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Foreword

Around the turn of the century, as it was becoming increasingly clear that the postmodern paradigm could no longer offer an adequate discursivization of contemporary experience, a number of influential thinkers – Ihab Hassan, Catherine Belsey, Thomas Docherty, to name but a few – started pleading for a return to reading. What they advocated is a kind of reading that learns the lessons of late-20th century 'Theory' but moves beyond its confines and particularly beyond its skepticisms to promote a probing and comparative interrogation of our humanity. In a 2003 article titled "Beyond Postmodernism," for instance, Hassan recommends a re-reading of the great world literature with an eye to the ways in which it foregrounds the values of trust, responsibility, truth, and humility (6). In an essay "On Reading" of the same year, Docherty proposes that reading is not only "a condition of the very possibility of subjectivity" but also a "determinant of our possibility of becoming citizens" (7). When such high stakes are attached to so simple an activity, which we learn early and do daily, it becomes clear why scholars, and language and literature specialists in particular, feel compelled to revisit the definitions, functions and practices of reading at regular intervals. In recent years, the Modern Language Association of America has proposed a special section of the *PMLA* titled "Learning to Read," which came to be included in the May 2015 issue, and another, titled "Cultures of Reading," forthcoming in 2017. Whether they are motivated by changes in the Common Core State Standards (the national curriculum in the USA) or by what seems to be a cognitive revolution, replacing not only paper books with electronic texts but publishers with personal blogs and profile pages in the social media, such invitations always incite stimulating re-considerations not only of the imbrication of literacy and literature with the world, both textualized and experiential, but also of our profession. Taking our cue from the urgency with which these issues are always debated in our field, the Academic

Anglophone Society of Romania organized an international conference on (why) "Reading Matters" in May 2016. A selection of the papers presented on that occasion are included in what follows and in the next issue of our journal.

The articles in this volume thus propose a cultural journey from the Middle Ages to our times in different genres and media (drama, poetry, novels, religious non-fiction, readers/ textbooks, and films) and address a variety of issues related to reading, such as spaces of reading and reading performance spaces, reading practices and practicing reading literary, cultural and religious texts. Mihaela Irimia's article opens the volume with a comprehensive contextualization of the book trade (particularly novels) and the significant role played by circulating libraries in shaping the "fashionable sociability" of the gendered reading practices invading the private and public spaces of England. In his essay, Michael Hattaway offers a minute analysis of the complex visual spaces of medieval performances at English fairs (as depicted, for instance, in early 18th-century paintings), such as the processions and rituals pertaining to the Horn Fair, the skimmington, and the booth theatre, discussed in the larger context of medieval cultural artifacts (ballads, plays, pamphlets). Mădălina Nicolaescu also focuses on performance spaces by looking at a number of interpretations of William Shakespeare's plays in the 18th- and 19th-century Saxon-German theatre in Transylvania, Romania, exploring the ways in which the English versions were adapted for a German-speaking public and demonstrating how the theatre connected various German-speaking spaces in Western and Eastern Europe at the time. Similarly, the article by Alina Bottez centers on Shakespeare's plays, as she examines their transformations and adaptations (in terms of plot, characters, etc.) in order to suit a different genre and medium, that of the opera, by analyzing various key elements that prompted their journey from the written page to the musical stage.

The literary journey proposed in this volume continues with two articles that explore two texts – in different genres – written in the late 1700s. The article by Dragoş Ivana looks at Henry Mackenzie's novel *The Man of Feeling* (1771) in light of Adam

Smith's and David Hume's theories of sympathy with a view to contextualizing and analyzing the misguided acts of sympathy performed by the main male character. Andreea Paris's article, on the other hand, offers an in-depth analysis of William Blake's poem "The Tyger" (1794), examining potential interpretations through the lenses of reader response criticism. The next two articles, by Estella-Antoaneta Ciobanu and Anca-Luminiţa Iancu, look at how the rhetoric in various non-fiction texts was employed, particularly in the nineteenth century, in order to limit/restrict or promote issues of collective racial or ethnic identity. Thus, Ciobanu argues that particular texts from the Holy Bible were manipulated in clever ways by the Christian slaveholding society so as to justify the institution of slavery in the United States, thereby illustrating how such rhetoric functioned as a way of disempowering the racial "other." In a similar vein, Iancu discusses the rhetorical choices and moves in a number of religious (Catholic) textbooks (1870-1910), meant both to preserve the ethnic and religious identity of the German-American youth and to appease the strong Americanization trend at the turn into the twentieth century.

Finally, Corina Selejan's article creates a bridge between the end of the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-first century, as she proposes an intriguing comparison between Robert Grudin's novel *Book* (1992) and the film *Stranger than Life* (2006), pointing to the intricacies of each work and each genre. The volume concludes with Sorin Ştefănescu's article, a thought-provoking examination of old age that looks at the complexities of human interaction and relationships in John Barth's short fiction collected in the volume *The Development* (2010).

The Editors

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"… these foolish, yet dangerous Books": Fashionable Sociability and the Circulating Library in Classic Modernity

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Abstract
In or about the 1770s human individuality changed. This handy paraphrase of Virginia Woolf's formulation could serve as an introduction to the revolution brought about by the established circulating library in Classic Modernity, aka the Enlightenment. With the novel settled in as commonplace, a growingly variegated and relaxed reading public enjoying extensive reading and delighting in what up until recently had been called dubious printed matter, the circulating library gradually won the battle for useful and amusing matters. Where it had been deemed "an evergreen tree of diabolical knowledge" (Sheridan *The Rivals* I. 2) comparable to brothels and gin shops, this modern type of library fitting the public sphere like a glove was snowballing into a sociable space where the great and the good were now impressive numbers of chic ladies advertising their knowledge as *emotional* and *sartorial* extravagance. Novels inundated the public and private spaces of the day: they were everywhere in salons, coffee houses, on shop and bank counters, on fashionable toilette or tea tables and kitchen ranges, in carriages and on board ships voyaging into, across and out of Britain, in English, French or Italian, devoured by aristocratic ladies and domestic maids and very often read in the midst of something else. Fiction and the circulating library revolutionized the book trade, the book and trade in 1700s' Britain, as they saw a sea change in the attitude towards reading that had not been witnessed after the trail-blazing invention of print in the 15th century. As the royalty, the aristocracy and the higher ranks of

the clergy were erecting huge libraries recalling ancient mausoleums, these new reading centres paved the way to modern individual freedom and were instrumental in expanding the reading classes across the country, between the sexes and down the social ladder.

This essay will look into the *fashionable sociability* offered by the new reading practices, values and preferences cultivated in the negotiations between public and private spaces, male sense and female sensibility, serious and frivolous options, scientific-to-be and would-be artistic choices, educational and sentimental outlets. In so doing, it will analyse what in the late 1790s came to be defined "depots of learning," as well as "stores for rational amusement" – an exciting anticipation of consumerist means in our Late Modernity.

Keywords: the Enlightenment, circulating libraries, the novel, reading, the materiality of the book, the public and the private spheres.

In or about the 1770s human individuality changed. With due observance of the cultural difference involved, this paraphrase of Virginia Woolf's formulation could serve as an introduction to the sea change brought about by the established circulating library in Classic Modernity, aka the Enlightenment. Jointly with novel-reading, novel-writing, publishing and selling, the "public borrowing and lending of books via libraries," together with the "associational mania of the Georgian period" made of circulating libraries "safe havens of structured sociability, promoting tolerance and inclusivity among the subscribers" (Bowd 157). The 1770s public sphere acted as a favourable context. It boasted no modest numbers of clubs functioning as spaces in which individuals contributed their cash with a view to finding and buying books for their curiosity and interest, as well as for their taste.

Club premises were the symbolic stage where *politeness* met its match called *sociability*. Both these forms of *civility* kept

associations of the kind going, as they did circulating and subscription libraries – all modern public fora. The roots of the latter "evidently lie in their key ancestor [which] contemporaries knew as the 'book club' (or occasionally 'book society' or even 'reading society')" (Allan in Crawford 105). There was a special relation holding between public libraries and the print trade of the day, were it only for the modernization of the *utile dulci* classical precept: as books pursued their circuit from seller to buyer or lender to borrower, economic profit fed on entertainment. In the mid-century, London, as well as Dublin, for that matter, offered quite a choice of coffee houses, circulating libraries and subscription libraries. All of these furnished the cities' inhabitants with "access to reading material hitherto largely restricted to 'graduates and gentlemen'" (Abbas 41). The traditional readership, that is, exclusively high/leisurely class and male, overflowed into lower class and female members, or servants, maids emulating their mistresses as novel-readers.

A representative image of Wright's Circulating Library in the mid-1740s (*Fig. 1*) has come down to us showing a spacious room lined up with book shelves sized and ranged in a semiotic order of meaningful and sensible use. The upper shelves seem to host serious volumes, judging by their impressive width and height – these are *folios*, massive and heavy, like the nature of their weighty contents (L. *seriosus* < *serius* 'weighty, important, grave'). There are noticeable gaps on the top shelf, an indication that the library is in thorough use of these pretentious tomes. The same applies to the next two shelves downwards filled with *quartos* and *octavos*, as it looks. A man, apparently the librarian in charge, has skipped the *duodecimo* shelf and can be seen in the act of taking out a volume from a more easily accessible place on which are stood more friendly-sized books, very likely *sextodecimos*. Intellectual cultivation reigns over this indoor scene, a public microspace protected against the outdoor fret of the big city by high blinds and curtains. And yet, there is more than this. Negotiation with the world out there, where frivolity can display its charm in other microspaces, is at work.

Fig. 1, *Wright's Circulating Library*, mid-1740s

The table in the foreground, covered by a richly folding cloth, shows a fairly random display of small volumes, which points to their potential readers having consulted their table of contents. Some are really small volumes, like the open one held in both his hands by a gentleman who has laid his tricorne on a chair seat and stood his cane to rest reclining on the back of the same chair. Two ladies appear as performers of their social and sociable roles on an equal footing with the gentlemen around. The one keeps her right arm over her heart, on the edge of a deep front cut in her fashionable dress. The other holds an open book at the same sentimental height. The set on the table, seemingly just about to be called out, look easy to handle, slip into purses or cuffs, and are, by all appearances, novels. They can be anything from duodecimos to sextodecimos or octodecimos and make for pleasurable reading. They are the physical written support for a life of leisure and pleasure, not merely one of righteousness. They recall Pope's *Rape of the Lock* (I, 138) with tiny *bibles* sitting on Belinda's toilet table beside *billets-doux*, in a jolly company of *baubles*. An air of domestic cosiness governs the male-female urbanity of the occasion.

Another gentleman in the middle ground heading for the forefront company seems ready to join the gossip round the table. Very likely, this is about the kind of choice the reader-customers will eventually make when they call out the titles they find useful

and amusing. In Mottley and Stow's 1734 survey of London's Exeter Court, in the Strand, where Wright's Circulating Library stood, we read that the area was all "Shops on each Side, for Smelters, Milleners, Hosiers, &c. (…) very handsome and well inhabited" (775). Luxury and cultivation stand out as personality-enhancers. We shall see their tandem functioning again and again, but we can conclude, at this point, that "Romances, Novels & other Books of Entertainment" were as a rule printed in easily manageable formats – from octavo to duodecimo, sextodecimo or octodecimo – alongside books on "Husbandry, Gardening and Cookery," and "Divinity."

As sites of public activities in the Classic Modernity, coffee houses were more than mere places of socializing with consumption as their rationale. They functioned as magnets bringing customers together to learn the news of the day and discuss matters of mutual concern with the residents in the area. They were sites of information and opinion and served as lending libraries and reading centres through the availability of newspapers, public notices, catalogues, pamphlets, announcements and various other printed matters, while gossip surrounding all these forms of communication added the lively ingredient to their success formula. Coffee houses did indeed host and legitimate the Classic Modernity's emerging class of urban professionals involved in politics or/and business. They have cast a long shadow on late modernity and internet cafés nowadays could not be a better sample.

In the late 1700s, "[l]ike coffee-house proprietors, many circulating library keepers were also printers, publishers, and newspaper proprietors" (Abbas 4). They ran profit-making ventures whose impact on the spread and diversification of reading could not possibly be denied. Not only did such public spaces facilitate access to reading material. They also provided the public dissemination of "information products," and circulating libraries "emerged as a sideline to the booksellers' businesses" (Abbas 56), in that they saw the evolution from setting aside books for loan to the commercial venture and the costs it entailed. The public perception was that coffee was a welcome beverage promoting virtue and wisdom. In

The Rape of the Lock, again, we read that "coffee makes the politician wise" (III, 117) and the extent to which it can stir the brain and activate the brains into communicating in the public sphere transpires in the scene from the mid-century in which gentlemen debate the latest events in broad daylight. Coffee is a morning public drink for male consumers. Women are usually part of the coffee house staff all through the century and into late Georgian years. An illustration by Rowlandson of *A Mad Dog in a Coffee House* published in 1809 shows some two dozen male customers using improvised utensils to defend the place against a raging dog, while the serving woman in the background looks unperturbed by the momentary disturbance, so she carries on her duty.

Fig. 2, *The Female Coterie at the Election of one of the Male Members of their Society*, c. 1770

"Ladies of quality" instead could be club members and enjoy coffee drinking in the institutionalized ambiance of choice associations. Such was the Female Coterie meeting at Almack's Assembly Rooms (*Fig. 2*), its inaugural session having been held in King's Street, St. James, London, on 20 February 1765. An illustration from a magazine of the time shows the distinguished company round a big table, over which presides the chairwoman seated on a high armchair. A tray on the table with a kettle, sugar bowl and cup sends the message to the intent viewer: coffee makes

the Bluestockings, too, wise. This London coterie was open-minded and relaxed about mores. It was one of the first clubs to admit a mixed-sex membership and practised the rule of ladies balloting for gentlemen and gentlemen proposing and electing ladies. It was deemed "one of the most usefull institutions," according to another illustration of the same time, and hosted card playing, flirting and out-of-wedlock affairs, real estate negotiations and news breaking. Unlike most venues for such occasions, it was not a private aristocratic house, but a public space. Concurrently, Almack's Coffee House came to be known as the gentlemen's club, or Brook's, while the Assembly Rooms became popular as female Brook's. As an institution writing the symbols of socializing on the grand Book of Society, rather than of Nature, it was a site of fashionable sociability about which Horace Walpole confessed at one time he could frequent once without forgetting how much sand was run out of the hour-glass.

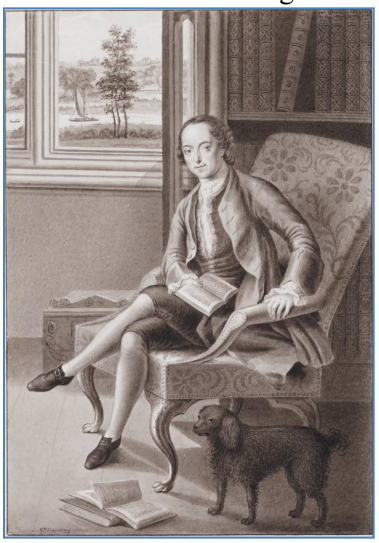


Fig. 3, *Walpole in his Strawberry Hill library,* 1780s

Walpole much preferred the peaceful atmosphere of his private library at Strawberry Hill (*Fig. 3*) with folio and quarto tomes on the first couple of shelves rising from the floor to the top of his armchair. We see him in a fairly well-known painting in which he looks out of the picture, his pet dog in the foreground in front of a couple of octavo volumes, while its master holds a duodecimo in his right hand. Right behind him stand the solemn folios so impressive in the gothic library with a gothic top over its fireplace. An equally interesting comparison is that between a private scholarly library of the 1770s, in which the owner's shelves have folios on

the top and the bottom levels, the ones for general reference, the others for current scientific necessities, and a mid-century lending library with a couple of customers, lady and gentleman, asking for octavo and duodecimo format books. The scholar's shelves stand by a window through which bees can be seen flying to their hives – an allusion to the labour of plucking knowledge, like nectar, at the source.

And here is the *differentia* at work as we interpret *Lady Coming from a Circulating Library* (1781) and *Beauty in Search of Knowledge* (1782). In the former (*Fig. 4*) the circulating library is rather discreetly present in the background, whereas the lady that has stepped out into the street holds tight an octavo in her hands clasped across her lower chest. She has left behind a female *utopia*, a place of ease by cultivating the mind, a refuge from the city bustle and a validation of ladylike readings. Much to be presumed, she has borrowed a romance or novel, suggested by her pensive expression. *Beauty in Search of Knowledge* (*Fig. 5*) shows a better delineated female figure, a better equipped library in the background and, tellingly, an umbrella rather ostentatiously held half up by her gloved right hand. What looks like a duodecimo in her left gloved hand is

Fig. 4, *Lady Coming from a Circulating Library*, 1781

Fig. 5, *Beauty in Search of Knowledge*, 1782

certainly, by comparison, minuscule. This is the cost of a frivolous lifestyle. From the 1700s umbrellas gradually lost their pragmatic function of keeping the rain out and their bearers dry. Instead, they gradually grew into symbols of cultural identity, a kind of female equivalent of the male cane or/and sword. "Beauty" walks out of the female *eutopia* which will be revived at home as she pores over the love affair couched between the borrowed novel's covers.

The symbolic mix of cultivation of the mind and euphoria of the heart reads in *The Vis a Vis Bisected or the Ladies Coop* (1776), in which the interior of a closed carriage is made visible by a longitudinal bisection to the effect that two young ladies can be seen, very much like the ladies coming out of lending libraries. The "Ladies Coop" presents the characters sitting face to face in profile as they head, very likely, for a place of entertainment. The lady to the left holds a closed fan in her hands, the one to the right raises a duodecimo to her eyes. They bow their heads hard to keep undamaged their huge hairdos decorated with flower garlands and feathers. These are recognizably chic symbols of social status. The ladies are quite possibly post-chaising for some spa, where seeing other beauties and being seen is the rule of the place.

Such Frenchified manners could easily be compared with French manners. *The Unlucky Glance* tells the spicy story of a gallant aristocrat who, as he leans against a book stand in a Paris gallery, casts the said look at two ladies buying laces from a counter across the aisle, his eye caught by their dress cuts and the jewels round their necks. A sex-geared differentiation accounts for the situation: men serve customers looking for books, women do the ladies desirous of trinkets. These are guarded by a gentleman and a pet, neither appearing to make them too fond of their gentleness. Instead, they are quite sensitive to the fashionable astute glance and act accordingly.

Spas were places of follies and frivolities and spending the bathing season away from big city life was of the order of fashionable stylishness. Conversation, correspondence and ensuing marriages were the cultural institutions which "fashioned the spa into a private fiction" (Hurley 6). Margate's Cecil Square, for

instance, contained large houses owned by fashionable families, as well as a row of shops and purpose-built Assembly Room and circulating library. Both these public places offered entertainment at this growingly successful spa. Margate was advertised by cards praising "every Accommodation for Bathing in the Sea at [the] Room in High Street," as well as the "Coffee Room adjoining where the London Papers [were] daily provided," with "Convenient Lodgings and Stables. Post Chaises (…) to hire" (Lee 1). Hall's Library in Margate offered the majestic view of a spacious site of fashionable sociability with readers accompanied by children and pets, engaged in conversation, choosing books from the lower shelves, where the smaller formats (so lighter contents) were ranged, and admiring the others' outfits as they showed off theirs.

Scarborough, like Margate, a seaside resort, became a chic place for wealthy people to go on trips and bathe in seawater. A circulating library could only enhance its choice lifestyle and cultural attractiveness. But, while Scarborough and Sidmouth were becoming popular in late Georgian times, Bath could boast its circulating library and reading room already in the 1770s. Seabathing and public bath sessions were the main form of fashionable leisure in spas and all along the Channel coast at least, they entailed the springing up of circulating libraries – another case of the *utile dulci* precept updated to Classic Modernity. Ladies found in such places books to keep them in touch with societal entertainment and felt encouraged to read poetry and novels which they could further imitate in texts of their own make. Some such libraries carried stocks of music and books in French, or else whatever Dr. Johnson deemed unserious, because aiming at "the young, the ignorant and the idle," of which he made a point in *The Rambler* of 31 March 1750 (1).

Truly, these stood at the other extreme from the *virtuoso* type, whose learned professionalism could stir him into long reading and observation sessions. In 1796 Isaac Cruikshank drew the caricature of such an erudite old man bending forward towards a *folio* tome opened on his study table. He is the central character in the illustration, but a fly buzzing over his treasured book causes him to

saw the air irritated. The virtuoso wears a night-cap and loose robe over his waistcoat and short breeches, white stockings and buckled shoes. A combination of domestic and professional life makes the scene symbolic in ironic hues: utter seriousness averts the naturalist's attention from the natural landscape emerging through the open sash window, the tome under observation offers the description of an uncommon species of insect, which he fails to read as he gesticulates to get rid of a real fly, and the learned old man is reduplicated by a stuffed crocodile hanging from the ceiling over a frame on the back wall displaying insects.

An earlier illustration shows Dr. Silvester Partridge, an astrologer, unfolding his professional skills in his household, with suspended specimens and shelves of vessels and books all over the place. He is represented casting nativities to his customers, seated at his work table in the middle of a laboratory of sorts. His working library displays folios on the lower shelves as an indication of the gravity of his status. Customers surrounding him in the centre of the room stand in wonder, instruments enhancing his professionalism take the foreground, while a crocodile hanging from the centre of the ceiling confirms the *doctor*'s *savoir*. "A private space within a private space, the cabinet [of curiosities] encapsulate[s] the great world within its odd and wondrous confines, and it announce[s] its owner to be a gentleman of polite and cosmopolitan understanding" (McKeon 218). As in the previous illustration, the private-public negotiation with its underlying magic of reading tricks provides food for thought.

The male-female role distribution in the public arena of the time stands out clear in late 1700s-early 1800s visual documents. William Combe's *Doctor Syntax's Tour in Search of the Picturesque* published in Ackermann's *Poetical Magazine* (1809-1812) won hugely in popularity once it was accompanied by Thomas Rowlandson's illustrations. Here is the eccentric scholar convinced that his and only his conception of nature is worth the traveller's or artist's attention. Early Romantic visitations in his mind turn Dr. Syntax into the literarily homologated equivalent of the Reverend William Gilpin, one of the originators of the idea of

the picturesque. Parodied as Dr. Syntax, the latter became famous for his co-ordination (cf. Gr. *σύνταξη*) of nature according to his calculated images: "[H]e tour[ed] not to see nature, but to produce his observations of nature" (Broglio 43). We see him arguing with a book seller in the latter's shop, where order is hardly at home. Here is yet another private space put to public use, with shop assistants overwhelmed by the big numbers of folios and octavos, some spread out on the floor. In the adjoining room a plump female character looks annoyed by the din in the shop and finds solace in a drink.

Fig. 6, Thomas Rowlandson, *Dr. Syntax with a Bluestocking Beauty* (1812)

Utterly enwrapped in his dreams of the picturesque, Dr. Syntax is taken up with his work and begins to see winged books in his dream, while fallen asleep in his private library armchair by his writing table. Book after book flaps around the room as their wings propel them upwards, to the level of octavo volumes. Instead, when he visits a Bluestocking beauty and follower of the fashion, Mrs. Omicron, Dr. Syntax is in rhapsodies over reading verse to his hostess. So carried away is he that he presses his left foot covered in a black stocking against her right leg dressed in a light blue stocking (*Fig. 6*). Divinity is about to give way under fleshly charm. The Book of God recedes in the background, the Book of Nature comes to the fore and the Book of Man mediates their relationship. In her Madame de Recamier pose, Mrs. Omicron is all attractive forms under her white empire-waisted dress, a light yellow sash round her

waist and chic turban of the same colour on her head, which she seems to need to support as she is emotionally transported. A quill-pen in her right hand suggests that she has been temporarily prevented from composing verse herself. This is an indoor scene in a country house private library with alcoves lined up by floor-to-ceiling shelves. Strewn across the floor are a square angle and drafting compass, as a reminder of the lady's intellectual pretentions. So are the globe in a wooden stand and more books, including a scroll. Symmetrically set, a wooden cradle in the left corner shows a few loose leaves for easy browsing. Slightly shadowed, yet visible between the writing table, the sofa and the books on the floor a chamber pot confirms the private status of this socializing-geared space. Private libraries were, indeed, sites of social interaction in which gentlemen and ladies could meet for the pleasures of the mind, and not only, but overtly they remained spaces of intellectual enlightenment. What had previously been valid only for the "civilized" gentlemen, namely the acquisition of "trait of sense, good taste, sensibility, and politeness from their classical education (…) and visits to museums, theatre, exhibition, concerts and music rooms, and stately homes" (Barnard 2), was now a female business as well.

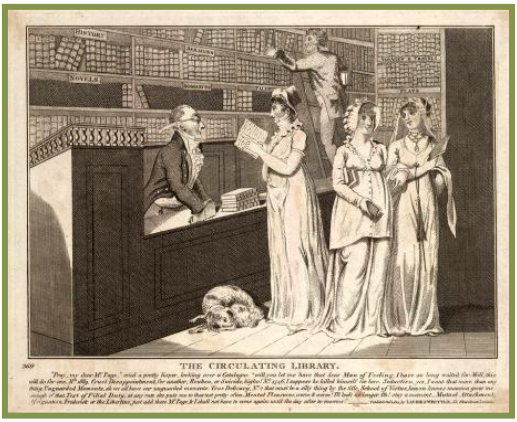


Fig. 7, *The Circulating Library* 1801

With sentimentalism fast growing into a *modus vivendi*, the Long Eighteenth Century saw the Werther effect in the late 1770s, after the English edition of 1779. *The Circulating Library* (1801) (*Fig. 7*) stands proof to it. Three female visitors have descended in front of the lending desk and two are about

to step out content with their choices: one octavo, two duodecimos and one sextodecimo. A third lady, in all appearances more energetic and determined, stands stiff facing the librarian, while a male visitor up a ladder is getting books out. In the caption under the image we read that Mr. Page – a transparent name for his business – is kindly asked to help her with the best decision, while she consults the library catalogue. She goes all the way from *The Man of Feeling* to *Frederick or the Libertine* and makes sprightly comments as she comes across more enticing titles. Most definitely is she tempted to choose Werther-type ones referring to suicide after unrequited love or "unguarded moments." When she gets into moralizing titles like *The School of Virtue* or *Test of Filial Love*, she voices her dislike in so many words. Nor is she delighted by "mental pleasures." Once her choices made, she announces her next visit in a couple of days, by which time she will have devoured four novels and romances. And then, again, male sense will serve female sensibility. The circulating library shelves show the actual reading/writing grid underlying this circumstance. Novels, romances and tales are almost completely called out. History is very scantily courted. Sermons remain impeccably untouched. And, incredibly, not even voyages and travels or plays are in demand by potential readers. Regular theatre going may account for supplementing the latter texts, while the female readership in this case may provide the clue to why adventures at sea and by land appear uninteresting.

Trade cards and advertisements associated with circulating libraries of the mid- into the late 1770s are at once commercial and cultural documents. We learn that the 1757 established Francis Noble's Large Circulating Library at Otway's Head in King Street, Covent Garden, lent books to read "Both English and French," with "New Books Bought as soon as Publish'd" (Noble 8). Catering for a voracious readership, it had to move at sprightly pace and keep their curiosity unperturbed. George Jerry Osborne's Circulating Library, opened in 1792, "Respectfully inform[ed] the Ladies and Gentlemen of Newburyport, and its Vicinity" that the owner would readily enlarge "his Shop, Guttemberg's Head, near the Rev. Mr.

Andrews' Meeting-House," according to the encouragement he might receive, and advertised "an Assortment of Books and Stationary" (*Essex Journal* 28) on display. "Polite knowledge and provincial sociability" (Bowd 157) contributed their due each to building a sense of provincial friendship felicitously copying the capital city habits.

Fig. 8, George Romney, *Serena Reading*, 1780s

Books borrowed from such institutions made for very enjoyable open-air reading by ladies with a taste for landscape. More often than not though, indoor reading in the late afternoon and early evening was the rule. *Serena Reading* (*Fig. 8*), a telling onomastic identity under Romney's brush, is a poised reader sitting upright on a comfortable chair which is in no way as gratulatory an item of indoor leisure as the duodecimo lying open on her clasped hands. White like her loose dress, the tablecloth hanging in folds to the floor increases the sense of virtuous dreaming. What looks like a Romantic landscape out of the open window, like the discrete candle light on the table, creates the pensive ambiance. The posture is the same as that of a *Lady Reading Journal des Dames et des Modes* (*Fig. 9*) seated on a mossy boulder in broad daylight.

Fig. 9, *Lady Reading Journal des Dames et des Modes* 1811

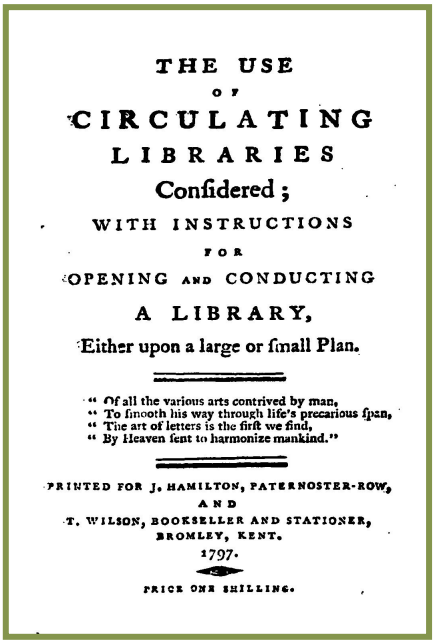
London could afford the so-called *Temple of the Muses*, a huge bookstore in Finsbury Square, so

large that a "mail-coach and four were driven round the counters at its opening" (Lackington 1), in 1793. James Lackington, the owner, was a hardworking bookseller credited with revolutionizing the British book trade: Londoners believed that upon arriving in the capital with his wife, Lackington spent their last half-crown on *Night Thoughts*, instead of buying dinner for the two of them. He found food for the mind in Young's verse, but could make real money out of buying whole libraries, publishing writers' manuscripts and selling remaindered books at bargain prices. Small provincial towns kept their circulating libraries going almost exclusively on duodecimo-sized romances and novels, as did Susann Oakes in Ashborne, in the County of Derby. With its ship-building business and flourishing trade, Newcastle-upon-Tyne hosted the circulating library run by Joseph Barber & Son lending atlases and maps, by the side of voyage books.

For commercial reasons a variety of items related to reading and writing were often sold in the selfsame place. Samuel Paterson, for instance, bookseller and stationer, at Shakespears Head, opposite Durham Yard in the Strand, London, boasted a wide range of books "in all languages and faculties, & all sorts of stationary wares…; likewise gives money for any library or parcel of books, takes catalogues of gentlemens libraries & disposes of 'em (…) to the best advantage" (1). John Wilkie, bookseller and publisher near the Chapter-House in St. Paul's Church Yard, London, sold "books in all languages & faculties, bibles, common prayers, & school-books of all sorts, wholesale ore retale: periodical publications of all kinds; play cards, … & stationary wares of all sorts" (*Eighteenth-Century Tradecards* 4).

A bookplate of T. Gascoigne, Parlington, Yorkshire, ca. 1770, shows the interior of Parlington Library, tenanted by two mythological females, in effect two Yorkshire damsels masquerading, one as a muse, the other as Apollo. This allegory of writing collates items of ancient Greek culture onto Classic Modern culture: as is only too becoming, the muse commits the words inspired by the god of poetry in a folio reclining on her writing table, on which stand a globe in a wooden frame and a bound folio

tome. The statue of Athena rises behind them, while a caduceus and coat of arms lie at her feet. Behind a pair of columns in the background shelves are ranged with books in the usual order of folio at the bottom, octavo in the middle and duodecimo on the top levels. Founded in 1796, the *Artizans Library* in Birmingham was structured according to the same logic, but, as it served the education of mechanical skills and addressed the working classes, it abounded in folios and quartos, as we can see in the allegory of practical labour reflecting the light of knowledge onto a pile of huge tomes. At the same time, the Minerva Press in London published "entertaining and instructive" duodecimos for aristocratic delight: fairy tales collected under the title *The Palace of Enchantment*.



THE USE
OF
CIRCULATING
LIBRARIES
Conſidered;
WITH INSTRUCTIONS
FOR
OPENING AND CONDUCTING
A LIBRARY,
Either upon a large or ſmall Plan.

" Of all the various arts contrived by man,
" To ſmooth his way through life's precarious ſpan,
" The art of letters is the firſt we find,
" By Heaven ſent to harmonize mankind."

PRINTED FOR J. HAMILTON, PATERNOSTER-ROW,
AND
T. WILSON, BOOKSELLER AND STATIONER,
BROMLEY, KENT.
1797.

PRICE ONE SHILLING.

Fig. 10, *The Use of Circulating Libraries*, 1797

A few years before the wind up of the century, more precisely in 1797, *The Use of Circulating Libraries Considered; with Instructions for Opening and Conducting a Library, Either upon a Large or Small Plan* was published in Bromley, Kent (*Fig. 10*). It made it clear from its first pages that prejudices against circulating libraries were losing ground every single day, as "nothing can be greater proof of their utility, than the great demand for books of late years, and increase of those repositories of instruction and amusement" (3-4). It also specified the support given to the lower classes via the "benevolence of the rich" (5) to provide food for the mind as well

as for the body. It regarded subscribing to a circulating library as a solution to moral dissolution as well as a way of getting people interested in a variety of subjects. History, for instance, was described as "a relation of the most natural and important events" (14), and narrative as "a relation of events which affords general entertainment" which "excite and gratify curiosity, and engage the passions" (15). Circulating libraries, in short, were defined as "depots of learning & stores for rational amusement" (9). In the day's well-wrought heroic couplet fit for *capitation benevolentiae*, this thorough guide condensed its message in the following motto:

> Of all the various arts contrived by man,
> To smooth his way through life's precarious span,
> The art of letters is the first we find,
> By Heaven sent to harmonize mankind.

Novels in particular were deemed to "bear a great resemblance to truth (…), most of [them] convey[ing] instruction with delight" (15). The more welcome were they felt as knowledge appeared as "a domestic private treasury, (…) one of the brightest rays of the Divine Nature" (16). Large libraries were praised for displaying magazines, newspapers and reviews, and books in libraries were recommended to be organized by subjects and numbered under the respective head. Exchanges between libraries were saluted as a reliable source of supplementary information. But by far the most relevant consideration stemmed from the hierarchy established naturally between divinity, history, narrative and novels. It was a matter of common sense to judge their importance based on the items stored: 1050 novels, 130 romances, 60 history and another 60 divinity books. Crucially, this was not an *a priori* evaluation. It did not work on a prescriptive basis, rather it came as the realization of actual demand, supply and consumption, all "*pro bono publico*" (40). Its aim was to serve the common wealth via books: "Proper books are proper companions, and often keep us from improper ones; with them we either travel or stay at home; with them we are

sentimental or merry; and from them we seldom part without improvement and pleasure" (11-12).

Doubtless, the "expansion and experiences of reading and the introduction and popularity of the *novel* and other *popular literature*" (Abbas 48, emphasis added) are undissociable from the overall modernization of reading in Classic Modernity. The whole communication process in "all its variations over space and time and in all its relations with other systems, economic, social, political, and cultural, in the surrounding environment" (Jacobs 44) accounted for it. In a nutshell, we could call it a deictic assessment of the book as cultural object. Adjacent conceptual views, professional specializations and trading skills came in a package. The legacy of this rich book-based culture is still with us, albeit in astoundingly different guises. Private libraries offering the spectacle of an elegant mix of books, china and various other *objets* are not strictly museum-like spaces, though the charm of musing over museified reality has not dwindled. A world bigger than life, a doubling of this world *and* one kept functioning by resort to reason and order, the library – whether in physical or electronic form – has not ceased being quantitatively exhaustive and qualitatively much better, desirably perfect as a universe.

Back in the Long Eighteenth Century, the by and large public library was a forger of urban culture, library members providing a marker of social position, respectability and enlightened credentials. It evolved hand in hand with the development of publishing as a specialist commercial undertaking. In the 1830s, the time of emerging reform acts, the industrialization of book production was fact and literacy rose in unprecedented proportion. Educational literature, children's books, specialist books, literature focusing on practical knowledge and so forth entailed a reshuffle of reader-author, publisher-bookseller, book-newspaper/periodical, metropole-colony relations. A protosociology of texts in its own right was assuming shape which we have gradually refined as the complex analysis of the material forms of books, their transmission and consumption, the human motives and interrelations between books and their readerships, the part played by institutions

responsible for all these activities – all in all, a cultural history of the book, of reading and writing. Roger Chartier calls it "the order of books," by which he means modern forms of sociability, new modes of thought and new relationships between humans and power. Other theoreticians refer to it as book-related practices riveting round the management of money, leisure and power (the Foucauldian avenue) or book selection, national networks of distribution and consumption and the establishment of national culture (the Andersonian avenue), neither ignorant of the re/construction of authorship (the Barthesian avenue).

The texts – cultures – the world interdependence, these *reading* matters emphasize the fact that reading *matters*, not simply as an activity, but as one occurring in cultural-historic embeddedness. Take, for instance, the deep-going change in Western culture from the traditional Bible reading practice pre-eminently in Protestant communities, in the vernacular, to the Classic Modern habit of reading the newspaper. The one is an act of collective performance and relevance, conducive to family-based community cohesion, the growth and settlement of shared literary-cultural imagery, thinking and understanding. Bible reading is an evening practice in the family and an Early Modern confirmation of intensive reading and abidance by the *canon*. The other is an individual act taking place in the public sphere, more often than not in the coffeehouse, tapping into the reader's curiosity for the latest news. Newspaper reading is a morning practice in the first place, putting the modern individual in touch with the world, efficiently and inexpensively. It confirms the weight of extensive reading for the modern mind and does justice to its thirst for *novelty*.

In this public sphere of private subjects, the *novel* won terrain as an easily accessible genre feeding on referential reality, written in the vernacular, pleasing personal tastes and castigating "the foibles and follies of social life" (Cowan 348) with amiable sociability, while not shying away from criticism. No wonder it was pooh-poohed as a cheeky bastard and looked down upon as foolish, yet dangerous literature finding shelter in public libraries, equally unreliable new developments, "evergreen tree[s] of diabolical

knowledge," as we learn from Sir Anthony Absolute in Sheridan's *Rivals*, I, 1. Like leaves on the mythical devilish tree of knowledge, leaves making up novels can feed the sinful fruit. Lydia Languish gives defensive orders to her maid, when she feels the danger of being caught in the reprimandable act of novel reading. Ovid, the master of *Ars amatoria* is hidden together with sentimental novels of the day, and the High Church devotional book *The Duty of Man* and *Fordyce's Sermons* are used as moral shields. Of the former we know that it circulated as anonymous for decades, its High Church stance being disliked in Puritan England. *The Duty of Man*, a direct Biblical formulation, passed for a collective book by some collective author in charge of public soul sanity. The latter was the work of James Fordyce, an ardent Scottish Presbyterian minister, whose preaching inflamed the crowds and impressed even David Garrick, the most demonstrative gesturer-actor of the late 1700s.

Fordyce was friends with Dr. Johnson, who, in the same *Rambler* No. 4 deplored the delight in works of fiction taken by "the present generation" for their capacity to "exhibit life in its true state, diversified only by accidents that daily happen in the world, and influenced by passions (…) to be found in conversing with mankind" (1). To him this was cheap entertainment for "minds unfurnished with ideas, and therefore easily susceptible of impressions; not fixed by principles." He was persuaded that "the foundation must be laid by reading" (Fischer 252). In effect, considered morally dubious and aesthetically problematic, the early eighteenth-century novel claimed the status of "historical writing," which it parodied to finally return to "historical techniques, this time on a new level in a to-and-fro motion" (Beck 405).

Something else stepped on the toes of such rule-abiding writers as Samuel Johnson. It was the loose relation entertained by the novel with loose species running against the grain of precise and time-tested rules. To prove it is *A Catalogue of English Prose Fiction: Mainly of the Eighteenth Century from a Private Library* published by J.C. Hardy in 1982 and listing: a fair quantity of "adventures", e.g. *The Adventures of a Black Coat* (1760), *The Adventures of a Watch* (1788), *The Adventures of a Valet* (1752) –

all either it-narratives or servant-geared stories; *The Correspondents, An Original Novel; in a Series of Letters* (1740) – that despicable fashion of wearing one's heart on one's sleeve; *Days of Chivalry. A Romance* (1797) – an equally painful resort to emotions, this time in the days of yore and in no definite place; *The Female Foundling* (1751); *Masquerades* (1780); *Memoirs of Maria, a Persian Slave* (1790) – all effeminate or easy-going or downright degrading, since good for the underclass; *The Narrative Companion: or, Entertaining Moralist: Containing Choice of the Most Elegant, Interesting, and Improving Novels and Allegories, from the best English Writers, viz. The Spectator, Rambler, World, Adventurer, Connoisseur* (1760) – these last titles, at last, morally recommendable.

From the 1750s "these miscellanies featured proportionately less politics and religion and more illustrations, fiction, periodical essays, and chitchat," and toward the late century "the most successful miscellanies had moved a long way toward mindless entertainment" (Sullivan xxi). A fruitful exchange of energy developed between novels and these variegated writings, major writers finding in the latter "essential sources of biographical information through their notices, advertisements, gossip, anecdotes, letters of controversy, reviews, biographical sketches, elegies, memoirs, imitations, and burlesques" (Sullivan xxv).

Self-indulgent novel-reading and the growing market for so-called guilty novels paved the way for a complex form of popular leisure praxis, with privacy regarded as a special asset. Relaxed private reading and pleasurable pastimes associated with it made of the news culture of the time the enjoyment of a predominantly female leisurely readership. Appealing to those that spent most of their time at home, ladies descending from the aristocratic down the social ladder to the serving classes, the novel became "the cultural expression of these changes, the cultural form of the period, catching the structure of feeling" (Vogrinčič 107). Most importantly, the mechanisms of inner life and individual psychology created "a bond of intimacy between a reader and a hero as well as the reader and the author, which enabled the process

of identification (…) the author, the hero and the reader shar[ing] the same 'world'" (Vogrinčič 108). The referential quality of novelistic characters, venue and events blurred the border between fiction and reality and moved the novel, symbolically, towards the anecdote, as defined by Fineman: "the only literary form that uniquely *lets history happen* by virtue of the way it introduces an opening into the teleological, and therefore timeless, narration of beginning, middle, and end" (61). Like the anecdote, the novel showed its capacity to produce "the effect of the real, the occurrence of contingency," as "the hole in the rim" (Fineman 61).

Regularly associated with novels, of which they offered loads on loan, circulating libraries appeared as blasphemous to the morally righteous and were at times compared with brothels and gin shops. While romances were raised by the deictic scaffolding of the high mode (the *up there*), novels lived at the deictic level of particularism and worldliness (the *down here*). Novels were the main food for female sensibility and (some) sense and were read everywhere, and often "in the midst of something else: at the hairdresser's, while travelling in a coach, at meals, while putting up makeup" (Vogrinčič 111). For an age pictured in telling detail by Pope's *Rape of the Lock*, this rings the bell of "Puffs, powders, patches, bibles, billets-doux" (I, 138). It is the signal of social status sent "through items of everyday material culture, through a symbolic universe of commonplace 'things'" (Breen 76), while focusing on the redefinition of material goods at a time of emerging consumerism. Published in 1796, the soon very popular novel *The Sylph* spoke about "these foolish, yet dangerous Books" (I, 36) as it took notice of the conspicuous leisure of the higher classes. In novelistic terms we can read Pope's famous listing on frivolous and serious items on Belinda's table as improvers for the visage ("puffs, powders, patches") and for the heart ("billets-doux") with the soul assisted by modern printed and easily manageable bibles in duodecimo format. This worldly accommodation of the Holy Writ points to its mechanical reproducibility and to its pragmatic use as hair-curlers, if we are to stay within the perimeter of the physical.

Bibles or baubles, bibles as baubles – here is a secularized reading of the Book of God, with the cosmic turned cosmetic.

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Reading Early Modern Theatrical Performance and a Skimmington at Horn Fair: Evidence from Sibiu[1]

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Abstract
A painting of about 1700 by Jan Griffier in the Brukenthal Museum in Sibiu, Transylvania, shows a view of London with Horn Fair, near Greenwich, in the foreground. At Horn Fair, held each year on 18 October, cuckolds with their wives and lovers, all wearing horns, processed from Deptford to Charlton, where the fair was held. At its entrance a large effigy of a male figure, wearing antlers and holding bull's horns, is erected above the gate. Behind there may be a two-storey building for sexual assignations. The procession includes a skimmington with 'rough music.' Originally a ritual humiliation for wayward women and their unfortunate husbands, skimmingtons often became triumphal celebrations of sexual liberty. Beyond the procession is a booth theatre, with actors on the stage – one of only two portrayals of this widespread form of representation. I relate Horn Fair to relevant pamphlets and ballads, to other Early Modern inversion rituals, the Shrovetide apprentice riots, for example, to details of other paintings held in the Brukenthal, to the skimmington inserted into Brome and Heywood's *The Late Lancashire Witches*, and to *The Merry Wives of Windsor* and *As You Like It.* I conclude with an account of a recent booth theatre production of *King Lear.*

Keywords: Horn Fair, booth theatres, skimmingtons, Jan Griffier, William Shakespeare

Visual representations of theatres and performances in early modern England are exceptionally rare, and, like the well-known De Witt drawing of the Swan, often problematic. What we have are a couple of engravings on title-pages of stages in private (indoor) playhouses, as well as one depiction of an outdoor – or "booth" – or "fairground" – theatre on the title-page of Scarron's *Comical Romance*, translated into English in 1676.

Figure 1

Visual evidence of the practices of theatre for the people, of players in the community, of performances outside the metropolis – at fairs, or on structures that were not specifically designed for theatrical representation – is, therefore, virtually non-existent.[2] This absence is not surprising since there was practically no landscape art in England until the mid-seventeenth century – little chance, therefore, of a booth theatre appearing in a corner of a townscape – and no sub-genre analogous to the paintings of Pieter Bruegel and others from the Low Countries that depicted the festival of the kermis ("church mass") in towns and villages.

However, at least one of those Dutch images may impinge on the study of Shakespearean drama: in versions of Bruegel the Younger's "Village Fair"[3] we note the enacted narrative *topos* of the lover being carried out under the husband's nose.

Figure 2

A very similar episode occurs in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*: seeing this in a 'folk' context may make us usefully sceptical of readings of that play that come heavily laden with mythical analogies such as "the carrying out of death."[4]

Recently, when preparing a lecture to accompany a 2014 performance of *King Lear* on a booth stage that was being toured from London by Shakespeare's Globe, I came upon a brief article by art historian Diana de Marly that appeared in the *Burlington Magazine* over forty years ago. I am not an art historian, but, even from its minute and murky reproduction of a small painting in Sibiu's Brukenthal Museum that shows a booth theatre, I could tell this picture was important for theatre and cultural historians too. It portrays not simply a booth stage but also suggestive details of the festive context of popular performance.

Figure 3

The artist, Jan Griffier the Older, was a Dutch painter who was born about 1652 and died in 1718 in London, having worked with Jan Looten in England for at least two decades.

In fact another of Griffier's paintings, "A View of London and its Surroundings" held in Turin,[5] also offers evidence of an extra-playhouse performance, and I shall turn first to that.

Figure 4

It can be related to the well-known account of Queen Elizabeth's visit to the Tower of London on 4 August, 1601. The antiquary Sir William Lambard was showing the Queen certain records: "she proceeded to further pages and, asked where she found cause of stay, so Her Majesty fell upon the reign of Richard II, saying, 'I am Richard II, know ye not that? … He that will forget God will also forget his benefactors: *this tragedy was played forty times in open*

streets and houses'" (Honan 216-217, emphasis added). We presume that booth theatres, portable or improvised, were used in streets or in the yards of inns or public houses for performances of this kind.

What might these performances have looked like? A suggestion comes from the booth stage shown in the Turin Griffier. Notice that the performance is taking place while a fair, associated with a religious ceremony, goes on around it. On the left side of the picture we see a church procession; in front of this there are booths with fairings or food for sale. The performance is taking place, perhaps opportunistically, on the unroofed first floor of a building, obviously not designed as a theatre, but one which is either under construction or being demolished. There is no sign either of a painted cloth or, behind the players, a tiring-house in which they may have donned their costumes. So we just might envisage improvised playing spaces like this for the performances of *Richard II* about which the Queen complained.

Booth stages were pretty simple affairs: a few boards on trestles (or barrels[6]) and, generally, a tent serving as a tiring-house behind. The stage in the second Griffier, in the Brukenthal, sits on what could be piles about a metre high – possibly a permanent structure – and it looks to be about 4.5 metres deep and probably less wide. I deduce this measurement from the presumed height of the players: the one down-stage looks as though he might be a *commedia dell'arte* figure, perhaps a clown engaging in banter with the spectators – as is shown in images from the Low Countries.[7]

There is no tent, only the blue and white awning over the back of the stage, and the space between the backdrop and some hanging in front is too shallow for a tiring-house. I just wonder whether the scaffolding behind the stage served to support cloths painted with images or devices relevant to the play. This conjecture of painted cloths is supported by the Scarron title-page and by details from other Sibiu paintings. First, one by Paolo Alboni (1671-1734) called "On Pilgrimage" that shows a kermis, with a booth in which, in front of a picture, a man sits. The architectural style of the presumably Roman Catholic church suggests Alboni is

depicting events in Austria or north Italy. The man is wearing clerical bands that suggest he could be a Protestant preacher – or someone satirising that kind of ministry. The painting could be of a preacher whom the man is parodying. In the left foreground, as Dr. Sonoc pointed out to me, are two Turks, bemused by the Catholic-Protestant rivalry.

Is the man a balladeer, a 'sit-down' comic, who is surprising his audience by squirting some liquid into the ear of one of them, just like filling their ears with a funnel? The image might satirise Protestant emphasis on the Word. Dr. Sonoc suggested that the German *Eintrichtern*, to funnel, or the English idiom "to ram something down someone's throat" convey the meaning of the moment.

The Brukenthal also owns two fine paintings by the German artist F.V. Decler, who flourished about 1780. Both show painted cloths – which we know to have been used on English stages.[8] The first is a useful representation of what look to be players in the *commedia* tradition on a small booth stage with a functional tent/tiring-house. It looks as though it has been built in front of a gate in a city wall – Dr. Sonoc has identified the setting as Ulm. The second, possibly representing somewhere on the Dalmatian coast, I take to be a performance by a couple of balladeers, using pictures on a painted cloth for illustrative purposes.[9] This is obviously not a "good fellowship occasion" – in England ballads illustrated with woodcuts were often stuck to tavern walls – but perhaps a performance by a singing pedlar like Autolycus in *The Winter's Tale*. Singers can be detected among the audience: I imagine that sing-alongs occurred quite frequently in ballad performances.

Horn Fair

How do we *read* what we *see*? The Sibiu Griffier is very important because the painting, which includes reality effects such as perspective and geographical specificity, offers not only some new and salient details but also, even more significantly, shows a performance *in context*. The performance is occurring not simply in

a fair-ground or on a street corner but at a particular time, the day of Horn Fair, held annually on 18 October (St Luke's Day), and at a particular place, Charlton, about five kilometres east of Greenwich, i.e. about 13 kilometres distant from St Paul's.[10] The symbol of St Luke, of course, was a winged ox with horns. I can suggest a date for the painting at the very end of the seventeenth century: Wren's new St Paul's had a round dome, and is visible in the distance. It was consecrated in 1697 and topped out in 1708.

There are a number of early accounts of Horn Fair as well as jokey broadside 'summonses' to come and join in the fun. In these sheets antlers and bulls' horns appear promiscuously.

A General SUMMONS for those belonging to the

Hen-Peck'd FRIGATE,

To appear at Cuckolds-Point, on the 18th. of this Instant October.

Licensed according to Order.

YOur Presence is required, and are hereby lawfully Summoned (as belonging to the *Hen-Peck'd-Frigate*) to appear at *Cuckolds-Point* (being the antient Place of our Rendezvous) on the 18th. of this Instant *October*; precisely by Seven of the Clock in the Morning, well fitted with a *Basket*, *Pit-Axe* and *Shovel*, there to give your Attendance, till the Last of your Brethren, the Knights of the *Forked Order*, is called over, and then at the Word of Command, to march in good Order to the Gravel-Pits, there to Dig Sand and Gravel for Repairing the Foot-Ways, that your Wives with their Friends may have pleasure and delight in walking to *Horn-Fair*, whereof you are not to fail, under the *Penalty* of a Garret-Correction, and the Forfeiture of all your Goods and Chattels, except your Master's Jointure.

Thomas Canit-Be-Quiet Beadle.

A New SONG *on* Horn-Fair. *Tune is* Ladies of *LONDON*.

HEre is a Summons for all honest Men,
belonging to the Hen-peck'd Frigate;
And I will tell you the place where and when,
both Gravel and Sand for to dig it;
To mend the ways, 'tis no idle Tale,
remember your Foreheads adorning,
At *Cuckolds-Point* you must meet without fail,
by Seven a Clock in the morning.

Shovels and *Pit-Axes* you must provide,
it is but in vain for to cavil,
You must bring with you a Basket beside,
in order to carry the Gravel,
That your Sweet Wives may walk to the Fair,
with Gallant that dotes on their Beauty,
See that you do it with diligent care,
consider it is but your Duty.

Taylors with *Turners*, and *Coblers* too,
also *Barbers*, *Pipers*, and *Scrapers*;
Nay, and besides there's a notable Crew,
a thousand or two of *Silk-Drapers*:
All must appear and patiently wait,
while they have receiv'd their Direction,
And if any Laws you shall here violate,
beware of a Garret-Correction.

But if you do it with perfect delight,
that Woman that finds you regard her,
She to requite you will sure dub you Knight,
and one of the old *Forked Order*;
For there was some left Year were made so,
and one was kind *Robin* my Neighbour;
This may encourage you freely to go,
as knowing you shan't lose your labour.

Doing of this you may lead a sweet Life,
as long as you flourish together;
Can any Man be too kind to his Wife,
I pray you now do but consider?
Therefore I pray be sure to attend,
and be not of labour too sparing,
When they return you will find in the end,
they'll bring you a HORN for a Fairing.

Printed for *J. Deacon*.

Figure 5

A New SUMMONS to

HORN-FAIR: 1714

To appear at *CUCKOLD's POINT* on the 18th of *October*, and from thence to march to the *Gravel-Pits*, to dig Gravel, to make a Path for your Wives to walk on to the FAIR.

THis shall be to Warn you: Now you are hereby lawfully Summoned, that belong to the *Henpecks-Frigat*, to appear in your own Perſon at *Cuckold's Point*, on the 18th of *October*, being the Day of your uſual Meeting, by 8 of the Clock in the Morning preciſely, with a Basket, Pickax, and Shovel, there to be muſtered with the reſt of your Brethren; and from thence to march to the *Gravel-Pits* to dig Gravel, to make a Foot-Path for your Wives to walk on to the *Fair*, upon pain of great Penalty, to be inflicted upon you, by Us the Knights of the *Forked-Order*, beſides the Forfeiture of all your Goods and Chattels, except your Wife's Weapon.

John Do-little, Beadle.

To the Tune of *The City Kamers.*

YOU Sots that are joyn'd to a Woman,
Your Implements ready prepare;
In the Name of your Wives here I Summons
You all to appear at *Horn Fair.*
Fa, la, la, &c.

Be brisk, and ſtill ready-witted,
That you may live Heaven-ly Lives;
With all things in Order well-fitted,
To make the Way clear for your Wives.
Fa, la, la, &c.

Both Citizens, Bumpkins and Seamen,
This Summons doth come for you all;
And all that are lately made Free men
Of Cuckolds, or Fumblers-Hall.
Fa, la, la, &c.

You are to appear in great Splendour,
With Pickax and Shovel alſo;
The Feet of your Wives they are tender,
When unto *Horn-Fair* they do go.
Fa, la, la, &c.

There's New-fahion'd Horns of all Sizes,
More Gallant than ever before,
To be given to Cuckoldly Nizes,
To hang up at every one's Door.
Fa, la, la, &c.

Four Fumbling Knights are appointed
To ſee that the Buſineſs be done,
Whoſe Horns are made long, and well joynted,
And Wives are as right as a Gun.
Fa, la, la, &c.

Before you ſhall be Rewarded,
For all your great Labour and Paine,
By an Army of Bullies well guarded,
If you've any Guts in your Brains.
Fa, la, la, &c.

The Liſt will be then called over,
And he that does not appear,
If living between *York* and *Dover*,
Shall do double Duty next Year.
Fa, la, la, &c.

Printed and Sold by *H. H.* in *Black-Fryars.*

Figure 6

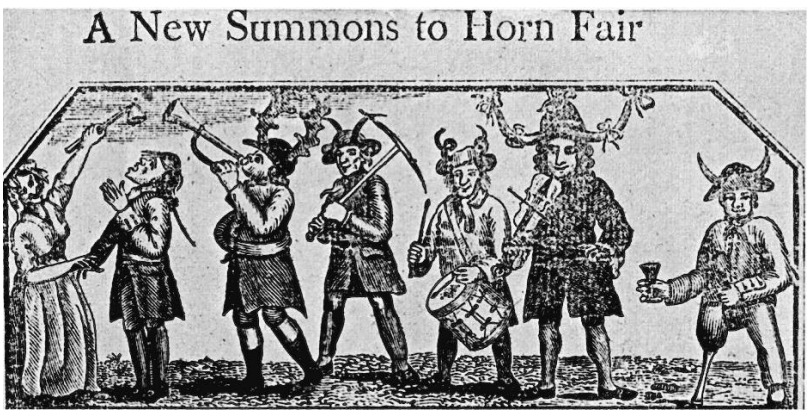

Figure 7

A NEW Summons

TO ALL THE

MERRY MAKING JADES

THAT ATTEND AT

HORN FAIR.

COME all you merry jades,
Who love to play the game;
And whilst your husbands are abroad,
To have some of the same,
You are summoned to Horn Fair,
Your fine there for to pay,
And caress your honest brothers,
Who assemble there that day.

Moll, Nell, and Sue, with Kitty too,
And Bridget, Nan, and Pat,
With Sally Prim, and likewise Doll,
Will trudge without a hat;
With Bess, and Kate, and Margery,
And simpering Peggy too;
All these and many more must come,
They are of the fumbling crew.

See where they are assembled,
With bottle and with glass,
And now the liquor it doth hand,
By passing round so fast;
And brandishing, the ladies swear,
They one and all agree,
Their husbands horns to tip with gold,
When they come home from sea.

The way it must be levell'd,
By the men who go before,
Or with the ladies they will crack
Their crowns will make them sore,
Then snapping of their fingers,
As they along do go,
Laughing at the rabble as they pass,
Crying, cuckolds all a row.

The breeches they do carry,
And swear they will them wear,
And have their sparks when they please,
Tho' husband jealous are;
What care they for such fumblers,
They with their sparks can go,
And answer all that laugh at them,
Cuckolds all a row.

In the booking kens they fuddle,
And within the fair,
And rapping with their ladies,
They barter ware for ware;
There's money spent in every tent,
And each man hugs his frow,
Kissing, tugging, pulling, hauling,
Cuckolds all a row.

Some horns are tipt with silver,
And others tipt with gold,
Which are to all spectators,
Most lovely to behold;
Crooked horns and hooks,
And horns that shrill do blow,
When they are put into their mouths,
Crying, cuckolds all a row.

They jog along unto the church,
With all their horned tribe,
No one will be excused,
By means of any bribe;
The parson with his curled horns,
Invites them for to go
Into the church, they think not much,
Being cuckolds all a row.

The parson makes his text,
Upon the horned crew,
And loudly doth exclaim against
The sin of adultery too;
And when they do come out again,
To mocking they do go,
And flourishing the ladies cry,
Cuckolds all a row.

Old maids and fusty bachelors,
With wanton widows too,
When you intend to marry,
Know what you must go through,
But rather than lead apes in hell,
Along with me do go,
No horned brother dare make game,
They are cuckolds all a row.

The miller they do mock,
Seeing his spreading horn,
Perhaps his wife is with some spark,
Whilst he's grinding of his corn,
She says her mill it sha'n't idle stand,
Whilst her husband's it doth go,
No horned brother dares make game,
They're cuckolds all a row.

Now having played their frolics,
They homeward do repair,
And sounding of their horns aloud,
Their coming do declare:
The people as they pass,
Make game we well do know,
Yet, nevertheless, if we may guess,
They're cuckolds all a row.

Printed and sold by T. Batchelar, 115, Long Alley, Moorfields, London.

Figure 8

In a pamphlet printed in 1700, the prolific Grub Street scribbler Edward (Ned) Ward (1667-1731) included in his text an archetypal masculine fantasy. He purported to have received a summons to Charlton from "a sorrowful young lady who had grieved … under the weakness and imbecility of an infirm husband." She had charged him,

> according to the ancient and laudable custom of the Corniferous Society, to meet at the Mermaid Tavern in Billingsgate, then to take boat and land at Cuckold's point [on the Rotherhithe peninsula] … where the troop of merry cuckolds used to rendezvous; armed with shovel, spade, pick-axe, their heads adorned with horned helmets. (Ward 3, 12)[11]

Then he would walk

> through Deptford and Greenwich to Horn Fair, there to receive a horn fairing as a token of one year's friendship … having full power given [him] … over her own body and her husband's goods, so far as they can be clandestinely converted without discovery, to [his] good use and benefit. (Ward 3-4)

Dream on, poor Ned, but his document reveals that, at Horn Fair, perplexingly, both cuckolds and cuckolders seem to have joined in the merriment.

Not surprisingly, this merriment may also have included cross-dressing. The trickster William Fuller wrote around 1703,

> I remember … upon Horn Fair Day, I was dressed in my landlady's best gown and other women's attire, and to Horn Fair we went, and, as we were coming back by water, all the clothes were spoiled by … an inundation, for which I was obliged to present her with two guineas to make atonement for the damage sustained. (122)

In *The Every Day Book*, William Hone in 1826 notes that the procession "went round [Charlton] church three times. This was accompanied by … many indecencies on Blackheath, such as the whipping of females with furze" (I, 693-694).

Cross-dressing and flagellation: I am not certain how much historical truth we can extract from some of these documents. Some accounts may project the fantasies of participants, others the imaginings of the Fair's critics – the rights to process had in fact been lost in 1768 (Williams I, 688). The Fair may indeed have morphed into a sexual orgy, losing the remedial function originally at its centre.

To revert to Griffier's painting, in the background to the left is another cluster of structures. To the right a beer barrel? To the left we may be able to detect someone reading a woman's palm. To the rear, a two-storeyed structure with many doors – leading to booths for prostitutes. A man stands on the upper level. A pimp (designated as a tapster in *Measure for Measure*)? Flags on the roof line: advertising the provenance of the whores?

Griffier's painting dates from the late seventeenth century, but we know that the Fair took place throughout the life of Shakespeare. Reading any performance entails a reading of context, and Horn Fair is extraordinarily complex because it involves not only ritualised behaviour and community performance, but also, if the painting is a record of an occasion, the performance nearby of a scripted text, probably by professional players to spectators who must have been, to some extent, imbued with the carnivalesque.

Now, Horn Fair is a test case for debates by social historians of the reform of popular culture. It may have been granted to the Abbey of Bermondsey by Henry III in 1268;[12] Ward's 1700 pamphlet may be the source of an apocryphal story that it was founded earlier by King John after he had royally awarded horns to a miller whose wife he had seduced (12).[13] There is no evidence that it has Celtic or pre-Christian origins. Accounts of the fair – by Defoe[14] and others – show that it cheerfully defied the genteel or the godly.

Griffier's painting shows a procession approaching a licensed space, designated by a figure of a large horned man, erected over a gateway. The figure not only wears antlers but also carries bull's horns. In the middle of the picture, behind the procession, is a long stall, with, in front, a form on which to sit. Presumably, cakes and ale were on sale, as well as fairings, such as "rams' horns, and every sort of toy made of horns, even …

gingerbread figures [with] horns."[15] The round objects may be rush mats. For sitting outdoors? For use on the players' stage (Mulryne and Shewring 134)?

In front of the stall we see, included in the procession, elements of a 'skimmington,' a shaming ritual, a punishment for adulterers. A skimmington ride or skimmington procession was generally led by someone personating the injured husband or offending wife, the purpose of which was to ridicule and presumably shame one or both of the parties. Either the husband whose wife was unfaithful to him or a shrewish woman could be designated as "a skimmington" (see *OED*) – for the latter, see John Taylor's *Divers Crabtree Lectures.*

Figure 9

The word seems to derive from a wife's skimming ladle – these appear in many illustrations. Skimmingtons were more prevalent in the west of England than elsewhere.[16]

The 'skimmington' in the Griffier is presumably the horn-bearing male about to enter the fair, although, as we shall see, the roles of skimmington leader and skimmington victims were interchangeable. As was customary, a couple follows on: a woman has been tied back-to-back with a man and placed on a horse (sometimes it was an ass), and, in this instance, is being processed to the fair. Often the procession wound through a town or village, to the accompaniment of what was called in France *charivari*, [17] in English, 'rough music.' This is shown clearly in a version of an engraving of William Hogarth published by Joseph Nutting, "Skimmington-Triumph or the Humours of Horn Fair,"

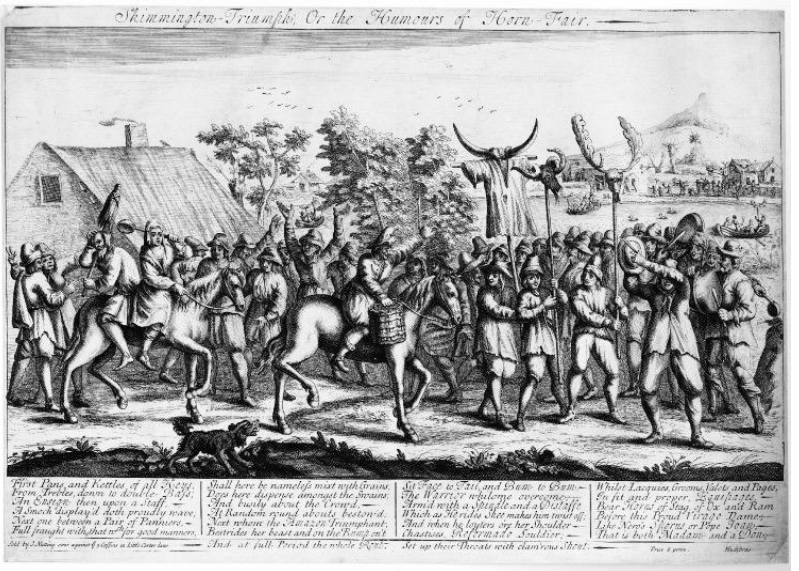

Figure 10[18]

as well as in "Hudibras Encounters the Skimmington,"[19] both of which appeared in a series of engravings to accompany Samuel Butler's *Hudibras* about 1725.[20] In the Griffier you can see a

drummer. On the mound at the bottom left of the picture, lovers are embracing; behind them we see, possibly, the cuckolded husband lamenting.

Now the man tied to the woman on the back of a horse was not necessarily her lover but often her husband, held up to ridicule for not controlling her or for not being able to satisfy her sexually. He is effeminised by having to carry a distaff (for spinning); she, as was the custom, flourishes a ladle. Other figures carry the spades or shovels mentioned by Ward, so that cuckolds might carry gravel and "level the way as they go … that their wives might come after with their gallants, without spoiling their laced shoes or draggling their holiday petticoats" (12).[21]

The field is open for the enactment of one of those inversion rituals enacted in early modern England where *disorder* was presented, as in the Hogarth, in the manner of a *triumph*: these are as difficult to read as they are fascinating. Moreover, in this picture we see a skimmington procession embedded in a Horn Fair procession: skimmingtons were meant to strip privacy away and *shame* transgressors; Horn Fair publicised and *celebrated* transgression. Mark Stanley Dawson offers evidence that certain contemporaries saw the procession as an instrument for social levelling, for the stripping of social distinction, indeed as a parody of the Lord Mayor's parade (65-66).

A skimmington is, rather strangely, incorporated into a stage play, Brome and Heywood's *The Late Lancashire Witches*, performed by the King's Men in 1634[22] – along with a horse. A dummy horse, as in pantomime?[23] A newly wedded pair of servants, Lawrence and Parnel, have fallen out, it is said, because "a better implement the bridegroom was unprovided of" – erectile dysfunction, it would seem. The play implies he had been bewitched.

So, enter the Skimmington, in this case a representation of a cuckolded husband:

> *Enter* [*a*] *drum*[*mer*], *beating before a Skimmington and his wife on a horse;* [*Enter*] *divers country rustics. As they pass, Parnel pulls*

> *Skimmington off the horse, and Lawrence Skimmington's wife; they beat 'em. Drummer beats alar*[*um*]*, horse comes away. The hoydens at first oppose the gentlemen, who draw; the clowns vale bonnet*[*s*]*. They make a ring; Parnel and Skimmington fight.*

I find it very difficult to read this. In this instance, 'Skimmington' and his 'wife' were obviously effigies, subject to ritual but pain-free punishment. This then leads to a brawl between 'rustics' and gentlemen. At first I assumed gender solidarity: I thought the 'hoydens' were women who came to the rescue of the effigy wife, the gentlemen having joined Lawrence to beat 'her.' However, *OED* records no instance of 'hoyden' meaning a brazen hussy before 1676. I, however, wonder.

The gentlemen draw their swords, and the commoners (here 'clowns') doff their caps ('vale bonnets') in respect. So hierarchical authority is quickly restored, but, although that happens, the sequence, at least by implication, ends with Parnel giving the effigy of her husband a good drubbing. Or is the outcome of the fight less important than the fact that social tensions were, it seems, being resolved by a ritual fight – in a way that is analogous to the old school-masterly habit of getting fighting boys to resolve their differences by putting on boxing gloves? Gabriel Egan surmised, "The skimmington forms a concise visual correlate of the ultimately harmless chaos that the witches create in this small Lancashire town."

But, handy-dandy. We know that some spectators of community shamings held them in their mind's eyes as triumphs (as in the Hogarth) or *celebrations* of transgression, especially if the victim was a disorderly or unruly woman – the trope was fixed by Natalie Zemon Davis in her celebrated essay, "Women on Top": "the image of the disorderly woman did not always function to keep women in their place" (131).

John Taylor, the Water Poet, indicates that in a processional spectacle, here the whipping by a beadle of a bawd at the tail of a cart, shaming can turn to celebration, a "triumphant progress," the

latter word designating a state progression such as were undertaken by early modern monarchs across their kingdom:

> And this is her comfort when she is carted, that she rides when all her followers go on foot, that every dunghill pays her homage, and every tavern looking-glass pours bountiful reflection upon her; the streets and windows are full of spectators of her pomp. Shouts, acclamations and ringing on well-tuned Banbury kettle-drums and barbarous basins [rough music] proclaim and sound forth her triumphant progress, whilst she rides embroidered all over like a lady of the soil, conducted in state out of the eastern suburbs, to set up her trade fresh and new in the west. (101)

I wonder whether a 'lady of the soil' referred to a rocky outcrop that seemed to have female form, or whether the 'embroidery' was formed from the marks left by the beadle's lash. The combination of voyeurism and moralism does not allow us a simple perspective on the work.

Another kind of inversion ritual took place at Shrovetide when both playhouses and brothels were likely to be sacked.[24] It is alluded to in *Pasquil's Palinodia* by William Fennor in 1619:

> It was the day of all days in the year
> That unto Bacchus hath his dedication,
> When mad-brained prentices, that no men fear
> O'erthrow the dens of bawdy recreation;
> When tailors, cobblers, plasterers, smiths and masons,
> And every rogue will beat down barbers' basins,
> Whereat Don Constable in wrath appears,
> And runs away with his stout halberdiers.

Taylor, the Water Poet, in *Jack a Lent*, similarly describes the oxymoronic "unmannerly manners of Shrove Tuesday." These were described, some decades later, in reminiscences in Edmund Gayton's *Pleasant Notes upon Don Quixot*, published in 1654:

> I have known upon one of these festivals, but especially at Shrovetide, where the players have been appointed,

> notwithstanding their bills to the contrary, to act what the major part of the company had a mind to … And unless this were done … there were mechanics of all professions who fell everyone to his own trade and dissolved the house in an instant and made a ruin of a stately fabric … Nothing but noise and tumult fills the house, until a cog [probably 'the drink'] take'em; and then to the bawdyhouses and reform them, and instantly to the Bankside where the poor bears must conclude the riot and fight twenty dogs at a time beside the butchers, which sometimes fell into the service. This performed, and the horse and jackanapes [ape] for a jig, they had sport enough that day for nothing. (271-272)

In 1614 Ben Jonson had had the Stage-keeper sketch the ritual in the Induction to *Bartholomew Fair*. But he colours it by introducing a contest between the disadvantaged and an elite:

> Would not a fine pump upon the stage ha'done well, for a property now? And a punk set under upon her head, with her stern upward, and ha'been soused by my witty young masters o'the Inns o'Court? (Induction, 31-5)

Was this mindless violence, this free 'sport,' the carnivalesque interruption of performance and the trashing of playhouses and brothels, a customary part of popular recreation? The misrule of the apprentices might be read as simply unruly behaviour by out-of-control youth. However, is there an important social distinction between 'apprentices' and the 'young masters' of the Inns of Court?

I think it was even more complex, as was the case during an analogous occasion, the ritual of 'barring out' enacted in certain schools. Schoolmasters were locked out of the class room if they refused to end the school term before the appointed date. Riot turned to ritual, and parents attended the annual re-enactment and were offered cakes and ale. Disorder was appropriated or licensed to reinforce the order of the school calendar.[25] Perhaps that happened at Charlton.

More generally, *unruly* behaviour might invoke the *rule* or order espoused by fathers or masters. Plays and prostitution were

thorns in their flesh, and youth and age participated in the same moral economy. We witness "a carnivalised fusion of high and low culture," and it has been suggested that this was revived after the rule of the Saints in order to rekindle the spirit of 'merry England' (Turner 56-57). No one put it more succinctly than Davis: "Misrule can have its own rigor and can also decipher king and state" (*Society and Culture* 97).

Sexuality

Let us just imagine – with no evidence at all – that the play being performed that day at Charlton was that provocatively titled play by Shakespeare, *As You Like It.* I confess I edited it some years ago, and spent an inordinate amount of time trying to gloss and contextualise the horn song, "What shall he have that killed the deer":

> LORDS What shall he have that killed the deer?
> His leather skin and horns to wear.
> Then sing him home,
> The rest shall bear this burden:
>
> Take thou no scorn to wear the horn,
> It was a crest ere thou wast born;
> Thy father's father wore it,
> And thy father bore it;
> The horn, the horn, the lusty horn,
> Is not a thing to laugh to scorn. (4.2.7-17)

How might we contextualise this? For years there was a mangy stuffed deer at the Stratford Theatre that was carried onto the stage for this scene – I presume in the interests of local colour or realism. But that gave out precisely the wrong signal: a "true representation" of an honest rustic sport, deer-hunting. Or was it vaguely mythical? In 1979 Colin Dexter's production at the National Theatre used the sequence to fix the mode of the whole play. The 'foresters' referred to in the scene's opening stage directions were woodwoses or wood spirits: they stood around the periphery of the stage in silent witness

of what their presence signalled as a ritual.[26] A remnant of the worship of a pre-Christian deity, both benign and malign? But Ronald Hutton has demonstrated the complete lack of any evidence of such survival.[27]

Surely it is about sex as well as hunting: "The horn, the horn, the lusty horn, / Is not a thing to laugh to scorn." We have learned a lot about anxious masculinity in recent years, in Shakespeare's time and our own.[28] There is a profusion of engravings of cuckolds with deer's horns. Claire McEachern suggests a paradigm in the story of Actaeon who was horned by Diana: the horns become a symbol of female domination: "Horn jokes mediate cultural anxiety" (608). Maybe anxiety breeds assertion: horns symbolised not just abjection but potency. In *The Merry Wives* the invisible deer horns so feared by Master Ford morph into the buck's head which, according to the Q text, is worn by Falstaff at the end of the play. He had been set up to be disguised as Herne the Hunter, a diabolic figure with "great ragg'd [wild] horns," according to Mistress Page (4.4.25-35). Furthermore Falstaff seems to think his horns might be seen as the bull's horns with which Jove appeared when he carried off Europa (5.3.2-3). In *As You Like It*, it is tempting to imagine a sing-along, like that shown in the Decler painting, with female members of audience merrily minded to mock any symbol of masculinity – although not, perhaps, at what may have been the first performance, before the Queen at Richmond Palace.[29]

Rosalind in *As You Like It*, implies that horns are inevitable: in 4.1, in another scene of merriment, immediately before the horn scene, she reflects on female constancy:

> ROSALIND … The wiser, the waywarder. Make the doors upon a woman's wit, and it will out at the casement; shut that, and 'twill out at the keyhole; stop that, 'twill fly with the smoke out at the chimney.
> ORLANDO A man that had a wife with such a wit, he might say 'Wit, whither wilt?'
> ROSALIND Nay, you might keep that check for it till you met your wife's wit going to your neighbour's bed.
> ORLANDO And what wit could wit have to excuse that?

> ROSALIND Marry, to say she came to seek you there: you shall never take her without her answer unless you take her without her tongue. O, that woman that cannot make her fault her husband's occasion, let her never nurse her child herself, for she will breed it like a fool. (4.1.129-41)

This is typically Shakespearean in that, like the performance as a whole, it is a species of revel, sport, or play, so that, linguistically, this speech is far less statement than word-play. In the period, 'wit' could designate the genitals of either sex, and 'tongue' had sexual connotations.[30] Being born with a wit means one is possessed of a sense of linguistic instability or fluidity. The play moves towards the closure of betrothal, but looks forward to life after marriage – in fact to possible horning. There may be a play for moral certitude – whether a plea for married chastity or for mannerly philandering – but Rosalind hints that it is conceivable that Orlando might have visited his *male* neighbour for sex. Gender too is to play for.

To conclude with, a brief report of seeing *King Lear* on a booth stage in 2014. I saw it twice, once at Shakespeare's Globe, and once a few weeks later at the Skirball Center for the Performing Arts, part of New York University, on Manhattan. In fact, on neither occasion did I see a 'straight' performance, outdoors on portable stage. At the Globe they had erected their booth scaffold on the Globe's own stage. We all know about plays within plays, this was a stage on the stage, a species of metatheatre. Everything on stage had invisible inverted commas around it. At the Skirball a new structure had been build, of beautiful American wood, and it too was placed on the stage. However, this was an enormous space, with the audience ranged in rows facing the front, as in a cinema. The stage too was built of fine wood and was reflective: in a gesture towards outdoor performance, the lighting did not change but was reflected every which way. This meant that the booth stage functioned as a set.

It was, however, definitely a company production, with doubling and lots of music: I think every actor played an instrument. Thunder sheets were visible from the side, and the noise they made

was amplified by wind sounds generated on cymbals. At the Globe, actors were visible when they were not involved in a scene and changed costumes before our eyes. This meant that they could move from part of the Globe stage that was not 'live' to one that was 'live.' It meant that at certain moments they were more 'in role' than 'in character.'

In New York this did not happen, and the sight of actors joshing with the audience in the stalls before the show started, easily and 'naturally' done in the yard of the Globe, seemed forced: only a few spectators, at the end of rows, were in reach of the players' outstretched hands. Locked into the ranged seats of a conventional auditorium, it was far less likely that the audience could cue particular emphases or gestures from the players, and on occasion the players had to cue the audience for the reaction they desired – always a fatal error.

What did it do to the play? I felt it changed its genre. In its first edition, Q1, of course, the play is titled *The History of King Lear*. In the Folio it is *The Tragedy of King Lear*. This production, with a degree of (manufactured) folksiness, bookended by a ballad and a terminal jig – these days *de rigueur* at the Globe – became *The Tale of King Lear.*

Did this 'poor theatre' generate an impoverished version? I don't think it did. I found that the scenes I expected to move me did move me. The play had been appropriated in the name of 'the people': Lear appeared as a John Barleycorn figure. This was 'our king,' a demonstration of life elsewhere, at court, and the great moments, some with mythical resonances, others, that simply delivered an emotional charge, were invoked rather than enacted. It was the best sort of pastiche and avoided the pitfalls of parody. For me it worked. What it would have been like surrounded by a fair I do not know.

So, only one conclusion. I have tried to show the complexity of context: cultural energy, what Hamlet calls "the forms and pressures of the time," circulates not just between playhouse, city and court but between an unworthy scaffold and a fair. Fairs, like markets – and like playhouses – were, in early modern England,

often liminal, on the threshold of the city. Stages, fairs, and markets are spaces for performance.[31] This *King Lear*, although I failed to see it creating its own live space, demonstrated that a booth performance is scarcely a simple or primitive performance.

Notes:

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[1] I wish to acknowledge the most generous help of Dr Alexandru Sonoc of the Brukenthal Museum in Sibiu, and also financial support from New York University in London.

[2] See Knutson.

[3] The painting exists in various versions held in the Auckland Art Gallery [https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/6/69/Pieter_Brueghel_II_%28The_Younger%29__A_Village_Fair_%28Village_festival_in_Honour_of_Saint_Hubert_and_Saint_Anthony%29_-_Google_Art_Project.jpg], the Musée Calvet in Avignon etc. Another version of the scene had been painted by Pieter Balten, where the wife in "The Trick-Water Farce" is being seduced not by a gallant but by a devil (Theater Instituut Nederland).

[4] Hattaway, "Falstaff"; compare Northrop Frye:

> … there is an elaborate ritual of the defeat of winter known to folklorists as "carrying out Death", of which Falstaff must have felt that, after being thrown into the water, dressed up as a witch and beaten out of a house with curses, and finally supplied with a beast's head and singed with candles, he had done about all that could reasonably be asked of any fertility spirit. (183)

[5] Galleria Sabauda, Turin.

[6] As in the engraving derived from Pieter Bruegel the Elder's "The Kermis of Saint George" (Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York).

[7] For example in "Kirmes" ["Village Fair"] by David Vinckboons (Koninklijk Museum Voor Schone Kunsten Antwerpen), ArtStor, Web. 12 July, 2016.

[8]

> WIFE … Now, sweet lamb, what story is that painted upon the cloth? "The Confutation of Saint Paul"?
>
> CITIZEN No, lamb, that's Rafe and Lucrece.

> WIFE Rafe and Lucrece? Which Rafe? Our Rafe?
> CITIZEN No, mouse, that was a Tartarian. (Beaumont, Interlude 2.11-16)

[9] It is reproduced in Muresan.
[10] References are assembled in Williams, *Dictionary* 1.688.
[11] There is an entry for Ward in the *DNB.*
[12] See http://www.british-history.ac.uk/survey-kent/vol1/pp420-441. 9 July 2016. Web.
[13] Dr. Sonoc told me that Byzantine emperors gave hunting lands to the men they had cuckolded.
[14]

> Charlton, a village famous, or rather infamous for the yearly collected rabble of mad-people, at Horn-Fair; the rudeness of which I cannot but think, is such as ought to be suppressed, and indeed in a civiliz'd well govern'd nation, it may well be said to be unsufferable. The mob indeed at that time take all kinds of liberties, and the women are especially impudent for that day; as if it was a day that justify'd the giving themselves a loose to all manner of indecency and immodesty, without any reproach, or without suffering the censure which such behaviour would deserve at another time. (Defoe I, 125-6)

[15] Grose, Francis (*A Classical Dictionary of the Vulgar Tongue.* London: S. Hooper, 1785. Print) (qtd. in Williams, *Dictionary* 688). There is a list of other fairings in Wesley (153).
[16] See Ingram.
[17] The word was not used in English until 1735.
[18]http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/collection_object_details.aspx?objectId=3071518&partId=1&place=32514&plaA=32514-1-2&sortBy=&page=1. 12 July, 2016. Web.
[19]http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/collection_object_details/collection_image_gallery.aspx?assetId=336768001&objectId=1419473&partId=1. 12 July, 2016. Web.
[20]http://www.artoftheprint.com/artistpages/hogarth_william_hudibras1_frontis_explanation.htm. 12 July, 2016. Web.
[21] References to Horn Fair and summonses to attend in pamphlets and ballads are usefully collected in Williams, *Dictionary* I, 688-9; for the ballad 'Cuckolds all of a row' associated with these summons, see Simpson 145-147.

[22] For an account see Pearson.
[23] See Egan.
[24] A significant component of (Elizabethan/Stuart) London's Shrove Tuesday celebration involved the violence done by the city's apprentices. One of their few days of free reign, Shrove was a popular time to riot and destroy things. During a 39-year span at the time, riots occurred on 24 different Shrove Tuesdays. The riots were usually located technically outside the jurisdiction of London proper, in the suburbs. Yet, those involved were from all around the surrounding area, including those from deep inside the city. (Lindley 109-110)
[25] See Thomas.
[26] See Warren.
[27] See also Holderness.
[28] See Breitenberg.
[29] See Hattaway, "Dating."
[30] See Williams, *Glossary* 309-10, 340-1.
[31] See Agnew.

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Figures

1. Paul Scarron. *The Comical Romance*. Trans. John Bulteel. London: John Playfere; William Crooke, 1665: Title-page. Print.
2. Pieter Bruegel the Younger. "Village Fair" (detail)
3. Jan Griffier the Older, "View of London."
4. Jan Griffier the Older, "Outskirts of London."
5. "A General Summons to [Horn Fair]," ca. 1688-95.
6. "A New Summons to Horn Fair," 1700?
7. "A New Summons to Horn Fair," 1709.
8. "A New Summons to all the Merry-Making Jades," 1817?
9. Mary Makepeace, [pseudonym of John Taylor]. *Divers Crabtree Lectures*, 1639. Sig. A1^{v}.
10. William Hogarth, "Skimmington-Triumph, or the Humours of Horn Fair," ca. 1720.

Shakespeare Performances in 18th and 19th Century Sibiu/Hermannstadt

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Abstract
The essay sets out to trace the history of German performances in Sibiu – called Hermannstadt in the 18th and 19th centuries. At the same time, it sketches the dissemination of German Shakespeare adaptations in the Eastern part of the Habsburg Empire. Particular emphasis is placed on the cultural and political life of Sibiu/ Hermannstadt in this period, as the city was the capital of the Habsburg province of Transylvania until 1813. The paper further accounts for the decline of Shakespeare productions and their subsequent revival in the last decade of the 19th century.

Keywords: Shakespeare, Sibiu/ Hermannstadt, German adaptations, Brukenthal library

In 1778 a troupe of itinerant German players performed *Romeo and Juliet* and *Hamlet* in Sibiu, then Hermannstadt, without however identifying the author as Shakespeare. What is the story of these plays and of the Shakespeare performances in Sibiu in the 18th and 19th centuries? This essay will look at this local Shakespeare in German, while at the same time viewing it as part of a larger process of transnational circulation of Shakespeare in translation/ adaptation in the late 18th century and throughout the 19th century. I focus on the historical and cultural background of the Shakespeare performances in Sibiu/ Hermannstadt as well as on the process of translation, re-writing and adaptation that Shakespeare's plays were

involved in as an integral part of their dissemination in the Habsburg Empire.

Sibiu/ Hermannstadt – The Seat of the First Transylvanian Theater

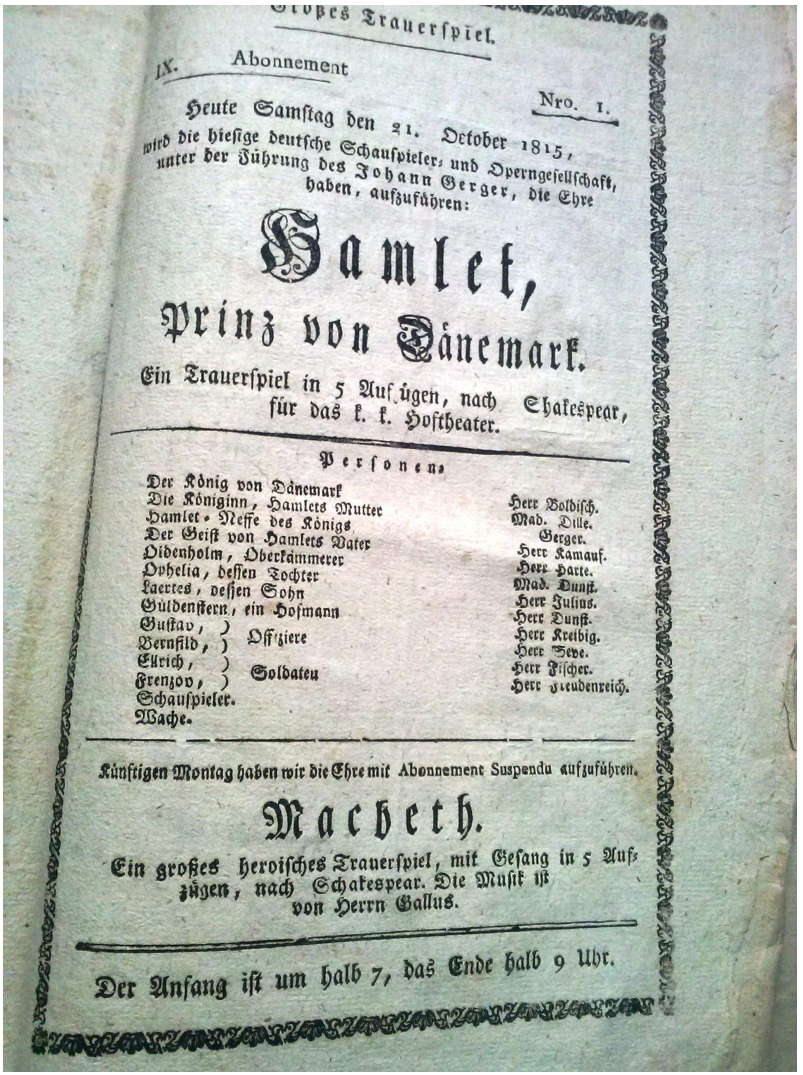
At the time of the first Shakespeare performances, Sibiu/ Hermannstadt was positioned at the very margin of the Habsburg Empire, bordering the Ottoman Empire. Together with Kronstadt – now Brasov – it was considered to be on the fringes of German culture and indirectly of European civilization, or, as one touring German actor put it, it was "one step off barbary" (Filtsch 1887: 578). For all that, it was important enough for the German players to include it in their travel plans, as in the late 1770s it was the capital of the Transylvanian Principality, which since 1690 had been a province of the Habsburg Empire. Hermannstadt was also the cultural capital of the German speaking "Saxon Nation" that had settled in Transylvania in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. As an administrative and cultural capital in the margins, Hermannstadt tried to reproduce the center – Vienna – as well as major German cities. In 1788, the Archduke Franz found it to be one of the liveliest cities in the Habsburg Empire (Filtsch 1887: 569). It boasted two casinos, seven coffee clubs, two lending libraries and a reading room in the newly built Brukenthal palace, which was the seat of the Habsburg governor.

Evidence in favour of the thriving cultural life of the city can be found in the massive import of books made available to the population in the various libraries. The lending libraries were reported to have had a large number of English novels in German translation, thus testifying to the expansion of the German Anglophilia to the borders of the Empire. The elitist reading room in the Brukenthal palace had an impressive collection of books in English, next to German translations, as well as the latest issues of journals published in Jena and Göttingen. The collection is still available in the same location. Here I was surprised to find next to novels by Richardson and Sterne, volumes by Congreve, Dryden,

Swift, Gay, the poetry of Young and Thomson in English and German, Pope's essays in English, German and French, Hume and Shaftesbury, as well as Addison and Steel in English. Yet the collection, assembled largely in the 1770s and 1780s, is not limited to eighteenth-century English literature but includes the works of Chaucer, Spenser, Donne, Milton, Beaumont and Fletcher and, of course, Shakespeare. There are two editions of Shakespeare's plays in English and two in German: the first German translation of Shakespeare by Wieland and the second revised and much amended version by Eschenburg. The books were either imported from England or were ordered from German publishers who reprinted the books in Germany (the Pope in the Brukenthal library, for example, was printed in English and French in Leipzig in 1758).

Having developed a fully-fledged cultural life, Sibiu/ Hermannstadt was also the first Transylvanian town to organize theater performances on a regular basis. As early as 1778 a German touring company headed by the actor Hülverding established themselves in Hermannstadt, performed five times a week and also issued a theater journal, named and patterned after the famous theater journal in Hamburg. The *Theatral Wochenblatt* (the *Weekly Theater Journal*) (Figure 1: *Theatral Wochenblatt*) aimed to provide theatrical education and to promote the new policies of Joseph II for an enlightened theater which should replace the earlier popular Hanswurst plays.[1] The journal also listed and commented on the plays the troupe performed, which included mostly pieces by Lessing, Beaumarchais and Kotzebue. Two plays that were performed relatively frequently could be put down as being by Shakespeare: *Romeo und Julia* and *Hamlet*. With respect to *Romeo und Julia*, the author mentioned in the journal was Felix Weisse. The journal praises Weisse as a "world famous playwright" and places him on a par with Lessing and Goethe. In the case of the performances of *Hamlet*, Shakespeare once again was not named: yet we can infer that this was Heufeld's adaptation which had been performed at the Burgtheater in Vienna in 1773.[2]

In 1788 the first proper theater house was built in Hermann-stadt, in the upper city, adjacent to the city walls. It was a



Großes Trauerspiel.

IX. Abonnement

Nro. 1.

Heute Samstag den 21. October 1815,
wird die hiesige deutsche Schauspieler- und Operngesellschaft,
unter der Führung des Johann Gerger, die Ehre
haben, aufzuführen:

Hamlet,

Prinz von Dänemark.

Ein Trauerspiel in 5 Aufzügen, nach Shakespear,
für das k. k. Hoftheater.

Personen.

Der König von Dänemark	Herr Boldisch.
Die Königinn, Hamlets Mutter	Mad. Dille.
Hamlet, Neffe des Königs	Gerger.
Der Geist von Hamlets Vater	Herr Kamauf.
Oldenholm, Oberkämmerer	Herr Harte.
Ophelia, dessen Tochter	Mad. Dunst.
Laertes, dessen Sohn	Herr Julius.
Güldenstern, ein Hofmann	Herr Dunst.
Gustav,)	
Bernfild,) Offiziere	Herr Kreibig.
Ulrich,)	Herr Seve.
Frenzov,) Soldaten	Herr Fischer.
Schauspieler.	Herr Freudenreich.
Wache.	

Künftigen Montag haben wir die Ehre mit Abonnement Suspendu aufzuführen.

Macbeth.

Ein großes heroisches Trauerspiel, mit Gesang in 5 Aufzügen, nach Schakespear. Die Musik ist von Herrn Gallus.

Der Anfang ist um halb 7, das Ende halb 9 Uhr.

(Figure 1)

large and lavishly provided building, fitting the capital of an important province of the Habsburg Empire. Both the stage and the auditorium were given ample room, the latter included two

parterres/ pits and two rows of boxes. There was place for the orchestra, rooms for the actors and a storage room for costumes and other properties. Trapdoors and all kinds of machines were also duly provided. There was only one hitch: its location. As the director of the theater of the time, the highly influential German actor Christopher Ludwig Seipp, complained, the theater should have been built in a place which could have been accessible to all of its inhabitants, those of the upper city, the aristocracy and the military and administrative elite, and those of the lower city, largely middle class people, the *Bürger*.[3] Such a position would have conformed to the model of the National Theaters that had been set up all over Germany (Hamburg, Berlin, Mannheim) and where the theater provided an alternative public space to that of the authorities and was an important institution of the newly emerged civil society.[4] Given its location in the upper city, the audience of the new theater was largely limited to the elite. The Saxon middle class craftsmen and merchants, albeit well educated and great users of the lending libraries, seldom went to the theater, even if they regularly read the play-texts that were performed there. Seipp tells the story of such a Bürger who was in possession of a play that had recently been performed, yet who did not even contemplate watching the theater performance (Filtsch 1887: 569-70). No mention whatever is made of the local Romanian population, who is absent in all reports of the cultural events of the city.[5]

The audience to the theater thus overlapped to a large extent with the elite reading public of the *Lesezimmer* (reading room) of the Brukenthal palace, which included two categories of readers: a) the learned (students, professors and teachers and reviewers), b) men of the world (*Weltleute*) and educated women. The *Weltleute* included the clerical staff of the imperial administration, the cosmopolitan military *intelligentsia*, the Hungarian aristocracy fluent in German and their educated wives.

Hülverding's troupe was followed by Christoph Ludwig Seipp's, who came to Hermannstadt twice, first in 1782-1783 and then in 1788-1790. Heufeld's adaptation of Shakespeare was replaced by Schröder's, Seipp being famous for his performances in

Hamlet, Henry IV, Othello and *Macbeth*. Schröder's famous version of *Hamlet* had displaced Heufeld's adaptation not only all over Germany but also in the Burgtheater in Vienna, where it was performed 104 times between 1778 and 1820. This *Hamlet* dominated the German speaking stages until well into the 19th century and was disseminated and translated all across the Habsburg Empire.[6]

Seipp left Hermannstadt in 1790 and was replaced by Franz Xavier Felder, whose troupe played here in summer time and in Brasov/ Kronstadt in winter. Felder's Shakespearean repertoire included *King Lear, Hamlet, The Merchant of Venice* – all of them in Schröder's adaptation. Weisse's *Romeo und Julia* and a radical re-working and localization of the *Taming of the Shrew*, called *Gassner II* were also part of Felder's repertoire. What is interesting about Felder is that he generally coupled *Hamlet* with Schiller's *Die Räuber* (*The Brigands*), thereby lending the Shakespearean play a rebellious dimension (Filtsch 1887: 580).

Another troupe of German actors that performed in other Transylvanian towns beside Hermannstadt/ Sibiu was Gerger's troupe, which even crossed the Carpathians and played in Bucharest. With Johann Gerger, a local actor who had previously joined Felder's troupe, Hermannstadt re-started its theatrical life, after a decade of cultural dearth and after having incurred two heavy losses in 1803 and 1813 – the death of the much celebrated governor of Transylvania, Samuel von Brukenthal, and the relocation of the capital of the province from Sibiu to Cluj-Napoca/ Klausenburg. Gerger's troupe would play in Kronstadt/ Brasov in winter and in Hermannstadt/ Sibiu in summer. In 1821 Gerger's troupe crossed the Carpathians and performed in Bucharest. His repertoire included plays by Iffland, Kotzebue (the two most successful playwrights of the time), Mozart, Schiller and Shakespeare.

A Glimpse into an Early 19th century Hamlet Performance

What did a Shakespeare performance look like at the height of the theatrical activity in Sibiu/ Hermannstadt?[7] Unfortunately there are no paintings or sketches left, only theater bills, so we can only

reconstruct some aspects of the performance on the basis of the details provided by the bills. The theater bill for the 1815 production of *Hamlet* can further help us understand some of the adaptation strategies that were frequently adopted when staging the play in the Habsburg provinces. (Figure 2: 1815 *Hamlet* theater bill)


Theatral
Wochenblatt,
Für das Jahr
1778.
Herrmannstadt/
Gedruckt bey Samuel Schardi, und Martin Hochmeister,
k. k. privil. Buchdrucker und Buchhändler.

(Figure 2)

The troupe's leader, Gerger, is mentioned in the first place. The bill informs the public that the play is *after* Shakespeare, i.e. that it is an adaptation and not the original play, yet it does not specify who the adapter is. Mention must be made that unlike Garrick's published adaptations, which foregrounded his name thereby stressing the adapter as agent that authorizes the text, the published versions of Heufeld's and Schröder's adaptations did not mention their respective names. The translator/ adapter was invisible in print yet widely known in the theater world. We can only infer that Gerger's 1815 performance is based on Schröder's second version on the following grounds: Laertes features among the dramatis personae (he does not appear in Heufeld's text), whereas the gravediggers, present in Schröder's first version, are absent. At the same time, as the production is announced to be in five acts, it can rely only on Schröder's second version as the first one was in six acts.

In any case the text employed in the Hermannstadt theater must have been much abridged, as the performance only lasts one hour and a half – from 7 to 8.30 p.m. This means that there were no changes of sets and that the action must have been cut down in a way similar to its reduction in Heufeld's earlier adaptation. We can infer that the play staged in Hermannstadt might have been a hybrid between Heufeld's and Schröder's versions, plus local interventions in the text.[8]

What legitimizes the production and offers it prestige is the fact that it stages a text that was performed at the Viennese Burgtheater. This aspect both conferred symbolic value to the performance (much more than the name of Shakespeare) and at the same time it represented a condition that touring actors had to fulfill: ever since 1795 imperial censorship required that touring actors perform only plays that had been previously staged in Vienna and had hence been accepted as 'safe.'[9] The bill announces the next performance of *Macbeth*, which is described as "ein grosses heroisches Trauerspiel mit Gesang" – a great heroic tragedy (not merely a great tragedy like Hamlet) with songs. We do not know whether this was Schröder's or Schiller's adaptation, the latter being increasingly used on German stages. The musical component

seems to have been of great importance as the bill also mentions the composer. The line between theater and opera performances of Shakespeare adaptations was rather thin, provincial theaters generally opting for the opera. Emphasis on music and spectacle – ballet or pantomime, was the distinctive feature of these theaters, some of them relying exclusively on spectacle and slowly veering towards the Singspiel or opera.

A further glimpse into the style of theatrical performances in Hermannstadt can be acquired from the theatrical supplement which was added to the major journal in Hermannstadt – *Siebenbürger Bote* (*The Transylvanian Messenger*), published since the 1770s. The supplement, called *Theaternotizen* (*Notes on the Theater*), like the earlier journal *Theatral Wochenblatt*, discussed theatrical issues and commented on current performances. Its editor belonged to the Habsburg military bureaucracy and was a highly educated theatergoer with a long experience in Vienna. His efforts were to counter the tendency towards the deterioration in quality of theatrical performances in an increasingly marginalized city like Sibiu. In his essays we find interesting information about the 1828 performance of *Hamlet*, still using Schröder's adaptation, and of which he gives a devastating review. It is surprising that the editor should quote Tieck's gloss on the play – "Hamlet ist eine Hieroglyphe von unerschopflichen Tiefsinn" (Hamlet is a hieroglyph of inexhaustibly profound meanings) – to establish the criteria to be met by the theatrical production. Unsurprisingly, the leading actor, Herr Sauerman, does not rise up to this level and does not do justice to the complexity of Hamlet's psychological make up. Worse still, he delivered the famous "to be or not be" monologue in such a flat and dull way, that those who had not read it beforehand, could hardly make any sense of it. The actor playing the ghost had a hoarse voice, Ophelia was unconvincing in the madness scene, etc. (*Notitzen* 36). However, a visitor coming from Vienna and who had also attended the respective performance considered it to be quite convincing for a provincial theater (Filtsch 1890: 317).

The nineteenth century historian of the Transylvanian German theater Eugen Filtsch put down the deterioration of the acting standards to the specific performance conditions of the time. The repertoire had to be diversified so as to draw audiences to the theater. Consequently, one day an actor had to play in a high tragedy, the next day in a farce and the third day he was supposed to sing in an opera or Singspiel. There was neither time nor scope for refining the roles. Opera increasingly became the staple fare of the German theaters in Transylvania, yielding, as Filtsch puts it, to the Operasucht (Opera mania/opera addiction) that had taken possession of the theaters in the entire area of German culture (Filtsch 1890: 311).

Worth mentioning are two other performances of the period preceding the 1848 Revolution: the first one is *Macbeth* performed in 1832 and which employed Schiller's adaptation. Consequently, Shakespeare is no longer mentioned on the theater bill. One might infer from this that to the Hermannstadt public Shakespeare had a lower political and cultural status than Schiller. The second performance was the 1835 new version of *King Lear*, no longer based on Schröder's adaptation as was the dominant practice, but on Schlegel's translation. This innovatory version was the one that Joseph Schreyvogel, the director of the Burgtheater, had first launched in 1822 in an attempt to confront the public with Shakespeare's text rather than with domesticating adaptations. The adaptation ran foul of the convention that the downfall of monarchs was an impermissible subject and was banned the same year (Yates 31). However, even this version sought to meet the demands of the public and displayed what came to be known as the Viennese ending of the play. Upon Lear's final line, "Look there! Look there!" (5.3.309), Cordelia revived and was shown to enjoy a rapturous union with her father, who of course no longer died.

The Decline and Revival of Shakespeare Productions

With some notable exceptions, like the visit of the Viennese actor Löwe in 1851, the Shakespeare shown to the Hermannstadt public

in the latter half of the 19th century was in the form of operatic adaptations. Löwe had four curtain calls for *Hamlet*, in which he delivered "sein oder nicht sein" (to be or not to be), to an enraptured audience that knew the monologue by heart (*Siebenbürger Bote* 120, 516). The list of opera adaptations of Shakespeare performed during this period included the German opera *Romeo und Julia* by Benda based on Weisse's play and rescripted with a *liete fine* (happy ending) by Gotter.[10] It was followed by Rossini's *Othello* (first performed in Sibiu/ Hermannstadt in 1836) and Bellini's *Capuletti et Montechi* (first performed in 1837). The first performance of Verdi's *Macbeth* took place in 1856. The theater bill of this performance once again mentions Schiller and drops Shakespeare: "Macbeth – grosse heroische Oper in vier Akten, componiert von Joseph Verdi. Der Stoff zu dieser Oper wurde Schiller's gleichnamigen Trauerspiels entlehnt" (*Macbeth* – great heroic opera in four acts, composed by Joseph Verdi. The text for this opera was taken from Schiller's tragedy with the same title) (*Siebenbürger Bote* 178).

The year 1864 signaled a clear departure of the Sibiu/ Hermannstadt German theater from the celebratory practices organized both in Transylvania and in the space of German culture. Sibiu did not join in the commemoration of Shakespeare's anniversary. Transylvanian German theaters did not participate in what Habicht has called "the German Shakespeare myth," according to which Shakespeare "war der dritte im Bund," was the third great German poet next to Goethe and Schiller.[11] One practical reason for the absence of any celebration or performance of Shakespeare was the fact that the theater had been closed. Sibiu/ Hermannstadt was going through difficult times: the Saxons had lost all of their political power in the province, a situation which also impacted their cultural life. Three years later, in 1867,[12] they were to be relegated to the status of an ethnic minority just like the Romanian population, which was not allowed to have a theater in the Romanian language. Both ethnic populations were subjected to strong pressures of Magyarization, involving restrictions in the use of their language in the public space. Another reason for the

absence of celebrating events was the political appropriation of Shakespeare by the Hungarian theaters in Transylvania. For the German and Romanian players in Transylvania, not to play Shakespeare became an act of resistance to the dominant cultural policy.

The 1890s witnessed a revival of the German theater in Sibiu, which was still called Hermannstadt. The revival was due to the advent of the German director Leo Bauer, who on the one hand re-organized the local theater and ventured powerful performances of plays often censured elsewhere in Europe, such as *Nora* and *Ghosts* by Ibsen. On the other hand, Bauer used his connections to bring over famous actors from Vienna and Germany, who performed Shakespeare in the latest versions, all based on Schlegel's translations. The Shakespeare repertoire was enlarged and included, next to *Hamlet* (in 6 acts!), *Romeo and Juliet* (the leading actor in both performances was the celebrated Viennese star Friedrich Bonn) in 1895-1896, *Richard III* and *Othello* (in these productions members of the reputed Meininger Theater were invited to play with local actors) also in 1896. Viennese actors from the Burgtheater further performed in *The Merchant of Venice*, *The Taming of the Shrew*, and *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, while the local cast played in *A Midsummer Night's Dream.*

The theater in Hermannstadt/ Sibiu could thus fully compete with the Hungarian Shakespeare staged all over the cities of Transylvania. At the same time, it grew out of its minoritarian position and re-established its links with major trends in German culture. Thus the German theater in Sibiu/ Hermannstadt eventually made its contribution to the myth of the German Shakespeare.

Notes:

[1] On Joseph II's reform of the theater see Yates 9-12.
[2] On Heufels's *Hamlet* see Weilen and Stahl.
[3] "Das Schauspiel gehort fur das ganze Publicum" (The play is meant for the entire public) (Filtsch 536).
[4] On the transformation of the Burgtheater into a National Theater during Joseph II's rule see Yates 9-10.

[5]The Romanian population, not called like that at the time, had not been considered to be a "nation" ever since the *Unio trium nationum*, i.e. since the pact after the Bobilna rebellion in 1437. As such they had no rights whatever, let alone to have a theater. Even later in the 19th century when ASTRA desperately tried to set up a Romanian theater, it was not deemed acceptable by the Hungarian authorities. What is particularly striking about the historical records on the German theater in Sibiu is that the locals of Romanian descent were not even deemed worth mentioning as a segment of the population.

[6] Heufeld's *Hamlet* was first performed in Vienna (1773), then in Pressburg/ Bratislava (1776-1778), Hermannstadt/ Sibiu (1778, 1781, 1788-9), Kronstadt/ Brasov (1790). Schröder's *Hamlet* was first produced in Hamburg (1777-1778), it went to Vienna in 1781, was further taken to Warsaw (1781), Lemberg/ Lvov (1796) and all the way to Vilna/ Vilnius (1808). This version reached Transylvania in 1790, to be first performed in Hermannstadt/ Sibiu and then in Klausenburg/ Cluj and later in Kronstadt/ Brasov in 1792.

[7] I have already discussed some aspects of the *Hamlet* representation in an earlier paper, titled "The Circulation of Shakespeare Adaptations in Eastern Europe," in *LINGUACULTURE* 1 (2014): 21-35.

[8] On the differences between the two versions of Schröder's adaptation see Renate Hauptlein and Ernst Stahl.

[9] The new regulations introduced in 1795 were a form of defense against the perceived threat of a "Jacobin" revolution and censured even the very words "liberty" and "equality," as well as the term "Enlightenment." See Yates 26.

[10] On Gotter and Benda's opera *Romeo und Julia* and the further changes introduced into the plot including the happy ending see Michael Burden's "Shakespeare and Opera."

[11] See Werner Habicht, "Shakespeare in Nineteenth-century Germany: The Making of a Myth," in *Nineteenth-century Germany* (141-157) and *Shakespeare and the German Imagination*.

[12] This is the year when the Habsburg Empire was turned into the dual monarchy Austria-Hungary through a political Compromise that among other things reinstated Hungarian power over Transylvania. Both the Saxon and the Romanian populations were viewed as minorities and suffered under the policy of enforced Maghiarization.

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Shakespearean Matters Reread in the Dramatic Musical Adaptations of *Romeo and Juliet*

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Abstract
Four centuries after his death, Shakespeare thrives not only in the theatre, but also through what Bolter and Grusin call remediation: newer media achieve cultural significance by paying homage to, and refashioning, earlier media. This essay analyses how opera, symphony and musical reread veteran Elizabethan drama.

Its main approach is comparative and relies on the history of mentalities. Rereading is dictated by the cultural context, the conventions of the lyrical theatre, social and political factors, as well as reception.

Romeo – the icon of male romance – is interpreted by a mezzosoprano in Bellini's *I Capuleti*, as the audience had become accustomed to equating male characters with a woman's timbre due to the castrati.

The confusing religious configuration of Shakespeare's England (Greenblatt's *Will in the World*) is reread, in Gounod's 19th-century France, according to staunch Catholicism, and the lovers ask God to forgive their suicide, adding a Christian dimension absent in the play.

Bernstein's *West Side Story* moves the action to New York in the mid-50's, and the Capulets and Montagues are replaced with rival Polish and Puerto Rican gangs.

Translation is also tackled as the rereading of English effects within the new linguistic richness of the foreign libretto.

Keywords: Shakespeare, music, libretto, adaptation, mentalities, religion, translation, theatrical convention, opera, musical

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Four centuries after his death, Shakespeare thrives not only in the theatre, but also through what Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin call remediation, a process through which newer media achieve cultural significance by paying homage to, and refashioning, earlier media – the concept on which they base their whole book (*Remediation:Understanding New Media*).

In our age, any heedful person must have already ascertained that Shakespeare's genius has permeated all layers of social behaviour: not just the intellectual, academic, artistic and cultural levels, but also common speech, advertising, the media and even TV series such as *Criminal Minds*, *CSI Las Vegas* or *Midsomer Murders*.

The realm of classical music is not a recent addition to this list, and it has been influenced by the Bard since the 17th century. The present essay can only be a succinct presentation of the ways in which opera, symphony and musical reread veteran Elizabethan drama and of how the rigours of the operatic tradition have imposed numerous and various transformations of Shakespeare's text from spoken to sung language. The passage from one genre to the other entails a dramatic metamorphosis resulting in the alteration of the plot, the reduction of the number of characters, or the contraction of several characters into one.

This rereading is dictated by the cultural context, the conventions of the lyrical theatre, social and political factors, as well as reception.

At least twenty-seven operas have been based on this play by Shakespeare, the earliest of which was either Johann Gottfried Schwanenberger's *Romeo e Giulia* (on a libretto by J. R. Sanseverino) or Georg Benda's Singspiel *Romeo und Julie* (on a libretto by Friedrich Wilhelm Gotter), both written in 1776. Twenty years later, Niccolò Antonio Zingarelli wrote his *Giulietta e Romeo* (1796), which has gone out of the regular repertoire, but was

revived in the summer of 2016 at the Salzburg Festival, casting Romanian tenor Bogdan Mihai as Everardo.

The first two opera adaptations to be written by well-known composers also belonged to Italians: Nicola Vaccai's *Giulietta e Romeo* (1825) and Vincenzo Bellini's *I Capuleti e i Montecchi* (1830). Their libretti were written by Felice Romani, who reworked the former to fit the latter in what Andrew Porter calls a "careful and thorough remodelling of an earlier work to suit Bellini's musical and dramatic ideas" (qtd. in Willier 135). Charles Osborne calls this double libretto taut and single-minded (329). Sarah Lenton considers the characters to be single-minded and stereotypical (35).

In 1831, Hector Berlioz revealed the fact that this libretto is not based on Shakespeare directly, but on the Bard's own Italian sources.[1] In this Italian context, the Capuleti and Montecchi are rival political factions here – Guelphs and Ghibellines respectively – rather than Shakespeare's "Two households, both alike in dignity" (Prologue, 1), which obviously makes the Italian setting much more prominent. As Francesco Izzo remarks, the libretto focuses exclusively on the two protagonists (14), marginalising the secondary characters and with them certain undertones of the plot.

Berlioz was in love with Shakespeare (so much so as to marry Harriet Smithson, the Ophelia who conquered Paris), so as soon as he heard about Bellini's opera he went to see it. Here are his impressions after the performance:

> What a disappointment!!! In the libretto there is no ball at the Capulets,' no Mercutio, no garrulous nurse, no grave and serene hermit, no balcony scene, no sublime monologue for Juliet as she receives the vial from the hermit, no duet in the cell between banished Romeo and the disconsolate friar, no Shakespeare, nothing – a failed work, mangled, disfigured, *arranged*.[2] (118; my translation)

Lorenzo, according to the Italian play, is only Giulietta's physician and confidant and "Friar Laurence loses his tonsure and,

as a medical man, substitutes for the Apothecary" (Orrey 101). Consequently, the two lovers are not even married!

As Gary Schmidgall humorously puts it, "Given *opera seria*'s allergy to comic elements, it is no surprise that Mercutio and the Nurse vanish, while Tybalt is transformed into a stock villain, as well as the rival nominated by Capulet to marry Juliet" (294). Opera loves black-and-white contrasts!

In the end only Romeo kills himself. Giulietta dies of grief – much more appropriate behaviour for bel canto opera in general and for the nineteenth century in particular, as it abhorred violent death on stage. This ending thus absolves her of the deadly sin, illustrating a Catholic concern with Christian compliance.

The world of Shakespeare's theatre is translated in yet another surprising way through the passage from the all-male Elizabethan company to the mixed one in the modern age, which is of course common to opera and spoken theatre. In opera, nevertheless, there is a different kind of reversal of gender issues that we can call 'vocal travesty.' The arch requirements of the early bel canto style, which pressed for flamboyant vocal prowess, created the vocal "aberration" of what we nowadays call the countertenor, but which started as the barbarous practice of the *castrati*. Therefore, the audience was used to watching men act as heroes or lovers on stage, yet the voices that sprang forth from those men had a feminine timbre. In the case of the operas inspired by Shakespeare's plays, this rare voice was not cast in the Baroque age, when the *castrato* was the rage, but in modern music: in Benjamin Britten's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, where the composer, reputedly homosexual, envisaged Oberon, the epitome of masculinity, as a weak effeminate voice.

As the fashion of the *castrati* faded away because of its cruelty to the talented young singers, the European opera audience was nevertheless left with the habit of hearing female-sounding voices emitted by male-looking characters. Therefore, later bel canto will replace the fashion of the *castrati* with that of travesty: male roles start being interpreted by women, especially mezzosopranos, which takes us to the exact opposite of Elizabethan

theatre. A shocking example of this common bel canto practice is precisely Bellini's *I Capuleti e i Montecchi*, where Romeo, the emblem of romantic male love *par excellence*, is interpreted by a mezzosoprano. The effect of the female voice is hard to palate nowadays, in an age which strives for naturalness and true-to-life rendition in acting and stage direction. But at the beginning of the nineteenth century, the passage from the age of the *castrati* was seamless and the casting of a woman in a fervent lover's part was accepted without a second thought as part of a common convention that reread an earlier practice grown obsolete.

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Another matter that required reinterpretation because of the different backgrounds of the audiences was religion, and the confusing configuration of Shakespeare's England is reread according to staunch Catholicism in Berlioz's and Gounod's nineteenth-century France.

Written around 1591-1595, Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* bears the marks of the religious turmoil that England had witnessed since 1534, when Henry VIII had veered Britain from Catholicism to Protestantism for personal reasons. After groping through that change, the nation was cleft by the rebellions against the Catholic Bloody Mary, who had her Anglican sister Elizabeth – daughter of Henry VIII and Anne Boleyn – locked in the Tower on suspicion of complicity with Sir Thomas Wyatt. The Elizabethan era seemed to be an age of religious tolerance and forgiveness, but the conflict between the English sovereign and Mary Stuart, Queen of Scots, had religious undertones as well.

Shakespeare's spiritual affiliation has been a matter of hot debate for centuries. His faith in God is beyond question, and his Christianity is apparent, as is his lack of concern with any other religion.

The issue of denomination, however, is hardly equally clear. As Stephen Greenblatt shows at length in *Will in the World* (89-

116), in Shakespeare's childhood there was a split between his father (officially employed by the Protestant state) and his mother (in all probability a devout Catholic), as well as a split within his father (outwardly reformed, inwardly loyal to the pope).

In fact, the religious situation of the age turned the English into a nation of two-faced men and women, who preserved their inward Catholic belief while going along with the official denomination and displaying steadfast public adherence to it. Maybe this was the ancestor of Doublethink.

This cannot have helped things with Shakespeare's clarity and purity of spiritual convictions: "If his father was both Catholic and Protestant, William Shakespeare was on his way to being neither" (Greenblatt 113). Hence his total disregard for dogmatic detail and accuracy, as well as his violent dislike of the Church as institution and men of the cloth as its representatives. If he only ridicules Parson Evans in comic mode in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, he blatantly incriminates Friar Laurence in his tragedy *Romeo and Juliet*, accusing him of criminal meddling.

Revolted, at first, to hear how fast Romeo's passion has swerved from Rosaline to another woman, when he hears the new object of his affection is Capulet's daughter, Friar Laurence tells young Montague: "In one respect I'll thy assistant be; / For this alliance may so happy prove, / To turn your households' rancour to pure love" (II. 2. 90-92). Deceitful as ever, Shakespeare makes the monk appear to have only the two lovers' well-being at heart, meaning to unite them and put an end to their families' longstanding feud. However, he is animated by ambition and mundane interests, wishing to take credit for his accomplishment and be rewarded for his politic mediation. The whole evolution of the character supports this theory. His cowardice reaches the apex after Romeo's death when, upon Juliet's refusal to follow him, he flees the scene, unconcerned with her fate and state of mind. Thus, if he is only indirectly responsible for the death of Romeo and Paris, he is directly responsible for Juliet's.

If Friar Laurence, who should be the bearer of spirituality in the play, is motivated by mundane pride, the Nurse is completely amoral. In Larry Champion's words, "set in a world of conflicting human demands, this tragedy requires that human dignity be achieved without the guidance of assumed moral absolutes" (61). The Nurse sees Juliet's marriage to Romeo as no impediment to her marriage to Paris at all, not being burdened with God's commandments or Church dogma on bigamy.

As Greenblatt remarks, "the only sainthood in which Shakespeare seems passionately to have believed throughout his life derives precisely from the subject matter that Campion[3] wished his students to avoid: erotic sainthood" (111). The realm of classical music responds to this sacred dimension of romance more than to any other theme in Shakespeare's play. Another feature that fits the opera genre like a glove is the intertwinement between love and death that characterises this play, as Roger Stilling points out:

> there can be no question but that Shakespeare felt tremendous poetic and emotional force in the juxtaposition of love and death and was determined to exploit both to the fullest. The nausea of bodily and psychological dissolution (…) is set against the beauty and strength of love (…). And the expected joy of the wedding day (…) is set ironically against the actual misery of loss. (72-3)

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In 1839, an entirely innovative work sees the light of day: Berlioz's dramatic symphony *Roméo et Juliette*. "Shakespeare coming upon me unawares struck me like thunderbolt," he wrote in his *Memoirs* (qtd. in Lenton 32).

The French composer was aware of the great number of operas that had already based their libretti on the star-crossed lovers' story, so he decided to anchor his opus in another genre – that of programmatic vocal-symphony music, on which, Paul-Marie Masson says, Berlioz pondered his whole life (185). Avoiding not so much the eloquence of his predecessors' characters as that of

Shakespeare's, Berlioz decided to depict the two protagonists through the orchestra and build their voices from the tumult of this collective instrument. Thus, the strength of their love, the rush of their desire, the pangs of their heartbreak and sorrow are poignantly expressed through the means germane to music.

The text is signed by Émile Deschamps, and Philippe Andriot considers it is mediocre and comments on Shakespeare's play in the manner of the ancient chorus (54). But even if from a poetic point of view he is right, from that of choices, ideas and character features it proves to be rather interesting. This text preserves very little from the play – next to nothing, and almost only group scenes interpreted by the chorus who stands either for the Prologue Chorus or for the supporters of the Capulets and Montagues. Among the individual characters, the only ones who are given voices are Mercutio (in Queen Mab's Scherzetto) and Friar Laurence (in his Recitative and Aria placed after the death of the lovers).

This libretto, the shortest of all, is the only one that conveys the guilt of the monk. Unaware of his self-incrimination, Friar Laurence quotes Juliet's reproach (absent in Shakespeare's play, but equivalent to the doubts she has already expressed[4]):

> LE PERE LAURENCE:
> 'Only you', she cried, 'could have saved me!
> There is nothing left for me but to die!' (Deschamps)[5]

This libretto also respects Juliet's valour and her bold fearless choice of a masculine weapon for her suicide (the dagger), while decorously skipping the details of Romeo's womanly choice (poison). On the contrary, an ambiguous reference (to his ravished breast) insidiously suggests he too has stabbed himself:

> LE PERE LAURENCE:
> But Romeo, deceived in the funeral chamber,
> Got there before me to die
> Over the body of his beloved.
> And almost as soon as she awoke,

Juliet, seeing
The death he carried in his ravished breast,
Armed herself with Romeo's blade
And passed into eternity
Just as I was arriving! (Deschamps)

Berlioz's Friar Laurence exceeds the audacity of his Elizabethan counterpart, pretending to know exactly what God means to tell the two families, as he is anointed and has God's grace through the sacrament of priesthood – an essential distinction between the Catholic and Protestant denominations. He accuses, he points fingers; he scolds from his high horse. In the middle of his ranting discourse, he slips his invocation that God should testify to the purity of his intentions, subtly seeing to it that it is not consciously perceived but subliminally assimilated. Last but not least, he presents himself as able to direct God's clemency towards the sinners who have gone astray:

LE PERE LAURENCE:
Silence, wretched ones!
Can you, without remorse,
Before such love display such hatred?
Must your rage unleash itself right here?
Rekindled by the torches of the dead?
Great God who see deep into our souls,
You know if my intentions were pure!
Great God, with a ray of your light
Touch these dark and hardened hearts!
And may your guardian breath,
Rising upon them at the sound of my voice,
Chase away and dispel their anger
Like straw in the wind! (Deschamps)

To a spectator or a reader who bears Shakespeare's play in mind (as Berlioz and Deschamps did), the monk's strategy is damning. However, to an audience that is confronted directly with this single appearance of this character in the dramatic symphony,

Friar Laurence becomes an honest, luminous figure who has tried to save the lovers but failed.

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In his masterpiece *Roméo et Juliette* (1867), Gounod, even if aware of his recent illustrious French precursor and his symphony, dares defy the long line of operas before it and surges as an entirely different instance.

The libretto signed by Jules Barbier and Michel Carré follows Shakespeare's play faithfully. As Steven Huebner points out, they did not allow any other adaptation to come between the literary masterpiece and the opera (173). However, what is added is precisely the religious, Catholic dimension that the Bard's play lacks, but which looms large in Gounod's works, as he was a former seminary student.

Since the marriage is quintessential to the play, it takes place on stage, in front of the audience. All the vile suspicions that Shakespeare casts onto the monk are gone, and he performs the ceremony with piety and self-abasement:

> FRIAR LAURENCE
> O God who madest man in Thine own image[6]
> And of his flesh and blood
> Created woman, and, joining her
> To man in wedlock,
> From Zion's summit consecrated
> Their inseparable union!
> Look with a favourable eye upon
> Thy miserable creature
> Who prostrates himself before Thee! (Barbier and Carré)

The whole scene is a prayer to God, and the bride and groom are prostrated:

> ROMEO AND JULIET

Lord, we promise to obey Thy law. (…)
Lord, be Thou my support, be Thou my hope! (…)
Lord, from darkest sin it is Thou who dost protect us! (…)
Lord, deign to look down upon our love! (…)
O happiness unalloyed! O immense joy!
Heaven itself has received our loving vows!
God of goodness! God of mercy!
Be Thou blessed by two happy hearts! (Barbier and Carré)

The implicit submission of women sententiously pronounced by Friar Laurence in the play is reinterpreted here in the spirit of nineteenth century France, where the woman was empowered:

Ordain that the yoke of Thy handmaiden
May be a yoke of love and peace! (Barbier and Carré)

Juliet's economical metaphor of the heart is given an entirely new valence: "Let virtue be her wealth" (Barbier and Carré) – Friar Laurence prays.

Far from Shakespeare's mundane monk, who is ready to suspect carnal sin but is a stranger to true love, his equivalent in the opera perceives precisely this dimension of the lovers' attachment and, wishing them to beget children and grandchildren, prays that, "united in the life eternal," they should "come at last to the Kingdom of Heaven" (Barbier and Carré).

Another convention so revered by opera as to become a cliché is the need of characters to voice their hope for the future and make plans against all odds.[7] The urge to use this convention is so strong that in Barbier and Carré's libretto, when Juliet awakes, Romeo forgets he has taken poison and presses her to run to the end of the world and be happy with him! This goes hand in hand with another operatic topos – that of the endeared delirium- and mad-scenes, in which characters permanently or temporarily lose their minds (especially in the Italian bel canto operas of the nineteenth century). If most of the characters that lose their wits are women, here it is Romeo who is momentarily confused:

ROMÉO
Viens! viens, fuyons tous deux!

JULIETTE
Ô bonheur!

JULIETTE, ROMÉO
Viens! fuyons au bout du monde!
Viens, soyons heureux,
Fuyons tous deux
Viens!
Dieu de bonté ! Dieu de clémence!
Sois béni par deux cœurs heureux!…

ROMÉO *(chancelant)*
Juliette, à la porte des cieux!
et mourir!

JULIETTE
Mourir! Ah ! la fièvre t'égare!
De toi quel délire s'empare?
Mon bien-aimé, rappelle ta raison!

ROMÉO
Hélas!
Je te croyais morte et j'ai bu ce poison!
…

ROMÉO
(serrant Juliette dans ses bras)

ROMEO
Come! Come! Let us flee together!

JULIET
O happiness!

JULIET, ROMEO
Come! Let us flee to the ends of the earth!
Come! Let us be happy, let us flee together.
God of goodness!
God of mercy!
Be Thou blessed by two happy hearts!

…
ROMEO *(staggering)*
Juliet, to the gates of heaven and to die!

JULIET
To die! Ah, fever bewilders you!
What delirium seizes upon you?
My beloved, come to your senses!

ROMEO
Alas!
I thought you dead and I drank this poison!
…

ROMEO
(clasping Juliet in his arms)
Console yourself, poor heart,

Console-toi, pauvre âme,
Le rêve était trop beau!
L'amour, céleste flamme,
Survit même au tombeau!
Il soulève la pierre
Et, des anges béni,
Comme un flot de lumière
Se perd dans l'infini.

the dream was too beautiful!
Love, a celestial flame,
survives even the tomb!
It raises the stone
and, by the angels blest,
like a wave of light
loses itself in the infinite.
(Barbier and Carré)

Too much in love to be able to live without each other, Romeo and Juliet do commit suicide in the opera too. But, in an exquisite duet, they die singing "Lord, Lord, forgive us!" (Barbier and Carré) – imploring God's absolution for their capital sin, which lends the opera a Christian dimension entirely absent from Shakespeare's play.

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The matter of the Bard's play is reread and radically altered in an interesting opera written in 1907 by the English composer Frederick Delius – *A Village Romeo and Juliet*, whose libretto he and his wife Jelka based on the novella *Romeo und Julia auf dem Dorfe* written by the Swiss author Gottfried Keller at the end of the nineteenth century. The literary source has no direct connection to Shakespeare. Relocated to a Germanic space and Protestant background, this is a story revolving around land property. The Dark Fiddler is the rightful owner of a disputed land, and Sali and Vrenchen, who live on it, have loved each other since childhood. After a complicated warp of disinheritance, they decide they cannot live a life of vagrancy and commit suicide by drowning. All trace of spirituality is gone. But the Protestant idea of working hard to make a living is gone too. All that is left is the Puritan leitmotif of predestination and doom.

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The last well-known opera based on Shakespeare's play so far is Riccardo Zandonai's *Giulietta e Romeo* on a libretto signed by Arturo Rossato, which premiered in 1922. Like its other Italian predecessors, it relies less on Shakespeare than on his Italian sources going back as far as the fifteenth century. As Gioacchino Lanza-Tomasi remarks, 'Italian version' means 'melodramatic version' – a rereading in which the dramatic fashioning of the characters is transferred upon the vocal archetypes of passion (191).

Since Friar Laurence is not a character in this opera, no wedding is mentioned. However, the question of marriage is quite ambiguous, which might be deliberate, since the two lovers seem to have an already old history of secret encounters in her chamber, which would be less than virtuous and quite sinful out of wedlock. In their Act I duet, Romeo sings: "The hatred between our families and fate / Will no longer be able to tear you apart from me. / In this life and even beyond death, / You are my wife, / I swear before God, my love!" (Rossato 24, my translation). Schmidgall asserts that the two are already married before the opera begins (292), but it seems odd – to say the least – to swear to someone before God that she is your wife. In all probability, the present tense is here used for the future tense and this is Romeo's pledge to do … the right thing. But, as stated before, the confusion might be deliberate.

The religious aspect is therefore eliminated, although Zandonai wrote about twenty-five religious works (according to Alberto Petrolli's catalogue). Tonetti also points out that there are religious pages in some of his operas – "Nato è Gesù" in *Grillo del focolare*, the chorus "O figlie di Jerusalem" in *Melenis* and the chorus "Natal! Natal!" in *I cavalieri di Ekebù* (311). But *Giulietta e Romeo* is not among these operas.

However, at the end Romeo takes poison and Giulietta dies of grief at the loss of her love, which bears witness to the fact that a librettist and a composer, both Catholic, strive to absolve the female protagonist from the capital sin.

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The most universally famous adaptation of Shakespeare's play for the musical stage is Leonard Bernstein's *West Side Story*, with lyrics by Stephen Sondheim, direction and choreography by Jerome Robbins, which is significant, since all three of them were American Jews. The musical premiered on Broadway in 1957. In 1947, Robbins approached Bernstein and Arthur Laurents about collaborating on a contemporary musical adaptation of *Romeo*. He proposed that the plot should focus on the conflict between an Irish Catholic family and a Jewish family living on the Lower East Side of Manhattan, during the Easter and Passover season. The libretto, therefore, was to be the most religion-oriented version of all the adaptations. The modern-day Juliet was to be a survivor of the Holocaust emigrated from Israel; the conflict was to focus on the anti-Semitism of the Catholic "Jets" aimed at the Jewish "Emeralds." Bernstein wanted it to be an opera, but Robbins and Laurents rejected the suggestion. The project was referred to as "lyric theatre" and Laurents wrote a draft he called *East Side Story*. Once they saw it, they realised the theme had been tackled more than once in non-musical plays such as Anne Nichols's *Abie's Irish Rose*. When Laurents withdrew, they abandoned the project and forgot about it for almost five years.

In the 1950's, gang violence had spiked out of all proportion and people were terrified. It was a newspaper article that Laurents and Bernstein claimed inspired them to turn the conflict to juvenile delinquent gangs. Bernstein suggested they should set the action in Los Angeles, but Laurents felt more familiar with Puerto Ricans and Harlem. Robbins was thrilled at the idea of a musical with a Latino beat. Therefore, the Jewish dimension of the work written by three Jews disappeared altogether in the end, as did any religious undertones.

But the hurricane-like tumult of teenage love remained vivid and, as Nigel Simeone intuits, "This is perhaps the reason for the show's continuing success today: half a century later, the precise circumstances that inspired it may have changed, but the value of human life – and the simple power of love – have not" (6). The scene of the ball is reread quite movingly as a dance at the gym. In

the havoc of the frantic mambo, everything stops as Tony and Maria see each other. They become blind to everything around them, the outside world fades away and they dance alone in a bubble. The music is much more symphonic, even if it preserves hints of cha-cha, and Robbins's brilliant choreography (which won him the Academy Award for Brilliant Achievements in the Art of Choreography on Film for the movie adaptation of the Broadway show in 1961) makes a visual connection with the play by devising movements with Mediaeval and Renaissance flavour for this scene.

An exotic notion to New York gangs, the official marriage disappears. With it, Friar Laurence and the incongruous potion, difficult to "swallow" by a mid-twentieth century audience. Thus, doing perfectly well without a priest, the two lovers – Tony and Maria – exchange vows, a mixture between the common vows of the Catholic ritual and their own personal pledges:

> TONY & MARIA:
> I, Anton/ Maria, take thee, Maria/ Anton
> For richer, for poorer . . . (etc.)
> Till death do us part.
> With this ring, I thee wed. (…)
>
> Make of our lives one life,
> Day after day, one life.
> Now it begins, now we start –
> One hand, one heart;
> Even death won't part us now.

Musically, the "Marriage Scene" is imbued with solemn sobriety, making up in sound what the context lacks in sacredness. But this may not be the only religious whiff that finds its way into the score. Bernstein's former assistant, Jack Gottlieb, dedicated a chapter to Bernstein in his *Funny, It Doesn't Sound Jewish*:

> Gottlieb examined specific influences from synagogue music and Yiddish songs (…) and (…) demonstrates the similarity between a traditional shofar call and the three-note 'shofar' figure in *West Side Story*. (…) Gottlieb also describes ambiguities

> between major and minor thirds as being characteristic of synagogue music, and of early Yiddish secular song. In various forms, either in melodic lines or in harmonies, this is another stylistic marker in *West Side Story* (…).
>
> There are other parallels with synagogue music: the shape of the benediction (…) finds a clear echo in 'Maria' (…); another is the instrumental underscoring (…) in 'One Hand, One Heart', similar to the 'Call to the Torah' quoted by Gottlieb. (Simeone 83)

If the Italian *opera seria* and the French *grand opéra* are – as Schmigdall says – allergic to comic elements, musical theatre is not, so *West Side Story* is the only important musical adaptation of *Romeo and Juliet* that rereads the matter of Shakespeare's play in comic key, taking over his humour. It reinterprets the headstrong, quick-tempered, trigger-happy, irresponsible behaviour of young Mercutio, Benvolio, Romeo, Tybalt and their respective trains as the mockery of juvenile delinquents. The Prince can only appear in a degraded version as the stultified Officer Krupke. The allusion to lawyers so dear to Shakespeare is preserved.

If some of Bernstein's music may reflect sacred Jewish ancestry, at the level of ideas the issue of religion is absent, since both gangs are Catholic (Puerto Rican Sharks and Polish Jets) and neither is in any way concerned with spirituality. What replaces this central topic is the theme of cultural identity, which is worth dying for. In the end, Tony – the American Romeo – is murdered, and Maria, his sweetheart, survives. Post-war America is a place and age in which no one dies for love anymore.

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A staggering number of musical works have 'reread' Shakespeare's play, pertaining to various genres, cultural spaces and ages: Filippo Marchetti's opera *Romeo e Giulietta* (1865), Henry Hugh Pearson's overture for orchestra *Romeo and Juliet* (1865), Tchaikovsky's overture-fantasy *Ромео и Джульетта* (1869), Johan Svendsen's fantasy *Romeo og Julie* (1876), Wilhelm

Stenhammar's incidental music to *Romeo och Julia* (1922), Prokofiev's ballet (1935), Heinrich Sutermeister's opera *Romeo und Julia* (1940), Dmitry Kabalevsky's incidental music to the play (1956) and many more. As Schmidgall puts it, "the play seems heaven-sent as an operatic vehicle" (293). It is interesting to remark that the works that attained the greatest strength of expression are those that dealt with it abstractly, musically, with the least resort to text (Berlioz, Tchaikovsky and Prokofiev). Among the operas, the only notable exception is Gounod's. The reason might lie in the great change of theatrical practices over the centuries, for – as Frank Kermode remarks – "the audience, many of them oral rather than literate, were trained, as we are not, to listen to long, structured discourses, and must have been rather good at it, with better memories and more patience than we can boast" (4).

Music thus replaces the grandeur and force of Shakespeare's text, for it is daunting to rival with the miraculous fabric of his words. As Schmidgall laments, "conspicuous failure to encompass fully the various elements of Shakespeare's tragedy of star-crossed love has been the unfailing rule since the competition began in 1776 with a Leipzig *Romeo e Giulia*"[8] (293).

Thus, the matter of the Bard's greatest love tragedy has proved to be a fountain of inspiration for a medium that relishes pathos and sensuousness (opera), but also for one that thrives on sex and humour (musical), and has been challenging composers from all ages and cultures to read and reread it in widely different dramatic musical adaptations, and this will probably go on for years to come.

Notes:

[1] The string of influence seems to be as follows: Giuseppe Maria Foppa's libretto for Zingarelli's *Giulietta e Romeo* (Milan 1796), itself relying on a play written by Luigi Scevola in 1818, inspired from Matteo Bandello's 1554 novella – a reworking of Luigi da Porto's 1530 tale *Historia novellamente ritrovata di due nobili amanti*, ultimately based on a fifteenth-century story by Masuccio Salernitano. Michael Collins (qtd. in

Willier 132) offers two other possible sources – a ballet dependent on both Foppa and Scevola – *Le tombe di Verona, ossia Giulietta e Romeo*, choreographed by Antonio Cherubini (Cremona ca. 1820) and *Roméo et Juliette* (1772) by Jean François Ducis, a notorious adapter of Shakespeare. On the other hand, Franca Cella claims that Foppa's sources were Gerolamo della Corte's *Storie di Verona* (qtd. in Weinstock 251).

[2] In the original French: "Quel désappointement!!! dans le libretto il n'y a point de bal chez Capulet, point de Mercutio, point de nourrice babillarde, point d'ermite grave et calme, point de scène au balcon, point de sublime monologue pour Juliette recevant la fiole de l'ermite, point de duo dans la cellule entre Roméo banni et l'ermite désolé, point de Shakespeare, rien, un ouvrage manqué, mutilé, défiguré, *arrangé*."

[3] Edmund Campion (1540-1581) was an English Roman Catholic Jesuit priest and martyr arrested by priest hunters, convicted of high treason, hanged, drawn and quartered at Tyburn, beatified by Pope Leo XIII in 1886 and canonised in 1970 by Pope Paul VI. Greenblatt speculates Shakespeare may have met him.

[4] "What if it be a poison, which the friar / Subtly hath minister'd to have me dead, / Lest in this marriage he should be dishonour'd, / Because he married me before to Romeo? / I fear it is, and yet methinks it should not, / For he hath still been tried a holy man" (IV. 3. 23-28).

[5] All the quotations from Deschamps are in my translation.

[6] All quotations from this opera are from Barbier and Carré's libretto.

[7] As in the famous Alfredo - Violetta duet "Parigi, o cara, noi lasceremo" in the last act of Verdi's *La Traviata.*

[8] Schwanenberger's opera. The exact date of the premiere is not recorded. The premiere of Benda's Singspiel took place in Gotha on 25 September of the same year 1776, so Schwanenberger's may well be the first opera adaptation of the play.

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Quixotic Readers of Human Nature; Or, the Misprisions of Sympathy in Henry Mackenzie's *The Man of Feeling*[1]

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Abstract
Rising to prominence in the latter half of the eighteenth century, the man of feeling readily became a virtuous model of liberal and charitable benevolence. Nevertheless, his moral epistemology – which translates feeling *per se* as virtue – proposed a model of masculinity that gradually absorbed feminine characteristics such as sympathy, sentimental effusions, tears and, ultimately, delicate feeling. This article places the man of feeling within the paradigm of delicate feeling, which interprets public responses in line with the protagonist's innate benevolence taken as a quixotic *idée fixe* propagated through sympathy, the very engine of ethical motivation and judgement within a social context marked by mercantile interests. Understood as an arbiter of the other's sentiments, sympathy – as understood by Scottish Enlightenment philosophers such as David Hume and Adam Smith – is grounded in the imagined perspective on the others' similar sentiments or emotions and is seen as having powerful social effects, once it manifests itself in a morally judicious manner. Failing to do so, it engenders excessive, unorthodox sympathetic feelings that are conducive to a misreading of fellowship. In this light, my task is to delve into Henry Mackenzie's *Man of Feeling*, a 1771 novel whose eponymous hero is an ultimately passive observer of life who epitomizes sympathetic feeling as failure caused by virtual forms of sympathy.

Keywords: man of feeling, sentimental morality, quixotism, sympathy, benevolence, David Hume, Adam Smith.

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Following in the footsteps of the good-natured man amply theorised by the sentimentalist moral philosopher Anthony Ashley Cooper, the third Earl of Shaftesbury, in the early decades of the eighteenth century and patented by Henry Fielding as the ultimately virtuous character in both his periodicals and novels published after the 1740's, the man of feeling became a popular protagonist in the latter half of the eighteenth century, when the novel of sensibility in England was in full swing. Partly employed for liberal and charitable purposes enmeshed in the civic humanist theory, partly propelled into action in order to challenge gender norms and thus highlight a model of masculinity which gradually acquired feminine traits such as sympathy, effusions of sentiment, tears and delicate feeling, the man of feeling was the advocator of the language of the heart, which stemmed from "the change in the base of morality in mid-eighteenth century sentimental ethics" (Sheriff 73). More specifically, the new novelistic hero augured a type of discourse drawing upon sentiment not as the symbol of one's own private self but as an expression of selfhood whose essence must be defined in relation to other feeling selves capable to establish what Adam Smith called "a correspondence of sentiments" (61). James D. Lilley encapsulates this idea by arguing that an affective self "can know itself only insofar as it is a self *for another*, only through the act of transforming its absolute privacy into a communal sentimental spectacle" (651). Utopian as it may seem, the question of sociability based on fellow feeling was assiduously debated by Scottish Enlightenment philosophers like David Hume and Adam Smith and explored by a wealth of English sentimental novels, of which Henry Mackenzie's 1771 *Man of Feeling* was a part.[2]

Abiding by such philosophical approaches to social epistemology, the novel of sensibility sets a sentimental hero or heroine against a background populated by self-interested low-class characters who elicit the former's pity rewarded by the sharing of a

few coins. This unprincipled way of performing charitable acts for the sake of "a communal sentimental spectacle" enables Janet Todd to remark that "the novels of the sentimental man are offsprings of *Don Quixote*, with its portrait of the idealistic *ingénu*" (108). As both a state of mind and social practice performed with an eye to redressing the unprivileged, sentimental quixotism acquires, I argue, the status of an ideology translated as disinterested yet unwary benevolence resulting from the fatal misunderstanding of the relationship between the private/self-interested and public/sympathetic self. "In order to register its essential humanity," writes Lilley, "this self must disclose itself, must direct its interiority outward, must cry public tears that somehow materialize and bear witness to its private core" (651). From this perspective I claim that the man of feeling's moral epistemology appears to be problematic, since publicly unresponsive private feeling acts as principled public virtue.

The Man of Feeling's success was consubstantial with the fact that Mackenzie was conversant with the literary and ethical debates on Hume's "Science of Man" (Hume x). Posing as "an index of 'Civil Society'" (Manning 83), the man of feeling was deemed as a counterpart of the good-natured man, whose morality was predicated on natural goodness. Failing to establish a community of fellow-feeling because society is driven by a mercantile ethos, Mackenzie's novel questions the status of sympathetic feeling as the engine of ethical motivation and judgement and fruitfully tackles "'public' issues of contemporary economic or political debate within the framework of a sentimental exploration of the 'private' world of feeling" (Skinner 3). Harley, Mackenzie's eponymous hero, embarks on a series of picaresque adventures on his way to London, where he is due to meet a baronet willing to help him secure the lease of some crown lands. The typology of characters he meets on the road - a cunning beggar with a dog, some mad people in Bedlam, a cardsharper, a misanthropist and a prostitute Harley restores to her dismayed father – bespeaks Harley's incentive to philanthropy and, concurrently, his inappropriate use of sympathy.

Conceived as a critique of sentimental virtues which, in Harley's view, take the form of moral duties, Mackenzie problematizes the privacy of feeling and its capacity to yield social benefits in a sympathetic manner. Hume's *A Treatise of Human Nature* is thus a serviceable instrument not only for stressing Harley's misreading of human nature but also for his quixotic malpractice. Hume asserts that "all human creatures are related to us by resemblance. Their persons, therefore, their interests, their passions, their pains and pleasures must […] produce an emotion similar to the original one; since a lively idea is easily converted into an impression" (203). The novel's hero takes stock of the others' emotions which are nothing but "impressions" of original affects. The man of feeling, therefore, behaves like Don Quixote when he transforms his own "impressions" into an error-causing "ideological strategy" (Mullan 23), a phrase meant as a Humean model of fellow feeling meant to underpin disinterested social harmony. Nonetheless, instead of being read rationally, the similar emotions shown by the others – most notably self-interest and malignity – are interpreted subjectively and camouflaged as a fellow feeling meant to reinforce the protagonist's disinterested benevolence. Consequently, the man of feeling is the embodiment of "moral weeping" (Crane 205), of an abstracted, if not absurd, form of fellow feeling muted by a capitalist background deprived of civic humanism through which man identifies his own interests with those of his fellow-citizens. Though dejected by the pragmatic standards of society, whose "immense riches have erected a standard of ambition, destructive of private morals, and of public virtue" (Mackenzie 62), the problematic Harley poses as an inept observer of vices, since "his internal concentration is a means of getting as much pleasure as possible from indulging and analyzing his emotion" (Sheriff 76). In stark contrast to the good-natured man, the man of feeling articulates a confusing rhetoric of feeling as virtue which recommends him as a fool or, as Sheriff points out, as a "degeneration" (73) of the former. Aware that "the passions of men are temporary *madnesses*, and sometimes very fatal in their effects" (Mackenzie 25; my emphasis), Mackenzie refutes Hume's

conviction that affections are the spring of social action. If inflamed by the imagination, as is the case with Harley, they "keep pace with the imagination in all its variations" (Hume 302). In this light, the conflicting theory-action dyad is vital to depicting Harley as a self-delusive sentimental automaton fed on Humean "impressions."

Responsible for the shift from the good-natured man to the dilemmatic man of sensibility (Hume x), Hume's "Science of Man" relies on an epistemology of the concrete which ousts reason and considers moral judgement as "essentially private and subjective" (Brissenden 24). The quixotic Harley thus reads human nature through the lens of sympathy taken as a fictional-*qua*-rational "correspondence of sentiments." Mackenzie lambastes the language of the heart and "its sensitiveness to the delicate and irrational intuitions by which man is prompted" (Humphreys 205) through "the science of manners" (qtd. in Manning 82) capable of creating an aesthetics of sensibility deep-seated in Hume's model of sociability. For Mackenzie, however, this "science" is hazardous, as it encourages self-gratification, as well as the impossibility of outgoing sympathy through feeling and judgement. Moreover, when seen in relation to the economy of feeling, sympathy is viewed "as an exchangeable, communal thing – a universal, totally impersonal commodity that congeals our innermost identities and desires" but "the private exercise of our own unique feelings becomes strangely irrelevant" (Lilley 653). Harley's "emotional capital of sensibility" (Manning 92) is counterpoised by a selfish middle-class addicted to consumption, exchange of goods and property regarded as the ultimate spring of the passions, whether in a Hobbesian or a Mandevillian way. Conducive to an "alarming crisis in the corruption of the state" (Mackenzie 62), this sad conclusion points to Harley as "a ruined feeling" (Lilley 654).

Harley's sentimental philosophy dismisses not only Hume's definition of sympathy but also Smith's theory of "the impartial spectator" posited in *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*. Whereas for Hume sentiments are similar when mutually conveyed because the "minds of men" are "mirrors to one another" (259), Smith equates sentiment with virtue, claiming that "the impartial spectator" is a

regulator of the passions. Smith imagines society as a "mirror" (162) in which "the individual looks in order to see whether […] there is a correspondence of sentiments that constitutes approbation" (61). Similar to Hume's "impressions" of original emotions, Smith's concept of the imagination is an active participant in the process of sympathetic identification: "As we have no immediate experience of what other men feel, we can form no idea of the manner in which they are affected, but by conceiving what we ourselves should feel in like a situation" (3-4). By following this line of argument, Harley's view is as quixotic as Smith's vision of moral approbation, since the former interprets the world in an inappropriate manner. Harley's purpose-free sympathy stems from imagined sensations that cannot be adequately decoded and, consequently, it brings about "an alarming crisis in the corruption of the state" (Mackenzie 62). Smith's "impartial spectator" examines the appropriateness of one's conduct in conjunction with the imagined sentiments of "the person principally concerned" (5).

Harley's failure is caused by his ongoing misreading of the outward appearance of the human types he meets on his way to London. Hence his "skill in physiognomy" (Mackenzie 33) is ironically seen as quixotic, as his excessive feeling is the hallmark of his superficial understanding of "the person principally concerned." According to David Marshall, Smith's ethical theory proves to be flawed epistemologically because

> […] the mirror of sympathy in which the spectator represents to himself the feelings of the other person and places himself in the position and person of the other is itself mirrored in the experience of the person who knows he is being viewed. As the sufferer tries to look at his spectators with sympathy … he finds himself in the same *epistemological void*. (596; emphasis in the original)

Failing to understand the others as "a kind of public version of one's private self" (McKeon 378), Harley's encounter with a beggar and his dog may prove to be a good opportunity for the display of fellow-feeling. But it is Harley's unconditional philanthropy that is responsible for gaining the friendship of the

beggar, whose hypocrisy fuels Harley's unprincipled sympathy. When taking a shilling out of his pocket to reward the beggar for his tale, "[…] a milder form, a young sister of virtue's, not so severe as virtue, nor so serious as pity, smiled upon him: His fingers lost their compression" (Mackenzie 18). Embedded in the mechanics of sympathy, Harley's "pity" for the fraudulent beggar is a somatic response dictated by unguarded sentiment. He is a quixotic charitable man who "erroneously rationalizes as a crisis of social corruption a condition which proves to be a fatal crisis of his own character, spiritually and physically" (Hollahan 47). Harley's judgement is quixotic to the extent that he takes the "pimp of a gauger" (Mackenzie 56) for a gentleman. His frame of mind is equally quixotic when he visits a madhouse in Bedlam, where "delusive ideas […] are the motives of the greatest part of mankind, and a heated imagination the power by which their actions are incited" (Mackenzie 25) or when he is cheated at piquet by an allegedly benevolent gentleman, whose malice and greed buttress the idea that "in his superficial reading of social surfaces, Harley exemplifies the naiveté and solipsism of sentimentalism, which mistakes self-regard for sympathy" (Benedict 123).

In a world in which "the affective commodity is all the more 'ours' for its *invisibility*, all the more valuable for its nonparticipation in the secular world of 'selfish' exchange" (Lilley 653; my emphasis), Harley's exacerbated emotions transform him into "a bashful animal" (Mackenzie 14), particularly in the presence of Miss Walton, the object of his unuttered love. "Remarkably silent in her presence" (Mackenzie 14), Harley remains the same passive spectator because for Miss Walton "humanity was a feeling, not a principle: but minds like Harley are not very apt to make this distinction" (Mackenzie 13). Here Mackenzie stresses that the man of feeling can hardly discriminate between "feeling" and "principle," suggesting that principled feeling is the only way to make conduct virtuous. In the words of Robert L. Platzner, Harley is a sentimental "martyr"[3] incapable of establishing either a Humean or a Smithean communication of sentiments able to ensure social harmony. The protagonist's encounter with the prostitute

Emily Atkins outside a brothel is yet another proof of ultimately imprudent pity triggered by her social and moral misery: "There is virtue in these tears; let them be the fruit of virtue" (Mackenzie 38). Emily, the daughter of a captain who teaches her to question religious faith and ethical norms, ends up as a prostitute, as a result of her naivety, desire for flattery and lack of sound judgement. By telling the story of her unfortunate life to Harley, Emily turns out to be his counterpart, in that both dissociate unprincipled feeling from social morality.

Mackenzie's hero behaves like a sentimental automaton – the equivalent of Don Quixote's *idée fixe* – and thus fails to be productive because his fellow-feeling only targets social pariahs. Analysed via Hume's or Smith's moral theory, the man of feeling's imagination becomes "a free-floating principle of sympathy that names […] that image-making power that accommodates to each other high and low, outside and inside, public and private in all dimensions of human life" (McKeon 379). Dying the very moment when Miss Walton confesses her love for him, Harley shows once more that he falls prey to the misprisions of sympathy, continuously – and continually – mistaking abstract forms of feeling for a morass of actual emotions experienced in the public realm.

Notes:

[1] Research for this article was conducted with support from UEFISCDI Research Grant PN-II-RU-TE-2014-4-1776, director Sorana Corneanu.

[2] See, for instance, Sarah Fielding, *David Simple* (1744) and *Volume the Last* (1753), Mary Collyer, *Felicia to Charlotte* (1744), Samuel Richardson, *The History of Sir Charles Grandison* (1753), Henry Brooke, *The Fool of Quality* (1766), William Goldsmith, *The Vicar of Wakefield* (1766), Laurence Sterne, *A Sentimental Journey* (1768), Henry Mackenzie, *The Man of the World* (1773), *Julia de Roubigné* (1777), Frances Burney, *Evelina* (1778).

[3] I use one of the terms present in the title of Robert L. Platzner's article, "Mackenzie's Martyr: The Man of Feeling as Saintly Fool" (1976). *NOVEL: A Forum on Fiction* 10.1, Tenth Anniversary Issue: I (Autumn 1976): 59-64.

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William Blake's "The Tyger" as an Expression of the Reader's Futile Search for Authorial Intent

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Abstract
Reader Response criticism warns against the literary interpreter's endeavor to uncover the author's intention in order to reconstruct the original meaning of the literary text. The present essay aims at providing a way of understanding this fundamental critical fallacy from the perspective of reader response criticism by allowing for this critical stance to be emphasized with the help of literature, and more specifically, of William Blake's famous "Songs of Innocence and of Experience" poem "The Tyger." In this perspective, the poem can be seen as stressing the potential futile quest for authorial intent in the process of literary interpretation, as well as the consequences of perceiving the literary text as an echo of its creator rather than a reader-reflected image and the interpretative perils associated with an insistent quest on the part of the reader to discover the origin of the text to the detriment of a creative construction of meaning.

Keywords: William Blake, "The Tyger," Reader Response Criticism, authorial intent

According to reader response criticism in general and Louise Rosenblatt's transactional reader-response theory in particular, one of the main pitfalls of the interpretative process is the endeavor to uncover the author's intention in order to reconstruct the original meaning that the literary text has been infused with. The present essay aims at providing a way of teaching this fundamental critical

fallacy from the perspective of reader response criticism by reversing the deeply rooted, traditional use of critical methodology in order to interpret a literary text so as to consequently allow for the underlining of a critical stance with the help of literature. More particularly, I will interpret William Blake's famous "Songs of Innocence and of Experience" poem "The Tyger" by highlighting the potential futile quest for authorial intent in the process of literary interpretation, the consequences of perceiving the literary text as an echo of its creator rather than a self-reflected image and the interpretative perils associated with an overly strong tie between reader and author to the detriment of the former's own imaginative and creative abilities.

"What did the author mean?" This inquiry represents a foundation for the reader who focuses on the need to access or understand the writer's consciousness in order to come up with the right response and the correct interpretation of a particular literary work. The underlying assumption is that artistic creation must reflect its creator, and, without thoroughly studying the latter, it would be impossible to pick up the meaning of the former. Consequently, this inherently elusive question triggers a quest on the part of the reader to connect with the writer and his or her life and context of writing by means of biographical and historical studies. While such undertakings would be valid in the case of critical approaches that focus on external factors, in the case of reader-response criticism, placing emphasis on the role of authorial intent in interpretation leads to excluding readings based on one's personal transaction with the text and focusing on the author's *potential* truth instead. According to Rosenblatt, in order for someone to fully enjoy the experience of literature, he or she need not be too concerned with the practicality of the message conveyed. In other words, a perspective focused too much on information and facts in the hopes of extracting clear answers to meet certain goals (stance which Rosenblatt will call *efferent*[1] as opposed to *aesthetic*) will only make readers miss on their own literary exploration. Thus, literature should only be seen as an ongoing process, a vital experience, "a living-through, not simply knowledge about"

(Rosenblatt 38), which implies a shift in authority from author to reader.

What follows is a reader-response analysis of Blake's "The Tyger" that is conducted from the perspective of someone who teaches reader-oriented theories and will consequently see it as an opportunity of exemplifying one of the gravest and easiest fallacies to make in this respect: attempting to discover the author's intention at the moment of writing. The analogy I propose is based on an aesthetic identification of the speaker with the reader of a poem, of the tiger with the text of the poem and of the creator of the tiger with the author of that poem.

Blake's text begins with a direct question addressed to a Tyger, whose features are mesmerizing. In an *efferent* stance I would imagine a real animal that is impressive in size and strength, but by reading aesthetically, I take the Tyger to be a masterful literary work that induces awe in the reader. The fact that the title of the poem accentuates the creature's eccentricity by replacing the letter "i" with the less common "y" is also a textual clue for realizing that what is presented is not the image of any tiger, but that of an atypical figure that should perhaps not be taken literally. Its powerful impact on the speaker is evident from the first few lines:

> Tyger, tyger, burning bright,
> In the forests of the night:
> What immortal hand or eye
> Could frame thy fearful symmetry? (Blake 271)

Since I envision the voice of the poem as a fellow reader, I understand the reflection on the text as both admiration and curiosity with regard to its creator. The reference to "the forests of the night" is a vivid reminder of the first Canto in Dante Alighieri's *The Divine Comedy*. Before his encounter with Virgil, the main character of the epic poem stated: "I found myself within a forest dark,/ For the straightforward pathway had been lost" ("Poetry of Dante Alighieri"). For this reason, the dark imagery of the labyrinthine paths of the forest creates in my mind the impression

of being lost and straying ever further away from the right course. This feeling of wandering was my clue that this approach on reading was not as stable as it might seem and could lead to being lost rather than finding answers. However, in the darkness of uncertainty, the apparition of a "burning" Tyger may symbolize the presence of a guiding light, a metaphorical torch that would bring about brightness and clarity of perception by leading the reader out of darkness and illuminating the essential role that he or she has in creating an interpretation.

Yet instead of gazing inward, the speaker of this poem seeks a response in the outside world and attempts to shape the image of the text's creator via external evidence. What is imagined is an "immortal" being that has the force to transcend time through the life of his work and the inevitable question emerges: Who could have had the "hand or eye" – that is, the writing skills and imagination – to grasp and "frame" the concept of such a terrifyingly perfect poem, such a "fearful symmetry"? At this point, the awe and curiosity of the reader leads to an understandable inquiry. It is important to mention that it is perhaps impossible or improbable to fully evade reflecting upon the beliefs, goals and passions that the author might have had. However, reaching certainty in this case is unrealistic, since readers are presented only with a patched version of the author's persona – as the speaker of "The Tyger" puts it, a hand, an eye and later a shoulder and feet. This should deter from making extrinsic information the ultimate goal of interpretation. In the words of Rosenblatt: "Background materials already receive much attention in school and college literature programs. The danger, however, is that such study tends to become an end in itself" (123).

Yet, the speaker of "The Tyger" disregards the limits to which authorial information can be of use and continues a series of rhetorical questions about the artist and the possible intention behind the poem:

> In what distant deeps or skies,
> Burnt the fire of thine eyes?

On what wings dare he aspire?
What the hand dare seize the fire?

And what shoulder, and what art,
Could twist the sinews of thy heart?
And when thy heart began to beat,
What dread hand? and what dread feet? (Blake 272)

Despite an acknowledgement of the temporal distance between author and reader, the observer fails to connect to the text in front of him or her, to the Tyger, and instead keeps wandering into "distant deeps or skies" in search for answers that might provide an explanation for the poem's greatness. What were the poet's aspirations, the "wings" he hoped to give his poem? And how could he have had the power and the courage to infuse and control "the fire" of his work? It is with these two questions that the speaker decisively takes an obscure path in the aforementioned forest because the desire to intellectualize authorial intention takes over the entire interpretation.

In addition, the following stanza introduces references to some of the creator's body parts, adding to his hand and eye, a "shoulder" and "dread feet." This strengthens the belief that a wholesome image of the writer is never accessible to a reader. The person praising the Tyger can only catch a glimpse of bits and pieces of the creator's personality and can only admire his "art" based on the broken fragments and hints in between the words. Without understanding that the evoked image is inevitably distorted and mingled with the reader's own experience, personality and train of thought, the speaker of this poem takes on a passive role, being content with observing instead of recreating the poem. Consequently, he or she continues to wonder about the "sinews" of the poem's beating "heart" and therefore the emotions that the author could have or must have invested in it. The assumption is that because the Tyger is so great and fearful, the entity that breathed life into it must have been just as "dread." The speaker is under the impression that the creation is complete and his role is to just step back and sing its beauty, without questioning why the

Tyger is seen in this light instead of another and without considering the possibility that instead of mirroring its writer, the poem might be reflecting its reader.

In order to achieve a more tangible image of the creator, the author is imagined as a blacksmith that forges his words:

> What the hammer? what the chain?
> In what furnace was thy brain?
> What the anvil, what dread grasp
> Dare its deadly terrors clasp? (Blake 272)

Thus, instead of the pen and paper, the artist's instruments are "the hammer," "the chain," the "furnace," and "the anvil," underlying the great amount of effort and energy put into the creation of the work, as well as the intricate nature of the process of writing.

The Tyger's brain appears as a metaphor for the reasoning behind the text's lines, while the flames of the furnace may represent the author's creative force that melts concepts into phrases and shapes the brain of the poem according to his own personal heat. In this sense, the title of the poem is misleading because the stress is not on the Tyger, as one might expect. In other words, the main focus of all the rhetorical questions is not the poem with its "deadly terrors," but its origin and the creator's mastery. Thus, the speaker's praising is actually not directed towards the beauty and the frightening nature of the text, but towards the inferred qualities of the writer. This reader's search for authorial intent dominates this interpretation to the point that the only guiding light that can be seen is the author's fire that overshadows even the Tyger's brightness.

In addition, I have noticed that the fragmentary view of the artist is also reflected in the resulting product of his work, as the Tyger is seen only in terms of "eyes," "heart" and "brain," reinforcing the idea that both the author and the text might be too complex and inherently obscure to ever be completely understood. But all of the elements that make up the Tyger are carefully controlled and framed by the author's imagination, feelings and reason, respectively, assigning to the speaker the sole role of

observer. Just as Mary Shelley's Frankenstein worked on his monster, putting body parts together to create a physical frame of his creation, only to lose control over it once it was finished, "a text, once removed, once published, is no longer in the author's control. In a very real sense, the author is outside the immediate, intimate reading circle. A body of work exists, the author's intentions threaded within them, waiting for the reader to respond to them, to enliven them" (Karolides 24). Hence, without a human consciousness to glue the Tyger together with his or her imagination, without a reader to provide a unifying principle and give coherence and dynamism to the work, the text would amount to nothing more than a shapeless, inanimate monster.

Even though the universe, represented by the stars is helpless when dealing with the Tyger, as it can encompass neither creator, nor creation, the poetic voice still hopes to shed light upon the writer's character:

> When the stars threw down their spears,
> And watered Heaven with their tears,
> Did he smile his work to see?
> Did he who made the lamb make thee? (Blake 272)

The stars are presented here as a defeated army that "threw down their spears" in recognition of the fact that they are not powerful enough to keep the Tyger captive within a frame of pure logic. Their tears are signs of pain and frustration at having renounced the fight to grasp the text's significance.

The Tyger's freedom is in vain because the mind that perceives it is captive and enslaved by an adamant quest to discover the creator's character. This reader seeks to find out whether or not the artist was pleased with "his work," with the result of his vision and whether a comparison with other texts can reveal more about the authorial intention. This approach has become predominantly *efferent* because stress is laid on picking up information about the writer from different sources in an attempt to *discover* and understand *his* way of reasoning.

Symmetry is not only a "fearful" characteristic of the Tyger, but it also stands as proof of the reader's circularity and redundancy in interpretation:

> Tyger, tyger, burning bright,
> In the forests of the night:
> What immortal hand or eye
> Dare frame thy fearful symmetry? (Blake 272)

The last stanza is almost identical with the first one, with the exception of the word "could" replaced by the much stronger "dare." The main question now is no longer how the creator had the ability to build something so powerful, but how he had the audacity to do it. However, the change does not affect the observer, as the focus still remains on the author and his potential intent, not on the effect of bringing together the Tyger and the reader. Therefore, because the speaker of this poem continues to ask all the wrong questions in interpretation, he or she is still lost in "the forests of the night," without having made any progress since the beginning of the poem. In this case, the reader is so driven to reach conclusions by projecting a virtual image of the writer that he or she fails to find any answers in the reading activity. The redundancy of this approach is underlined by the never-ending series of questions that remain groundless and unanswered.

Fig. 1 William Blake - "The Tyger" (The William Blake Archive)

The same feeling of redundancy and desolation is given by the bare tree depicted in the illustration of "The Tyger" (Fig. 1), while the symmetry is physically represented by one of its branches dividing the text into two equal sections of three stanzas each. Nonetheless, in the lower half of the plate there is the image of a tiger that has almost nothing in common with the Tyger of the text. First of all, the creature seems to be simply walking by, not preparing an attack and definitely not inspiring fear or terror. Secondly, the "deadly" predator has the peaceful expression of a mild, almost domesticated animal that does not induce horror and admiration in a display of fangs and claws, but shows friendliness and even submission by keeping its tail down and its ears laid back. The difference between the speaker's Tyger and the one etched on the plate proves how much the reader's perspective can modify reality. Thus, the Tyger's description and mental representation is not pinned down by authorial intention, but is highly dependent on the reader's subjective experience.

This essay has considered the effects of what Rosenblatt calls efferent reading in the form of pursuing virtual answers about the author based on the work's features, to the detriment of the reader's own response. The Tyger's brightness could not help the speaker find a way out of the circle of rhetorical questions about the artist's power and courage to compose the text's eyes, heart and brain. But the creator's image is broken into pieces that can never form a complete picture which makes the goal of this kind of interpretation unreachable. Hence, "The Tyger" could be interpreted as drawing awareness to the reader's potential emotional and intellectual stagnation caused by being stuck in a circular, efferent and futile quest for authorial intent.

Notes:

[1] The origin of the word is the Latin "effere," which means "to carry away."

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Reading the Bible with and against the Oppressor: Nineteenth-Century Slavery and Scriptural (Ab)uses

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Abstract
Reading the Bible has never been exclusively a spiritual exercise in learning the allegedly divinely inspired precepts of Judaeo-Christianity; on the contrary, biblical passages have often been marshalled to endorse often divergent, sometimes infamous social practices. This essay investigates nineteenth-century American pro- and anti-slavery texts which document the traditional Christian strategy of *argumentum ad verecundiam* through appeal specifically to biblical authority, used to buttress arguments in the abolitionist controversy. American ministers tailored their selection of biblical passages so as to persuade the black converts that submissive docility complied with divine imperatives and emulated Christ's; slave owners extolled their paternalistic care for slaves and vindicated bondage as a/the biblically sanctioned human condition. Not only did educated freed slaves, some turned ministers, expose the Christian slaveholder society's iniquity, but they would sometimes read blacks (back) into biblical stories which mention civilising heroes.

My aim here is not to provide a definitive answer, if any should ever be possible, to the (for me) haunting question whether Christianity could and/or aimed to empower the converted slaves – and generally the subaltern. However, with the benefit of European hindsight as offered by the Holocaust, I would suggest that historically the practice of reading the Bible to vindicate one's position may have had disempowering effects on "the other" of white Christianity rather than providing the catalyst for long-term socio-political self-empowerment of the oppressed.

Keywords: Bible, Christianity, American slavery, *argumentum ad verecundiam*, abuse, disempowerment

> *For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.*
> *For the body is not one member, but many.* (1 Corinthians 12.13–14 (KJV))

Historically, biblical passages have often been cited to endorse one social practice or another. The Pauline epistles, whether regarded now as the Apostle's or as merely attributed to Paul by his disciples,[1] have been famously quoted to claim equality and enfranchisement in the face of inequity without or within *Christianitas*, to extol Christianity's liberality or, conversely, to buttress kyriarchy, viz. patriarchy's hierarchical structure, and disenfranchisement. Such lines as the epigraph's (1 Cor 12.13–14) seemingly enjoin the creation of an assembly (*ecclesia*) of universal participation of everyone baptised in Christ, despite the *acknowledged differential of social standing*, without thereby also enjoining non-discrimination. Difference is also noted by the Luke-Acts writer, if in the ontological/ethnic rather than social register: "And [God] hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth…" (Acts 17.26 KJV). Other Pauline passages, on the contrary, appear to extol ethnic and social *de-differentiation*: "For *there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek*: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him" (Rom 10.12); "Where *there is neither Greek nor Jew*, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, *bond nor free*: but Christ is all, and in all" (Col 3.11).

Nonetheless, the ecumenical message of such *paradoxical* passages capable to maintain difference even when naming de-differentiation, is blatantly offset by the neo-testamentary *household codes*, especially poignant in Paul's epistles, which "typically reiterate the threefold social hierarchy of the patriarchal

family" – the gender, generational and slave hierarchies of kyriarchy – more explicitly than the Old Testament does (Ruether 92). In Rosemary Ruether's reading, such explicitness "indicat[es] that this pattern was partly challenged in early Christianity, reflecting egalitarian movements in some contemporary forms of Judaism," which forced "early Christian documents [to] spend more time justifying patriarchal patterns as appropriate for the church" (92) than the vetero-testamentary books needed to. Ruether (92) quotes Ephesians to show Christian kyriarchy at its vilest,

> Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing. (Eph 5.22–24)
>
> Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. (Eph 6.1)
>
> Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ. (Eph 6.5)

as well as similar injunctions in 1 Timothy (2.11, 6.1–2) and 1 Peter (2.18–21, 3.1–2), where the latter epistle also "calls for submission to state authorities, the emperor, and governors ([1 Pet] 2:13–14)" (Ruether 92). A dual pattern thus emerges within the kyriarchal frame of early Christianity: submission at home mirrors that owed in society, and both forms are alleged to be organised on a divinely inspired template. A truly inspirational doctrine – rigidified canonically – to persuade the subaltern to desist from any "temptation" to resist and/or challenge the kyriarchal status quo! To anticipate my argument about the use of biblical quotes to justify African-American slavery, when 1 Peter 2.18–24 enjoins submission to an unjust master, it legitimises its ruthless endorsement of social iniquity by comparing the slave's suffering to the redemptive suffering of Christ, and moreover perversely calls such patient obedience the only conduct "acceptable with God" (1 Peter 2.20)! It appears God *him*self, in such discourse, is but a

tyrant that furnishes his earthly counterparts with their role model! My interpretation finds unexpected support in the perspicuous observation of Dominican theologian Edward Schillebeeckx relative to the Christian currency of images of powerlessness and their debilitating social role:

> Cradle and cross were an initiation into the "suffering Jesus": a helpless child between ox and ass and a Jesus who goes staggering up to Golgotha.... However authentic this experience may be, here *the Christian interpretation of suffering enters a phase in which the symbol of the cross becomes a disguised legitimation of social abuses, albeit to begin with still unconsciously*.... "Suffering in itself," no longer suffering through and for others, took on a mystical and positive significance so that instead of having a critical power it really acquired a *reactionary* significance. Suffering in itself became a "symbol." (Schillebeeckx 699, emphasis added)

Schillebeeckx's sounds like so much late twentieth- and twenty-first century critique by feminist Christian theologians and feminist counsellors (Jantzen 499–500; Smith and Davis-Gage 120–30).

Regarding race under the Christian dispensation and in its discourse, Colin Kidd rightly argues that whilst the "logical coherence of Christian theology depends upon a certain reading of the significance of race," nevertheless "race has the potential to undermine some of the central doctrines of Christianity" (25). For a long while, "Christian commentators on race were inclined to refuse the apparent fact of distinctive races or racial types for fear of endorsing the destructive heresy of polygenesis" (25), viz. the belief in the original creation of humankind in two (or several) strands (33–5). Nevertheless, a tension does arise between the implicit Christian assumption of a monogenetic theory of race – based on the account of common Adamic descent of all humankind[2] – intended to explain the Fall and redemption as a universally valid drama, and the Genesis suggestion of racial diversity framed within the Cain, Noah and Tower of Babel stories,[3] if not framed within a bi- or polygenist account as in non-Christian cultures. According to

Kidd, the deepest impact made by Christian theology on the western construction of race was a "negative inhibitory influence" (26): "Theological factors, more than any others, dictated that the proof of [racial] sameness would be the dominant feature of western racial science" (26).

A caveat is in order here. Scholars are agreed that the Bible does not *racialise* slavery (Johnson 231–2). Nor do scriptures engage with racial or ethnic differences – apart from describing different religious observances (Kidd 3) – either systematically or inchoately theoretically (Kidd 20; Johnson 231–2). It is *biblical interpreters* who *appeal to biblical authority to legitimise racialised oppression*, with the Bible "merely as a screen on to which ... [to] project their racial attitudes, fears and fantasies" (Kidd 3). Furthermore, under biblical inspiration, "race is collapsed into lineage, [which] should inhibit racial prejudice": the "ascription of the racial Other to some part of the Noachic family tree, however distant from the Japhetite branch to which the white race was customarily assigned" benignly "render[s] racial Otherness as a type of cousinage or remote kinship" (Kidd 21). Unfortunately, scriptural notions of lineage qua otherness could also "encourage the importation of divinely authorised categories of blessed and cursed – and by extension objective moral categories of good and evil – into the reading of the ethically neutral differences between races" (Kidd 21). This is the infamous case of "exacerbating negative attitudes towards the racial Other by ascribing ... the blackness of Africans to the divine curse placed on the descendants of Ham" (Kidd 21–2), in the notorious *curse of Ham* account (39–41, 75–6; Gen 9.25–27): in expiation of Ham's sin, Canaan (one of his sons) with all his progeny (which in early modernity referenced Africans) was cursed to become Noah's other sons' servants throughout posterity. And here we reach one of the many biblical interpretation conundrums: the traditional "belief in common Noachic descent [of all races] gave no guarantee of human compassion, let alone mere indifferent acceptance" of racial/ethnic difference (Braude, "Sons of Noah" 104); rather, "the treatment of

Jews, blacks, and Indians in the early modern world arose despite, not because of, theological acceptance of a shared genealogy" (105).

In the particular case of the curse of Ham, the Renaissance appears to have brought a significant shift in the ascription of racial/ethnic identity to the accursed descendants of a man whose race is *not* self-evident in the Bible (Braude, "Michelangelo" 81): Augustine's Jews in *City of God* now became the Black (Braude 79). Benjamin Braude contends that Michelangelo's *Nakedness of Noah* (1509) within the Genesis cycle on the Sistine Chapel ceiling signals this turning point in the construal of the Noah-and-sons myth. In the painting's wake, "[t]he curse of slavery, which previously could be interpreted allegorically as a sign of heresy and infidelity, was increasingly interpreted literally as the mandate for a specific social and economic institution": African slavery (Braude 87).

It is precisely the unquestioned *authority* of the Bible that has often been resorted to in *argumenti ad verecundiam* to legitimise any (controversial) aspect of the status quo. Yet the allegedly divinely inspired, even divinely emanated, ethics which purportedly grounds such authority is hardly consistent or fair, an aspect which biblical scholars should actively and critically engage with (Davies 218–20):

> [T]he Bible promotes and fundamentally depends on oppressive structures like imperialism, ethnocentrism, sexism, and slavery (although scripture is not reducible to any of these)....
>
> Biblical authority is merely one form of human power that disguises itself as transcendent and otherworldly.... Correcting this misperception means recognizing that the Bible and other authority symbols are ethically ambivalent; because they derive from histories of conquest, they embody ideologies of domination. (Johnson 244–5)

Furthermore, Kidd insists that the humanistic study of racial constructs should factor in what he calls *race-as-theology* (19), i.e. the biblically inflected vocabulary of race whose construction started in early modernity and which permeated Euro-American

lexicography and linguistics from their inception, and later racial science, anthropology and ethnology (22–4, 27–8).

As both pro-slavery and abolitionist scriptural appeals demonstrated in the nineteenth century,[4] the Bible squarely supports slavery: "Servants [i.e. *slaves*],[5] be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ" (Eph 6.5 KJV), urges St Paul (or rather one of his disciples). Before I examine such arguments, a brief historical detour is necessary. Centuries before the abolitionist controversy, God-abiding Europeans had used iniquitous episodes like "the Promised Land" (Gen 12.1–3, Gen 15.18–21, Exod 3.6–8), with a Christian stress, to legitimise their settlement in and their countries' colonisation of the Americas. "Discoverers" of all religious stripes drew on the vetero- and neo-testamentary books to ground western European claims for the New World, while purporting to (also) undertake the "most godly and Christian work" (Hakluyt qtd. in Gaustad and Schmidt 34), the missionary work of preaching the gospel to "heathen" Indians, as Columbus (qtd. in Gaustad and Schmidt 17) and Richard Hakluyt (qtd. in Gaustad and Schmidt 33) proclaimed.[6]

John Winthrop's statement in *A Modell of Christian Charity* (1630) belongs to such socio-political – yet ultimately economically minded – twist to the biblical message of religious expansion. Worse, the speech's incipit sets the stage for the colonialist project as divinely sanctioned and moreover steeped in the providentially devised class system:

> GOD ALMIGHTY in his most holy and wise providence, hath soe disposed of the condition of mankind, as in all times some must be rich, some poore, some high and eminent in power and dignitie; others mean and in submission. (Winthrop 33)

Winthrop's *naturalisation* of class, gender, religion, race and ethnicity – societal categories harnessed to a political agenda: to set barriers among humans and buttress inequity – may strike us now

as deeply prejudiced. So may also the pilgrim father's professed belief in the *divine* origins of kyriarchy.

A relatively similarly embedded argument was proffered by pro-slavery advocates over two centuries later at the height of the abolitionist controversy. In *A Brief Examination of Scripture Testimony on the Institution of Slavery...* (1841, 1850), Rev. Thornton Stringfellow proclaimed, explicitly against abolitionists, that:

> [T]he institution of slavery has received, in the first place,
> 1st. The sanction of the Almighty in the Patriarchal age.
> 2d. That it was incorporated into the only National Constitution which ever emanated from God.
> 3d. That its legality was recognized, and its relative duties regulated, by Jesus Christ in his kingdom; and
> 4th. That it is full of mercy. (Stringfellow, *A Brief Examination* 1)

Stringfellow perplexingly affirms his inner knowledge that Christ himself recognises the legality, and regulates the relative duties, of slavery "in his kingdom." Yet the reverend's view of Jesus as a slavery advocate does not differ significantly from Apostle Paul's of God as an oppressive tyrant. Unsurprisingly, Stringfellow's first biblical quotation to vindicate slavery is the curse of Ham (Stringfellow 2), the episode which "has constituted one of the standard justifications for the degradation and enslavement of the African black in both South Africa and the American South" (Braude, "Sons of Noah" 103–4).

How could the good Baptist pastor not repeat the traditional Noachic argument in his *Scriptural and Statistical Views in Favor of Slavery*, whose first part is a reprint of the early booklet! In the novel part proper, Stringfellow resorts to the 1850 census data to explain the ostensibly universal welfare of the southern states by comparison to the slavery-free North in terms of the wage-slaves' but "[n]ominal freedom," which, "combined with poverty, cannot secure it [freedom] in those conditions," whereas "[t]he slave of the South enjoys this sympathy in all conditions from birth till death" (*Statistical View* 128–9; 137–49).[7] An idyllic place to live in, the

southern plantation, if one was fortunate enough to be enslaved! And an irrefutable argument too, grounded as the tract is – ironically, in moderate Enlightenment fashion – in both scriptures and modern science, or at least bureaucratic travesty thereof!

Countering precisely such a position as advocated by Stringfellow, some "theologians questioned folkloric misunderstanding of the significance of the curse of Ham" (Kidd 40). Virtually half a century before Stringfellow's *A Brief Examination*, Rev. Alexander McLeod, the Reformed Presbyterian pastor of New York City, wrote in his *Negro Slavery Unjustifiable* (1804) *contra* the slavery apologists' appeal to the curse upon Ham's son, Canaan:

> In order to justify Negro slavery from this prophecy, it will be necessary to prove four things,
> 1. That all the posterity of Canaan were to suffer slavery.
> 2. That African Negroes are really descended of Canaan.
> 3. That each of the descendants of Shem and Japheth has a moral right to reduce any of them to servitude.
> 4. That every slaveholder is really descended from Shem or Japheth. Want of proof in any of these particulars will invalidate the whole objection. (qtd. in Kidd 40)

Unfortunately, McLeod's logical parsing of the biblical argument had no impact comparable to the conventional misreading of the curse. More unfortunately yet, McLeod did not attack the very *institution* of slavery. I would ascribe such "blindness" to the deleterious influence of the Bible on its white Christian readers in endorsing slavery as a natural, God-sanctioned institution.

William J. Grayson undertook a lengthy defence of slavery in *The Hireling and the Slave* (1854) by pitting, like Rev. Stringfellow, the South's (idealised) benevolent slave system against the North's ruthless industrial capitalism. However, Grayson's preferred medium is verse: the brave conservative southern politician penned his didactic poem in heroic couplets! For Grayson, the labour predicament of either category of African Americans ultimately derived from the Adamic curse (ll. 1–10):

> FALLEN from primeval innocence and ease,
> When thornless fields employed him but to please,
> The laborer toils; …
> In vain new-shapes his name to shun the ill
> Slave, hireling, help the curse pursues him still;
> Changeless the doom remains, the mincing phrase
> May mock high Heaven, but not reverse its ways….
> To each alike applies the stern decree
> That man shall labor; whether bond or free… (21–2, ll. 1–3, 7–10, 13–14)

It never occurred to Grayson that, in practice, God's curse on Adam – sadly, on the entire earth: "cursed is the ground for thy sake; ... thorns and thistles shall it bring forth to thee" (Gen 3.17–18) – that "in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread" (Gen 3.19), affected people differently. He belonged to the privileged few, in post-lapsarian times, not having to toil for their subsistence, but living free from the allegedly universally applicable Adamic curse, "this sad estate of *all mankind*" (Grayson l. 18).

Likewise, another 1854 text, *Sociology for the South; or, the Failure of Free Society*, by southern lawyer and sociologist George Fitzhugh, strongly defended slavery as a benefit-ridden political economy antithetical to the barbaric and dehumanising northern capitalism. Not only did Fitzhugh, like Grayson, extol the patriarchal benevolence of slave-owning aristocrats,[8] but his, admittedly, capitalist (and racist) more than religious argument equated facetiously the ruler's *virtuous* duty[9] towards the subordinates with slavery within, and for the benefit of, society at large:

> But abolish negro slavery, and how much of slavery still remains. Soldiers and sailors in Europe enlist for life; here, for five years. Are they not slaves who have not only sold their liberties, but their lives also? And they are worse treated than domestic slaves. No domestic affection and self-interest extend their aegis over them. No kind mistress, like a guardian angel, provides for them in health, tends them in sickness, and soothes their dying pillow. Wellington

> at Waterloo was a slave. He was bound to obey, or would, like admiral Bying, have been shot for gross misconduct, and might not, like a common laborer, quit his work at any moment. He had sold his liberty, and might not resign without the consent of his master, the king. The common laborer may quit his work at any moment, whatever his contract; declare that liberty is an inalienable right, and leave his employer to redress by a useless suit for damages. The highest and most honorable position on earth was that of the slave Wellington; the lowest, that of the free man who cleaned his boots and fed his hounds. The African cannibal, caught, christianized and enslaved, is as much elevated by slavery as was Wellington. The kind of slavery is adapted to the men enslaved. Wives and apprentices are slaves; not in theory only, but often in fact. Children are slaves to their parents, guardians and teachers. Imprisoned culprits are slaves. Lunatics and idiots are slaves also. Three-fourths of free society are slaves, no better treated, when their wants and capacities are estimated, than negro slaves. The masters in free society, or slave society, if they perform properly their duties, have more cares and less liberty than the slaves themselves. "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou earn thy bread!" made all men slaves, and such all *good men* continue to be. (Fitzhugh 85–6, original emphasis)

Self-imposed duty towards one's subordinates[10] and other-imposed subordination, e.g. women's or other subaltern group's,[11] may be virtually coterminous for Fitzhugh,[12] yet only the former will he exalt as noble and thus worth regarding as a role-model under kyriarchy: "The masters in free society, or slave society, if they perform properly their duties, have more cares and less liberty than the slaves themselves" (86). The latter kind of slavery, the subaltern's, merely accords with the divinely ordained post-lapsarian human condition!

In the above eulogies, appeals to the Bible to legitimise class divisions and slavery *ipso facto* also vindicate such institutions ethically. That this is so becomes apparent in the encomia of the slaveholding system's benevolence in rescuing the Africans from the ills of their native society such as savagery and cannibalism, let alone in offering these people the gospel of redemption. Enslaved

Africans had to hear with their own ears how fortunate their middle passage had been in bringing them to the condition of personal salvation. And hear they did, as we shall see shortly.

Yet, "[p]lagued by nightmarish visions of slaves using biblical inspiration to rise and destroy" the oppressive institution, southern slaveholders typically demanded that African Americans be presented with "a limited version of their Gospel message" (Fountain 56). When the Methodist missionary William Capers promised South Carolinians that "[o]ur missionaries inculcate the duties of servants to their masters, as we find those duties stated in the scriptures" (qtd. in Fountain 57), he pointed to what many white Christians did: tailor the Bible to legitimise and endorse slavery by "emphasiz[ing] otherworldly salvation in exchange for moral behavior and earthly obedience to whites" as *the* way to redemption (Fountain 57). Sermons to the slaves typically encapsulated the disciplining pseudo-biblical message: "[m]ind yo mistress. Don't steal der potatoes; don't lie bout nothin' an don' talk back tuh yo boss; ifn yo does yo'll be tied tuh a tree an stripped necked. When dey tell yuh tuh do somethin' run an do hit" (qtd. in Fountain 58).

As Margaret Creel has demonstrated, most religious messages played down reciprocity of duty of masters to slaves (Fountain 57), unconcerned about such teachings' likely repellent effects on the slaves. Nonetheless, such effect did exist. Slave Alice Sewell rightly complained that she had never heard "'bout a slave dying and going to heaven," and Georgia slave Hannah Austin that she "seldom heard a true religious sermon" (qtd. in Fountain 58). Charles Ball offers another telling case: not only did his slave African grandfather refrain from appropriating the Maryland slaveholders' version of Christianity, but he could see through "the religion of his oppressors ... [as] the invention of designing men" (qtd. in Fountain 57). The utmost cruelty of slavery rendered Ball unwilling to pray, for he "felt as if there was no mercy in heaven, nor compassion on earth, for a man who was born a slave" (qtd. in Fountain 59). Slave Matilda Perry voiced her and many other (former) slaves' distress, "White folks can't pray right to the black man's God" (qtd. in Fountain 61), in striking anticipation of

twentieth-century queries, coming from the ranks of people of colour and white women alike, about how a *male* (or *white*) Jesus could redeem women (or non-whites).[13] Time and again slave narratives indicate that the rampant iniquity of the white Christian polity persuaded the converted slaves about the unbridgeable chasm separating whites and blacks in their allegedly common faith.

Given the lopsided ethics of the Bible, the further skewing of its message during the First and Second Great Awakenings[14] for the benefit of a white slaveholding society, and the hypocrisy of the white slaveholder ministers and self-appointed preachers, it is little wonder that Christianity did not make the massive inroads within the slave population as traditionally presented by twentieth-century historians of religion. As Daniel Fountain argues, however significant the number of converts before the Emancipation, Christianity may never have "replaced African-based religions until the Christian god delivered the freedom his followers had prophesied" (5). The slaveholders' faith "probably did not meet most slaves' needs" (5): "the nature of the Christian message offered to slaves, and slave religious identity" too (46), were unlikely to render Christianity appealing to most African Americans. Besides, little slave access to proper religious instruction – and more generally to literacy – further impeded conversion (46–55). The white masters also limited their slaves' access to and interest in Christianity by often curtailing religious expression: "On Sundays us jes' laid 'roun' mos' all day. Us didn't git no pleasure outten goin' to church, 'caze we warn't 'lowed to say nothin'" (qtd. in Fountain 52). On the other hand, the slaves who converted "likely did so because of the Christian core's demonstrated faith in the coming of freedom and salvation" (Fountain 5).

Unsurprisingly, the converted African Americans who had acquired a smattering of home education could retort to the whites' pro-slavery arguments in like rhetorical manner, thus forcefully debunking the hypocritical strategy of using the Bible and generally religiously sanctioned moral idiom to vindicate oppression. Denunciation by African Americans worked most forcefully either

through appeal to the argument that "the Exodus narrative of redemption from Egyptian slavery was also applicable to the situation in America," as did minister Nathaniel Paul and abolitionist David Walker (Johnson 236)[15] or, conversely, by "attempting to represent Blacks as historical agents by locating them in biblical narratives" (236), as did minister James Pennington. In fact, Pennington's *A Textbook of the Origin and History of the Colored People* (1841) inaugurated the African-American tradition of using "stories from Genesis that referred to Egypt and Ethiopia to argue that ancient Blacks were ... builders of powerful civilizations and developers of important arts and sciences" (Johnson 237; see Fanon 99).

For David Walker in his *Appeal to the Coloured Citizens of the World* (1829), the "story of Israelites being rescued from slavery was evidence that God opposed slavery and would aid victims of the institution" (Johnson 236). Consequently, "[w]hite slaveholding Christians were the most vile and hypocritical of all peoples" (236). So had they also struck the former slave Olaudah Equiano in his 1789 autobiography. Chapter 2 of Equiano's *Life* indicts the "nominal Christians" whose observation of Christic principles of fairness was, wryly and perversely enough, only skin-deep, or perhaps merely the "letter that killeth" (2 Cor 3.6) African slaves:

> O, ye nominal Christians! might not an African ask you, learned you this from your God? who says unto you, Do unto all men as you would men should do unto you. Is it not enough that we are torn from our country and friends to toil for your luxury and lust of gain? Must every tender feeling be likewise sacrificed to your avarice? (57)

For Equiano, the horrendous cruelties of the slave system ran contrary not only to Christian principles of neighbourly charity and compassion, but also to common human decency, even pragmaticism, as encapsulated in the Bible: "Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets" (Mt 7.12); "And as ye

would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise" (Lk 6.31); "For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again" (Lk 6.38).

In a memorable jeremiad penned in his *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* (1845), Douglass impugned Christian slaveholders in priestly garb as despicable, strident hypocrites:

> I am filled with unutterable loathing when I contemplate the religious pomp and show, together with the horrible inconsistencies, which coexist in the Slave States. They have men-stealers for ministers, women-whippers for missionaries, and cradle-plunderers for church members. The man who wields the blood-clotted cowskin during the week fills the pulpit on Sunday, and claims to be a minister of the meek and lowly Jesus…. He who sells my sister, for purposes of prostitution, stands forth as the pious advocate of purity. He who proclaims it a religious duty to read the Bible, denies me the right of learning to read the name of the God who made me.... The warm defender of the sacredness of the family relation is the same that scatters whole families, – sundering husbands and wives, parents and children, sisters and brothers…. We see the thief preaching against theft, and the adulterer against adultery. We have men sold to build churches, women sold to support the gospel, and babes sold to purchase Bibles *for the poor heathen! all for the glory of God and the good of souls!* The slave auctioneer's bell and the church-going bell chime in with each other, and the bitter cries of the heart-broken slave are drowned in the religious shouts of his pious master. Revivals of religion and revivals in the slave-trade go hand in hand together. The slave prison and the church stand near each other. The clanking of fetters and the rattling of chains in the prison, and the pious psalm and solemn prayer in the church may be heard at the same time. The dealers in the bodies and souls of men erect their stand in the presence of the pulpit, and they mutually help each other. The dealer gives his blood-stained gold to support the pulpit, and the pulpit, in return, covers his infernal business with the garb of Christianity. (119–20; original emphasis)

Rev. James Pennington raised systematically the issue of slavery's inherent infringement of morality: he strategically

"related natural rights to morality and placed both above human law" (Johnson 237). Arguing that morality was derived from God, Pennington averred: "No law, Covenant, or agreement, can legalize wrong in such a sense, as to give it the character of moral rectitude" (qtd. in Johnson 237). For him, this was pre-eminently the case of the slavery-approving US Constitution; Pennington therefore subordinated the Constitution itself to the Declaration of Independence, with its basis in a moral, not a legal, principle, i.e. the proclamation that "all men are created equal" and granted certain "unalienable" rights by God, most notably "freedom" (Johnson 237).

It is equally true that not all African Americans would appear revolutionary to their contemporaries – or to us nowadays. A startling case in point is Phillis Wheatley, the neoclassic black poet resigned to her slave condition, if condemning slavery, and (or perhaps *because*) devoutly Christian. Wheatley's celebrated poem "On Being Brought from Africa to America" (included in her *Poems*, London, 1773),

> 'Twas mercy brought me from my *Pagan* land,
> Taught my benighted soul to understand
> That there's a God, that there's a *Saviour* too:
> Once I redemption neither sought nor knew.
> Some view our sable race with scornful eye,
> "Their colour is a diabolic die."
> Remember, *Christians*, *Negros*, black as *Cain*,
> May be refin'd, and join th' angelic train. (18, original emphasis)

strikes me as an abject eulogy of Christian conversion penned in the most disheartening tradition of *internalised racism*.[16] Whilst we must concede Wheatley little, if any, familiarity with her ancestral religion, given the tender age when she was captured and enslaved, the adult poet who praises Christianity as necessary to *redeem* the black *Cains* of Africa[17] is but the mouthpiece of an imperialist and masculinist religion which has been notoriously unwilling to systematically address and redress social ills within Christian

kyriarchy, let alone to consistently regard human heterogeneity as God's praiseworthy creation.[18]

This is not intended to castigate Wheatley or any other slaves who accepted their social condition as preordained by God, i.e. who internalised both God-talk and colonialist idiom – two allies of sorts – in order to come to terms with oppression. Rather, it wishes to highlight both the dangerous rhetorical arguments furnished by institutions through their biblically steeped discourses to legitimise inhumane practices, and the seemingly inescapable epistemic condition of the speaker who belongs to the subaltern group, as Gayatri Spivak and Audrey Lorde, among other non-white feminists, have warned.

Was familiarity with biblical God-talk empowering for the converted slaves? Did black ministers inspire their black flocks out of bondage? Could black and white preaching with or against the Bible's sanction of slavery tip the abolitionist scales? Can the Bible empower the subaltern socially, i.e. in this life? Such questions are doomed to remain partially, some perhaps wholly, unanswered. With the benefit of European hindsight as regards not Atlantic slavery but the Holocaust,[19] it is more probable that historically the practice of reading the Bible to vindicate one's position has had disempowering effects on "the other" of either Christianity or the white race once dragged into the latter's imperialist projects, than being the catalyst for long-term socio-political self-empowerment of the oppressed.

Notes:

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[1] Unlike Romans and Corinthians, Colossians is of disputed authorship, although perhaps most biblical scholars now doubt that Paul wrote it; its context appears to be the chastisement of a community with perhaps hybrid religious-philosophical allegiances (Allison 911–14). Nonetheless, even the "genuine" Pauline epistles are *interpolated*, as different parts missing from one ancient manuscript to another also suggest. Romans, whose origins and purpose are obscure, may be an attempt by Paul "to clarify his own mind about certain matters" (911) or even a sort of self-

introduction to the Jerusalem believers he was heading to (911); the epistle sponsors an inclusive theology, "according to which Gentiles fully participate in redemption," in an attempt to quell conflict over the non-Jewish converts to Christianity (912). 1 Corinthians, which addresses a variety of topics (913), chastises a community fractured by its heterogeneous practices, which Paul wishes to bring to a common denominator as he believes he can outline in masterly (or inchoately hegemonic) fashion.

As undoubtedly Pauline epistles are recognized nowadays: Romans, 1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Philippians, 1 Thessalonians, and Philemon, all of which come from the second half of his ministry, *c*. 50 CE and later; 2 Thessalonians and Colossians are disputed, whilst Ephesians and the so-called pastoral epistles – 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, and Titus – were written in Paul's name after his death to grant them his authority (Allison 911).

[2] Monogenesis also posits a common, deemed uniform, human nature (Kidd 87), a theory which could be marshalled in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries to argue the case of races in either benign or obnoxious terms, the latter by positing *racial degeneracy from the default white race*, as Enlightenment anatomist Johann Friedrich Blumenbach did (Kidd 9, 85). Conversely, the trope of racial degeneration was twisted by doctor John Mitchell from Urbana, Virginia, to explain – to the Royal Society of London! – *the white race* as being further removed from the originally tawny Noachids than "the Indians and negroes" were (qtd. in Kidd 91).

[3] Such tension inherent both in the Cain story – expelled Cain goes to the land of Nod and marries (Gen 4.16–17): incest, like in the case of all other Adamic offspring, and/or polygenesis? – and in the Noachic account of lineage (Gen 10) between mono- and polygenesis, ostensibly influenced nineteenth-century theorisation of race by "racial scientists" like Count Gobineau. On the other hand, since the Enlightenment various voices argued for the white, reddish/tawny or black colour of Adam, where at stake was the theologico-racial riddle of human origins (Kidd 27–33) and implicitly of racial supremacy.

[4] See Johnson for the history of anti- and pro-slavery American discourse through scriptural appeal since 1700.

[5] King James Bible's "servants" here – as elsewhere – translates the Vulgate's *servi* (Eph 6.5 Vulg.), the plural of *servus*, "slave" (*OLD*, s.v. "seruus"), but is *accurately* rendered "slaves" in most other English

versions; a few English versions allow the "servants"/"slaves" juxtaposition. Electronic versions of the Bible in English and other languages are available through the Bible Gateway (<https://www.biblegateway.com>).

[6] See my commentary on various early explorers' and royal charts' rationalisation of American colonisation (Ciobanu, "Writing Race" 309–10).

[7] Further primary resources can be found in *Documenting the American South, or, The Southern Experience in 19th-Century America*, part of the *Documenting the American South* digital publishing initiative at the University Library of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (<http://docsouth.unc.edu/index.html>; slavery: <http://docsouth.unc.edu/browse/subject/?letter=S>).

[8] Sharing the (at best) patronising supremacist idiom of western racialism, Fitzhugh pictures slaveholders as civilising heroes thanks to whom Africans escape a cruel lot on their home continent, a fate apt to dehumanise them so as to commit every conceivable crime; such incapable and savage beings are governed better in the American South than they would be in the North (Fitzhugh 84–5).

[9] Yet this *duty*, Fitzhugh notes, if counterintuitively, is *not* so much *self-assumed* as preordained through the Adamic curse (Gen 3.19): "'In the sweat of thy face shalt thou earn thy bread!' made all men slaves, and such all *good men* continue to be" (Fitzhugh 86).

[10] In Wellington's case, Fitzhugh (85) runs again into a paradox: that of extolling the admiral's self-imposed duty to his country ("The highest and most honorable position on earth was that of the slave Wellington"), after first insisting that Wellington had to obey within the chain of command or otherwise would have been court-marshalled ("He was bound to obey, or would, like admiral Bying, have been shot for gross misconduct, and might not, like a common laborer, quit his work at any moment. He had sold his liberty, and might not resign without the consent of his master, the king").

[11] With a diluted Aristotelian echo (*Politics* 1254a17–1254b39, discussed in Bradley 110–12): "The kind of slavery is adapted to the men enslaved" (Fitzhugh 86).

[12] "The African cannibal, caught, christianized and enslaved, is as much elevated by slavery as was Wellington" (Fitzhugh 85–6).

[13] Ruether's pioneering work of feminist theology, *Sexism and God-Talk*, first published in 1983, asks, "Can a male savior save women?" (qtd. in

Beattie 3356).

[14] Mark Stoll notes southern evangelicalism's accommodation of its message to southern society: whilst early "it tended toward a fervent opposition to the institution of slavery," the hostility it raised – also fuelled by attempts to proselytise slaves – made preachers reconsider the evangelicals' position on the slavery issue "from silence to outright support" (219): "To win over slave owners, by the 1830s evangelicals asserted that Christianity's black converts made better slaves because they had absorbed the proper message of Christian meekness and Pauline obedience to masters" (Stoll 719–20).

[15] The self-styling "New Israel"/"the chosen people" was a befitting sobriquet as much for the slave-soldiers – the Loyalists evacuated from the US to Nova Scotia – who gained their freedom after the American Revolution as for the English Puritans seeking their American haven from religious persecution in Europe; in the former case, however, the biblical phrase was used to betoken *identity pride* in the Loyalists' (diasporic) "Africanness" (Sidbury 9–11).

[16] Wheatley had internalised the denigrating colonial rhetoric against the colonised which, two centuries later, Fanon would expose and psychoanalyse. For an overview of the literature on *internalised racism*, see Pyke.

[17] Now the primeval biblical murderer, Cain, not Noah's son Ham, appears as the ancestor of Africans; yet the analogy renders Africans inherently murderous. For the debates on Cain's and Ham's colour/race since early modernity, see Kidd (33–5, 39–40).

[18] In this connection, see Ciobanu (*Spectacle* 126–63) on the Christian view of the "monstrous races" as God's creation, and their relegation to the margins of the known world, in sub-Saharan Africa, on late medieval *mappaemundi*.

[19] See the admission, in Pope John Paul II's *Letter on the Occasion of the Publication of the Document* "*We Remember: A Reflection on the Shoah*" (12 March 1998) and in the document itself (16 March 1998), of some Christians' – but not *Christianity's* – anti-Judaism as responsible for the Holocaust (<http://www.vatican.va/ roman_curia/pontifical_councils/ chrstuni/documents/rc_pc_chrstuni_doc_16031998_shoah_en.html>).

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German-American Religious and Ethnic Bridges: The Rhetoric of German Readers for Catholic Schools in the United States (1870-1910)

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Abstract
In the second half of the nineteenth century, the German Americans, one of the largest immigrant groups at the time, were actively involved in the process of re-negotiating their linguistic and ethnic identities in the American environment. Consequently, particularly after 1850, they started setting up German-language schools in order to maintain their language and cultural heritage. Between 1870 and 1910, the Catholic schools for Germans in the United States used textbooks/readers in German to help their students to acculturate successfully to the American mainstream, while also maintaining their ethnic, linguistic and religious ties. This essay explores the ways in which the secular and religious information in a set of four fourth-level Catholic readers/textbooks reflects issues related both to the German Catholic education and to the Americanization trend at the turn into the twentieth century, from a synchronic perspective, as same-level readers, and from a diachronic one, by looking at their progression in time - 1870, 1874, 1897, and 1910.

Keywords: German Americans, religious and ethnic identity, acculturation, readers/textbooks, Catholic education, rhetorical choices

The turn into the twentieth century (late 1800s and early 1900s) was a period of great turmoil in the United States, which brought

about significant changes in the social and political status of different immigrant groups. On the one hand, immigrant groups were struggling to find their place in the new culture; on the other hand, the Americans were using the immigrants' alleged lack of literacy and education in English as a pretext to reinforce nativist tendencies.[1] Against this cultural backdrop, the German Americans – one of the largest immigrant groups in the second half of the nineteenth century - were actively involved in the process of re-negotiating their linguistic and ethnic identities in the American environment, and one way to accomplish that was by setting up schools in German. As Walter Kamphoefner et al. point out, between 1832 and the mid-1850s, Germans emigrated to the United States for economic, political/ideological or religious reasons.[2] As far as German-American education is concerned, Carolyn R. Toth claims that

> the church Germans – sectarians, Protestants, and Catholics alike – were generally more concerned with the religious aspects of their educational programs than with methodological considerations. It was in reaction against the "old-fashioned" methods that liberal immigrants, particularly the groups known as the 'Thirtiers' and the 'Forty-Eighters,' developed independent schools offering a broad course of study and utilizing the latest European pedagogical advances. (43)

Therefore, while the liberal Germans ("Forty-Eighters") founded the independent (and/or bilingual) schools, the more conservative Germans created the German Catholic schools so as to uphold not only the preservation of the German heritage but also that of religious, respectively Catholic, values.

Research suggests that a number of German textbook series (textbooks for different levels of study) were published in the United States after 1850 both for sectarian/parochial (Lutheran and Catholic) and for independent schools. Between 1870 and 1910, the Catholic schools for Germans in the United States used German textbooks/readers in class, readers which ranged from the first level to the fifth.[3] Depending on the publishing houses and places, the

German Catholic readers/textbooks consisted of series of four, five, or six textbooks (each for one level of studies), possibly addressing students from the second to the eighth grade (Toth 67). Overall, these readers illustrate the connections between the German and the American educational systems. Furthermore, one of the purposes of these textbooks might have been to suggest methods or strategies that the teachers in Catholic schools could apply in order to help their students to bridge the two cultures – German and American – successfully; on the one hand, the information and the teaching methods would facilitate the maintenance of the students' German background and heritage; on the other hand, the students would also learn how to connect the information to the academic and cultural spaces of the American mainstream.

Since the fourth-level Catholic readers display a greater variety of texts and more engaging readings, this essay focuses on a set of four fourth-level textbooks published in different parts of the United States (New York/Cincinnati, St. Louis, New York/Cincinnati and Chicago) between 1870 and 1910. By looking at the implicit and explicit rhetorical choices made by the textbook authors, my aim is to illustrate the connections between these textbooks and the ones published in Germany against the backdrop of German education in Europe, as well as to uncover relevant issues pertaining to ethnic (and American) education in American Catholic schools at the turn into the twentieth century. Furthermore, as these readers seem to reflect both the ethnic tensions within the larger context of American Catholic education (especially in the 1880s and 1890s)[4] and the socio-political and cultural context of the Americanization trend in education (the request for English-only education), a synchronic and diachronic approach offers a deeper comprehension of the changes that took place in the layout and content of the readers not only in parallel, but also progressively, in time. For instance, an analysis of the readers from a diachronic perspective illustrates how the rhetorical choices and the selection of texts reflect the social, cultural, and political reality of the time. Thus, the issue of immigrant assimilation, not necessarily considered a significant problem in 1870 as the mass immigration

from Eastern and Southern Europe had not reached its peak, changed dramatically in 1910, as immigration restriction policies and laws were passed, and there was much anti-immigrant feeling in the American society, in general.[5] Consequently, this essay explores the ways in which the Catholic readers/textbooks reflect issues related both to German Catholic education and to the Americanization trend by examining the secular and the religious information in the set of four fourth-level readers, with particular emphasis on the analysis of the rhetorical choices in the forewords/prefaces, both from a synchronic (as same-level readers) and a diachronic perspective (with emphasis on their progression in time, 1870, 1874, 1897, and 1910, respectively).

German-American Catholic Education

In *Catholic Schools in the United States*, Hunt et al. maintain that the founding of Catholic schools[6] in the nineteenth century was the result "of the threat posed by the Protestant influence and [the one] posed by the secular state" (30). Similarly, when discussing the challenges faced by the American Catholic education towards the end of the nineteenth century, Marvin Lazerson claims that "the growth of separate Catholic schools was not so much a natural and preordained extension of the Church's mission in America"; he believes that it was rather "a response to the rapid development of a Protestant-based public school system, often guided by people who felt themselves alienated from America's dominant culture" (298). In addition, he points out that "the large influx of non-English speaking Catholics … led to demands that the Church [should] support efforts to preserve ethnic cultural values," by creating "national parishes and separate nationality schools" (299). Therefore, as Hunt et al. argue, "ethnicity, as was the case for German Americans, …, contributed heavily to the growing Catholic school movement" (30). In this context, the German Catholic schools represented a good example since German was the language of instruction, and the maintenance of the German language made it possible to strengthen the ties with the ethnic

culture and to uphold the moral (and aesthetic) values of the home country, in addition to the Catholic values. Still, in spite of the strong emphasis placed on the German linguistic, cultural, and educational heritage and the "true" Catholic values, the 1870, 1874, and 1897 readers also illustrate the authors' attempts to create bridges of knowledge between the German and American cultures by combining the selection of secular and religious information (possibly pointing to the process of adaptation/acculturation to the American mainstream), a rhetorical choice that becomes more apparent as the changes in the readers are analyzed according to the time period when they were published.

Education in Germany: Values, Models, and Textbooks

In the late 1860s, several articles published in the *American Educational Monthly* discussed relevant aspects of education in Germany, perhaps as a suggestion for improving the American one. At that time, Germany was considered to have one of the most advanced educational systems in Europe. For example, in the January 1867 issue of the magazine, an excerpt from J. Ross Browne's book *An American Family in Germany* was published under the title "German Schools and Schoolmasters." The author suggests that in the German schools "great attention is bestowed upon those studies most likely *to be of use* to the pupil *in future life*. *A love of nature* in its most attractive aspects *is encouraged.* The beautiful *legends of the country* are the subjects of *song* and *story*" (A1, emphasis added). As the information and the prefaces to the Catholic readers illustrate, the authors were intent on underscoring the valuable connection between school and real life, along with developing in the students a love of nature and of their cultural and literary heritage. Toth also points out the strong German influence on the German-American readers in her book *German-English Bilingual Schools in America*; she claims that "the reading contents of the German–American reader did not differ significantly from certain texts printed in Germany" (42), referring roughly to the

same time period, and although she discusses textbooks targeted towards bilingual schools, the Catholic readers also seem to follow the German models quite closely.

Furthermore, in terms of the secular information, the Catholic readers are similar to the "Lebensbilder" ("Pictures of Life") series, praised as the best textbook series in Germany, as the article "Some German Reading Books" in the September 1867 issue of the *American Educational Monthly* points out. The article suggests that the authors of the series believe that

> a reading-book should not be a text-book for systematical science, but should consist of selections from the *noblest* and *best* of the *German classics*. Through its material it becomes at once *the lever of national culture*, the *cherishing nurse of our cultured mother-tongue*, and of the so long *neglected literary attainments of our nation*. (339, emphasis added)

Like the "Lebensbilder," some of the Catholic readers include "pictures" (often of physical spaces or of "objects") that students are familiar with and/or are significant to them: for example, the school, the human body, the garden, the village, the field, the seasons, God, and man. Regarding the genres illustrated in the "Lebensbilder" series, the article in the educational magazine points out that "more than half of the book is made up of stories, fables, and 'märchen,' and about one-fifth of songs. The rest are descriptive and didactic pieces, dialogues, prayers, riddles, lists of names, and parables" (339). One might argue that since the Catholic readers are modeled so closely on the "Lebensbilder" series in the secular part of their content, the authors may have intended to project the image of the reader/textbook as an authentic and useful educational tool in preserving not only the German language, literature, and culture, but also in developing the students' taste for reading important and valuable (literary) texts in general.

Fourth-Level Catholic Readers: Similarities and Differences in Content

The four readers examined in this essay include: *Viertes Lese-, Lehr-, und Uebungsbuch für Deutsche Katholische Schulen der Vereinigten Staaten von Nord-Amerika* (1870), *Viertes Lesebuch für die Deutschen Katholischen Schulen in den Vereinigten Staaten von Nord-Amerika* (1874), *Viertes Lesebuch für die Deutschen Katholischen Schulen in Nordamerika* (1897), and *Viertes Lesebuch: Deutsch-Englische Lesebücher für Katholische Schulen (German-English Readers for Catholic Schools)* (1910). It is unclear which age groups these readers addressed specifically, but perhaps, as Toth suggests, like the textbooks series for bilingual schools, these Catholic readers may have addressed learners/students grades second to eight (67); hence, possibly the fourth-level readers were targeted towards students aged 13-14 or thereabout.

The four readers are similar in content, though the structure differs greatly in each textbook. Some authors allot more pages to the religious content, others include appendices, but generally all readers include texts (religious or literary) about God, man, history, geography, about scientific discoveries, and about natural history. The 1870 *Fourth Reader* (New York and Cincinnati, Pustet Publishing House) is the most comprehensive reader, 762 pages, and consists of three large sections, each divided into smaller subsections. The first part, about 200 pages, includes readings about various religious and moral aspects, such as "Of God and His Qualities," "Of Man and his Moral Duties," and "Of the Church." The second part, about 250 pages, comprises "useful and entertaining readings" such as "Of Man and His Human Nature," "Natural History" (readings about the animal - , plant - , and mineral world), and excerpts from scientific texts in the section called "From the World of Science." The last part, about 275 pages, consists of readings about the universe (the planets), about geography (with texts about some important American cities such as New York, Philadelphia, Cincinnati, St. Louis, Chicago, New

Orleans, San Francisco), and about history (a brief history of the world, with a chronology of German, American, and European history). Among the main events from American history, this reader includes the discovery of America, the Revolutionary War, and the period between 1783 and 1869 in brief vignettes about each American president during that time and his achievements and role during his presidency. The textbook ends with a comprehensive appendix on letter-writing, about 30 pages, which includes numerous samples and exercises to practice writing correct letters, and in which the author suggests that every learner/student should become familiar with writing letters correctly (there are references to the significance of the purpose and audience of letters), as the practice of letter-writing was considered an important skill for any educated person.

The 1874 *Fourth Reader* (New York and Cincinnati, published by Benziger Brothers) is slightly shorter than the previous one, about 510 pages, divided into two parts of approximately equal length. The first part, about 230 pages, incorporates what appears to be an overview of the period before Christ, starting with "God, the Creator," followed by a rendering of religious content through literary texts (a combination of literature, moral stories, fables, and history based on religious content). The second part, about 270 pages, starts with Christ, and the "Anno Domini" period is illustrated through readings about history, nature, geography, science, and literature. This textbook, like the 1870 one, also ends with instances from American history: a text about sugar cane, another one about the Indians (Native Americans), yet another about "the most glorious period" of the United States (after the Revolutionary War until 1846), and a short text about Niagara Falls, followed by a brief reading on the difficult situation of immigrants in the 1850s (illustrating early American anti-immigrant sentiments), entitled "It goes downhill." The reading on immigrants is followed by an excerpt on the significance of cotton and one on the Civil War. The excerpts describe isolated historical instances, which seem disconnected; however, as the selection of texts captures significant moments in American history, one might

argue that the chronological arrangement suggests a timeline of important American historical events. Finally, the textbook ends with two apparently significant readings (for a Catholic school) that underscore the good deeds done by two important American Catholic figures, Bishop Fenwick and Father Gallitzin, possibly suggested as role models for the students, and the reader/textbook ends on a happy note about the harmony between the different people and cultures that form the United States, perhaps as a response to the growing anti-immigrant and anti-Catholic feelings in the American society.

The 1897 *Fourth Reader* (St. Louis, Herder Publishing House) is of similar length, about 530 pages, and one might argue that, at least as illustrated on the front page, it marks a change from the previous readers. Thus, while the 1870 reader has no religious images on the first page, the 1874 textbook has an image of God floating above the human world; this world contains the image of a train in the forefront, the image of a natural landscape on the left, a factory on the right, and different types of churches (a mosque and a Christian one, among others) in the background (perhaps suggesting an ideal world in which nature and industry/science, as well as different religions, coexist harmoniously).[7] In contrast to the previous two readers, the 1897 textbook has two world globes on it (North/South), one showing the Americas and the other showing the other continents (perhaps pointing to a union between the old continent and the "old country," Germany, and the new one, the United States). On the East-West axis, Bishop Carroll, the first Catholic bishop in the United States, faces George Washington, the first president of the United States, each under the respective flag (of the Catholic Church and of the United States), possibly implying a reconciliation between politics and religion through the images of the "founding fathers" (Washington and Carroll). This reader is also 525 pages long, divided into numerous short sections, comprising information on religion and life, man, natural history, natural life, including numerous pictures of geographical places and historical events, and information on the history of the "father land," the United States. Interestingly, for the first time the United

States is called "father land," possibly a translation from the German "Vaterland," perhaps a rhetorical choice that might refer both to a coexistence between the two "father lands" for German Americans, or it might even point to a subtle desire for assimilation to the new "father land." The section on the history of the "father land" includes facts related to geography and history, as well as a brief history of the German immigrants in the United States, with readings about the Catholic Church in the United States, the Catholics and the republic, the Civil War, and the Germans and the republic. Thus, the illustration on the front page seems to be supported by the information in the texts/readings. Given the year 1897, and the controversies inside the American Catholic church during the previous years, the readings about German Catholicism in America and the situation of the Germans in this context may have been meant to reflect, reinforce and/or strengthen the political image of the Germans in the United States. Finally, in order to uphold the significance of German cultural creations, the last part of the textbook is devoted to an extensive literary section divided according to genre, which comprises a number of German classical texts, such as legends and fairy-tales, literature and language excerpts, poetry (lyrical and epic poems), prose (stories), "special poetic forms" (prayers and excerpts from Schiller's play *Wilhelm Tell*). One might argue that the authors of the reader may also have believed that, in order to acquire and develop refined literary tastes, the students should have been exposed to German literary gems (like Schiller's work) and to a greater variety of aspects of the German culture.

Out of the four readers, the 1910 reader (New York, Cincinnati, Chicago), published by Benziger Brothers (the same publishing house that published the 1874 reader) is the most different one. First of all, this reader is the shortest, only 143 pages. At the same time, it best reflects the ways in which the changing socio-political climate and the nativist tendencies have affected the information and the perspective in the reader/textbook. While in the late 1870s the German language had still carried a lot of prestige – it was even taught as a foreign language in public schools in

different places in the United States, and the American educational system took inspiration from the German one – in 1910, due to the political and social turmoil in Europe and Germany (and the proximity of WWI), but also perhaps because of the exodus of Eastern-European immigrants in the late 1890s, the American society started displaying not only strong anti-immigrant sentiments, but especially anti-German feelings.[8] Lazerson points out that the period between 1870 and 1910 was characterized by "outbursts of intense nativism, rapid systematization of public schooling, formal and informal failed attempts to create working relationships between Catholic separate schools and public schools," as well as by ethnic tensions/dissentions within the Catholic Church (305). He further suggests that, "in terms of schooling, nativism manifested itself in unsuccessful attempts to pass a federal constitutional amendment forbidding public aid to religious schools and, more successfully, in state legislation forbidding such aid," and claims that "attempts were also made to restrict the use of a foreign language as the language of instruction" (305). This might be one reason why the readers/textbooks (and the rhetorical choices in the forewords) became more valuable for German-American teachers and students in Catholic schools after 1900, as the information in the textbooks was still meant to teach students of German origin something about their (or their parents') home country and about the real German values, in a country where their linguistic and ethnic identities were not looked upon favorably anymore. In addition, this is also perhaps a reason why the image on the front page of the 1910 reader is intensely religious: on the left, the birth of Jesus, and on the right, an image of Jesus as a child with the halo of the Holy Trinity, possibly in the belief that the ethnic belonging is toned down if the religious belonging is foregrounded.

At the same time, in light of the immigration restriction legislation that was beginning to be enforced, the idea of "loyal American citizens" became vital. In this context, Hunt et al. state that towards the turn of the century, "morality was increasingly divorced from religion, and citizenship education became the priority for public schools" (30). Although the 1910 reader does not

make any explicit references to citizenship, there is a more explicit rhetorical move towards countering nativism, perhaps, as many translations of German words and texts (especially letters) are included after each text, a move that is illustrated again on the front page. The title appears in English as well, and the hyphenated German-English identity appears for the first time in the 1910 reader: "German-English Readers for Catholic Schools," not for *German* Catholic schools as the previous textbooks proudly emphasized. This rhetorical move – changing the emphasis from the schools to the textbooks – is significant, and I argue that it is closely connected to the fact that the German-American authors were aware and perhaps trying to acknowledge that the German-American desire to assimilate and conform to the requirements of being loyal Americans had to come across more explicitly in order to alleviate the nativist concerns and fears. Also, another intriguing feature of this textbook is that there seems to be no recognizable structure at all. The texts are short moral tales and poems interspersed with numerous letters addressed in particular to family members (parents, grandmother, brother), arranged in no particular order and without any headings. Moreover, the table of contents does not mention any authors (German or otherwise) of the texts, perhaps another rhetorical choice to downplay the German heritage.

Rhetorical Choices in the Forewords/Prefaces

On the one hand, in the forewords, the authors try to contextualize the religious readers in the broader American educational environment, compare the German and American educational systems, explain their choices of texts, and/or suggest pedagogical strategies. At the same time, the authors situate the textbooks in the context of the series they are a part of, either by comparing a certain reader to the previous level (level three) or by comparing it to a previous edition of the same-level reader. On the other hand, the authors connect their choices of texts to the cognitive and psychological development of the learners/students. Furthermore, the authors underscore the significance of textbooks as educational

tools that shape the minds of young learners and give them useful advice not only for school but also for life. In addition, the prefaces seem carefully crafted rhetorically to address not only the teachers (either Germans or German-Americans, ideally acquainted or even familiar with the German educational system) but also the learners/students, possibly of the same ethnic background. The authors underscore the significance of maintaining the German moral, cultural, and literary heritage by pointing out the thorough process that had led to the careful selection of significant texts/readings and authors, so that the students would learn valuable lessons for life, whether as good Catholics, good German-Americans, or good American citizens of the republic. In order to perhaps reconcile all those sides of their identities, learners/students were invited to seek ways of negotiating and reconciling the values and beliefs of their German heritage with the necessity to adapt to the conditions of the American culture. Particular emphasis is placed by the authors on the development of an aesthetic sense and a good taste by reading classics of German literature, and in conjunction, by emphasizing such aesthetic qualities as refinement and propriety. These suggestions expressed in the Catholic textbooks are similar to the ones put forth in the German "Lebensbilder" textbooks, as pointed out by the author of "Some German Reading Books." In order to achieve good results, the materials in a textbook need to be graded/scaffolded according to the students' age levels and levels of cognitive development. Furthermore, as the "Lebensbilder" series does, useful textbooks should "cultivate[s] the child's intellect, and, as far as possible, his *moral nature* – the point at which most books stop" but

> they do not neglect his *aesthetical culture*. They give the very best material to *cultivate a true taste* for all that is *beautiful in nature or in literature*. *Our* education now-a-days too often contents itself with the categories of *the True and the Good*, forgetting that there is a third category of thought - *the Beautiful*. The *danger* of the present age is that *the true*, that is *science*, will *overshadow the good,* that is *religion*, and entirely *destroy the beautiful*, that is *art*. (399, emphasis added)

The assumption might be that the sentence beginning with "our education" refers to the American education, which, in the author's opinion, appears to have neglected the aesthetic values as a significant part of education.

For the most part, the authors of the readers/textbooks (and of the forewords/prefaces) are not mentioned. In this context, the preface to the 1870 reader is almost an exception, as the author, J. J. Menge, although not mentioned on the cover page of the reader, signs the preface and explains his choices of religious and secular texts. One striking aspect is the fact that the author takes great pains to explain the selection of the texts, and, by using a metaphor - that the texts were chosen or reworked "with the pen" not "with the scissors" (iv) – suggests that every choice was carefully thought through, and the texts were not chosen at random. Menge emphasizes the fact that the textbook is conceived exclusively as a reader for Catholic schools, and he includes a lengthy justification regarding the religious information and texts. At the same time, the author carefully points out that special attention has been given to bringing in material related to the American life in the texts about nature and geography, as well as in the historical section. The author states that in the historical part both the church history and the state history of "our country" have been discussed in detail. Furthermore, Menge explains the inclusion of texts about real life, the scientific part related to life and the (natural) sciences. In addition, to achieve more variety, special attention has been given to different literary genres: prose, poetry, letters, stories, so that the students would not get bored or tired of reading similar material for a long period of time. The appendix is important because it exposes students to letter writing, and the author underscores the valuable practical applications of letter-writing in preparation for the students' future needs. Finally, the author expresses his hope that the reader would not simply function as a textbook that students set aside after school is over, but as a book to be kept in the house, for the enjoyment and study of other family members (vi).

The 1874 preface emphasizes the collective identity of the authors, since the reader was put together by "several priests and teachers," as the cover page shows. The authors carefully mention how this reader builds both upon the learners' previous knowledge and on the previous knowledge displayed in the second- and third-level readers. Like Menge in the 1870 reader, these authors also felt the need to justify their selection of reading materials. First of all, they claim that (hi)story is important and speaks to learners; secondly, a textbook should give young learners a wealth of knowledge that they can use in life:

> What is more useful and necessary for our male young people than some knowledge of history! Our boys are growing up as citizens of a republic, and later in life, they should be able to participate in the political life. Knowledge of history is important, and so much the better if the students find this information in their reading books. (vi)

The authors believe that if a young boy reads about historical stories in his reading book, as he grows up, he will develop a taste for serious, historical works. At the same time, the authors point out that the textbook can give students the right historical perspective on issues distorted in some public spaces, particularly regarding such issues as the prejudices against various religious aspects during the Middle Ages, related to monasteries and the Inquisition. Furthermore, the authors explain that the consequences of the reformation movement in Germany are rendered according to the historical truth, against the embellishments of the Protestant beliefs. Thirdly, the authors believe that the choice of historical readings will help the learners to get acquainted with the cultural life of different peoples, at least in big brush strokes, and find out how discoveries, art, and science have been interwoven naturally into the life of different cultures. Finally, the authors point out that

> in light of the predominant material hassle in our American life, those pictures/images of history that set/place the children's hearts and spirits into a more poetic and ideal realm, are most significant

> for the noble upbringing of our young people. And whether these lessons are taught to students depends a lot on the teachers. (vii)

The 1897 reader does not have a preface, but the foreword to the 1910 reader is particularly interesting. First of all, there is no mention of authors anywhere – on the cover page or after the foreword. Secondly, this reader represents a clear and explicit illustration of the changes from a process of acculturation/adaptation to one of assimilation. The authors of this reader claim that the textbooks need to be adapted even more to the American conditions, as the previous readers, so heavy on German texts, do not correspond to the current conditions anymore since the linguistic dynamics in German-American families has changed significantly at the beginning of the twentieth century. Textbook authors cannot assume any longer that students are exposed to a lot of German at home or in any public spaces (neighborhoods, etc.), since they might already be second- or third-generation German-Americans. In this context, the texts need to be easier and simplified. The foreword points to the handy translations after each lesson, meant to facilitate the students' understanding of German by using English. So, while this reader responds to some of the issues of the general Americanization trend, at the same time, it also addresses some new pedagogical methods (especially regarding the process of learning a foreign language), for example, illustrated in the questions after each lesson meant to reproduce the information from the text in whole sentences. The foreword suggests that this is how children learn to think and speak in German, an important step that prepares them for more complicated writing activities, for instance essay writing. Furthermore, the translation exercises take into consideration different German grammatical issues; they consist of practical questions and answers taken from the daily life and are designed so as to acquaint the young learners with the idiomatic language. Moreover, careful consideration has been given to writing personal letters, which are interspersed throughout the reader. Although the reader is short, there is a variety of texts to choose from: stories, descriptions, poems, etc. In addition, this reader focuses much more on the idea

of utility for students and on the practical usage of the German language. For instance, after the introduction, there is a brief section that discusses the new German simplified spelling since this is also used in the textbook, so learners should become more familiar with it. However, the authors point out that this new series of simplified readers is still written in the Catholic spirit, as is appropriate for church/parochial schools. Finally, the authors' hope is that these books will make the process of teaching in German easier, as well as help to spread and to maintain the language.

In conclusion, these four readers reflect the tense political, religious, social, and cultural environment that surrounded both the American Catholic church and the German-American immigrants between 1870 and 1910. While the information in the readers and the prefaces/forewords follow similar patterns, regarding the religious and secular information offered (from a synchronic perspective), each textbook reflects specific issues that either the American Catholic Church or the German-American immigrants (or both) were going through during a particular time (from a diachronic perspective). Further research about the differences and similarities between the Catholic readers and the readers used in German independent schools might shed some more light on the connections and/or tensions between liberal and conservative Germans in the United States. At the same time, synchronic and diachronic analyses of readers/textbooks and forewords/prefaces for different levels (level two, three and/or four) might help contextualize the religious and secular information and texts in different historical, cultural, and temporal spaces.

Notes:

[1] For in-depth studies of immigrant education and literacy between 1870 and 1910, see Zimmerman, Carlson, and Smith. For more on German-American immigrants, see Hoerder and Nagler.

[2] For instance, given the push and pull factors of immigration, scholars of German-American immigration differentiate between the "Thirtiers" (who emigrated in the 1830s for economic reasons) and the "Forty-Eighters"

(who emigrated after the 1848 revolutions in Europe, mostly for ideological reasons).

[3] The readers/textbooks discussed in this essay come from the archives of St. Meinrad Abbey, Ohio, United States of America.

[4] See Gleason for a comprehensive overview of the situation of German-American Catholics during this time.

[5] For immigration restriction debates and nativism, etc., see Daniels and Graham, and Graham.

[6] According to Lazerson, "the terms parochial, parish, and Catholic schools tend to be used interchangeably. The first two refer to schools run under parish auspices, as opposed to schools run by the diocese or under the authority of religious communities. In addition, there were a variety of primary schools, high schools modeled on secular lines and petit seminaries" (299).

[7] Interestingly, one might notice a similarity with a painting by John Gast in 1872, which points to the progress achieved in the late nineteenth century. It is difficult to assert whether there are any connections between the two, but the front page of the reader may have wanted to create a connection between the idea of progress and religious harmony in the 1870s.

[8] For more information on language and identity during that time, see Pavlenko.

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Reflexivity in Filmic and Literary Fiction: Marc Forster's *Stranger than Fiction* and Robert Grudin's *Book*

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"All art has been nourished by the perennial tension between illusionism and reflexivity."
(Robert Stam)

Abstract
The virtues of self-reflexivity in fictional texts have become something of a critical orthodoxy: texts doing (or purporting to do) away with the transparency of their own medium have been hailed as 'new,' 'original,' 'revolutionary,' politically 'progressive,' fostering 'active' readings, etc. – in short, everything that sounds critically correct. This complacent view has been challenged of late from a variety of vantage points, notably film studies and literary criticism. This essay engages with two self-reflexive texts, one literary and one filmic, in an attempt to illustrate the reductiveness of certain still prevalent critical truisms. The choice of *Stranger than Fiction* and *Book: A Novel*, the former *not* a filmic adaptation of the latter, has been made with a view to eschewing the pitfalls of 'fidelity criticism,' another quondam critical commonplace. Nevertheless, envisioning what their respective counterparts in the other medium could possibly look like will prove to be a productive imaginative exercise.

Keywords: self-reflexivity, realism, Victor Shklovsky, Bertolt Brecht, Linda Hutcheon, Patricia Waugh, film theory, classical Hollywood cinema, Robert Stam.

The wide critical interest enjoyed by self-reflexive fiction – otherwise known as metafiction, self-conscious fiction or self-referential fiction – since the early 1970s seems to point to the fact that self-reflexivity in narrative discourse is a contemporary invention. Moreover – so the critical cant goes – self-reflexivity is a typically postmodern phenomenon. A cursory glance at the history of art in general and of fiction in particular will reveal the fact that, at least since Cervantes's *Don Quixote*, reflexivity has been a continuous though perhaps often inconspicuous presence, or, as Stam calls it, "the 'other tradition' in literature and cinema" (*Reflexivity* xi). The reduced critical interest in reflexivity has contributed to realism's being constructed as 'the norm' in fiction, and mainstream cinema as well as, to a lesser extent, literary fiction, have certainly helped confirm this view. Furthermore, when it comes to the activity or passivity of the reader, realism and reflexivity are also commonly regarded as opposites in a dichotomy.

This essay engages with two self-reflexive texts, one literary and one filmic, in an attempt to work out the implications of the (possibly false) realism-metafiction dichotomy. Robert Grudin's novel *Book*, published in 1992, and Marc Forster's film *Stranger than Fiction*, released in 2006, based on an original screenplay by Zach Helm, have been chosen with a view to their not being adaptations of each other, in order to avoid questions of fidelity criticism and asymmetrical intertextual relationships. Nevertheless, the two texts share in the formal experimentalism that is associated with self-reflexivity, as the following will hopefully illustrate.

Grudin's novel focuses on the protagonist Adam Snell, a novelist and academic gone missing at the beginning of the book, who is then discovered to have been the victim of a literary theorist trying to obliterate him as well as his novel, *Sovrana Sostrata*. Snell is found alive due to the efforts of his friend Harold Emmons and, though severely injured, survives, as does his book, which is re-published with the help of Harper Nathan, an attractive (female) editor with whom Adam Snell falls in love. The novel thus incorporates a mystery plot as well as a love story with a happy ending, which must be two of the most popular plotlines and genres

in the history of narrative. Similarly, Marc Forster's film distinctly revolves around an (also male) protagonist, an IRS agent named Harold Crick, who audits a baker, Ana Pascal, with whom he falls in love. At some point in the film, Harold starts hearing a voice narrating his own life "accurately and with a better vocabulary" (*Stranger*), a voice which eventually announces his imminent death. Harold sets out to discover the origin of the voice and because he finds it in the novelist Karen Eiffel, manages to avoid his death by having her rewrite his life story. Both texts rely heavily on character, plot and elements of suspense and apparently cater to the reader's/viewer's narrative greed and desire for closure. Yet they also constantly subvert and question their own narratives as well as their status as works of art by drawing attention to themselves as texts and artifacts. It is the combination of this perpetual self-reflexive impetus and the narrative thrust that accounts for rewarding readings of these texts.

Reading matters have always been central to self-reflexive texts. By drawing attention to their own textuality, self-reflexive texts have made not only their production, but also their reception conspicuous. It has become a critical orthodoxy to claim that the self-reflexive text in particular and the experimental text in general fashion an active role for the reader as opposed to the classic realist text, which supposedly fosters passivity in its readers. The theory of metafiction, whose seeds can be found in Victor Shklovsky's "laying bare the device" (*obnazhenie*), is implicitly panegyrical of metafiction's ability to generate critical responses in its readers. Linda Hutcheon explicitly insists on the "central paradox for readers" inherent in metafiction, i.e. in the contradictory impulses at work: the reader is simultaneously distanced from potential identification by being made aware of the fictional nature of what she reads and stimulated to become an involved "co-producer of the text" (xii). While Hutcheon acknowledges the fact that non-passivity is true of all reading, other critics such as Catherine Belsey (51, 103) construct realism and experimentalism as the elements of a dichotomy. The superimposition of political overtones is the next inferable step, so that realism is mostly

aligned with conservatism, liberal humanism, etc., while experimentalism is hailed as 'new,' 'original,' 'revolutionary,' politically 'progressive,' and so on. Andrzej Gąsiorek (*Postwar British Fiction*, 1995) and Robert Stam (*Film Theory*, 2000) are two of the critics who insist on dispelling these arbitrary associations. In literary theory, formalism has had a profound impact on the way metafiction has been theorized: as Gąsiorek points out, "[t]he realism/experimentalism dichotomy is formalist. It construes realism as a set of narrative techniques, and experimentalism as their subversion" (1). However, metafiction recognizes the fact that the subversion of realism is not the same as its absence or, as Patricia Waugh states, "[t]here has to be some level of familiarity. In metafiction, it is precisely the *fulfilment* as well as the *non-fulfilment* of generic aspirations that provides both familiarity and the starting point for innovation" (64, emphasis in the original). Stam similarly points out that reflexive texts "operate on the borders between the mainstream and the vanguard and between narrative and anti-narrative, … flirt with the narrative and taunt it, deconstructing narrative rather than rejecting it entirely" (*Reflexivity* xii).

Film theory, while also under the sway of Formalism for some time (particularly the Soviet montage theorists), has been more deeply and lastingly influenced by Bertolt Brecht's vision of the 'epic theater' and especially his concept of *Verfremdungseffekt*, which, as near as it seemingly stands to Shklovsky's *ostranenie* or "making strange," is considerably different in its outlook, as the Leftist Brecht advocated a politicized version of the alienation effect. Brecht combined a call for representational realism in social terms with an aesthetic of anti-illusionism. By advocating a "theater of interruptions" (Stam, *Film Theory* 147), Brecht counteracts identification on the part of the viewer and aims to transform rather than satisfy spectatorial desire (146). The spectator is thus led "not to contemplate the world, but to change it" (146), whereas for Shklovsky "*Art is a way of experiencing the artfulness of an object: the object is not important…*" (16, emphasis in the original). The Russian Formalists do away with the form-content dichotomy, form

being redefined as not being in need of a correlative such as content. The 'world,' irrelevant to the Russian Formalists in representational terms, is most relevant to Brecht.

Epic theatre, then, with its distancing devices, defines itself in contradistinction to tragedy and the involvement and catharsis it entails. Both Grudin's *Book* and Forster's *Stranger than Fiction* evince an ambivalent attitude towards tragedy. While both texts seem to be implicitly appreciative of tragedy, both choose to veer off the tragic course themselves, in the direction of Fielding's "comic epic poem in prose." In Grudin's novel, the book-within-the-book, i.e. Adam Snell's *Sovrana Sostrata* is a tragedy much praised by the characters the novel morally endorses: the editor Harper Nathan, Snell's academic peers Harold Emmons and Quintus Adler, the open-minded judge Harry Stuart, Harper's well-loved farmhouse hosts Asher and Doris Fox, and even Floconne de Mais, a prominent literary theorist making a comet-like appearance in the novel. The praise ranges from academic readings – "…Sovrana rose, dolphinlike and hugely politic, above reductive interpretation. She could not be cubbyholed by a philologist, typecast by a genre critic, dismissed as fluff by a theorist" (28) – to the affectionate regard of non-academic book-lovers – "Sovrany" (59), "an un-put-down-able book" (55) – to the informed commendation of one who constantly reads with the preferences of a wider audience in mind: "fiction this passionate and focused and exploratory has been out of fashion for decades" (57). Furthermore, almost all of *Book*'s chapters are preceded by mottoes allegedly taken from *Sovrana Sostrata* or, rather, from the book penned by its eponymous heroine, entitled *Gesta.* The *mise-en-abyme*-like progression from Grudin's *Book* to Snell's *Sovrana Sostrata* to Sovrana's *Gesta* renews the reader's awareness that she is, in fact, reading a work of fiction.

Forster's film is also metafictional, in the narrowest sense of the word, as it is a film 'about fiction,' about a novel by novelist Karen Eiffel, who has penned eight tragic novels in which the protagonists die, ironically, just at the moment they really start living their lives to the full. Forster's film follows the production

process of Eiffel's ninth novel. When Harold first seeks the help of a university professor of literature, Jules Hilbert, in order to find out who the narrative voice in his head belongs to, the latter's approach consists in determining whether Harold's story is a tragedy or a comedy. Harold gets hold of the as yet un-typed manuscript of *Death and Taxes*, the novel whose protagonist he is, and Professor Hilbert, a fervid admirer of Eiffel's tragic fictions, hails it as her masterpiece and tries his best to resign Harold to his fate: "Even if you avoid this death, another will find you. And I guarantee that it won't be nearly as poetic or meaningful as what she's written. I'm sorry, but it's … it's the nature of all tragedies, Harold. The hero dies, but the story lives on forever" (*Stranger*). The fact that Karen Eiffel decides to keep Harold alive and changes the ending ruins her masterpiece for Professor Hilbert, who thinks it is now merely an "ok" novel. Thus, both Grudin's *Book* and Forster's film eschew tragedy even as they profess to uphold it. Whether they do so in order to distance the reader from the characters, or, on the contrary, in order to satisfy readerly expectations of a happy ending, is another question.

Book draws attention to its status as an artifact starting with its very cover (which visually alludes to burnt pages) and title, an effort which is sustained throughout the novel, most visibly through its use of paratexts. However, *Book* makes conspicuous use of all the types of transtextual relationships defined by Gerard Genette – intertextuality, metatextuality, architextuality, hypertextuality and paratextuality. Genette's taxonomy is alluded to in a chapter title – or architext – i.e. Chapter 5, entitled "Five Types of Discourse," which turns out to actually refer to the five discourses sampled in that chapter: the office memo, the newspaper article, the private journal, the college guide and the academic paper. Other chapter titles are also intertextually charged: Chapter 2, entitled "Childe Harold's Pilgrimage," Chapter 7 "Time Regained," alluding to Proust's *À la recherche du temps perdu*. Each chapter is preceded by an excerpt from the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*'s 11th edition, printed in bold fonts on a separate page and graphically embedded in a frame which suggests a paper stack: the excerpts in the first

half of the novel are from A.W. Pollard's entry on "book," whereas the novel's second half affects a shift in focus from the artifact to its commercialization, as the entry referenced is "bookselling," by an allegedly anonymous author. The novel's preoccupation with the publishing business and with sales figures will come to bear on its many allusions and prolepses anticipating its own lack of commercial success.

Book's graphic design – its use of marginalia, footnotes, framed excerpts, mottoes, elaborate chapter titles and other graphic signs at the beginning of each chapter – is the first indication of its preoccupation with form and with a disruptive style: its chapters are stylistically very heterogeneous, reveling in pastiche and parody (e.g. second-person narrative in the manner of Italo Calvino, Joycean stream of consciousness, private journal, drama, etc.). Apart from that, the novel stages several episodes which enact an interruption of the story. As Adam Snell's novel *Sovrana Sostrata* has enraged all critical camps at the fictional Washagon University, his academic peers decide to hold his post-tenure revue even if he has been reported missing. Chapters 9 and 10, entitled "The Parliament in Touwhee Hall" and "The Parliament (continued)" respectively, which cover the post-tenure revue, form a masterpiece of montage and collage – not incidentally, two cinematic terms. Chapter 9 starts with "A Handlist of Terms," mostly containing academic jargon the non-academic reader might not be familiar with, such as: "**deconstructionist:** a literary theorist who believes that a work of literature has no fixed meaning and can therefore be re-created in a new form with each reading"; **"destabilizing:** acting against some established idea (used only with positive implications)"; "**exclusionist:** person insensitive or inimical to diversity (used exclusively with regard to individuals who espouse traditional values)"; "**marginalia:** notes (printed or handwritten) in the margin of a text"; "***PMAA:*** *Publications of the Maudlin Anguish Association*, the most respected and powerful academic journal of literary studies"; "**subversive:** anti-establishment (used only with positive implications)" (62-3, emphasis in the original). Apart from providing the reader with accurate information, which

is the case for most of the twenty-two entries in the list, there are other impulses at work: the explanation of "marginalia," for example, acts as a fairly innocent prolepsis for the paratexts to come in the novel's next pages, but with some of the other entries, the reader is directed in her ideological assessment of future events by the ironic comments in brackets. The next eight pages abound in paratexts: marginalia actually commenting on while pretending to summarize the events (e.g. "The author questions Gazza unsuccessfully"; "Gazza's heroick ambition" (64) – a frame-break in terms of ontological levels of narration) as well as footnotes, intensely subversive of the 'main' text. The 'main' text dramatizes four critical responses to Snell's novel *Sovrana Sostrata* – from a Marxist, a deconstructionist, a feminist and a New Historicist perspective. These readings culminate in ludicrous statements consisting in intensely parodied critical discourse: this novel "is an *open* and *shit* case … a premature *defication*, a case of poor esthetic toilet training – Adam, you might say, having made meta-poopoo in his meta-panties" (68, emphasis in the original); "*Sovrana Sostrata* is a *rapist* book" (70, emphasis in the original). The footnotes react to these judgments with disruptive force: "Can you believe these flimsy evasions? And you trust these people with your kids?" (67); "DOWN WITH TYRANNY! FOOTNOTES, UNITE!" (70, capital letters in the original). The discursive climax of the meeting is represented by five nearly blank pages (72-6), containing only "**TECHNICAL DIFFICULTIES. PLEASE STAND BY**" (73, emphasis in the original) and a notice from the editor, who salutes the MAA's decision to limit the use of footnotes (75). Chapter 10 abandons all pretenses to prose and is written entirely in dramatic form, with stage directions and ending in "[Scene dissolves]" (90), thus suggesting that the reader is actually reading a film script.

As the novel progresses, interruptions morph into frame-breaks: the narrator directly addresses the reader and replies to what are ostensibly readers' questions in a Q&A session. When the readers ask the author why he has failed to include certain relevant information in the text, the latter responds with a tongue-in-cheek definition of his newly coined term:

> That is all part of my innovative stylistic strategy. You've all heard of 'intertextuality,' the idea (done to death by interpreters like Gazza and Underwood) of a text subtly commenting on other texts or on itself. Well, I've invented a new concept that I call *extratextuality*, consisting of things readers won't ever know unless they ask the author personally. In fact, I may even put blank pages in the text, so that readers can write questions on them and send them to me. (Grudin 170, emphasis in the original)

It is these readers who get to choose the content of the next chapter, i.e. Chapter 7 of Part Two, and as they ask to "hear a bit of everything" (170), the next chapter consists in a collage of nine discourses and styles. Grudin thereby resurrects the Author and simultaneously keeps the Reader in existence, only to question the former's existence again at the end of the novel, in "Postscript 1," allegedly penned by Snell, who reports Grudin's disappearance after his having completed the book on Snell's adventures. Grudin, who has taken to calling his wife Sovrana and "overidentif[ies] with his own composition" (246), has apparently disappeared "into the book" (246), as "Postscript 2," apparently penned by Sovrana, seems to confirm. No ontological level of discourse is privileged in *Book*, and no discursive hierarchy or totalizing interpretation can contain it. *Book* perfectly illustrates Waugh's claim that "[t]he alternation of frame and frame-break (or the construction of an illusion through the imperceptibility of the frame and the shattering of illusion through the constant exposure of the frame) provides the essential deconstructive method of metafiction" (31).

The constant shift between discourses and styles and the facile manipulation of theoretical jargon and philosophical ideas make Grudin's novel a demanding read, calling on the reader to fill the text's many gaps and to permanently re-adjust her expectations. In other words, *Book*'s metafictionality undoubtedly fosters active readings. When it comes to its political stance, however, no clear-cut assertion can be made. On the semantic level, the novel's text professes to uphold traditional moral and artistic values such as: honesty, braveness, openness/open expression, creativity,

assertiveness, intensity, and such old-fashioned values as beauty and goodness, sincerity, fulfilling experience and self-knowledge. The most frequently invoked concept is "truth" (55-6, 155, 224, 250). Snell is repeatedly accused of being reactionary, conservative, an elitist, etc. The novel's stance is blatantly anti-theoretical, so much so that it occasionally reads like a fictional reworking of Grudin's essay "The Vanity of Literary Theory," published one year before the novel. In this essay, Grudin denounces New Historicism and Deconstruction as "logocidal" (382) and theory at large as "not only foolish, but also proud" (383) and advocates a re-fashioning of the entire discipline of literary scholarship along the lines of ancient Greek theory (he cites Socrates, Plato and Aristotle). The novel itself is nostalgic for un-distanced readings: Snell is submerged in his novel and infatuated with the female protagonist Sovrana and Grudin the author-character shares his fate. Harper's first reaction to reading *Sovrana Sostrata* illustrates this nostalgia in no uncertain terms:

> … a feeling of profound familiarity, a connection restored apparently after so long a loss of touch as to suggest the sudden repetition of some forgotten childhood event. … An attitude of commitment, of total, abandoned, celebratory engagement with a subject. (*Book* 55)

Furthermore, the novel makes ample use of poetic justice, as the 'bad' characters – i.e. literary theorists who are also Snell's antagonists – end up dying or having to leave Washagon University, while all the 'good' ones flourish. The black-and-white division of the characters according to their allegiance to literary theory is deliberately foregrounded by the novel itself: Sig Bazoom, Harper's boss at the Wolper McNab publishing house, emphatically criticizes *Sovrana Sostrata* as "too old-fashioned," "too black-and-white," too much "like Hardy or Lawrence" (141). Warren Schmutzhauf, the brilliant scientist who had engineered the "mucca grass" which keeps Snell warm and therefore alive for days, decries theory as "medieval science all over again … kept Europe asleep

for a thousand years" (134), while chancellor Paul Edson underscores its "manifest lack of social relevance" (147). By criticizing Lieutenant Pierce for letting "the results of [his] case experience harden into a theoretical grid that [he] can then apply to anything new that pops up," for "a kind of mental automation that simplifies life" (181), the novel's text implies the obsolescence of literary theory. Moreover, Floconne de Mais, the most notorious theorist in *Book*, proclaims that theory is "on eets way out" (223) and protests to Glanda Gazza: "Tell me, learned prof, what's ideological aboud telleeng de truth?" (224). However, the novel qualifies Floconne de Mais's ['corn flake'] authoritativeness by endowing her with a ridiculous French accent and a name that suggests intellectual frivolity.[1] Nevertheless, *Book* attempts not only to fend off potential accusations of conservatism, but it also endeavors to eschew ideology altogether, asserting itself as 'new' by means of a critical return to older traditions, to a "*prisca philologia*" (224) untainted by ideology, to a purely aesthetic realm.

Stranger than Fiction, on the other hand, is much more Brechtian in its outlook, more transparent in its 'message' and more militant in its political attitude. The character of Ana Pascal, the woman with whom the protagonist Harold Crick falls in love, is illustrative of this: she refuses to pay the taxes used by the government for "national defense, corporate bailouts and campaign discretionary funds" (*Stranger*) and has decided to make the world a better place with her cookies, after she has tried but failed to make a career in law. Unlike Harold, she has chosen a profession that she loves and lives lucidly and intensely, in close contact with other people, doing much good in the process. In terms of mise-en-scene, the film endorses Ana's attitude to life and contrasts it with Harold's: Ana's café and flat abound in color and texture, whereas Harold's flat is as nondescript and impersonal as a hotel room, the only non-beige/grey object being the blue display of his wristwatch. Harold's unreflective and automatized life is disrupted not only in narrative terms, but also in terms of camera movement within the shot and montage of shots. The very beginning of the film draws attention to the medium: a very deep and very rapid pseudo-

forward-tracking-shot from outer space into Harold's bedroom ends with a close-up of his wristwatch. The tracking shot, apart from creating the illusion of depth, suggests an omniscient view of the events narrated, not least because the camera transits another apartment before reaching Harold's. Emma Thompson's (a.k.a. Karen Eiffel's) voiceover is present from the very beginning: "This is a story about a man named Harold Crick … and his wristwatch" (*Stranger*). This acousmatic voice (i.e. a voice for which the source is invisible) is unsettling for the spectator because of its ubiquity, panopticism, omniscience and omnipotence (Stam, *Reflexivity* 217). It is also a typically Brechtian distancing device, which is meant to reject the fourth-wall convention and to address the spectator directly, thereby effecting a frame-break. Thompson's voice is non-diegetic during the first shots focusing on Harold (i.e. Harold himself cannot hear it), but it becomes diegetic less than five minutes into the film, thereby disrupting and changing Harold's life irreversibly. Visually, the continuity style and invisible editing characteristic of classical Hollywood cinema are subverted by the collage of several frames into one as well as by the obtrusive imposition of GUIs (i.e. graphic user interfaces) on the film stock, which suggest the exactness and sterility of Harold's life: the numbers we see are meant to visualize his habit of counting brush-strokes while brushing his teeth, the amount of time Harold self-consciously devotes to his morning tasks and the minuteness and routine of his daily life. The fourth shot, seemingly taken from inside Harold's mouth, is not only unusual, but also self-reflexive in the narrowest sense of the word, as he is facing his bathroom mirror. All these devices foreshadow the degree of narrative subversion to come: when Emma Thompson's voiceover shifts from the non-diegetic to the diegetic, the ontological levels of narration become confused and the narrative resists "total interpretation" (Waugh 141). *Stranger than Fiction* thereby posits itself as a metafiction. Whether it is also a meta-film – questioning its own cinematographic medium – is a different matter.

About 49 minutes into the film, Professor Hilbert, whom Harold asks for help in order to identify the voice he hears, requires

the latter not to do anything that might drive the plot forward, in order to test whether the plot is driven forward by Harold himself or not. What follows is one of the most interestingly reflexive sequences in the film: Harold sits on the couch in his flat, watching wildlife documentaries, refusing to switch channels, answer the ringing phone or go to the bathroom. Short bits of four documentaries are shown in a carefully edited sequence in which the images on Harold's TV are alternated with shots of Harold himself (so-called glance-object matches). Obtrusive shot-to-shot transitions are drawing the spectator's attention towards the filmic medium: a clock wipe between the shots showing the second and the third documentary watched by Harold not only signals the passing of time, but also intertextually alludes to comedic cinematic montage. The accelerated forward tracking shot of Harold's ringing phone as well as the zoom on Harold's hand wavering above the remote control are examples of obtrusive camera movement within the same shot. The documentaries themselves make up a prolepsis by commenting on Harold's predicament: "The wounded bird knows its fate. Its desperate attempts to escape only underscore the hopelessness of its plight" (*Stranger*). The four diegetic voiceovers in the documentaries are in three different accents of English: French, American, British and then again American accents (alluding perhaps to Bakhtinian heteroglossia), the last being the most aggressive and sensationalist of the four, abounding in onomatopoeia ("ouch!" is uttered no less than five times, in a crescendo of pitch). As the fourth documentary gets unbearably violent both in image and in sound, the shots no longer frame Harold's TV in its entirety, but show dramatic close-ups of the animals in distress. Simultaneously, Harold's digital wristwatch goes berserk and the rhythm of montage accelerates, as a wrecking-claw comes through Harold's window and wall, shocking him as well as the spectator. Harold's life is in danger and he scrambles to the back of the sofa, but after a few short eye-level shots of the claw and Harold in immediate proximity, a bird's-eye shot clearly shows the claw snatching the TV set, only to let it crash to the ground in front of Harold's building after it turns out that the

wrecking is the result of an error relating to the house number made by the workers. The destruction of the TV set and the film-within-film device are metafilmic techniques meant to 'disenchant' the spectator, making her "aware of the meaning-making apparatus" (Kolker 16). The cinematic techniques employed in *Stranger than Fiction* are challenging the continuity style prevalent in Hollywood cinema, whose key characteristic is its "self-effacement, its ability to show without showing itself, tell a story and make the storytelling disappear so that the story seems to be telling itself" (Kolker 17). As Stam argues, mainstream cinema has inherited both the conventions of pictorial representation from Renaissance humanism, i.e. the monocular perspective, vanishing points, the impression of depth and the accurate scale characteristic of the paintings of the quattrocento (*Film Theory* 136) *and* the narrative codes dominant in 19th century literature (143). Classical Hollywood cinema aims therefore to be transparent "in that it attempt[s] to efface all traces of the 'work of the film', making it pass for natural" (143). Furthermore, there are film theorists (e.g. Siegfried Krakauer) who claim that *all* cinema has a "natural vocation for realism" (Stam, *Reflexivity* 10), because the photographer, unlike other artists, cannot work without a model. The mainstream illusionist aesthetic in cinema owes much to this assumption of cinema's "intrinsic" realism.

Conversely, alternative cinematic aesthetics – or, in Peter Wollen's terminology, counter-cinema – advocates a 'laying bare of the device' and is redolent of much of Brecht's theorization of the epic theater:

1 Narrative *intransitivity* versus narrative *transitivity* (i.e. the systematic disruption of the flow of the narrative).
2 *Estrangement* versus *identification* (through Brechtian techniques of acting, sound-image disjunction, direct address, etc.).
3 *Foregrounding* versus *transparency* (systematic drawing of attention to the process of construction of meaning).
4 *Multiple* versus *single* diegesis.

5 *Aperture* versus *closure* (rather than a unifying authorial vision, an opening out into an intertextual field).
6 *Unpleasure* versus *pleasure* (the filmic experience conceived as a kind of collaborative production/consumption).
7 *Reality* versus *fiction* (the exposure of the mystifications involved in filmic fictions). (Stam, *Film Theory* 148, emphasis in the original)

The last (seventh) point might sound contradictory in relation to the preceding ones, yet Brecht called for a realism not in terms of formal conventions, but of social representation, in order to prompt the viewer to social action by activating her critical thinking. Seen through this grid, *Stranger than Fiction* emerges as largely Brechtian in its purpose: Harold manages to escape his 'fate' and make his own history, Will Ferrell's understated and distanced acting implies a critique of pathos, the viewer is confronted with several frame-breaks and the gaps that need to be ultimately filled (e.g. to bridge the fact that Karen Eiffel, although she is 'writing' Harold, is not aware of his being aware of *her*), etc. The intertextual aperture of the filmic text is effected not only by the incorporation of the documentaries already mentioned, but also by such films as Monty Python's *The Meaning of Life* (1983) and *Un homme et une femme* (1966), watched by Harold, alone or together with Ana. Literary inter/hypotexts are also present: L. Ron Hubbard's 1940 *Typewriter in the Sky* (suggested by the film's poster), Luigi Pirandello's *Six Characters in Search of an Author* (1921) and even Lawrence Durrell's *Alexandria Quartet*, which Prof. Hilbert is teaching, according to the inscriptions on a blackboard. The film's very title is a nod to Mark Twain. As a point of critique, however, *Stranger than Fiction* formulates its argument too explicitly at the very end of the film, in Emma Thompson's voiceover, thus saving the viewer the trouble of producing her own meaning of the filmic text: "the occasional piece of fiction, … the nuances, the anomalies, the subtleties, which we assume only accessorize our days are, in

fact, here for a much larger and nobler cause: they are here to save our lives" (*Stranger*).

Stranger than Fiction is based on an original screenplay, but it would be interesting to see it as a literary work. The most obvious genre that offers itself is, of course, drama. In order to keep the two levels apart – i.e. Karen Eiffel's and Harold Crick's – at the beginning of the play, a revolving stage might be used to speed up the change of the scenes. An 'adaptation-in-reverse' in the novelistic genre would have to dispense with Emma Thompson's voiceover while preserving the film's interruptions and multiple diegesis, perhaps by not making clear from the start of the novel what the connection between Karen Eiffel and Harold Crick is, in the manner of Andrew Crumey's novel *Mr Mee* (2000). In Crumey's novel, the story itself and the storyteller's story are awarded equal ontological status, by alternating the chapters or sections which contain them without initially informing the reader as to the connection between the sections. It is the reader's task to uncover this connection, a fact that makes Crumey's novel an engaging and intriguing read.

Grudin's novel *Book*, on the other hand, often reads like a reverse-engineered film, particularly the interruption caused by the footnotes, which could easily translate into white noise or a black screen with a caption that reads "Technical difficulties. Please stand by." The footnotes themselves might be represented by an acousmatic voice, whereas the handlist of terms might be rendered with the help of GUIs. The most interestingly disruptive and truly meta*filmic* part would be the Q&A session between the Author and the novel's readers: the camera might then be turned around to reveal the cameramen, the director, and the viewers of the work-in-progress, seated perhaps like the spectators of a talk-show or the viewers of a sit-com. Unwittingly (or perhaps not), these sketches of adaptations inevitably revert to *imitatio* or *mimesis* – and realism's haunting presence suggests itself.

Regardless of their medium, self-reflexive texts are commonly contrasted to realist texts in that they aim to do away with the transparency of their medium, specifically in exposing the

fact that their medium is steeped in ideology. While the two texts discussed here tick many of the boxes of self-reflexivity in terms of the devices they employ, they do not eschew realism altogether. The metafictional pyrotechnics of these texts do not shy away from incorporating even such traditionally realist elements as 'messages' expressive of the authors' 'intentions.' Grudin's moralist, conservative leanings are writ large in *Book* – which seeks to be quite persuasive as to Theory's uselessness and, moreover, perniciousness – while *Stranger than Fiction* offers a facile conflation of personal happiness with the espousal of a left-leaning sense of responsibility and the shunning of the safety of routine. After all, both stories could have ended very differently… Thus, both texts serve to uncouple well-worn (leftist) algorithms construing reflexivity as "a *political* obligation" (Stam, *Film Theory* 151, emphasis in the original) and to show that facile applications of theory to texts will ultimately not yield readings that matter.

Notes:

[1] Grudin's *Book* abounds in suggestive character names, as if challenging the structuralists' belief in the arbitrariness of the signifier: Glanda Gazza's name onomatopoeically as well as semantically suggests a quick temper, as "glanda" is Italian for 'gland' and "gazza" is a street name for 'speed,' derived from 'gas,' but it also has negative connotations due to the Italian meaning of "gazza," i.e. magpie, a bird of bad omen in many cultures. The latter interpretation is confirmed by the novel: when she seduces Thor(eau) Marshall [Norse god of thunder cum chief justice of the U.S. Supreme Court with almost no formal schooling], Glanda Gazza is wearing a "smashing black velvet dress with a touch of white at the neck" (103). "Sovrana Sostrata" incorporates both "sovereign" and "stretched out underneath" (28), and "Snell" is also an oxymoronic combination of snail and the German word for 'fast', i.e. "schnell" (223). The Marxist and the feminist academics reviewing Snell are named, respectively, Maulwurf and Taupe, which are German and French for 'mole.' Doppler, Adam Snell's dog, is also his protective Doppelgänger, who saves Snell's life twice (he finds Snell in the mucca grass and he takes the bullet fired by Underwood which was actually meant for Snell). Penrose Press, which

first publishes *Sovrana Sostrata*, is a nod to David Lodge's *Nice Work* (1988) and its female protagonist Robyn Penrose, as is Emerson Baismacou's [hand/neck-kisser] *The Text as Undergarment* (235), which is redolent of Morris Zapp's article "Textuality as Striptease" in Lodge's novel *Small World* (20). The critics cited by Rainer Maulwurf are Hans-Peter von Gierigkeit [i.e. greediness], published by "Kuhschlachter" [cow-slaughterer] press, and Michel La Vache (67). But for reasons of brevity, this list could be considerably longer.

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Senior Attachment or What Love Turns Into

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Abstract
My essay puts forward a reading of John Barth's most recent short fiction keyed on the biographical element that governs the ideology of his late fictional output, old age. It endeavours to identify the instances in which affection functions as a catalyst for tracing the outline of the golden years of the characters, as the pretext to release the political and parodic slants of the fictional fabric. These instances range from the less profound, such as physical love or tenderness to the ones that compensate for the associated tragedies of the inevitable demise: deep attachment, terror of being left behind, temptation to commit suicide or misgivings over eternal life.

Keywords: indispensable, irreplaceable, unimaginable, unassimilable, companionship, love, eternity.

This is not about me at all. It is about looking for my key. What key? The key in which to read John Barth's more recent fiction. There is always something in Barth that attracts your attention. His narrativity is one thing: if you read his fiction often enough you begin to think in narrative frames, shifting narrating personae and the like. Been there, done that. Then there is his penchant for underscoring such issues as exclusion, as he so amply does in the story cycle that I now have in mind, called *The Development*, published in 2008. It creates the secluded universe of the Heron Bay Estates, a gated community of WASP upper-middle class predominantly retired couples, whom Barth himself occasionally

calls "empty nesters" (3), since their children have grown up and moved away, or makes reference to their "TINK prosperity (Two Incomes No [dependent] Kids)" (118). But even white Anglo-Saxon protestants can sometimes display human qualities (setting aside issues of colonialism, racism, or economic supremacy), so I sense an undercurrent of affection within the couples of the community and implicitly, on the next level, amid the characters of these stories I am telling you about.

So how about love? For the key to my reading, I mean. I can't be serious: Barth is now in his mid-eighties, and he really writes about people his age. Actually he writes about *his age*. So again, Love? Yes, why not, Love and Old Age. As the master likes to say: Ditto! The many guises that love can adopt with people who are, as the phrase goes, over the hill, are basically influenced by the powerful bearing that their impending demise has on their life. Love comes from the past of their blooming years, when their whole being responded to the inherent conditioning of being attached and to the immense pride of being accepted into the inner circle of another's affection. But descending through time, the feeling begins to bear the scars of every encounter with life's big moments, which desperately try to push it into the background. This happens largely to those aspects of love that involve not so much the deeper emotional resources of our being but act out on the surface as markers of erotic sensitivity. And one such marker is **physical love**. Now I know that many would jeer at a discussion of sex in connection to old age, but since Barth himself, in his advancing years, is doing it, let's give him credit. He would know! In fact, his oldsters are shown to try very hard to keep the flames of passion alive even now, whether out of genuine attraction or just preserving a life-long routine. Barth seems both satirical and nostalgic when he inserts, in his 2011 novel *Every Third Thought,* the words like an adage, "Sex goes. Memory goes. But the memory of sex never goes" (168).

So, in the "Peeping Tom" story of *The Development,* here are Tim and Margie Manning, retired couple approaching the three-quarters-century mark, who lead a pleasant life in their villa in the

above-mentioned gated community. Tim the character is also the narrator, on his PC, of the story of an intruder, spotted some years earlier on and off by the residents of the neighbourhood, and who supplies a welcome period of excitement to their very quiet lives. He offers unexpected details about the routines of his and his wife's daily existence, so one night, when he tries to investigate the commotion of flashing lights from a police car outside his window, no doubt occasioned by another peeper being spotted, Tim mentions putting on his "pajama bottoms" first and explains parenthetically, "which Margie and I have always slept without, originally for romantic reasons, latterly out of long habit and urinary convenience in our three-pees-a-night old age" (11-12). It is true that the image chiefly belongs to the parodic sphere, rendering, in one short digression, the pitiful decay of romance. But one cannot help wondering, since Tim and Margie's relation is obviously based on true affection, whether the detail is not by any chance hinting to a perhaps dormant sex drive coupled with love. It could mean at least that, despite their age, they are still confortable with their partial but essential bareness, which is the gratifying factor here.

But we see the said dormant drive very much awake in another "Peeping Tom" episode. Stepping out for some air on a hot summer night, Tim nears Sam and Ethel Bayley's neighbouring villa to investigate what might have been another voyeur, and is drawn by the light of their bathroom window where the still slender and nude Ethel performs what looks like a self-arousal ritual. Surprised Tim can only watch until she is about to remove her undies and ashamedly rushes home, only to discover that his wife Margie is expecting him in bed with similar thoughts on her mind. She asks him in "mock-petulant amusement," "Where've *you* been? . . . Out peeping on the neighbors?" (21). His reaction is revealing: "'Nobody out there worth peeping at,' I declared as lightly as I could manage, and moved past her to the bathroom to hide my flushed face. 'All the hot stuff's right here in Ten-Ten'" (21). And after informing us "At that period of our lives, we Mannings still made love at least a couple of times a week" (21),

Tim recounts the unusual intensity of their experience: "That night, as the low-speed overhead fan moved light air over our skin and I was simultaneously stirred and shamed by the unexpungeable image of Sam Bailey's naked wife, we came together more passionately than we had done for some while" (21). Surprised and pleased, Margie maintains the playful tone of their conversation: "'Wow,' she murmured in drowsy languor. 'That night sky of yours must've been some turn-on. You'll have to try it more often.''You're my turn-on,'" replies Tim "dutifully, guiltily, but nonetheless sincerely" as they go to sleep (21-22).

And with that out of our way, we may move on to the next stage on the scale of commitment, which likewise only involves a shallow implication and can barely be seen as more than an outward sign. I am referring to brief **moments of tenderness**. In another story in the cycle, called "Toga Party," we come to meet Dick and Susan Felton (aged 75 and 69), whose outward signs of affection have imaginably been mothballed by propriety but who still give in to occasional bursts of affection. As is evident from the title, they attend a costume party, which appears to be so much fun that Susan takes Dick's hand into hers, a gesture lost on other senior couples that is even more touching in theirs. And, since old men lose interest quite quickly, Dick suggests an early departure, only to be countered by his wife, who wants to stick around at least until prizes are awarded in a game that is in progress. "'Sorry sorry sorry,' he replies. 'And he was, for becoming such a party-pooping partner to the wife he so loved and respected'" (49). The apparent docility of his reply is no doubt the long-accepted realisation of a disparity in their temperament ("he reached his sufficiency of good food and company sooner than Susan" [49]) and a desire to accommodate her every whim that springs out of deep affection. And, to make the picture more complete, Dick feels "his throat thicken and his eyes brim" (49) when, also induced by a moderate amount of wine, nostalgic thoughts cross his mind about the passing of their "good life together" (54).

In the end, unfortunately, Dick and Susan Felton decide to take a shortcut through existence, unable to cope with the

perspective of the same good life together turning into the purgatory of advanced physical and mental decay that precedes extinction. Actually they make the decision to end their lives after seeing their friend Sam Bailey in hospital utterly incapacitated. He had a failed suicide attempt because he was unable to wrestle with the loss of his dear wife Ethel and the prospect of loneliness for the rest of his life. And even when they are about to die, Dick and Susan are overwhelmed by tender feelings, declaring their love. Or, maybe, precisely *because* they are sitting in their car in the closed garage with the motor running do they utter the words that they used as a pledge of affection many times before, and that now acquire the added sense of a farewell: "Already they could smell the exhaust fumes. 'I love you Dick.' 'I love *you*'" (54).

What may be peculiar for many (but neither for Barth nor myself), these people, who near the twilight of their life, are shown to exist as pairs who feel a **deep attachment** for each other. We may illustrate with the case of George Newett and Amanda Todd (or George and Mandy), retired, respectively almost retired author-professors from the local college, appearing as a couple in the "Bard Award" story of the present sequence (and also in the novel *Every Third Thought*). In fact, their deep attachment is supremely visible in the novel's end with the depiction of George's heartbreaking and debilitating reaction to Mandy's equivocal loss. Here, in the story, we only find an indirect testimony of their harmonious life. George's familiarity with student Cassandra, whom he still coaches in creative writing despite his retirement, does not amount to more than, in the narrator's own words, "*Additional* small strain . . . on a *prevailingly* happy marriage. Mandy's and mine has been that, for sure; keenly aware of each other's strengths and shortcomings, we feel much blessed in each other, on balance" (84). But they are, of course, crazy about each other: theirs is the type of deep attachment that evolves from the fervour of their young years based on an ideal physical and mental affinity. In simpler terms they are deeply in love. So the phrase "on balance" probably illustrates people's usual reluctance to admit

perfection in intimacy and is only introduced to endorse the general sophistry of this most technically daring story.

Another elderly couple that enjoy a deep attachment are Gerald and Joan Frank in a story riddled with issues of exclusion and appropriately titled "Us/Them." They both experienced a failed marriage before, but are now shown in a winning relationship, despite the restrained textual representation of their love:

> And some fifteen years later here they are, happy with each other and grateful to have been spared not only direct involvement in the nation's several bloody wars during their life-decades, but also such personal catastrophies as loss of children, untimely death of parents or siblings, and devastating accident, disease, or other extraordinary misfortune . . . . Husband and wife much enjoy each other's company, their work, their modest . . . prosperity . . . and their leisure activities. (118)

A sort of self-absorption sometimes appears in older couples who still love each other deeply. This develops from the realisation that they fill out all the corners of each other's minds and fail to see the need to congregate with other people. In this sense, people who do not exactly have a good time in a relationship and try with some anxiety to dissolve this banality into intense socialising, find it inconceivable that these can keep so much to themselves.

With the Franks the situation is similar. They live in what could be termed a social self-confinement, only interacting with people on unavoidable occasions. And then they socialise with a certain degree of reluctance, as the indirect narrator Gerald confesses:

> Over the years since, however, for whatever reasons, their social life has atrophied: annual visits to and from their far-flung family, lunch with a colleague now and then (although they both work mainly at home these days), the occasional office cocktail party or HBE community social—that's about it. They don't particularly *approve* of this state of affairs, mildly wish it were otherwise, but have come to accept, more or less, that outside the workplace that's

> who they are, or have become: more comfortable with just Us than with Them. (127-128)

This is nothing else than deep attachment manifested in seclusion, a universe that the couple have created for themselves. And, in keeping with the ideology of the story, love causes ownness to conquer otherness, it induces the self-sufficiency of husband and wife, and, as we are about to discover, the desperation of losing it all.

To conclude the deep attachment segment, let us look at the story about Tim and Margie Manning, called "Assisted Living." What is so moving about it all is that Tim's affection for his wife continues, and indeed increases, after Margie's death from a stroke. He realises that he has become so dependent on her that his life turns to despair and possibly personality disorder. Tim thinks of her as "Indispensable Margie—his 'better two-thirds'" (131), and he cannot find his course in life alone anymore. The story is a quintessential one for old-age love: it shows Tim absolutely lost without his Margie, who appears to have been the centre of his existence. Barely able to type on his computer, he surveys the essence of their life together, while attempting to create a fictional alter ego of himself that he could maybe rely on to guide him now that his wife is gone:

> In the forty-nine and eleven-twelfths years of their married life, she and he constantly assisted each other with everything from changing their babies' diapers to changing jobs, habitations, outworn habits, and ill-considered opinions as their time went by. In more recent years, as her body and his mind faltered, he more and more assisted her with physical matters—her late-onset diabetes, near-crippling arthritis and various other -itises, their attendant medicos and medications—and ever more depended on *her* assistance in the memory and attention departments as his Senior Moments increased in frequency and duration. While at the same time, of course, they continued to assist each other in the making of life decisions. (132)

Under the circumstances, the syntagm in the title, "assisted living," can be construed as nothing less than love, best describing the ordeal of Tim and Margie's advancing age.

We can easily detect the analogy between love and life in the elderly couples that Barth depicts, benefiting from the insight that his own age offers: they are mutually implicated, love cannot exist without life. And, if we are to follow the general opinion that has Christian overtones, the reverse is also true. The stories in *The Development* cycle obsessively revisit one aspect of love and old age that rather haunts the characters: **the terror of being left behind**. In "Toga Party," the story in which Dick and Susan Felton ultimately commit joint suicide, the ideas are organised into a framework that reveal the outcome gradually. Among the worries that Dick lists in his mind for what he calls "his fast-running mortal span" are "the physical and mental deterioration that lay ahead for them; the burden of caregiving through their decline;" and, most importantly, "the unimaginable loss of life-partner" (28). One of the reasons for which Dick gets Susan to agree with his fateful decision is the panic of having to cope with a life in loneliness. "Dick couldn't imagine, frankly, how he would survive without his beloved and indispensable Susan" (30). And, as I said, the final straw is supplied by their friend Sam Bailey, who, after losing his wife Ethel to cervical cancer, is so desperately lonely, that he stabs himself with the machete that Dick attached to his party costume as a Roman sword. Later, in the emergency room lobby, after being informed that Sam will only partially recover, Dick mentally outlines the outcome of Sam's drunken despair for him and his son:

> the father doomed to an even more radically reduced existence than the one he had tried unsuccessfully to exit; the dutifully attentive but already busy son now saddled with the extra burdens of arranging the care of an invalid parent and the management of that parent's house until he could unload it and install the old fellow in Bayview Manor . . . or some other assisted-living facility. (53)

The pespective that this might happen to them as well triggers Dick and Susan's decision to end their lives on the same evening.

The agony of being left behind by the death of one's life-partner is very well captured in "Us/Them" when Gerald's fingers appear to gain a will of their own on the computer keyboard while he writes his weekly newspaper feature column. Several versions of his own life with his beloved wife Joan appear on the screen, one of which actually paralyses him with fear:

> – Or he has just learned that the precious, the indispensable Other Half of our Us has been diagnosed with . . . oh, advanced, inoperable pancreatic cancer? While *he* sits scared shitless on his butt counting his heartbeats, her killer cells busily metastasize through that dearest of bodies. Maybe less than a million evermore-wretched tick-tacks to go, at most, until The End—of her, therefore of Us, therefore of him. (128)

But since the other versions are more optimistic, they all paint the picture of the old man who, despite the full, satisfying life he leads, always entertains in the back of his mind fearful thoughts of looming demise. In Gerald's case, the thought about the loss of his wife and the breakdown of their strong emotional bond reaches the proportions of a nightmare.

But Tim Manning in "Assisted Living" is truly left behind. His wife Margie dies suddenly and he feels helpless and abandoned. This is another very good opportunity for Barth to add to the complexity of the narrating instance, when Tim is portrayed in such a state of shock that he splits into another persona as well, meant to fill the void left by the passing of his wife. This persona appears in the text as either "Tim Manning" (in inverted commas) or simply "T.M." This is about him: " . . . especially since Margie's unassimilable death just one year later—he has found himself standing ever more outside himself: prodding, directing, *assisting* Tim Manning through the increasingly mechanical routines of his daily existence. Talk about Assisted 'Living' . . . " (131). I do not believe that this added artificiality is just an empty technical exercise, as it never is with Barth. The split personality is a marker of deep human suffering and desertion that character Tim experiences.

We receive confirmation of his deranging anguish on the next page, where the tasks of assisting debilitated Tim with his life and of recounting the events is, to some extent, amalgamated, which is only natural, I imagine, when the mind starts playng tricks on its host: "And who, exactly, is the Assistant? Not 'I' these days, he was saying, but old T.M.: same guy who'll get on with telling this story, if he can recollect what the hell it is" (132). All that can be said here is that our hero manifests something of a schizophrenic personality: Tim seems to be the narrator-character and the implied author at the same time, speaking in an authorial voice. And more confirmation follows: "In a way, he supposes, 'T.M.' is replacing (as best he can't) irreplaceable Margie as Tim Manning's living-assistant" (132). To be frank, it would be difficult to imagine a more appropriate way of expressing the suffering of a forlorn old man than this, be it in a postmodern narrative or elsewhere.

And then Tim finally manages to recall the details of that most horrific moment one morning, when Margie ceased to exist, and more or less squeezes out of himself a fairly detailed account of the event:

> . . . Tim had withdrawn to his computer desk in the apartment's guest bedroom/study . . . Margie, still in her nightclothes, lingered at table over a second coffee . . . after which she meant to move as usual to *her* computer in their little den/office/library to do likewise and attend to some family business before lunch and whatever. But he had no sooner sat down and booted up than he heard a crash out there and, bolting kitchenward, found his without-whom-nothing life partner, his bride of half a century minus one month, his Margie!Margie!Margie! face-down and motionless on the breakfast-nook floor tiles, coffee from the shattered porcelain mug staining her nightgown and the crumpled pages of the *Sun*. With a half-strangled cry he ran to his fallen mate, her eyes open but not moving, her face frozen with alarm . . . . Now he desperately felt for a pulse, put his face near hers to check for respiration, and detected neither; dashed to locate and press that Help button (on the wall beside the main-bath toilet); dashed back to try whether he could recollect anything whatever of the CPR routine; pressed his mouth to Margie's in what was meant to be some sort of forced

> inhalation but dissolved into a groaning kiss and then collapsed into a sobbing, helpless last embrace. (137)

Precisely to avoid moments like this and all the attendant unpleasantness of advanced aging do the already mentioned Dick and Susan Felton contemplate ending their own lives while still reasonably mobile and sane.

Suicide temptation is seemingly not part of my topic of senior love, but in the case of the characters in "Toga Party" nothing could be farther from the truth. Because Dick and Susan are trying to cheat destiny precisely *because* of love. Their so perfect existence so far, the perfect connection that they enjoyed physically, emotionally, intellectually and even socially renders them incapable to submit to the unimaginable hardships of their very last years, with diminished mental and physical capacity, inability to care for themselves, and possibly even, the worst terror of all, one of them having to survive the other. So they decide to break all conventions and intend to do the deed, fearful that they might witness the complete decay of the partner that they each loved so much. Consequently, Dick's idea of an impeccable end, which crosses his mind more often as he advances in years, is nothing short of a miracle: "Richard Felton found himself wishing that somewhere down the road they could just push a button and make themselves and their abundant possessions simply disappear—*poof!*—the latter transformed into equitably distributed checks in the mail to their heirs, with love. . . " (29). Susan is less practical and, realising she cannot live without her husband, envisages a romantic simultaneous extinction of the Romeo and Juliet type, for the same reason of being spared all complications: "For her part, Susan often declared that the day Dick died would be the last of her own life as well, although by what means she'd end it, she hadn't yet worked out" (30). Suffice it to say that Dick gentlemanly removes even this burden from his loving spouse by suggesting the time and the means: they lock themselves in their garage and remain in their car with the motor running, after returning from the fateful toga party.

There must be a **conclusion** to all this. People centre their entire lives on love. In the beginning they desperately search for it and then some find it and bask in its glory, as if they have suddenly become untouchable and immortal. Others just *think* they have found it and frantically reduplicate experience after experience ending up more puzzled than when they started. But in the end all come to realise the value of love in all its forms as the cornerstone of universal existence, even more so when old age starts dealing blow after blow to that cocky security of youth. Conceivably, Barth's stories in *The Development* are, among other things, about *what love turns into* in our declining years: when we need companionship most, when we slip back into childish helplessness, the thought of being alone, of *facing destiny in loneliness*, is more unbearable than death itself. So love and companionship appears to be our meagre attempt to face the permanence of eternity.

Speaking of eternity, or rather **eternal life**, John Barth does try, in good postmodern fashion, to counterbalance the story he calls "The End," in which hurricane Giorgio flattens the Heron Bay Estates gated community and kills George and Carol Walsh, with the last story in the cycle, "Rebeginning." The characters seem to confirm the circularity of the narration holding a meeting to discuss the rebuilding of their community, while narrator George I. Newett (incidentally, also the narrator of Barth's next novel) ponders about how to "rebegin" the narrative, undoing all the tragedies, in a characteristic alternative ending. But even a "rebeginning," which seemingly conquers time, will eventually be swallowed up by the recycle bin of history.

Perhaps this *is* about me. A little.

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