteboom, Walter Benjamin,
and Alberto Giacometti

Timothy Mathews

I

I shall be writing a chapter essay about a novel in translation, published originally in 1998 in a language (Dutch) which I do not read with any competence, and about a European capital city of which I have no lived experience. It is a novel about the history of Berlin, but also about the location of historical experience. Where do we know history, and how do we discover it? How do we discuss it, communicate it, and live it? How do we hear history, as temporal beings who experience, recollect, forget? What is the relation of that personal, unique sense of time to its not-there-ness to others?

The events and meditations of *All Souls' Day*¹ do not only unroll in Berlin, but also Madrid, as well as taking in the Zen Buddhist monasteries of Japan. Located in Berlin, the history it observes wanders as its narrator does, in search of a form for his experience. As a novel of learning—a novel about bodies of learning as well as the process of learning, but also the collapse of learning—*All Souls' Day* occupies a space which by being literary shows the inherent relation of history to its own translation. Personal, cultural, generational, national histories—how are they all told? How do they survive? What are their

¹ Cees Nooteboom, *Allerzielen* (Amsterdam: Uitgeverij Atlas, 1998); translated as *All Souls' Day* by Susan Massotty (London: Picador, 2001).

audiences, grouping and losing themselves in amongst the shapeless diversity of the point of view?

The book is made from mental, geographic, cultural, psychological, as well as historical journeys; its traumatic shocks and transitions arise from Germany in the Second World War; from Germany before and after the collapse of the Wall; but also the Estonian ferry disaster; and the personal grief of the principal character, his mourning for the loss of his wife and child in a plane crash. My concern is on the one hand simply to show and enjoy the fact that Nooteboom's understanding of the novel form allows him to interweave these strands in the experience of time and in the constitution of events. But beyond that, Nooteboom also shows that these experiences and conceptions of time, of the person, of psychic, cultural, historical time are at odds with each other; and that our understanding of the past, and of each other in the present, rests on this incompatibility.

Daane, the protagonist, is a film-maker working for news agencies, reporting on events in news items and documentaries. He is also an independent documentary film-maker, reflecting on the way history is made in the contemporary moment. There is an immediacy or a self-evidence about the point, about the relation of working for news agencies and working for himself; even the quality of a cliché. Nooteboom recounts Daane's recollection of his producer and sometime employer, who tells him: 'I know you have two polar opposites in your . . . head (he had been about to say "soul"), namely, action and reflection. But reflection doesn't get high ratings' (13). Events need to be commodified to be bought and sold on the news market. Moreover, in the producer's experience, events with a high-ratings tariff are traumatic ones. Daane is reminded of the bodies of children shot by the Brazilian police in Rio as part of the shocking way the military government chose to clear the streets of beggars. Ossified in his approach under the twin banners of lapsed Marxism and lapsed Catholicism, the producer counts the profit as well as public service value of the film in European television trading. In a mental space still on the move, Daane for his part silently reruns his film, given to us to see in Nooteboom's writerly translation of this fictional sequence of images—or is it fictional?

Arthur saw the bodies of eight or so boys and girls stretched out on marble slabs, grotesque feet poking out from under gray sheets, labels around their ankles, names on pieces of paper that would perish along with them one

day, interchangeable, bits of words that had already begun to mold along with the broken bodies they supposedly named. (13)

Are we reading a form of resistance to the commodification of suffering? Or watching someone simply standing and looking? This indeterminacy is formal as well as affective—we read about the recollection of a film we will never have seen. This formal indeterminacy produces doubt about standing and looking in one place and not another. The repression involved comes to light—we see from the point of view of seeing now. Daane only remembers when prompted, is not sure how to deal with the memory, or with his own film that has passed into the public domain, leaving its sediments in his private bank of pain. Insofar as those sediments re-appear, perhaps the easy routes to forgetting have to that extent been dismantled. But still Daane stands and looks, in his own mind, removed from the event, locked into his troubling conversation with his producer. The allegiance of looking and forgetting is confirmed; and of remembering and the present, its chance happenings as well as its markets. And the novel form developed by Nootboom here shows rather than denies this allegiance. We read what we read, in our own imaginings, translating and synthesizing in the present of our reading and living.

The indeterminacy of event translated into film and film into text confirms the paths of forgetting at the same time as showing them. It produces active doubts about the model of knowledge as a passage from darkness to light. Perhaps light will bathe us only in the dimensions of the visible, confirming the limits of the known rather than challenging or extending them. A traumatic knowledge, rather than a knowledge of trauma, would be one that seeks to know loss and not only its translations into recovery; or simply into the forms of its passing. Would this simply be a morbid way of thinking? A passive one? In Freudian terms, would it exemplify the failure to translate melancholia into mourning, as does Daane's own grief at certain points? Perhaps; but still, Daane seeks a vision that is not simply self-regard; seeks not just the authoritative voices of the present, but also their passing. 'You were only dead when you couldn't even remember disappearing' (34).

Arno, the philosopher of history, refers to the footage of Daane's 'private', as yet unseen independent film rushes, as his 'ledgers'; and also as 'fragments that would one day become a summa'. Daane recalls what he had shown Arno on that occasion: 'icy landscapes in Alaska, *candomblé* ceremonies in San Salvador de Bahia, long lines of POWs,

children behind barbed wire fences, mercenaries, Greek Orthodox monks, streets in Amsterdam. Random images that seemed to lack all rhyme or reason, but were connected somehow. A world torn to pieces, filmed from the sidelines, slow, reflective, nonanecdotal—fragments that would one day all come together like a summa. To borrow Arno's word' (64). But that day of reckoning may never come. The books may never be balanced, the columns of voices may remain unrelated, unrelating, each made in its own demise. The delay of the summa is signalled by the open-ended interweaving of Arno's voice, of Daane's voice, of the silent reading voice of any individual reader; and by the dispersal of Nootboom's voice in his own text. And yet perhaps that delay also signals a broken and fragmented translation of the living moment into its territorialization and its dominance.

One of Daane's projects refused by his producers is a documentary on Walter Benjamin entitled *The Soles of Memory*—one of Benjamin's own phrases. Uncannily, reading Benjamin's material included in *The Arcades Project* is formally analogous to reading the 'private' films of Daane in Nootboom's novel. These textual films explore the relation of private to public, the lost to the used and the consumed; and of recovery from trauma to an enduring sense of responsibility towards trauma—or is that simply a regressive attachment? In the *Convolutes*, which form such a substantial part of *The Arcades Project*, Benjamin has assembled under various headings, some with a title, some not, a host of quotations which hover in an indeterminate relation to Benjamin's own comments. In their translators' Foreword, Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin write that 'what Benjamin seems to have conceived was a dialectical relation—a formal and thematic interfusion of citation and commentary' (Benjamin, 1999: xiii). In such a light, the *Convolutes* consist not so much of notes for an unfinished project, but instead they are the manifestation of a way of thinking and working which is integral to the project itself.

What is that project? One section in the *Convolutes* (1999: 603–97) is devoted to mechanical dolls, of the notorious kind exploited by E. T. A. Hoffmann and Offenbach. Benjamin's collage of citations and responses undermines the distinction between the two, but through that indeterminacy of observation and interpretation, a story is told of the alliance of clockwork technology and the exploitation of labour. What have we learnt by hearing this story told and untold in this way? What have we learnt about learning, and about learning anything of the past? Benjamin has a story to tell about the formal as well

as economic alliance between the technology allowing the exact measurement of time, and the management procedures allowing the exact measurement of the relation of labour to profit. But far more than that still, through the *Convolutés* perhaps we have also un-learned our learning, learnt again to understand historical developments through lived time, rather than conceptual or *a fortiori* time. In other words, formally at least, through an engagement with a particular kind of reading, perhaps we have re-learned the material, the bodily as well as affective sensations of knowing in its relation to lived experience. This is not a Bergsonian intuition of different kinds of knowledge—material and spiritual; economic and affective—woven together in memory. This is an intuition that while perception is made instantaneously and indefinitely backwards in memory, it is also made of forgetting. In everyday moments of synthesis allowing the performance of the simplest as well as the most complex tasks, we synthesize not so much past and present, but the past *in* the present. The present is the place of our becoming, of a material understanding of how our situation has come about. But we can only understand that becoming if we accept the risk that we will not be able to find it or see it in the place of its living; or to speak and live our coming-into-being at the same time. In speaking or writing or showing, we cite the voices that are lost to our view—if only there were someone to hear them. The *Convolutés* offers a reading within which we might imagine such a listener.

Such a listener might be the figure of Arno, immersed in Daane's filmic fragments, and invited by Daane to write the commentary: a commentary we must imagine, which we may learn to imagine from within the transitions of Nooteboom's novel—some made in conversation, some in day-dream, some in emotional collapse (2001: 63). Benjamin's citations and Daane's film entries are calls to the past, they are forms given to the voices of the past. In each case, the call of the past and of its voices is sad, ranging from mourning—and its ethical withdrawal from self-regard—to the traumatic—with its irreparable haemorrhaging of the sense of self. Here, and as an approach to the past, neither mourning nor trauma seeks a cure, or seeks recovery, in the sense of a return from illness or a recapturing of the past. Perhaps Daane clings to his sense of loss after all, to the point of that obstinate regression and emotional passivity I alluded to before, and which finds its way far into his sexual behaviour as well. But perhaps that indefinite suspension of the point of view, a kind of

all-pervasive un-knowing of a standpoint, over the time of the novel, and in amongst the incompatible times of its individual readings, cracks open the cycle of loss and compensation, of alienation and aggression. All the same, the mobility of the novel's forms does not allow for the disintegration of the point of view, or of any escape from the territorializing impulse in human relations: the Midas touch by which everything is turned into profit, emotionally as well as economically. Rather, an increased *because* de-localized sense is created of that appropriateness in the simplest acts of looking, conversing, thinking, constructing images. At the same time, generation rather than outcome is given form, the scarring rather than scars; as well as the voices off in amongst the narrator's. The suspension of the point of view does not liquidate it or evacuate it; but shows its coming in and out of being, along with the forms and formlessness of events.

Such is the *chronosophy*, to borrow Krzysztof Pomian's term,² involved in Daane's film-making, made of images we cannot see only read, of voices belonging to the attachments with the living or the dead of a fictional character; and he himself is made to wander among the locations of his creator's intellectual, geographical, and affective travels. Through Daane, Nootboom reconstructs the unfolding of time in such a way as to make it open to the call of the voices from the past, which individually lived time covers over. This textual fabric allows the epistemological content of translation to appear—to the extent that to translate involves the high stakes of translating one form of disciplinary knowing to another. At various points in this *Bildungsroman* without conclusion, in this epic homecoming without a home, and particularly in his encounters with his young lover Elik, Daane seems unable to grasp the lesson of his own ledgers, or of Benjamin's convolutes; which is somehow that translation of one moment in time to another involves continuous re-visiting, a sense of revelation that cannot be measured, and points that cannot be proved.

Still, at the conclusion of the novel, Daane comes to a multiple crossroads. Shall he continue his pursuit of his lover? From the point of view of Daane's friends, Elik has engaged in this encounter as a form of witness to her own suffering, the trauma of her own abuse, of

² Pomian (1984) proposes an understanding of history as consisting of a series of conflicting *chronosophies*—philosophies of chronos—each challenging the visibility of the others.

which her enclosing, exclusive, archival, detached, and academic approach to historical research is symptomatic. Will he seek her out in Spain, one of the poles in his geopolitical affective compass, or return to his other one, Northern Europe? In turning away from the two assaults on his person he suffers in following her, the second of which involves the destruction of his camera, towards what might he be turning instead? What might he be accepting—or is it repressing? Either way, he will bear witness. But to what? ‘Only connect’, intones E. M. Forster:³ but here, to pursue such an ambition is to cling to an illusion as damaging as it is unreachable. In allowing himself to be invaded by Elik’s trauma, Daane nearly loses not only his sense of self but actually his life. Conversely, by building pockets out of present moments, and in alliance with rigorously circumscribing moments in the historical past—in other words, by fixatedly circumscribing the known against the unknown, Elik loses the ability to form any attachment. Perhaps in continuing to turn towards Elik, Daane would remain loyal to his pursuit of the invisible and inaudible voices of the past; and in turning away, perhaps he would be accepting his place in the communities of the present. But neither in his own nor in Elik’s experiences of the past, and of its repression, and of its invasiveness, is the past itself either lost or found. It is found in the *incapacities* to hear it, and in the living negotiations, active as much as passive, with that ever-present, flimsy, and wrap-around residue of rapture and responsibility.

In keeping with Daane’s filmic ledgers and Benjamin’s *Convolutés*, Nooteboom ends his novel with a quotation, which I re-quote in part here:

Myriad researchers thought they were coming closer to certainty as they waded through oceans of paper; or actually believed, as they compiled numbers and charts, that their methods resembled those of science. Yet the greater the accumulation of raw data, the more it became clear that every historical trail was a mute puzzle. Behind those names, those notorial acts, those judicial files, stretched the immense aphasia of life, closed in upon itself, lacking all contact with a before and an after. (Roberto Callaso, *The Ruin of Kasch*)⁴

³ Forster (1910), epigraph.

⁴ Nooteboom (2001), 340.

Elik will have been impelled to take part in that desperate lack of contact; Daane will have been impelled to seek ways past it. Neither will have succeeded; nor will the two sets of desires connect. Daane turns neither away, nor towards, at the crossroads of his own personhood. As witnesses to this hybrid moment of fiction and citation, of suspension and continuum, as readers we might realize our own individual immersion in that *living* lack of contact, that alive oblivion in which each one of us knows the unfurlings of the past in the dispersals of the present.

II

But despite this boundless implicitness, the messages of translation do speak. Nooteboom seems to listen also to the developments of the modernist European novel, in which Joyce assigns Ulysses such a prominent role, and whose voice travels not just in messages but in forms. In France, Proust seeks to fashion narrative voices that show the processes of revision and hindsight Eliot evokes later in 'Little Gidding'; but Proust does so but without the vantage points of authority, and without seeking beacons of revelation. Proust's narrator comes to the awareness his projected novel is always still to be written; and Proust's own, the one we read, is presented to us in that light, its project of redemption incomplete, allowing us to read knowledge in its mutations, its fashioning at the hands of the point of view, and the passing of the point of view into spontaneous unawareness. Points of view coincide, converge, overlap, communicate in the synchrony and diachrony of a person's life—or do they? Work such as this with the forms of representation engages with questions of where: where to place, in both time as well as space—familiar questions to all modern art since the explosions of Cubism. Nooteboom inflects questions of perspective and of narrative points of view with questions of trauma, loss, and potential rebirth. All have in common the fundamental affective question—where are you? What joys and pains might unite or divide us? And what notions of victory or defeat?

The Brandenburg Gate dominates *All Souls' Day* in the same way as it dominates Berlin itself—in ways that make it hard to place. The novel complicates the placing of the Gate, the way we might locate it historically, geographically, and mythologically. It was originally

designed as a fusion of the Palladian and Baroque architectural ambitions of the day; it was removed and taken to Paris by Napoleon after Iena; it was repossessed and returned after the Franco-Prussian War, and emblazoned with the Iron Cross of Prussian military self-confidence—itself so evidently taken over subsequently by the Fascist voice of Hitler. The Wall ran along the side of it, and in 1963 the East Germans hung banners to prevent John F. Kennedy from looking through it and into their territory. On the night of its symbolic collapse Daane joins the crowd in an ecstatic but easy political, cultural, and sexual fluidity: easy to live, easy to forget, easy to anticipate repeating in the future—as freedom should be (116-17). But the ease of living and of anticipation is also the ease of its passing, of forgetting, of unconsciousness, and the wounds behind may re-emerge at any time in all their untold glory. Deep in her own efforts to cauterize trauma as well as the slippery contexts of history, Elik takes Daane to a night-club in the former East Berlin where he is set upon by Neo-Fascist thugs. And Daane's own suspension of the point of view, allowing all points of view to interact indefinitely, in indefinite illumination, can just as easily implode, leaving only bits, no direction home, no place, context, or arena; panic.

In this environment of constitution and loss of events and place, the four chariots of Victory on the top of the Brandenburg Gate call to mind *The Charioteer of Delphi*. On the one hand, the complete quadriga; on the other, the incomplete charioteer, his victory a matter of conjecture now, of re-assembly if you will, but dependent on making visible what is clearly no longer there. Even if we know we are right, and that the reins and the chariot and the horses have gone, even if we can draw diagrams of what was, the charioteer exists in part now, a part of himself, an intransitive synecdoche that is not to be made whole, and that is made in how the charioteer is seen now, in the loose and indefinite community of those who know him. The figure's intangible, but also palpable power seems to lie there: made in how we see, but escaping the visibility which is our own, he lives in our time, in our lived time.

Rosalind Krauss sees him at the decentred centre of one of Picasso's sculptures from 1929–30, *Construction in Metal Wire*, which is in fact a projected monument to Apollinaire, one of the prime generators of the European avant-garde (Krauss, 1977: 132-5). Within that renaissance of aesthetic creativity and confidence, Cubist and Constructivist practitioners share the ambition to move beyond the

permissible vision of perspective, and to reconstruct the positionings of which the point of view consists in its personal, affective, historical, and ideological dimensions. Will such art generate the capacity to see beyond its own formal play and free us from what is in effect the tragic vision of perspective: the marks and the scars of seeing from one point of view and not another?

In response, Krauss at the time of writing this book saw this monument-sculpture as a testament to a conceptual time sense, rather than one of lived time. An integral part of this critical illumination is Krauss's invitation to see an allusion to *The Charioteer* at the heart of the piece: a visual reincarnation. As I look at Picasso's piece in that way, the network of rods emanating from the figure which they also suspend seems to show the reins of the charioteer restored—and not just the reins of the chariot, but those of *The Charioteer's* construction. This is like saying that what has been restored, what Picasso has recreated and made visible, are the threads of *The Charioteer's* own reception. But equally, Krauss suggests, *The Charioteer* is suspended in its own temporal making. The geometric, triangular and circular forms which allow the figure to be seen also enclose it, provide it with its only space. But still, the figure here drives its own construction and just as much as it is driven by it, and the sculpture as a whole in Krauss's appreciation shows the terms of its conception in the manner of its execution. The time of conception and the time of generation are shown in and through each other in an indefinite transparency, one that can be constituted in any number of different ways. But this new-found freedom with history is illusory, Krauss suggests: it imprisons us within the terms and temporalities of our own understanding just as much as it fragments them. The seamless transparency of the sculpture, of its generation and reception, forms the glass walls and ceiling of our own knowing.

Krauss contrasts that sculpture with another slightly later piece, *Head of a Woman* of 1931. Together, they show again Picasso's ability not only to absorb styles from his own and other periods of life and art but to reveal their philosophy. For Krauss, this later piece shows the part Picasso played in the Surrealist development of collage, its disruption of the contexts of the visible, and of rationalist reconstruction and revelation as well. Instead, the making of art is turned towards responsiveness to the effects of chance, the unpredictable and the non-known—the *formless*. Here as later, in *Formless: A User's Guide* which she wrote together with Yves-Alain Bois, Krauss develops Bataille's

word (*l'informe*) to suggest the possibility of a knowledge free of its own *Gestalten*, its own forms, and the history of their ingrained and exclusive recognition (Bois and Krauss, 1996).

Krauss in all her work is driven by the ambition of artists to intervene in this sorry story of recognition, repetition, and discontent. But with a special regard for the formless, Krauss reminds us that a place from which to build effective intervention in the terms of our sense of self and others can always be found in the immediate, in the material experience of the artefacts which compel our attention. Surfaces and the time of their perusal give a freedom of movement created in the moment, and which reach beyond the superficial and the formal into a continuous reorientation of our ways of seeing. Krauss points to the eclecticism of Picasso's *Head of a Woman*, the interruption and redirection of viewing it solicits, as though each of the many different kinds of surface in the piece invites synthetic understanding but resists it at every turn, implacably as well as joyously. The censorship on which synthetic organization depends, the formal simplification of context is undone in this open-ended process of viewing, continually suspended between beginning and continuation. Singularizing viewing, the translation in viewing of any object into a manifestation of tunnel vision, is now ready to be invaded by the unfamiliar, the unrecognized, and the as yet unknown. Making an art object and in turn looking at it are welded to the moment; they rebuild the present as well as its relation to the past. Here, makers and consumers of art objects are not only re-immersed in their *own* history, but enfranchised there.

Perhaps this is what Daane seeks as he films from underneath the flow of shoes going up a flight of stairs. And yet at any moment in this narrative, the willed interruption of synthetic, cohesive understanding involves the collapse of all meaning and all communication; resistance to the translation of the past into the loss of the past itself involves the loss of all voice and view. How can we expect to insist on the index? The mark of the moment? The succession of moments that make up our lives, literally, is certainly without redemption. And as Krauss suggests, we do not need the recourse of sublimation, the translation of desire into recognizable, socialized outlets to be able to tolerate our own passing, or to harness the unpredictability of creative impulse. But nonetheless, how can we resist the assimilation of our own time into that of others? Index into icon? The mark of our own time into the mark of public symbolization? And moreover, what imaginary position would allow us to combat that enforced translation? Where is the step from diachrony to

synchrony, and not the reverse; from sign to experience, and not the reverse; and from the formless and the neutral to the ideological?

It cannot be made; or only in fantasy. That step in one direction cannot be kept apart from the step in the other. Perceptions of the present and in the present cannot be preserved or protected from their recollection, as much part of the now as perception itself; nor can impulse be coated against ideology. And the incapacity to remove a moment from its time confirms the incapacity of translation to meet, in the same place, with the texts and the history it faces. This incapacity remains unresolved. And the implicit trauma involved spreads not simply in seeking a resolution that cannot be reached, but in its own inconsistency. Where translation fails to reproduce, as it must, it reveals the loss of voices no longer here; but where it gives in to the fantasy of recovery, as it must, it confirms the loss of those voices. The voices of the past may at all times take the form of so many transitional objects sealing our own voices as we speak, and seek a place in the now of our own experience.

In *All Souls' Day* Victor the sculptor talks of the sensation of historical time as one of invisible powder: such is the sensation in the present—not simply its passing, but its magical *ever*-presence:

He'd also used another word that Arthur had remembered all these years, because it had seemed so out of place in these surroundings—the word 'powder'. [. . .] Victor [. . .] groped in the air, pulled out something that wasn't there, and wiped the invisible stuff from his fingers. A magic trick.

'It's seeped into everything. Including their eyes. Which is why they can't see where they're going. Once again. Reunification—they don't understand the first thing about it. . . . Do you remember the euphoria? . . . And have you listened to them lately? About how *they* dress, about how *they* behave? Racist jokes about people with the same color of skin.' (118-19)

In quoting Maxime Du Camp writing about fashion, Benjamin offers the insight that 'history is like Janus: it has two faces. Whether it looks to the past or to the present, it sees the same things' (1999: 543). Always seeing the same thing, but never knowing how or why—such is the effect of Victor's dust, as he describes it, strolling peripatetically around the Synagogue, the Reichstag, and the Brandenburg Gate. He also attributes experience of this powder to a sculptor's particular kind of knowing, the particular understanding of making something by chipping or carving or modelling *away*. Familiarity is coupled with oblivion, and with incomprehension, in the very process of making

something in which others recognize something of themselves. But Daane knows his own gray powder too.

When he wakes up for the second time, the light is a gryish powder. It's going to be another one of those typical winter days in Berlin, a gray twilight between two nights. 'No time to shilly-shally' (Victor), get up, shave, don't turn on the radio, there's no news today, a cup of coffee at the Zoo station, standing at one of those round chest-high tables without chairs that give you such a fine view of the homeless, the Vietnamese cigarette vendors, the security men with their muzzled dogs, the sawdust, the vomit, the Romanian cleanup crews, the junkies, the beggars, the all-pervading smell of sausage . . . , he was their servant, portraitist and archivist, drinking his coffee with Bulgakov's cat standing six feet tall beside him, its furry arm around his shoulder, the long, sharp, curvy nails digging into his flesh. (185)

Find a point of view from which to tell; *resist* the point of view and its blind telling and endless re-telling; but find a point of view . . . ; or a translation that translates to the exact extent it fails to. Such is the task set by Victor's sculptor's powder and Daane's film-making one. Will Behemoth be up to it, Bulgakov's Puss in Boots—his wit, his speed, and his unruliness? Or will he simply kick Daane back into the archivist's self-entombment? Each immersed in his own powder, Victor and Daane attempt a history of their time; and to show the passing of its understanding in their present.

Victor's sculptural powder, the powder Nooteboom seeks to remove from his eyes and ours, the same powder he shows in our eyes and Daane's—this formal and aesthetic powder produces a paradoxically living anonymity. It is reminiscent of the effect produced on Jean Genet in watching Giacometti sculpt in clay (Genet: 1993). There too, layer upon layer of dust is produced which Giacometti refuses to remove, piling silently higher, and which now we will know only if we follow Genet's imagination, or someone else's; just as we might follow Victor here, as he wanders around the Potsdamer Platz conversing with Daane and a young journalist. He has been there before. We might imagine that we understand, and can make the translations allowing a pattern or a coherence to emerge, a form for our understanding—not of anything in particular, not of Giacometti's work, still less of the return to the racist hate feared by Victor, or the generosity pursued by Daane; but an understanding perhaps of how we look, in our own time, and how we look for understanding. And yet still we see only what we see.



Fig. 17.1. © succession Giacometti, ADAGP / DACS 2010

For Giacometti in his post-war style, sculpture treads the same invisible line as Victor's invisible powder between emergence and disintegration. The figure standing in his *Chariot*, 1951, stands upright like *The Charioteer of Delphi*, and the chariot is now there to be seen. Perhaps the passage from antiquity to the present has resumed its journey, without destination or return. But the reins are still absent, the direction of the charioteer is ours to make, and as you might walk around the piece, which stands in the MOMA in New York, the figure seems to grow still flimsier, still closer to the perfect vertical and to its

own disappearance, still more deprived of movement, until your next step reveals the slightest change in the line, a tiniest beginning in her grace and movement. For Giacometti's charioteer is a woman—his anecdotal account suggests she was once a nurse—and the male claim to victory seems long since abandoned; along with revelation and repossession. Even to recognize her female form viewers might need to step closer, and closer still, still never touching, until even facial features emerge from a place barely to be seen, or located, since by now you might be so close as to be unable to relate the place of the face to any other, other than in an increasingly distant and *present* memory. At such a moment, the impulse to relate emerges again, inevitably. Some will see the face of a Cycladic sculpture, some of an Etruscan one, some again elements in the portraiture of Matisse. Intertextual allusion here is the material of translation from past to present, the material of relation itself from one context and moment to another. For the allusion will *not* arrive, it seems to disintegrate in its travelling, emerging or failing to emerge in the individual approach of each viewer, each reaching out to other viewers, through this piece. It invites a sense of community, paradoxically, by showing a figure on her own, about to move, but locked in the immobilizing place of the way each of us will see her, unable ourselves to see the wheels in motion, or in the motion of our own seeing. But in that *not*-seeing, Giacometti's female charioteer reaches out to the present moments of our viewing—and *still* we cannot see her, for we cannot find or locate her. Neither formal nor formless, neither neutral nor significant, the *Chariot* remains suspended, always differently. Giacometti seems to create his own Angel, neither of Redemption, nor of the North, but an Angel standing, or about to disappear, in the space of its own becoming, or departure. The incomplete indication of the chariot's movement which you or I, individual viewers, can only realize—subjectively? narcissistically?—and which you or I can only fail to realize—ignorantly, generously?—provides a platform, suspended in its own space without place, for this angel of history.

Walter Benjamin's own Angel of History comes to him through Paul Klee.⁵ It rushes forward into the future taking with it the ruins of the past which it can only show and not see. And yet Benjamin has invented this Angel, invented a knowledge of history, and in history, which allows us to think what we cannot know, and see what is

⁵ Benjamin (1982), 259–60: 'Theses on the Philosophy of History', VIII & IX.

beyond the places of our telling. Nooteboom, echoing Daane's desire to be commissioned to make a documentary film about Benjamin, includes passages in his novel written in the language of Angels—'And we? Ah, we...': those are their last words (339). Beyond temporal disintegration, they at once suggest the power to synthesize, conceptualize, and the inability to do so, fixated as they are on the perspectives, perceptions, points of view that any one person is unconscious of, is made unaware of in the space without place of her own existence. The Angels have offered commentaries, or have merely observed; have observed above all that their voice cannot be heard. Invented in the language of Nooteboom's novel, the novel charts their necessary disappearance. Their omniscience, as well as their attention to subjectivity, above all, their ability to deal in both, to fashion the total human voice, and a transparent human history: that idea, however generous, that fantasy, however ambitious, exhibits its own futility, exhibits its one use—to 'bulldoze' the scars of our losses and of our own passing. And astride myth and mortality, each now failing to find itself in the other, Giacometti's female charioteer, his disappearing angel, watches and waits. Perhaps she shows, fleetingly, without showing, that we have allowed ourselves to see, blindly to see, as only each one of us can, the translations that make our moment.

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Conclusion

Can Anyone Look in Both Directions at Once?

Timothy Mathews

What can we know of a past so far away we call it Ancient, all the better to contrast it with the modern? Paul Ricœur suggests translators might need to learn Freud's message of mourning—the original, the lost, will never be recovered. On that basis alone can the past re-enter the land of the living and the world of present society. But then what might be the relation, if any, between a sense of responsibility to the past and a Beckettian sense that the past is what we fear the most—its endless generations of authority and boundless, indigestible wisdom?

Reception, communication, translation—it has not been the purpose of this book to engage with the history of these terms and the critical history which they carry with them. Its project has been less ambitious, and yet has sought a more pronounced engagement with the intransitive transitions in which the past is heard as living voices in the present. Perhaps the past is another form of what we now easily know as the 'other' in an easy critical parlance allowing us to engage with the range of cultural, social, historical, gendered differences known to us. But that range is part of the vocabulary of a cultural and economic moment; how quickly the now less than current notions of multiculturalism have dated, for example. What kind of knowledge will we need if the notion of progress, instead of educating, is not to blind with delusions of historical and temporal transparency? What understanding of the past is needed for a community to learn neither to banish the past, nor to assume naively it can avoid banishing the past? Reception, communication, translation—all these approaches seek to cast light on ways in which

the past is appropriated in spite of acknowledgements of its otherness. This book has sought not only to learn from all these approaches but also to engage them in a comparative critical environment, and to resist conniving with loss of the past by granting any approach the right to an overarching agenda. As much as anything, this endeavour involves critical contiguities rather than critical assimilation, it involves understanding knowledge through form, in particular the forms of art: the ways in which art stages the anxieties of understanding and brings them to light.

So translation is a journey; between past and present, but also a spatial journey between different places of reading and knowing—some disciplinary, some cultural, some intimate. Writers in this book have sought to explore the passages involved in this journey, the journeying rather than the arrival. Some of those passages are affective, testifying to investments beyond the rational and the acquisitive in cultural heritage, and questioning the relation of individual to community in the idea of heritage itself. Ancient texts are reached out to in a range of ways: through an intangible ideology, as Matthew Fox discovers in exploring the influence of Ciceronian rhetoric and the changing values attributed to it; through an ever-developing intertext, as Richard Armstrong discovers in Fellini's adaptation of *Satyricon*; or in equally mobile experiences of place, exile, and personal temporality discovered by Lorna Hardwick and Pat Easterling.

Tragedy is the tragedy of fracture itself—fractured society, the fractures in which a person is made. Oedipus has become the emblem of this fracture, and of the enigmas of family which are at its root. The picture painted by Rachel Bowlby of the complexity of the contemporary family and contemporary parenting is a marker of that fracture and its endless permutations. And as Pat Easterling writes here, this endless fracture and re-fracture makes of Oedipus a powerful image of the interpreter: an outsider as much as an insider, he is never in the right place to pronounce the message that will help; and seeks always more tentative and even damaging accounts of his past, and of the future communal life of his subjects. As we read his words now, they speak of our own understanding—of the past, and of the tragedy of perspective more generally: of seeing, speaking, communicating from one point of view and not another. That point of view, our own, remains unknown to us, in its wholeness; the wrap-around integrity with which we experience it is itself a mark of the Word evading understanding as it is spoken. But surely the poetic word is also

inspiring? Perhaps—if it is also ironic: showing the power of texts to transport, to allow the imagination of an experience *not* the reader's own; but simultaneously, allowing an imagination of the way, as readers, we cast the invisible light of our own needs on what we read.

This irony of understanding is revealed in the ambitions and practices of modernism, particularly in the refracted light of translation. Modernism promises freedom from causality, from natural or ontological determinism stifling creativity and generosity. But this promise need not involve the misplaced optimism invested in market-led progress and arising from it. Ian Patterson describes turn-of-the-century modernist exploration in poetry as myriad 'uncanny doublings of temporal awareness'—an experience of cultural temporality embodied in the writing of Proust, and where historical and affective meaning interact in a mnemonic parallelism rather than the chronology of progress. Patterson emphasizes the importance of translation—Laforgue of Whitman, and Baudelaire of Poe before—in allowing free verse to travel from France to England, and French Symbolism to English Imagism. The awareness of the power of translation to trans-form the ways in which poetry might be heard speaks of the ability of translation, as a process, not only to facilitate communication but to interrupt it, creatively and anti-predictably. The chance encounters of urban experience celebrated, as art, in works from Baudelaire to Surrealism, and from Joyce to Pamuk and Nooteboom, testify to art as a site of re-reading, re-orientation, re-direction, re-forming, and re-voicing. The openness of the translator not only to hearing but hearing differently reveals, or rather renews the offerings of art, and their ability to re-write and re-think the terms of historical understanding.

But equally, this continual re-direction—if it is to remain self-renewing rather than re-ossify under regimes designed to discredit and replace—re-affirms the limits of the understanding it offers. In that way, both for better and for worse, art remains rooted in the reality it represents, just as the translator adjusts to the echoes in her own transparent cave. Determinism is not countered by plurality, which is rather its equal partner, as Balzac and Darwin suggest: novelist and scientist each show the rhizomic nature of the causality under which we live. The plurality of voice and reading multiplies the possibilities of causality, of the generation of thought and response, of receiving words from places other than the ones where they are read and of the reader's own desiring. But this also means that the weight

of determinism is fractured in indefinite moments of interruption and silence, and in blind spots and intervals of any and every length. To join those points of view unproblematically together like the dots in a child's guided drawing would replicate the imaginary panorama-effect of any moment's dominant perspective. As Proust so frequently recounts—and nowhere more than in *La Prisonnière/The Captive*, as he tenaciously explores the differences between the images offered by bought love and discarded love—discovery without journey tells us only what we already know; and journeying—to an assignation, a work of art or a city—tells us only that the desired knowledge evades us. Plurality of perspective and of causality is plain to see. But nonetheless that understanding survives ambivalently, reminiscent of Janus who looks in both directions but only sees in one.

The writing of Walter Benjamin has at times been central to the work of this book, for his writing in many ways explores how and why those two approaches to the past come together. Throughout his writing he maintains a tension, discussed at length by Howard Caygill, between transcendent and speculative philosophy. In Benjamin's approach to history, an equally dynamic poise is maintained in the pressure on the historian to provide a total account of a set of events which does not in the process stifle the complexity of context and contingency. Benjamin's readings of the past in the present consist in an indefinite hesitation between the exposition of loss and the pursuit of revelation.

Benjamin's key notion of the *aura* functions both to signal the past and its returns, and to signal the diffusion of past meaning in the present, as an understanding of such returns and their meanings. But if the idea of *aura* performs both the voices of the past and their understanding in the contemporary moment, it also signals an attachment to the past that is commercial and marketable. The *aura* consists of the light in which we know the past now, and in which the process of understanding the past in the present and *as* the present takes shape. For Benjamin, this story of exploitation is not only economic but traumatic. The 'continuum of history' which he evokes is a kind of communal everyday life, involving the monadic scurrying after pleasure of each one of us; and in which self-awareness is seamlessly attached to the un-self-conscious spontaneity of perception. Perhaps we are seduced by the simple activity of consuming, as much as by what it is we consume. In such a way the past is covered over much as it is revealed; the two processes are interdependent, wrapped up in the two modes of revelation Benjamin

identifies, the *sacred* and the *profane*. His vision of 'blasting open' that 'continuum of history' is as much a metaphor of trauma as it is of salvation—caught between giving voice to the past, to the vanquished, and silencing the vanquished yet again in the voices of the present and their ever more violent acquisitiveness.

To return to Janus, in the *Arcades Project* Benjamin engages with the novelist, travel writer, and historian Maxime Du Camp to suggest that Janus always sees only the present, whether he faces the past or the future. For Marcel the narrator, forever separated from the perspective of Proust the novelist, and from his understanding, by the immense distances covered by the novel itself, Janus expresses the oscillation between the boredom of knowing and the fascinations of losing. Janus himself cannot look both ways in this construction; instead he confronts the viewer always with only one of his faces. And Marcel the narrator is left here seeking ever more outlandish comparisons between states of stability and imbalance to try and reconcile the two. But the voice of understanding is always somewhere in front of the voice of Marcel's narrative, facing it from somewhere un-fixed in the length of the novel and its voices on and off. The faces of knowing now, and knowing the other, cannot meet; and determinism appears as only one of the many flawed theories of knowing aimed at drawing clearly perceptible lines of communication between the two. If modernism is driven by the idea that today need not be conditioned by yesterday, then Eliot can only have been right in pointing out that the 'past should be altered by the present'; and that the present itself should be made obscure in the hiatuses through which the past is embraced, understood, re-directed, and nullified.

On such issues hinge the distinctions between the modern and modernity. The modern or avant-garde aesthetic exploits notions of chance in order to promote rupture in the fidelity of translations from the past and in the uninterrupted reception of its values. Chance is used as a means to perpetuate a mode of thinking open to, and matched to lived time itself. The agenda for modernity on the other hand suggests just that—a planned re-reading and re-direction of the way the past may be understood in the planning of the future. Wen-chin Ouyang examines the way poetry has been at the centre of debates in Arabic culture as to how best to underwrite the Arabic past in the hope of re-fashioning an Arabic future, whether one of religion or nation. 'Cultural change and intercultural exchange are twins who, on occasion, fail to recognize one another'—Ouyang

raises familiar but intractable questions: the relative merits of the preservation and the risking of cultural identity; of approaching the journeys of tradition as summative or fragmentary; of the embrace of migrating values or the defence against their power to undermine the host ones. Napoleon's invasion of Egypt signals trauma, but also the modernizing impulse itself, as the enlightened pursuit and plunder of knowledge undertaken by Napoleon's researchers injects the European values of progress; or infects with it. Does that trauma of invasion signal revolution? or the voice continually re-surfacing in Svetlana Boym's account of nostalgia for a lost home, for a place giving integrity to the journeys of an idea and its passing?

George Rousseau enables such an approach to nostalgia through its intellectual and psychiatric history. His chapter is in itself an incarnation of the kind of translation and transition explored in this book. It contextualizes the understanding of nostalgia and the ways of constructing its pathology, from the Enlightenment to the post-Romantic. It shows too the way in which thought on the pathology of nostalgia is itself a transitional stage in the psychiatry of trauma. Rousseau shows that trauma develops and disrupts the logic of psychiatry in the conceptualization of nostalgia. Nostalgia ceases to be organic, a malaise to be treated in its physiology. From its construction in the Enlightenment as a condition with no memory but placed in the body, it becomes in the Romantic period a condition of memory but with no place. The passage from nostalgia to trauma builds on this loss of the somatic symptom. The Romantic nostalgia with its mourning for the loss of place is a translation from the soma to the structure: but in the sense of a *break* in the continuum. The symptom cannot be traced back to its source, and there is now an 'uncanny' kinship between the loss of place and the wounds of loss itself. Rousseau shows that this is the step allowing Freud's key psychoanalytical discovery that '*all homes are unhappy*'. Equally and crucially, Rousseau shows these developments embedded in the individual points of view of the thinkers themselves who are involved. These include Boltzmann, Mach, Janet, Freud, Jaspers; and Rousseau shows their points of view constructed psychically, culturally, institutionally, intellectually. The 'travel' of concepts, to borrow from the title of Mieke Bal's book, is made possible in the nexus of disciplinary hiatuses of a particular moment in intellectual history. The figure of the journey emerges once again as a recurring catalyst in the thinking of this book.

Furthermore, here as elsewhere, thought in the book is directed at the co-presence of contradictory ideas. More than this self-evidence, writers here have explored the active capacity to think with and through the incompatibility of values, points of view, ideas of place. Benjamin has once again been an emblematic figure here—in the sense of prompting varied returns, varied readings, varied sensations of things past found in the losing of them; varied ways of discovering the historical in the aesthetic, and the ethical in the formal. Benjamin seeks voices for the defeated, rather than the triumphalism of the dominant ideology—any ideology: for as Roland Barthes is concerned to show throughout his writing from the first to the last, it is the property of ideology itself to assert dominance. These are the ‘what-if’ narratives evoked by Christopher Prendergast: the ability to tell a history different from the all-encompassing history of oppression; and the ability to respond to Benjamin’s own call, in his essay on Surrealism, to a last crusade of the imagination against censorship at every level. But the dominance of ideology is invisible, perceived as natural, part of the seamless commodification of experience—of experience sensed as our own, to have and to hold: a psychic and cultural sense of ease, of agility with what we are given to see. The past is spontaneously appropriated, the distinctions between synchronic and diachronic made dynamic, living, resistant to secure location; but those are also the conditions of complacency, and the ‘what-if’ narratives may once again become everyday constructions and reconstructions of the point of view and the ego. Benjamin in response develops his metaphor of the heliotrope, the sun suddenly blasting open the continuum not only of history, but of perception itself, the seamless passing of the past into present self-interest and its living spontaneity. This is a humble and a generous form of knowing, rooted in the understanding that the indefinite plurality involved in the making of any point of view does not simply undermine but confirms its tyranny. Such is, perhaps, the clarion call to the idea of translation sounded in this book.

Jonathan Monroe’s reading of Édouard Glissant offers a telling return, in the paradoxical light of Benjamin’s utopic explosions of the past into the present, with the issues engaged with in the opening section of this book. Lorna Hardwick and Pat Easterling, each in different ways, engage there with different classical and contemporary writers; and through the very indeterminacy of that textual meeting point, engage also with the paradoxical immediacy in the encounter

between text and spectator, text and reader. This immediacy takes the form of a palimpsest—whether we imagine ourselves in our ‘own’ present or transported into another’s ‘past’. A historical hybridity meets the cultural one; for as Monroe shows through Glissant, if cultural difference is to be brought to light, it is through form rather than theme that it will be understood and lived; through ‘modality’ rather than ‘identity’. For Glissant in Monroe’s account, hybridity emerges from a sense of place, rather than the transcendence of place; and from interaction between the identities standing there, themselves in motion: whether slow and imperceptible motion, barely distinguishable from the effects of determinism; or exploding, self-exploding, and radical. Hybridity is a way of thinking rather than a way of identifying voices and places, each distinguished from others, each interrelating, in a fantastic utopia such as the ones warned against by Voltaire, championed by Fourier, and parodied by Michel Houellebecq. As Monroe suggests, hybridity is not a discipline, nor an interdisciplinarity; but a poetics. But can a poetics be taught, independently of a discipline? And independently too of the urge which lurks within (inter-)disciplinary approaches to seek reactive change, to organize thought under manageable headings ranging from ‘post-colonial’, to ‘global’, to ‘world’? By contrast, in what ways might a ‘poetic’ approach to disciplines support their powers of self-criticism?

There is more involved here than the pedagogical and philosophical value of scepticism. It is not so much a matter of questioning conclusions arrived at, but of the process itself of concluding and of the value of closure. There is a debate going on in the last section of this book about what can be remembered and told about suffering; and about mourning. But this is also a debate about what can be remembered at all: about investments in the power of language to translate into the written or spoken what has passed from its domain. We remember, and yet we live only in the present. We remember what we remember, and not what we do not. Perhaps it is the challenge of history to counter the failures of memory, to distinguish itself from memory and the cement it gives to the edifices of the known. But as Hayden White and others have so consistently mused upon, drawing a boundary between history and memory repeats the compulsion to narrativize, to think in terms of narratives. What is the power of narrative arguments to show the ways in which they tell the story of the present, the construction of a point of view and of an understanding of the past? If we feel a responsibility to the past at

all, we must deal in the Word, in logos, which not only in the mouth of God is always a beginning; a passage; the end of something. Lacan's *Éthique de la psychanalyse/The Ethics of Psychoanalysis* alerts us to the dangers of misreading Darwin's thought as the promise of an origin; and paradoxically suggests the *ex nihilo* notion of creation might be better suited to an understanding of the signifying chain. If the word cannot encompass its own *origins* or *future*, how better to conceptualize that discovery than to think of the word's *becoming* as beyond our understanding as well?

But that idea of understanding what we cannot, and of knowing what we cannot, is itself an idea we can understand. How else could we take any intellectual step at all? And yet without some antidote, without some irony, how can the pretension to understand resist complacency—and also the hubris of that very attempt? Gail Holst-Warhaft investigates the power of poetry and art to express public mourning—mourning of loss, the ability to note what is no longer there, its irredeemable passing from our view; and notes from the outset, with Wilfred Owen, that to note is not to console. To record the events of destruction need not be a moment of re-appropriation, but one in which the subjective and the communal share a space of loss—even if only in the time of a performance or the appreciation of an art-object. Cassandra 'eschews consolation' for the fractures in family, state, and in the make-up of Greek culture itself—its hesitancy between West and East, virile thought and female lament. Cavafy and Ritsos, Holst-Warhaft shows, hear this same hesitancy in the ancient voices, and celebrate it in re-forging their own passages in poetry from ancient to modern.

Hesitancy is the price paid for finding voice for the vanquished and resistance to its silencing. But it can be a high price. In Jane Montgomery Griffiths's reading, Electra assumes an identity which 'takes her to the borders of the living and the dead'. Delving into the spectacle of Fiona Shaw's performance of Sophocles' play, Montgomery Griffiths draws on Cathy Caruth's notion of *belatedness*. An unspeakable pain—trauma defined as such because we find no other name for our inability to speak it—must in the end be spoken. In its very unspeakable-ness, this pain is embedded in the body, the forever elusive source of memory, of sensation, and also of language. The spectacle of Classical drama, viewed by Montgomery Griffiths in the body of Fiona Shaw, is a space made in trauma, for it takes voice and body to their limits, to the moment where it seems they can only lose form and shape, yet still they speak. The boundaries of there and

now, this and that side of the stage, of mimetic mask and the face; of myth, history, and the present-ness of memory itself, are about to dissolve in the agony of Electra, for whom crime must never be silenced, even as it founds society and grounds the ability to change. The violence of society and its demands, of the symbolic order of family and state, should be accepted—but cannot be; should be resisted, but cannot be. More than the passivity of the Freudian discontent, or even its dynamic and sceptical pessimism, this floating indeterminacy made in the conjunction of translation and trauma can, perhaps, form a basis for knowing.

Against but also through Brecht, Jan Parker situates Electra in such an indeterminate space—a space constructed to perform indeterminacy. Would you bring the ashes of your son to act the grief of someone else? Or to explain the experience of grief? Or speak professionally about the treatment of excessive grief? On the one hand, the literalness of the gesture seems abhorrent; as well as the capacity simply to abstract the individual performer from his, from her performance. Faced with such complacency, Brecht seems self-evidently right to seek every way possible to shatter the habits of identification, of knowing; of behaving as though how we see were the natural extension of what is there. But how can this shattering be achieved? Are not the identifications making up our sense of self already as broken as they are seamless? Identifications are indeterminately fixed and fragile, perhaps. In response, Brecht's theatre shows that what is abhorrent is the pretension itself to expose definitively—ideologically—the way ideological identifications are formed. Such a pretension simply smooths the path to more effective ones; to identifications better suited to the voracious pursuit of the profitable new. And Polus with his urn alerts us to such issues: he is like the translator failing to listen to Ricœur's exhortation—to learn the lesson of Freudian mourning and abandon the pursuit of the original text; and to make of her, of his translation an ever more precise, ever more diffuse testimony to the loss of that original. As Benjamin paradoxically argues, a translation should not seek to convey any particular message. With the Baudelairean irony for which Benjamin had such a keen ear, that absence of message is the message itself, the message of forms and the ability to read them, perhaps with nostalgia, perhaps with a sense of mortality, for everything that exceeds them.

But once again, such excess gives voice equally to the excesses of power, and the inevitable exploitation of loss; of the flimsiness of the

mind's capacity to bear witness to oblivion. For how can the a-historical impulse be countered or resisted? We know only what we know, from where we stand; over time as well as space, witness is removed from itself, and witness comes to witness witness. This is also the delayed non-linear, non-spatially experienced time of the traumatic response Rousseau discusses in Freud. In a further refraction, Helena Buescu draws attention to *postmemory*, 'memory by adoption'. In reading *Das Áfricas*, the combined work of Furtado and Velho da Costa, in company with Sebald's *The Emigrants*, Buescu seeks a way of reading able to undermine the appropriativeness of the adopter from within her own, his own voice: the voice of the host; the protector; the curator; the heritage-maker; the critic. As Buescu points out, Paul Gilroy's notion of a postcolonial melancholia takes the former hosts and parasites from a state of paralysing guilt to a position of reflection. This is a reflection which does more than meditate on guilt from afar, but meditates also on responsibility from a distance: not a distance which can be measured and crossed, but one which eludes the tyrannies of the point of view and allows its perspectives continually to be re-built.

Following the lead of *Das Áfricas* and *The Emigrants*, Buescu reads literary with photographic melancholy; and in company with Roland Barthes sees the response to photography as straddling the sense that something has happened, and the equally implacable sense that it is out of our reach. Trauma, grief, melancholy, mourning—all are bound by the urge to repeat an experience which is temporally, spatially, and affectively out of our range and our embrace. And yet together they chart a tentative process, a journey fearful of its end, an unfinished journey to a place from where as individuals, as communities, we might allow the languages of others to be heard. But the voice of an other is never heard in its purity, its imaginary own-ness, its originality—such is the stuff of further illusion, however clothed in generosity. Giacometti's post-war figures seem to work against such illusion. They seem to show a reaching out which does not touch, and to invite a viewing which does not place. From within the temporal and anthropological uncertainty of its features, *The Chariot* encourages viewers to respond to indeterminacy at its most literal level. As individual viewers, as a community of viewers, how can we know whether the figure on the wheels represents movement towards or away from us? Moments of stopping or starting? How can we know with any certainty whether we create movement or stasis with

our looking and with our thinking? On such questions rides the ability of Giacometti's figures to evoke pathos while still bearing witness to the *self*-awareness from which pathos emerges. At such a formal level, at the level where metaphor shows the collapse of its own powers of revelation, and as a collapsing metaphor itself, translation, with trauma, suggests the transitions of knowing at their most intransitive and at their most critical.

In his seemingly casual use of the pronoun 'nous', we, Proust presents his reader, in a wide variety of different kinds of moment, with some of the fundamental questions of translation and reception. Does this simple pronoun invite us into a shared understanding of the vast psycho-cultural edifice represented in *A la recherche du temps perdu*; or seduce us into shared delusion? Will we ever know what it is that we hear? In *La Prisonnière/The Captive*, the sixth volume in his great novel, Proust for a moment speaks as its author, almost as himself, it might seem, so enraptured might a reader have become in the harmonics of a sense of self and its ageing. He seems to become aware that his reader might be dismayed at the amount of time his narrator, his central character, the avatars of that sense of self always ahead of or behind or beside the voice coming from the page, is to be found spent in the by-ways of aristocratic life. He expresses sadness at the idea that the reader might be put off by the sight of such degeneration, the slow moral and political collapse of a class. But as he goes on, it becomes clear that just as there are various Marceles in the book, joined to each other with such seamlessness that their extraordinary difference from each other is all the more enigmatic, Proust can imagine a range of different readers too. The one who would be shocked by the self-seeking sexual manipulations of the established, the rich, and the leisured might perhaps be a reader to whom such things are simply unknown as well as distasteful. Knowledge—of the present, of the past; of me and of you—is clearly culturally inflected, just as the absence of understanding is; each is made from its own filters and blinkers, as in its own way this book has tried once again to show.

Proust as author seems to sense this from within his own vocation as writer; which here seems like a profession as he considers the merits of realist literature, fleetingly suggesting that realism is restricted to addressing experiences that are already familiar to us. What 'us'? And as such a group, how would we recognize the familiarity with which we view ourselves and others, or know

anything about its generation? What literature would produce such a knowledge? In amongst cultural awareness the inflections and invisible filters of affect begin to emerge, in the same moments as the distinctions between Proust the author and the narrator with whom he shares the name of Marcel begin once again to melt into air. In the voice of either one, we may never know which, Proust alludes to the poetry in the story of the fury of Xerxes lashing the seas which have sunk his ships and prevented the start of his conquest of Greece. 'Qu'y-a-t-il de plus poétique . . . ?' / 'Is there anything more poetic . . . ?' The phrase evokes all the frustrations of Marcel the narrator, ensnared in this volume in the labyrinths of his jealousy, leading him ever further into his fruitless attempt to deny his lover, Albertine, whom he no longer loves, her freedom. In this novel of lying—about sex, sexuality, marriage, finance, politics, morality, or simply in any everyday social, commercial, psychological negotiation—Marcel identifies through Herodotus the seductive complexity of his own impotent anger and pursuit of power.

The presence of the Classical here consists in an unnerving contiguity of education and egoism. Through Xerxes, Marcel's knowledge and Proust's knowledge of Marcel seem to meet—but not quite. In that measureless but fragile space-in-between, Proust's knowledge of Marcel does not only illuminate Marcel's own Narcissistic basking in the 'poetry' of Xerxes; but signals also Proust's own pursuit of a poetry of knowledge—knowledge through poetry. And yet both Proust and Marcel share the same familiarity with Classical culture. Proust's knowledge offered to the reader extends ever further into the family of affective as well as cultural associations that make up both Marcel and Proust himself; his novel re-builds ever more extensively and elusively the forms and given shapes of each one's thinking. Later in the novel, in one of those many instances—each reaching out to the others, each unique—when he uses his indeterminate 'nous', Proust writes about going past a certain age; that may well mean middle age, but suggests above all the indeterminacy of any rite of passage. We are told that past that age, somewhere, the souls of our younger selves meet with the souls of the dead and together 'co-operate' ('coopérer') in our present experience, and in who we have become. Marcel senses this Borgesian library of voices; reads that sensation through the complexity of the jealousy-driven eroticism at this moment in his life narrative. In the space of a beat, the narrative voice changes to one that might include Proust's, the idea of the author we might have built

up by now, each one of us, as individual readers. 'Nous devons recevoir . . .'—after a certain point, 'we must receive' all these voices from so far and now reassembled around us. This 'around us' ('autour de nous')—as flimsy as the breath separating Marcel from Proust, and in amongst the edifice of *À la recherche du temps perdu*, whose completion remains always ahead of itself—evokes the idea of translation which has been developed in this book.

It is an arena with open sides, and which creates indeterminacy rather than transparency. Who looks in? At what? From where? Who is the Marcel that the author claims is different from himself, even though they share a first name? What, where is the meeting of history and affect? What are the messages we must hear in this confusion—all the more under their reign, as 'we' are, for hearing them imperfectly? Proust divulges the knowledge he has to offer through a narrator who knows only what he himself hears; and yet whose knowing and listening create further conduits to others as well as ever further filters cornering him in. Such is the theory of knowledge he offers; like Benjamin's theory of translation this is a knowledge without messages, offering neither perfect nor imperfect understanding. Though itself metaphorical, it both observes and stages the crumbling of its own metaphorical pretensions. It stages identification—individual, group, disciplinary—and exposes the obstacles to its necessary collapse. Wrapped in the tyranny of the point of view, translation in this light shows what is lost, and that this trauma can be made to live without resorting to the juggernauts of recovery. Perhaps above all, translation in this idiom shows the responsibility we still need to take for the knowledge we make.

Epilogue

Derek Attridge

Two scenes. The first is a shanty town in South Africa in the late 1980s. An elderly white woman has agreed to assist in the search for her domestic servant's son, and is now being led by her servant's cousin to the site of the violence that they fear (rightly, as it turns out) has engulfed him. They reach the edge of a pond, beyond which the shanties begin.

At the brink of the pond I hesitated. 'Come,' said Mr Thabane. Holding on to him I stepped in, and we waded across, in water up to our ankles. One of my shoes was sucked off. 'Watch out for broken glass,' he warned. I retrieved the shoe.

Save for an old woman with a sagging mouth standing in a doorway, there was no one in sight. But as we walked further the noise we had heard, which at first might have been taken for wind and rain, began to break up into shouts, cries, calls, over a ground-bass which I can only call a sigh: a deep sigh, repeated over and over, as if the wide world itself were sighing.

The woman is Mrs Curren, the writer of the letter that makes up J. M. Coetzee's 1990 novel *Age of Iron*; dying of cancer, she feels more and more strongly the burden of living as a white person in a society founded on racism. She is a retired classics teacher, so her response to the world around her is filtered through her familiarity with Greek and Roman literature and ideals.

They struggle up the dunes on the far side of the pond, and Mrs Curren describes to her daughter (who has fled to the safer environment of the United States) what they saw before them:

We were at the rear of a crowd hundreds strong looking down upon a scene of devastation: shanties burnt and smouldering, shanties still burning, pouring forth black smoke. Jumbles of furniture, bedding, household objects stood in the pouring rain. Gangs of men were at work trying to rescue the contents of the burning shacks, going from one to another, putting out the fires; or so I thought till with a shock it came to me that these were no rescuers but incendiaries, that the battle I saw them waging was not with the flames but with the rain.

It was from the people gathered on the rim of this amphitheatre in the dunes that the sighing came. Like mourners at a funeral they stood in the downpour, men, women and children, sodden, hardly bothering to protect themselves, watching the destruction. (Coetzee, 1990: 87–8)

She attempts to leave, but finds herself surrounded by a ring of spectators, who press her to say what she thinks of what she is witnessing. One senses the deep impress of a lifetime of classical studies in her response: “‘To speak of this’—I waved a hand over the bush, the smoke, the filth littering the path—‘you would need the tongue of a god’” (1990: 91).

Second scene. It is the back garden of a suburban Cape Town house in 1955, and a 15-year-old boy is ‘mooning around’ at a loose end when he hears, coming from the next-door house, unfamiliar music.

As long as the music lasted, I was frozen, I dared not breathe. I was being spoken to by the music as music had never spoken to me before.

What I was listening to was a recording of Bach’s *Well-Tempered Clavier*, played on the harpsichord. I learned this title only some time later, when I had become more familiar with what, at the age of fifteen, I knew only—in a somewhat suspicious and even hostile teenage manner—as ‘classical music’.

The boy was the young John Coetzee, and he recounts the episode in an essay entitled ‘What is a Classic?’—an essay written in response to T. S. Eliot’s essay of the same name, in which the poet sought to argue for Virgil’s *Aeneid* as the supreme classic.¹ Among the questions he asks himself when he returns to this moment in the back garden are,

¹ Coetzee (2001), ‘What is a Classic?’, quotation on p. 9. The essay was first given as a talk in Austria in 1991. Eliot’s essay is reprinted in *On Poetry and Poets* (London: Faber and Faber, 1957), pp. 53–71; it was given as the presidential address before the Virgil Society in 1944. For a valuable discussion of the two addresses, see Ankhi Mukherjee, ‘“What is a Classic?”: International Literary Criticism and the Classic Question’, *Proceedings of the Modern Languages Association* 125 (2010): 1026–42.

‘What does it mean to say that I was being spoken to by a classic in 1955 when the self which is asking the questions acknowledges that the classic—to say nothing of the self—is historically constituted?’ and ‘Is being spoken to across the ages a notion that we can entertain today only in bad faith?’ (2001: 15–16).

In these two scenes we have many of the threads woven skilfully through the essays in this volume. In order to represent a traumatic experience, Mrs Curren draws on her reading of classical literature; her description, for all its specificity, has the ring of ancient epic, reminiscent particularly of Aeneas’ crossing of the marshy Styx with unburied souls clustered beseechingly on its bank and grieving souls on the other side.² And Coetzee, choosing a classics teacher for his narrator, and giving his novel a classical title, also draws on the continuing power of ancient literature to portray some of the horrors of his own time. Soon after the publication of the novel, we find him discussing, in essay format this time, the power of the classic, his examples being the *Aeneid* for Eliot and *The Well-Tempered Clavier* for himself. The answer to his own question about the timelessness and placelessness of the classic is that there is no magical transcending of history that produces the sense of being spoken to directly by the work of the past, but rather that classic works survive through history precisely because they are tested and challenged again and again. ‘Therefore the interrogation of the classic, no matter how hostile, is part of the history of the classic, inevitable and even to be welcomed. For as long as the classic needs to be protected from attack, it can never prove itself classic’ (2001: 19). The consequence of this for criticism is that it is duty-bound to interrogate the classic, and that criticism, even the most hostile, is ‘what the classic uses to define itself and ensure its survival’ (2001: 19).

One might add that it is also through the translating, rewriting, adapting, parodying, even travesty of the classic that it is able to survive. The *Aeneid* lives on in Mrs Curren’s, which is also Coetzee’s, description of the dying spasms of apartheid (as of course does *The Divine Comedy*). Virgil was keeping the *Odyssey* alive in his account of the underworld—and we find Coetzee achieving something similar

² Virgil, *Aeneid*, Book 6, 305–14, 426–49. There is also in Mrs Curren’s description an echo of another visitor to hellish regions, one whose guide was Virgil, which may remind us that Eliot, too, invokes both Dante and Aeneas in the ‘Little Gidding’ section of *Four Quartets*—as Coetzee notes in his essay on the classic.

through the mouth of another of his female characters, Elizabeth Costello:

There is an episode in the *Odyssey* that always sends a shiver down her back. Odysseus has descended into the kingdom of the dead to consult the seer Tiresias. Following instructions, he digs a furrow, cuts the throat of his favourite ram, lets its blood flow into the furrow. As the blood pours, the pallid dead crowd around, slavering for a taste, until to hold them off Odysseus has to draw his sword.

The pool of dark blood, the expiring ram, the man, at a crouch, ready to thrust and stab if need be, the pale souls hard to distinguish from cadavers: why does the scene haunt her? . . . The ram is not just an idea, the ram is alive though right now it is dying. If she believes in the ram, then does she believe in its blood too, this sacred liquid, sticky, dark, almost black, pumped out in gouts on to soil where nothing will grow? (Coetzee, 2003: 211)

I don't think it would be an overstatement to say that the passage in the *Odyssey* grows in power as the result of Coetzee's rewriting of it; I can testify that it does for me, at any rate, turning the relatively laconic testimony of Odysseus into a vivid scene of horror. (That Homer's two sheep become, in Costello's memory, a ram suggests that what is at stake is not simply accuracy.)

Jacques Derrida has written about the survival of *Romeo and Juliet* thanks to its capacity to be restaged and re-imagined; like any sign, he argues, if it could not be infinitely recontextualized it could not exist beyond its original time and place (Derrida, 1992). All literary works, I have argued, have their existence as literature in the event of reading, and this event is an irruption of otherness, however slight, always different, into the settled framework of the reader's world. Iterability, Derrida's word for the constant remaking of the sign in new contexts, involves both sameness—the *Odyssey* and *Iliad* we read are in some sense the same works our predecessors heard or read—and difference—they preserve their identity only because they are different each time one of us experiences them.³ Their otherness to us, therefore—the strangeness of the sighing souls or the pouring blood, for instance—is not in conflict with their identity as classics; on the contrary, it is that continued strangeness, as they resist assimilation into our habitual milieu, that keeps them alive. Our translations,

³ See Derrida (1988).

elaborations, rewritings, critical accounts, stagings do justice to them precisely in their failure to do justice to them; if it were possible to be wholly faithful to them, they would cease to be classics and become inert historical artefacts. And yet we constantly strive to be faithful to something in them, something that speaks to us in its strangeness not its familiarity, something that illuminates places that our culture prefers to leave in the shadows. For Coetzee, these places include the suffering of exploited peoples, like those who watch the destruction of their homes in *Age of Iron*, and exploited animals, like the ram whose black blood Elizabeth Costello sees pumped onto the barren soil. When he rewrites a passage in this way, he is far from exhibiting fidelity to the letter of the original, but he is keeping alive, for us, for the future, a classic.

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Index

- Abu Nuwas 194, 198–200, 203–5
Abu Tammam 194, 204
Adonis (Ali Ahmad Sa'id) 191–206
Aeschylus 214, 215, 252–3, 255
Aesthetic movements:
 Augustanism 36, 66
 Cubism 324–6
 Imagism 57, 114–15, 178
 Impressionism 278
 Modernism 143–5, 175–89, 196,
 269, 273–9, 324
 Postmodernism 144, 158, 278
 Romanticism 66, 104, 144,
 265–6, 269, 271, 276–8
 Surrealism 111, 158, 180 n. 7,
 278, 326, 335
 Symbolism 177, 278
al-Akhtal 199
al-Farazdaq 199
al-Razi 194
al-Suli 198, 205
ambiguity 104, 111, 186 n. 13, 224,
 284–5, 288
 and translation 31–2, 86, 301
Apollonius 31
Appadurai, Arjun 163
Apter, Emily 158
Apuleius 121
Aristotle 33, 112, 214, 246
Auerbach, Erich 70, 112 n. 15
Augustus (Octavian) as
 'Augustus' 29, 36; as
 'Octavian' 30–1, 33, 36
Austin, Linda 272

Barthes, Roland 307, 313, 339
Bassnett, Susan 161, 291
Bauchau, Henry 86
Baudelaire, Charles 177, 179, 342
Baudrillard, Jean 40
Bebel, August 150
Bell, Anthea 288, 291
Benítez-Rojo, Antonio 156–7
Benjamin, Walter 2–3, 7–8, 143–52,
 157, 165, 201–2, 249–50, 267,
 300, 312–13, 320–3, 328, 331–2,
 336–7, 342
Bergson, Henri 180, 278, 321
Bhabha, Homi K. 157
Bois, Yves-Alain 326–7
Boland, Eavan 39, 212–13, 216, 220
Boltzmann, Ludwig 263–5, 267,
 278–9
Bondanella, Peter 124
Borges, Jorge Luis 2, 7–8
Bowdlerization 29, 31–2
Bowersock, G. W. 122
Boym, Svetlana 201–2
Brathwaite, Kamau 156
Brecht, Bertolt 231, 245–9, 255,
 257–60
Breuer, Josef 248, 269–70
Briggs, C. 218–19
Bronfen, Elizabeth 267, 268
Bryant, Jacob 64–5, 68, 69
Butts, Mary 176–7, 185–9
Byron (Lord), George Gordon
 67–70, 276

Carcopino, Jérôme 114, 115
Carr, E. H. 148
Caruth, C. 235–6
Cavafy, Constantine 220–2, 225
Césaire, Aimé 156, 158

- Chapman, George 47
 Charcot, Jean-Martin 248, 268,
 271–3, 275
 Chaucer, Geoffrey 31–2
 Cheeke, Stephen 68
 Chesterfield (Lord), Philip Stanhope
 (Earl of Chesterfield) 92, 101
 Church, A. J. 98
 Cicero 91–106, 246, 253
 Cockman, Thomas 98, 100
 Coetzee, J. M. 347–51
 Cold War 162–71
 Cole, T. R. 83
 comedy 256
 Connor, S. 236
 Constant, Benjamin 150
 Cook, Elizabeth 47
 Cooper, Frederick 163
 Cornford, F. M. 185–6
 counterfactuals 143, 147–52
 Crassus 104
- Dames, Nicholas 271–2
 Dante Alighieri 7, 31, 264, 349 n. 2
 Darwin, Charles 341
 Dash, Michael 162, 171
 Deleuze, Gilles 43, 180
Delphic Charioteer, The 24, 325,
 330
 Derrida, Jacques 146, 161, 350
 Du Camp, Maxime 328, 337
- elegy 117, 211, 213
 Eliot, George 276
 Eliot, T. S. 176–8, 184–9, 269,
 276–7, 324, 337, 348
 Ellmann, Maud 185, 237, 238
 Empson, William 31
 Engelking, Barbara 285–6
 Engels, Friedrich 150
 Enlightenment 92, 106, 144, 178,
 265–6, 272
 Enzensberger, Hans Magnus 157
- epic 117, 167–70, 176, 322, 349
 Alexander Pope and 67
 influence on tragedians 74–5
 translation of 32–4
 Victorians and 30–1
Epic of Gilgamesh, The 216
 Euripides 6, 247–52, 260
 exile, *see also* migration
 physical 73–5, 80, 222–4, 270,
 308
 psychological 229, 276–7, 278
- Fabian, Johannes 176
 Fagles, Robert 32
 fascism 31, 110, 325
 Fellini, Federico 109–25
 Fitzgerald, Robert 56
 food:
 anorexia 237–8
 cannibalism 119–25, 122
 as cultural reception 123
 Electra and 233, 236–40
 exile and 263–4
 starvation 238–40
 forgetting 8, 201–2, 276, 319, 322,
 325
 Frazer, James 181, 186
 free verse 177–89
 Freud, Sigmund 114 n. 19, 129–35,
 140, 187, 232–3, 238–9, 248,
 253, 266–73, 319
 Frost, Robert 125
 Fukuyama, Francis 146
 Furtado, José Afonso 299–314
- Gadamer, Hans-Georg 12
 Gaisser, Julia 41
 Gellius, Aulus 246 n. 1, 253
 Genet, Jean 329
 Giacometti, Alberto 329–32, 343–4
 Gilbert, Sandra 311
 Gilbert, W. S. 29
 Gilroy, Paul 307

- Glissant, Édouard 155–72
 Guattari, Felix 43
- Hallward, Peter 157–8
 Hanka, Vaclav 290
 Hardy, Thomas 264
 Harris, Stephanie 308
 Harrison, Jane 185–6
 Hartley, David 266
 Hawthorn, Geoffrey 148
 Heaney, Seamus 5–8, 39, 49–53, 57
 Heberden, William 99
 Hejinian, Lyn 158, 160, 171
 Herman, Judith Lewis 233, 235, 237,
 239, 241
 Herodotus 345
 Hight, Gilbert 67
 Hirsch, Marianne 309–11
 historicism 93, 145–6, 249 n. 6
 Hitler 325
 Hobsbawm, Eric 148
 Hofmannsthal, Hugo von 260
 Hölderlin, Johann Christian
 Friedrich 3
 Holocaust 283–96, 300, 311
 Holzer, Jenny 211
 Homer 2, 6, 29–30, 39–40, 44 n. 18,
 47–50, 53–7, 61–71, 182, 216,
 221, 258, 263, 349–50
 Horace 246, 253
 Hughes, Ted 6, 32, 34, 39
 Humanism 123
 Huxley, Aldous 275
 hybridity 155, 157–8, 160, 340
 hysteria 248, 253, 267–71, 273 n. 19,
 275, 279
- Ibn al-Rawandi 194
 Ibn Qutayba 198–9, 203–5
 identity 140, 157, 171, 253
 and actors 255–7
 cultural 93, 139, 164, 191, 196–7,
 259
- Electra 229–32, 238, 240–1, 246,
 252–3
 and the ‘ethnic other’ 199–200,
 202, 204
 ethnicity and race 157, 171,
 196–7, 293
 familial 131–4
 textual 21, 157–9, 350
 irony 335, 341–2
- Jabir Ibn Hayyan 194
 Jackson Knight, W. F. 32
 James, William 266–7, 275
 Jameson, Fredric 144
 Janet, Pierre 266–8, 272–3
 Jarir 199
 Jaspers, Karl 266–73
 Jay, Martin 274–6
 Joyce, James 45, 176, 324
- Kavanagh, Patrick 39, 44–54,
 56–7
 Kazantzakis, Nikos 223, 225
 Keats, John 47, 50
 Ker, W. C. A. 30
 Kerr Prince, C. 40
 Klee, Paul 147, 331
 Konstan, D. 249
 Koran, *see* Qur’an
 Koselleck, Reinhart 147 n. 3
 Kosinski, Jerzy 291
 Krapp, George 31–2
 Krauss, Rosalind 325–7
 Kristeva, Julia 239–40
- L’Estrange, Roger 94, 100
 Lacan, Jacques 341
 Laforgue, Jules 177
 lamentation, *see also* mourning;
 tragedy 54, 81–2, 211–25,
 245–7, 250
 caoine (keen) 212–13, 216, 220
 dirge 214

- lamentation, (*Cont.*)
 lament-singers 212–13, 217–19, 225
- Latour, Bruno 202
- Lechevallier, Jean-Baptiste 64
- Lefevere, André 4, 6
- Leociak, J. 289, 292
- Lobo Antunes, António 310
- Longley, Michael 39, 52–7
- Loomba, Ania 159
- Loroux, Nicole 213–15, 217, 224, 234 n. 5, 237
- Lucan 30–1
- Luce, J. V. 65–6
- lyric 54, 82, 111, 215
- Mach, Ernst 263–5, 278
- Macpherson, James 290
- Makine, André 290–1
- Mallarmé, Stéphane 179
- Mark Antony 95
- Marx, Karl 144, 150
- Marxism 146, 149, 163, 318
- melancholia 232–7, 239, 307, 313–14, 319, 232–3
- Melmoth, William ('Sir Thomas Fitzosborne') 99–102, 106
- memory 8, 86–7, 123, 200–1, 219–20, 319–21, 331, 340
 collective 201, 202, 218–20, 290
 cultural 53, 57, 177, 201, 219, 300, 307
 the Holocaust and 283, 285, 290, 311
 Modernism and 185, 188, 276–7
 nostalgia and 264–70
 poetic 50, 57
 'postmemory' 309–11
 trauma and 234–6, 265, 270–1, 273–5, 299 n. 1, 304, 307–14
- metaphor 344, 346
 orator as 102–6
 translation and 6, 95–7
- metatheatricity 245, 249, 251–2, 255–9
- Middleton, Conyers 99
- migration, *see also* exile:
 physical 263–6, 271–3, 275–8
 textual 42, 195
- Milton, John 31
- mimesis 112, 184, 214, 230–1, 240
- Mitchell, W. J. T. 308
- Montgomery, James E. 203–5
- Montgomery, Jane 254
- Moreiras, Alberto 158
- mourning, *see also* lamentation;
 tragedy 54, 75, 122, 211–25, 318–19, 321, 348–9
 actors' portrayal of 231, 246
 Electra and 234–6, 246–52, 256, 259–60
 Freud on 232–3, 319
 Hecuba and 245, 247–52, 258–9
 translation and 333
- Munch, Edvard 278
- Musil, Robert 148
- mythology 45–6, 121–2, 124, 332
 Irish poetry and 51–4, 57
 Modernism and 176, 178, 181–2, 187
 and Roman public
 executions 94–5
 translating 33–4
- Nabokov, Vladimir 13
- Nederveen Pieterse, Jan 157
- Neoclassicism 253
- neurosis 114–15, 265–6, 268–71, 276
- Nietzsche, Friedrich 145, 176, 179–80
- Nooteboom, Cees 317–24, 328–9, 332
- nostalgia 149, 196, 201–2, 222–3, 249–50
 medical condition 263–79

- Modernism and 177, 179, 189
nostos 74–5, 201
- ode 205
- Odoric of Pordenone 6
- oneiric realism 109, 112–13,
 117–18, 122
- Ovid 29, 52, 55, 94
- Owen, Wilfred 54, 211
- Pasolini, Pier Paolo 305
- pastoral 45, 51, 185
- pathos 177, 183, 245, 246, 251,
 257–9
- trauma and 247–9, 252–60, 344
- Petronius 109–25
- Philippos of Thessalonika 53
- photography 299–314
- Picasso, Pablo 325–7
- Pirandello, Luigi 256
- Plato 32, 171, 214, 258
- Polanski, Roman 286, 295–6
- Pope, Alexander 5, 61–71, 277
- postcolonialism 155–72, 299 n. 1,
 304, 307, 309, 311
- Pound, Ezra 114, 176–8, 180–6,
 189, 276–7
- Proust, Marcel 324, 335–7, 344–6
- pseudotranslation 290–1
- Quasimodo, Salvatore 111
- Quinn, Antoinette 45
- Quintilian 104, 123
- Qur'an 193, 203
- Ramazani, Jahan 155–6
- reception studies 15, 18
- Renaissance 99, 123, 253
- rhetoric 91–7, 102–6, 203,
 218–19
- rhizomes 43–4, 57–8, 335
- Ricœur, Paul 333, 342
- Rieu, E. V. 47–8, 54
- Rilke, Rainer Maria 13–14, 263
- Ritsos, Yiannis 224–5
- Robespierre, Maximilien 150–1
- Rosen, Alan 284–5
- Rosenberg, Isaac 49
- Roth, Michael 271–2
- Rousseau, Jean-Jacques 150–1
- Russell, George ('A. E.') 44–5
- Saint-Just, Louis Antoine de 150–1
- Santner, Eric 149, 152
- Schopenhauer, Arthur 248, 278
- Scott, Clive 179
- Sebald, W. G. 308
- Seferis, George 220, 222–3, 225
- Segal, Charles 213–14
- Seneca 32, 34, 123
- Shackleton Bailey, D. R. 99
- Shakespeare, William 260, 135,
 245–6, 249, 256, 258–60, 350
- Shaw, Fiona 230–1, 240–1, 250–1,
 253
- Shuckburgh, E. S. 98
- Sontag, Susan 308–9
- Sophocles 3, 6, 32–5, 73–87, 129,
 132–40, 229–41, 252–61
- Spielberg, Steven 288
- Stalin 110, 295
- Statius 31
- Stoppard, Tom 255–6, 258
- Strauss, Richard 260, 278
- Swinburne, Algernon Charles
 182–3
- Szpilman, Andrzej 287–90, 293
- Szpilman, Władysław 286–96
- temporality 176, 179–80, 183
- Theocritus 51
- Theodorakis, Mikis 224–5
- Thucydides 257
- Toland, John 92–3, 100–2
- Toury, Gideon 290–1
- tragedy 230–1, 254–7, 334

- tragedy (*Cont.*)
 mourning in, *see also* lamentation;
 mourning 213–15, 217, 220,
 224
 oracles in 79 n. 20
 translation studies 3–8, 17, 21, 40, 41
 Trivedi, Harish 161
 Trotter, David 276
- Valerius 31
 Velho da Costa, Maria 299–314
 Victorian Age 30–1, 33, 272, 276
 Virgil 7, 29–36, 45, 51–3, 124,
 348–9
- Walcott, Derek 6, 39, 86–7, 156, 158
 Waldorff, Jerzy 287, 291, 294, 296
 Walton, J. M. 40
- Wanamaker, Zoë 250–1, 257
 Weber, Max 144, 175, 267
 Whitman, Walt 177
 Wilde, Oscar 275
 Wilkomirski, Binjamin (Bruno
 Grosjean) 283, 291
 Williams, Bernard 145–6, 150–1
 Williams, Raymond 144, 152
 Wood, Robert 63–7
 Woodard, T. M. 234
 wordplay 31–2
 Wordsworth, William 68, 276
- Yeats, W. B. 45–6, 50–1, 212–13,
 220, 269
- Young, Robert 171
- Žižek, Slavoj 149–50, 152