EGER JOURNAL OF ENGLISH STUDIES

VOLUME IX

EGER, 2009

EGER JOURNAL OF ENGLISH STUDIES

VOLUME IX

EDITED BY
ÉVA ANTAL AND CSABA CZEGLÉDI

EGER, 2009

A kötetet nyelvileg lektorálta:

Charles Somerville

HU ISSN: 1786-5638 (Print)
HU ISSN: 2060-9159 (Online)

http://anglisztika.ektf.hu/new/index.php?tudomany/ejes/ejes

A kiadásért felelős:
az Eszterházy Károly Főiskola rektora
Megjelent az EKF Líceum Kiadó gondozásában
Igazgató: Kis-Tóth Lajos
Műszaki szerkesztő: Nagy Sándorné

Megjelent: 2009. december Példányszám: **80**
Készült: az Eszterházy Károly Főiskola nyomdájában, Egerben
Vezető: Kérészy László

Eger Journal of English Studies ***IX*** *(2009) 3–19*

Being Engaged: Trauma in Henry Green's *Party Going*

Tamás Tukacs

1 Introduction

Lyndsey Stonebridge boldly asserts that "Green is a trauma writer, not before, but very much of his time" (57). She points out, in connection with Henry Green's later novel (but the statement is equally true of *Party Going*), that "*Caught* is not only a psychoanalytically informed genealogy of trauma, an exploration of the belated effects of the past upon the present lives of war-anxious characters [but] it is also a text which […] gives poetic form and shape to the trauma, not of the told, but of the telling" (58–9). The condition of the malfunctions of memory is the condition of waiting, being in transit, a suspended state between event and non-event, non-war and war, "which stubbornly refuses to unfurl into an event" (Stonebridge 61). Henry Green's (1905–1973) only novel of the 1930s can be evaluated as manifestations of a traumatised decade, revealing several aspects of ontological dilemmas such as the existence in a suspended, parenthesised, immobile period determined by the catastrophe of the First World War and threatened by the imminent second one. In this paper I shall discuss *Party Going* (published in 1939) as illustrative of the memory crisis of the 1930s, highlighting that in the apocalyptic atmosphere, on the threshold of the war, Green produced a text which illustrates the mechanism of trauma both in its subject matter and by its peculiar stylistic devices; in short, this novel is "about" trauma and is a traumatised text itself.

2 The theoretical framework of trauma

After a certain point, of course, every catastrophic or painful event may be regarded as "traumatic", thus the interpretational field of trauma is very often broadened to such an extent that trauma often loses its precise meaning, becoming a too quickly and too easily applicable tag. To reveal the traumatic nature of Green's text, a more precise examination of the nature of trauma is needed. Of the several theories I wish to emphasise three aspects, attempting to focus on *trauma as an epistemological, existential and narrative problem*.

The *basic epistemological paradox* of trauma is that the sufferer does not necessarily experience the original occurrence as traumatic and does not necessarily know that he has undergone a trauma. As Freud, very early,

explained in "The Aetiology of Hysteria", it is not the original event itself that exerts a traumatic influence on the victim, because it very often comes too early in his childhood to be understood and assimilated; nor is the second event inherently traumatic, but it triggers a memory of the first one that is retrospectively given a traumatic meaning (see Leys 20). Between them is the period of temporal delay, which defers interpretation and prevents immediate reaction. As Freud points out later in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, "it may happen that someone gets away, apparently unharmed, from the spot where he has suffered a shocking accident" (see Caruth, *Unclaimed* 17). Amnesia, latency, or as Freud put it, an "incubation period" follows the scene of trauma, due to the fact that during the occurrence of trauma, the patient could never become conscious of its significance; in other words, he/she simply *does not know* that he underwent a trauma, thus existing in a state of epistemological void. The experience of trauma, Cathy Caruth maintains, "would thus seem to consist, not in the forgetting of a reality that can hence never be fully known, but in an inherent latency within the experience itself" (*Unclaimed* 17). The victim may leave the site of the event, apparently unharmed, without realising that he has in fact became a victim, perhaps never to return again, but he cannot leave trauma behind. Amnesia is most clearly indicated by the fact that the psyche cannot treat the "event" as memory, it is not able to integrate it into the life history of the patient, on the basis of the simple past/present dichotomy. What signals that a traumatic event took place at all is that the shock returns in nightmares, flashbacks, bodily and conversion symptoms, nightmares, repetitions, traumatic re-enactments, etc. in the latency period. "Survival" thus has a very ambiguous meaning: the "passage beyond the violent event" is accompanied by "the endless inherent necessity of repetition, which ultimately may lead to destruction" (Caruth, *Unclaimed* 63). Trauma thus causes a temporal delay of reaction and understanding and hinders creating a teleological, linear story of the self since the experience always exists in its belatedness, which is the reason why therapy is needed to create a story including memories, putting an end to latency and endless repetition; in short, to create a past instead of the permanent present of trauma.

A traumatic occurrence, conceived as *a narrative and temporal problem* subverts several basic notions of "normal" existence: linearity, teleology, narrative logic, symbolic integration, remembering, representation and the sense of possession or ownership of one's life story. Since the effect of trauma is permanently present (at least until the end of therapy), it is impossible to tell it, remember it, for it is inconsistent with the field of knowledge pertaining to memory (Belau xv), or, as Slavoj Žižek puts it, it "is too horrible to be remembered, to be integrated into our symbolic universe" (quoted by Belau xvi–xvii). In the precise sense, it is *not an event* that may be narrated, it always already precedes narration, it has always already taken place before narration, and thus shatters narrative into isolated and unmanageable fragments (Bényei, "Sebek" 360). At the heart of traumatic memory (which is, in fact, an oxymoron)

there is the idea of unrepresentability, for trauma interposes the disruption of memory between an event and its representation (Hodgkin and Radstone 6). Basic differences exist between narrative and "traumatic memory", as van der Kolk and van der Hart summarise (163): as opposed to narrative memory, traumatic events take a long time to recount, the narrative is disrupted by hesitations, gaps and silences. It is not adaptive at all, for it is invariable and inflexible. Another important difference is that it is evoked under certain conditions. The victim is characterised by a permanent duality and simultaneity of "normal" and "traumatised" selves, which is "related to the fact that traumatic experience/memory is, in a sense, timeless. It is not transformed into a story, placed in time […] If it can be told at all, it is still a (re)experience" (van der Kolk and van der Hart 177). To put it in another way, traumatic narrative at best can only exist as a story, the different elements remaining isolated to only be linked by continuatives ("and… and")[1], but it is the task of therapy to emplot the fragmented story of trauma. Trauma induces a strong urge to tell, which is supposed to lead automatically to some sort of cure, but, as Dori Laub puts it, "there are never enough words or the right words" ("Truth" 63). Another important dilemma of trauma narratives is whether telling would not lead to an even greater pain (with the victim going over his "memories" again and again), and whether he/she should remain silent, risking the "perpetuation of [trauma's] tyranny" (Laub, "Truth" 65). Trauma in fact reveals "inhumanity, the bare life" (Edkins 214), therefore trauma exists outside the realm of language, and the attempt to bring it back to this realm, by setting it within a linear narrative form, is to destroy its truth (Edkins 214). The victim thus becomes entrapped in a vicious circle of repressing the desire to talk about trauma or remain in constant search for words apt to insert the meaningless, subversive traumatic occurrence into symbolic narrative.[2] Dominick LaCapra terms this paradox "a fidelity to trauma" (22), which creates "a more or less unconscious desire to remain within trauma" (23).

The third aspect of trauma to be briefly summarised is its *ontological context*, by which I mean the manner in which the traumatised victim lives the event, the shocking situation, and how he is able to live after its survival. First and foremost, the trauma victim feels hopelessly passive, betrayed (Edkins 4), immobile, frozen, characterised by "panic inaction", "catatonoid reactions", immobilisaton and automaton-like behaviour (Krystal 80); they submit themselves to the circumstances, even claim that the traumatic event was

[1] See Ruth Leys's criticism of Caruth's notion of trauma narrative as a literal repetition of the past: "Caruth's theory of how the traumatic past is ineluctably registered and transmitted thus comes to seem like an extremely literalist version of history as a chronicle, conceived as a nonsubjective, nonnarrative and nonrepresentational method of memorialising the past […]." (273, Note 9)

[2] "That the speakers about trauma on some level prefer silence so as to protect themselves from the fear of being listened to – and of listening to themselves. That while silence is defeat, it serves them both as a sanctuary and a place of bondage. Silence is for them a fated exile, yet also a home, a destination, a binding oath." (Dori Laub, "Bearing Witness" 58)

justified by its causes (Krystal 83). At the moment of the trauma, the ego is dissociated into a subjective emotional system (that feels the trauma but cannot represent it, of which the result is the appearance of conversion symptoms) and an objective intellectual system (that perceives the trauma but cannot feel it, as if it were happening to another person) (Leys 131). The other consequences characterising a trauma victim is the fragmentation or loss of unity resulting from the radical unbinding of the death drive but also the simultaneous binding (or re-binding) of cathexes (Leys 34). This dialectic of binding and unbinding, hate and love constitute traumatic reaction. A profound split characterises trauma victims, as if they were living in two different worlds. The success of the therapy naturally depends on to what extent gaps can be bridged between emotional and intellectual selves, the desire to tell and the imperative to stay silent and between past and present. Trauma victims are also bound to confront, not primarily with their own trauma, but their "enigma of survival" (Caruth, *Unclaimed* 58) and the insight they gained through the traumatic experience (Caruth, "Interview" 134).

3 In parentheses: *Party Going*

As the author's signature at the end of *Party Going* indicates ("London, 1931–38"), this novel had been written through almost the entire span of the thirties, thus encapsulating (and subverting) the major preoccupations, anxieties and myths of the decade.[3] In what follows I intend to treat *Party Going* as symptomatic of the traumatic 1930s and discuss it as a text that enacts a post-traumatic state at several levels.

The plot of the novel is deceptively simple. A group of rich young men and women are about to set out by train for a holiday in the south of France, the London railway station is, however, shrouded in fog, and the trains are delayed. The commuters and working class people are forced to gather in the hall, while the wealthy young people are given rooms in the station hotel. There they pass the time, gossiping, confessing to each other, getting angry, creating and revealing secrets to each other, while the impatient crowd threatens to break down the hotel door. Finally the fog lifts, the trains leave, and the party is free to continue its journey.

Even this nutshell summary shows that the novel manifestly lacks any turning point or major revelations; in a strange manner, most of the plot is filled with impatient waiting. One of the major features of the text is the masterful way it dramatises the inertia of waiting, a state, from which, apparently, there is no escape. Like the thirties itself, the characters are entrapped, bracketed in the

[3] According to Rod Mengham, Green, especially in *Party Going*, reconsiders basic myths of the 1930s, including the extensive use of bird imagery, for instance ("Thirties" 369, see also North 80), but he also subverts the intense preoccupation with frontiers, crossings, transgressions, the fetishistic pleasure in trains, the symbolic treatment of journeys and also the Audenesque use of definite and demonstrative articles.

large hall of the station, doomed to remain literally in transit, journeying from one place to another, but without the energy and determination that the word "journey," or "going" would imply. The feeling of being encapsulated is even more emphasised by the fog that shrouds the station and makes everything impenetrable (386, 392) and the streets ("dirty cotton wool saturated with iced water" [401]) as well as by the scenes depicting London at night and in rain. The novel powerfully subverts one of the main myths of the thirties, and perhaps that of modernism itself, fast travelling, speed, the symbolic sense of departure, going in new directions, to a new country (*New Country* was an influential anthology of poetry in 1933, edited by Michael Roberts). If we approach the sense of waiting from Kirby Farrell's prosthesis theory, we might say that the failure to travel is powerfully indicative of a traumatic situation. According to Farrell, we are continuously engaged with the world through prosthetic extensions, "tools and relationships" to "make up for our creaturely limitations" (175). These can be voices but also cars, trains, aeroplanes to transcend our own body. In case of an accident, the vulnerability of these prostheses is revealed, and attention is called to their supplementary nature. Since a prosthesis reveals the scar of an earlier trauma, by wishing to make it seem undone (see also Takács 6), the basic situation of the novel, "a railway accident" is especially apt to depict a post-traumatic state, since "trauma reflects a disruption of prosthetic relationships to the world" (Kirby 176).

3.1 "Waiting at the gates": The land of ghosts

The temporal paradox of trauma and the disruption of prostheses are symbolised by the opening scene where we can see the characters entering tunnels that, perhaps paradoxically, have "DEPARTURES lit up over" them (384); a word which, instead of the joy of leaving for a sunny place, entraps the characters in a space with artificial lighting, full of smoke and noise, and more importantly, also conjuring up the notion of departing, dying, as if the travellers were entering the land of the dead. Other references to tunnels reinforce this impression: Angela and Robin (who are engaged to each other) "also had to engage in one of those tunnels to get where they were going" (384). The expression "engage in" opens up peculiar associations here, for normally one is engaged in a conversation, or in reading a book, one is busy doing something when he is engaged, or is bound by a promise, especially to get married. The characters of the novel – against their will – are engaged, bound, fixed to the situation, and to each other and once they are engaged, there is no way back (not one of the party leaves for home, in fact they are "engaged" more and more in the world of the station). Angela and Robin want to "get where they were going" (384), by entering one of the tunnels; the text does not let us know where they are travelling to or which tunnel they enter, it says considerably less (and more) than it should: it claims that "they too went in under one of those tunnels" (385), as if descending to the underworld; the passengers "came into the station by way of those tunnels, then

out under that huge vault of glass" (388, the word "vault" might be associated with a vault in a cemetery); the taxi driver who brings Alex to the station "also went in under into one of those tunnels and was gone" (402). The words "departure," "engage in," "went in under," "vault of glass," "was gone" open up a wide referential field pertaining to death, passing, loss, "going", and set up a marked contrast with the original idea of the party going on holiday. Green, recalling an episode in his autobiography when he was saying goodbye to a family he spent the vacation with (interestingly) in the South of France, meditates on the act of bidding farewell and leaving a pleasant place. He links it to dying: "Every farewell, as the French have it, is to die a little. Calling these to mind now may be in a way to die a little less" (Green, *Pack My Bag* 133). There are many references to "going" and travelling in the novel, all of which, thus, may be seen in the context of dying. It is said about Max that "he goes about a great deal" (387); when Edwards, his servant warns him that maybe his train will not run, he answers: "That's not the point, I've got to go" (400); when he is in the mood not to care about the others, we are informed that "His feeling was he must get across the Channel and it was better to go with people than alone" (406). Later Alex declares, "one always goes" (440). It is as if "going" was an inevitable compulsion, an urge that Max cannot resist. The point of the journey seems not to be in reaching its destination, the South of France, but to "get across the Channel" (which evokes the tunnels at the station and other frontiers). The most obvious point where the alignment of "going" and death is linked is the judgement of the mystery man at the hotel, who repeats several times that "She's a goner" (478).

The novel makes it clear several times that the characters and the place might be likened to the dead and a cemetery, respectively. Alex Alexander, one of the party, heading for the station in a taxi,

> likened what he saw to being dead and thought of himself as a ghost driving through the streets of the living, this darkness or that veil between him and what he saw a difference between being alive and death. […] He did not know where he was, it was impossible to recognise the streets, fog at moments collapsed on traffic from its ceiling. (401)

The inside of the station is also infected with death, and looks like a huge cemetery full of ghosts: "there was so much luggage round in piles like an exaggerated grave yard, with the owners of it and their porters like mourners with the undertakers' men […]. Several other passengers were nearly in hysterics" (402); Robert Hignam's man is "making his way from one grieving mourner to the other, or, as they sat abandoned, cast away each by his headstone, they were like the dead resurrected in their clothes under this cold veiled light and in an antiseptic air" (498). One of the party, Julia, shortly exclaims: "My darling, my darling, in this awful place I wondered whether we weren't all dead

already" (414). Later on the faces of passengers, depicted as uniform lozenges, also recall coffins (437); after the steel shutters are put on the hotel door, to prevent the angry crowd from breaking in (the crash sounds like closing a monumental coffin), Alex and Julia order the sick Miss Fellowes to be taken up to a room, a scene which bizarrely resembles a funeral procession:

> As they went up short flights from landing to landing on deep plush carpets with sofas covered in tartan on each landing, Miss Fellowes was being carried by two hotel porters up the back stairs. For every step Alex and Julia took Miss Fellowes was taken up one too, slumped on one of those chromium-plated seats, her parcel on her lap, followed by the two silent nannies, and, coming last, the same man who had sat next her, he who winked. (416).

The importance of these scenes lies not so much in the fact that certain parallels may be drawn with either a cosmic vision of the anxiety of purgatory, "the fear of a threshold" (Mengham, *Idiom* 35), with another representation of the "Waste Land" (Odom 63) or a surrealist fantasy of the underworld (Swinden 70). Undoubtedly, the text may be read as suggesting these literary and cultural parallels, it should not be forgotten, however, that this is a text very much of the traumatised thirties. What is apparent in the above quotations is the hesitation and uncertainty surrounding life and death; we are not simply in the land of the dead, but in that of people lingering between death and resurrection, being in limbo; between finality and imperfectivity, highlighting the temporal dislocation caused by a traumatic occurrence. What should become memory (the memory of the dead) is brought back again by the journey and the site of the railway station (and the hotel) themselves that by their very nature reflect transition and the impossibility of closure. These sites are not habitable, they are not "homes", however the passengers would like to make them more comfortable (the rich partygoers ordering tea, taking baths, the commuters starting to sing, trying to evoke the much repeated "fellow-feeling", a girl kissing the elderly porter, Thomson), the scene remains for every one of them inhabitable, unhomely, that is, *unheimlich*, powerfully dominated by traumatic returns of pathological memories.

The general movement of the novel is from large transitory spaces (street, hall) towards "recession to cavities" (Mengham, *Idiom* 37) that become smaller and smaller (hotel corridor, rooms, then finally the bathroom where Amabel looks at herself in the mirror). Yet these enclosures offer no stability, no protection, and are marked by a lack of finality and a suspension of time. In the long hall of the hotel we can see a man who "had a cigar in his mouth, and then she [Julia] saw he had one glass eye, and in his hand he had a box of matches which now and again he would bring up his cigar. Just as he was about to strike his match he looked round each time and let his hands drop back to his lap, his match not lighted" (414). The others are constantly looking at the huge

illuminated clock in the hall, which, according to Julia, resembles an enormous doctor's waiting room (414). She contends that "it would be like that when they were all dead and waiting at the gates" (414). The metaphor of the waiting room recalls or anticipates Leonard Woolf's simile when he likens the war to "endlessly waiting in a dirty railway station waiting room with nothing to do but wait endlessly for the next catastrophe" (quoted by MacKay 93). Mark Rawlinson mentions that *Party Going* takes place at Victoria station, which was a starting point for many journeys to war in the 1930s (74). The party heading for France is suspended between Mayfair and their destination, like during an air raid (75). As Rawlinson recalls, John Strachey spoke about air raids as bringing relief because at least they stopped what seemed to be an endless wait for catastrophe (76). With these in mind, we can say that the novel very spectacularly enacts the "waiting room atmosphere" of the whole interwar period. The characters are suspended between two catastrophes, waiting for relief; as one of the occupants of the hotel remarks, "what targets for a bomb" (483). We are witnessing in the novel how the members of the party are trying to put an end to this temporariness, suspended time, the permanent present of trauma, using basically two methods: most of the rich members of the group withdraw into smaller and smaller places, attempting to shield themselves from uncertainty and suspended time (in close connection with this, they create secrets and fictionalise their situation), but one character, Miss Fellowes, who, significantly, does not participate in the journey, deliberately engages in a traumatic situation and dares to undergo the risk posed by the surfacing of traumatising occurrences.

3.2 "Dim whirling waters": Fluidity and trauma

The other devices that the novel uses to illustrate the contrast between finalised, self-enclosed, safe and nostalgic worlds and unfinished, transitory, limbo states are images of fluidity and instances of repetition. Both – directly or indirectly – strongly represent the (violent) intrusion of the past into the present. Images of fluidity are represented in the text in so many ways that it would be impossible to list them all here (just a few examples: fog floats into the station [396], noise, fog and smell invade the hotel [437], through the thick curtains noise can still be heard [466], the noise of the crowd resembles that of aeroplanes [483], Robert feels as if drowning [450, 457], etc.).[4] Images of fluidity also dominate the description of the mass: "As pavements swelled out under this dark flood […] these crowded pavements would have looked to you as if for all the world they might have been conduits" (388). Angela and Robin are described as two lilies

[4] The notion of fluidity invades other layers of the novel as well. Mengham, in connection with Green's first novel *Blindness*, mentions the "fluidity of names" (*Idiom* 8), which makes it very difficult to differentiate between Joan, John and June. The characters in *Party Going* particularly resist memorialisation, too: we have Alex Alexander, Angela Creevy, Claire Hignam, Robert Hignam, Robin Adams, Max Adey, Amabel, Edwards, Evelyn Henderson; the recurrence of "a" and "e" makes it especially difficult to remember them and separate them from each other.

on a pond, "engulfed in swarming ponds of humanity" (395), while later the crowd is referred to as "dim whirling waters" (474). When at last the train arrives, "at the gates a thin line of people were being extruded through in twos and threes to spread out on those emptier platforms" and they "would slowly begin to drain away again, their tide had turned" (524–5).

Another equally revealing metaphor is used in the novel to illustrate the temporal displacement of the station's world, namely, when the narrator compares the waiting people to ruins:

> They were like ruins in the wet, places that is where life has been, palaces, abbeys, cathedrals, throne rooms, pantries, *cast aside and tumbled down with no immediate life and with what used to be in them lost rather than hidden* now the roof has fallen in. Ruins that is not of their suburban homes for they had hearts, and feelings to dream, and hearts to make up what they did not like into other things. But ruins, for life in such circumstances was only possible because it would not last, only endurable because it had broken down and as it lasted and became more desolate and wet so, as it seemed more likely to be permanent, at least for an evening, they grew restive. (497, emphasis mine)

This passage is primarily disturbing because, similar to the graveyard, or limbo metaphor, it uses another powerful image: ruins recall ghosts, being haunted, places "with no immediate life", and they deny the possibility of existing fully in the present. Just like trauma, the image of ruins (similarly to the station itself) effects an uncanny colonisation of the present by the past, resulting in the transformation of the place into an uninhabitable, *unheimlich* site. Life in these circumstances is, by definition, marked by a permanent loss, traumatised, which cannot be hidden by small talk or any hope for the coming trains.

The motif of fluidity is not only present at the level of the characters or in descriptions of the crowd; it can be detected at the level of the arrangement of the text. It happens several times that the same word is used within the space of one or two paragraphs to refer to different entities or people. At the beginning of the novel the word "ensconced" refers to the narratee ("if you had been ensconced in that pall of fog"), while two paragraphs later it is used in connection with the station master: "Mr Roberts, ensconced in his office" (388). Later we can see Miss Fellowes holding a dead pigeon wrapped in a paper parcel, thinking that "it was going to be a nuisance", right after which a man begins to speak to her, and Miss Fellowes "hoped he was not going to be a nuisance" (394). In the same passage, Claire and Evelyn greet each other "with cries not unlike more seagulls" (394), which recalls the seagulls that Julia saw on her way to the station (391). When Julia looks down on the crowd, she imagines it as corpuscles in blood, "for here and there a narrow stream of people shoved and moved in lines three deep and where they did this they were like veins". A few paragraphs later we can see Miss Fellowes having a nightmare:

"In terror she watched the seas rise to get at her, so menacing her blood throbbed unbearably" (430). The stability of frontiers, thus, is not only threatened in the physical world but also on the level of representation (the crowd, noises, fog, smoke) and even at the very level of language and text organisation. It is language itself that enacts the permeability of frontiers, refusing to assign precise and stable meanings to signifiers; it is as if an ever permanent belatedness or dislocation existed between paragraphs that corrupts the signification of morphemes.

In close relation to the motif of fluidity we find repetition (with variation) as the structuring principle of the novel, which is again a powerful effect of trauma, as for the patient, who is not aware of the occurrence of primary trauma, remembering is blocked. In the classical Freudian theory, "the patient does not *remember* anything of what he has forgotten or repressed, but *acts* it out. He reproduces it not as memory, but as an action; he *repeats* it, without, of course, knowing that he is repeating it" (150). Few critical evaluations recall that the trip planned by the members of the party is *the repetition* of the same journey they made to the south of France: "They had all, except Angela Crevy, been in the same party twelve months ago to the same place, so fantastically different from this" (421). At the end of the novel Amabel and Max have a very similar scene to what Max and Julia had a couple of pages earlier ("'No, go on, how much, tell me, you must, how much,' she said, as Julia had about her top" [507]). One description of the repetition with variation pattern sheds light on its significance: it is evoked by the narrator that years ago, on a similar occasion, the management of the hotel ordered the steel doors to be shut

> because when once before another fog had come as this hundreds and hundreds of the crowd, unable to get home by train or bus, had pushed into the hotel […] and had smashed everything, furniture, lounges, reception offices, the two bars, doors. Fifty-two had been injured and compensated and one of them was a little Tommy Tucker, now in school for cripples, only fourteen years of age, and to be supported all his life at the railway company's expense (437).

Thus, this pattern serves to set up a barrier to further damage, calling attention to the fragility of frontiers and the lasting effects of injury. Yet, as has become evident, boundaries cannot be erected against the intrusion of the past. Robert, while forcing his way through the crowd, has an experience similar to one he had in childhood. The gap between the nostalgically imagined past and the traumatised present has an anticlimactic effect:

> When small he had found patches of bamboo in his parents' garden and it was his romance *at that time* to force through them; they grew so thick you could not see what *temple* might lie in ruins just beyond. *It was so now*, these bodies so thick they might have been a store of

> tailors' dummies, water heated. They were so stiff they might as well have been soft, swollen bamboos in groves *only because* he had once pushed through these, damp and warm.
>
> His ruined *temple then* appeared, still keeping to whisky [Max] (406–7, emphasis mine).

On the one hand, this passage illustrates how the memory of the past is corrupted by the present, using a metaphor of the temple that leaks into the next passage, not respecting the boundaries of the paragraphs, nor those between the past and the present, and, on the other hand, more importantly, is a perfect example of thwarting meaning. The past occurrence ("at that time") is connected to the present ("it was so now") with the gesture of repetition, the past comes back in a different form, but the link that connects "then" and "now" does not explain why and how the past returns, for what could explain cause and effect ("only because") does not resolve the epistemological confusion surrounding Robert's strange experience in the present moment. Robert, not aware of the significance of his experience, and perfectly acting out an event that becomes traumatic only respectively, repeats pushing through bamboos, "without, of course, knowing that he is repeating it".

3.3 "The fidelity to trauma": The strange case of Miss Fellowes

Finally, one of the main characters, Miss Fellowes shall be examined who illustrates best the insistence of the past in the present and the mechanism of trauma, regarding its epistemological and ontological aspects. All critical evaluations agree that the founding moment, the primal scene, establishing the mood of the whole novel, is the first sentence: "Fog was so dense, bird that had been disturbed went flat into a balustrade and slowly fell, dead, at her feet" (384). There are at least four aspects from which this sentence may be approached. The enigmatic lack of articles has a powerful effect, as if the sentence – just as in the case of trauma – were not able to refer back to any point of origin, any past and could not be interpreted with reference to the outside world. Secondly, "a structure of secrecy" is created, for following this scene, Miss Fellowes wonders what could have happened, picks up the bird, washes it and wraps it in brown paper parcel, an act that baffles and confuses everyone around. Thirdly, the motif of birds is introduced, which is omnipresent in Green's fiction; and finally, together with the previous one, the motif of falling and death appears.

According to Mengham, the image of the bird is displaced from somewhere else, probably from "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner", where the Albatross also appears suddenly out of the fog (*Idiom* 32, see also Odom 60). Another point of contact with Coleridge's poem may be the traumatic event, the death of the bird determining the life of the mariner and the subsequent "talking cure",

which however, is markedly in contrast with the reticence of Miss Fellowes. The dead pigeon, right from the beginning, represents some kind of threat, for it cannot be placed, it "is robbed of its interpretational value and returns the narrative to an impasse" (Mengham, *Idiom* 33), becomes a dead weight, a nuisance that hinders progress just like the fog it comes from. According to North, the dead pigeon stands for stopped progress and also for stopped explanation (84). MacKay gives a social meaning to the death of the bird, relating to Max and his company who is not willing to listen to the crowd outside, shutting the window, maintaining that to be rich is to be looked after, "not as any bird tumbling dead from its branch for the foxes" (96). The common feature of most interpretations is that they focus on the hermeneutic difficulty posed by the fall of the bird ("everything unexplained") and Miss Fellowes's treatment of it (equally unexplained), and that they deem this hermeneutical puzzle to be valid for the whole novel. The only difference between Miss Fellowes and the rest of the characters is that only she is capable of building a *willed* relationship with the past, performing an act of mourning, a ritual, even if she does not fully understand why and what she mourns. The quotation, however, which places the bird's death in the context of hunting, is equally revealing. Two paragraphs after the opening sentence, we learn why she washes it:

> She thought it must be dirty with all that fog and wondered if it might not be, now it was dead, that it had fleas and they would not come out on the feathers of its head but she did not like to look as there might have been blood. She remembered she had seen that with rabbits' ears when they had been shot and she remembered that swallows were the most verminous of all birds – how could it have died she wondered and then decided it must be washed. (384)

Thus the appearance of the bird is not totally without context, not fully unexplained since, for Miss Fellowes, it conjures up memories of hunting when she was a child. After washing and appropriating the bird, she feels ill, orders whisky, which is again an act of repetition (and besides refers to the fluidity of borders, among them, those between the past and the present):

> It had been a fancy to order whisky and she was trying to remember what her father's brand had been called which was always laid out for them years ago when they got back from hunting. […] And there was that poor bird. One had seen so many killed out in shooting, but any dead animal shocked one in London, even birds, though of course they had easy living in towns. She remembered how her father had shot his dog when she was small and how much they had cried. (393–4)

The nature of traumatic responses is, again, brilliantly illuminated by this passage: the first, original events (shooting birds and the dog) did not work in themselves as traumatising and are only belatedly evoked as a result of the

second event, and even at that instant the "patient", Miss Fellowes, does not fully know why she remembers what she remembers, being unconscious of the link that is established retrospectively between the two occurrences.

Later, the motif of drinking whisky is again connected with her childhood: "she argued why shouldn't she order whisky if they always had it when they were children" (453). The connection between remembering and hunting is all the more interesting here for Green uses precisely this metaphor in his autobiography. In a revealing passage of *Pack My Bag* he compares recalling memories to a foxhunt:

> As we listen to what we remember, to the echoes, there is no question but the notes are muted, that those long introductions to the theme life is to be, so strident so piercing at the time are now no louder than the cry of a huntsman on the hill a mile or more away when he views the fox. We who must die soon, or so it seems to me, should chase our memories back, standing, where they are found, enough apart not to be too near what they once meant. Like the huntsman, on a hill and when he blows his horn, like him some way away from us (96).

In this passage he emphasises the difficulty of retrieving memories and at the same time points to the violence of recalling them. In the same chapter of the autobiography, he also remembers the traumatising episode when he got to know that his parents were dying, following an accident in Mexico (97). Green recalls that he had never had a similar experience before, when "a shock blankets the mind and when I got back to my room I walked up and down a long time" (97). However, he did not think of the experience of this event as necessarily traumatic, for "I began to dramatize the shock I knew I had had into what I thought it ought to feel like" (97). He remembers the isolation he had to suffer among his schoolmates due to this dramatic piece of news, "I had wounds to lick", as he puts it (100). He recalls that he "was given a push further down this hill about five weeks later" (98) when his parents got better and sent him photos with bandages around their heads" (98). "This gave me a return of hysteria," he claims. This is a classical traumatic situation when the second event recalls and re-interprets the first one as traumatic. By a fine metonymic link, the narrator begins to talk about his parents' visit to Mexico every other year. Once, when the parents were on leave, there was a girl in the house who seemed reluctant to show Green her private garden, her little kingdom. In the end she agreed, but the child Green grabbed a spade and wanted to dig up the garden. "Rightly she would have none of this and tried to stop me. She was the stronger and was succeeding when in a last attempt to get my way I swung the spade with all my strength against her leg and cut her to the bone" (101). Similarly to the episode in school, this also leads to isolation, "as though I had been cut off forever" (101). The only solution to the shock, he thinks, is a similar wound on inflicted upon himself, *repeating the wound*: "I saw nothing for it but to cut my own leg

open and was carried to bed screaming for a knife" (101). What connects the three episodes, the foxhunt, the news of the parents' accident and the spade scene is the motif of wounds, that is, traumas. At the beginning of the section, Green talks about the metaphor of foxhunt in which presumably it is the rememberer who, "like the huntsman, on a hill" "blows his horn" (97) to evoke memories. By the end, however, it is the fox that he identifies with: "They say the fox enjoys the hunt but the sound of the horn as he breaks covert must set great loneliness on him" (101); "Later, when the accident I have described disrupted me, I felt, and it is hard to explain, as though the feelings I thought I ought to have were hunting me. I was as much alone as any hunted fox" (102). Thus, instead of the rememberer hunting, retrieving, recalling memories, he becomes the hunted – or perhaps more appropriately, haunted – , inflicting wounds on himself, and what remains is "shame remembered" (102).

If we examine Miss Fellowes's reaction to the dead bird in the context of the metaphor of hunting, we can say the she follows a similar strategy of repetition and identification. She picks up the dead bird, the prey standing for memories, and she instantly appropriates it, incorporates it in her world, "carrying *her* dead pigeon" (384, emphasis mine). But instead of treating it as a mere object, she attaches to it some transcendental significance, she "decided it must be washed" (384). "Descending underground", she enters a lavatory, and cleans the bird with hot water, causing pain to herself, too, which is an act of unconscious identification with the prey: "Air just above it was dizzy with a little steam, for she was doing what she felt must be done with hot water, *turning her fingers to the colour of its legs and blood*" (385, emphasis mine). After she comes up from below, she begins to feel ill, so she asks Robin Adams (significantly, having a bird's name) to dispose of the parcel with the bird. By this time she is connected even more closely with the bird, she "said to herself that it was coming over her now and when it did come would she fall over backwards and down those stairs" (386), like "a prey falling for the foxes." When Robin throws it in a wastepaper basket, she immediately feels relieved. When she is better, however, she *retrieves* her dead pigeon (387). It continues to possess and haunt her, instead of her possessing it and hunting it, illustrating what LaCapra termed "the fidelity to trauma" (22); she dares not break her promise, and remains engaged within the haunting presence of memory. As the bird is gradually becoming a nuisance (394) she is also becoming a nuisance, a dead weight on the party (North 85). It is for this reason that the members of the party would like to "dispose of her", suppress her; as Max informs Julia, "Just arranged for three men to carry her up the back way where she won't be seen" (413), later Claire decidedly declares, "I don't want a soul to know" (414). In her worst state, Miss Fellowes has a vision of a dark sea, menacing to engulf her: "Lying inanimate where they had laid her she waged war with storms of darkness which rolled up over her in a series" (421); she "felt she was on a shore wedged between two rocks, soft and hard […] she would notice small clouds where sea joined sky and these clouds coming far away together into a greater

mass would rush across from that horizon towards where she was held down" (422). The dark sea and the masses recall the masses of people outside threatening to engulf the members of the party. However they would like to deny their attachment to Miss Fellowes, and exclude her from consciousness, their bond is evidently represented by Robert, who, sent out to find Angela and Max, finds him: "the first thing I asked him whether he had seen Claire's aunt although no one had ever asked me to find her" (422). When Miss Fellowes feels a little better, she keeps returning to a scene of hunting: "She was having a perfectly serene dream that she was riding home, on an evening after hunting, on an antelope between rows of giant cabbages" (440). She is not able to get rid of images of her childhood, which now appear as the age of shame, guilt and reproach: "It might have been an argument with death. And so it went on, reproaches, insults, threats to report and curiously enough it was mixed up in her mind with thoughts of dying and she asked herself whom she could report death to. And another voice asked her why she had brought the pigeon, was it right to order whisky […] the voice asked why she had washed it and she felt like when she was very small and had a dirty dress" (452–3). She arrives to a point where she is not able to order her memories that break up into isolated fragments or appear as undistinguishable dark masses, denying her the ability to tell a story: "her lips moved, only she had no voice to speak with" (452). She unconsciously seeks death, the vantage point to be able to tell her story; and she evidently identifies herself with the dead bird, meaning that in the company she is the sole figure being able to accept her own death. In the novel, hers is a narrow escape, but it sheds light on the others' story as well. When the train arrives, they also escape, not knowing what they risked in entering the station. Mengham is right when he claims that "the only travelling is done by Miss Fellowes" (*Idiom* 37); Max and his companions only delude themselves with crossing a bridge (504), and going past frontiers into "that smiling country" (510), not recognising that they became engaged in a traumatic situation.

Henry Green's *Party Going* uses language in a masterfully unorthodox way to reveal a post-traumatic situation, that of being suspended, encapsulated, bracketed in the symbolic space of the railway station and thus becomes, on the one hand, a brilliant piece illustrating the anxious, "waiting room" atmosphere of the late 1930s (a decade also isolated by two world wars), and on the other, illuminates the general (temporal, ontological and epistemological) mechanism of trauma, especially through the example of Miss Fellowes, who cannot help being bound, engaged by the uncanny presence of the past in the transitional space of the station.

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Eger Journal of English Studies ***IX*** *(2009) 21–31*

Homage and a Kind of Thumbed Nose to a Very Old Tradition: John Fowles's "The Ebony Tower"

Tibor Tóth

The predominant atmosphere of the novella is shaped by various approaches to apocalypse, a theme which has always been an exciting asset of John Fowles's art. This charismatic artist defines apocalypse as the triumph of ignorance over knowledge and John Fowles describes comprehensively the 'soft' terror that emerges from the above state of affairs. In John Fowles's interpretation neither knowledge nor ignorance can be described in traditional ways. The only chance of understanding and recycling these evergreen conditions is provided by variations. In the works of John Fowles variations threaten with some sense of anarchy, so, there is need for a constant, a point of reference which is, as usual, provided by woman in "The Ebony Tower" as well.

At the surface level of the novella, the main characters are the two male characters who stand for traditional and abstract art respectively, yet it is woman (and her many possible interpretations or impersonations) who offers the author, his characters and the readers the chance to interpret the above situation. For John Fowles woman is nature, intellect, past and present, in short life itself, and she can help man overcome ignorance and escape the hypnotic power of apocalyptic tradition. The above definition might sound a bit pompous, so, I have amended it with the help of the title I have chosen for this paper: woman teaches man that art and life can be reconciled if he pays homage and also shows a kind of thumbed nose to an evergreen tradition and in this context sex, or rather sexuality becomes a central metaphor expressive of both the eternal and the momentary variations or revelations of creativity.

A comprehensive interpretation based on a close reading of the short pieces included in the collection exceeds the space I can afford in the present paper, so, I have decided to discuss some relevant aspects of the methods by way of which John Fowles handles archetypes, legends and myths in *The Ebony Tower*. Through the analysis of "Eliduc A Personal Note" I hope to reveal the nature of John Fowles's intentions to marry very old traditions and contemporary themes in his novella "The Ebony Tower."

The heterogeneous quality of the material imposes some central themes around which it can be comprehensively discussed, so, I chose the themes of quest and freedom to support my interpretation. The volume is dominated by variations on the themes of freedom, art and life in the context of both homage

and a thumbed nose to a very old tradition. The basic principle is easy to demonstrate if I alter, or rather re-establish the (tradition bound) correct order of the stories, as the structure reveals the nature of the 'authorial manipulation' of the declared organizing rationale.

The 'misplaced' introductory section of the collection reveals John Fowles's attitude towards collecting, classifying and ordering a complex theme well known from *The Collector*. That early novel set the example of the way in which John Fowles's self-reflexive meta-fiction feeds on myths, legends, icons, art experiences, or intertexts, which thus contribute to a specific Fowlesian fiction and serve an authorial/artistic intention to create freedom(s) that allow for other freedoms to exist as it is theoretically set forth and exemplified in *The French Lieutenant's Woman*.

It is also important to remember that the initial title of the collection *The Ebony Tower* was *Variations*, but professional readers discarded it on grounds that they could not see justification for this title as they considered the variation-principle a private mirage in the writer's mind, and right they were, at least with regards to the nature of the authorial intention. This is so as the result of this mirage is easy to spot in the very structure of the collection as "Eliduc A Personal Note" sounds very much like an introduction, yet it is only the second piece of the collection. The nature of the mirage or manipulation principle is relatively easy to grasp if I reinstate the 'logical' chronological order of the first pieces and search for the major themes formulated in "Eliduc A Personal Note."

The central themes are easy to identify. Eliduc suggests the theme of quest as a principal concern, yet the novella "The Ebony Tower*"* which introduces the collection employs more dimensions of literary and art experiences than the one suggested by the medieval romance 'adapted' rather than translated by John Fowles, which means that the roots are remembered only to be cut. At this point I have to agree with Pamela Cooper who demonstrates her thesis that John Fowles 'repossesses' Marie de France rather than translates her story by quoting Robert Hanning and Joan Ferrante's comments regarding the 'popular' translation John Fowles offers. Naturally she argues in favour of creative freedom and states that "an academic translation is as subject to distortion as any popular one." (Cooper 166–167) John Fowles also asserts that Eliduc is his attempt to 'resurrect' the mood of the collection, which is that of infinite variations based on the principle of freedom from and reverence towards tradition and the contemporary, but this statement gains in meaning if I take into consideration the fact that the medieval story explains, or rather functions as a kind of prologue-epilogue to, the twentieth century prose writer's aims.

Yet, the 'mirage,' the 'mystery' reinterpreted in "Eliduc A Personal Note" is telling of John Fowles's honest reverence towards the influence of great minds on his fiction as expressed by Henry Breasley in "The Ebony Tower" when he tells David Williams that the roots have to be cut. John Fowles takes the 'blame' for having severed the 'umbilical cord' much more neatly than was his intention and he reformulates the above principle stating that there is a far more emotional

than structural relationship between genuine works of art, which reads as superimposition, that is, the solution does not imply the repetition of structures or methods, rather it employs their spirit and transforms it through their creators' – (in the case of "The Ebony Tower," Marie de France's and John Fowles's) – spiritual and sentimental filter.

The method will be defined by John Fowles in *Mantissa* as 'reforgetting,' but it is also contained by the title and the introductory notes of his collection of non-fiction *Wormholes*. In his preface to the 1998 edition of *Wormholes* John Fowles writes that he hit upon the title with the help of Peter Bonson, and that he decided on that title because he found the *OED* definition, which describes the concept as "a hypothetical interconnection between widely separated regions of space-time," metaphorically appropriate. And because all serious writers are endlessly seeking for the wormholes that will connect them to other planes and worlds. (*Wormholes* Xii) "Eliduc A Personal Note," the re-forgotten medieval tale clearly adds to meanings formulated in the twentieth century novella of the collection and is compatible with all the other short pieces which in their turn discuss mainly contemporary issues. This is possible as "Eliduc A Personal Note" illustrates John Fowles's intention to 'reforget' the birth of the contemporary novel and novelist and suggests that the enigma which accompanies this return is an essential element as far as the freedom contained in the creative process is concerned. The meta-fictional and postmodern aspects of the novella entitled "The Ebony Tower" are implicit and their presence can only be explained with the help of the above rationale.

The tone of "Eliduc A Personal Note" is nostalgic and reverent and if one asks what happened to the existentialist thinker he or she is likely to gain a new point of reference through which the inconstancies inherent in the Dianne Vipond-like interviews can be explained.

But I believe that we also owe – emotionally and imaginatively, at least – the very essence of what we have meant ever since by the fictional, the novel and all its children, to this strange northern invasion of the early medieval mind. One may smile condescendingly at the primitive technique of stories such as Eliduc; but I do not think fiction can do so with decency – and for a very simple reason. He is watching his own birth. (Eliduc A Personal Note 118–119)

Yet, to demonstrate that his reverence is not restricted to the imaginative and the emotional, John Fowles offers us a research material on Marie de France's possible identity, her family ties and of the *Lais,* the collection in which the original "Eliduc" was included. John Fowles also demonstrates his intention to continue a task undertaken by Marie de France, that is, to save a Celtic story from oblivion. Furthermore, John Fowles marries the reverence of the great follower with the accuracy of a philologist when he explains methods, 'means' that he is incapable of using in his material because they could not meet his ends.

Another similarity is much harder for us to detect today, and that is of humour. Because her stories are so distant from us we tend to forget that much

of their matter was equally distant from her own twelfth century; and we grossly under – estimate both her and her contemporary audience's sophistication if we imagine them with totally straight faces and credulity. (Eliduc A Personal Note 120–121)

John Fowles is aware of the enormous responsibility that befell him when he decided that he would tell a genuine Marie de France tale, and some twentieth century shadows of this art, to his twentieth century readers and cautions them of the 'real-life systems' which sustain her and unavoidably his material as well. The first one is the relationship of vassal and lord with the implication that the power structure depended on a man being as good as his word, because all civilized world depended on it. The Christian element is identified as being responsible for the ending. Courtly love is the third 'real-life' system where the same stress of keeping faith was applied to sexual relations. The above 'real-life' situations are, of course, related to other major themes of pieces included in the collection, as well as to other Fowles works. The formulation rather explains the 'roots' that on other occasions are 'cut' than render them exclusive themes for consideration. The first 'real-life' situation will illustrate a 'primitive' glimpse at the sources of exile of any form, a contemporary continuation of 'a man being as good as his word' with the possible analogy: an artist is as good as his art is true.

The 'Christianity' motif demonstrates the unpredictability of the outcome to human fate and 'infant' fiction's preoccupation with variations about possible ends even in its cradle. Stress on keeping faith applied to sexual relations as well is central to many of John Fowles's novel.

It is also important to remember that John Fowles's genuinely 'archaeological' interest is complemented with the gesture of giving away authorial secrets. The gesture certainly fascinates the reader of the contemporary re-telling of the twelfth century tale and urges him to feel free and re-tell its atmosphere.

The fact that the initial title of the tale was "Eliduc" is relevant on many accounts. It reminds one of characteristics more general than the love element in the verse romances of the tenth and the eleventh centuries, as medieval romances in opposition to the general belief are not restricted to a prevalent love element. It is true that the most popular romances like Tristan and Iseult, Cretyen de Troyes and the like are concentrated round the motif of love, yet nearly all subordinate the love element to adventure. Most romances are narratives of heroic adventure where love connects, or compensates for the lack of unity of action and not too convincingly defined characters. The simple and skilfully managed plot uses poorly differentiated characters who stand rather for a type than for the individual.

This freedom is employed by John Fowles as well as his characters re-forget their typicality to gain flexible, variable identities. In romances the hero conforms to the pattern of the ideal knight with very limited possibility of variation. Furthermore, the fact that John Fowles adopts the earlier title of the tale demonstrates that he has the intention of re-creating the variant

concentrating on heroism. The touch of the master's hand in spite of the reverence set forth in his introduction to the tale transforms it into a research-material in process.

His imaginative freedom demonstrates the power of intellect to re-assimilate old Celtic faith in heroic attitude and Marie de France's love tainted interpretation. Thus, John Fowles's contemporary vision of the shifting emphasis of the tale leads to the mirage of the possibility to tell a story based on multiple earlier tellings. For John Fowles re-forgetting is certainly not chewing on an old straw and it demonstrates a principle by which the artist's earlier books can be revisited. This is also relevant as "Eliduc" argues that neither love nor heroism was entirely equivocal at the time of the writing of the variants of the tale.

The declared authorial will to link "Eliduc" to "The Ebony Tower" allows for further relevant interpretations. Following the quotation taken from Marie de France's original text, John Fowles introduces his version of the tale in a fashion, which will not disappoint any of his readers. "I am going to tell you the full story of a very old Celtic tale, at least as I've been able to understand the truth of it." (Eliduc 123)

This appears to be a very strange introduction after the pedantic personal notes one has to read before starting to read the tale proper. First the promise that we are going to read the full story, not a part or any of the medieval variants of it then as much of it as the author is able to understand.

Ability to understand and the possibility to interpret are central issues regarding the consistency of "Eliduc A Personal Note" and the actual story. Celtic is used to define the meaningful origins of the story and by virtue of the author's research it reveals a cultural duality burdened with mystery and legend and an inapt historiographic expertise relevant in "Eliduc A Personal Note." Yet John Fowles's promise can refer to an unchanged original, unauthorized version of the Marie de France tale being offered up.

John Fowles promises the true story of the tale, of the variants handed down to us, and as a philologist he tells us that this story contains significant changes in the genuine authorial intention and position announced. In fact, John Fowles offers up his readers his authority over Marie de France's already questioned authority regarding the tale. This is a rather sophisticated democratic act, which at the same time means that the intention could be interpreted as a warning that the personal note will be followed by a personal variant of that tale.

The details are of the domain of the Celtic tale. John Fowles's choice of the initial title suggests, as I have already mentioned, that the narrative will follow the medieval model, but the perspective will be determined by at least two fictional authors' discourse: that of Marie de France and that of John Fowles's memory of the earlier discourse. It should be noted that John Fowles's memory includes the statement that most of the medieval ideals have a false quality.

The examples with respect to this tenet are genuine and convincing. Heroic attitude is not sufficient to prevent the knight from falling into disgrace. A king's devotion to his defender is not sufficient to prevent him from betraying him in

the name of love. A knight's promise to stay faithful to his wife is not sufficient to prevent him from falling in love with another woman. A knight's true love is not sufficient to prevent him from telling her that he has already got a wife. There is need for a spiritual dimension to bridge the fissures of the heroic ideal. Consequently we are told that it is only the wife's love that stands straight in the storm of lies and betrayed feelings. Her love and understanding is only equalled by divine revelation of some sort that smoothens down the waves of passion that return regularly to the storm-torn shores where people seem to believe in everything that is currently being betrayed.

John Fowles shares his intentions with his readers in the conclusions to the story. "If I managed to render the message of my assessment poetic and deceiving enough I achieved my goal."(Eliduc A Personal Note 143) It is this confusing and confused world about which John Fowles promises to be true, at least as he understood it.

One cannot tell whether he is trying to be a nice and decent re-teller, like in "The Enigma," or something of the sort dictated by the very spirit of the material he is using. The secret might be incorporated in the possibility to participate in the creative act because with John Fowles one has to be prepared for an invitation like: the cards are on the table, the characters are given the rules of the game and the play can go on.

Although John Fowles offers his readers a brief summary, he intentionally fails to mention the real case for Eliduc's exile and certainly does not mention exile itself. He also avoids mentioning the Christian element closing down the story. It is then a second variant of 'at least as I've been able to understand the truth of it'. Predictably we have the promise that we would be offered a third and not only very accurate but also 'exact' version of the tale in the continuation of the story. At least this is the impression one gets after a short inventory because the 'research material' offered up in "Eliduc A Personal Note" which in its turn managed to chart the adequate theoretical implications and historical background. The opening passage of "Eliduc A Personal Note" sets the method, the second section discussed offers a selective preview and the third larger portion promises to tell us "exactly how it all happened." (Eliduc 123)

As I have already mentioned John Fowles chooses a very interesting principle when he organizes his short fiction into a collection. The typical authorial manipulation of the fictional material is obvious and emphatic because, although the collection includes "Eliduc," John Fowles's 'adaptation' or liberal translation of a Marie de France story, the medieval story is preceded by a sort of introduction entitled "A Personal Note." The personal note and the very old French story follow the novella of the twentieth century artist, while "The Ebony Tower" is constructed upon the major principles of the medieval romance.

"Eliduc A Personal Note" should introduce the collection and it could be followed by the writer's example of a very old form of fiction. Yet, historicity, clockwise chronology, predictable logic are not John Fowles's concern. Once again John Fowles is consistent in not being consistent in his declared intentions.

Of course, John Fowles's admiration for the domain, which is a world of mediaeval legends, simple yet impressive aesthetics is well known and, so, is his conviction that literary experience can be assimilated and employed freely by twentieth century artists.

Thus, the logic of "The Ebony Tower*"* repeats, and typographically actually precedes the scheme of the Celtic story. An artist is as good as his art, the divine element can bring life and faith together if it allows for various/flexible endings/meanings of origins and contains/reveals cultural multiplicity to reformulate legend and myth/archetype and all previous and future historiographic expertise. Art is a continuous flow of tellings, a process of re-assimilation of real life situations.

This means that comprehensive interpretation of the opening piece, of its metafictional and postmodern elements woven into a simple plot, supported by myth and archetype, is only possible following a retrospective reading of "The Ebony Tower." Thus, it becomes clear that the novella employs a popular mediaeval theme and David Williams can be interpreted as a contemporary variant of the knight-errant who wants to rescue the beautiful princess(es) from the monster's captivity. The contemporary flavour of the story is increased by the inherent duality thus revealed: the knight-errant is actually an abstract painter, the princess is a former art student, and the owner of the 'magic domain' is a world famous painter. "Eliduc A Personal Note" makes it clear for the reader that David Williams' visit to the mysterious domain, a place governed by 'pagan' admiration for art and life will reveal powerful sources of fertility based on myths and legends. Uccelli's, Braque's and Henry Breasley's paintings can be, and are in certain ways compared in the context of Ovid's version of the Actaeon-Diana legend. Richard Bevis attempts to give a comprehensive treatment of the above implications in his "Actaeon's Sin: The Previous Iconography" of John Fowles's "The Ebony Tower," but I consider that the relationship between the legend and its contemporary variant can and should be further explored. (Bevis "Actaeon's Sin")

Naturally the above mentioned legend is haunted by Marie de France's interpretation of a similar situation, and John Fowles's list of life situations can be of great help when interpreting the twentieth century story.

David Williams' heroic attitude is not sufficient to prevent the knight from the realisation that he is falling into disgrace. The support of abstract art (a king's support) of its defender, is not sufficient to prevent him from betraying it in the name of love and admiration for a still viable older tradition. David Williams' (the knight's) promise to stay faithful to his wife is not sufficient to prevent him from falling in love with another woman, a muse, and actually a form of art which is incompatible with his status. David's (the knight's) experience of an eternal form of love is not sufficient to prevent him from returning to London via Paris to his wife and enjoy his actual social and academic position.

Yet, the dilemmas formulated create a spiritual dimension which can bridge the fissures of the two variants of the heroic ideal. Consequently, we are told that both dimensions are burdened with some sense of betrayal and art is the only agent, that can marry betrayal with loyalty due to its capacity to understand that generation after generation seem to have believed in everything that is currently being betrayed. The novella is a telling example of this complexity.

The structure, the mode, the style of the novella contribute to representational fiction rich in the extreme in pictorial details due to the 'art experiences' it feeds on as the young abstract painter plunges "straight into the legend. (The Ebony Tower 12) The domain and the old man's paintings are dreams (the equivalents of the mirage) and his subject matter is mysterious and archetypal further obscured by a sort of intellectual exile. The comparative interpretation of Uccelli's *Night Hunt* and Henry Breasley's *Moonhunt* will reveal the self-exiled master's genuine interpretation of artistic heritage. Both paintings are pictorial representations of Acteon's tragic end. David is Acteon's equivalent and he surprised Diana/Artemis and is/was cruelly punished for what Ovid in his *Metamorphoses* calls misfortune, an innocent mistake interpreted as crime.

This clearly means that David's innocence is also interpretable as crime, while Breasley's ars poetica is "both homage and a kind of thumbed nose to a very old tradition." (The Ebony Tower 23)

The old faun's private forest sets free intertexts, which help John Fowles 're-direct the play' which abounds in icons: the mystery of island Britain, Chretien de Troyes, wandering horsemen and lost damsels and dragons and wizards, Tristan and Merlin and Lancelot, Marie de France and "Eliduc."

> The old man explained in his offhand way the sudden twelfth- and thirteenth-century mania for romantic legends, the mystery of island Britain […] Chretien de Troyes, […] wandering horsemen and lost damsels and dragons and wizards, Tristan and Merlin and Lancelot … (The Ebony Tower 57)

Everything is designed to contribute to yet another re-telling of the archetypal elements on which the novella is built, the brown breasts of the girls returning from their bath invoke Gauguin and the Garden of Eden, and art, myth, legend repeatedly impose themselves as unavoidable details of the 'reality' of Coet.

> Another echo, this time of Gaugen; brown breasts and the Garden of Eden. Strange, how Coet and its way of life seemed to compose itself so naturally into such moments, into the faintly mythic and timeless. The uncontemporary. And then yet another such moment had come. The girls had stood. (The Ebony Tower 61)

The source of David's ordeal is specified: he does not understand the presence of the timeless in the momentary and he certainly fails to sense the vital importance

of iconicity for the contemporary. The way in which John Fowles employs 'The Fall of Man' described in *Genesis* 3:14 in "The Ebony Tower" demonstrates the novelist's faith in the associative power and adaptability of the great narrative to very contemporary contexts.

In the John Fowles text it is Adam who is tempted, and the apple becomes a pear, Henry Breasley is both God and the serpent, he tempts David into realizing that one's status as man, in terms of creativity can equal that of the divine. The non-biblical register with which he explains the biblical reference helps him elucidate some moral stereotypes that could change David's understanding of the situation. The Garden of Eden becomes a nudist colony suggesting that innocence has been reclaimed and was begotten. The girls walk back to the two men naked and David observes the 'Eve' in them. David is essentially the fallen man in a quite liberal variant of the Garden of Eden.

The young man discovers that his pagan instincts are provoked from under the civilised mask he is wearing. The marriage of the story of Diana, the Garden of Eden and the very contemporary mystery play directed by Henry Breasley naturally leads to yet another literary reference. To no surprise of the reader the Freak is reading John Fowles's *The Magus* by the lake. The reader will certainly halt for a moment and reconsider the fictional situation in its possible reference to *The Magus*.

The centrality of *The Magus* in Fowles's fiction needs no demonstration. In his introduction to the 1976 edition of *The Magus* John Fowles discusses "the nature of human existence – and of fiction" and concludes that true freedom lies between the metaphysical (supernatural) and the scientific "in each two, never in one alone, and therefore it can never be absolute freedom. All freedom, even the most relative, may be a fiction." (*The Magus* 10–11) The conflict remains centred around the dispute of the book we are reading as it was only the title of *The Magus* that the author needed and not the possibility to intrude into both texts.

The twentieth century story is invaded again by tradition as the M-O-USE and David become characters in a romantic tragedy, and Alfred Tennyson's monodrama, *Maud,* adds to the series of epiphanic peripetia in the sylvan domain "Where everything is not possible." (The Ebony Tower 97) Magic is just an impression as Diana tells David that fairy tales about sleeping princesses and their princes with whom they could live together afterwards all avoid telling the truth as they don't mention the notable exception that they couldn't.

The paradox instantly invites new icons and they remember Tristan and Yseult and their nonsensical insistence on chastity and the sword between them. David, the twentieth century knight errant loses his armour and is dominated by incredulous despair, senses "an anguish, a being bereft of a freedom whose true nature he had only just seen." (The Ebony Tower 102)

When David interprets his journey to the domain he refers to himself as an artificial man, he senses that he can "only look back through bars, like caged animals, born in captivity, at the old green freedom." (The Ebony Tower 109)

Acteon/Adam/David defines his earlier interpretation of freedom ass non-freedom and he turns against those false prophets who were trying to bury the not yet quite extinguished awareness of frustration. Those false prophets are part of art education in Britain, and the young man's rage against those who lead the academic world is as convincing as it is true:

> That notorious diploma shows where the Fine Arts students had shown nothing but blank canvases – what truer comment on the stale hypocrisy of the teaching and the helpless bankruptcy of the taught? One could not live by one's art, therefore one taught a travesty of its basic principles; pretending that genius, making it, is arrived at by overnight experiment, histrionics, instead of endless years of solitary obstinacy: that the production of the odd instant success, like a white rabbit out of the hat, excuses the vicious misleading of thousands of innocents; that the maw of the teaching cess-pit, the endless compounding of the whole charade, does not underpin the entire system. When schools lie …
> Perhaps it was happening in the other arts… (The Ebony Tower 110)

David feels that the injustice is that art is fundamentally amoral and all goes to the pigs nothing to the deserving and understands that he was born to be an eternal fugitive trying to escape the dangers raised by truth and beauty. It seems that a heritage of vital importance, mostly inaccessible has been offered to him and he deprived himself of this knowledge. In the twentieth century Garden of Eden this is a fatal sin that could lead to the extinction of the only torch burning true: knowledge. The death of knowledge brings in the image of total apocalypse, the extinction of all mankind, without hope of redemption, of free will. In his vision he sees the lights of the runaway as "all the boats burning," and he tries to run for salvation. "But the boats proof to all flame, the ultimate old masters, kept the tall shadow of him where he was; static and onward, returning home, a young Englishman staring at a distant row of frozen lights." (The Ebony Tower 113)

Although the apocalyptic images are overwritten by his return to normality, the betrayals he and many of his contemporaries committed do not mean the end of the quest. David returns to his dividends, Henry rages against avant-garde art and the reader discovers the conclusion to the contemporary story in the medieval one. The new story precedes the old one it is prior to it, which means that all that has elapsed between the two periods can be repeated and reformulated. Ignorance, or lack of knowledge, the betrayal of innovation and tradition in the arts and life can be referred to older situations of the kind. "Eliduc A Personal Note" follows the twentieth century variant of the quest and the possible is impossible, ergo the impossible is also possible, old tradition and contemporary desire reclaim the freedom of art and artist in the name of both homage to and a thumbed nose to a very old tradition.

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Eger Journal of English Studies ***IX*** *(2009) 33–40*

"But in what country have we been?" Observations of the Border in Contemporary Irish Poetry

Péter Dolmányos

> State borders may be perceived in very different ways. In successful cases of statebuilding, as the state becomes institutionalized and legitimated, its borders become accepted parts of everyday life, appearing as normal, even inevitable bounds of national identity, the frame of understanding of state and civic life, and the limits of community formation (Lustick, 1993: 41–46). […] Borders may also be resisted, bypassed, ignored or subverted. They may be perceived not as facts of life, but as alien intrusions on ordinary interaction, introducing foreign powers and actors into civic life. In such cases, national identity overflows state boundaries and civic life cross-cuts them. (Todd 2)

The complexity of the nature of the concept of the border is summed up in a concise manner in the above quotation. This summary, however, offers a neat categorisation of the possible reactions to the border – perhaps even too neat for certain contexts. The example of the island of Ireland demonstrates the possibility of the simultaneous presence of several of these perceptions, and this is also reflected in the poetic approaches to the concept of the border in contemporary Irish literature.

Attention has been called to the fact of the rather strange situation of a border which does not conform to significant physical divisions on a relatively small island (cf. Rankin 2). The border separating the Republic of Ireland from Northern Ireland is a dividing line from the point of view of political formations and also in terms of the 'official' versions of reality. The simple-looking political dimension is complicated by the specific location and origin of the line: as the interpretation of the act of partition itself is different on the two sides of the border, consequently the concept of the border is different as well. The temporary or permanent nature of the line has long divided the population of the island yet this division does not fully coincide with the geographical one. The different approaches to the temporal aspect of the political border are rooted in those different versions of reality: traditional Republican aspirations regard it as only a temporary inconvenience in the way of a united Ireland whereas traditional Unionist belief considers it as permanent and nearly sacred.

The notion of the border involves figurative possibilities as well. A line or zone separating two distinct unities can easily be broadened into an experience

situated at the face of confrontation between two different worlds with the concurrent state of anxiety. Questions regarding the existence of the border by those living in its vicinity in a rural area indicate a different approach: the practical dimension very often takes no notice of the border since it does not seem to affect the life of these people – the political aspect of life is reduced to a virtually unnoticed magnitude when everyday practical matters are concerned such as health care or postal services. The experience that the border may be crossed unnoticed in several places on several occasions implies the arbitrariness of the category yet this very arbitrariness is the source of the fascination and anxiety which can be experienced in the border zone.

The border dividing the island into two units comes to be addressed in the work of Catholic poets from the North. They principally regard the border as a physical location though with a definite temporal dimension – it is the border at the time of conflict. This allows the border to acquire further figurative dimensions in addition to its usual one of division, which results in a spectrum of reactions ranging from acceptance to subversion. The question, often considered especially relevant in the Irish context, whether the border actually divides people or rather unites them does not receive an answer; it is the location itself that haunts the imagination of the poets, and the variety of responses indicates the possibility of the simultaneous validity of both answers.

The complex background of John Montague, born in Brooklyn, raised in the North and educated in Dublin, does not lack the experience of the border either. Frequent crossings of the border render it a familiar enough concept, yet this does not rule out the possibility of anxiety in the vicinity of the location. On occasion historical bitterness compels Montague to assert the absolute irrelevance of the border as he contemplates his 'native' County Tyrone as a land "betrayed by both South and North" (Montague 41), yet this statement at the same time gives a permanent significance to the border as it is the physical manifestation of partition, the final cause for the feeling of betrayal.

The laconic title of Montague's poem "Border" offers no commentary on the category of the border; it simply employs the concept and turns it into a trope. The poem is a part of a longer sequence composed after the death of the poet's mother, and it captures the moment of border crossing, a part of the actual journey from the South to the North, with a generalising conclusion which opens the poem towards the figurative direction. The opening lines of the poem, "That wavering needle / pointing always North" (Montague 154), pursue a double purpose: on one level it is the simple rephrasing of a geographical fact which serves as the basis of orientation in space, on another it locates the persona in an inescapable relation with his place of birth, in a way also functioning as a means of orientation.

The persona of Montague's poem traces the event of border crossing as an intimately familiar experience since childhood holidays provide a concrete set of memories in relation to it. The present experience, however, is different on several levels: the direction is reversed as this time he heads North, thus the

implications of a darker and starker destination heighten the tension, and the adult perspective on a conflict-ridden present world is more readily focused on landmarks of a less comforting type – the route is marked by "sand-bagged / barracks" (ibid), a "half-bombed bridge" (ibid) and "potholed roads" (ibid). All these introduce a world of alternative realities, manifesting in post boxes of red and green colours, British patrols and *gardaí*, signs in English and Irish, "both bullet-pierced" (ibid). The destination is not any less consoling either – it is

> that shadowy territory
> where motives fail, where
> love fights against death,
> good falters before evil. (ibid)

This might as well be any place as the rather universal details indicate, and at the same time it offers a verdict on the place itself, giving a declaration of its second-rate importance in the face of fundamental categories of existence. The wider context of the poem situates this instance of border crossing as part of a visit to the ill mother of the speaker, yet the journey is a recollected one, so the metaphorical dimension of the visit takes over from the literal one, and the rather troubled personal relationship between the poet and his mother launches the poem on a figurative course, as an attempt of reconciliation, of a crossing of another border of another kind.

Though the border as a physical location is principally evoked for a figurative journey, the description works well on the literal level too. The details mentioned capture the atmosphere of the place as well as of the time; it is not only the border between the Republic and the North in a general dimension but the border at the time of the Troubles. The atrocities evoked by the landmarks render the concept of the border even more complex, turning the region into a real frontier zone with the suggestion that it is not only two different political formations which meet there but more profound divisions may be encountered in the face of which the political dimension will appear only secondary or even less in terms of importance.

In another poem, "Border Lake" the border is simply a point of reference in locating the scene. The poem begins with an almost banal statement of the relation between northward movement and a decline in temperature: "The farther North you travel, the colder it gets" (Montague 153). Still, the confidential personal pronoun insists on a possible figurative dimension, turning the climatic relation into a marker of the general hostility of life in a certain location. The example offered is a "border county of which no one speaks" (ibid), with its bleak capital town almost dead after the end of a fair: "The only beauty nearby is a small glacial lake / sheltering between drumlin moons of mountains" (ibid). The fact of locating beauty outside the human settlement depersonalises and dehumanises the place, and the glacial origin of the lake suggests cold beauty only. The only living beings glimpsed at are a "solitary pair

of swans who haunt the lake" (ibid), indicating the near-void quality of this world.

The nameless county is that of the poet, yet its namelessness raises a number of thoughts. It is either too trivial to identify the county by its proper geographical marker or it indicates the fate of the place: that it has been forgotten, as its location would suggest, by both sides of the border, and as a result it becomes the border proper, a land of no one, a purely symbolic place which can only be travelled through but not inhabited and possessed. Even the glacial landforms support this latter idea since the principal agent of the formation of the landscape, ice, did its work and withdrew to leave an altered world behind.

A later sequence entitled "Border Sick Call" marks a return to the haunted world of the border. The poem gives an account "of a journey in winter along the Fermanagh-Donegal border" (Montague 345), according to the dedication, and of a special one indeed: the poet accompanies his physician brother on a sick call into a special territory, that of the border region. The rather harsh winter setting provides a chilling mood for the journey which is already a peculiar one due to the location; the short winter afternoon with its quickly receding light transforms the border region into an even more haunted and haunting place, a world forgotten by both countries, and the border becomes an apropos of the frontier between life and death while it loses its significance as a political category.

The point of departure is a haunting landmark, a "Customs Post that has twice / leaped into the air" (Montague 346). This creates the image of a world with no solid point of reference, one where it is a precondition to life to accept "*the impossible as normal, / lunacy made local, / surrealism made risk*" (ibid; italics in the original). The setting is thus one where normal categories of observation will be suspended, and the very concept of the border will come under attack. The frozen environment does not provide ideal conditions for a journey, and the concealment or erasure of landscape elements dislocates the importance of divisions usually considered important in the border region – an observation rather unusual for the speaker but fairly commonplace for the local inhabitant, as the comment of the first patient visited indicates:

> 'Border, did you say,
> how many miles to the border?
> Sure we don't know where it starts
> or ends up here, except we're lost
> unless the doctor or postman finds us. (Montague 350)

Despite the recent political turmoil the border region is not a place which receives special attention; the only 'explorers' of this world are the common figures of the doctor and the postman, both responsible, though in different ways, for keeping the border people alive.

The past glitters in the shallow light of nostalgia for a brief moment as the border is seen as an opportunity for making a living – out of smuggling cattle across the border, with the implication of the mythic cattle raids of ancient Ireland. The wartime prosperity, however, is gone and not even this "auld religious thing" (Montague 351), the present conflict, can revive it; yet the commentary of the patient cuts deeper than perhaps intended: "Have you ever noticed, cows have no religion?" (ibid) The secondary nature of otherwise definitive differences is amply demonstrated in this ironic remark, and the host's generous offer of a "small prescription bottle of colourless poteen" (ibid) functions as the most telling proof of the only significant relation which is between people, without any further qualification.

The return from this location offers a minor epiphany for the speaker: he notices a small boat on the lake not glimpsed at earlier. The drink initiates a confession from the doctor: he is the one to translate the border into an overtly figurative concept – "the real border is not between / countries, but between life and death" (Montague 353). The vivid memory of the first death witnessed by the doctor is recalled; though the section is in brackets, it still gives an accurate picture of that border crossing, and the story itself implies that there is a very thin line dividing life from death, especially in such quarters as the present location.

The visit ends in darkness, and the return to the main road appears as an escape from a strange world "adrift from humankind" (Montague 357). With the physical border turned into metaphorical the persona formulates weighty questions of particular origin but of general significance: "Will a stubborn devotion suffice, / sustained by an ideal of service? / Will dogged goodwill solve anything?" (ibid) The struggle between life and death unfolds in any other location as well yet the poet's choice of placing it in such a setting seems to deflate the category of the political border and makes it irrelevant on the level of the experience itself. The final question of the poem reinforces this idea: "The customs officials wave us past again. // But in what country have we been?" (ibid) The question is printed as a separate unit, and its isolation reflects the confusion of the speaker. The direction of the border crossing was not specified at the beginning of the poem either and this piece of information remains a secret at the end as well, building towards the idea that the sole function of the border is to act as a reminder of separation – of the two fundamental worlds and perhaps not that of people.

Paul Muldoon's attitude towards the border as a concept partly reflects another conviction, that of the destabilisation of experience. The event of border crossing initiates the rather uncomfortable feeling of the loss of stability, of entering a land of conflicting interpretations of the 'same' reality. From a closer perspective the border itself becomes an actual divide – and the literalisation of the metaphor yields a rather absurd situation, thus the very concept comes to be subverted. While in John Montague's experience the border may lose its significance, in a crucial moment for Muldoon the border comes alive to impose

its importance on a phenomenon of the physical environment, however absurd that instance may appear.

The crossing of the border facilitates an experience which can be simultaneously seen as profound and revelatory as well as trivial. "Good Friday, 1971. Driving Westward" is the record of a westward journey which necessarily involves the crossing of the border. The beginning of the journey is in Northern Ireland and its last mentioned point is Gaoth Dobhair in the Republic; the intended destination, if any, however, is not specified. The speaker races against the sun and appears to arrive at every place synchronously with it, as if it were possible to stop time. The early morning hour finds the country in a slumberous state, though the cattle are already out and lorries have delivered their loads; most people, however, are still caught between sleep and being awake. The speaker acquires a companion as well, a girl picked up and given a lift "out of love" (Muldoon 1973, 23), and the border is crossed into the "grey flesh of Donegal" (Muldoon 1973, 24). As the road is tricky and winding, it is not difficult for the speaker to lose control of the car for a short time, and they hit something on the road. The meaning of this, however, is different for the two people: "she thought we hit something big / But I had seen nothing, perhaps a stick" (ibid). In the rest of the poem, as in the day perhaps, this difference of opinion separates them, ruining the day and its memory altogether as a result.

The literary precedent for the poem, as Tim Kendall notes, is John Donne's work "Good Friday, 1613. Riding Westward" (cf. Kendall 29-30). The more secular present, however, significantly rewrites the poem, and there is a substantial presence of local colour too. The Good Friday evocation of the death of Christ is reduced to an accident even whose memory is recalled differently, and which appears to be a fairly trivial one anyway. The girl's behaviour, however, displays an extraordinary amount of guilt, which is considered by Kendall a critique of religious guilt, regarding it as mainly pointless (Kendall 30). As the itinerary is a westward one, it involves the crossing of the border as well; there is not much change observable in either the landscape or the places, apart from the accident itself which happens in the 'other' country. The crossing itself, however, suggests the potential loss of the feeling of safety and something of this expectation is justified as the accident leads to a difference of opinion and the revelation of the girl's sense of guilt with the ultimate verdict of the speaker, alongside the prospect of the impossibility of reconciliation.

The poem "The Boundary Commission" involves no journey; it evokes a strange place instead with an extraordinary dimension. The body in the title is only implicitly conjured up, through its absurd decision to draw the border "Down the middle of the street" (Muldoon 2001, 80) of a village. The division separates "butcher and baker" into "different states" (ibid), providing not only a grotesque situation but an unmanageable one at the same time, which creates an image at once surrealistic and absurd yet, unfortunately, not exclusively imaginary. The border for a brief spell acquires actual dividing powers:

a shower of rain

Had stopped so clearly across Golightly's lane
It might have been a wall of glass
That had toppled over. (ibid)

This revelatory moment takes the character in the poem unawares, freezing him on the spot with a paralysing dilemma: "He stood there, for ages, / To wonder which side, if any, he should be on." (ibid)

The poem investigates the questions of division and belonging, with an eye on the rather arbitrary nature of such categories. The border in this case is a purely human construct, defined and decided by the boundary commission. Borders may be natural ones too though in many cases they have nothing to do with the physical environment – human decisions are superimposed on an indifferent landscape. The village, however, is a human construct; that the border ignores this is in itself an absurd phenomenon. The border is *there*, though, separating people of the same village into different states, and a situation of this kind immediately recalls Northern Ireland with its internal division and the whole island with the internal border on it too. In a divided world the acknowledgement of allegiances is (or at least seems) necessary, and the figure's hesitation suggests that taking sides is anything but a simple question, if it is a question at all.

The border zone is thus a strange place of strange events and encounters with strange characters and the impression is that of another world altogether where normal categories come to be suspended. In the vision of poets the most shocking observations of this world belong to the local people themselves: the inhabitants of the border zone, regardless of their position and affiliation, often recognise an inherent element of absurdity both in the location and in the concept of the border. This absurdity amounts to total irrelevance in some cases as even the locals themselves do not know the exact whereabouts of the border, whereas in other cases the absurdity of the idea of division itself is demonstrated. Whatever approach is pursued, the border is noticed and interpreted, which corresponds to the scholarly observation that "[f]or much of its history the Irish border has been peculiarly resistant to dispassionate analysis" (Coakley and O'Dowd 4).

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"A Womb with a View" — Approaches to Classic-Novel Adaptation in Recent British Films

Angelika Reichmann

Introduction: "A Womb with a View"

A Cock and Bull Story, Michael Winterbottom's 2005 adaptation of Laurence Sterne's *Tristram Shandy*, includes a striking scene: Steve Coogan, impersonating himself as the actor playing Tristram and Walter Shandy in this metafilm on the possibilities and limitations of novel adaptation to the screen, is hung upside down into a gigantic artificial womb during a rehearsal. To make shots of the actor possible, one side of the model womb consists of transparent plastic foil, which inspires crew members to call it "a womb with a view" (00:29:40-00:29:44). Feeling claustrophobic and uncomfortable, the actor suggests that the scene should be shot in the normal position and then reversed. To this the others raise objections on grounds of realism. The otherwise fully dressed Coogan – missing nothing but his hat, wig and overcoat from his period costume – gives a somewhat upset retort: "He [the director] wants realism? I'm a grown man, talking to the camera in a fucking womb" (00:30:55).

Both the film in general and this scene in particular are emblematic of at least three dilemmas that novel adaptations in British cinema have to face. First and foremost, as a novel adaptation, the film inevitably enters the critical discourse about the literary or even novelistic nature of British cinema[1]. The invented scene featuring Coogan/Tristram Shandy talking to the viewers (cf. "talking to the camera" above) is first of all a visualisation of the absurd narrative situation in the first four books of Sterne's novel: not managing to tell the story of his birth before that, the grown-up Tristram Shandy enlarges on events related to his prenatal life. After the rehearsal the status of the image remains ambiguous: it features in Coogan's dream about the shooting of a sexually charged scene between the Widow Wadman and Toby Shandy,

[1] One of the most prestigious critics to voice his premonitions about the novelistic nature of British cinema is Brian McFarlane. While comparing the American and the British cinema from this respect, he points out that it is not the huge number of adaptations that makes British cinema novelistic, but its lack of enterprise in the treatment of its literary sources. Instead of its awestruck and "decorous, dogged fidelity" McFarlane seems to demand a "radical approach" to and a "critical scrutiny" of literary texts as a prerequisite for more filmic adaptations ("A Literary Cinema?" 120). He adds, however, that adaptations are prone to remain "novelistic" if they do "not know how to display [their] narrative in visually effective terms" (ibid. 141).

therefore the audience cannot be sure whether the scene is actually included in the film that is being shot in *A Cock and Bull Story*. In the dream a miniature Coogan appears – this time naked – in the life-size artificial flower-like womb in the garden of Shandy Hall, trying to shout his story to the other actors, who cannot hear his puny voice properly, so they only look down on him and laugh[2]. Assuming that this repetition of the scene *is* a part of the novel adaptation, it adds a second shade of meaning to "the womb with a view": it comes to represent one of the central issues in *Tristram Shandy*, the main character-narrator's inability to tell his own life-story, a linguistic impotence connected with the sexual one throughout the novel. It is thus one of those instances when adaptation proper can be clearly differentiated from the transfer of novelistic elements onto the screen[3]. The rehearsal scene has a crucial function in highlighting that "the womb with a view" is a trick that only the technical devices of cinema can produce and it is a visual image characteristic for the medium; consequently, it underscores the essentially non-novelistic nature of the present adaptation.

Second, *A Cock and Bull Story* is based on a classic novel, and therefore belongs to the group of adaptations[4] which – as opposed to films based on second-rate or practically unknown novels – are viewed by the audience primarily *as adaptations*[5]. This fact, at worst, raises issues of fidelity or faithfulness to the source text – a sense of claustrophobic confinement clearly visualised by the actor's untenable situation in the restraints of the womb. At best, it refers the viewer to Sterne's novel as a prioritised intertext[6] of which

[2] The scene is thus also an organic element of the metafilmic frame-story: using the dream as a classic device for representing unconscious fears, it is a perfect visualisation of Coogan's jealousy of the rival actor's success – he feels helpless, ridiculous and impotent.

[3] Relying on Roland Barthes's narratological approach, McFarlane differentiates "*transfer*" and "*adaptation* proper". The former can be applied to the elements of the literary text which are not specific of its medium – e.g. "pure information" – while the latter is necessitated by the inherent qualities of writing itself ("Reading Film and Literature" 19).

[4] I apply the term classic novel in a similarly wide sense as Sarah Cardwell does when she specifies the term classic-novel adaptation to be used later on in this article as well: it includes "well-known literature" (the canon) from the eighteenth to the early twentieth century (183).

[5] McFarlane, arguing for an intertextual approach to film adaptations, points out that "the anterior novel or play or poem is only one element of the film's intertextuality, an element of varying importance to viewers depending on how well or little they know or care about the precursor text" ("Reading Film and Literature" 27). One must realise, however, that because classic novels are usually well-known – in fact, they formulate the core of compulsory readings in elementary and secondary schools – it is in the case of classic-novel adaptations that viewers are most likely to have a first-hand reading experience of the precursor text and therefore to view such films *as adaptations*. Classic-novel adaptations are also highly problematic because of the often overwhelming power of the literary source. As McFarlane emphasises elsewhere, "it has become a cliché that films derived from second-rate fiction are more likely to be successful *as films* than those derived from classics" ("A Literary Cinema?" 124). Cf. (Cartmell and Whelehan 8).

[6] Deborah Cartmell and Imelda Whelehan associate this liberating intertextual approach to film adaptations with Robert Stam's name. They clearly contrast it with critical approaches centring on fidelity, according to which novelistic "picture books" probably would excel among all novel adaptations (3). Cf. also (Stam 201-212) and (McFarlane, "Reading Film and Literature" 27).

Winterbottom's film is an interpretation. In this sense, the two texts should be read together, each opening up potentially new readings – views – of the other.

Last but not least, Winterbottom's solutions of classic-novel adaptation do not exist in a void: if Sterne's *Tristram Shandy* is one of its intertexts, clearly other classic-novel adaptations are equally so. The pun on James Ivory's *A Room with a View* (1985) highlights heritage film – with its notorious insistence on period detail and (false?) realism – as one of the factors against which Coogan (and ultimately Winterbottom) defines himself. Of course, the polemic with realism also evokes the previous outstanding generation of British cinema[7], the social realists of the 1960s. Winterbottom's film is also a tribute to Tony Richardson's daring 1963 adaptation of *Tom Jones*[8] – to a director whose name hallmarked British New Wave (cf. Győri).

Interpreted as a summary view on issues of novel adaptation, the scene above also marks out the scope of the present study. I focus on recent classic-novel adaptations as a representative segment[9] of novel adaptations in British cinema and attempt to give a survey of the approaches they take: Hollywood-style adaptations rooted in the prestige film, heritage-style adaptations on TV (mini-series), fusion adaptations[10], heritage films proper in the cinema and post-heritage. Viewed from the theoretical standpoint of intertextuality these approaches give strikingly different readings of the source texts. The liberties that Hollywood-style adaptations take with plot, setting and character often lead to very clearly articulated, but also rather shallow and restrictive readings: they have a strongly romanticising and melodramatic tendency. In contrast, heritage-style TV adaptations and heritage films, though often characterised as unimaginative and unadventurous, by sometimes transferring almost everything from the novel onto the screen, leave much more room for the audience to formulate a reading of their own. While fusion films try to combine authenticity and fidelity with cinematic inventiveness, they attempt to give a strong reading of the literary source with varying success. Post-heritage films are characterised by a similar combination of devices, but also by a much more formalistic and symbolical approach, which usually results in fairly complex and sophisticated readings of the literary source.

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[7] In a study published in 1986, during the growing popularity of the much-debated heritage films, McFarlane could still quite characteristically write about the years between the social realist period (1959-63) and his contemporaries: "Since then the British cinema has been in a continuing crisis" ("A Literary Cinema?" 140).

[8] It is one of the few adaptations McFarlane praises for its courage and invention ("A Literary Cinema?" 140).

[9] Cf. note 3 on the reception of classic-novel adaptations as adaptations and on their problematic relationship with the source text.

[10] Here and in the rest of my study from the many existing adaptation theories I use Linda V. Troost's categories for classifying the adaptations of nineteenth-century classics. Apart from the Hollywood-style, heritage-style and fusion adaptations she also mentions the "imitation", which "uses a novel's plot and characters but updates the setting to focus on a modern-day highly structured society" (75–76).

Drawing the demarcation lines: nineteenth-century women writers, Hollywood, BBC and the rise of heritage films

The emergence of heritage films is usually connected with three precursors: the historical costume dramas of the 1940s (Váró), the Hollywood prestige films and classic-novel adaptations on British TV. These latter two also represented the two major approaches to classic-novel adaptations until the middle of the 1990s, when the two kinds fused with each other (Troost 82).

This fusion is not so surprising if one, like Timothy Corrigan, takes into consideration the close affinity between the Hollywood prestige film of the late 1930s and the British heritage film: both are fascinated with the adaptation of classical novels, which "offer psychologically and socially complex stories" with a "canonical status" (36). It is not to be ignored, either, that British theatre-trained actor stars – like Laurence Olivier, for example – were often invited to feature in Hollywood adaptations, which were later also shown in European countries. Some of them – like William Wyler's *Wuthering Heights* (1939) – made, in my opinion, an unquestionable impact on British film. However, there is a remarkable difference between the handling of the literary source in Hollywood-style and heritage-style adaptations. Hollywood films changed the plot and setting of classic novels sometimes almost beyond recognition, often in the interests of "showcasing [a beautiful] star" (Troost 76–78). In contrast, heritage-style TV-adaptations[11] are famous for their fidelity to the literary source[12]: "priding themselves on their historical authenticity" they take full advantage of the longer playing time that their medium affords and retain most of the plot elements and dialogues. As a result, they are usually slow-paced and rather "dialogue-heavy" (Troost 78). Furthermore, they characteristically include "high production values; 'authentic,' detailed costumes and sets: 'great British actors'; light classical music; [...], steady, often symmetrical framing; an interest in landscapes, buildings and interiors as well as characters; [and] strong, gradually developed protagonists accompanied by entertaining cameo roles" (Cardwell 189). Consequently, the products often lack inspiration and adventurousness, they are clearly novelistic and uninteresting as films (Troost 79). It seems to be a matter of critical consensus that the appearance of the first heritage films at the very end of the 1970s was the result of the application of

[11] The contrast might be intentional. Even before the heritage boom in British cinema, McFarlane – quoting Alan Lovell – spoke of the decorous qualities of British films as "the British cinema's 'negative reactions' to the more dangerously flamboyant and vigorous aspects of Hollywood" ("A Literary Cinema?" 121).

[12] Opinions concerning the notion of fidelity in TV serials seem to vary. Troost claims that the fusion of Hollywood-style and heritage-style adaptation equaled doing away with any notion of fidelity whatsoever in the middle of the 1990s (82). Cardwell, on the other hand, speaks about a change in the meaning of the term: "fidelity has been reconfigured and adaptors have become more concerned with conveying the 'spirit' of the source text. […] the affiliation to the source text remains, but it is possibly better conceptualised as a desire to show *respect* to that text, rather than to be *faithful* to it" (193).

these "standards and methods" to cinematic production (Troost 79–80)[13]. Heritage films have been heavily criticised since then, mostly because historical authenticity can lead to the fact that "the objects and possessions can become disproportionately important, displacing characters or ideas" (Troost 80).

While Troost insists that pure Hollywood-style and heritage-style adaptations gave place to fusion films in the 1990s, one must also notice that during the 1970s and 1980s British TV and cinema seem to have drawn the demarcation lines between their territories, largely pointed out by the technical givens of the two media. Accordingly, the eventful and often rather bulky nineteenth-century novels seem to be more suitable for the slow-paced heritage-style and later fusion adaptations on TV[14], usually as mini-series. What with their "focus on domestic issues" and "appeal to mature, feminine audiences" (cf. footnote 13), women writers seem to be the record-breakers among them. For example, Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* was turned into a BBC mini-series both in 1967 and 1978, apart from numerous other TV adaptations. Even more astonishingly, Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* and Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* can both pride themselves on at least five BBC adaptations since the 1950s (IMDb). In contrast, cinema, restrained by the time limits of average films, renders these novels into fusion or Hollywood-style adaptations – or does not dare to film them at all. For instance, both *Wuthering Heights* and *Jane Eyre* were adapted to the cinema several times even in the silent period – when filmmakers tried to adapt anything, regardless of its suitability for the large screen. Both had – just like *Pride and Prejudice* – a "definitive" cinema adaptation made in Hollywood: William Wyler's *Wuthering Heights*, *Jane Eyre* (1944) with Orson Welles, and *Pride and Prejudice* (1940) with Laurence Olivier again (IMDb). All of these cinema adaptations seem to have cast a long shadow: no major filmmaker – and especially not a British filmmaker – adapted these texts to the cinema again for more than fifty (*Wuthering Heights* and *Jane Eyre*– IMDb) or sixty years (*Pride and Prejudice* – IMDb).

As opposed to the dominance of Jane Austen and the lengthy Victorian novels on TV, during the most recent boom of high-quality adaptations to the cinema in the 1980s and 1990s, heritage film seems to have found a totally new field of interest. It adapted either the elegantly slim volumes of Jane Austen and the Late Victorian (and equally short) texts of Henry James and E. M. Forster, or

[13] This idea can be brought home quite easily if one compares the above-mentioned features of heritage-style TV-adaptations with Eckart Voigts-Virchow's collection of the characteristic features of heritage films at the cinema at the heyday of the genre. It includes "a small to medium budget, with a clear dependence on the classic TV serial and other heritage and history formats on TV"; "an appeal to relatively mature, feminine, or gay middle-class audiences"; "a reference to traditional quality (decorum, moderation, harmony)"; "the implicit values of a literary canon, authorship, and (British, theatre-trained) quality acting"; "the showcasing of landscapes […] and costume props"; "the adherence to conventional generic formulas and stylistic means" and "a focus on domestic issues" (128–9).

[14] Cf. Cardwell's opinion, according to which "television produces some of the strongest, most sensitive adaptations of lengthy and/or complex novels" (Cardwell 192).

the densely modernist and rather long late novels of the two latter writers – whose plot can be easily pared down to the minimum, because most of the written text is concerned with thought processes[15]. As far as James and Forster are concerned, in many cases the heritage-style cinema adaptation is the first adaptation ever of their novels (IMDb).

Let me focus here on the three above-mentioned nineteenth-century novels – all of them classics by women writers – and some of their numerous adaptations to highlight the reading strategies of Hollywood-style and fusion adaptations.[16] Both seem to have a penchant for romantic or romanticising readings. Nevertheless, Hollywood-style adaptations are characterised by extremes: they often seem to verge on melodrama, while they shun the naturalistic or crudely realistic elements of the novels. In contrast, fusion adaptations try to balance respect to the spirit of the source text with cinematic inventiveness and the need to fulfil the expectations of audiences "conditioned" on Hollywood films – and therefore to come up with interpretations which are successful not only artistically but also financially. Since the reception history of the novels themselves has been dramatically changed by the appearance of strong feminist and even postcolonial readings in the last decades, the less marked readings of the fusion adaptations often seem refreshingly flexible and complex in comparison with the dated romanticising of the Hollywood versions.

William Wyler's *Wuthering Heights* is a classical Hollywood adaptation, a prestige film. What makes it so? First and foremost, it arbitrarily changes the setting – the time – of the story, and accordingly the costumes and props, though it does not even bother to be consistent about them. A title card sets the story's present in 1839 – "a hundred years ago" (00:01:11) – and the flashbacks, that is, Cathy and Heathcliff's childhood and youth, approximately between 1807 and 1821. Taking that as a starting point, the costumes are at least fifty years out of period, let alone the obvious anachronism of the virtuoso music and musical instrument in the ball scene (01:12:06). Secondly, the typical Hollywood feature of showcasing the star can be clearly observed[17]. Both features play a

[15] Cf. Kata Váró's list of major heritage films: apart from the Late Victorian writers Jane Austen is the only nineteenth-century writer to appear in it with more than one novel. All the bulky Victorian novels, apart from Dickens's *Little Dorrit,* are absent. Martin Halliwell also highlights the fascination with Austen, James and Forster in heritage film, though he interprets it as an unease to deal with modernist texts proper (94). Taking into consideration the fact that James' late novels rival if not beat high modernist texts in their linguistic complexity, density of implications and intricate symbolism, I cannot fully accept this approach.

[16] Heritage-style TV-adaptations become dated quite quickly and are impossible to find among the output of the last two decades; therefore, I have neglected them in this section. The more so, because I devote a separate section to heritage and post-heritage film in the cinema.

[17] Luckily, in this case it means an actor star, Laurence Olivier, and the exotically beautiful Merle Oberon. One of the ironies of the film is that the camera obviously favours Oberon: many of the close-ups show her in the full-front position or in a quarter turn, with the dominant contrast on her face, while Olivier is often shown in profile or three-quarter-turn position, or even with his back to the camera. Oberon's dynamic acting also sharply contrasts Olivier's mostly restrained and low-key performance. An exemplary scene is Cathy and Heathcliff's peeping through the

fundamental role in shaping the reading of Brontë's novel that this film seems to have established on screen with its focus on the romantically tragic love story of Cathy and Heathcliff, and with its neglect of the "inferior" and "insignificant" second generation.

First of all, shifting the time of the story highlights the general reading strategy of the novel: the main events of the story take place in the Romantic period to further the Gothic/Romantic reading of *Wuthering Heights* embodied in the film. The Gothic elements are emphasised from the very beginning: even the title card mentions Wuthering Heights as a "bleak" house and the opening shots work with low key lighting or high contrast – light effects to emphasise the mysterious and often melodramatic nature of the story. Wuthering Heights is shown as the classic Gothic mansion: dark and fearful, its labyrinthine spaces threaten the visitor's security – both physical and mental. However, the most important feature that emphasises a Romantic/melodramatic reading is the tendentious cutting out of half the plot and characters: the second generation – and therefore the very Victorian compromise with society and culture that Emily Brontë offers through the modified repetition of the tragic Cathy-Heathcliff love story in Catherine and Hareton's marriage – is eliminated from this film version. On the one hand, in the case of *Wuthering Heights* this reading reflects a major critical debate: the story of the second generation is often viewed as inferior and redundant in comparison with the powerful story of Cathy and Heathcliff. On the other hand, one is tempted to think that the prime factor for presenting this kind of reading is not a critical approach to the literary text but the general Hollywood tendency for romanticising stories. It also surfaces in a third feature, in the film's strong preference for romantic and nostalgic contrast: the idyllic past of the Earnshaw children and Heathcliff before Mr Earnshaw's death is shot in high key, dynamic images (00:10:36), as opposed to the bleak, low key and static present. Similarly, Thrushcross Grange is associated with high key, bright images and the ballroom – something one does not find in the novel, which emphasises the ambiguity of both locations instead of their clear-cut contrast. Granted that, the film stops short in front of the often Gothic excesses of the novel: the bloody wild scenes of hysteria and family violence are carefully expurgated from the film, just like the implications of mental breakdown and anorexia – the focal points of contemporary feminist readings. Maybe as a compensation for them, the film introduces a number of highly effective invented scenes which support the Romantic reading, on the one hand, and supply a strong rhythm and well-built dramatic structure for the plot, on the other. Such scenes include Cathy and Heathcliff's repeated meetings at Peniston Crag (e.g. 00:33:22, cf. with the closing scene – 01:43:10); the somewhat melodramatic but powerful synchronising of the storm and Cathy's "I am Heathcliff" soliloquy (00:43:10-00:45:57); the symbolic destructions of Cathy's dress by the weather (00:47:30) or by herself (00:32:47), which clearly

window of Thrushcross Grange before the famous dog-biting scene (00: 26:29). Nevertheless, it was Olivier who was nominated for the Academy Award for the film (IMDb).

foreshadow her self-destructive behaviour; and the scenes focusing on Heathcliff's "dirty hands" (00:39:40) – hands he wants to get rid of by cutting them up with the broken window pane (00:41:10).

Apart from the above-mentioned changes in plot and setting, a major and very influential shift in Heathcliff's interpretation and even in the chronology of the novel's events seems to be rooted in the Hollywood star-system. On the one hand, Olivier's interpretation of Heathcliff's character has had lasting influences on subsequent adaptations. While the Heathcliff of the novel is a Gothic villain whose only saving grace is his love for Cathy, Olivier and the Heathcliffs on screen after him are often Romantic rebels and outcasts, who are also highly attractive sexually. Apart from the expurgation of the most violent scenes in the novel, and the addition of some melodramatic tirades (cf. Heathcliff's curse on the Lintons before he leaves the house after the dog-biting scene 00:28:04), showcasing Olivier's physical qualities has a major role in realising this shift. One of the best examples is the scene when he has to give Hindley a hand-up to help him mount his horse (00:21:33). The symbolism of the scene is clear: it is a perfect expression of the two men's relationship – Hindley wants to humiliate, whereas Heathcliff, the powerless victim, has to restrain his passion. What the shot focuses on, however, is Olivier's innocent-looking, "pure" and beautiful face: it is hard to believe he can have anything evil on his mind – now or ever. On the other hand, the focus on the star, combined with the practical difficulties of finding good child and adolescent actors, led to the establishment of a tradition in filming *Wuthering Heights* which has rather disturbing effects: usually only two sets of actors – child and adult – are involved. It means that some of the adolescent scenes – most notably the dog-biting scene, which takes place when Cathy is about twelve or thirteen – are usually acted out by the adult actors, just like in this film. The effect is disastrous: the scenes lose the symbolic meaning they have in the novel in Cathy's (failed) sexual development and maturation, a central aspect of the novel that feminist readings focus on.

Peter Kosminsky's *Wuthering Heights* (1992) – a British and American joint venture – is a fusion adaptation, which is sensitive to many of the ambiguities inherent in the novel and thereby reflects a much more complex reading of Brontë's classic. It is characterised by much more historical authenticity than the Hollywood version: the present of the film is set approximately in the year of the novel's publication, 1847 – it is represented by the appearance of the narrator-author in Wuthering Heights – in comparison with which most of the events take place in the distant past, during the last three decades of the 18th century. The film uses period costumes but the hairdos give away the fusion adaptation: all the major characters have modern hairstyle most of the time during the film. As a sharp critique of the earlier Hollywood adaptation, it retains most of the plot elements and many of the dialogues of Brontë's text. What is more, it actually emphasises the repetitive nature of the plot and the redemptive quality in the story of the second generation by casting Juliette Binoche both as Cathy and Catherine. As opposed to the romantic

contrasts dominating Wyler's film, it works with ambiguous images and characters: the scenes on the moors take place in murky, cloudy weather (e.g. 00:15:36) – in fact, the sky seems to be permanently overcast in the film, whether the events take place in Thrushcross Grange or Wuthering Heights. Some of the violent scenes in the novel are filmed with gritty realism, for instance Hindley and Heathcliff's (00:24:06), and later Heathcliff and Edgar's fighting scenes, or the traces that reveal Heathcliff physical aggression against Isabella after their elopement. This and other naturalistic details – Heathcliff's greasy hair, his rather disgusting eating and his fighting scenes with Catherine Linton – are clear attempts to revise Olivier's romantic and "gentlemanly" Heathcliff figure. Though two European stars are cast in the leading roles, the film relies on their superb acting skills rather than on showcasing them as stars for effect. A comparison of Juliette Binoche's "I am Heathcliff" scene (starting at 00:32:28) with Merle Oberon's is a case in point here: she is subdued, restrained, almost choked by her emotions, shown in close-up instead of full shot – the scene is powerful without any of the highly melodramatic special effects of the earlier Hollywood film. All in all, the film reads Brontë's novel as a strange mixture of historical Romanticism and the Gothic (Cathy's ghost appears at the beginning and end of the film as a natural course of events) and realistic Victorian fiction, with a willingness to work out a compromise between the two tendencies.

From the many TV adaptations of *Wuthering Heights* let me chose a recent one, shot in 2009, to demonstrate a tendency in British TV serials to move from heritage to fusion and Hollywood style adaptations in their attempt to say something new about a novel that has been adapted a dozen times and to please American audiences which they are targeted at. The film actually more clearly reads the earlier adaptations than the novel: it tries to get rid of Heathcliff's idealised image just as well as to rehabilitate the second generation by completely restructuring narration. Nevertheless, the result is rather confusion than a changed vision of the story. The title urges a Gothic reading – up to 00:01:13 the camera suggests the point of view of a ghost approaching Wuthering Heights in supernatural pace and manner. This Gothic reading, however, is not sustained in the rest of the film. In fact, the title is immediately followed by the first, very short flashback (00:01:13-00:01:27), which is extremely confusing, if one does not know the novel. Then it picks up the line of the story at the moment when Linton Heathcliff is separated from Catherine Linton and forced to move into Wuthering Heights. The viewer's first reaction is probably the feeling that s/he has missed out the first part of the series or started to watch a film from the middle by mistake. The long flashback which involves Cathy and Heathcliff's story starts when Catherine Linton is imprisoned in Wuthering Heights to be married to Linton Heathcliff (00:18:17). It is not an oral narrative this time – both Wyler's and Kosminsky's adaptations retain some kind of reference to Brontë's specific narrative technique based on the linking of emphatically oral narratives – but a visualisation of Heathcliff's memories,

which are triggered off by the sight of Catherine in a window of Wuthering Heights. After this the story is narrated chronologically, but the viewer still has to face a number of minor shocks: the childhood and adolescent years include several invented scenes which heap improbability upon improbability in a pulp fiction style. For example, the adolescent Heathcliff and Cathy are already played by the adult actors, but to erase inconsistencies Mr Earnshaw also lives to see Cathy and Heathcliff grow up. The casting of the film is very unfortunate: Cathy looks like a doll or a model, while the bulky Tom Hardy as sixteen-year-old Heathcliff evokes the bad guy of second-rate horror movies. This is also furthered by the greatest inconsistencies in period details: the odd mixture of authenticity and modern elements resembles quasi-historical adventure stories, where period costumes of all ages are used most extravagantly – if they are showy enough. The film also tries to be modern by including overtly sexual scenes (01:12:49) – one keeps wondering why. The major plot change of Heathcliff's actual suicide – he puts a bullet through his head – is equally unmotivated. In conclusion, the film presents a reading of Brontë's classic in the style and at the level of cheap romances.

The other Brontë sister's classical text, *Jane Eyre* has fared only slightly better lately. After the many BBC adaptations, Franco Zeffirelli adapted it to the cinema again in 1996 and the BBC produced yet another mini-series in 2006. Their contrast is a classic example of how a conventional-looking TV series can sometimes be more satisfactory as an adaptation for a literary-minded viewer than a somewhat shallow Hollywood film, made by an ever so renowned director.

Another joint European and American venture, Zeffirelli's *Jane Eyre* shows striking similarities with Wyler's *Wuthering Heights*: it simplifies a cult book and a key text of both Victorian literature and feminist literary criticism into a Romantic love story. The central factors contributing to this effect are the usual ones: cutting out if not half, then at least a large portion of the plot, taking liberties with characters in harmony with the plot changes, manipulating the setting, and asserting the priorities of the star as opposed to the interests of subtlety in interpretation. Zeffirelli's version brings Rochester and Jane Eyre's romantic love story into sharp focus by cutting out both the Marsh End and the Ferndean sections of the novel entirely, and cutting the Gateshead scenes to a minimum. Whatever is left, requires a dramatic rewriting of some novelistic characters. Thus, Miss Temple's role is totally changed: on the one hand, she is not the head-mistress of Lowood and therefore is totally powerless to give Jane and Helen Burns any material help, on the other hand, for some mysterious reason she is denied marriage in the film (00:26:07) – which, in turn, deprives Jane of her major motivation for leaving Lowood. Combined with the suppression of the Rivers sisters' role, it also means the loss of any positive role models for Jane Eyre in her Bildung. Eliminating the Marsh End section results in St. John Rivers's turning into the rector of Gateshead – a charming young man whose amiability and sense of humour is demonstrated in a scene where he

chases his wind-blown hat rather playfully and laughing at himself. This change is problematic for at least three reasons. First, it means that after the failed wedding Jane Eyre does not really take any risks when she leaves Rochester – she simply goes "home" to his friends at Gateshead. Second, Rivers's marriage proposal is represented without any preliminaries, as a very brief scene, therefore one cannot take him seriously as a rival and counterpoint to Rochester. Third, the hat-chasing jolly fellow has nothing to do with the novelistic ruthless missionary of God who does not scruple to use emotional blackmail and psychological terror to further his heavenly father's – and his own – interests.

Though Zeffirelli's reading is romantic, it is definitely not Gothic: it carefully eliminates not only Mr Reed's ghost from the story, but also the Gothic implications of Thornfield itself – a classic Gothic castle in Brontë's novel. Together with much of the mystery, Jane's childhood mental breakdown and premarital nightmares must also go: the result is a very subdued presentation of the story, which relies mostly on masterly acting to imply the hidden emotional turmoil behind the smooth Victorian surfaces. And indeed, the person of the star is brought to the foreground, even if it blurs culturally coded metaphorical contents: William Hurt is naturally fair-haired and remains so in the film, not only to contradict the archetypal outlook of the dark Byronic hero Rochester is, but also to attract a blonde belle (Blanche Ingram) to match his natural colours. This wipes out the logic that connects all the dark-haired, sexually attractive and therefore powerful and dangerous women in the novel: Bertha Mason, Adéle Varens and her mother, Blanche Ingram and, last but not least, Jane Eyre. In general, though since the publication of *Madwoman in the Attic* in the 1970s *Jane Eyre* has drawn much critical attention as a key text from a feminist perspective, Zeffirelli's film is not only untouched by such notions, but eliminates the central scenes such readings are based on. No one would think of interpreting Jane Eyre and Bertha as doubles on the basis of the film version. Similarly, though the red-room scene is highlighted by its position in front of the title, its implications are not brought out in the film. A nicely shot movie including brilliant actors and actresses, Zeffirelli's *Jane Eyre* is just another Hollywood love story – a prefabricated fantasy made by *men* for women.

The BBC mini-series based on *Jane Eyre* seems to be a very conventional venture – a fusion adaptation with strong links to heritage. It takes some time to realise that almost all the major scenes of the film involve some kind of rewriting in comparison with the novel – those of plot, setting, dialogue, or simply the rearrangement of chronology – or introduce an invented element. The combined effect of these subtle changes, however, is a very consistent narrative which in many ways keeps a critical distance from Brontë's text and reinterprets it. The most conspicuous of these reinterpreting strategies is connected to Bertha's figure: the film consistently builds up a metaphorical sequence of red clothes–heat–fire–blood–passion–love–desire–destruction, which it connects with both Jane and Bertha's portrayal. The way it happens suggests a reading of *Jane Eyre* that has been probably informed by feminist and postcolonial readings

or such crucial rewritings of Brontë's novel as Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea*. The very title, similarly to the opening chapters of the novel, establishes this metaphorical chain built on the colour red: it features undulating blood-red drapery, evoking notions of passion and sexuality just as well as violence. The opening scene (one of the invented scenes of the film) immediately connects red with Jane and her passionate nature: she is shown in the desert, wearing a red skirt and red shawl – the latter trailing behind her in the sand (00:01:07-00:02:14). The scene later turns out to be the child's daydreaming and thus an expression of not only her desire to escape from Gateshead, but also of her romantic fascination with the exotic. By implication, Jane features in the daydream as a colonial woman – a notion that clearly connects her with Bertha Mason even without the carefully repeated motif of the red scarf/shawl, associated with both of them. The red skirt and shawl also evoke Bertha/Antoinette Cosway's red dress in *Wide Sargasso Sea* – the only symbolic object Rochester's mad wife insists on keeping as an embodiment of her sexual identity and transgressive female desire. It is this novel that gives a fundamental critique of the colonial subject's representation in Brontë's text – an approach clearly adopted by the BBC mini-series in Bertha's portrayal. As opposed to her novelistic beastlike and vampiric representation, in this film Bertha Mason is an alluring, exotically beautiful and sexually attractive woman even in the moment of her suicide. Though her madness and aggression are obvious, in the lyrical scene of her fatal jump from the battlements of Thornfield Hall the image of the flying bird dominates: the motif of a beautiful white owl interprets Bertha's death as a flight from her imprisonment in Imperial Britain, in Thornfield and in marriage. In comparison with Zeffirelli's romanticised reading, the BBC adaptation actually proves to be more thought-provoking and informed by contemporary critical discourse related to the literary text it is based on.

Pride and Prejudice is also one of those novels that have been serialised so many times and so successfully that cinema did not "dare" to approach them for decades. Troost associates its 1980 BBC version with the "start of 'heritage drama' even though it was only following established BBC methods with regard to period style" (Troost 80). It is the 1995 mini-series – a fusion version (Troost 84) – that has become a definitive adaptation of the novel: a restrained satirical take on early nineteenth-century society (and husband-hunting), which, however, portrays Elizabeth Bennet, a heroine far from infallibility but capable of development and representing an ironic point of view, with much sympathy. So much so that six years later the film adaptation of *Bridget Jones's Diary*, a modern-day rewriting of *Pride and Prejudice,* was still able to trade on the "darcymania" surrounding Colin Firth.

Thus, the makers of the 2005 cinema version of *Pride and Prejudice* probably found themselves in a very difficult situation: the BBC mini-series obviously could not be beaten on its own ground. Troost reads Joe Wright's solution for this problem as another fusion film, marked by realistic tendencies (86-87), but on closer inspection it is hard to accept this opinion. On the one

hand, the film has too many of the Hollywood accessories: not only a "young photogenic star" (Troost 87), who giggles herself through the first half of the story, but also an overflowing sentimentalism and an annoying number of highly improbable scenes in highly improbable circumstances – including worn-out cliché-like Hollywood conventions. First of all, the film has a framed structure: the opening image is that of a landscape at dawn, with an implication of the rising sun off frame (00:00:48), which returns when the lovers declare their feelings for each other at the end of the film, this time with the rays of the rising sun transpiring from behind the lovers kissing each other (01:49:19-1:50:21). The fact that Elizabeth and Darcy – presumably in 1797 – reach this point after marching towards each other at the break of dawn in their night-dress and shirt, respectively, does not help to relieve a feeling of artificiality and sentimentality in the viewer. Second, some of the indoors scenes are transferred into the open air – among them Darcy's first proposal – preferably in moments of pouring rain as if to satisfy Lizzy's and Darcy's penchant for experiencing all their emotional turmoil soaking wet. On the other hand, it is possible to puzzle together from the film a consistent reading of Austen's novel in terms of historical Romanticism. Exactly the scenes mentioned above are totally consistent with the excesses and imagery of Romantic literature. A further example to be mentioned is the representation of the sublime through the traditionally Romantic image of the lonely figure standing on the edge of the precipice, at the top of a rugged mountain or cliff – this time, though, unconventionally with a female character, Lizzy featuring as the viewer of the sublime romantic landscape potentially inspiring a transcendental experience (01:16:38-01:17:14). To complicate matters further, the film includes a number of non-realistic – and highly successful – scenes at crucial moments. Such scenes include the turning of Lizzy and Darcy's dance into a solitary duel by suddenly placing them into an empty room (00:39:25) and the representation of Lizzy's need to re-establish her shattered identity and also of her inability to understand Darcy by a highly formalistic mirror-scene (01:10:49-1:12:09) after the first proposal. While the Romantic reading of Austen's story simply goes against the grain – it is a matter of critical consensus that her novels can be interpreted in the context of the eighteenth-century satirical tradition and not Romanticism – these latter instances of adaptation proper might indicate a way out from the dead end of the so "perfect" BBC versions.

Modern classics: heritage and beyond

Since a great majority of heritage films were classic-novel adaptations, it is probably impossible to avoid the term when speaking about recent film adaptations. Heritage film, a highly ideological construct[18] associated with

[18] Eckart Voigts-Virchow emphasises the utopistic nature of heritage films: they reconstruct a past that never really existed to convey an imaginary cultural identity to the members of the community (128).

Thatcherism and conservatism, inherited most of its distinguishing features from the BBC classic-novel adaptations, including its respectful attitude to its literary source. However, these features did not remain totally unchanged, as Voigts-Virchow – among others – clearly argues. It is possible to differentiate two phases in the development of the heritage film: David Lean's films and the Merchant Ivory productions of the 1980s – "catering to an individual, nostalgic desire to be part of a non-organic, indirect community" – belong to the first one, while the "revisionist" heritage or post-heritage films of the 1990s to the second. These latter characteristically show a critical approach to the conventions of heritage itself (Voigts-Virchow 128-9). In my opinion, heritage and post-heritage films differ both in their choice of novels for adaptation and in their treatment of the literary precursor.

The earlier heritage films seem to prefer novels which are relatively simple as far as narrative technique is concerned and they work with "faithfully" transferring as much of the novel onto screen as possible. E. M. Foster's little jewel of a book, *A Room with a View* is an extreme case in point here. A short novel based on terse and very ironic narration, witty dialogues, the character development of a charming young heroine and a number of mythological and cultural references, one feels that it was not adapted but bodily lifted onto the screen by James Ivory in 1985 – to make one of the most successful heritage films with the public. Even the apparently very filmic title cards interpreting the scenes of the film and representing the ironic narratorial standpoint are actually nothing else but the chapter titles of the novel. There are altogether two invented scenes in the film: George Emerson's hilarious shouting match with God, which ends in the breaking of the tree-branch he is standing on, and consequently in his downfall (00:30:25-00:31:16), and Charlotte Bartlett's dialogue with Mr Emerson and subsequent overt intervention into the course of action towards the end of the film (starting at 01:39:05). The former does not belie the "spirit" of the source text – in fact, the naked bathing scene which originally *is* in the novel, is a much more daring element – while the latter simply makes an implication overt: both George and Lucy surmise at the end of the novel that Charlotte Bartlett had a hand in the happy end of their love story. If there is a way to speak about James Ivory's interpretation of Forster's novel, it must take into consideration rather the very fact of the adaptation than the kind of adaptation the director produced: focusing on the enclosed nature of English rural environment, community and society on the one hand, and an individual interpretation of the European cultural heritage as distinctly non-English, on the other, the film offers "a view" – an imperative to enjoy life, fulfil desires and ultimately to find one's happiness within the enclosed space of the domestic circle.

The case of David Lean's *A Passage to India*[19] is somewhat more complicated. An exceptionally slow-paced film, it visualises much of the

[19] McFarlane sees Lean's adaptations as the best examples of "novelistic cinema" that work "heritage" on a very high level ("A Literary Cinema?" 135).

symbolism characteristic for Forster's text, nevertheless it still reads the novel primarily as a social satire on Britain's role in India, on the one hand, and as Adela Quested's Bildungsroman, on the other. Try as it might to capture them, the dense metaphysical implications of the modernist text, however, seem to escape the film.

Approximately the first eighteen minutes of the film play a crucial role in these shifts of emphasis in comparison with the novel. The scenes included in this section do not feature in the novel: they focus on Adela and Mrs Moore's journey to India and the power demonstrations of the British they see on the way. Though heritage film is often criticised for showcasing the landscape – or, in this case, the parades of the British Army (00:04:00-00:04:56) and the Indian scenery – from the perspective of viewing Lean's film as an adaptation, it is perfectly justifiable. By the time Adela and Mrs Moore arrive in Chandrapore, the viewer has the strong impression that in the India of the film even the smallest gesture is politically tinted – or tainted? – and that the two newcomers are totally out of the colonial discourse that governs the other characters' behaviour. Therefore, the first important function of these invented scenes is to establish the perspective which involves the necessary distance needed for a critical, ironical, often satirical representation.

Secondly, the opening shots of the film, featuring Adela as she is buying her ticket to India in pouring rain (00:02:18-00:04:00), form a perfect frame for the whole film with the closing image of the girl as she is looking out of her window – *without* a view – in the rainy London again. Such framing suggests that *A Passage to India* is fundamentally Adela's story – an impression that the novel's often-quoted closing scene, with Fielding and Aziz riding in the jungle and even their horses deciding that times are not yet ripe for real friendship between an Englishman and an Indian, obviously does not convey. This emphasis on Adela is further strengthened by one of the rare invented scenes in the main action of the film: her visit to a forsaken Indian temple complete with sculptures of love-making gods and goddesses (00:47:52-00:52:16) – an experience that makes her realise her own sexuality, accept the possibility of marriage with Ronny as desirable (00:53:25-00:53:30) and an experience that comes to haunt her at night (00:55:58-00:56:25). The scene underscores the psychoanalytical interpretation of Adela's cave experience – she has to face her own repressed desires which transgress the racial taboos of colonial India and therefore cannot be admitted.

Forster's novel, however, also has very strong metaphysical implications inherent in the symbolical qualities and intertextual connection of the description of the caves. Though Lean's adaptation carefully transfers onto the screen the novel's imagery – both visual and auditory – related to the caves (cf. 01:15:18-01:17:41), it fails to evoke metaphysical connotations, probably because it is pushed into the background by the turmoil of events and because some of the symbolic elements establishing the context for a metaphysical reading – such as Godbole's song about god – are missing. A very sensitive adaptation, Lean's

film fails exactly at moments when real adaptation is needed to imply the complexity of the literary text.

Voigts-Virchow refers to Iain Softley's *The Wings of the Dove* (1997) as one of the significant post-heritage films (128-9), and if one compares its choice of source, its approach to it and its style to those of earlier heritage films, its differentiation from such adaptations as *A Room with a View* seems to be well-justified. For a start, while Forster's work is an enchantingly simple novel, this late-Jamesian text is a masterpiece of symbols, circumlocutions, silences and points of view – a bulky novel in which hardly anything happens, and the major events seem to take place in the characters' heads and convoluted, (self)deceptive dialogues. The scriptwriter Hossein Amini did not only have to pare down the plot to the essentials, but also had to bring many implications onto the surface and concretise many mysteries which pass in the enigmatic novel as part of the characters' often romantic self-deception, but not in the cinematic version. Thus, Milly's mysterious illness turns out to be cancer of the lungs, Mr Croy's mysterious sin that makes him impossible in high society and urges him to "sell" his daughter is opium addiction, and the major factor that makes Densher Merton ineligible for Kate is not that he is a penniless journalist, but that he is also a socialist. These – and other – revelations naturally imply many invented scenes.

A seemingly unmotivated change, however, includes shifting the time of the novel, which was originally published in 1902, to 1910 – if anyone should miss it, there is a title card announcing it at the beginning of the film. McFarlane argues that it happens "in the interests of highlighting the sexual imperative underlying the novel's main action" ("Reading Film and Literature" 24), which might as well be the case. It does not exclude, however, the possibility that the shift is necessary to facilitate the creation of a consciously and consistently formulated, highly artistic visual world, which involves the characters, setting and some of the events of the novel.

This visual world is modelled on artefacts (paintings): an approach that is inspired by James's novel but is not realised in the same manner and on the same artistic material. In the novel Milly Theale is compared to a Late-Renaissance painting, a Bronzino – according to the critical consensus it is the portrait of Lucrezia Panciatichi, completed around 1545. The comparison brings into play a number of metaphorical connotations – a central one of these is that the painting is dead (doubly, since the model died long ago and has been turned into an object, which is by definition dead), whereas Milly, though dying, wants to live desperately. This comparison also has a very practical effect: readers familiar with the painting visualise Milly Theale as a red-haired, white-skinned angelic Renaissance beauty. The film plays the same card, only with a different painting – Klimt's *Danae*, which appears in the film in an invented museum scene (00:27:54-29:56). It was, however, painted in 1907–08 (*The Klimt Collection*), so historical accuracy actually required the updating of the setting if the painting was to feature in the film.

Why should a scriptwriter go out of his way just to make the inclusion of one painting historically credible? Viewers soon come to realise that it is not the inclusion of one picture that is at stake here – far from it. They are immediately struck by Milly's resemblance to the painting, just as by the fact that the other Klimt painting featuring in the film, *The Kiss* (*The Klimt Collection*), is not only a perfect representation of the stuffy, sexually charged atmosphere of the film, but also an exquisite counterpoint to one of its climactic scenes – Densher and Milly's kiss. Then one starts to realise that the beautiful period costumes are also inspired by the visual world of Klimt's paintings – the world of art nouveau and Viennese Secession. In hindsight even the opening scene of the film, in which her aunt is making up Kate's face (00:03:23-00:04:06), is strongly reminiscent of Klimt's female portraits, *Judith I* (*The Klimt Collection*) in particular – which has also been associated with Salome. Both dangerous, fatally attractive women figures can serve as parallels for Kate's character in the film. Interpreted in this context, the lengthy carnival scene in Venice (00:52:50-1:01:50) is far from being just another case of showcasing cultural heritage: it is a realised metaphor, an adaptation to the screen of the central metaphors of deceit, masking and unmasking, dominating the Venice section of the novel. The choice of this motif is in perfect harmony with the visual world of art nouveau not only because carnival is a favourite thematic motif of the style, but also because its art – just like Mannerism – is associated with assembling artefacts from surprising raw materials and often deceiving the viewer about the real nature of the objects.

The Wings of the Dove, therefore, creates a visual world with the methods of heritage film but these methods are used creatively – the film is inspired by James's text, but not overpowered by it. Softley's adaptation gives a very strong reading of James's novel as a story of (self)-deception and desire, but it does so by creating a visual world of its own.

Instead of a conclusion – *A Cock and Bull Story*

Heritage and post-heritage do not represent the only approach to classic-novel adaptation. It is enough to think of Sally Potter's *Orlando*, a 1992 Neo-Baroque film (Váró) based on Virginia Woolf's novel to remember that experimentation does not necessarily take place in mainstream films. They belong, however, to the 1980s and 1990s, so one cannot avoid the question of what comes next. Or is the recent history of classic-novel adaptations just another "cock and bull story" that turns on itself? The questions Winterbottom's metafilm poses about the possibilities of classic-novel adaptation imply that after the boom – and decline – of heritage films filmmakers are not much better off than they were in the 1970s.

Though the "womb with a view" scene implies a constant critical debate with heritage film, it is not the only approach to classic-novel adaptation that *A Cock and Bull Story* evokes and presents as problematic. The discussion about the battle scene the film is supposed to include (00:51:40-00:51:50) is an

emblematic case in point. Though it is a low budget film, the crew has to face three options. First, they can follow the heritage tradition and mount a historically authentic battle – but the costumes are unfortunately fifty years out of period, a fact that makes the weeping costume designer in the background rather desperate. Second, they can aim at a Hollywood-style monumental affair – *Braveheart* is the catchword for this approach in the film – but it is too expensive. Third, they can end up with a "comedy battle" – maybe a tribute to Richardson's *Tom Jones* – which, however, is not true to the spirit of the novel. The dilemma is solved by a fourth option – an obvious parody of the Hollywood-style adaptation as a star vehicle: to hide the insufficiencies of the battle scene, the director invites Gillian Anderson to play the role of the Widow Wadman. The sequence reaches its comic height when the final product is played for the crew, and Anderson is shocked to realise that most of her scenes have been cut out from the film. Further options are also implied by filmic allusions. Thus, the shadow of earlier auteurs also looms large above *Tristram Shandy*: Nino Rota's music written for Fellini's *8 ½* is one of its leitmotifs, while Jenny, a most spirited and somewhat idealistic assistant is a great fan of Fassbinder and keeps referring to his works (01:11:35-01:11:50). Last but not least, the film is also reminiscent of Karel Reisz's adaptation of *The French Lieutenant's Woman* (1984), which similarly adapts to the screen a metanarrative by turning it into a metafilm about the shooting of a period film and writing a modern frame-story which parallels the adapted story's plot.

Apart from the question of how *Tristram Shandy* should be filmed, *A Cock and Bull Story* also openly thematises the other central issue of all novel adaptations: what should be transferred and adapted to the screen from the rich literary resource. Winterbottom's film poses it as a question of interpretation: apparently all the members of the crew have their own reading of the novel and would focus accordingly on different elements in the film version. For example, Coogan, father of a young baby but otherwise a hopeless womaniser, emphasises how Walter Shandy could be made human and how all his stupid theoretising could be forgiven if he was filmed with his baby in his hands (00:57:21-00:57:31)[20]. For Jenny the story is about parental self-sacrifice that still – and always – goes wrong, like in her own mother's case. For Tony Wilson TV-reporter (featuring as himself) the novel is fundamentally a romantic comedy with the Widow Wadman and Uncle Toby in the centre. The two most highbrow readings of the novel – utterly discouraging for any attempt at adaptation – are verbalised by Steve Coogan and the imaginary Curator of Shandy House. Coogan's terse remark reflects the critical consensus about the novel and is part of his interview with Tony Wilson:

[20] Of course, Coogan here is trying to redeem himself – the fact that he neglects both his girlfriend and son because of his work – and it is emphasised by a scene that takes place outside the shooting: he holds the baby playing baby Tristram Shandy in his arms for quite a long time and is really humanised by this act (01:20:14-01:20:28).

> Wilson: "Why Tristram Shandy? This is the book that many people say is unfilmable."
> Coogan: "I think that's the attraction. Tristram Shandy was a post-modern classic written before there was any modernism to be post about." (00:35:47-00:36:05)

The Curator, on the other hand, identifies the theme of *Tristram Shandy* in one crucial sentence of despair: "Life is too full, too rich to be captured by art" (00:58:20-00:58:29).

If *Tristram Shandy* is a piece of metaficion about the unwritability of the novel, than certainly a metafilm about the unfilmability of *Tristram Shandy* in its totality does justice to it as a film adaptation. What next? A cock and bull story.

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Eger Journal of English Studies ***IX*** *(2009) 61–77*

A Cognitive Pragmatic Review of Natural Discourse

Ágnes Herczeg-Deli

The central issue of this paper is the relation of discourse to its contextual background. First I will outline the concept of context in a cognitive pragmatic approach, and then I will explore how mental processes get involved with the "interpersonal plane of discourse" (the term is Sinclair's, 1983). The extracts used for analysis were selected from recordings of natural conversations on BBC Radio, and they are meant to reveal linguistic and pragmatic factors that I assume to be determining components of the verbal interaction of the two participants at the current moment of the discourse. My research was qualitative, and the paper is basically expository, aiming at the observation of the emergence of discourse coherence in the light of relevance.

1 Introduction

Meaning in context has been investigated by philosophers and linguists from various aspects for over half a century now. Austin's revelation of speech acts opened a door on meaning in actual communicational situations. Speech act analysis is concerned with utterances in terms of their potential force in the communication, i.e. with their function in a particular context, albeit within the framework of the theory there is no scope for the interpretation and definition of the concept of context. The social dimensions of a verbal communicational event are the concern of conversational analysis, which explores the organization of speaking turns, and the recognition of signals, verbal and non-verbal, that the participants exploit in the course of a conversation. The structure of discourse, the nature of its units and the functions of the participants' acts in these units are the subject matter of discourse analysis (see Sinclair and Coulthard, 1975; Coulthard, 1977: 1985).

The theoretical issues raised for the explanation of the production and interpretation of utterances are the concern of pragmatics; its goal is to account for some non-linguistic dimensions of linguistic 'performance' with focus on the force of an utterance in context and principles of language use. For the past twenty-odd years, however, pragmatics has moved from its original concern rooted in philosophy towards the field of cognitive science. Advocates of the cognitive approach to pragmatics and communication propose theories of how mental processes operating in the production and understanding of utterances

can be captured and described in a general framework (see Sperber and Wilson 1986, 1995; Carston 2002a, 2002b). Due to its target and scope of interest, pragmatics illustrates theories mainly with invented data, and frequently, the examples are simple and goal-directed individual utterances. In this respect the validity of pragmatic explanations of language use may sound somewhat paradoxical. In order to think about discourse in a pragmatic frame there is an obvious need for investigations of natural language in a corpus-bound approach.

Difficult as it is to trace mental processes in natural language, let alone in conversation, it should be a central issue for the analyst to reflect on such questions as: what is the basis for a valid decoding and verbal response to the thoughts and communicative intentions of the speaker in a natural communicative event? From another perspective: what is the nature of coherence in an exchange of a natural conversation? My assumption is that the surface linguistic phenomena of a discourse can give us cues to the cognitive processes in progress during the production and interpretation, and this paper is meant to explore these cues.

2 The form–function dichotomy

In a number of cases the form of the utterance is supposed to guarantee the discourse function; the grammar can be a token for the hearer to infer the speaker's intention. However, as it was first proved by speech act specialists, form does not serve as the only signal of function. Discourse analysts also point out that conversation cannot be given a meaningful structural description based on the four major sentence types; at the same time, we have to face the fact that the functional units of discourse are realized by these four grammatical options. What is possible in discourse analysis is "to provide a meaningful structure in terms of Question and Answer, Challenge and Response, Invitation and Acceptance" (Coulthard 1985, 7). Labov (1972) emphasizes that it is most important to distinguish between *what is said and what is done*, and he sketches rules for interpretation. These rules, however, do not make reference to how the actual forms of the speaker's utterances are conditioned. Grice (1975) subscribes to the Labovian observation about the possible difference between 'saying' something and 'doing something' by it, and introduces the term *implicature* to explain how the force of an indirect utterance can be represented. He assumes that inferencing by listeners is essential for interpretation, and that "the presence of a conversational implicature must be capable of being worked out" (1975:50). He also suggests that the participants of a conversation have an orientation to be co-operative and are supposed to follow basically four principles in the areas of *quality*, *quantity, relevance* and *manner* (ibid., 45–6). Supporting the Gricean theory of inferencing Sperber and Wilson's discussion of communication processes emphasizes the observation that pragmatic interpretation goes well beyond decoding (1986; 1995). They propose a new theoretical framework for an explanation of comprehension, setting out from the assumption that human

cognition tends to seek relevance in communication, which is an essential contextual factor of interpretation processes. In their later work they argue that interpretation mechanisms of inferential comprehension are metapsychological through and through (Sperber and Wilson 2002b). They support the view that inferencing involves „the construction and evaluation of a hypothesis about the communicator's meaning on the basis of evidence she has provided for this purpose" (2002b:9).

Natural discourse clearly shows that linguistic straightforwardness is not a must in communication. Carston makes a justifiable note about communication saying that "the majority of our exchanges are implicature-laden" (2002a:145), and yet, our experience is that it is relatively infrequent that the hearer misunderstands the speaker's meaning. This fact allows us to presume that in natural discourse there are some contextual factors continually available to the hearer, other than the grammatical form of an utterance, which control the interpretation process and the hearer's consequent linguistic behaviour.

In view of the crucial role of the contextual factors in comprehension, in the following part of the paper on the one hand I will be concerned with the concept of the context and those factors of it that induce the intended meaning or allow the hearer's meaning. On the other hand, I will see whether there are felicitous lexical signals in the speaker's utterance of the intended meaning. These issues are expected to provide for some answers as to what are the conditions for the hearer to interpret his partner's utterance when it is not straightforward in form, and also to respond in a way satisfying the pragmatic principles of cooperativeness.

The investigation will be cognitive-pragmatically oriented. First of all, the concepts of *context*, *knowledge,* and *relevance* will be discussed, for I assume that it is through these concepts that some 'unarticulated' constituents of a discourse event can be elucidated. In section 4.2 the analyses of discourse extracts aim at a discovery of the discourse acts realized by pragmatically interpretable schemata and their lexical - conceptual maps. The extracts used for illustration come from natural conversations on BBC Radio.

3 Interpretation and context

In pragmatic literature the context is usually characterized as indispensable for the identification of meaning, but its concept is frequently left undefined. Givón (2005) finds that since the pivotal year of the publication of Austin's *How to Do Things with Words* (1962) pragmatics has proven itself both indispensible and frustrating:

> "Indispensable because almost every facet of our construction of reality, most conspicuously in matters of culture, sociality and communication, turns out to hinge upon some contextual pragmatics. Frustrating because almost every encounter one has with context opens

> up the slippery slope of relativity", and "everything is 100 percent context-dependent" (2005:xiii).

In line with Givón's assessment of context we have to admit that due to its non-objective nature, the concept of context is particularly troublesome to define.

Sinclair and Coulthard (1975:28) define their 'context of situation' as "all relevant factors in the environment, social conventions and the shared experience of the participants", but they do not go beyond this general statement. Van Dijk's view about the relationship between discourse and context is that one needs to distinguish between the actual situations of utterances in all their multiplicity of features, and the selection of only those features that are linguistically and culturally relevant to the production of utterances (1977). In his later work van Dijk advances a socio-cognitive description of context by providing a mental model embedded into a social context and situation (2005; 2006).

Ochs (1979:1) points out that the scope of context includes 'the social and the psychological world in which the language user operates at any given time' and he explains that all this involves "the language user's beliefs and assumptions about temporal and social settings, prior, ongoing and future actions (verbal, non-verbal), and the state of knowledge and attentiveness of those participating in the social interaction in hand" (ibid., 5).

Leech (1983) argues that meaning in language use combines semantic and pragmatic aspects. His 'general pragmatics' has a combinatory character in the sense that he is both concerned with 'pragmalinguistics', which is related to grammar, and 'socio-pragmatics' which he relates to sociology. He includes context in the criteria of meaning in speech situations, and notes that it has been understood in various ways, "for example to include 'relevant' aspects of the physical and social setting of an utterance" (1983:13). He considers it "to be any background knowledge assumed to be shared by *s* and *h,*" speaker and hearer, "and which contributes to *h*'s interpretation of what *s* means by a given utterance" (Leech 1983:13). The 'problem-solving' procedures of planning and interpreting on the speaker's and on the hearer's part, respectively, Leech suggests, "involve general human intelligence assessing alternative probabilities on the basis of contextual evidence" (ibid., 36).

Coulter (1994) challenges some 'deconstructionist', 'objectivist' arguments about contextuality, and argues for any minimally intelligible text "to possess certain self-explicating features due to the inter-articulation of its conceptual devices, a parallel to the *gestalt-contexture* character of situations, rules and conduct in everyday life" (ibid., 689, italics as in the original).

Cognitive pragmatic approaches to communication regard the context as a mental phenomenon which is essentially dynamic in character. Similarly to van Dijk (1977) or to Ochs (1979), Sperber and Wilson (1986) see the context as a psychological construct in the communication process which is controlled by *knowledge* as well as by the *co-text*, two factors which change from moment to

moment. They also propose that the participants make selections from a variety of possible interpretations at every crucial point of the discourse, and that the possible choices involve shared assumptions about the world between the speaker and hearer (cf. Sperber & Wilson 1986:14–7). By advocating this view Sperber & Wilson assume that for the hearer the context constitutes not only the immediate physical environment or the meanings of the immediately preceding utterances, but "expectations about the future, scientific hypotheses or religious beliefs, anecdotal memories, general cultural assumptions, beliefs about the mental state of the speaker, may all play a role in interpretation", too (1986:14–5). Thus in the interpretation process of "each item of new information many different sets of assumptions from diverse sources (long-term memory, short-term memory, perception) might be selected as context" (1986:138). To refer to the psychological process Sperber and Wilson coin the term *context selection*, and the relevance of an utterance is defined in the theory in terms of *contextual effect*. Sperber and Wilson argue that newly presented information is relevant to the hearer "when its processing in a context of available assumptions yields a POSITIVE COGNITIVE EFFECT" (2002a:251, full capitals as in the original), and that the greater the contextual effect, the greater the relevance of the utterance. One type of cognitive effect is CONTEXTUAL IMPLICATION, while other types of it include the strengthening, revision or abandonment of available assumptions (ibid.).

3.1 Knowledge: a feature of the context, or context: a feature of knowledge

Some cognitivists emphasize that in communication social meaning and context are conceived of as internal rather than external phenomena (Marmaridou 2000:13; Fetzer 2004:226; van Dijk 2005; 2006). Likewise, van Dijk (2006), in a broad multidisciplinary approach, considers context a "participant construct".

Fetzer (2004:3, 164) points out that the connectedness between a linguistic expression and its context, in another psychological approach, viz. gestalt psychology, can be considered in terms of the *figure–ground* distinction as figure and ground, respectively. According to this approach the ground represents context or common ground, which is generally assumed to denote knowledge, beliefs and suppositions that are shared, while figure, viz. the phenomenon being investigated, stands for the linguistic expression with which it is connected.

In a cognitive understanding of context *knowledge* is a central concept. The context is a composite psychological construct which entails awareness of the physical environment of the communicational situation and familiarity with socio-cultural aspects of pragmatic meaning, managed by the participants' various mental faculties. In this approach, abilities of retrieving the valid knowledge structures – scripts and schemata – from the memory, skills of reasoning and association are part of the context (cf. Sperber and Wilson 1986). Knowledge is basically implicit, but presupposed. From the principle of co-

operativeness (Grice 1975) it also follows that assumed knowledge between the participants is crucial; without a sufficient amount of shared knowledge between the participants efficient communication cannot take place.

The essence of the interdependence of context and the mind can be framed in the following motto: **the context is actually in the mind and the mind is in the context** (see Herczeg-Deli 2009a:105).

3.2 Interpretation and relevance

The speaker's meaning cannot be coded in a linguistically explicit form, hence hearers have to be able to work out implied meanings. In communication valid inferences are achieved on the basis of knowledge through cognitive operations. Sperber and Wilson's theory (1986; 1995) proposes that all the pragmatic factors and processes that operate in communication can be explicated within the framework of one cognitive phenomenon, which they term *relevance* after Grice (see Sperber & Wilson 1986, 1995; Wilson & Sperber 2004; Smith & Wilson 1992).

The core of the theory is Grice's proposal that "communication is successful not when hearers recognise the linguistic meaning of the utterance, but when they infer the speaker's 'meaning' from it" (Sperber & Wilson 1986:23). A further point of Wilson and Sperber is that the decoding phase of utterance interpretation provides only input to an inferential phase "in which a linguistically encoded logical form is contextually enriched and used to construct a hypothesis about the speaker's informative intention" (Wilson and Sperber 1993:1). The theory proposes that in a communication situation every utterance creates an expectation of relevance worth of the listener's attention and consideration: "any external stimulus or internal representation which provides an input to cognitive processes may be relevant to an individual at some time", as the search for relevance is a basic feature of human cognition (Sperber & Wilson 2002a:250). Thus, every utterance conveys a presumption of its own relevance. This claim is called the Second, or Communicative, Principle of Relevance, and the authors argue that it is the key to inferential comprehension (cf. Sperber and Wilson 1986/1995, chapter 3; 2002b). Contradicting Grice (1975), advocates of Relevance Theory emphasize that "relevance is fundamental to communication not because speakers obey a maxim of relevance, but because relevance is fundamental to cognition" (Smith & Wilson, 1992:2).

In a relevance-theoretic approach the basis of the explanation of how communication happens is the assumption that for successful communication utterances in discourse are supposed to be relevant to the context. My interpretation of context is that it involves a multiplicity of physical, social and psychological factors, of which the latter play a crucial role. An utterance is motivated by the speaker's need and her goal in the immediate linguistic or non-linguistic context, and the hearer, potential speaker B, is assumed to be able to interpret this goal, i.e. speaker's meaning, applying his knowledge and information

available for him in the context. Both decoded and inferred meanings are the result of mental processes involving various factors of the context which include the participants' intelligence, awareness, knowledge, as well as his logical and verbal skills. In my view lack of knowledge or insufficient knowledge, just like uncertainty also have to be considered part of the psychological context, as these mental states can serve as motivation for elicitations for information or confirmation in a conversation (cf. Herczeg-Deli 2009a).

No context can be analysed by compositional parsing. Its psychological component emerges as a result of interacting mental processes constructed and negotiated all through the communication, and at the same time it has control over the process of the communication. The following figure, a modified version of the figure in Herczeg-Deli 2009a:106, is meant to be a schematic illustration of the processes of production and interpretation of an utterance in discourse as conditioned by the context:

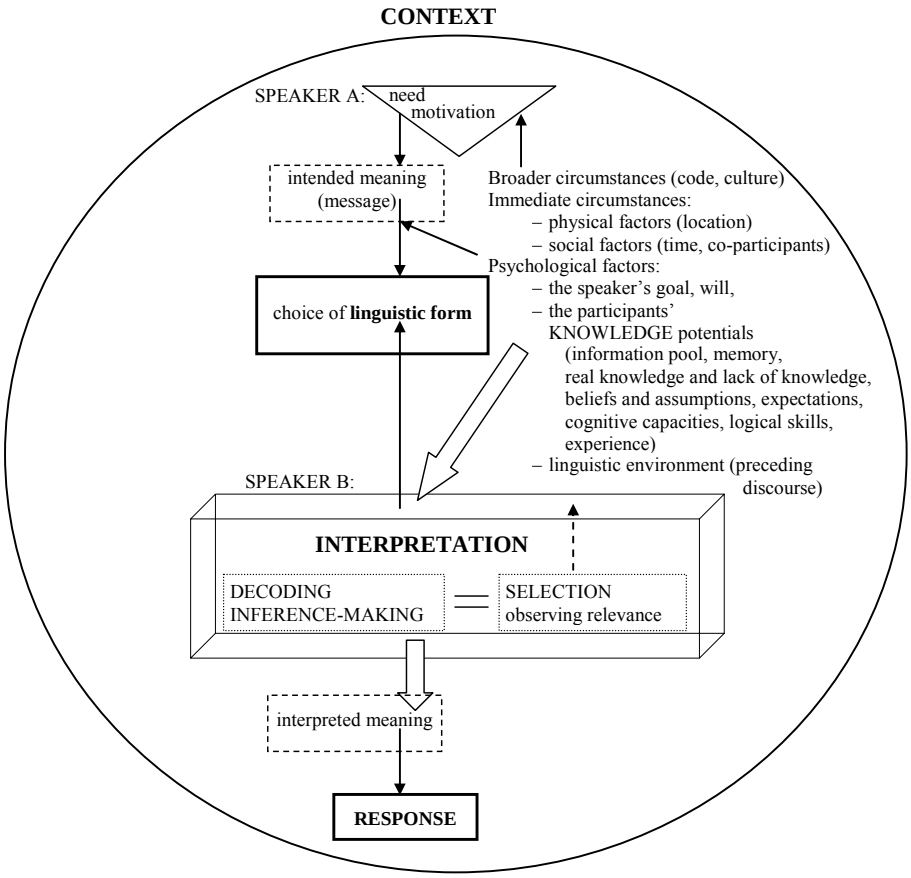

Fig. 1. Production and interpretation in discourse

From the empiricist perspective there may be arguments against a cognitive interpretation of the context reasoning that mental states are too private to be detectable, and that there are no clear empirical data available for a study of what goes on in a mind. In another point of view, however, it is sensible to assume that even if we don't know exactly what neural processes are going on in the brain, we can make some hypotheses about how interpretation emerges. A close linguistic analysis of natural discourse, the investigation of its lexico-grammatical properties usually provides cues for some 'inconspicuous' cognitive factors obtaining in the local interpretation. This can also permit assumptions about some schemas and mental processes involved in the discourse. My research and observations about discourse processes are in accordance with the following assumptions made by van Dijk and by Levinson:

i) "contexts are not observable – but their consequences are" (van Dijk 2006:163), and

ii) certain „aspects of linguistic structure sometimes directly encode (or otherwise interact with) features of the context" (Levinson 1983:8).

4. Relevance in discourse

In the following part of the paper linguistic evidence will be found of some ongoing cognitive processes and of the operation of relevance in natural discourse.

I assume that relevance in a discourse exchange is conditioned by the following contextual factors:

a. Hearer's inferences regarding Speaker's linguistic behaviour satisfy Hearer's expectations of a relevant act in the communication event.

b. This judgment about the suitability of Speaker's utterance(s) in the current context serves as a basis for Hearer's processing of the stimulus as well as for her/his response.

Proper interpretation leads to a relevant response, or, looking at it from the other end of the process: the proof of the positive cognitive effect of Speaker's utterance is a response from Hearer accepted by Speaker as relevant. In the light of the theory Hearer's interpretation can be considered the function of an utterance understood in terms of its relevance in its context.

4.1 Socio-cultural aspects of the data

Analysing talk in institutional settings or in public contexts such as talk radio shows requires consideration of certain contextual factors which are not a component part in other kinds of natural discourse when, for instance, the

participants have a private conversation. In radio discourse the listeners are not simply eavesdroppers, but the target audience, which is a relevant factor of the context. The goal of a talk show is to induce the guest to contribute to the success of the conversation with a considerable amount of information about him/herself, and to allow a third party to listen in. Due to the characteristics of the genre the conversational partners have to restrict themselves to their communicational roles: the host asks questions and the invited guest answers. In this respect the participants are not equal, and their discourse strategies are predetermined accordingly. Participation in such conversations also shows some asymmetry: the host speaks less, as it is the guest who has to be in the focus of attention. These controlling factors of the context are, of course, all in the cognitions of the participants. As regards other types of discourse I assume that in terms of the intentions, communicational strategies and the mental processes behind these show similar, if not the same, general properties.

4.2 Interpreting the speaker's meaning: the observable and the unobservable

Natural discourse manifests a lot of observable properties. An investigation of the linguistic realization can provide us with cues for some of the mental processes generating it, and it also allows for assumptions about contextual prerequisites for the interpretation. Stubbs (2001:443) notes that "what is said is merely a trigger: a linguistic fragment which allows hearers to infer a schema….", also pointing out that communication would be impossible without the assumptions which are embodied in schemata. This part of the paper will be devoted to the analysis of some discourse extracts from a cognitive pragmatic perspective as it follows from my views of context, knowledge and relevance discussed in sections 3.1, 3.2 and 4 above.

In the following extract speaker A is the host of the talk show, late John Dunn, one of the best-known voices in his time on BBC2, and B is his special guest, Keith Waterhouse (died in 2009), newspaper columnist for the Daily Mirror until 1988 and thereafter for the Daily Mail, writer of a newspaper style book. The time of the interview is 31st October 1989.

(1) A1: *But they must have you must have been accused # from many quarters of turning your coat, surely.*
B1: *[ə] # Well, I hadn't all that much because [ə] [ə] the column was there but it still got barbed wire around it. [əm] # Nobody can touch it. It's the same column, # you know. As I said to Captain Bob I'm simply # moving from the Palladium to the Colosseum. It's the same act. It's like Max Wall.*

A2: (laughs*) # You're your column is inviolate* | *if if* | *no one's*
B bch: | *yes* |

~A2: *allowed to touch a single thing on it.*
B2: *No, no, 't was too valuable to me.*

A3: *Somebody just can't get at it.*
B3: No.
A (laughs)
B (laughs)

To respond appropriately speaker B has to grasp the relevance of the first speaker's words, and find out his intention. For the latter, in the context described above familiarity with the character of the programme, the participant roles and the goal of the host serve as a plausible cue: A's job is to ask, and for interpretation the linguistic form has to be measured against the Hearer's, B's, assumption about this goal. A's accepting attitude (see turns A2 and A3) towards the response is proof of B's proper "context selection" (see Sperber and Wilson 1986). The indirect form used by A had a "positive cognitive effect" (Sperber and Wilson 2002a): his partner interpreted it as Elicitation for Confirmation and/or for Information. The epistemic modality represented by the auxiliary *must* has the contextual implication of the speaker's strong hypothesis concerning a Situation B may have experienced. As regards their function, my data show that Hypothetical utterances in an Initiation Move of a discourse exchange typically elicit some kind of Evaluation of the assumed situation submitted by the speaker in the proposition. The hypothetical situation then is either accepted as true or rejected as false by the communicational partner. Rejections are generally supported by some Reason, some explanation or details of reality, as in our case above.

In the interpretation process the Hearer's further cognitive task is contextual meaning selection for the lexical units in the Speaker's utterance, by considering relevant contextual information. The referents of the indexicals and the noun phrases in discourse have to be activated in the memory of the participants or selected on the grounds of the available contextual information. There is a good reason for us to think that in extract (1) the referents of the personal pronoun *they* were identified by B without difficulty, in spite of the fact that after a short consideration speaker A changed his initial linguistic choice for a passive structure. Due to the context selection going on in the minds of the participants such kind of vagueness does not necessarily disrupt mutual understanding, or cause communicative failure, and from the preceding discourse even the listeners of the programme can infer a plausible meaning: A probably had B's colleagues working for the Daily Mirror in mind, where B had his previous job. As this is not a crucial topic in the process of interaction, the interviewer's change for the noun phrase *many quarters* does not sound misinterpretable either. Contextual knowledge is a guarantee for proper sense selection for

quarters. The interpretation obviously requires the abandonment of several of the possible context-independent meanings such as *one of four parts, fifteen minutes, a part of a town, an American or Canadian coin*, and in the current context in A's rerun it possibly involved the broadening of the possible circle of the referents of the pronoun *they* to many others who the speaker could not or did not want to name. No referent has to be identified for the noun phrase *your coat*, as for anybody who speaks good English it is inferable that the speaker uses it in the metaphorical sense in an idiom, in which the verb *turn* is also used in the abstract sense, and it would not be plausible to associate the situation with the law court either just because the verb *accused* appears in the discourse.

The response in Move B1 entails a lot of diverse sources of assumed common knowledge, too. From B's profession, which is journalism, contextual information is available for the proper selection of the meaning of the noun *column* excluding the possibility of reference to *a tall cylinder which is usually part of a building*, to *a group of people or animals moving in a line* or to *a vertical section of a printed text*. The selection of the metaphorical meaning of *barbed wire around it* is a plausible corollary of the contextual meaning of the noun *column*, and it is this metaphor that allocates the verb *touch* an abstract meaning. B's discourse presupposes a common cultural background for the interpretation of the proper nouns *the Palladium* and *the Colosseum*, and similarly, for his reference to *Captain Bob* and *Max Wall*. The assumed knowledge that the two names, the former of which was a nickname dubbed by him, speaker B personally, refer to one and the same famous English comedian, and the context in which the speaker associates himself with him is exploited as a source of humour, which is appreciated by his host, and potentially by the audience, with laughter.

Speaker A's reaction in the Follow-up Move, A2 and A3, is an excellent example of contextual inference, which he made on the grounds of B's explanation of his circumstances. It emerges as a kind of summary, a reformulation of the assumed essence of speaker B's words: *your column is inviolate if if no one's allowed to touch a single thing on it. Somebody just can't get at it,* which B accepts as a valid interpretation (B2 and B3), and gives a logical Reason: *'t was too valuable to me.*

The first exchange of the extract, A1–B1, shows a discourse pattern which Winter (1982; 1994) identifies as a frequently occurring semantic structure in written text: the Hypothetical–Real, a cognitive schema, which also commonly emerges in conversations (cf. also Deli 2004; Deli 2006; Herczeg-Deli 2009a).

The analysis of the short discourse above permits the conclusion that the following are essential contextual factors for interpretation:

- awareness of the situation, the goal of the discourse and of the participant roles
- knowledge of the subject matter of the discourse
- knowledge of the relevant socio-cultural environment
- linguistic knowledge

- logical skills and abilities for sense-selection observing relevance
- knowledge of relevant cognitive schemas.

In the characterization of natural discourse exchanges some of the cognitive perspectives of the context are fairly easily identifiable. The discourse attributes of extract (1) e.g. can be summarised as follows:

Participant roles:	Host = interviewer (A)	Guest = interviewee (B)
Contextually assumed intentions:	Seeking information/ confirmation	Giving information
Discourse moves:	Initiation	Response
Discourse functions of utterances:	Elicitation	Giving information/ confirmation
Cognitive operations:		
in A1–B1	Assumption	Rejection (+ Reason)
in A2–B2	Assumption (inferred)	Acceptance
in A3–B3	Assumption (reformulated)	Acceptance
Emerging discourse schemas:		
in A1–B1	Hypothetical —	Real
in A2–B2	Evaluation —	Evaluation
in A3–B3		

Table 1. The discourse attributes of extract (1)

Communicative goals can be achieved by various linguistic forms, which can be detected in natural speech via insight into the speaker's discourse planning process. The following extract reveals how the first speaker, after deliberating as to which linguistic form to chose for his information seeking Elicitation, decides on a Hypothetical Evaluation, reinforced by a tag question:

(2) A: *But [ð] the idea [i i] # it is quite important, actually, when you think about it that a newspaper should have # a universal style. I mean it would look a bit silly if it printed recognize in one place with a 'zed' and one place with an 'ess', wouldn't it?*

B: *Yes, but [əm] some [ən] [ən] [ən] I think what's more [im] important is that a newspaper should have a good # recognizable [ə:] voice. And the idea of this # thing was that was that when I # first came to to [ə:] [ə] work in popular journalism # [ə] we # used to talk in in [ə] what my [k] [ə] guru, Hugh Cudlip would, you know, one of the founding fathers of the Daily Mirror called good, clear doorstep English. [ə] you It was the language of the people, you know, it was the language the people spoke themselves……*

In this context the question tag at the end of A's Elicitation is obviously not crucial for the interpretation, which is clear from the fact that B starts responding before the question is uttered. The Hypothetical proposition reflecting the speaker's assumption does its job; just like in extract (1), it elicits a response, by which the Hypothetical–Real schema emerges. Here it is interlinked with the schema of Evaluation–Evaluation, and combines with some specification of the contextually Unspecific and Specific.

Winter (1992 and elsewhere) and Hoey (1983) identify a semantic relationship between textual elements which they label the Unspecific–Specific or the General–Particular pattern, respectively. Probing such textual units Hoey (ibid.) distinguishes between two varieties: Preview–Detail and Generalization–Example, and points out that in their identification the context plays a crucial role. Specification is a commonly occurring cognitive process in spoken discourse, too (see Deli 2004; 2006, Herczeg-Deli 2009a; 2009b). After Winter I tag the cognitive relationship between two discourse units in which the second gives details about the local interpretation of the first the contextually Unspecific–Specific schema.

Table 2 below is meant to display the lexical cues of the cognitive schemas that are identifiable in the two moves of exchange (2):

MOVES	HYPOTHETICAL	EVALUATION	REAL
Initiation:	*when* ***you think***	*it is* ***quite important***	
	should *have*	***a universal style***	
	it ***would*** *look* ***if*** *it printed...with a [zed] ...with an [ess]*	***a bit silly***	
Response:	***I think***	***more important***	UNSPECIFIC
		a ***good, recognizable*** *voice*	***a good, clear doorstep*** *English*
			SPECIFIC
			the language of the people the language the people spoke themselves

Table 2. The conceptual map of exchange (2)

As can be worked out from this conceptual map, for his response the second speaker interprets the first speaker's Hypothetical Evaluation as an Elicitation for Evaluation, of which the cue concept is his expectation of *a universal style* in newspapers. B's Evaluation (*more important,*) realizes the act of Correction, a variant of Rejection. His evaluative concept *a good, recognizable voice* does not refer to some absolute value, and, aware of this he gives a local interpretation. What he calls a *recognizable voice* is specified with a metaphorical expression: *doorstep English*, and to ensure the appropriate interpretation of what he is trying to communicate he clarifies the meaning: *the language of the people, the language the people spoke themselves.* In the current context both the contextually Unspecific concept and its Specification describe the Real situation as a necessary counterpoint to what speaker A assumed in his Hypothetical proposition.

The discourse attributes of the extract are in some respect similar to those of the first one above. The difference is in the emergence of the Unspecific–Specific schema in the second speaker's move here:

Participant roles:	Host = interviewer (A)	Guest = interviewee (B)
Contextually assumed intentions:	Seeking information/ confirmation	Giving information
Discourse moves:	Initiation	Response
Discourse functions of utterances:	Elicitation	Giving information/ confirmation
Cognitive operations:	Assumption	Rejection (by Correction)
Emerging discourse schemas:	Hypothetical — Evaluation — Unspecific—Specific	Real Evaluation

Table 3. The discourse attributes of exchange (2)

In the following discourse John Dunn's special guest is Mike Batt, one of Britain's best-known songwriters, composers and recording artists:

(3) A1: *...Now, how did you choose the tracks?*
B1: *Just by discussion, really. There were some # tracks which Justin said [ə] I'd like to do these, and some which I said # and there often were # songs which # meant something to us personally, there might be songs which # one of us # would think 't would be nice to do this in a particular way having decided that we would do it with an orchestra and a valco. # And [ə] # so we just [ə] [ə] [ə] did this by discussion, I mean with this sort of # rang each other every night until one of us thought of another one. Everything.*

A2: *Could [əv] ended up with a very large album.*
B2: *Yeah, we could [əv] done about ten albums, actually.*

In move A2 the speaker makes a realistic inference based partly on the details of what B tells him about his and his colleague's approach to their preparation for their new record, partly on his original knowledge about his guest. The inference is realized in a Hypothetical unit, whose modal value is signalled by the irrealis *could [əv]*. The communicative value of the utterance, A's intention, is interpreted by speaker B as need for confirmation and/or for further information. Response B2 starts with *Yeah*, which, on the surface, sounds like confirmation, i.e. like acceptance of A's assumed proposition as true. In fact, it is followed by the correction of A's hypothesis: *about ten albums, actually*, which assigns B's utterance the function of Rejection. This meaning is emphasized by the attitudinal adverbial *actually*. In this context *yeah* means *no*; it is not an integral part of the correction; it is said to indicate that the speaker understands his partner's meaning. Its function is, very plausibly, back-channelling.

This discourse extract can also be analysed as an example of how vagueness is interpreted in certain local contexts of natural conversation. The concept of *a very large album* is rather vague in itself; its meaning is relative to contextual knowledge about the world of music. The meaning of the noun phrase *about ten albums* is similarly far from exact. For all this, its vagueness is not an obstacle to a plausible inference about the speaker's intention. In this context the expression becomes relevant through its implicature: many more than enough for one large album. On the whole, in move B2 the speaker adds some clue for further inference: they had many more songs on the list than what appeared on the record. The exchange (A2–B2) shows the Hypothetical–Hypothetical schema emerging.

5 Conclusions

In this paper my goal was to give evidence of how the interpretation of the global and the local factors of the context contribute to the participants' behaviour in their verbal interactions, as well as how the cognitive properties of discourse can be analysed. It has been demonstrated that the lexical signals of some cognitive factors of communication can be recognized through such discourse attributes as participant roles, contextually assumed intentions, discourse moves, the assumed functions of utterances and discourse schemas emerging in the communication. The investigation of the mental components of natural discourse via linguistic traces within the frames of Relevance Theory can also provide an explanation for how verbal interactions are controlled by such contextual factors as discourse schemata.

Abbreviations and symbols used in the discourse extracts

A:	speaker A's move
~A:	speaker's move is continued
B:	speaker B's move
B bch:	speaker is back-channelling
# :	a short pause
⎪ ⎪	parallel speech

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On the Development of the Subjunctive from Early Modern English to Present-Day English

Éva Kovács

1 Introduction

The subjunctive in English is a rather controversial topic of grammar, and opinions on the subjunctive were and are varied even today. It was very common in Old English and in Middle English, and although it underwent a so-called revival in the 20th century again, especially in AmE, its use has been in decline since 1600. Today it is usually described as moribund, fossilized and almost extinct.

It is a common assumption that the most radical changes in the subjunctive took place in Old English and Middle English. In fact, it seems not to have changed significantly since the beginning of Early Modern English. The primary aim of this paper is to explore what impact the period from Early Modern English to Late Modern English had on the development of this rather marginal aspect of Present-Day English. Before outlining it, let us consider briefly the general treatment of the subjunctive by grammarians and what changes the subjunctive underwent in Old English and Middle English.

2 The treatment of the subjunctive by grammarians

The controversial nature of the subjunctive is reflected in the way it is treated by grammarians. The first really influential grammars that could provide insight into the treatment of the subjunctive appeared in the 18th century. The grammarians of this period greatly differed in opinion respecting the form and use of the subjunctive mood. Even the category of mood seemed to be problematic. Most 18th c. grammarians refer to the indicative, imperative, infinitive and subjunctive and some even added the potential or optative as a fifth mood.

Compare the mood system of English found in some 18th c. grammars:

Ash	1775	Ind.	Imp.	Inf.			Pot.
Murray	1795	Ind.	Imp.	Inf.	Subj.		Pot.
Dilworth	1751	Ind.	Imp.	Inf.	Subj.	Opt.	Pot.
Bayly	1758	Ind.	Imp.	Inf.	Subj. (Opt.)		
Johnson	1755	Ind.	Imp.	Inf.	Conj.		Pot.
Lowth	1762	Ind.	Imp.	Inf.	Subj.	Part.	

(Ind. = Indicative, Imp. = Imperative, Inf. = Infinitive, Subj. = Subjunctive, Opt. = Optative, Conj. = Conjunctive, Part. = Participle, Pot. = Potential)

Some 18th c. grammarians deny the existence of a subjunctive form altogether. Ash (1760; 1775) is the best representative of this line of thought. According to Ash, subjunctive is a synonym for the potential mood. In contrast, Johnson (1755), Murray (1795) and Dilworth (1740) regard the potential and the subjunctive as two distinct moods, with Dilworth adding optative and Lowth (1762) participles as a fifth mood. Bayly (1756) uses the terms subjunctive and optative synonymously and Johnson uses the term conjunctive mood, which was interchangeable with subjunctive mood. Nevertheless, it is noteworthy that the subjunctive in the 18th century was still somewhat of a riddle and the grammarians were not sure of how to deal with it.

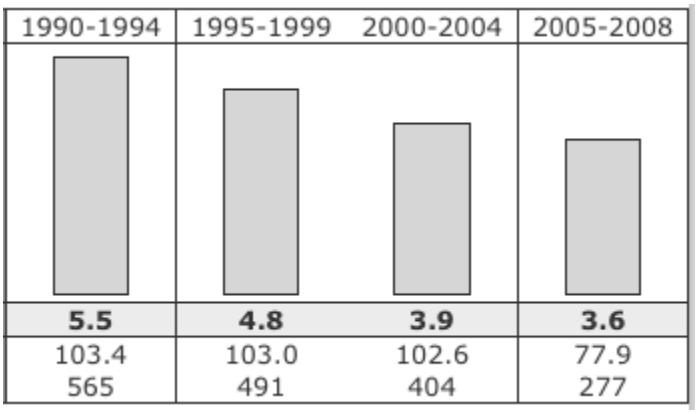
The subjunctive remained a source of dispute among grammarians in the 19th century as well. Goold Brown (1851:33) noted, "It would, perhaps, be better to abolish the use of the subjunctive entirely". Henry Sweet (1898:109) also observed that the subjunctive is "rapidly falling into disuse – except, of course, in those constructions where it is obligatory in the spoken language".

Similarly, in the 20th century, Somerset Maugham (1941:257) pointed out that American writers use the subjunctive more than British writers; yet "they are kicking against the pricks; the subjunctive mood is in its death throes, and the best thing to do is to put it out of its misery as soon as possible".

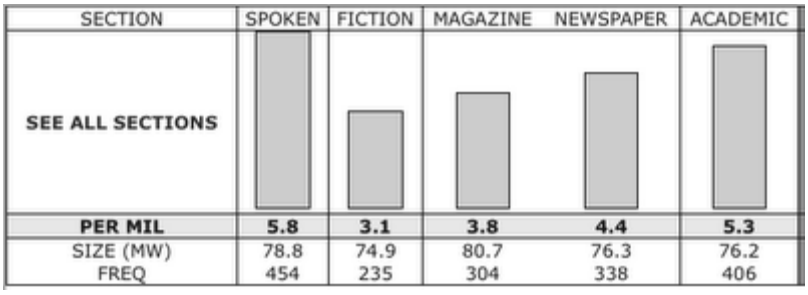
Quirk et al. (1985:155) noted that there are indications that the subjunctive is re-establishing itself in BrE, probably as a result of AmE influence. Nevertheless, especially the mandative subjunctive is more characteristic of AmE than of BrE, where it is formal and rather legalistic in style. In fact, the subjunctive in modern English is generally an optional and stylistically somewhat marked variant of other constructions, but it is not as unimportant as is sometimes suggested.

In fact, in recent years some other grammarians refer to the revival of the subjunctive, especially in AmE. Charles Finney (2000) argues that „the subjunctive mood is a beautiful and valuable component of the English language, and instead of dying out, it actually is enjoying a subtle revival" (Finney 1999–2000).

In contrast, quite recently, Jack English (2009) has pointed out that Finney is wrong as "you can't show a revival by looking at a single point in time." To prove this, he examined the occurrence of the subjunctive in COCA (*The Corpus of Contemporary American English*). It is the corpus of contemporary American English, which contains more than 385 million words of text, including 20 million words each year from 1990–2008, equally divided among spoken, fiction, popular magazines, newspapers, and academic texts. As this corpus (The most recent texts are from late 2008) is updated every six to nine months, it serves as a unique record of linguistic changes in American English, and is supposed to give reliable data for the usage of the subjunctive as well. Consider English's diagram, which shows a drop in the usage of the subjunctive in the last two decades:



Another interesting finding of English is that spoken English appears to be the biggest user of the subjunctive, though academic English isn't far behind, which challenges the common view that the subjunctive is characteristic of mainly formal style. The author uses the following chart to illustrate this:



On the basis of the evidence above it appears that the subjunctive is really in decline in American English as well.

Whether the subjunctive is dying or reviving, the subjunctive has lost a lot of its importance since Old English. Leaving aside various fixed phrases like *So*

be it, Long live...', etc. the subjunctive of Present-Day English is mainly restricted to various kinds of subordinate clauses, i.e. mandative clauses, conditional clauses and clauses of negative purpose (Quirk et al. 1985:155–158 and Huddleston and Pullum 2002:993). Especially the mandative construction is very much alive, with attested examples like *I would stress that people just be aware of the danger* suggesting that its distribution is increasing (Huddleston and Pullum 2002:1000). In spite of its alleged revival the subjunctive is, however, rather neglected in grammar books and course books. It may be due to that fact that especially in BrE it is often replaced by other constructions. To understand what made the subjunctive a marginal and rather controversial aspect of Present-day English, let us have a brief look at the changes it underwent in the Old English and Middle English period.

3 A brief overview of the subjunctive in Old English and Middle English

As far as its historic development is concerned, it is generally agreed that the inflectional subjunctive experienced a steady decline in the history of English, which began in late OE and went on in Middle English (cf. Traugott 1992:184–185, 239–240 and Fischer 1992:246–248, 349–356). Being extremely common in Old English, the subjunctive mood had special formal, syntactic, and semantic characteristics. Basically it was used to express various modal meanings (e.g. unreality, potentiality, hypothesis, exhortation, wishes, desires, requests, commands, prohibitions and obligation), and was the mood selected by certain conjunctions, mainly in conditional, concessive clauses and clauses of comparison. Besides, the subjunctive was also widely used in reported speech, when the reporter wished to avoid commitment to the truth of what was reported, or wished to cast doubt on it, as is typical in the early Germanic languages.

The subjunctive underwent some basic changes in the Middle English period as well. With the gradual loss of the verbal inflections, the periphrastic construction gained ground rapidly (*sholde, shal, wil, may, can*). Another significant change that had an impact on the development of the subjunctive was that the past tense indicative began to be used as a modal marker, the so-called modal preterite. Furthermore, in dependent clauses, such as concessive clauses or clauses of comparison the subjunctive began to be replaced by the indicative or sometimes the indicative and subjunctive were found side by side within the same sentence. However, the subjunctive still occurred regularly in object clauses where the subjunctive mood gave the activity expressed in the verb a certain modal colouring. In independent clauses, the present subjunctive still expressed wish or exhortation.

4 The subjunctive in Early Modern English (1476–1776)

As noted by Rissanen (1999:210), the Early Modern English period, particularly the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, witnessed developments that resulted

in the establishment of the Present-Day English verbal system. The subjunctive and the modal auxiliaries are among the most noticeable.

Owing to the loss of inflectional endings, in Early Modern English distinctive subjunctive forms are restricted to the verb *be* and to the second and third person singular of non-auxiliary verbs (*thou lovest/love, he loves (loveth)/love; thou lovedst/loved*). It was probably the main reason for the replacement of the subjunctive forms by auxiliary periphrasis, which was supported by the general trend towards analytic constructions.

As far as modality is concerned, in main clauses the present subjunctive expressed a realisable wish (optative subjunctive), which is largely restricted to formulaic contexts, such as *God forgive him, Lord help our understandings, Heaven grant, God save, Long live*, etc., but also in less formulaic wishes (Rissanen 1999:228–229):

(1) Come on, (poor Babe): Some powerful Spirit *instruct* the Kites and Rauens To be thy Nurses! (Shakespeare *Winter's Tale* II.iii)

Besides, the present subjunctive also expresses exhortation (hortative or mandative), for example:

(2) Who hateth him and honors not his Father… *Shake* he his weapon at vs, and *pass* by. (Shakespeare *Henry VI* IV.vii)

However, the optative subjunctive is often replaced by periphrasis with *may* and the hortative subjunctive with *let*:

(3) 'A god *rewarde* you', quoth this rouge, 'and in heauen *may* you *finde* it.' (Harman 39)

Let him *love* his wife even as himself: That's his Duty. (Jeremy Taylor 24)

Of these two periphrases, the one replacing hortative subjunctive seems to develop more rapidly, while the optative periphrasis is less common than the subjunctive.

As for the 'preterite subjunctive' (or modal preterite), the form *were* (and *had* in some phrases) seems to resist best the replacement by auxiliary periphrasis. In clauses indicating wish, preterite or pluperfect subjunctive can mainly be found in exclamations (Rissanen 1999:229–231):

(4) O that I *knew* where I might find him. (Addison Spectator No. 565: IV 532)

Were and *had* with a personal subject occur with as good or better/best:

(5) I *were* better to bee married of him then of another. (Shakespeare *As You Like It* III.iii)

If you follow this advice, you *had* best wrap some broad leaves … about the stock. (Langford 38)

The preterite or pluperfect subjunctive is fairly common in the apodosis, i.e. the main clause in a conditional sentence:

(6) I *were* a verie vnworthye man to hold that place… if I were to be touched in that sorte. (Essex 16)

The periphrasis with *should/would* is, however, more common than the preterite or pluperfect. The use of the pluperfect subjunctive in the apodosis is particularly common when the protasis (the subordinate conditional clause) has inverted word order instead of the *if*-link:

(7) *Had* not such a peece of Flesh *been ordayned*, what *had* vs Wiues *been* good for? (Middleton 1)

Due to the modally marked character of the subjunctive forms, it is natural that they occur in nominal clauses indicating wish, request, exhortation, doubt, etc. In reported speech, the subjunctive forms are also common, particularly in contexts in which uncertainty (question, assumption, etc.) is indicated.

As in main clauses, subjunctive forms vary with auxiliary periphrasis in subordinate object clauses (Rissanen 1999:285–286):

(8) I do intreat you, not a man *depart*, Saue I alone. (Shakespeare *Julius Caesar* III.ii)

I doubt he *be* not well that hee comes not home. (Shakespeare *Merry Wives of Windsor* I.iv)

While in Middle English the typical auxiliary is *shall/should*, in Early Modern English *will/would* gains ground; *may/might* is used in expressions of uncertain wish or expectation:

(9) I began to think, How if one of the Bells *should* fall? (Bunyan *Grace* 33)

Than the provost was in doubt of hym, that he *wolde* in the nyght tyme come and overron the cytie of Parys. (Berners *Froissart* 1 405)
and thereupon I made sute that Edward Wyat *might* either be brought face to face to me, or otherwise be examined. (Throckmorton 68 Ci)

Similarly, the mood of the final clauses is mostly expressed by subjunctive forms or by modal periphrasis with *may/might, shall/should* and *will/would* (Rissanen 1999:304–305):

(10) that we orderyne at the portes and havens of Englande suche provysyon and defence that our countrey *receive* no blame (Berners *Froissart* 4 314)

Final clauses were introduced by the conjunction *that*, which was often preceded by elements making the indication of purpose more obvious, such as *so, to the intent/end* and *in order*. There was an alteration between the subjunctive and the auxiliary verbs *may/might*:

(11) To do this *to the end that* they *may* oft-times reade over these… (Brinsley 46)

In order… that the Resemblance in the Ideas *be* Wit, it is necessary… (Addison *Spectator* No. 62 1 264)

In negative clauses of purpose *lest* is used if the intention or purpose to prevent or guard against something is expressed:

(12) which I denied, *lest* they should so recouer the swords… (Coverte 17)

The subjunctive forms predominate in conditional clauses indicating hypothetical or rejected condition, where auxiliary periphrasis also occurs. In non-introduced conditional or concessive clauses (with inversion) the subjunctive or auxiliary periphrasis is the rule (Rissanen 1999:308–309):

(13) and if euer it *came* soo to/ that he shulde resygne his Kyngelye mageste /he sayde his mynde was to resygne to the Duke of Herforde (Fabian 168V Ci)

If he *should* nowe *take* any thinge of them, he knewe, he said, he should do them greate wronge… (Roper 41)
Would I haue my flesh Torne by the publique hooke, these qualified hangmen Should be my company. (Ben Johnson *Sejanus* II.iii)

Furthermore, the subjunctive or a modal auxiliary is used in conditional clauses of comparison introduced by the conjunction *as if* and *as though* as well. A special case of the use of *as* in clauses of comparison is the combination of *as* with *who/which* in the phrase *as who say/says* 'as if somebody should say', after which the subjunctive or the modal auxiliary *should* varies with the simple indicative form both in Middle English and Early Modern English (Rissanen 1999:317):

(14) *As who say*, one condition… of the couenant is our vpright and good profession (a1586 *Answer Cartwright* 9)

As who should sai it were a very daungerous matter. (1551–6 Robinson, transl. More's *Utopia* 35)

5 The subjunctive in late Modern English (1776–Present day)

As pointed out by Denison (1998:92), by 1776 the English language had already undergone most of the syntactic changes which differentiate Present-Day English from Old English and relatively few categorical losses or innovations have occurred in the last two centuries. As evident from the above discussion, the subjunctive was losing importance already from OE onwards. Nevertheless, there have been no substantive changes in it since the end of the 18th century.

In Late Modern English the present subjunctive is morphologically distinct only with *BE* or with 3rd Person Singular of other verbs. Denison (1998:162)

refers to some subtypes of the subjunctive, which are, however, not truly productive. It occurs in expressions of type *God grant that…, Long live NP, Far be it from me to VP, Suffice it to say*; in stage directions of the form *Enter NP*; and in the types *Try as he may, Say what he will*.

One productive syntactic pattern with a present subjunctive has an indefinite pronoun as subject:

(15) *Take* the pipe out of his mouth, somebody. (1841 Browning, *Pippa Passes Poems*)

Subjunctives with definite third person subjects have been supplanted by forms involving *may* or *let*:

(16) *May* the devil take him. ~ The devil *take* him.

The subjunctive in the latter survives now in formulaic utterances.

The present subjunctive is also common in clauses which complement an adjective, noun or verb whose meaning is desire, obligation (Denison 1998:262):

(17) and Jo wrathfully *proposed* that Mr. Davis *be arrested* without delay (1868 Alcott, *Little Women* vii89)
Jerry knew that it was *imperative* she *be got* some place where it was dry and warm. (1947 Gallico, *The Lonely* i.39)

The present subjunctive above, which tends to be replaced by the modal verb *should* in BrE, has retreated to high-flown literary or legal language. In America, however, it seems to be the norm.

As for final clauses, the main changes during Late Modern English are in the inventory of subordinate conjunctions and in the increasing disuse of the (present) subjunctive:

(18) She… kept putting up the hand, that held the stone, first closing it carefully *that* the precious stone *be not lost.* (1923 Sherwood Anderson, *Many Marriages*)
Loath though he was to encourage his employer in any way *lest* he *get* above himself, Joss was forced to drop a word of approval. (1940 Wodehouse, *Quick Service*)

The conjunction *that* and *lest* occur now only in very formal registers while the comparatively recent conjunction *in order that* occurs only with modals (*may, might, should*).

The present subjunctive is also used in conditional and concessive clauses:

(19) *If* it *be* I will have nothing to do with it, much as I love and reverence the man. (1981 Green, *Letters* 80)
Reason never comes too late, *though* it *be* midnight when she knocks at the door. (1799 Dunlop, *False Shame* II 20)

Denison (1998:297) also refers to the usage of the subjunctive present in exceptive clauses, where *may/might* rivals with *should* as the possible modal alternative:

(20) And I judge that this must ever be a condition of human progress, *except* some religion *appear* which can move forward with the progress of man. (1863 Green, *Letters* 118)

As for the past subjunctive, it is used in apodoses (main clauses) of unreal conditionals, which is highly literary and was already a rather pompous archaism by the early nineteenth century and *would be* would be normal (Denison 1998:163):

(21) But it *were* better not to anticipate the comments to be made. (1948 TLS 23 (10 Jan)

The past perfect subjunctive is used similarly, which is illustrated by the following example, in which *had been* stands for *would have been* in Present-Day English:

(22) It *had been* easy for me to gain a temporary effect by a mirage of baseless opinion; (1871–2 George Eliot, *Middlemarch* 201)

In the protasis of an unreal conditional the past subjunctive is optional after *if,* with the indicative increasingly often used in standard (Denison 1998:298):

(23) Obviously, it is not easy to be a great poet. If it *were,* many more people would have done so. (1913 Ezra Pound *Egoist*, 48)
If Everest *was* only 300 metres higher, it would be physically impossible to reach the summit without bottled oxygen. (1993 Ed Douglas, *New Scientist* 23)

The past subjunctive is virtually obligatory in the generally more formal, inverted protasis:

(24) Ah! *were* she a little less giddy than she is. (1843–4 Dickens, *Chuzzlewit*, 305)

Where unreality is involved, certain nominal subordinate clauses permit a past subjunctive or a past perfect which may be regarded as subjunctive (Denison 1998:264):

(25) I wish I *were* more worthy of you. (1891 Sidney Webb, *Letters* 153)
I dined a Pologne as usual yesterday, & wished you *had been* there. (1890 Dowson, *Letters* 91 p. 139)

The subjunctive is also the normal form after conjunctions expressing a rejected comparison:

(26) I feel as if I *had jumped* into old age during the last two years. (1918 Bell, *Letters* II 450)

As evident from the above examples, the decline of the subjunctive went on in the 18th century with its forms being reduced and its functions being taken over by the indicative and some modal auxiliaries.

6 Conclusion

The subjunctive is a continual source of dispute among grammarians and of perplexity to scholars as its historical role in English seems to have been rather weak and inconsistent. Some grammarians and linguists even proclaimed the subjunctive's death, and others regarded its usage as pretentious in Modern English. As far as its historic development is concerned, it is generally agreed that the inflectional subjunctive experienced a steady decline in the history of English.

In fact, historical change has more or less eliminated mood from the inflectional system of English, with past subjunctive confined to 1st/3rd person singular *were*, which is moreover usually replaceable by the indicative past form *was*. Besides the loss of inflections, the appearance of the periphrastic forms accounted for the decline of the subjunctive. Thus, in Present-day English, the main mood system is analytic rather than inflectional and the functions of the subjunctive seem to have been taken over by the indicative and modal auxiliaries.

As might be evident from the above discussion, by the end of the early Modern English period, i.e. 1776 the subjunctive had more or less undergone all the significant changes that would differentiate it from its present-day usage.

Unlike Present-day English, the subjunctive forms were still also common in reported speech, particularly in contexts in which uncertainty (question, assumption, etc.) was indicated.

An additional change occurred in the usage of the subjunctive in clauses of purpose and in the inventory of the conjunctions, which nevertheless reflected a new tendency in Present-Day English. The conjunction *that* began to be preceded by elements making the indication of purpose more obvious, such as *so, to the intent/end* and *in order* and the subjunctive altered with the auxiliary verbs *may/might*.

In Early Modern English, a special case of the use of *as* in clauses of comparison was the combination of *as* with *who/which* in the phrase *as who say/says* meaning 'as if somebody should say' in Present-Day English, after which the subjunctive or the modal auxiliary *should* varied with the simple indicative form.

As another peculiarity of the subjunctive, in the early nineteenth century the past subjunctive was used in apodoses (main clauses) of unreal conditionals, which was nevertheless highly literary, regarded to be as a rather pompous archaism.

The past subjunctive *were* also occurred in clauses indicating wish, mainly found in exclamations (O that I *knew* where I might find him), just like after a

personal subject with better/best (I *were* better to bee married of him then of another).

All in all, in spite of the fact that there have been considerable changes in the forms of the subjunctive during the centuries, with a few exceptions there have not been many in its usage. The subjunctive has always been marked for modality, expressing doubt, unreality, wishes, commands, and so on, and it is the mood selected by certain conjunctions, such as *if, though, whether, as if* and *lest* even today with the exception of earlier *except, unless* and *that (expressing purpose)*. In fact, there were some losses and changes in the 18th and 19th centuries in its usage, which are, however, not considered to be significant.

It may also be true that the subjunctive is used in a limited area in Present-Day English, but it is very much alive in that area, especially in Am E, in which it is assumed to have become remarkably prevalent again in the 20th century.

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Selected Problems with the Translation of Woody Allen's Essay *The UFO Menace*

Martin Kubuš

Introduction

In the Central European context, Woody Allen is generally known, maybe even renowned as a filmmaker – a director, a screenwriter and, obviously, an actor. However, many a fan of Allen's is aware of his other artistic activities, such as writing and playing music. Woody Allen has played the clarinet in a jazz band for many years (in 2008, having a concert in Prague, for example) and, for his film enthusiasts, his fondness of jazz is more than evident from the use of jazz music in the soundtracks of a number of his classics such as *Manhattan*, *Hannah and Her Sisters*, *Radio Days* and many others.

This paper, as its title suggests, does not deal with Allen's filmmaking, nor his jazz playing, but is focused on his writing, particularly on one of his essays which shares a characteristic feature with a great majority of his films – i.e. humour. Our objective is to take an in-depth look at the source of some unique and, for translators, problematic passages found in the essay entitled *The UFO Menace*.

Before doing so, it would be appropriate to briefly introduce the essay. It was first published in 1977 in *The New Yorker* and was later included in Allen's collection *The Complete Prose*. In this essay, the author in his unique and usual mocking, yet friendly fashion thinks it is necessary to stop ignoring UFOs and spare a kind-hearted thought, flavoured with slight irony, for his countrymen who claim to have seen the extraterrestrial means of transport:

> UFOs are back in the news, and it is high time we took a serious look at this phenomenon. (Actually, the time is ten past eight, so not only are we a few minutes late but I'm hungry.) (Allen 1997:325)

Fortunately, the UFOs as obscure phenomena are more or less marginal topics, the essay itself was conceived a couple of decades previously, nevertheless, there is some truth to Allen's witty remarks above, since even last year, in 2008, some startling testimonies appeared in the media coming straight from the British Army which had reportedly confirmed numerous close encounters.

Possible target readers of this paper could be, firstly, enthusiasts of Woody Allen's post-modern literature (Part 1), and secondly, anybody interested or somehow involved in the subject of translation studies (Part 2).

Part 1: Allen's alleged witnesses of flying saucers

This section is focused on the close encounters reported, on one hand, at the time when the essay was written (last century) and, on the other, in the past. Woody Allen refers to numerous obscure sources, mentioning fictional characters of his own imagination as well as historical personalities from the fields of philosophy (Parmenides) and literature (Goethe). He introduces the phenomenon stating that it is not necessarily anything new to mankind. Allen speculates that certain accounts described in more or less historical documents might have posed evidence that man has been aware of various kinds of flying objects for centuries. He manipulates facts and provides us with false (but humorous) theories and conclusions:

Scholars now tell us that the sighting of unidentified flying objects dates as far back as Biblical times. For instance, there is a passage in the Book of Leviticus that reads, "And a great and silver ball appeared over the Assyrian Armies, and in all of Babylonia there was wailing and gnashing of teeth, till the Prophets bade the multitudes get a grip on themselves and shape up" (ibid.).

The extract above is a par excellence example of the manipulation we are talking about. A learned reader, who would not have to be an expert in Biblical matters, would notice the collocation, *wailing and gnashing of teeth*, which is typically Biblical in style as is the phrase *Assyrian Armies*. These are credible and completely fit such a text. On the other hand, the phrasal verb *to shape up* and the phrase *to get a grip on themselves* are colloquial – their use in such a text would be inappropriate. They are marked and their function is obvious – i.e. to amuse the reader with a Biblical parody. We are not here to discuss religion, or Allen's opinions on it and the Bible, it is not our aim now, but we have to affirm that upon reading or mere skimming the *Book of Leviticus*, we will not find the passage we just quoted. *The Book of Leviticus* consists primarily of strict commands and laws concerning various offerings the Israelites brought to the Lord in the times of the Old Testament.

Let us continue with the second piece of "historical evidence". This extract that we deal with now is very witty and, as we will come to see, very confusing:

> And, again, were those "orange objects" similar to what is described in a recently discovered twelfth-century Saxon-church manuscript: "A lauch lauched he; wer richt laith to weet a cork-heild schonne; whilst a red balle lang owre swam aboone. I thank you, ladies and gentlemen"? (ibid.)

Notwithstanding the evident formal complexity of the lines, which at first sight makes us believe in their possible authenticity, a reader with a good knowledge

of English as well as its older forms catches Allen red-handed. His literary crime is in the distortion of the history of the English language while stealing lines from an existing poem. He then mixes them with his own words, an imitation of an alleged older form of English from the 12th century which tells us about the orange flying objects. If it had not been for the amusing effect of the parody on readers, caused also by the last sentence of our extract which, again, does not fit in, Woody Allen would not have got away with it. The passage in question, however, does not, in fact, come from *a recently discovered twelfth-century Saxon-church manuscript*.

After conducting some literary research we discover that Allen took the almost incomprehensible lines from a ballad entitled *Sir Patrick Spens*. *The Norton Anthology of English Literature* reads:

> Bishop Thomas Percy (1729–1811) was among the first to take a literary interest in ballads, stimulated by his chance discovery of a 17th-century manuscript in which a number of them had been copied down among a great welter of Middle English verse. (Abrams et al. 1968:335)

We also read that "Although any stage of a given culture may produce ballads, they are most characteristic of primitive societies such as that of the American frontier in the 18th and 19th centuries or that of the English-Scottish border region in the later Middle Ages" (ibid.)

There may be multiple versions of the same ballads:

> When one speaks of *Sir Patrick Spens* one is actually speaking of a number of poems that tell the same story in slightly or widely different words. If a single original form by a single author lies behind this diversity, it is too far back in the mist of time to be recovered. (ibid.)

Now we can compare the extract found in the *Anthology* (below) and the second version used by Allen (see the extract quoted above) who cites a different source.

O our Scots nobles were richt laith,
To weet their cork-heeled shoon,
But lang owre a' the play were played
Their hats they swam aboon.

(Ibid., 344)

As we have already mentioned, he added *whilst a red balle lang owre swam aboone* to give information about a red ball swimming above, a potential UFO. The evident differences in spelling are sufficiently explained in the *Anthology*:

> The version chosen for this anthology are those which the editor considers the most effective as poetry. Spelling has been modernized;

> the majority of the northernisms in the originals have been retained. (Ibid., 337)

To sum up this section, we do not know the precise year in which the ballad was conceived, but we can rely on the *Anthology* which provides us with a possible historical period which is, however, (as could be expected) at odds with Woody Allen's statement:

> The presumably much older ballad Sir Patrick Spens may be based on a historical incident that took lace at the end of the 13th century. (Ibid., 337)

So far we have analysed accounts which were, according to Allen, found in existing written documents and then for the sake of our research we analysed the sources which inspired Woody Allen while he was writing his side-splitting essay. And now we turn to the last UFO story which was reported, as Allen states:

> …by two Louisiana factory workers: "Roy and I was catfishing in the bog. I enjoy the bog, as does Roy. We was not drinking, although we had brought with us a gallon of methyl chloride, which we both favor with either a twist of lemon or a small onion. (Allen 1997:330)

The tone of the excerpt above corresponds with the whole essay – Woody Allen reveals his friendly, yet rather contemptuous attitude towards all the witnesses of the mysterious and unexplained occurrences. At the very beginning he betrays his stance with the following tongue-in-cheek remark:

> Up until now, the entire subject of flying saucers has been mostly associated with kooks or oddballs. (Ibid., 325)

The passage about the workers from Louisiana is very relevant for us since, as Allen's fans are well aware of, the author who spent the vast majority of his life in the New York City, has always been an artist-bohemian living in a metropolis of worldwide importance, the city that never sleeps, often making fun of people coming from different and smaller American cities and towns. His Louisiana characters are thus just more non-New Yorkers, mock-worthy stereotypes.

As for the content of the excerpt, Allen suggests the two men might have been under the influence of chloromethane, also called methyl chloride which is a "colourless gas with a pleasant ethereal odour" (Sharp 1990:93).

Although other semantic aspects of this account are interesting and satirical too, let us focus very briefly on the formal aspects of the passage. The reason for this step is explained in the Part 2.

We have already quoted the first sentence reported by one of the workers and, before concluding the first part of this paper, we quote Allen once more:

> At first Roy mistook it for a whooping crane and took a shot at it, but I said, 'Roy, that ain't no crane, 'cause it's got no beak.' (Allen 1997:331)

In the first extract above we detect an incorrect use of the verb *to be* / *was* instead of *were* which indicates the speaker's social status and thus is an inevitable part of his social dialect. The same applies to the phrase found in the same extract – "as does Roy" instead of "so does Roy". Another social dialect phrase is "that ain't no crane" which is marked by the sequence of two negatives. The last specific language unit which we deal with now is the informal and spoken form *ain't*. In the handbook *Longman English Grammar* we can find the following assertion (Alexander 1988:189):

> The non-standard form *ain't*, in place of *am not*, *is not* and *are not*… is frequently heard in all persons and is avoided by educated speakers (except perhaps in joking).

The assertion in the handbook is precise and sufficiently supports our ideas – Woody Allen thus indicates the workers' lack of education and, of course, as we have already mentioned, he did so in order to joke.

Now, we have found ourselves at the end of the first part. Therefore, let us proceed to the second part, which focuses on translation problems.

Part 2: Translation problems

We have selected several problems and analysed them and in this part we suggest suitable approaches which should be taken in order to translate them – to transfer them from the source language into the target language while maintaining the function of the text.

The aim of the text has already been stated – the author's objective was to amuse his readers through humorous stories and witty references to historical (sometimes quasi-historical) documents and accounts retold by the characters. At the same time, Allen reveals his own attitude towards the whole UFO issue as is evident from the next-to-last extract from the essay we have cited up to now. If we want to get an equivalent translation, the aim or the function of the text must be preserved.

Let us start with the first problem – the instance which was supposed to be taken from the Bible. If the author of the original text quotes from an existing book for which a translation already exists in the target culture, a translator should not automatically translate the part again, but should instead use the already existing version. Since we have already proved that Allen's lines were not authentic, not actually taken from *the Book of Leviticus*, we do not have to search for them in the target language version. In such a case we can be creative and, since the author used colloquialisms, we should use the colloquial equivalents in the target language. The only things which we should be really

careful about are the collocations typical of the Bible which we mentioned at the very beginning of the Part 1. Despite the fact that Woody Allen created his own Biblical passage using his own words, some typically Biblical phrases were reflected in his parody. The Bible, of course, has been translated into a great number of languages worldwide and we ought to find the equivalent collocations, the existing translations, in the target language translation of the book. This, however, does not pose a formidable task (e.g. in Slovak the phrase *wailing and gnashing of teeth* is translated as *plač a škrípanie zubami*).

Now we may proceed with the second problem. This passage written in northern-English dialect, contrary to the previous one, is more problematic to translate. Let us mention the basic facts concerning the extract:

– The language of the passage is archaic, for, as we mentioned in the first part, it partly originates from a medieval poem, and is partly made up by Allen, who tried to maintain the archaic features (the meaning of the archaisms and north-English dialectal words remain unknown to us, since we are not English native speakers. This problem is, fortunately, solved also thanks to the *Anthology* editors who foresaw it and for the sake of comfortable reading provided the readers with the modern English equivalents as well).

– If we divide the excerpt from the manuscript into three lines, we detect assonance at the end of the second and the third lines, which should also be preserved in the translation.

Bearing these facts in mind, we have to ensure the intelligibility of the translated text. The translation should be equivalently archaic but only to an extent which is easily understandable to the target text readers – the target text must be communicative. The concept of communicative translation was defined as follows:

> Communicative translation attempts to render the exact contextual meaning of the original in such a way that both content and language are readily acceptable and comprehensible to the readership. (Newmark 1988:47)

The desired function of the text, arising from Allen's intention to amuse his readers, must not be thwarted by its formal complexity, even if the archaic translation equivalents should be much more recent than the archaisms in the original.

According to the Slovak school of translation, the creative method which was elaborated in detail by Ján Ferenčík in the early 1980s, regional dialects in the source language text should not be translated into any other existing regional dialects found in the target language culture since it could result in excessive

naturalisation (Ferenčík 1982). In other words, it would not be natural for an English character to use, for example, a dialect spoken in western parts of Slovakia. Translators should create a special tailor-made dialect suitable for the characters which would aptly express the deviation from the standard language their speech is marked by.

The problem with the incorrect and substandard use of negative forms of the verb *to be* in the last extract we discuss in this paper can be solved on a microstylistic level. It is necessary to find suitable morphological means which would express a more or less lower social position of the users. In contrast to the previous case, the Slovak translation school now, while translating a social dialect, allows us to use linguistic means specific for an existing target culture social dialect. To be more specific, a Slovak translator may translate the clause *Roy, that ain't no crane* with *Roy, čak to neni žeriav*. The translated version is informal enough – the particle *čak* (or *šak* instead of *však*) is substandard. It is not specific to any particular region while being generally used in informal communication. The same applies to the verb *neni* (instead of *nie je*) which now poses an appropriate equivalent for *ain't* from the original.

Before concluding this part as well as the paper itself, we should mention one more example from the original: "Roy and I was catfishing in the bog. I enjoy the bog, as does Roy..." The grammatical deviations have already been discussed but we may now add that word order and a deliberate use of incorrect inflections are suitable vehicles for transferring informality and expressing social dialects in many a so-called inflectional language. Slovak is one of a great number of inflectional languages and herein we see a possible translation of the passage from the essay which is based on using incorrect suffixes (e.g. *v močiare* instead of *v močiari*, *chytali sumcov* instead of *chytali sumce*), etc.:

> Ja s Royom sme v močiare chytali sumcov. Mne sa páči v močiare, Royovi takisto. Sme nepili, ale zali sme si so sebou zo štyri litre chlórmetánu, čo máme obaja rady buď s citrónom, alebo malou cibuľou.

Summary

The author of this paper entitled ***Selected problems with the translation of Woody Allen's essay*** **The UFO Menace** focuses on three specific passages in which Woody Allen satirises people who have reportedly sighted UFOs. He briefly analyses them literarily as well as linguistically and in the second part he proposes translation approaches. Being Slovak, he refers to the Slovak translation school and, when necessary, he introduces various Slovak equivalents of the discussed extracts.

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BOOK REVIEW

Eger Journal of English Studies ***IX*** *(2009) 101–105*

Siobhán Campbell: *Cross-Talk*

Péter Dolmányos

Siobhán Campbell is a poet whose achievements have been recognised with several awards and her poems have been widely anthologised. Besides writing poetry she is a member of the Faculty at Kingston University in London. Siobhán Campbell's *Cross-Talk* (Seren, 2009) follows her earlier collections *The Permanent Wave* and *The cold that burns*.

The collection opens with a brief quotation by John Hewitt and another one by Louis MacNeice. Hewitt's lines reflect on tragic change while MacNeice addresses the internal dynamism of poetry. More striking is the fact that both poets are Protestants from the North, though both of them spent a considerable time in England (in fact MacNeice spent most of his life there) – in spite of this both poets are strongly embraced as formative influences by a wide range of contemporary poets, often irrespective of their sectarian background. The afterlife in the volume of these two quotations, however, is an even more intriguing affair: the lamentation of Hewitt for having to dismiss the pastoral reading of the present is somewhat readjusted by the MacNeicean ideas of internal conflict, just as the deliberately unromantic approach to experience is occasionally (but indeed, only occasionally) mellowed by more comforting elements in the poems of the volume.

The collection is divided into three sections yet only the last one is marked by more than simple numbers, bearing the title of the whole volume. The very first poem of the volume is a tentative promise of a journey north (without any definite reference, e.g. an article or a capitalised initial), yet the title itself, "When all this is over" casts a shadow of doubt over the venture as the "all this" is only vaguely explained in the course of the poem by references to such concepts of "batter" and "crisis". The implications of the details, however, evoke the spirit of freedom and something akin to that pastoral atmosphere which comes under revision in the course of the volume, thus a framework is created out of the simultaneous presence of hope and sober insight, with the latter providing the control.

The collection presents a rich stock of experience ranging from the everyday to the legendary. There are episodes drawn from the trivia of everyday life ("Removal" "The last long drag") which intend to arrest those moments which have been cherished sources of poetry since the time of Romanticism. Side by side with this everyday experience there appear accounts of figures of a near-legendary status from the past of an intimately known community ("Pitched",

"Hothead") with the sustaining pride such a heritage offers. Common superstitions are also included ("Quickthorn", "Blind Eye") which trace allegiances back to a recognisably Irish poetic fatherland. Some of the accounts are bizarre ones as the characters make for a rather awkward experience – the poem "That other walking stick" commemorates such a figure, with a walking stick employed for the sole purpose of beheading certain flowers ("weeds"). There is also the pseudo-legendary "Canola" in which the modern name for a variety of rapeseed is traced back to an imaginary origin of women taking up a position implying rape, collapsing different worlds into each other.

Several of the poems reflect on visits to the North, exploring various aspects of the journey as well as the experience of the border and the world beyond that. Indeed, the whole collection is haunted by the spirit of the North in some form or other: there are references to the Troubles such as the practice of tarring and feathering girls "for loving / from the wrong camp" ("The last long drag", p. 12) or the "*No Fraternising*" ("Parsing", p. 34) graffity recalling usual Unionist battle-cries; several instances hint at the internal divisions of the society of Northern Ireland ("North", "Defined by negatives", "Turns", "The Surprise"). The otherness of experience on the other side of the border is richly acknowledged, even in the form of puns playing on Northern accents ("How could we catch their weird?" in "First Time Up"), and that experience with its bifurcations seems to stamp its mark on the majority of poems in the collection as the fierce logic of a world of conflicts conditions the eyes to register all kinds of events in a light that leaves little space for sentimental assessment.

This fierce logic is employed even in accounts which seem to be free of any other (political, sectarian or indeed any other) consideration. "Giving the Talk" is one such poem – the speaker proudly announces intimate familiarity with the smallest details of the surrounding landscape, concluding with a reference to a road accident taking the life of two children, yet no apparent emotions are reflected in the narrative. Occasionally the tone involves a more personal scale (it becomes nearly informal and colloquial in "Return") but there is a tendency to maintain a reflective distance in spite of the lyric.

The diction is clear and precise yet the poems retain a highly suggestive quality and a degree of mystery about them, making for a challenging reading at what Dillon Johnston would call the "forward edge of language" (Johnston xvii). The wit employed in the poems is striking, yet the deliberate insistence on balancing accounts does not allow sympathy to blur the contours of observations, which creates the impression that the contemplated world is held at an arm's length for a clearer vision.

There is a palpable presence of the Celtic tradition in the cadences of the collection as rhymes and half-rhymes richly resonate through the individual pieces. Alliteration is also frequent and the generally lavish use of sound patterns creates a special music that forms an essential element of the dynamism of several of the poems as the narratives are often at an angle to the music sustaining them, embodying that "internal conflict" which is pointed out by the

MacNeice quotation. The music lulls as well as unsettles, the narratives flow and then come to abrupt ends or turns – the whole collection is outlined by such contrary trends.

Few of the poems end on a consoling note, providing a neat closure and making an organic and consolingly harmonious whole. Instead, there are surprises spared until the end, bizarre turns and comments which tend to complicate the picture and suspend the poems rather than closing them in their own compete circle of reference. This makes the volume an engaging reading, one that opens up basic categories of reference to scrutiny and subtle reconsideration and the lingering mysteries inescapably draw the reader into the poems which in turn keep yielding up other suggestions and subsequent mysteries as well, to embody, and not only to hint at, the cross-talk of the title.

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Two poems by Irish poet Siobhan Campbell
from *Cross-Talk*, her fourth collection of poetry from Seren Press, October 2009

Canola

Far from the astronomers and the counsellors,
the princess gathers her most loyal courtiers
to the safe landing-place for underlings.

If we arrange ourselves like this, she says,
bending her supple back to reveal the lemon suns,
we will survive the collapse of everything we know.

Her maids try the pose, decide it's surprisingly comfortable.
'In the coming times there will be travellers
who'll look from their windows past the subtle greens

stunned by our parade of brightest yellow.
Rape they will say, knowingly, as the word turns
into something like oil on their tongue.'

Removal

This morning
  a hare stood stem-still
    watching my door open square

Sodden look of thud and tear
  hock sworn speed
    the zip of fields into halves

What motioned him to start
  race from a dented den
    where grass unfolds his form?

His breath more white
  more of it on the air than mine
    from a smaller heart

I see the brown eye
  of the spied replicator
    is counting me out

Beyond my lintel
  home recedes
   until it is vastly gone

His seize on the day
  thickens time
    like a bomb

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