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Dear readers:

We are thrilled to bring you the sixth volume of *The Channel*. Since its inception in 2008, *The Channel* has aimed to integrate the three streams of McGill University's English Department – Literature, Cultural Studies, and Drama/Theatre – into one vibrant intellectual forum.

This year, our editors strove not only to recognize the diversity and multiplicity of student writing, but also to present you papers that are relevant and original. In this issue you find seven essays that range from a close reading of Lisa Moore's award-winning Canadian novel, February, to an analysis of the blank spaces in comic books, to a discussion of Andy Warhol's Blow Job. There are two radically different studies of Shakespeare's beloved character Falstaff, a paper on technology and voice in that daunting, yet quintessential modernist novel, Ulysses, and an ethical reading of Irving Layton's poetry that won the 2012 prize for best undergraduate essay in Canadian literature. This edition of *The Channel* displays the strongest student work in our department – and we are confident that it will appeal to a wide variety of readers.

We invite you to take a look inside this journal and to join us in celebrating the accomplishments of our incredible community.

Olivia Lifman + Gillian Massel
The Editors-in-Chief

Glass Houses: Lisa Moore's February and the Curse of Reflection

MATTHEW REDMOND

Lisa Moore's second novel, *February*, focuses on a traumatic event in contemporary Canadian history: the sinking of the *Ocean Ranger* oil rig, which resulted in the death of all eighty-four crewmembers, many of them from nearby Newfoundland. While dealing with a particular community's terrible loss, the novel also gradually unfolds into a poetic meditation on mortality itself. Moore achieves this unfolding with a plunge into the mental sanctum of her characters; she draws out their private fears and desires, and transforms the book's physical reality into a subtly symbolic one. In an especially effective and thorough exercise of such power, Moore takes one of the properties of water, reflectiveness, and applies it to every corner of her fictional milieu, creating a mirrored world where her characters fight to avoid drowning in their most private anxieties. To save herself, the novel's long-suffering protagonist, Helen O'Mara, must first escape her own fixed likeness as a solitary 'survivor.'

February discloses its own symbolic makeup in its first chapter, and even in its first line: "Helen watches as the man touches the skate blade to the sharpener" (Moore 1). Perceptibly, this woman, the widow of *Ocean Ranger* crewman Cal O'Mara, begins her story on a razor's edge. Her grief controls not only which nearby objects she notices but also what meaning they assume for her. The narrator, who will follow Helen's viewpoint closely throughout the book, quickly latches onto a few seemingly trivial objects and episodes from both Helen's present surroundings and her memories. Readers follow Helen's gaze from the skate to a gum ball machine from which Timmy withdraws a black jawbreaker; then to the waves of a beach where Helen sat decades ago with her son, John; and finally to a nearby frozen pond, which, according to the shopkeeper, "will be good soon" (7). Far from arbitrary, these landmarks are an expression of Helen's mental state. By returning obsessively to them throughout the chapter, Moore's narrator models the symptoms of her protagonist's troubled psyche. The reader, meanwhile, is thrust into a cramped world of glass, steel, and water. Moore's reliance upon these materials to construct her opening scene should draw our attention to what is common among them: a tendency to reflect light.

Reflectiveness is not the only property that gives these early details meaning. The grinding metal and orange sparks are an arresting suggestion of Helen's continuing struggle with the technological failure that killed her husband (Lecker, 27 September), while the black jawbreaker whispers of the complicated interplay of risk and luck. Long after this opening scene, however, it is reflectiveness that permeates the landscape of the novel more deeply than any other motif. Both before and after Cal's death, the world of the O'Mara family is filled with re-

flective surfaces. They can be found in every chapter, every time period, and nearly every character's memory. Many of them are humble, like the glasses, butter knives, and stainless steel cookware of the sterile O'Mara kitchen. But Moore does not confine her motif to the world of household objects; she is both more subtle and more conspicuous than that. John and Jane kindle their love affair in Iceland, near "Wineglass Bay" (Moore 32). Jane, who "made a stir with her master's thesis, an ethnography of street people living in New York," is still troubled years later by the memory of their "glazed eyes and addictions" (121). More than one hundred pages after this confession, John stalks the streets of Toronto, contemplating his past and future while watching "the reflection of yellow cabs float in the glass like giant carp" (235). Back in Newfoundland, his mother navigates memories ranging from homework with her son—"your lives are backwards" (14)—to the obvious, recently separated former boss who "couldn't match socks" (200). While these images suggest the omnipresence of reflection in all its forms throughout *February*, they also indicate the artfulness with which Moore deploys that property. Glass and other sources of reflection are a fixture of the novel's every attempt to portray grief and suffering. Moore's goals in choosing this conceit are complex in themselves, and still more so because the use of glass has a precedent in canonical Canadian literature—one that Moore clearly knows about.

Michael Ondaatje, with his watershed novel *Coming through Slaughter*, delivered some of the most iconic scenes in contemporary Canadian fiction. One of the most memorable finds his protagonist, Buddy Bolden, sitting at a kitchen table with his wife when, "furious at something" (Ondaatje 16), he thrusts his left hand toward what he assumes is a wall but is in fact a closed window. At the last possible moment before impact, Bolden realizes his mistake and tries to stop. Though the glass is left "starred and crumbled," his hand remains "miraculously uncut" (16). "It [Bolden's hand] had acted exactly like a whip," the narrator explains, "violating the target and still free" (16). Bolden has destroyed without being destroyed, a feat that the narrator then fills with equal amounts of wonder and foreboding. This small phenomenon demonstrates the quasi-mystical inner power of a brilliant and tragic musician— the man whose life becomes the focus of Ondaatje's whole book. Moore's strategy is different. She recreates Ondaatje's image—a man capable of shattering glass with his slightest touch—but then shifts the focus of her novel to the lives and struggles of that man's wife and son.

Consider Helen and Cal's wedding night, when Cal inexplicably breaks a "full-length mirror" (Moore 72) in the lobby of the Newfoundland Hotel. "He must have touched it," we are told, "knocked it in some way, but it seemed to spread with cracks all by itself" (72). Already the resemblance to Ondaatje's scene is quite clear, but Moore carries it even further by telling us that Cal "walked over the glass in his bare feet (...) and he was not cut" (78). In tone as well as in subject matter, this scene is patterned after *Coming through Slaughter*. Unlike Bolden's wife, who can only stare with amazement at her husband's inadvertently destruc-

tive act, Helen shares her own interpretation of the scene, albeit through the mediation of a third-person narrator. For her, this unforgettable moment becomes a gateway to the future:

> ...one baby after another, and the jobs, the bills, snowsuits, dinner parties disappointments (...) nights on the town, staggering home in each other's arms , dragging each other up the hill, and the stars over the Kirk, graffiti on the retaining wall; all of that was in the mirror of the Newfoundland hotel on their wedding night, and—*POW*—Cal glanced at it, and the mirror spread with cracks (...) and it fell to the carpet, fifty or so jagged pieces (77).

Moore complicates this dreamlike sequence by subtly blending Helen's youthful identity with her current one. The final assessment comes from the elder Helen, who still searches her memory for signs of the tragedy that awaited her in the years ahead. Unbroken and inert, the full-length mirror contains the youthful Helen's expectations of married life—its mundaneness and its awkward glimpses of beauty. The tasks and habits that appear to her seem both unremarkable and unrelated, but are in fact linked and dignified by Helen's onetime assumption that she would weather all such challenges with Cal supporting her (as he does literally in her vision). The elder Helen understands that in breaking the mirror, Cal transcends the limits of the difficult, intimate, and beautifully conventional married life that his young wife foresees, leaving only "jagged pieces" for her to traverse in pain. The younger Helen, in contrast, sees the broken mirror mainly as a sign of Cal's awesome power, even integrating glass itself into a private wish for her unborn child: "my son will be like that: black hair and blue eyes and thousands of mirrors smashing in his wake" (79). By shattering the mirror, albeit accidentally, Cal becomes larger than life in his new wife's eyes. Unfortunately for Helen, he proves as haunting in death as he was casually wondrous while alive.

By cracking the full-length mirror, likely the largest in the novel, Cal reveals Moore's most important intertextual project. Having recreated Ondaatje's metaphor, she will explore not the life of the man who broke the glass, but the lives of the characters closest to him. Throughout her novel, reflective objects—especially those made of glass—become canvasses for the grief and shame of an alienated widow—or the inner tumult a boy who hardly knew his father. In a famously close-knit region of Canada, *February* gives more weight than *Coming through Slaughter* to the breakdown of a family, and the subsequent attempts of its members to assemble into some collective unit, in which process lies their best hope of healing.

After the wedding night, but before Cal's death at sea, the glassy surfaces that litter Helen's world are numerous but largely benign, and even useful. Helen wears "big sunglasses" to the beach (106), and Cal "black sunglasses" to the regatta (210). During a job interview, John re-

calls that his father "couldn't see a thing without his glasses"— which were found "tucked away" (139) in his shirt pocket when Cal's body was recovered after the disaster. Cal also buys his son "Jesus boots" (168) and teaches him to walk on the lake without disturbing the surface of the water. Moore aligns glass with stability and perceptive clarity. Other pieces of glass, however, are already tinted by the fear of death. One of the more harrowing 'early' chapters in this novel concerns the family dog, which runs away during a violent storm. Suspecting that Cal's beloved pet must be dead, Helen gives up the search. En route home, she notices that "the lawn was covered in water, and only the very tips of each blade stippled the glassy surface" (188). The metaphor must hold some special meaning for Helen—perhaps by unconscious association with the Newfoundland Hotel scene— since the narrator quickly repeats it: "It [the rain] was still falling, but it fell silently, and there was sun and the clouds and the blue sky reflected in the glassy surface over the lawn" (188). The central question of this episode is not whether the dog will live or die, but whether Helen will give up hope that he might be alive. Her indecision is dramatized by the rain-soaked lawn, whose every blade of grass is a natural mirror reflecting Helen's personal conflict back at her. That Moore will turn even grass into a reflective surface demonstrates the enormous value of mirrors to her psychologized project. Later, Helen, Cal, and the kids resume their search for the dog and find him near death, "lying in a puddle of water" (189), framed by another mirror of sorts. Helen's brush with mortality in this chapter foreshadows the much longer and more painful grieving process that lies ahead of her—a process that plays out against an equally glassy backdrop.

Once Cal dies, glass changes decidedly from a medium of useful tools to an unwanted, confining, and, at times, even violent presence. In part one, Helen's private anguish is described as "a transparent partition between her and the outside world" (20). In part two, during a chapter about her daughter's baptism, Moore's narrator repeats this image with major differences: "You see your life but it's as though you are behind a glass partition and the sparks fly up and you can't see them" (65). This second version combines the original metaphor with the orange sparks from chapter one. More importantly, it specifies that when Helen is trapped behind is a boundary that reflects light. Unlike eyeglasses, which improve vision without changing what is actually seen, the glass of mirrors and partitions produces something that would not otherwise exist: the image of the watcher herself. Decades after Cal's death, then, mirrors are dangerous because they remind Helen of what she has become: an aging widow who feels undesirable, hopeless, and alone.

Glass threatens Helen both physically and emotionally. While vacationing in Florida with her sister Louise—perhaps the only person with whom she feels completely comfortable—Helen is involved in a car accident. We are told that her "head hit the windshield," and later that she quickly "put down the visor and checked her face in the mirror" (213). In the novel's larger figurative content, there is something almost perversely pathetic about the use of one glass surface to inspect the damage inflicted by another. Decades before this incident, Helen is

forced to take a job as a waitress, but quits after an appalling experience: "a man smashed a beer bottle on the corner of a table and held it to his girlfriend's face" (16). Helen cannot help but read this incident as a twisted reflection of her wedding night: man, woman, and the threat of broken glass. But perhaps the cruelest assault by a glass surface comes years later, during a chapter titled "The Carpenter." In one of the earliest scenes to involve Barry, Helen wonders whether Louise's daughter-in-law has tried to set her up. "She stood and saw herself in the mirror and she was bright red, with a sheen of fast sweat on her forehead" (559). This mirror inflicts the full weight of Helen's years upon her, even mutilating her face with the blinding "sheen."

Wracked with unresolved feelings about her husband's death, Helen pays frequent visits to the *Ocean Ranger* in her head, which has sunk thousands of times since the real disaster. "The Portal" takes us through Helen's latest mental inspection of the doomed rig. Her frustrated imagination, desperate for certainty in a world that she never actually saw, focuses on particular features of the ship—the kind that can be found in official reports—but also tries to impose the effects of a devastating accident upon them. In her mind, the titular portal becomes a "glass portal smashed by ice" (148), and thus a symbol of reflection as destruction. Since Helen can never succeed in building a fully accurate simulation of the wreck, her mind runs to the most lurid possibilities, like that of being "attacked by a fish through the window" (152), which also equates glass with the dangers of an uncaring external world. As Helen sees it, the man whose inner strength could shatter a full-length mirror was killed by a revolt of the glass and water around him. In her imagined wreck, the breaking of a piece of glass demonstrates her Cal's strength but his vulnerability before the power of nature. After his death, Helen and John are forced to endure constant, chilling personal reflections upon the fragility of life.

Moore's novel is highly 'realistic' precisely because of its expressionistic picture of grief. The author accepts distortion of her characters' environment as necessary to a faithful representation of their shattered worldview. Through her use of mirror imagery, such distortion borders on the supernatural. It almost seems that Cal, in breaking that mirror in the Newfoundland Hotel, unleashed a curse upon himself and his family—one that not only looks his life but also claws at his family through every available mirror. While obviously not a literal explanation of the disaster itself, Moore's heightened reality likely speaks to the sense of helplessness and victimization felt by real people facing circumstances like Helen's. Her son, John, soon proves to be no less a victim of glass than his mother.

It is impossible to appreciate John O'Mara's insecurities without analyzing his relationship to glass. From his first appearances in the novel as a boy, John tries intuitively to fill the gap left by the death of his father. In a moment of gendered social commentary, he even buys his mother a steak, being "very proud of himself" (17). In 1982, as Helen is going into labour, John's protective impulses flare up more visibly than ever. At first he watches silently as his mother clambers into a taxi. Still

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trying not to burden John with adult stresses, Helen would prefer to leave him behind. Just as the taxi is about to pull away, "Johnny slap[s] his hand against the window" (39). Whereas Buddy Bolden and Cal broke glass accidentally, thereby demonstrating their mysterious inner power, John strikes such a surface intentionally and reveals only his desperate upon others. In response to his son's impulsive gesture, Helen gives the cab driver blunt but highly meaningful instructions: "Don't let him in" (39). This brief scene registers John's frustrated desire to take his father's place. Years later, at fourteen, John accidentally runs through a "plate-glass door" (174) while shoplifting and is punished for his rebellious act by a shower of "glass triangles" that leave him in need of stiches. Mythic men like Cal and Bolden would have emerged uncut, but the boy suffers for his mistakes.

John's childhood anxieties remain with him well into his adult life, and Moore consistently paints the same haunting visuals to express his troubled relation to the past. Shortly after learning that Jane is pregnant, John confides in a hotel cook from Sydney, who is busy chopping onions with a large knife—"one hand on the handle, the other on the top of the blade" (90). Bearing his soul while facing the stainless steel surface of the tool, John becomes more like Helen than he can know. Recall how Moore structures our first glimpse of Helen's private turmoil around the blade of a skate. The later image of John "struggling to get the big window on the third floor open" (Moore 137) makes even clearer that his current problems—especially his fear of becoming a father—are closely related to his troubled childhood. For all his professional clout, John remains the fatherless child pushing his hands against a glass partition, unable to make it move. Moore uses the symbolic language inherited from Ondaatje to express the cursed handing down from father to son. John's constant, unsuccessful attempts to bend, break, or otherwise consciously manipulate glass are an expression of his unfulfilled desire to assume the role of his mother's protector—the same impulse that caused him to buy the skate. Illogically but understandably, John will not forgive himself for having been a child when his father died.

In her treatment of lives tainted by tragedy, Moore never crafts an identifiable "turning point" for any of her characters. There is no single event that marks the beginning of a "new life" for Helen. By jumping back and forth between time periods in various characters' lives, *February* rejects time itself as the agent of change and acceptance—the so-called healer of all wounds. Since Helen experiences the night of her husband's death thousands of times, her life is better expressed in terms of an emotional continuum than a timeline. It is clear, however, that Helen's interactions with Barry change the course of life for the better. To prove Barry's positive effect on Helen, Moore disguises tiny, figurative healing gestures as trivial details. While he renovates her home, Barry covers Helen's furniture in "thick sheets of opaque plastic" (113), thereby reducing the glare in her private space. The laconic carpenter is interests, and, eventually, the nature of his attachment to the person who calls him during jobs. The opportunity to focus on someone else's life

is itself a temporary release from the palpable pressure of her constant self-scrutiny, of which her mirrored world has been an omnipresent reminder to the reader. When Helen's curiosity turns to attraction—most clearly with a private declaration of "I am wowed" (234)—the reader must wonder how such new feelings will affect the novel's psychological landscape.

As Helen's perspective shifts, so does the novel's predominant visual symbolism. In the last section, Helen's environment changes from reflective to projective—not a world of mirrors, but one of light. Moore's optimistically titled last section, "The New Year," follows Helen and Barry's first date, an awkward undertaking for them both. After dinner, "Helen walk[s] over to a wall switch and dim[s] the lights while he [is] talking" (286). She then leads him upstairs to look at one of her finished wedding dresses. The scene that follows is by far Moore's most luminous yet:

> "Helen had a hundred-watt bulb in that lamp and it hit the white satin and the dress was blazing white. Pearls and sequins sparkling, light spilling along the folds, beading up like mercury and spreading in all directions." (287)

Light follows the apprehensive couple. After dinner, they head for a fireworks display, eventually walking between cars, past "the sea-foam of yellow headlights" (284), to get a better view of the main event. Not surprisingly, the festival of lights throughout this chapter achieves its climax in Moore's description of the fireworks themselves. "The explosion of light seemed to reach through the darkness towards them"—and, soon later—"[t]he light flew in their faces as silent as something at the bottom of the ocean" (288). In our world, silence and pyrotechnics do not mix; in Moore's, the skyward spectacle serves as a mirror image of the undersea world. The simile not only brings new symmetry to the universe of *February*, but also gives Helen a figurative opportunity to face her fears. No longer trapped on an ever-sinking *Ocean Ranger*, she finds herself capable of staring unafraid at a seafloor both conjured and changed by bright, revealing lights.

Perhaps to underline her thematic shift from mirror- to light-based imagery, Moore suddenly reenacts that shift in miniature with an unlikely prop. While Helen and Barry make love on the couch, her eye is drawn to the glass circle of Barry's "watch face" (289), vibrating against the floral print of her sofa. In an earlier stage of the novel, this glass reference, like so many others, would have been yet another sign of Helen's captivity in guilt and the fear of intimacy. But through a humbly remarkable transformation, the watch becomes a "disc of light" (289) that finally touches with her tongue. In one way, the preceding two hundred ninety-five pages of Moore's novel have been building to this minute metaphor, which quietly announces a profound change in Helen's perspective upon life. The Christian resonance is surely deliberate; Helen, previously described as a non-practicing Catholic, is now savouring 'emmunion'

with another human being after years of emotional isolation. A moment later, Barry grunts—"a sound so unselfconscious and true so deep inside him that it thrilled her" (290). These three characteristics—brightness, unselfconsciousness, and expression from within—have replaced water, glass, and stainless steel as the main components of *February*. It now seems reasonable to imagine that in the years ahead, Helen might slowly open up to the people from whom she once felt cut off by the pressures of life as a single mother. Her newfound solace may also lift some of John's self-inflicted guilt, freeing him from constant, futile fights with glass walls.

In a chapter called "She Sees It," Moore gives her protagonist one last intense, cathartic burst of grief and discovery. This dark vision reads like an atlas of Helen's mind. Entering the chapter with her through a now-familiar portal of the *Ocean Ranger*, we find a "cliff of water" that "turns, as things sometimes turn, into concrete." Helen stares at the cliff and asks herself: "Is it concrete or glass?" (298). In fact, the sea is both. As concrete, it crushed Cal's body; as glass, it haunts Helen with constant reminders of her loneliness. Experiencing water as a mirror allows Helen to pursue this line of thought: "The wave (...) is a mirror image of death, not death itself; but it is advantageous not to glance that way. Avoid the mirror if you can" (299). Helen has spent nearly three decades avoiding all mirrors because she lacks Cal's exhilarating power to break them with a glance. Now, however, Helen is reminded of the night when her absent (and, as she would later discover, dead) husband spoke to her from the bathroom. "Look out the window," he said. Or he said something similar. Look out the window" (300). Like the Newfoundland Hotel accident, this command offers a bizarre mixture of the mundane and the supernatural—so simple in itself, but apparently spoken by a ghost. Moore's use of glass surfaces places the two scenes in dialogue with one another. Unlike every other window in the book, this one is just a window; it neither threatens no entreats the observer, but exists simply to be looked through. That irreducible, selfless function is of a piece with Helen's realization, in this same chapter, of a "promise" to her husband: "If Cal died out there on the rig, Helen would never forget him. That was the promise. She will never forget him" (302). This deeply personal, almost vocational discovery alleviates much of Helen's private self-loathing and sense of passive futility. Glass and metal will not threaten this woman anymore, because she no longer despises the sight of her own face.

It is fitting that the last chapter of Helen's story finds her sitting on a beach, beside an oceanic mirror. After more than twenty years, the mystery and malaise of the water has given way, at least partially, to the revelatory power of the sun. "The sun is constant," says Moore's narrator. "The sun is not moving" (302). Soon Barry leaves Helen on the shore, diving under the surface of the waves. There is a pregnant pause. As he rises from the ocean and returns to rejoin his new wife, readers witness the mirror image of a scene from the first chapter. There Helen remembers standing on another beach, calling out to the bullies whipping her son with seaweed, and watching them as they "took off,

ploughing through the waves" (6). Slowly and respectfully, Moore has turned the ocean from a place of constant antagonism to one of consolation and peace.

Inspired in part by Michael Ondaatje's use of glass to portray genius, suffering, and survival, Lisa Moore adapts this complex metaphor to the study of normal people struggling with unresolved grief. To portray her characters' psychological battle with their own anxieties about death, as well as their sense of isolation from the living, Moore places her characters in a jagged world of glass and metal, thereby literalizing their tendency toward self-destructive reflections. John and Helen are constantly beset by their own likenesses—a sign that recovery from the trauma of losing Cal will require some serious acceptance of their respective identities. As the book's visuals change broadly from reflective to projective, there follows an increased sense of hope that these characters, especially Helen, can find meaning and purpose in the external world. At the very least, she can "look out the window" with the genuine hope of such discovery.

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Gramophone, Telephone, *Ulysses*: Technology and the Voice in the Modernist Novel

KEVIN DROZ

James Joyce's *Ulysses* (1922) dramatizes the ways in which modernity and technology intersect (Danius 193). Throughout *Ulysses*, Joyce interweaves the dialect of the Dublin of 1904 with the emerging language of telecommunication, especially that of the gramophone, the telephone, and the radio. By recording aural communications at a distance, these technologies complicate traditional understandings of the voice as an utterance that a body fleetingly projects. Thomas Edison introduced the phonograph, the ancestor of the gramophone, to the public on 6 December 1877 (Kittler 3). Oliver Read and Walter L. Welch note that, in an 1877 issue of *Scientific American*, Edison intimated that with the phonograph "Speech ha[d] become, as it were, immortal" (12). Edison not only recognized the phonograph's potential to revolutionize telecommunication, but also identified a variety of possible uses for his machine, including "the reproduction of the last words of dying persons" (Knowles 1). In the "Hades" episode of *Ulysses*, Leopold Bloom similarly ponders the potential of the phonograph to capture the voices of human beings, even from beyond the grave. Bloom believes that placing a gramophone in the graves of the deceased will "Remind you of the voice like the photograph reminds you of the face" (U 6.966-7). He hints that the human voice, even when stripped of the body, carries the memory of the departed.

For Bloom, gramophones destabilize the relation of the speaking voice to the recorded voice. Gramophones etch the modulations of a speaking voice onto the surface of a record. "Upon speaking into a phonograph," Friedrich A. Kittler remarks, "the vibrations of one's voice are transferred to a point that engraves lines onto a metal plate that correspond[s] to the uttered sounds" (30). Gramophones contain a copper disk into which furrows are impressed; a needle emits recorded sounds, voices, and music as it travels over these furrows (Kittler 31). By this logic, gramophones counterbalance the fragmentation of a voice – the degeneration from "uttered sounds" into copper grooves – by reassembling that voice as a record plays. Gramophones, then, endlessly deconstruct and reconstruct the human voice, and reify the voice through technology.

In *Ulysses* disembodied voices – voices heard without, or beyond, the bodies from which they are projected – enter into the lives of Leopold Bloom and Stephen Dedalus. Complications accrue as technologies isolate speakers from the inflections of their respective voices, the gestural logic of their respective bodies, and the intimacy of direct aural contact. Telecommunicational distance thematizes a crucial problem of modernist aesthetics: "represent[ing] authentic experience in an age in which the category of experience itself has become a problem" (Danius 3). How can fiction reconcile the voice of the dead – a voice recorded on a gramophone, for example – with the death of the body that uttered that voice? The rise of telecommunication coincides not only with the gradual mechanization of the body, but also with the gradual humanization of the machine. Recording technologies appropriate the functions of bodily organs: the telegraph acts as an "artificial mouth," while the telephone acts "as an artificial ear" (Kittler 28). In the "Aeolus" episode, Joyce stresses the means by which people ascribe human attributes to mechanical utterances. Trekking through the offices of the *Freeman's Journal*, Bloom muses over the nature of the noises that circulate throughout the building. Bloom assigns specific meanings to all of the sounds that he encounters: "Everything speaks in its own way," he reasons (U 7.177). That Bloom locates meaning in mechanical expression, notably that of the uproar from printing presses and ringing telephones, bespeaks Joyce's fascination with the intersection of the human and the mechanical. Technology becomes the lens through which Joyce "investigates the perceptional problems of seeing and of hearing against the backdrop of telephones, newspapers, and gramophones" (Misa 328). Both Bloom's and Stephen's wanderings throughout the Hibernian metropolis expose them to various forms of technology. Technology, Sara Danius writes, is therefore "in a specific sense *constitutive* of high-modernist aesthetics" (3; italics in the original). By appropriating the suggestive power of the voice, machines seize modes of human expression. Joyce problematizes the ways in which technology reifies and dehumanizes the voice: *Ulysses* deconstructs how modernity attributes expressive power to non-human machines, specifically through the voice.

In the "Hades" episode, Bloom's interior monologues often convey a keen interest in the voice. As Simon Dedalus berates his son, Stephen, for keeping company with the "contaminated bloody double-dyed ruffian" Buck Mulligan (U 6.64), Bloom's mind wanders, and eventually settles on the memory of his deceased son, Rudy. In a moment that wonders what it would be like "If little Rudy had lived. See him grow up. Hear his voice in the house" (U 6.75-6). That Bloom conflates Rudy's voice with Rudy's living presence indicates that, as Allan Hepburn argues, "Voices, as objects in and of themselves, begin to replace subjectivity" (*Ulysses*, Opera, Loss" 63). Voices reveal their expressive power throughout *Ulysses* as synecdoches for the characters from which they emanate (Hepburn, "*Ulysses*, Opera, Loss" 63). Instances of a voice standing in for a character abound in *Ulysses*. In "Sirens," "Miss voice of Kennedy" responds to Lenehan (U 11.237). Molly Bloom's voice speaks independently of her body in "Circe," as her voice announces "*(sweetly, hoarsely, rising to her throat)* Ah! Weeshwashtkissinapooisthnapoohuck?" (U 15.3810-3). Molly's convoluted utterances answer "Boylan's Voice," whose speech remains equally muddled: "*(sweetly, hoarsely, in the pit of his stomach)* Ah! Godblazegrukbrukarchkhrasht!"

(U 15.3808-10). The voices of both the clients and the whores in Bella Cohen's brothel also articulate beyond their respective bodies: "The Voice of Kitty" chats to "The Voice of Florry," who in turn prompts responses from "The Voice of Lynch," "The Voice of Zoe," and "The Voice of Virag" (U 15.3410, U 15.3412, U 15.3415, U 15.3417, U 15.3419).

Yet in the "Hades" episode, voices transcend the limits of synecdoche, and instead "stand[] in for life itself" (Hepburn "*Ulysses*, Opera, Loss" 65). Bloom's reflections on Rudy's voice lead him to think of Rudy's conception. Bloom recalls: "How life begins" (U 6.81). He in turn recalls his daughter, Milly, and similarly announces "Life, life" (U 6.90). Because of his obsession with the voices of the living and the dead, Bloom flirts with the idea of placing gramophones in the graves of the departed. Bloom reasons that gramophones, with their capacity to record, transmit, and retransmit sound, could memorialize the dead for the living:

> Besides how could you remember everybody? Eyes, walk, voice. Well, the voice, yes: gramophone. Have a gramophone in every grave or keep it in the house. After dinner on a Sunday. Put on your poor old great-grandfather. Kraahraark! Hellohellohello amawfully-glad kraark awfullygladseeagain hellohello amawf krpthsth. Remind you of the voice like the photograph reminds you of the face. (U 6.962-7)

Bloom advocates preserving the memory of the dead through the aural capacities of the gramophone. His notion of "Put[ting] on your poor old greatgrandfather" on the gramophone resonates with one of Edison's original intentions for this technology – conserving the voices of the dead and the dying. From its inception, as Sebastian Knowles observes, the gramophone entertained in the public imaginary immediate connotations of death and dying: "the gramophone [was] associated . . . with the utterances of the deathbed, and the recording of the dying" (1). Avital Ronell likewise contends that telecommunication "has always been inhabited by the rhetoric of the departed" (qtd. on Danius 181). Why record a sound, a piece of music, or a voice, if not to protect it from its inevitable decay?

With the advent of recording technologies came the possibility to replay speech that otherwise would vanish upon its utterance. Jacques Derrida describes, in what he terms "the gramophone effect," the principle that signifiers gain significance through repetition: "meaning is . . . woven" through the signifier "from repeatable marks" (Caputo 187-8). Bloom similarly hopes that, through the "technological repetition" of the voice on the gramophone, he can reanimate the memory of the deceased (Caputo 188). Because gramophones "perfectly reproduce[] the living voice . . . in the absence of any living, intentional presence," they permit the dead to survive in the memory of the living (Caputo 188). Preserving the dead in a more vivid, forceful way than a photograph does, the gramophone "implements [a] memory and thereby makes it

conscious" (Kittler 33). Like a photograph, however, the experience of a gramophone can be repeated infinitely, even beyond the death of the original speaker.

Repetition and "[r]epeated phrases," as Angela Frattarola observes, "come to have a great impact on the reader because they are familiar sounds made meaningful for no reason other than that [readers] have heard them several times before" (152). Repetition comes to a head in the operational logic of the "Circe" episode (the stylistically innovative height of *Ulysses*), which recasts many of the events, phrases, and voices that Bloom and Stephen encounter throughout the day. Aural repetition, though, poses a complex hermeneutical problem: are vocal utterances inherently meaningful, or do they merely acquire meaning through repetition? In James Joyce, Richard Ellmann notes that Joyce's favourite composer was Giuseppe Verdi; Ellmann explains that Joyce "could intoxicate himself on a single phrase from [Verdi] . . . which [Joyce] sang again and again" (393). Joyce, moreover, often "would call on his son Giorgio to sing it in his clear boy's voice, [and] then he would repeat lovingly the one word 'ri-i-i-ide-e-enti' from Verdi's line "*Addio! del passato bei sogni ridenti*" (Ellmann 393; italics in the original). Joyce recognized the suggestive power of repetition, and integrated it into his fiction.

Bloom's distinction between the repeated viewing of a photograph and the repeated playing of a gramophone also comments on the distinction between print media and telecommunication. After the emergence of the gramophone, the telephone, and the radio, "print-biased media ecology had been altered by new ways of recording, storing, and transmitting sounds and voices" (Winthrop-Young and Wutz xii). Because of the varied modes through which technology could now transmit information, "writers became increasingly aware of the materiality of language and communication" (Winthrop-Young and Wutz xxv). Many of these modes, especially voice recordings, problematize the relation between the spoken voice and the recorded voice. Unlike the era that Winthrop-Young and Wutz describe as "print-biased," the modern era gauges the extent to which the gramophone faithfully captures a recorded voice. Innovations in technology and communication in the nineteenth century accordingly "center[] on links between flesh and machine" (Kittler 74). Frattarola remarks that modernity faces a challenge absent to previous times: the act of separating utterances from their "originating sources" (144). How do sounds projected from a body differ from, contrast with, or go against, sounds recorded by a gramophone? The inner body-voice dyad – the body that utters a voice diverges from the uttered voice – troubles the way in which people respond to sound (Frattarola 144).

Although gramophones complicate the relation of the body to the voice, they also overcome the formal limitations of visual media, including photographs. Gramophones remove the mediation between the meaning of an object and the communication of that object's meaning. Language, for example, transmits information through symbols; print media employs words as symbols that convey meaning, and music scores

employ musical notation to the same end (Kittler 4). As Kittler remarks, language sacrifices the transmission of the real through the mediation of symbols and signifiers (14). Kittler understands the real as that which "neither the mirror of the imaginary nor the grid of the symbolic can catch: the physiological accidents and stochastic disorder of bodies" (15-6). "Once technological media guarantee the similarity of the dead to stored data by turning them into the latter's mechanical product," Kittler argues, "the boundaries of the body, death and lust, leave the most indelible traces" (55). The "indelible traces" to which Kittler refers ensure not only that recording technologies capture aural occurrences, but also that these aural traces can be relieved without mediating influences, such as language.

As "Hades" unfolds, Bloom also considers the power of the telephone to connect the living with the dead. Watching the gravediggers bury Paddy Dignam, Bloom entertains an odd notion: "And if he was alive all the time? . . . They ought to have some law to pierce the heart and make sure or an electric clock or a telephone in the coffin and some kind of a canvas airhole. (U 6.865-9). Bloom's musings "associat[e] death and telecommunication" (Darius 180). Although he grants that the dead depart from the world of the living during their burial, Bloom also hopes to be absolutely certain that the dead are indeed dead – because "if the dead are not really dead, a telephone might come in handy" (Darius 180). David Trotter notes that on 10 March 1931, the Telephone Development Association (TDA) approved a poster campaign to increase awareness of the telephone, both as a tool for convenient communication and also as a tool for emergencies ("e-Modernism" 15). One of the TDA's slogans reads: "Presence in absence – secured by the telephone" (qtd. in Trotter "e-Modernism" 15). Just as the TDA understood that the telephone plays a pivotal role in times of crisis, so does Bloom believe that telephony can rescue the living from a likely death.

Hepburn remarks that in Joyce's fiction, telephonic "Distance, paradoxically, permits intimacy and sympathetic rapport" ("Noise, Music, Voice, Dubliners" 208). For Bloom, this "sympathetic rapport" transcends the distinction between the living and the dead. With his radically egalitarian vision, Bloom hopes to connect all peoples through infrastructure. And he even explores the possibility of telecommunication among the dead. "Wonder does the news go about whenever a fresh one is let down. Underground communication" (U 6.990-1). Bloom suggests implanting telephones in the graves of the deceased will "make certain that the inhabitants of graves, too, are connected to the public telephone network" (Kittler 12).

Telephony, though, centers on the "dissociation of the eye and the ear," during which a technological mode of communication replaces system of signification [bodily contact] has just been sundered" (Darius 12). "The experience of the disembodied voice," Darius writes, "has thus been detached" (13). Indeed, both the gramophone and telecommunication more broadly "strip[] . . . human qualities such as consciousness

and agency" from the voice; they "reduc[e] [the voice] to a nonhuman entity" (Darius 16). Telephony complicates the relationship between speaker and auditor. The telephone enables communication across both spatial and temporal distances: like the gramophone, the telephone is "a mechanical device . . . [that] makes it possible to strip sound not only of its spatial source but also of its temporal origin" (Darius 17). That devices such as the phonograph etch "invisible physiological action[s] [like voices] into visual records" certainly suggests that nineteenth- and twentieth-century technologies "appropriated the epistemic privileges of the human senses" (Darius 19).

Throughout "Hades," and indeed throughout all of *Ulysses*, Bloom debates how to use technology to reshape public infrastructure. On the carriage ride to Paddy Dignam's funeral, Bloom muses: "Couldn't they invent something automatic so that the wheel itself much handier? Well but that fellow would lose his job then? Well but then another fellow would get a job making the new invention?" (U 6.176-9). That Bloom constantly conjures up plans to improve public transit reflects Joyce's preoccupation with the "thematization of the public utility" (Rubenstein 39). Bloom remarks:

—I can't make out why the corporation doesn't run a tramline from the parkgate to the quays, Mr Bloom said. All those animals could be taken in trucks down to the boats.

—Instead of blocking up the thoroughfare, Martin Cunningham said. Quite right. They ought to.

—Yes, Mr Bloom said, and another thing I often thought, is to have municipal funeral trams like they have in Milan, you know. Run the line out to the cemetery gates and have special trams, hearse and carriage and all. Don't you see what I mean? (U 6.400-8)

Rubenstein contends that, during Joyce's career, Joyce's efforts to "Forg[e]" national consciousness [gave] way after *A Portrait* to "efforts to[] engineer[]" national consciousness" (47). Of course, the "forging" to which Rubenstein alludes stems from the famous concluding lines of *Portrait*, in which the young Stephen Dedalus declares: "I go to encounter for the millionth time the reality of experience and to *forge* in the smithy of my soul the uncreated conscience of my race" (275-6; emphasis added). The crux of these polarized approaches to modernity – that of the blacksmith and that of the engineer – spring from the inner operations of Joyce's fiction. For Rubenstein, Joyce composed not only *modernist* fiction but also fiction that *modernized*. Unlike other modernists, Joyce's writings "strain[] to find a way to reconcile the technological progress of modernity with a vision of the common good" (Rubenstein 47). Because Joyce integrates technological developments into his prose, he not only captures the essence of the Dublin of 1904, but also looks forward to modes of imaginative writing that embrace technology as well. Joyce's concern with infrastructure, particularly with electricity

and the sewer system, emerges even in the early, formative moments of *Ulysses*. In "Telemachus," Mulligan playfully informs Stephen "That will do nicely. Switch off the current, will you?" (U 1.28-9). Mulligan presents this request lightheartedly, as "there is no electrical current in the Martello Tower" (Rubenstein 74). That the technology of the city occupies a striking presence in Joyce's fiction, even in jest, signals the extent to which Joyce "challenge[s] prevailing notions of perception and representation" (Misa 327).

In the "Aeolus" episode, the first of the newspaper headlines announces the role of technology to the aural logic of the city. The headline reads: "IN THE HEART OF THE HIBERNIAN METROPO-LIS" (U 7.1-2). "Aeolus" teems with the sounds of metropolitan life. The din of electric trams abounds outside of the newspaper offices of the *Freeman's Journal*. Don Gifford remarks that, in 1904, the Dublin tram system "was regarded as the most efficient and 'modern' in Europe" (128). These tramlines, which dart to and from Nelson's Pillar, travel throughout metropolitan Dublin and beyond the city limits. The trams emit a distinct aural code: "Right and left parallel clanging ringing a doubledecker and a singledeck moved from their railheads, swerved to the down line, glided parallel" (U 7.10-2). The trams brim with activity as they traverse the heart of Dublin; indeed, the repeated presence of present participles ("clanging ringing") animates the hub of Dublin life.

"Aeolus" thematizes the need to attribute meaning to sounds, particularly nonverbal, preverbal, and mechanical noises. Bloom appears especially preoccupied with the origins of the sounds that he perceives: he identifies both a source and a meaning to audible utterances. As he walks through the inner offices of the *Freeman's Journal*, Bloom interprets an expressive rhythm from the clamour of the printing presses. He judges that the "machines clank[] in threefour time. Thump, thump, thump" (U 7.101). The "dullthudding [Guinness] barrels" that pierce the soundscape also receive a meaning independent of their origins (U 7.21, U 7.24, U 7.44-5). Bloom discerns a similarly percussive impulse as Professor MacHugh strums a strand of dental floss between his teeth: "Bingbang, bangbang" (U 7.374). Bloom even discriminates between the noises from MacHugh's floss – "bang" appears in both portmanteaus, while "bing" only appears in the first. Whereas Bloom previously interpreted his cat's onomatopoeic utterances as requests either for attention or for milk – he inferred that one "Prr" expressed "Scratch my head" while another expressed a desire for milk (U 4.19-20, U 4.24) – he ascribes a semantic content to the sounds that technology and instruments produce.

Telephony emerges as one of the prominent aural modes in "Aeolus." As John D. Caputo observes, the sound of ringing telephones saturates the soundscape of *Ulysses*, especially in "Aeolus" (185). Indeed, as "Aeolus" progresses, Joyce increasingly accedes the episode bespeaks not only Joyce's preoccupation with "telecommunicational motifs" in literature, but also how telephony contributes to the networks of communication that pervade the novel as a whole (Caputo 187). As "Aeolus" progresses, Joyce increasingly accedes the episode bespeaks telephone with one sound; a whir. "The telephone whirr[s]" as Stephen

chats with Crawford (U 7.565). Similarly, as Bloom enters Crawford's office, he notes how the "telephone whirred inside" (U 7.384). That the telephone here rings under the heading of "O, HARP EOLIAN" ironizes the relation between the speaker and the telephone (U 7.370). In the classical tradition, the design of the Aeolian harp enables the winds (rather than human hands) to play this instrument (Gifford 135). But, in "Aeolus," humans operate telephones, and select their interlocutors. Professor MacHugh informs the editor that Bloom is on the line; and, instructing MacHugh to "Tell [Bloom] to go to hell," the editor rudely dismisses Bloom's call (U 7.671-2). Ringing telephones complicate a speaker's relationship both to her or his voice and to the meaning of the other speaker's disembodied voice – characters ascribe value, or an absence of value, to the voices on the telephone.

Telephony also appears in figurative forms in "Aeolus." Glimpsing a typesetter correcting type, Bloom considers the implications of the Shema from Deuteronomy 6:4: "*Shema Israel Adonai Elohenu*" (U 7.209; italics in the original; Gifford 132). Gifford translates the Hebrew: "Hear, oh Israel, the Lord our God" (132), and Derrida characterizes this passage as a "long-distance phone call par excellence" – a playful call that allows Joyce to suggest that "divine revelation is inscribed in a communication system" (Caputo 187). For Derrida, the joke implies that technological innovations like the telephone can put a human speaker in contact with the divine – through the disembodied voice.

Disembodied voices intrude into both Bloom's and Stephen's lives throughout *Ulysses*. In the "Nestor" episode, Stephen describes God as "a shout in the street" (U 3.386). The "shout" to which he refers captures the voices of children playing outside. Stephen separates the children's voices from the children's bodies, and suggests that their voices convey elements of the divine. Likewise, voices appear unaccompanied by their bodies in "Aeolus," particularly through the telephone. Before Crawford dismisses Bloom's phone call, the call emerges from the text under the heading of "A DISTANT VOICE" (U 7.667). This headline typifies the desire in "Aeolus" to attribute the ownership of a voice to the body from which it emanates. Moreover, the inner workings of "Aeolus" also convey the threat of indecency that underlines telecommunication. Trotter notes that telephony in general, and phone-boxes in particular, "have always been 'obscene'" ["Phoning It In"] 147). Trotter cites the passage in "Circe" in which Bloom confronts "The Sins of the Past" (U 15.3027): the "Sins" accuse Bloom of "Unspeakable messages . . . telephoned mentally to Miss Dunn at an address in d'Olier Street while he presented himself indecently to the instrument in the callbox" (U 15.3029-31; 147). In "Aeolus," then, as in "Nestor" and "Circe," the ownership of speech troubles characters, specifically with the absence of indicators of speech, like quotation marks.

Quotation marks not only indicate that parts of speech have been borrowed from another source, but also attribute to that source the ownership of an utterance. Joyce explicitly rejected the use of quotation marks in his writings; as Keane notes, Joyce "famously referred to them as "perverted commas'" (409). Technology, however, problematizes the

ownership of speech: "neither quotation marks nor italics lend themselves to oral performance or aural reception, particularly in the audio-only world of gramophonic reproduction" (Keane 409). The newspaper headlines, to which we cannot ascribe a definite author or consciousness, enact this very difficulty. André Topia remarks that "Aeolus" dramatizes "an increasing instability in the notion of origin: discourses weave through the text in such a way that one cannot really distinguish the original from its more or less distorted version" (qtd. on Frattarola 55). "The headings," Karen Lawrence suggests, "seem to participate in a game of emphasis and classification" (55). Both the newspaper headlines and the sounds of the *Freeman's Journal* (telephonic and otherwise) pose a key thematic question: how do we reconcile the disembodied voice, utterance, or phrase to its original source?

Damien Keane remarks that Joyce only agreed to record one passage of *Ulysses* to a gramophone record – an extract from the "Aeolus" episode (401-2). In *Shakespeare and Company*, Sylvia Beach writes that:

> Joyce had chosen the speech in the Aeolus [sic] episode, the only passage that could be lifted out of *Ulysses*, he said, and the only one that was "declamatory" and therefore suitable for recital. He had made up his mind, he told me, that this would be his only reading from *Ulysses*. I have an idea that it was not for declamatory reasons alone that he chose this passage from Aeolus [sic]. I believe that it expressed something he wanted said and *preserved in his own voice*. (171; emphasis added)

Theodor Adorno detects a profoundly ideological (and solipsistic) motive behind a speaker's wish to preserve a voice. Adorno argues:

> What the gramophone listener actually wants to hear is himself, and the [record] merely offers him a substitute for the sounding image of his own person, which he would like to safeguard as a possession. The only reason that he accords the record such value is because he himself could also be just as well preserved. Most of the time records are virtual photographs of their owners, flattering photographs—ideologies. (qtd. on Keane 411)

Recording technology not only reifies the speaker through the voice, but also attributes meaning to potentially meaningless sounds – *Ulysses* thematizes the intersection of technology and modernity, particularly through the ways in which recording technologies reshape the human voice. In this view, *Ulysses* in part catalogues "a technologically mediated crisis of the senses," according to which modernity and "mod-ernist aesthetics signif[y] the increasing internalization of technological matrices of perception" (Danius 1-2). For Kittler, this perspectival shift occurs through recording technologies: the gramophone fashions "a crucial link between physiology and technology" (Kittler 73). Because gramophones erase the mediation between a person and the memory of a person (unlike a photograph), the "real" accordingly "replaces the symbolic" (Kittler 73). Bloom certainly espouses the aural and technological capacities of the gramophone – he endorses in "Hades" the machine's ability to reproduce the voice of the dead and the dying. Problematically, though, gramophones capture both intentional sound and incidental noise. "Phonographs," Frattarola observes, "pick[] up background noises that ordinarily [go] unnoticed in mundane circumstances" (Frattarola 145). Joyce mirrors this indiscriminate recording practice in his fiction. In "The Wandering Rocks," the "implicit narrator reports one side of [a telephone] conversation, and that alone, as though his task is to record what he has heard, not what he knows is there" (Darius 181). But, as Danius notes, the narrator's transcription of the conversation seems bizarrely unsystematic; like the phonograph, which records both peripheral noises and meaningful sounds, the narrator never distinguishes between significant and insignificant information (181). He merely relates that which he overhears.

Indeed, throughout *Ulysses*, Joyce foregrounds noises commonly relegated to the periphery. Angela Frattarola points out that the "Calypso" episode opens and closes with appeals to peripheral noises in Bloom's soundscape: "Calypso" "begins with the repeated 'Mkgnao!' and 'Prr' of Bloom's cat (4.16–32) and ends with the resounding 'Heigho! Heigho!' of church bells (4.546–48)" (147). "This emphasis on peripheral noise continues in the 'Aeolus' episode," Frattarola writes, "when the repeated 'Sllt' of the printing press causes Bloom to think': 'Almost human the way it slit to call attention. Doing its level best to speak. That door too slit creaking, asking to be shut. Everything speaks in its own way. Sllt'" (Frattarola 147; U 7.175–77). That Bloom intimates in "Aeolus" that "Everything speaks in its own way" bespeaks the presence of onomatopoetic utterances in *Ulysses* as a whole: a "Heigho! ... Barang[s]" in "Wandering Rocks" (U 10.649-50); "The Bracelets" "Heigho! Heigho!" in "Circe" (U 15.3732; "The Boots" "Haw haw" in "Circe" (U 15.3732-4); and Bloom passes the "Pprrpffrrppffff" of gas in "Sirens" (U 11.1293) (Frattarola 147). In "Sirens," Bloom similarly notes of music: "Numbers it is. All music when you come to think" (U 11.830), bloom: "Might be what you like, till you hear the words" (U 11.838-9). Although Bloom refers to music, his musings remain equally apropos of the sounds of telecommunication, too. As Hepburn observes, "Joyce's sense of the acoustic relies on a suppression of the visual in favor of sound" (200). The acoustic logic of "Aeolus" privileges sonic happenings rather than visual ones. Though Bloom comments on the presence of the "Sllts" in the offices of the *Freeman's Journal* (7.175–77), he never views the presses themselves. "Aeolus," then, expresses the ways in which people attribute meaning to seemingly meaningless – and non-contextualized – utterances.

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[   ] [Blank Space] [   ]:
The Comics Form and Constructions of Space in Joe Sacco's *Palestine*

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When I try to imagine the creative point of origin of Joe Sacco's landmark piece of comics journalism *Palestine*, I tend towards seeing a blank page in some suspended moment before pen hit paper. The visual, spatialized story of Sacco's comic is then constructed onto that apparently neutral empty space. Comics theorist Scott McCloud locates the uniqueness and particular aesthetic power of the medium precisely in the blank space retained on the finished page: "the limbo of the gutter" (66), "this blank ribbon of paper" (88), the space between. McCloud proposes that meaning in comics is produced in the space between its elements, through a process he calls "closure": as the eye reads the text and images, it pauses at the undefined spaces between panels, where the reader engages in an act of connection and unification of the comics' fractured elements. The production of meaning is thus an active process of connection and imaginatively constructed continuity. For McCloud, "No other art form gives so much to its audience while asking so much *from* them as well. ... What happens between these panels is a kind of magic *only comics can create*" (92). As McCloud is concerned with the spatial grammar of comics, sociologist-philosopher Michel Foucault is concerned with the social grammar of space. For Foucault, space, power, and social history are inseparable, but cultural discourses of space and time are set fundamentally at odds: "Space was treated as the dead, the fixed, the undialectical, the immobile. Time, on the other hand, was richness, fecundity, life dialectic" (Power/Knowledge 70). That apparent opposition between time and space must be collapsed, and physical space understood as a dynamic product of historical, social, and cultural forces defining processes of power (63-64). In *Palestine*, Sacco engages the uniquely spatial grammar of the comics medium to powerfully express the social dynamics of space. Like Foucault's, *Palestine's* blank space is politically charged, and inextricable from processes of production of meaning. The way images are and are not separated from each other, and the way a sense of continuity between the aesthetic object and the world is both affirmed and denied, depends on the implication of the reader in the imaginative construction of the space – not merely physical, but socially, historically, and culturally constituted – of Israel/*Palestine*.

The political conflict at the heart of *Palestine* is a struggle over the dominance of space, and the dynamics of power that define and follow from it. The collected edition of *Palestine* is prefaced with an introduction by major postcolonial critic Edward Said, whose presence paratextually enters the graphic novel into dialogue with postcolonial

studies. In Israel/Palestine, the perennial colonizer/colonized binary falls apart in light of the interdependency of history and geography, of space and time. Pressing further back into the murky records of human history, one finds that the very categories of "colonizer" and "colonized" refuse uncontested definition. *Palestine* complicates postcolonial studies' driving space-power binary by introducing the dynamics of temporality in the social production of space.

Said poignantly introduces the symbolic power of space - and implicitly, its socially defined and imaginatively constructed nature - at stake in the Israeli/Palestinian context:

> Joe the character is there sympathetically to understand and to try to experience not only why Gaza is so representative a place in its hopelessly overcrowded and yet rootless spaces of Palestinian dispossession, but also to affirm that it is there, and must somehow be accounted for in human terms, in the narrative sequences with which any reader can identify (vii).

In Said's symbolically powerful identification of palimpsests of space in Palestine - especially that the existence of a place called "Palestine" might be denied, or, as it is here, affirmed - Foucault's call for the collapse of space into time is answered. Space here is not mere physical, geographical facticity, but profoundly social in character. Like the overpopulated space of Palestine, the space of *Palestine*'s pages is overcrowded: images bleed to the edge of nearly every page, panel shapes and sizes are irregular, and there is almost no space between images that could conceivably fit McCloud's phrase "this blank ribbon of paper."

Sacco explicitly states his journalistic intent in *Palestine*. "My idea was not to present an objective book but an honest one" (ix). He shows conscious attention to journalistic subjectivity in the colouring of each chapter's cover image: in each case, the illustrated figure of himself in black ink contrasts with the gold colouring of everything and everyone else. Sacco's visual strategy does not press towards an extremely abstracted or iconographic style, but rather entails a productive tension between realistic and distorted representations of space. In recognition of potential implications of racist caricature in early issues, he states: "slowly but surely I forced more realism out of my pen though I could never shake – nor did I desire to lose – my 'cartoony' line" (x). That qualification is notable for his commitment to a certain degree of abstraction, as well as for the aesthetic contradiction that it implies: in a sort of realistic abstraction, two-dimensional cartoon images claim to represent with journalistic authority a three-dimensional reality.

Sacco perhaps most dramatically articulates his journalistic subjectivity in his rejection of linear perspective in the representation of moments of disorientation and chaos. In both the culture shock of that first violent clash Joe witnesses (1, 54-55), perspective is distorted, scenes render representational style edges towards character, linear time folds

into simultaneity, distinct planes seem to collapse into each other, and objects within one image are represented according to conflicting scales. Sacco's visual strategy clearly rejects any simple representation of a linearly projected space mapping onto any single moment in time, and instead derives its power precisely from its contrast to the realism which permeates the bulk of *Palestine*.

The Chapter 1 section entitled "Return" exemplifies the essential spatial dynamic of collective imaginative construction at the heart of *Palestine*'s political content and comics form. In his essay "The Construction of Space in Comics," Pascal Lefevre is also concerned with the unique way the form relies on the imaginative constructions of its reader. Lefevre aligns the blank space of McCloud's gutter with the real space in which the reader is located, an "extradiegetic" space set in contrast to the "diegetic" space represented and implied within the panel frame. In each McCloud's and Lefevre's approach to the unique spatial grammar of comics as "sequential art" (McCloud 9), the comics form is irreducibly spatial, temporal, and imaginatively constructed. In "Return", the extradiegetic space that would be the "limbo of the gutter" refuses to be blank: diegetic and extradiegetic space are blurred. Narration imposed on an image of Joe looking down to the original level of the Western wall reads: "It goes down, down, / Like the feelings you can get for this city, it's hard to see the bottom" (11.4). Space and time are collapsed in this image. Joe literally looks down into the past. The image's apparently infinite depth, a point of origin too distant to be visible, seems to stand as a kind of visual metaphor for the origins, lost to the distance of history, of the physical geography in dispute. The reader is positioned looking up the shaft at the two men, its lines extending off the edges of the page and into logically infinite imagined space. From that vaguely mystical moment of infinity and continuity, Sacco exploits the materiality of the comic: flipping the page, the reader is thrust into a visually overcrowded space, against which Sacco narrates the historical creation of the state of Israel, a Zionist declaring at its bottom: "A land without a people for a people without a land!" (12.4). The grammar of spatial organization of Sacco's pages inflects this statement with a grim irony. Theatrical extension to infinity is juxtaposed against a limited reality. An ideal of blank geographical space is set against an overcrowded reality, written over like a palimpsest, but one that resolutely refuses to be wiped clean.

Palestine for the most part rejects the conventional comics grid as a structure of spatial organization. The impact is therefore greater when the grid's ordered, geometric structure resurfaces. Sacco's use of the grid declares the extradiegetic space between images and its particular structure to be *not* neutral: it is not outside of the process by which the images within the panels produce meaning. Directing attention to the Palestinian experience under Israeli occupation, the Western journalistic/readerly second-hand experience, and the active readerly process of closure operating around the visual structure of the comics page, space in *Palestine* is socially constructed. Chapter 4, concerned with testimonies of Palestinian experiences in Israeli prisons, is marked by the visual rhetoric of the grid. Image panels and texts are here more

geometrically and linearly ordered than anywhere else in the book. In a striking invocation of that visual rhetoric, an image in the upper corner of a page shows, from an impossibly elevated perspective, the uninterrupted obliquely-set plane of a prison-yard ceiling made of gridded fencing (86.1). Perfectly perpendicular lines of this physical structure of incarceration extend to and seem to continue past the borders of the page.

The visual rhetoric of the grid reaches its climax in "Moderate Pressure" Part 2" (102–113). As a Palestinian man recounts his experience of brutal torture in an Israeli prison, perfectly gridded panels are set into a black background. As the torture intensifies and he approaches a psychological breaking point, the panels of the grid get progressively smaller; its tightening frame takes on the violently oppressive resonance of the prison cell. The grid literally opens up to a full half-page panel as the man is released from prison. As part of the structure of incarceration, the space between in this sequence is not simply neutral but actively engaged in the production of meaning. Sacco repeats the gridded grammar to visually shape another story of inhuman brutality in a series of panels as where a young boy recounts his experience of being beaten into unconsciousness by Israeli soldiers (200–201). This much shorter sequence of images ends poignantly on the gridded structure of five repeated images of they boy's increasingly beaten upper torso, his mouth contorted in agony, concluding in a blank black square. Each image stands as a frozen, diegetically silent moment in between non-visualized blows organized into the visual structure of the grid: the negative space outside the panels again takes on incredible hope.

More generally, Sacco's use of the grid in *Palestine* works as a visual structure to articulate the violently monotony and confinement of Palestinian life under Israeli occupation. Quietly building from Joe's venture into the refugee camp towards, the visual grammar of an imperfectly aligned grid takes on another dimension, spatially articulating the disturbingly increasing banality of the stories of suffering he hears. The monotony and repetition of experience and its retelling moves towards anonymity and placelessness, towards the treatment of human suffering as normal. In Chapter 6's "Rooms," which opens with Joe's comment that "The cold, the men, the tea … / That's the Essence of Palestinian Room … / (…) / These rooms… / not even the talk changes…" (152), images of undifferentiable rooms are punctuated by images of incredible violence (155). Subsumed into the visual structure of the grid, the violent images take on an unsettling banality themselves.

Through continuous engagement with the visual rhetoric of Sacco's grid, Chapter 8 carries the sense of a calmly ordered expectation of suffering to a haunting crescendo. Repetition is crystallized in the figure of Sameh, Joe's translator, whose mediating role is brought to the fore: "And he's heard every blow and humiliation described twice, once by the person telling me, and again when it's come out of his mouth in translation…" (219). An image from an impossible perspective looking down across a gridded barrier at women waiting to communicate across the Egypt/Palestine border echoes the visual rhetoric that pervades Sacco's earlier aesthetic treatment of the prison (244.4 / 86.1). The grid's

visual structure – outlined in black, thereby eliminating any potential "blank" space – lends an aspect of ordered efficiency to Joe's treatment of testimonials of human suffering. This visual structure is used in the compression of one man's story of dispossession into the space of a single page – as Joe darkly comments, "That's it! A speed interview! An entire tragedy in under 20 minutes" (246). Chapter 8 sustains its gridded, rationalized repetition until its final pane, in which another story of suffering begins. The grid's predictably ordered, repetitive structure literally and symbolically shapes the readerly experience of space in *Palestine*.

Sacco also tests the border of extradiegetic space as Let reads understands it: the space contained inside the panel frame against the space of the reader's reality. The idea of literary nonfiction and the possibility of an aesthetic appreciation of it rests, in a certain sense, on the assumption of the continuity between the work of art and the world. However, this idea that an aesthetic object departs in some meaningful and relevant relationship to the material reality from which it is produced is not necessarily self-evident: one could argue that the work of art is autonomous. Sacco's comics journalism in *Palestine* productively tests that borderland between the aesthetic and the real. Instances of depth cues being dramatically distorted are scattered throughout *Palestine* (37, 49, 171). In perhaps the most self-conscious of these moments, textual fragments reading "See them? See how good they are? / Here, take some! / take!" are imposed onto an image of a Palestinian man reaching with a handful of tomatoes past the borders of his image panel, seeming to extend out of the page and its flat dimensionality (171.1). Straining against the boundaries of their means of representation, they imply the continuity and simultaneity of the space represented in Sacco's comic with the space of the reader's reality.

Palestine ends as it begins, it always was: in the spatial dynamics of power. Sacco ties opposing subjective attachments to spaces defined temporally as "Palestine" or "Israel" to the socially-constructed spatial dynamics of power imagined to follow from a moment when a boy was forced to stand in the rain: "what becomes of someone when he believes himself to have none?" (283.3). His resonant end on a bus lost in the desert of Israel/Palestine echoes back to his fully first lines:

> We pass tanks twisted and burned out since when? / '73? / '67? / '56? / (…) It's a long way to Palestine and slow going / But I've been speeding, man / I've been speeding / I'm already there. (3)

The mangled tank marks the violent palimpsest of the disputed desert, Sacco's lyrical prose revealing its definition of space as imagined, not merely physical but historically, socially, and culturally constructed.

At its core, comics is a medium of spatial organization: juxtaposed images and texts are related in particular ways by their alignment on the space of the page, standing together and in tension to produce meaning from the marks they make on that previously blank space. The comics medium will perhaps above all be the medium of space. We are

in a medium of simultaneity; we are in the medium of juxtaposition, the medium of the near and far, of the side-by-side, of the dispersed. This strange statement derives from the bastardization of a claim made by Michel Foucault. My mongrel pronouncement by itself applies to the particularly visual and spatial grammar – to the spatial process of production of meaning in "closure" with which McCloud is so fascinated – that defines the particular aesthetic form of comics. Put back into something of its larger context, the appropriated statement is part of one of Foucault's reflections on the tension between the analytic concepts of history and geography:

> The great obsession of the nineteenth century was, as we know, history: with its themes of development and suspension, of crisis and cycle, themes of the ever-accumulating past, with its great preponderance of dead men and the menacing glaciation of the world...The present epoch will perhaps be above all the epoch of space. We are in an epoch of simultaneity: we are in the epoch of juxtaposition, the epoch of the near and far, of the side-by-side, of the dispersed "Of Other Spaces" 22)

The striking applicability of Foucault's phrase to the comics form derives from the shared perspective of social theorist and aesthetic form: space in comics and in Foucault's thought is inseparable from time, and is actively defined by social relations. In Joe Sacco's Palestine, the particularities of the grammar of the comics form - especially in its productive tension between the active implication of the reader in the creation of meaning through "closure" and the strongly felt sense of that process which is shaped by the visual rhetoric of the grid - reflects the unique ability of the comics medium to articulate the nuanced, historically, socially, and culturally constituted spatial dynamics of contemporary political crises.

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The Power of the Audience's Interpretation: Maurice Morgann *Reading* Falstaff's Character

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After reading Maurice Morgann's *Essay on the Dramatic Character of Sir John Falstaff*, Samuel Johnson criticized Morgann, claiming that he "might as well have defended the virtue of Iago" (Hudson 47). According to Nicholas Hudson, Johnson "expressed a widespread opinion in scoffing Morgann" (47). Like Hudson, Christy Desmet argues that Morgann was "dismissed as merely 'paradoxical' by his contemporaries" (51). It is no surprise then that critics find Morgann's defense of Falstaff troubling. Morgann attempts to convince us that Falstaff is courageous, "distinguished at least, if not from a Noble family" (45), by constructing his past from supposed hints found in Shakespeare's *Henriad*. How can Morgann assign courage to a character who denounces honour as "a mere scutcheon" (5.1.139), asserting "I'll none of it" (5.1.139)? Despite the widespread disapproval of Morgann's essay, I argue that Morgann's article is a valid piece of criticism that stands ahead of its time and that is in touch with theoretical approaches of the twentieth and twenty-first century. Although dismissed as a piece of fiction, Morgann's essay is valuable and speaks truth precisely because of its reliance on fiction and the reader's imagination in creating a character. Rather than looking at whether or not Morgann successfully proves that Falstaff is or is not a coward, or providing my own opinion on Falstaff's courage, I leave it open to your interpretation. Instead, I focus on claiming that Morgann's essay agrees with criticism today because Morgann recognizes that the audience has the power to extend a character's life after the curtain falls. Morgann treats Falstaff as if he is a real person—a practice Michael Bristol supports in his essay "A System of Oeconomical Prudence: Shakespearean Character and the Practice of Moral Inquiry." Bristol claims that it is "possible to relate to Shakespeare's characters in the same way that we relate to actual social agents" (15). He further holds: "thinking about fictional characters as if they were real people is not a crude mistake" (15). Morgann also explores modern questions such as: Where do we find the meaning of the text? Does a text have any meaning at all independent from the reader? Or is it in the author's original intention? I will begin my defense of Morgann by demonstrating how he voices relevant concerns about the relationship between the author and the reader. I will then examine how Morgann differs from the critics of his time by placing emphasis on *individual* response over *general* nature and the passions over reason. Finally, I will review Morgann's discussion of issues that are still contemporary concerns—namely, the limits of language and Falstaff's imperishability. Morgann's essay is influential

because it underlines the importance of the audience's imagination in creating meaning, an interpretive activity in which we are invited to engage with the character of Sir John Falstaff.

Morgann raises the issue of locating meaning through the author's intention right at the beginning of his essay. In the very first sentence of the Preface, Morgann argues that Falstaff's "Character was not intended to be shewn as a Coward" (1) and later holds, "I do not conceive Shakespeare ever meant to make Cowardice an essential part of his constitution" (2). Here, Morgann voices his concern with the author's intention and explores the relationship between author and reader, a relationship questioned by the twentieth-century critic Roland Barthes. In "The Death of the Author," Barthes rejects the author's intention as a place for meaning, and instead argues that "to give a text an Author is to impose a limit on that text" (1325). By removing the author, the meaning of a text is found in the reader's own interpretation. Despite Morgann's focus on authorial intention he actually demonstrates, through his extensive analysis of Falstaff, that the reader or audience creates meaning. Morgann questions the reader's place in the making of a text, a process Christy Desmet discusses in Reading Shakespeare's Characters: Rhetoric, Ethics and Identity. Desmet argues that Morgann "reflects on the act of analyzing Falstaff as much as on the character himself" (52) and competes with Falstaff for textual control (58). Her observations suggest that Morgann is self-consciously aware of himself in the act of reading Falstaff. Desmet holds that "by making his essay an exercise in reading rather than a demonstration of moral principles or an excursion into belles lettres, Morgann differs from his contemporaries" (56). As a result, Morgann's text is not only a piece of eighteenth-century criticism concerned with Falstaff's virtue, but its subject is reading itself. He explores a topic still relevant today, the critic's relationship to a work of art.

Morgann further analyzes and blurs the boundary between audience and playwright, reader and writer, through his controversial reading of Falstaff's noble origins. While Morgann's interpretation is dismissed as farfetched, the real value of Morgann's text rests in the fact that the reader becomes the writer—a move made by Shakespeare himself. For instance, Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet is based on Arthur Brook's The Tragicall Historye of Romeus and Juliet. Shakespeare uses an older source and adds value, much like Morgann creates his own text by using Shakespeare's Henriad. Morgann searches for "what hints of the origin and birth of Falstaff, Shakespeare may have dropped in different parts of the Play" (46) and constructs his own personal narrative of Falstaff's life founded on what he himself finds significant. It is not Shakespeare's hints, but Morgann's own reading of the text, since character criticism always reflects something about the reader. Desmet calls Morgann's article a "de Manian reading" (53) on account of its "close scrutiny of Falstaff's life as a text" (53). Although eighteenth-century notions of honour and nobility no longer apply in the twenty-first century, Morgann's focus on reading has greater significance than his efforts to prove Falstaff's nobility. Nicholas Hudson critiques Morgann's

defense of Falstaff in reasoning that "Falstaff has to be courageous...because courage makes up a necessary part of a true nobleman's character" (Hudson 47). By trying to convince us of his own reading of Falstaff's noble past, instead, Morgann highlights the fact that the text is open and subject to different interpretations and readings. It follows that, despite Hudson's claim, Morgann's reading resonates with criticism today. He emphasizes the power of the reader's imagination, a power each one of us possesses.

Morgann certainly suits his imagination when he argues that Falstaff's ring confirms his nobility since "family crest and arms were authentic proofs of gentility" (51). In Act III, scene iii, Falstaff complains that someone stole a "seal-ring of [his] grandfather's" (3.3.100) and Hal responds, "a trifle, some eightpenny manner" (3.3.236). Despite Hal's comment that the ring is worthless and only copper, Morgann claims that "the ring, I believe, was really gold; tho' probably a little too much alloyed with baser metal" (51). He also suggests, "the Prince indeed affirms, but not seriously I think, that this ring was copper" (51). How do we know that Hal believes that the ring is really gold? Is he merely teasing Falstaff or is he telling the truth when he states that the ring is copper? Morgann argues outside the boundaries of Shakespeare's own text. In this light, why not say the ring is silver or even plastic? While critics find this freedom of interpretation troubling, Morgann emphasizes the audience's ability to make Shakespeare's characters come to life outside of the show and to keep writing Falstaff's text.

The practice of looking beyond the words given to us in Shakespeare's plays in order to find a character's origins, or to imagine a character's future, continued in the nineteenth-century up until our present day. After Morgann, Mary Cowden Clarke wrote stories about Shakespeare's characters in The Girlhood of Shakespeare's Heroines, which contained "fifteen long tales describing the childhood and early life of Shakespeare's Heroines up until the point at which Shakespeare's play begins" (Thompson 81). Clarke's goal was to "trace the probable antecedents in the history of some of Shakespeare's women" (81). She examined characters such as Portia in The Merchant of Venice, Ophelia in Hamlet and Desdemona in Othello. In addition to Clarke, the nineteenth-century actress Helena Faucit spoke about performing as some of Shakespeare's female characters and claimed: "I could never leave my characters when the curtain fell and the audience departed. As I had lived with them through their early lives, so I also lived into their future" (189). Here, Faucit expresses her wish to know what happens to characters after the show ends, as these women become "living realities" for the actress (Faucit 185). These examples show us that Morgann's critical approach, though radical for its time, simply makes use of the kinds of interpretation audiences continue to engage in throughout literary history.

In the twenty-first century, Harold Bloom comes closest to Morgann's defense of Falstaff. Bloom tries to construct Falstaff's past and sketches "as comprehensive a view of the Falstaff-Hal relationship as Shakespeare allows us to infer, from the origins of so unlikely a friendship" (291). Bloom wants to find the answer for "Prince

Hal's initial choice of Falstaff as a wayward mentor" (291). He argues that "what Shakespeare challenges us to imagine is left almost clueless by him: How did Hal and Falstaff enter upon their original friendship?" (290). While critics look for evidence about what lies outside of the plays, we cannot help but want to know more about Shakespeare's characters and treat them as real people. Why does King Lear decide to subject his daughters to the love test? What leads Ophelia to go mad? Who is Falstaff? By asking such questions, we use our creative tools and gain authority over Shakespeare's text.

In addition to questioning the relationship between author and reader, Morgann differs from his contemporaries by focusing on the individual as opposed to general nature. Samuel Johnson saw Shakespeare as the "poet of nature" (viii) and praised his works "nothing can please many, and please long, but just representations of general nature" (Johnson viii). For Johnson and other eighteenth-century critics, Shakespeare's skill rests in his ability to give us accurate depictions of human nature. While Johnson certainly recognizes that characters are individuals on a stage, his concept of general nature is too rigid. He searches for universal qualities that are found in every single person and reduces human nature to a general formula that applies to us all. Johnson adopts a scientific approach to Shakespeare's text and admires him for showing us a "species" (ix) because "in the writings of other poets a character is too often an individual" (ix). Contrary to Johnson, Morgann believes, "we cannot do otherwise than admit that there must be distinct principles of character in every distinct individual" (6-7). In Morgann's opinion and in our twenty-first century world, we cannot deny that characters on the stage are unique and possess different characteristics.

For this reason, William Hazlitt criticizes Johnson and remains sympathetic with Morgann. Hazlitt argues that Johnson's "general powers of reasoning overlaid his critical susceptibility. All his ideas were cast in a given mould, in a set form: they were made out by rule and system, by climax, inference, and antithesis: - Shakespear's were the reverse" (176). Johnson uses reason to explain human nature when it is something that is much more complex and Protean. How can we pin down human nature to a series of rules, especially when it is something that is always changing? Hazlitt voices this concern by describing Johnson as "a man of strong common sense and practical wisdom; rather than of genius or feeling" (177). Hazlitt continues: "he could not quit his hold of the common-place and mechanical, and apply the general rule to the particular exception, or shew how the nature of man was modified by the workings of passion, or the infinite fluctuations of thought and accident" (177). While Johnson admires Shakespeare, he fails to see that both characters and spectators are truly individuals. As Hazlitt claims, Johnson "did not find the individual traits, or the *dramatic* distinctions which Shakespear has engrafted on this general nature" (177). We search particular characters on stage and we also respond to characters in different ways. Each individual has a personal opinion about a character in Shakespeare's play. Some argue that Falstaff is a coward, while others, like Morgann, maintain he is courageous. Morgann understands that there are a variety

of opinions regarding one single character and acknowledges that his views on Falstaff are "so different from those which I find generally to prevail in the world" (1). It follows that Nicholas Hudson is correct in arguing that "Morgann demonstrated that what audiences experienced when responding to Shakespeare's characters might be more unpredictable and various than could be explained by the overarching principle of general nature" (47). Morgann advocates the passions over reason and understands the beauty in seeing characters as individuals who are open to a multiplicity of interpretations.

Although the audience's emotional response to characters is a central feature in eighteenth-century criticism, these feelings are controlled by reason. In 1759, Adam Smith writes *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* and analyzes our relationship with characters on the stage. Morgann argues that sympathy links the audience and a character (4). Jean Marsden discusses Adam Smith's theory in her essay "Shakespeare and Sympathy" and informs us that, "sympathy's essential component is connection between one person and another who observes his or her emotion" (31). It is our "fellow-feeling" (Smith 4) or emotional bond with another character. While it initially appears as though Smith supports an individual's subjective feelings for a character, he soon advocates the general and the objective. For Smith, sympathy "enables us to judge others and ourselves because through it we appreciate virtue and abhor vice" (Marsden 31). As audience members, we watch characters perform virtuous actions on stage and in turn, we perform virtuous actions in the physical world. In order to make ethical judgments about the virtues and vices in a play, we must watch the play as an *impartial spectator* (21). It follows, then, that we do not enter into a character's feelings but instead insert ourselves into a character's situation. Amanda Cockburn argues that "entering into another person's situation, rather than simply entering into a person's feelings allows a measure of objectivity and detachment that is integral to ethical judgment" (139). In this way, our feelings become objective and universal as opposed to personal or particular.

Morgann recognizes that it is impossible for us to watch a show as an impartial spectator and to remove our own personal feelings and experiences that lead us to identify with a character in a certain way. Reaching objective and universal conclusions about characters simply cannot work in practice and such observations are less valuable than the array of nuanced judgments brought by individual critics and audience members. We approach characters with unique experiences and emotions that we are unable to remove when we watch a play. As such, as audience members, we come to different conclusions about characters. As Burns argues, character is "a transaction between two human subjects" (2) that "constructs both observer and observed as its subjects – it identifies them, in other words, as somehow particular" (2). Morgann relates to Burns' claim by understanding that character is the connection between two people, rather than a relationship between a character and an entire audience.

When we examine the relationship between Morgann and Fal-

staff, Christy Desmet offers a compelling account of why Morgann might relate to his character. Desmet uses biographical facts about Morgann's life in order to establish a link between the two. She informs us that "Morgann was not an academic; between 1766 and 1769 he had served as secretary of New Jersey, and he held other administrative positions in America and in Canada" (58). In addition to his love for Shakespeare, Morgann was very involved in political life. In his earlier essay "An Enquiry concerning the Nature and End of a National Militia," Morgann "argues for a national militia over a standing army" (Desmet 58). By advocating a national militia, Morgann hoped that soldiers would be able to find peace and return to their families once the war had ended (58). He saw a national militia as the cure for a standing army that had become corrupt and decadent (58). Desmet believes that "in deflecting attention away from Falstaff's military role to his wit and humor, Morgann may be protecting his ideal image of a sober national militia; at the same time his experiences in American between 1757 and 1777 might have encouraged him to see Falstaff, who is profligate without being a true coward, as a more realistic portrait of the part-time soldier" (58). In Desmet's opinion, Morgann has a complex personal identification with Falstaff. On the one hand, Morgann views Falstaff as a member of the national militia, a part-time soldier who is happy and peaceful, away from the battlefield. On the other hand, Falstaff is corrupt, since he takes bribes from soldiers who wish to escape the war. Falstaff admits this in *Henry IV, Part I* when he laments that he has "misused the King's press damnably" (4.2.10-12). He chooses wealthy soldiers and cowards who "bought out their services" (4.2.30) and is left with soldiers who are "ten times more dishonourable-ragged than an old feazed agent" (4.2.29-30). Desmet proposes that "the connection between the *Essay on the Dramatic Character of Sir John Falstaff* and Morgann's *Enquiry concerning the Nature and End of a National Militia* are only tantalizing possibilities but suggest that Morgann's exploration of Falstaff's valor...may be symbolic of his own burdens" (58). Morgann had to find a way to account for Falstaff's excess and dishonesty, the very characteristics he thought we could avoid by establishing a national militia.

Morgann defends that our judgments about characters cannot be explained by reason alone, and instead we must also rely on feelings. Morgann distinguishes between impressions and the understanding. Morgann defines impressions as "feelings or sensations of mind, which do not seem to have passed thro' the Understanding" (5). These feelings are mysterious and remain independent from our reason. Morgann argues that "the Understanding and those feelings are frequently at variance. The latter often arise from the most minute circumstances, and frequently from such as the Understanding cannot estimate, or even recognize; whereas the Understanding delights in abstraction, and in general propositions" (6). Impressions focus on particular instances and the understanding concerns itself with the general. The "Impression is incommunicable" (7) because we cannot express these emotions adequately to others by using words alone (7). Impressions are not rational and are impossible to communicate in a direct manner, since the understanding

fails to comprehend such feelings. Morgann suggests that Shakespeare has the power to "steal such Impressions on us before, without their special notice" (9). He holds that Shakespeare makes "secret impressions upon us of Courage" (13) found in Falstaff's character. For Morgann despite his flaws or questionable actions, on account of such impressions; this phenomenon is something our understanding cannot explain. For Morgann, "impressions take priority over conclusions drawn by the understanding" (Desmet 53). Morgann favours the audience's feelings or instincts that arise from minute occurrences, rather than the overall picture we have of Falstaff as a coward.

Amanda Cockburn discusses Morgann's distinction between the impressions and the understanding and argues that since impressions are incommunicable, "the critic has no other choice but to rely upon his rational faculty to clear this character of the charge of cowardice" (148). Morgann looks for evidence in Shakespeare's text that leads us to believe that Falstaff is not a constitutional coward. While Morgann searches for proof and engages in ethical criticism, she teaches us that our feelings towards characters cannot be reduced to a rational explanation. As a result, Cockburn holds that "something essential in Falstaff's character arouses sympathy in his spectators despite his debauchery and seemingly unethical actions" (148). This is an opinion that resonates today as we often admire characters who possess flaws or vices. In the eighteenth-century, appreciating the genius of vicious characters was extremely controversial because audience members were supposed to sympathize with virtue when watching a play. Accordingly, "Sir John Falstaff, a character who embodied the unique tensions of the era, posed a unique challenge to this variety of criticism: he is deplorable, yet lovable" (Cockburn 149). For instance, William Richardson argued for the pleasure we feel towards Falstaff's by proving "how the mixture of different mental qualities, in the same character, affords delight" (245). While Richardson offers a solution for understanding Falstaff's character, Cockburn argues that he is "unfairly severe in his analysis of Falstaff" (147) when he concludes that Sir John is "totally incorrigible" (147). She informs us that "it is against such harsh accusations that Maurice Morgann constructs his own defense of Falstaff" (147). In contrast with the Enlightenment values of reason and scientific truth, Morgann argues that "the understanding, must in the first place, be subdued" (69). The rational approach of placing characters under a microscope and coming to universal truths about characters is not sufficient. We simply cannot explain our favourable impressions for certain characters.

As Morgann constructs Falstaff's story, he argues that there are hidden meanings in Shakespeare's text shrouded by what is actually written. Falstaff's mere appearance has "led to the opinion of his Constitutional Cowardice" (16), when in reality he is a man of courage. Morgann suggests that the *real* character of *Falstaff* may be different from his *apparent* one" (14), a controversial claim that results in Morgann's rejection as a paradoxical critic. How can two Falstaff exist in a text? Morgann's argument is not inconsistent but relevant, as it stresses the need to look beneath the language of the text and engage in deeper

interpretive activity. His ideas are not far from those of critic Paul de Man, who argues that "language, which can only describe, therefore provides an inadequate access to the inner self" (Desmet 23). Like Paul de Man, Terence Hawkes suggests, a text's 'meaning' cannot be limited to the words it uses" (40). Desmet makes a similar claim about language: "words are arbitrary signifiers that further obscure ideas and their relations to one another. For this reason, the role of language in constructing identity continues to be problematic" (43). When words do not reveal the meaning of a text, it is the reader's task to delve into the text and extract his or her own meaning. In this light, Morgann reflects upon contemporary concerns about the limits of language.

While Morgann makes claims about Falstaff that lie outside of the language in Shakespeare's text, L.C Knights condemns this process in his essay "How Many Children Had Lady Macbeth?" In Knights' opinion, criticism should focus on the "unique arrangement of words that constitutes these plays" (286) as opposed to any exterior information. He dismisses Morgann's essay for shifting away from Shakespeare's true words (288). Knights believes that "the main difference between good and bad critics is that the good critic points to something that is actually contained in the work of art, whereas the bad critic points away from the work in question; he introduces extraneous elements into his appreciation – smudges the canvas with his own paint" (287). The problem with Knights' objection is that language is not reliable. How can we learn about character from the words on the page when they do not tell us the truth? How can we ever really know what the author meant? Moreover, smudging the canvas with our own paint is part of the joy in reading texts and it helps us arrive at our own individual understandings of Shakespeare's plays. Shakespeare excites our imagination because he leaves us asking questions such as: How did Iago become so evil? Is Kate really tamed at the end of the *Taming of the Shrew*? What happens to the characters after the curtain falls? The words in the plays cannot provide the answers to these questions and as a result, our critical process begins.

The inability to communicate direct truth through language or the literal, as suggested in Morgann's text, is evidenced through conversations between Hal and Falstaff. We learn more about Falstaff or Hal's identity through pauses, role-play or instances in which one character switches the subject, rather than through direct speech. Meaning lies in the words that remain unsaid or the subjects that characters try to avoid. In Act I, scene ii, Falstaff speaks to Hal about their relationship and declares, "Before I knew thee, Hal, I knew nothing: and now am I, if a man should speak truly, little better than one of the wicked. I must give over this life, and I will give it over. By the Lord, an I do not, I am a villain" (1.2.90-93). The audience only grasps the full significance of his words when Hal immediately switches the subject just after Falstaff finishes and asks, "Where shall we take a purse tomorrow, Jack?" (1.2.95). An abrupt transition shows that he is uncomfortable with the current topic; knowing that he will soon undergo a reformation and leave his companion. Falstaff's words, "I must give over this life", are also echoed

in Hal's soliloquy "so when this loose behavior I throw off" (1.2.196). This unlikely similarity suggests that Falstaff knows that Hal will abandon him, even though he does not say so explicitly. Falstaff's awareness of his impending rejection is further conveyed when he and the Prince engage in role-play in Act II, scene iv. When Harry plays his father, and Falstaff plays the Prince, Falstaff tells the pretend King to "banish not him thy Harry's company – banish plump Jack, and banish all the world" (2.4.460-2). Harry responds: "I do, I will" (2.4.463). Falstaff begs Hal not to reject him and speaks truth precisely when he is playing a role. This creates two levels in the text for the reader: the appearance and the reality – a distinction Morgann rightly defends in his essay.

Like Morgann, Orson Welles makes a distinction between the real and the apparent Falstaff in an interview with Kenneth Tynan in 1967. Welles believes that "Falstaff is like a Christmas tree decorated with vices. The tree itself is total innocence and love" (Estrin 132). On the surface level, the apparent Falstaff seems like a vicious character. If we look underneath the decorations at the real Falstaff, we find nothing but goodness. Welles identifies with the banished Falstaff as Sir John offers an alternative to Hal's rise from rags to riches. Falstaff is an outsider, a position Welles felt that he occupied in relation to Hollywood. Welles' connection with Falstaff is displayed in his film *Chimes at Midnight*. In addition to directing *Chimes at Midnight*, Welles stars as Falstaff, who occupies the central focus of the film. Welles sympathizes with the history's outcast and gives us his side of the story, much like Morgann does in his attempt to create Falstaff's past and to convince us that he is not a coward. Welles also understands the importance of silences in the text. During Hal's speech in which he banishes Falstaff in *Henry IV, Part I*, there is an important pause after he says "till then I banish thee, on pain of death, as I have done the rest of my misleaders. Not to come near our person by ten mile" (5.5.59-61). The camera first shows Falstaff's reaction and then gives us a close-up of Hal's face, showing the pain he feels while he banishes his old friend Falstaff. After Hal finishes his speech, he and Falstaff remain silent for ten seconds, gazing at one another. The camera zooms in and gives us a close-up of Falstaff's face, followed by Hal's face. Once Hal turns and walks away, the camera returns to Falstaff's expression. We are invited to search his face and to uncover our own interpretation. The audience sees betrayal, understanding, admiration and lament in each close-up. Welles gives us expressionistic moments and tries to convey the complex relationship between the two characters. He gives us his own adaptation of Shakespeare's play, just as Morgann creates his own interpretation of Falstaff's story.

Morgann is correct in arguing that there is both an apparent and real Falstaff, as Falstaff is a symbol for the audience's own interpretive activity. Although Morgann believes that "the leading quality in Falstaff's character, and that from which all the rest take their colour, is a high degree of wit and humour" (18), I suggest that Falstaff's leading trait is the imaginative power he represents and gives to the audience. This creative power is epitomized in Act IV, scene ii of *Henry IV, Part II*. Upon encountering Falstaff, Coleville asks: "Are you not Sir John

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Falstaff (4.1.361)? Falstaff replies, "as good a man as he, sir, whoe'er I am" (4.1.362). He invites the reader to fill in this blank by analyzing his character and, in doing so, he becomes a spokesperson for the world of the imagination.

In fact, the Gad's Hill episode is symbolic of the reader creating his own story from the text. Just as Morgann becomes a writer from Shakespeare's text, Falstaff creates his own narrative from Hal and Poins' practical joke by appealing to the imagination. Falstaff changes the number of thieves from a "hundred" (2.4.155-6), to a "dozen" (2.4.159) to fifty (2.4.179) and provides multiple readings of the event. He loves to play in the text, much like the reader. Although Falstaff eventually claims that he knew of Hal's prank all along, whether or not he is being truthful is insignificant. The greater matter at hand is Falstaff's reliance on interpretation. Peto and Bardolph display Falstaff's imaginative power when they reveal that Falstaff asked them to "tickle our noses with spear-grass to make them bleed, and then to beslubber our garments with it and swear it was the blood of true men" (299-303). He invites his friends to engage in costume and role-play. In an eighteenth-century world concerned with Enlightenment values such as the excavation of truth or general nature, both Morgann and Falstaff provide an alternative that stresses the importance of the imagination in getting through our daily lives. Similarly, Harold Bloom suggests that Falstaff "is the representative of imaginative freedom, of a liberty set against time, death and the state, which is a condition that we crave for ourselves" (288). When faced with a twenty-first century audience, Falstaff's imagination resonates just as it did for Morgann in the eighteenth-century.

Falstaff uses the imagination to escape from a world in which language cannot communicate anything and his imagination becomes his reality. He is very much aware of the fact that language has no true meaning and voices this opinion in a soliloquy on honour in *Henry IV, Part I*. At Act 5, scene i, Falstaff asks: what is honour? A word. What is in that word honour? Air" (5.1.133-134). He recognizes that words are empty; we are the ones who attribute meaning to these words that, alone, have no real explanatory force. He asks us to approach language with a critical eye, knowing that the words on the page cannot give us access to definitive truth. When facts fail to provide certainty, Falstaff finds truth in the world of the imagination. Since honour does not actually signify anything, Falstaff's rejection of honour is more real than Hal's ascent to power, the story of a fairy-tale prince. Rather than focus on reality, Falstaff conveys the truth through wit, comedy and jest. Harold Bloom holds that "if you love language, then you love Falstaff" (289) and believes that he is a "genius for language" (291). Falstaff's deeper understanding of language gives him access to a greater truth. For Bloom, Falstaff is "one of the lords of language, with beggars him: he is the veritable monarch of language, unmatched whether elsewhere in Shakespeare or in all of Western literature" (294). Falstaff masters language because he knows that if words mean nothing, it is time to play and use our imagination—precisely what Morgann shows us in his *Essay on the Dramatic Character of Sir John Falstaff*.

Falstaff's ability to generate the audience's imagination is the reason behind Morgann's assertion that "there is nothing perishable in the nature of *Falstaff*" (177). Morgann's claim about Falstaff's immortality is most true, as Falstaff remains a favourite subject today. Harold Bloom praises Falstaff's character in *Shakespeare: The Invention of the Human*, and calls him "immortal Falstaff" (273), a term coined by A.C. Bradley and Goddard. Critics, such as Morgann and Bloom, immortalize Falstaff through interpretation, an act Falstaff begs us to engage in at the end of Act 5, scene iii, *Henry IV, Part I*. Alone on stage, Falstaff asks the audience: "give me life" (5.3.58). He speaks right at us, in the form of a soliloquy, engaging us to give life to his character with our words and imaginations.

Falstaff fakes his own death in *Henry IV, Part I*, but never truly expires. The false death leads Hal to provide his own interpretation of Falstaff's character, fulfilling Falstaff's desire. Hal speaks of his companion:

What, old acquaintance, could not all this flesh
Keep in a little life? Poor Jack, farewell!
I could have better spared a better man.
O, I should have a heavy miss of thee
If I were much in love with vanity.
Death hath not struck so fat a deer today,
Though many dearer, in this bloody fray.
Embowelled will I see thee by and by.
Till then, in blood by noble Percy lie. (5.4.101-109)

Lying on the ground, Falstaff hears Hal's words, rises and responds to this speech. Falstaff believes that "to counterfeit dying, when a man thereby liveth, is to be no counterfeit, but the true and perfect image of life indeed" (5.4.314). For Falstaff, truth lies in fiction rather than reality. Morgann claims that "life (and especially the life of *Falstaff* might be a jest; but he could see no joke whatever in dying" (26). Falstaff's greatest fear is death because, for him, to die is to be cut off from the audience's interpretive activity.

Although Falstaff eventually dies from a broken heart in *Henry IV, Part II*, it is significant that the audience does not actually see this death on stage. Instead, we only hear about his death from Hostess Quickly's speech in Act 2, scene iii:

A made a finer end, and went away an it had been any christom child. A parted ev'n just between twelve and one, ev'n at the turning o' th' tide – for after I saw him fumble with the sheets, and play with flowers, and smile upon his finger's end, I knew there was but one way. For his nose was as sharp as a pen, and a babbled of green fields. 'How now, Sir John?' quoth I. 'What, man! Be o' good cheer!' So he cried out 'God, God, God', three or four times. Now I, to

comfort him, bid him he should not think of God; I hoped there was no need to trouble himself with any such thoughts yet. So he bade me lay more clothes on his feet; I put my hand into the bed and felt them, and they were as cold as any stone. Then I felt to his knees, and so up'ard and up'ard, and all was as cold as any stone. (2.3.9-24)

Through the Hostess' words, Falstaff escapes death, as she grants him his wish to live on through interpretation. We receive her reading of Falstaff's death, and are left imagining the scene for ourselves. Bloom believes that "Shakespeare's largest tribute to Falstaff is that, belying his own promise to the audience, he dared not allow Sir John to appear on stage in *Henry V*. The playwright understood the magnitude of his creature" (314). The decision to keep Falstaff's death offstage demonstrates the imaginative power Falstaff gives to the audience. Unseen events are more powerful than those that are seen because they require the use of the imagination. The audience members develop their own interpretations of the event and this process teaches each member something about him- or herself. Bloom argues that "Falstaff needs an audience and never fails to find it" (314). Falstaff needs us and we also need Falstaff. As Paul de Man writes in "Criticism and Crisis": "the observation and interpretation of others is always also a means of leading to the observation of the self" (Desmet 33). Falstaff grants us this power and in this way, he remains immortal.

In conclusion, Morgann's criticism is not different from criticism today, even though he discusses dated eighteenth-century notions of honour and nobility that no longer apply to the twenty-first century. Morgann's essay is significant because, instead of attempting to prove whether or not Falstaff is courageous, it examines the idea that the reader creates the meaning of a text—an idea well ahead of its time. Shakespeare is aware that the playwright needs his audience, since we play the crucial role of keeping his works alive. Falstaff is memorable because he calls out to us to partake in this activity. Since Falstaff encourages us to engage with the text and give life to his character, in defending Falstaff, Morgann defends the reader. Morgann's text invites us to ask fundamental questions such as: What does character criticism reveal about the self? Why do I make certain judgments about characters and what does my interpretation teach me about my own desires, ambitions and values? He asks us to look inside ourselves and uncover our secret impressions, or inner emotions, that lead us to form opinions about characters. When you place a character under a microscope to discover scientific truths about human nature, you end up finding questions rather than answers. Our responses to characters cannot conform to a prevailing general opinion about what is right or wrong. In contrast with Morgann's eighteenth-century contemporaries who praise reason over emotion and seek objective knowledge, Morgann teaches us to feel rather than to understand (Morgann 61). He argues that we can find truth in fiction rather than the rational—precisely what theater, Shakespeare, and Sir John Falstaff, ask us to do.

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Flies and Kings: The Ethical Implications of Nietzschean Overcoming in Irving Layton's Poetry

BENJAMIN COMEAU

Which is the greater evil: to remain forever an oppressed cog in the impersonal machine of modern society, or to overcome this oppression but in the process become indifferent toward the suffering of others (even enacting violence upon these "inferior" creatures as an expression of one's will to power)?. The writings of Friedrich Nietzsche and Irving Layton rarely offer mediation of these two extremes; in fact, Nietzsche's Zarathustra resolutely declares that pity is the ultimate sin—as it generates futile suffering for the sympathizer—and laments, "where in the world has there been more foolishness than among those who pity?" (Nietzsche 77). According to Nietzsche, in order to attain the ideal of the *Übermensch* one must overcome a series of ethical and sociocultural obstacles: passivity, selflessness, pity for the masses, the yoke of religion and objective rationality, the herd instinct, artificiality, a resistance to destruction (in particular, self-destruction) and a longing for permanence, and finally discontent. To surmount these obstacles and establish one's absolute autonomy, however, one must first reject the Apollonian "slave" morality that Judeo-Christian societies impose, for only through the embracement of a Dionysian ethos can one deny the apparent incontrovertibility of objective ethical systems. Consequently, in the exceedingly rational world of modernity, "[t]he free individual—independent and gay—is farther from realization than he ever was," yet "all art celebrates him, prepares the way for his coming," and encourages the masses to recognize the repressiveness of the *status quo* (Layton, *Engagements* 83; quoted in Francis, *Layton and His Works* 44). Layton's poems "For Mao Tse-Tung: A Meditation on Flies and Kings," "New Tables," "Still Life," and "The Cold Green Element" function in this manner, for each expresses the tension between relativistic morality and the absolute morality it is attempting to overcome, features personae who aspire to the condition of the *Übermensch* and disregard (or violate) traditional virtues, and exemplifies the poet's efforts to engage the reader in a reevaluation of his own accepted values—a reevaluation contingent upon the reader's open-mindedness, and one that any anti-Dionysian ethical prejudice would immediately preclude.

Superficially, "For Mao Tse-Tung" and "New Tables" appear to offer an indisputably constructive message in their extolment of the virtue of individualism amid a society of "sick people whom no one loves or understands, / Whom even the gods [...] Have completely expunged from their memory" (Layton, "New Tables" lines 7-8, 10). Although these poems repeatedly dismiss the practicality of an orientation to-

ward otherworldliness—religious doctrines are either relegated to the genre of legend or ridiculed as fruitless appeals to deistic, non-interventionist gods—they depict the ignorant and misguided masses as solely concerned with religion, the accumulation of material wealth, and the struggle for power. In contrast, the individualist speaker is able to appreciate the beauty of nature and earthly experience, for his spiritual happiness is one's achievements and one's transient impressions of the Dionysian rather than one's ability to oppress others. These poems consequently affirm Nietzsche's declaration that "to live the 'good life' [one must hold himself up to the ideal of the *übermensch* [...] creat[ing] and recreat[ing] himself through self-knowledge and self-discipline," for the recognition and exercising of the will to power is the implied author's sole differentiation between the character of the superior individual and that of the masses (Francis, "Layton and Nietzsche" 48). The speaker of "For Mao Tse-Tung" emphasizes this distinction when he proclaims, "Poet and dictator, you are as alien [to the masses] as I," which implies there is a natural affinity between those who exert their will to power that elevates them above the psychologically enslaved masses—even if the manifestations of their wills are as controversial and dissimilar as indiscriminate violence toward animals and Mao Tse-Tung's instigation of a social and political revolution (Layton, "For Mao Tse-Tung" line 29). "New Tables" and "For Mao Tse-Tung" thus present the will to power as an indispensable prerequisite for a meaningful and individualistic life and simultaneously suggest that the virtue of exercising one's will to power overshadows the morality (or immorality) of the consequences of this will.

While relativistic and absolute moral systems are both compatible with the notion that individualism is superior to conformity, the ethical stances of these systems sharply diverge in regard to the moral supremacy of the will to power and to the implied author's subsequent proposition that, because the masses are anonymous, numerous, and spiritually immature, they are therefore insignificant and disposable. This proposition and polarization of ethics represents an application of Layton's assertion that "[t]he poet's job is to disturb and discomfit"; otherwise, the largely Apollonian argument that individualism is a virtue would not have required the reader to question his preconceived conceptions of morality (*Engagements* 50; quoted in Van Wilt 22). Layton portrays the suffering of the masses in a manner that engenders disdain rather than pity in the reader: when they die of their own accord, they "fold noiselessly into each other like grey shadows; / They expire quietly like poisonous mushrooms," whereas when a "superior human" wills the death of an uninhibited individual, the murder is depicted as the mere squashing of a fly ("New Tables" lines 14-15). The conspicuous absence of emotional intensity in these images suggests that Layton intended the reader to assume the same indifference to human suffering that the speaker consistently conveys—in effect, making the reader complicit in the speaker's aloofness from, or abhorrence for, the masses. Nevertheless, the brutality of the violence that the speaker of "For Mao Tse-Tung"

enacts upon the weak, innocent, and occasionally inanimate ("Smash insects with my boot, / Feast on torn flowers, deride / The nonillion bushes by the road") calls into question the virtuousness and sanity of the self-overcoming man ("For Mao Tse-Tung lines 10-12). Although this unrestrained expression of the power that relativistic ethics affords an individual—the ability to oppress others while remaining *relativistically ethical*—is a significant testimony to the irreconcilability of absolute and relativistic morality, it does not reflect Nietzsche's idealized attitude toward violence: while Zarathustra acknowledges that "evil is [humanity's] best *strength* and [...] the human must become better *and* more evil," he also declares that "Unwinnable is the beautiful by any violent will" and that humans must "unlearn [their] hurting of others" (Nietzsche 191, 102, 76). According to Nietzsche, violence is not an attribute of the *Übermensch* despite its utility as a means to induce human progress, and thus Layton's portrayal of violence may have been intended as one such catalyst—not as an object of overcoming but as a means to confront the reader with a conflict that must be overcome. It is possible that a reader might encounter this poem and identify with its endorsement of individualism and the will to power to such an extent that he is inspired to overcome his "Judeo-Christian" ethical precepts, yet it is much more likely that the poem's propositions will simply offend him; in either case, however, his Apollonian rationality will be forced to confront the poem's Dionysian abandon, and one aspect of this antinomy will be overcome.

Although Layton's persona in "For Mao Tse-Tung" and "New Tables" openly express their sympathy for the plight of the masses (apparently a concession to the vestiges of their former "slave" morality), both inadvertently and repeatedly undermine this assertion. As these personae are in the midst of the process of overcoming, they have already rejected several attributes of the herd instinct, including a propensity for selflessness, and therefore their love for themselves and their unmistakable aversion to the moral character of the masses expose the insincerity of their avowed compassion. The speaker of "New Tables" professes that the ignorant masses "Fill me with anxiety and compassion; / I am anxious about them," which appears to be a straightforward and noble articulation of sympathy until he continues, "And about myself who must unavoidably deal with them" ("New Tables" lines 4-6). In this context, the speaker's claim of compassion emerges as a lament not for the misery of the masses but for his own misfortunes, as he must interact with those he considers inferior and be incessantly exposed to their misery. The poetic persona of "For Mao Tse-Tung" similarly perceives the suffering of the meek as an inconvenience and solely considers it in relation to himself; only once does he sentimentalize the enslavement of the masses, but even then he cannot conceal his revulsion for more than one line: "I pity the meek in their religious cages / And flee them" ("For Mao Tse-Tung" lines 42-43). Furthermore, he refers to the masses as "joy-haters, joy destroyers" and expresses his ecstasy when he can escape their "[s]warm"; the viciousness and dehumanizing import of these avowals reveals an intensity of disgust that counteracts the credibility

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of his earlier admission of sympathy (lines 45, 33). These poems thus chronicle confrontations between the relativistic and absolute moral systems, for although their speakers have successfully overcome pity (an indication of relativistic morality's power to confer autonomy), they have not yet overcome artificiality and continue to conceal themselves behind personae "[i]nscribed all over with signs of the past" (an indication of absolute morality's enduring influence) (Nietzsche 104). The transition from absolutism to relativism is an arduous process of innumerable overcomings, each of which imparts greater self-awareness and demands greater self-destruction; these overcomings slowly erode the influence of imposed morality (in what the *Übermensch* aspirant considers to be the supreme liberation) but simultaneously destroy the Judeo-Christian virtue of concern for others.

The personae featured in these two poems are entirely oriented toward Nietzschean moral ideals—exalting the earth and earthliness, overcoming pity, exercising their will to power—yet both have lost the capacity for creation. "The Self [...] wants the most—to create beyond itself," Zarathustra declares, but "one must still have chaos within, in order to give birth to a dancing star" (Nietzsche 31, 15). The speaker of "For Mao Tse-Tung" embraces violence and destruction in order to arouse this chaos—the Dionysian energy that fuels creation—but his efforts remain fruitless due to the object of his aggression. His destructive energy is channeled outward rather than inward, as an expression of his Being rather than an initiation of Becoming:

> But I
> Am burning flesh and bone,
> An indifferent creature between
> Cloud and a stone;
> Smash insects with my boot...
> ("For Mao Tse-Tung" lines 6-10)

The causality the speaker delineates between the "burning" of his corporeality amid the emptiness of an earthly existence and his impulsive aggression illustrates that his destructiveness is a manifestation of his spiritual anxiety (a manifestation that more accurately resembles brute force than will to power), and therefore, although he believes he is behaving ethically, his actions are caricatures of the motions necessary to create and self-overcome. The poetic persona of "New Tables," on the other hand, lacks the will to create. He prefers to remain "poor and powerless" in an exaltation of the earth and allow Dionysian impressions to engulf him rather than attempt to restrict this energy to a superimposed Apollonian order ("New Tables" line 33). While this speaker's conscious selection of an "unproductive" yet ecstatic experience over an opportunity to create diverges from Nietzsche's conception of "the good," it nevertheless represents an individual interpretation of relativistic ethics and is therefore—from one relativistic perspective—even more virtuous. His capacity to adopt a Nietzschean ethical philosophy in order to surmount absolutism and then reject this system when it opposed his personal

values signifies that he has attained the ideal of autonomy. In contrast, the speaker of "For Mao Tse-Tung" is as enslaved by relativistic morality as he was beneath absolutism, for although he has overcome many obstacles, his indiscriminate employment of brute force violates both Nietzschean and Judeo-Christian morality and is merely a product of his superiority complex.

The stranger in the poem "Still Life" has likewise misconstrued the concept of sublimation and misunderstood that "aspect of Overcoming in which the destructive impulses of man are made creative and beautiful" is an invitation to commit violence (Van Wijk 23). He asserts that his spontaneous murder of the linnet is a refinement of man's destructive compulsions into "an exciting composition" of modern art, yet his "composition" is arguably a mere *redirection* of these violent tendencies rather than a refinement of them, for the manner in which he kills the bird is an indisputable expression of brute force (Layton, "Still Life" line 23). Although the motive behind the stranger's aggression—the desire for an interesting experience—differs from the source of aggression for the speaker of "For Mao Tse-Tung"—the desire to externalize angst—both personae, amid similar conditions, embrace the perception that brute force can be ethically justified. Like the speaker of "For Mao Tse-Tung," the stranger has already overcome many of the obstacles that impede one's attainment of the *Übermensch* (most notably the sentiment of pity) and may have even become a "superior human," but he is nevertheless frustrated and impatient as a result of a plateau in his process of overcoming. "'God, nature, man,/ we've exhausted them each in turn,'" he declares listlessly, for after overcoming the enslavement of religion, the inscrutability of nature, and the homogeneity of the masses, he is only interested in innovative experiences that challenge the convictions of the individual (lines 4-5). Only a person who has overcome pity but not discontent, such as the stranger or the speaker of "For Mao Tse-Tung," would be capable of willing injudicious violence against the innocent in this manner (as the *Übermensch* would readily perceive the futility of enacting violence upon another in order to cultivate one's own spiritual growth), yet perhaps experimentation with aggression is a crucial step one must overcome before one can refine one's destructive impulses.

The stranger's nonchalance throughout "Still Life," as well as the speaker's observation that the stranger crushed the bird "As if he had done this / many times before," encourages the reader to identify the stranger's actions as fruitless (because self-overcoming entails that one's established values be perturbed) and, consequently, unethical (lines 10-11). The poem's absence of finality demands that the reader integrate the Dionysian energy and chaos of the violence within a framework of Apollonian rationality, thereby evaluating whether or not the stranger's "composition" constitutes art; however, in spite of one's conclusions regarding the aesthetic nature of the "still life," Layton causes it to be nearly impossible to perceive the stranger's action as morally justified. If one approaches the poem from the perspective of almost every absolute moral system, the stranger's actions would be considered reprehensible

due to the purposelessness of the murder, while if one approaches the poem from the perspective of a relativistic moral system, the failure of the bird's death to exert any positive influence on any of the characters would render the stranger's actions similarly condemnable. Furthermore, in contrast to "For Mao Tse-Tung" (in which "kings" [...] must deal with the many (the 'flies') for the common good [while] the many stubbornly remain passive rather than active sufferers [and] never learn [...] to take joy in life"), the linnet is portrayed as "wiping its beak / on the fallen leaves and grass, / joyfully ignoring both of us" shortly before the stranger crushes it. In the former poem, Layton desired that the reader identify with the kings and their apathy toward the flies (which therefore obliges the reader to resolve the inner tension between his loyalties to the principles of both absolute and relativistic morality), yet in the latter poem, Layton desired that the reader unconditionally sympathize with the linnet (*Layton and His Works* 43; "Still Life" lines 7-9). This design could have had two profound objectives: either Layton intended the reader to witness the "still life" from the same perspective as the speaker and to experience the same reaction he did (for perhaps the stranger's "composition" was not meant to facilitate his own overcoming but to perturb the reader and, by extension, the reader) or else Layton intended to emphasize the discrepancy between the individualist ethics of the stranger and the ideal of the *Übermensch*. The first of these conjectures is entirely plausible, yet the second is certain, for why else would the stranger imprint an animal with any expression of human will in order to "create art," while the personae of "For Mao Tse-Tung" and "New Tables" affirm (and are able to appreciate) that the intrinsic aestheticism of nature is superior to the creations of man?

Man's potential for creation is inextricably bound to his obligation to destroy, and thus self-overcoming is a continual process of destruction and creation, a continual sublimation of the Dionysian into the Apollonian. "The Cold Green Element" is a poetic representation of this perpetual process: it portrays a world in which "[a]ll permanence [...] is mere allegory" and "[c]reating [...] is the great redemption from suffering" (nevertheless, in order "that the creator may be, [his life] itself requires suffering and much transformation [...] much bitter dying") (Nietzsche 74). The poem itself is thoroughly Dionysian, and, although it is constrained within a visually structured arrangement, the poet persona's stream of consciousness often spills from one stanza into the next and proceeds along a fluid association of sensations and images rather than within a deliberate construction of meaning. Unfortunately, the overwhelmingly chaotic nature of this technique regularly obscures the speaker's will and the precise nature of his suffering (though he evidently fears mortality despite his recurrent self-destructions), yet it is possible that the reason the speaker never exercises a will to power is because he no longer intentionally self-overcomes, as indicated by his lack of ethical motivation:

At the end of the garden walk
the wind and its satellite wait for me;

their meaning I will not know
until I go there (Layton, "Cold Green Element"
lines 1-4

The speaker appears to surrender his will and allow himself to float along the poem's unrestrained Dionysian energy until he is "misled by the cries of young boys" and unintentionally becomes once again "a breathless swimmer in that cold green element" (lines 38, 40). While one cannot conclude that the "cold green element" is a representation of the process of self-overcoming, the deduction that that character with his "murdered selves" is "in his element" (albeit a cold, unsettling one) when he is forced to overcome his present state seems logical. Curiously, the speaker, unlike the personae of the other three poems, does not describe self-overcoming as an ethical good; in fact, his depiction of his "murdered selves" as "hanging from ancient twigs" implies that he laments the destruction of these aspects of himself and therefore preserves them, perhaps to anchor his identity (lines 29, 28). Consequently, he conveys the notion that overcoming to an excessive extent can be a disorienting and alienating experience.

The characters who inhabit the world of this poem all appear to embody a mode of Nietzschean ethics—the crowds do not pity the hanging poet although he fascinates them, the speaker "embrace[s]k a lover / the trunk of a tree" when he is compelled to verify his own earthliness, and even the worm sings "for an hour in the throat of a robin" in order to celebrate the positivity of process before he is consumed—yet none of them appear to be particularly happy or to have found meaningfulness in their lives (lines 16-17, 37). Although they have overcome each of Nietzsche's ethical and sociocultural obstacles (and may have even attained the ideal of the *Übermensch*), they exist in a state of indifferent detachment, solely aware of their confinement within processes that they fear but cannot articulate. The speaker (possibly a poet himself) experiences anxiety when he contemplates the fate of the dead poet, becomes "breathless" when he considers the worm (for the worm singing in the robin's throat evokes a cyclicidity of processes—the worm that is consumed and the worm that will consume the speaker when he dies), and envisions himself in a condition of elderly infirmity whenever he sees old women; however, he is unable to express these fears lucidly, and the fact that the crowds respond to the city's gates respond to the dead poet "with grimaces and incomprehension" suggests that the inarticulateness of this city's inhabitants is a consequence of inadequate self-awareness rather than an inadequacy of language (lines 40, 12). These characters may have overcome the enslavement of absolute morality, yet they are comparably enslaved by the kinetic inertia of its replacement. The true ethical stance of this poem is therefore not that of the characters but that of the implied author: Layton is illustrating that the ideal of the *Übermensch* is as flawed as any other ethical system and that it is the elements absent from the society of "The Cold Green Element" that gives this system strength—self-awareness, the frequent reevaluation of one's accepted ethical convictions, personal autonomy, and the will to power.

In the wake of Nietzsche's declaration of "'the death of God' and 'the advent of nihilism,'" mankind was confronted with "a great absence and emptiness of values and yet [...] a remarkable abundance of possibilities" (Berman 21). The overcoming of the previously incontestable regime of Judeo-Christian morality afforded individuals the opportunity to develop their own ethical systems for the first time on a mass scale, and thus the widespread emergence of relativism was a logical reaction to and rejection of the absolutist ethical systems that had reigned for millennia. Nevertheless, one need not maintain an unconditional segregation of these two ethical models: one need not consider the adherents to absolutism as ignorant and dispensable "flies," nor judge the advocates of relativism as morally superior, self-aware "kings." At its most fundamental level, a religion is merely a prepackaged set of ethical and moral codes, prudently selected for easy digestion, yet the mass marketability of these morals does not inevitably entail their incompatibility with the vast majority of individualized moral systems. It is now the irreconcilability of absolutism and relativism—Layton's moment of celebration and preparation on the interminable stairway to the *Übermensch*—that must be overcome, for any moral system that combines the individualism of relativism with the egalitarianism of utilitarianism will provide the greatest freedom and contentment for all. What the world needs now is another transcension: beyond Layton and on toward conscientious relativism.

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Falstaff's Family Tree: Exploring Falstaff's Genealogies

AARON GOLISH

This essay is an excerpt from a longer research project that explores the mythical and classical character genealogies of Shakespeare's Falstaff.

Characters, as genres, have a certain vitality, and while a catalogue is certainly an important first step and resource for criticism, there is only so much value in an inventory of dead bugs pinned to a wall in a museum. There is a kind of death in this sort of categorical analysis that would 'lynchpin' characters to a constant inflexible state or define them solely by a unitary function. Perhaps it is well that so many characters escape such critical murder by continuing to animate and oscillate in a way that escapes critical reductionism. Fowler speaks to this vital effect in her discussion of the many social persons within the figure of the Knight from Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*:

> The riding figure holds together the entire portrait, but it vacillates before us through many models of the person . . . The process of vacillation itself develops the character—neither a crusader nor a pilgrim, alone, but something made of the alternations, like a flip-page book or a film that we perceive as integral, though it comes of many distinct still frames racing by our eyes.

The image of vacillation and the animation of the flipbook is, I feel, an apt one for describing how a character resists immobilization. No single frame can encompass the whole of the animation and likewise movement makes characters slippery. What better example of this slippery animation is there in a character than Falstaff, whose sprawling genealogies defy reduction? Indeed by this account to 'banish plump Jack' would truly be to 'banish all the world' (1 Henry IV 2.4.467).

Historically Falstaff is associated with the Lollard knight Sir John Oldcastle, made into a protestant martyr by John Bale and whose name he initially bore. His name was changed to Falstaff following a controversy with Oldcastle's descendent the powerful Henry Brooke, Baron of Cobham. While this is the most obvious genealogy for Falstaff it quickly proves profitless in revealing anything of Falstaff's nature. Outside of a vague friendship with Henry V, Falstaff shares no characteristics or dramatic function with previous iterations of the Oldcastle, neither in the polemical *Briefe Chronycle* by John Bale, the

protestant martyrology *Acts and Monuments* by John Foxe, nor in his earlier appearance in the anonymously authored play *Famous Victories of Henry V*. The lack of correspondence between the two figures has suggested to some that Shakespeare used Falstaff to satirize either the figure of Oldcastle, Cobham himself, or perhaps other figures. More recently Stephen Greenblatt has argued that Falstaff's character was based off the pamphleteer and rival playwright Robert Greene. This conjecture remains attractive especially considering that Greene was notorious for his corpulent character and his claims to have spent time amongst London thieves and con-artists. Nevertheless this remains mere conjecture and these historical sources do not account for how Falstaff functions within the plot of *Henry IV*.

MILES GLORIOSUS & PARASITI: EURIPIDES' CYCLOPS

Although, Frye categorizes Falstaff as a *bomolochoi*, or buffoon, "whose function it is to increase the mood of festivity rather than to contribute to the plot," we might also find Falstaff fits the model of the *parasiti* – the parasite who flatters constantly to ensure his next meal – and the *miles gloriosus*, the braggart that convention dictates "must be exposed, ridiculed, swindled, and beaten." The *miles gloriosus* is one of the earliest and most common genealogies attributed to Falstaff. The archetypal characters of the *miles gloriosus* and the *parasiti* come from the Roman Comedy of Terrence and Plautus, which Shakespeare and most Elizabethan playgoers would certainly have been familiar with. Moreover, the *miles gloriosus* survives through the tradition of *Commedia dell'Arte* and the characters of *Il Capitano* and *Scaramouche*, and their many descendants. The *miles gloriosus* and *parasiti*, however, actually descend first from ancient Greece. Plautus' Roman comedies and the traditions they began were largely imitations and translations of now lost works of Greek New Comedy by the likes of Diphius and Menander. Roman comedy inherits not only its plots but also its typed characters, which, like in *Commedia dell'Arte*, would have been assigned the same mask in each appearance. We can, however, trace the *miles gloriosus* and *parasiti* back farther than this to the Athenian *Satyr-play*.

In ancient Athens, tragedies were written and performed in a tetralogy, traditionally followed by a *Satyr-play*, intended to relieve the tragic pathos of the three preceding tragedies. A *Satyr-play* always featured a chorus of bawdy and wanton Satyrs lead by their father and patriarch Silenus. The Satyrs and Silenus are proverbially braggarts, parasites and cowards – as followers of Dionysus they forever seek the instant gratification of wine and sex. In a *Satyr-play* the Satyrs would stand as comic antithesis to tragic or epic heroes such as Odysseus. They subvert the high iambic action of heroes with their licentious and indecent behaviour. Since there was one *Satyr-play* in every tetralogy, Silenus would have been the most popular and reoccurring character on the Athenian stage. In fact, since the stock characters types of New and Middle Comedy could not have grown out of Old Comedy alone, which favoured the satirizing of political figures

and topical events over stock plots or characters, Silenus and the Satyr-play are the most logical place to look for the origin of the stock characters of New Comedy. Finally, Satyr-plays began disappearing in Greece around the same time that New Comedy emerges.

The humour of the Satyr-play derived from Silenus and his retinue's escape from some new predicament, often through some form of dishonesty, and much like the delight found in Falstaff's witty sidesteps. In Euripides' *Cyclops* for example, Silenus and the Satyrs find themselves enslaved to the Cyclops Polyphemus. In his absence Silenus sells the hero Odysseus the monster's cheese and goats when Odysseus lands his ship nearby. When the Cyclops shows up, Silenus betrays the hero pretending to have been beaten and tells Polyphemus that the hero was trying to steal the cheese and goats. The Satyrs initially agree to help Odysseus in his plan to blind the Cyclops but when the time for action comes each comes up with an excuse to avoid participation. Despite this betrayal, Silenus and his sons are permitted to escape the Cyclops with Odysseus after he has blinded Polyphemus in concordance with the myth. Thus they are parasites to the heroic action of Odysseus, like Falstaff to Hal in the slaying of Hotspur and in his constant debt.

Much like Falstaff, Silenus is also a proverbial braggart. *Cyclops* begins immediately with a prologue where he proclaims to the absent Dionysus to have served in a battle with the *Gigantes*: "I took my stand protecting your flank with my shield, and, striking Enceladus with my spear in the centre of his targe, killed him" (Eur. Cycl. 5-7), though anyone listening familiar with the myth would know he did not kill any of the Giants. In fact, as the myth goes, Silenus and Hephaestus rode towards the battle on donkeys, whose braying incidentally scared the Giants into retreat, not knowing what they were hearing. Thus just as in *2 Henry IV* 4.2, Falstaff inadvertently captures Coleville on account of his fake reputation for the slaying of Hotspur, Silenus inadvertently helps defeat the giants on account of his braying donkey and the giant's ignorance. Both figures enjoy an uncanny good fortune that they exploit to aggrandize themselves. Though, just as Falstaff cannot manage his funds and is perpetually in debt, Silenus episodically find himself enslaved to a different monster or tyrant, whom he always escapes, usually not by any heroic action on his own part, and often only to find himself once more enslaved.

FOLLY, *STULTITIA*, AND THE FOOL

Falstaff shares many affinities with Shakespeare's classic fool since he is known largely by his wit and plain speech. Many authors have confused this blunt speech with 'licensed speech.' The distinction, however, is important. The Fool's specific outspoken boldness is dependent on his privileged relationship to a King, which allows him the exclusive license to criticize the otherwise uncriticizable. Falstaff on the other has no King – he only has a Prince and therefore occupies an essentially different relationship with authority. Upon Hal's ascension to the throne, Falstaff assumes an indecorous and familiar tone

when speaking to his King and is silenced: "Reply to me not with a fool-born jest" (2 Hen IV 5.5.55). It is important to note that Hal's infamous rejection speech occurs in response to Falstaff's presumptive license. Falstaff addresses Henry V in a familiar and diminutive possessive language: "God save thy Grace, King Hall *my* Royal Hall" and "God saw thee, *my sweet boy!*" (5.5.41-43. Emphasis mine.) Falstaff cannot be a Shakespearean Fool because though he is plainspoken, he does not hold the license for plainness that he believes his relationship with Hal should afford him.

In *Praisers of Folly*, Walter Kaiser, drawing on the lengthy medieval tradition discusses the difference between the 'natural' fool, the person deprived of wit or reason, and the artificial fool such as the court jester who we see in the figure of *Feste from Twelfth Night*. Kaiser suggests that the artificial fool derives his license from the 'natural' fool. Since the natural fool, he says, "does not comprehend the conventions of society, the natural fool is invariably irreverent of those conventions, not out of any motive of iconoclasm but simply because he does not know any better." Furthermore, the medieval 'idiot' was considered to be under the special protection of God. Therefore, if and when the idiot's rambling madness condensed into a coherent comment that pierced the veils of convention, then it was believed that God had possessed the fool briefly with the simplicity of truth. We can see this belief in Hal's comment that "wisdom cries out in the streets and no man regards it" (1 *Henry IV* 1.2.85). One can imagine here a figure like Edgar's Poor Tom who wanders the street speaking nonsense within which there is still hidden reason. Thus we arrive at the paradoxical and particularly Renaissance concept of the wise fool, a figure who "embodies these paradoxes and capitalizes upon the equivocation in the word *wit*. He manages, that is, to present truth by means of comedy." Consider this notion of paradoxical incongruities that are the stuff of 'wit' when intelligently explicated through comedy. Perhaps Maurice Morgann articulates it best in his description of Falstaff's wit:

> For what is humour in the humourist, but incongruity, whether of sentiment, conduct, or manners? What in the man of humour, but a quick discernment, and keen sensibility of these incongruities? And what is wit itself, without presuming however to give a complete definition where so many have failed, but a talent, for the most part, of marking with force and vivacity unexpected points of likeness in things supposed incongruous.

Wit is often found in a character's quick ability to point out incongruities in an ironic manner. Incongruities, particularly in character, have been a recurring topic for us here, and most critics discussing Falstaff will at one point or another comment on his uncompassionableness due the various and often incongruous aspects of

his personality. But if we're going to discuss his incongruities, let us consider first his role as a 'misleader of youths.'

BEASTLY PEDEGOGUES AND *DEERE* SACRIFICES

Douglas J. Stewart in his article *Falstaff the Centaur*, makes the interesting argument that Falstaff's role in his tutelage of Hal, not merely as misleaders of youths, is analogous to the mythic education of Greek heroes by the centaur Chiron. "Why a centaur?" says Stewart, "Like other man-beast composites of Greek myth -Pan, Proteus, satyrs, Silenus, and the Cyclopes, centaurs are notable for extreme wildness and extreme self-indulgence, and by definition a counter-force to civilization. Yet they often have near-divine powers and are frequently repositories of 'wisdom'". In these mythic traditions, the hero's early and exceptional education appears essential to their later greatness as military leaders. For Hal this involves learning of tongues amongst the rabble of Eastcheap, finding Chiron's cave in the Boar's Head tavern. With this mythic approach in mind, Falstaff, ceases to perform the role of the misleading Vice figure and instead becomes a hermetic Merlin, or rather a beastly Chiron. Like a centaur that is at once man and beast, foolish and wise, Falstaff's incongruities give him animation. His characterization fits no type because he oscillates between contradictory ideas. The fool is a fool, but Falstaff is also a knight. He is a braggart but also a philosopher, and since he is always moving, he is impossible to pin down.

And yet there is another important pedagogue from the classical period that a number of scholars have associated with Falstaff. Noting the similarities between Mistress's Quickly's discussion of Falstaff's death and the description of Socrates' death in Plato's *Phaedo*, these scholars have begun comparing other nuanced similarities between the two misleaders of youth. The two figures also share an important structural similarity in that they both represent what Frye would call a *pharmakos*, or scapegoat. In Greek *pharmakos* means both the sacrificial victim, or individual ostracized from society as well as a drug that is administered as a cure. Like Socrates, Falstaff is ostracized from Henry V's society and dies shortly after. But perhaps more importantly, both Socrates and Falstaff tutor military generals. Socrates' primarily literary pupil is the young general Alcibiades, while Falstaff's 'pupil' is young Hal. Amongst North's translation of Plutarch's *Lives*, which Shakespeare used for his Roman plays, is of course Plutarch's *Life of Alcibiades*, the companion piece to the *Life of Coriolanus*. More importantly, however, Erasmus explicated the figures of Alcibiades and his Socratic teacher in both *The Praise of Folly* and *The Sileni of Alcibiades*. While, there are plenty of other remarkable similarities between Falstaff and Socrates, the figure Erasmus raises in these two passages brings us to our circle:

> First of all, it's well known that, like the Silenus figure of Alcibiades, everything in human affairs has two aspects totally unalike. So what on the face

of it, as they say, is death, when you look inside, proves to be life – and conversely, what looks like life proves to be death. What looks beautiful is ugly within; what looks rich is abjectly poor; what looks disreputable is prestigious; what looks learned is ignorant; what looks study is feeble; what looks noble is base; what looks glad is sorrowful; what looks favourable is adverse; what looks friendly is unfriendly; what looks beneficial is injurious – in short, when you open the Silenus, you will find everything reversed.

This passage from Erasmus's *Praise of Folly* once again draws upon the theme of incongruities, and in the context of the *Praise of Folly* it also sheds light on the early modern conception of wisdom. In *Praise of Folly*, Erasmus is demonstrating that the only man who is not a fool is the one who knows he is a fool. Much like Socrates' wisdom in knowing he knows nothing, Erasmus completes the reversal, the fool is wise, the wiseman foolish. Picked up from Plato's *Symposium*, Erasmus, as well as other writers such as Rabelias adopt Alcibiades' description of Socrates as the satyr Silenus. Erasmus in his short text *The Sileni of Alcibiades* discusses Silenus similarly:

. . . if you open up this Silenus, who is outwardly so ridiculous, you find within someone who is closer to being a god than a man, a great and lofty spirit, the epitome of a true philosopher. He despised all those things for which other m o r t a l s strive and sail the seas, sweat and go to court, even go to war. He was untouched by insults, and neither good fortune nor bad had any impact on him.28

This description, though of an entirely different character, appears to be a nearly perfect description of Falstaff himself. This passage also illustrates Kaiser's description of the Renaissance fool an unassuming ugly vessel that could contain penetrating wisdom and truth. Falstaff too has moments of such life affirming philosophy29 especially where his disregard for heroic ambition marks him as all too commonly human. Oddly there is something satyric in this "life-affirmingness." The satyric, like the satyr-play, is opposed to the epic seriousness of high mimetic tragedy, though there is always a cyclical tragic element or danger in satyr that threatens to reveal itself should the danger become too real.

Frye describes his theory of modes as circular, the ironic mode, his fifth in the series, begins to resemble in its own simplicity the primal qualities of the first mythic mode. "Irony descends from the low mimetic" the forth mode, "it begins in realism and dispassionate observation. But as it does so, it moves steadily towards myth, and dim

outlines of sacrificial rituals and dying gods begin to reappear in it." The stark pathetic realism of a dying animal is therefore 'ironic,' but it becomes mythic when that dying animal dies for no other reason than as a sacrifice. Satyr, which always has an ironic element, likewise bears a similar cyclical nature to tragedy. Falstaff is, throughout *Henry IV* and *Merry Wives*, frequently associated with stags, goats and other horned animals of the hunt and sacrifice. In *Merry Wives* he jokingly describes himself as a prize stag to be divided and consumed between the two women. This joke plays dangerously close to the idea of *sparamagos*, ritual dismemberment and consumption. Although Silenus never appears to be the object of sacrifice, he is the tutor of the fertility god Dionysus. As a fertility god, Dionysus is a god of death and renewal. Consequently in his festivities after his celebration he is ritually torn to pieces and eaten. This is precisely the sacrificial *pharmakos* that Frye refers to. It is an archetypal role that is both arbitrary and necessary, and it is also an essential to herald in spring festivities.

CARNIVAL : SATURNAL : BACCHANAL

The final genealogy we will discuss is Falstaff's debt to the Carnival Lord of Misrule. Since Bakhtin identified the carnivalesque in *Rabelais and his World*, many critics have eagerly discussed carnivalesque elements in Shakespeare and Falstaff in particular. Often drawing comparisons between Falstaff and the fat figure of Carnival in Bruegel's painting *Combat of Carnival and Lent*, critics suggest that Falstaff comes from the Feast of Fool's tradition of the Lord of Misrule. This carnival king represents an ephemeral reversal of social order and has been identified particularly with the tavern scene where Falstaff burlesques Henry IV before Hal, donning a comic pillow for a crown, only to be 'deposed' by Hal. Falstaff is dethroned a second and final time when he is banished by Hal on his coronation day. This fits with the dethroning of the mock king of carnival as the real king emerges as monarch.

Though Carnival is associated with the Christian celebration of Lent its practices originate in antiquity, which has the most affinities to the Roman Saturnalia. "The Saturnalia, which has the most affinities to medieval rites of misrule, began with an election of a *Rex Saturnalis*, a mock monarch, who was literally or symbolically destroyed at the end." Similarly the Lord of Misrule is often symbolically killed, or at the very least deposed. Slaves were given considerable freedom of speech and other aspects of social order were reversed for the duration of the festivities, usually held between December 17th and December 25th, and centering around the Winter solstice. The Roman Saturnalia in likewise intimately related to the Greek festivals for Dionysus. In Athens, the rural Dionysia occurred sometime around the winter solstice, during which was followed three months later by the City Dionysia during the spring equinox. These dates are important since the Christian carnivals fall on the same two times of year, the date of the Fat Tuesday carnival is determined by the spring equinox. Being a spring celebration, the City Dionysia represented renewal and rebirth as well as the

sparamagos sacrifice of Dionysus, represented by a bull, and a drunken procession through the streets. The daily festivities concluded famously with the dramatic performances, which culminated with the final Satyr-play. In images of Bacchanalia, processional celebrations of Dionysus, Silenus is almost always present riding a donkey and being pushed along by followers. Carnival traditions also featured a chaotic procession and a "mock king appears in emblems and other visual images as riding backwards on a donkey." We can see these parallels to the figure of Carnival in Breugel's painting and elsewhere.

The birth/death dichotomy and renewal that is part of these festivities is also an essential aspect of Falstaff's connection to the Carnival tradition. For Carnival, the celebrations and feasting always contained an aspect of ephemerality, since they were followed by Ash Wednesday, the fasting of Lent and the reminder of Christ's death and rebirth.43 I have already discussed a similar ephemerality in the character of Falstaff. In *1 Henry IV*, he is largely unstoppable and easily escapes death, but by *2 Henry IV* he is keenly aware his mortality. When Doll Tearsheet suggests he prepare for the grave he rejects the advice: "Peace, good Doll, do not speak like a death's / head, do not bid me remember mine end" (*2 Henry IV,* 2.4.231-2).

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The good, the bad and the sucker; or how the Zapruder film and Warhol's *Blow Job* illustrate the contradictions and illusions of the age of mechanical reproduction (and make a sucker out of anybody who tries to interpret them)

THÉO LEPAGE-RICHER

Andy Warhol and John F. Kennedy figure among the most important personas of the 1960's. Both of them can be considered representative of this era: one being the standard bearer of a new underground aesthetic interested in the "factuality and materiality of everyday life in a modern urban consumer society" (Lubin, 31) and the other the first president to be specially packaged for the screen culture of an emergent late capitalist consumer society. In that sense, each of them is inseparable from the media scene of the 60's characterized by instant reproducibility and omnipresent, bodiless images. Two artifacts embody these 60's symbols' inseparability from their media context, the first one being the "Zapruder film." If Kennedy's fall is as vivid as his rise in the collective consciousness, it is probably because of Abraham Zapruder's recording of his assassination. The second work is one of Warhol's most well known films, *Blow Job*, showing a young man from the shoulders up supposedly receiving the act designated by the title. The Zapruder film documents the death of Kennedy in a context of cultural anxiety with regards to total, nuclear destruction and *Blow Job* teases its viewer with a promise of watching a sexually explicit act in a historical context defined by sexual containment and frequent censorship in the cinema. This essay will reflect upon this promise of revelation as specific to "the age of mechanical reproduction" and discuss how these representative artifacts actually disavow their revelatory power through the technological limitations and epistemological crisis they embody. I do not intend to aestheticize the assassination of Kennedy by presenting it as an artwork. However, by the way in which the film foregrounds pre-existing anxieties about knowledge, interrogates the nature of cinema and its relation to contemporary questions of materiality and factuality, it seems to share in Warhol's pop art aesthetic. Thereby, it can be considered as a cultural object like *Blow Job*.

I aim to show how these two contemporaneous artifacts engage in an implicit cross-communication that enriches the meaning of each and permits their viewers to gain important insights into an era

that marks the advent of late capitalistic culture and its promises. I will argue that, when considered in the context of their medium, their materiality, as well as Benjamin's and Baudrillard's visions on mechanical reproduction, these works of art embody America's faith in film's revelatory power and its fear of meaninglessness. Taken together, the two films permit us to rearticulate Benjamin's vision of the aura in the late capitalist context as a resistance to closure and illusory immediacy.

Abraham Zapruder was shooting the president on November 22, 1963, with a home movie camera loaded with 8-mm color film. His film is a single take, lasts twenty-six seconds and its only camera movement is a pan to the right taken from an elevated vantage point. It shows a limousine arriving with the Kennedys, John disappearing briefly behind a road sign, emerging as he holds his throat, his head being blown off by a bullet, the car speeding up with his wife Jacqueline climbing on his back and finally disappearing under a bridge. *Blow Job*, directed by Andy Warhol, was filmed a few months later in January 1964. The film is thirty-six minutes long and displays the face and neck of a young man against a stone wall. The young man looks up and down, to the right and to the left. His movements make his face sometimes partially disappear from the frame and it is often overexposed in the light, disappearing in the obscurity of the dark background. Despite the fact that the viewer is never privy to this explicit act, the man seems to react to an off-screen blowjob. *Blow Job* shares with the Zapruder film a home-movie style of cinematography, with black and white film and no sound in a single, long take.

In his book *Shooting Kennedy*, David M. Lubin underlines the classical Hollywood-like structure of the Zapruder film: "a relatively brief opening act concludes with a sudden dramatic turn of events, leading to a comparatively long middle act that climaxes in a third and final act" (4). This analogy directly ensues from the dominance of narrative-driven films during this era, but interpreting these films in terms of their narrative might be misleading as the spectatorial pleasure that they trigger does not ensue primarily from their story structure, but from the event they depict. In his article "Cinema of Attraction[s]", Tom Gunning theorizes an alternative approach to cinema based on the turn-of-the-century's non-narrative-driven films, whose interest was based on their "ability to show something" (382) and on "directly solicit[ing] spectator attention, inciting visual curiosity, and supplying pleasure through an exciting spectacle – a unique event [...] that is of interest in itself" (384). This demonstrates an exhibitionist rather than a voyeuristic approach to cinema. Gunning also explains that this aesthetic, which he calls "cinema of attractions", "does not disappear with the dominance of narrative, but rather goes underground, both into certain avant-garde practices and as a component of narrative film" (382). While this aesthetic is indeed visible in *Blow Job*, whose sexual explicitness corresponds to the literal definition of exhibitionism, the Zapruder film also shares in this impulse with its obscene staging of physical violence, loss of bodily control and death. These two films embody the aesthetic of the spectacle by the way in which *Blow Job*

covertly depicts a sexual act whose underlying homoeroticism openly challenges cultural repressiveness toward ambiguous sexuality and the Zapruder film stages a spectacle of death illuminated by its unrepeatability. The spectatorial pleasure of these films ensues more from the capacity of mechanical reproduction to depict a spectacle defined by its uniqueness and unrepeatability, than from the pleasure of following any closed, coherent narrative.

In that sense, the structure of both films relies on the cinema of attractions' rhetoric of display and representation. That being said, this reproductive aspect is not proper to this particular aesthetic and is inseparable from the process of mechanical reproduction in general. The "cinema of attractions" relays a more explicit account of cinema as a revelatory medium. In the 60's, mechanical reproduction was confirming its central role in America's cultural life, both on the home front by way of Hollywood's cinematic production and in the home *per se* with the video camera and the television entering the domestic space. In his seminal 1936 essay "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," Walter Benjamin argues that the means of mechanical reproduction has destroyed the "aura" of artworks. Benjamin puts considerable emphasis on what he considers the fundamental lack of the instantly reproduceable work of art: its lack of a specific "presence in time and space, its unique existence at the place where it happens to be" (222). Benjamin's understanding of an artwork's aura is associated with its authority to impose the terms of its spectatorship, both spatial and temporal. In that sense, mechanical reproduction removes art from any physical preserve and, rather than the spectator having to come at the artwork, it is now coming at them. By reproducible art, Benjamin mainly refers to photography and cinema. Through these media, images have managed to break free from their formal materiality. Benjamin presents this new relation to art as ensuing from "the desire of contemporary masses to bring things "closer" spatially and humanly, which is just as ardent as their bent toward overcoming the uniqueness of every reality by accepting its reproduction" (225). In this regard, the work of art loses its authority by the way it is now designed and conceived for its reproducibility. The new idealized viewer is a consumer, concerned with a constant immediacy through possession. In short, Benjamin defines aura as "the unique phenomenon of a distance, however close it may be" (224) and this new aesthetic of representation-as-reproduction, or even representation-as-possession, is one over which the artwork itself has no authority. According to Benjamin, photography and cinema are thereby aura-less.

Jean Baudrillard's 1983 book *Simulations* appears in some respect to be a descendant of Benjamin's in that it updates his ideas on reproducible art and immediacy-through-commodification. He gives the example of twin sisters in a pornographic movie in which "the charnel reality of their bodies is erased by the resemblance. [...] The regard can go only from one to the other; all vision is locked into this coming-and-going" (144). In that sense, he underlines the way

by which reproduction creates an illusion of immediacy, of non-mediation, to the extent that the "contradiction between the real and the imaginary is effaced. The unreal is [...] *a hallucinatory resemblance of the real with itself*" (142). This idea of representation for representation's sake triggers a sense of imminent immediacy, of "objective" and indexical inseparability. Such confusion between reality and its representation occludes the distancing effect necessary to give any form of authority to a specific artwork, since its images are replaceable, free from materiality, always available and therefore valueless.

It is precisely in this theoretical tradition that *Blow Job* and the Zapruder film warrant critical attention. They are—in their aesthetic, their structure and their themes—representative artifacts of their era. As stated earlier, their deployment of a home-movie aesthetic and their promise of revelation with regards to their staged anxieties toward ambiguous sexuality and sudden destruction are inseparable from the 1960's and the emergent democratization of mechanical reproduction technologies. However, on the contrary, these films gained their mythological status by the way they refuse such hyperreal approaches and play on Western culture's anxieties towards meaninglessness and ambiguity. In his book Andy Warhol's *Blow Job*, Roy Grundmann explains how *Blow Job* emerged in the cultural context of "a vigorous leap into a certain postmodern sensibility that oscillated between self-consciousness and disaffection" (11). These two films channel such epistemological anxiety by emphasizing in their narrative the mediation they conduct and not meeting the revelatory expectations related to their medium. It is precisely in the way that they integrate in their own narratives and aesthetics their temporal and spatial absence and failure as supposedly transparent and objective media that they emerge as nuancing Benjamin's and Baudrillard's visions on reproducible art. They rearticulate a concept of the aura for the age of mechanical reproduction and postmodernism, but nonetheless present it as an exception rather than a rule by rejecting reproducible art's most common tropes. Since Benjamin emphasizes the temporal and physical restrictions of an engagement with pre-industrial art, the Zapruder film and *Blow Job* will be considered in terms of the relations of distance and delayed temporality they embody.

Given their staging of physical distance, it is relevant to consider these films as part of the body genre. In her article, "Film Bodies: Gender, Genre, and Excess", Linda Williams articulates one of the main features of this genre as being "the spectacle of a body caught in the grip of intense sensation or emotion [...], of the body "beside itself" with sexual pleasure, fear and terror, or overpowering sadness" (4). In that sense, the uncontrollable body becomes the signifier of the genre and qualifies its subdivisions in terms of the nature of this loss of control, *Blow Job* appears to be a porno and the Zapruder film a melodrama. That being said, they become problematic in the context of this genre by their effects on their audience. Williams writes: "the success of these genres if often measured by the degree to which the audience sensation mimics what is seen on the screen" (4). In this

regard, the body genre is paradigmatic of the reproducibility era in the way it integrates as a fundamental part of its rhetoric the notion of physical immediacy and of hyperreality in the way that the spectators' reactions mimic the characters' as their intradiegetic substitutes.

However, the most important aspect of Williams' argument is that the body genre presents the visible as an extension of the spectator's physical body. In his article "Video Pornography, Visual Pleasure, and the Return of the Sublime", Franklin Melendez explores the relation between physical immediacy and the gaze and emphasizes the contradiction of visual pleasure in pornography by "conceptualiz[ing] how a viewer experiences a video pornography as a *mediated* image of undeniable *immediacy*" (403) by giving the example of the "varying angles of genital activity intercut with close-ups [... that establish] a structural repetition that creates the fiction of immediacy" (408). In that sense, immediacy emerges as a fiction that is paradoxically created by the visible traces of mediation. The Zapruder film and *Blow Job* emphasize their mediation, but not in a way that perpetuates such an illusion. Instead, the long takes that compose them give a more clinical and distanced point of view that seems more interested in the physical reactions of their protagonists (the young man's head tilts to the right, Kennedy's head shoots backward) than in closing the narrative as they refuse to give the reverse-shot that would show the antagonists, the fellator or the killer(s).

Furthermore, the idea of absence is essential in understanding these films, both in terms of spectatorship and of their actual absence in the cultural scene of the sixties. While the Zapruder film wasn't available to the public until 1975, many people were well aware of its existence because stills of it were published in Life magazine (Lubin, 166). Outside the Warren Commission on Kennedy's assassination, the only way to have access to it in the 1960's was through "an illegal copy or copy of copy made from the original" and these "bootleg dupes [...] were projected in private homes, dormitory rooms, church basements" (Lubin 36). These projections were illegal and often shut down in a similar way to the exhibition of avant-garde films like *Blow Job*, which were engaging in a "cat-and-mouse game" with the police because of their explicit content (Grundmann, 9). In his article "The Zapruder Film", Art Simon emphasizes how the absence of the film from the public sphere has been "a structuring absence for the film avant-garde" (35) and it is interesting to note how formal censorship as forced absence became a structuring theme in the history and narratives of avant-garde film.

In *Blow Job*, the absence of the genital space forces the viewer to interpret the face as the site of erotic pleasure, in which lip biting and head tilting become sexualized. Ara Osterweil argues that "*Blow Job* transforms what is most often considered peripheral to the erotic experience into the sexual spectacle itself" (438). "Warhol addressed the notion of "the limit" itself as the generative mechanism of pleasure" (434), she adds, and the absence emerges as substituting the sexual act by what stands for it and, more importantly, structuring and

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driving the narrative itself. Grundmann writes that *Blow Job*'s self-censorship "must be understood as the discursive production of what it purports to suppress [...and that] [r]eading and interpreting the film require reading into it, and these modes of reading and hypothesizing say more about the reader's psychosexual and cultural mind-set than about the film itself" (9). In that sense, *Blow Job* relies on the spectator's projection of an off-screen other, which is reduced to nothing more than an extension of one's own desires. Despite an impression of immediacy ensuing from its minimalist cinematography, the absent other becomes central. The external, off-screen site is thus where the mundane and the pornographic converge through the spectators' active projection triggered by the fellatio to which they may feel entitled by the title of the film. In "Andy's Hand-jobs", Tony Rayns articulates this idea as an act of subjective editing by underlying "the tendency [of the spectators] to mentally edit or re-direct movies, to take from them what's interesting, exciting or sexy and to repress or ignore the rest" (84).

For its part, the Zapruder film plays on a similar rhetoric by being an unresolved case. The film shows what happened, but does not provide a coherent narrative of the events in question. In his article "Identity, Identification and Desire", Mike Reynolds notes the following about the obsessive stories around Kennedy: "The disruptive performances of narrative desire demand an active identifying" (87) and "[t]he whole subject is produced at the site of some absence" (89). Reynolds emphasizes the way the passive spectator becomes an active subject through such absence and thus need to complete the disrupted narrative is palpable in the work of many conspiracy theorists. Art Simon gives the example of Gerald Posner who analyzes Kennedy's movements thusly: "He looked to his right toward the crowd, and then back to his left to Jacqueline, as if to be reassured that everything was alright". But Simon retorts that the film "does appear to show Kennedy moving his head toward the left, but it does not reveal him looking for reassurance" (52). The attribution of internal reflection rather than factual interpretation illustrates the way in which the gap of the structuring absence tends to trigger projection from the viewer and how a given fact can support antagonist interpretations. In that sense, the Zapruder film illustrates how such subjective projection and forced coherence can in fact emphasize the artifact's resistance to closure. Such subjective proactivity alters the vision of a hyperreality—of pure indexical immediacy—by emphasizing the interpretable absence. The immediacy of the body genre is defused by an active interpretation and projection in the open-ended films.

Furthermore, as written by Osterweil regarding *Blow Job*, "[i] here is both a missed space in the film (the space of the supposed fellatio) and a missed time (by the time the cigarette is lit, "it" is already over)" (436). Likewise, Benjamin emphasizes the temporal presence of the object, and asserts that the aforementioned epistemological crisis—based on a rupture of the visible as extension of the body and on the off-screen action—is amplified by the disrupted inner temporality of the work. Their home-movie aesthetic, characterized by unedited linearity, indeed gives the impression of temporal immediacy, of an inner time following the spectator's clock-time. Nonetheless, they break from such immediacy by establishing two particular relations to time. The first one is a sort of Proustian approach to time, but not in terms of remembrance. *Blow Job* has a lengthy running-time considering the simplicity of its cinematography and its minimal action. The Zapruder film is quite the opposite: short in time and maximum in action. Both of them play on a high contrast between clock time and action that puts the emphasis on questions of duration and the spectator's capacity to endure it. In that sense, as written by Lubin on the Zapruder film, this Proustian quality is in fact based on the way "it compels viewers to experience the passage of time" (33) and, due to its length and cinematography, *Blow Job* seems self-reflective upon such experiencing. *Blow Job* asks the viewer to endure time, to suffer it even, through the diluted nature of its narrative. Benjamin presents the spectatorship under reproducible art as one of pure affect where contemplation and introspection are inhibited by the fact that "[n]o sooner has his [the spectator's] eye grasped a scene than it is already changed" (240). *Blow Job* refutes this idea through its static framing, relative eventlessness and its similarities with the tradition of portraits. It requires the spectator to contemplate not only the film, but also their own experiencing of it, inflating one's perception of time with self-consciousness. In comparison, the Zapruder film is indeed less contemplative, but proposes another approach to the experiencing of time by amounting to a *memento mori*, a symbolic reminder of the inevitability of death. Through the presentation of such a dramatic and graphic death, the film's narrative is saturated with a self-awareness of one's own finitude. Both films trigger a spectatorship inseparable from such intense self-consciousness.

Moreover, the second relation is somewhat similar to the one normally associated with home movies which, "no matter [how] joyful in subject or lighthearted in tone, ultimately suffuse their viewers with sadness" (Lubin 2). They emphasize that the recorded moments won't come back and trigger a feeling of instant pastness anchored in the visible decaying of the celluloid. But, if the home movie affirms that it is too late, the two films engage in such rhetoric at the heart of their narrative in a way that extrapolates this idea further. As explained by Osterweil, in *Blow Job*, the climax of the film, the orgasm, is only "signaled belatedly and ambiguously by the presumably post-fellatio smoking of a cigarette" (436). In that sense, the spectator can only recognize the occurrence of what he had been looking for retrospectively. In the Zapruder film, the spectator is in a similar situation. Indeed, they see the assassination itself, but, from the moment that Kennedy disappears behind the road sign before emerging after a brief second, holding his throat, it is already too late. In actuality, from the first still of the film, the assassination is already organized and the murderer(s) is/are in place. In both situations, one can watch the film again in order to look for evidence earlier in the narrative. One

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can look for specific facial gestures, inspect the crowd to see if people are reacting to an unseen, earlier gunshot or scan the young man's accelerating movements, but these are only traces of the event. There are only ambiguous, non-symbolic signs of what the spectator is looking for. Osterweil writes that "by projecting the film at silent speed, Warhol recuperates those details ordinarily traversed rapidly in the pornographic presentation of pleasure" (438) and this speaks to the way the film acknowledges in its narrative the spectator's investigating activity. Simon also emphasizes the way decelerated versions of the Zapruder film trigger similar scrutinizing effects by giving the example of how he himself started wondering if the ten-year-old girl running along the limousine turned her head at frame 160 because she heard a gunshot (52). Nonetheless, even the act of slowing down the film in order to give oneself more time to scrutinize it doesn't yield satisfactory conclusions. It is too late. The signs of the ejaculation are too confused and when the first shot is fired, even the hypothetical one at frame 160, it is already too late. In that sense, the two films articulate a temporal universe in which it is always too late. If both films refuse immediacy with the spectator as mentioned earlier, they also refuse immediacy with the reality they depict by denying the myth of instant epistemological coherence through their emphasis on their representational lag and their instant pastness.

All these interpretative impasses and ambiguities become especially problematic considering the popular faith in cinema as the medium of revelation *par excellence*. During the Warren Commission, the Zapruder film was the most analyzed and discussed piece of evidence. John Connally, the governor of Texas wounded during the assassination, said at the Commission that "of all the witnesses to the tragedy, the only unimpeachable one is the 8-mm movie camera of Abraham Zapruder [...] and by studying its individual frames, one can see what happened at every instant and measure precisely the intervals between events" (qtd. in Simon 42). Simon writes that such emphasis on the "objectivity" of the film "positions it outside its specific conditions of production [...] and] the representation becomes indistinguishable from the original event" (42). However, such faith is problematic in two main ways with regards to the medium. Not only does it overlook the mediative intervention of the camera, and more particularly the subjective aspects of the long take, it also disregards the paradox between the intended nature of film projection and the way the Zapruder film was scrutinized.

Connally's account illustrates a credulous faith in the legibility of film's representation of a non-symbolic language of actions (gun shots, the head tilts to the right, a woman screams). In "Observations of the Long Take," however, filmmaker Pier Paolo Pasolini contradicts the idea of the camera as an objective translator of the language of reality. He first emphasizes that it "is impossible to perceive reality as it happens *if not from a single point of view*, and this point of view is always that of a perceiving subject" (84). He adds that "[a]s long as such actions remain unrelated [...] they are fragmentary and in-complete languages" (85) and the incapacity of Zapruder's camera to reveal anything but its own limits as a single point of view forecloses any possible claims to objectivity. Pasolini explains that meaning cannot be extracted from this language of actions as long as it remains *in potentia* and objectivity can only be achieved through the coordination of different, complementary subjectivities (86). As mentioned by Grundmann, *Blow Job* plays on the same tropes by encouraging the viewer to interpret the poser's face work that relies on prelinguistic, non-symbolic facial expressions (30). Despite the straightforwardness of such language of actions, the cinematography acknowledges the subjectivity and incompleteness of its point of view by playing on the ambiguity of "[t]he signification of sex itself [that] is constantly threatened to be subsumed under the possibility of heightened nonsexual extremes, such as pain and psychological anguish" (Grundmann, 31). The fact that such non-symbolic signs are presented as being impossible to actually interpret can be considered as an intradiegetic metaphor for the film's impenetrability despite the indexical nature of its medium. Taken alone or incompletely associated with other subjectivities, the given point of view of a camera cannot aspire to objectivity despite its supposedly objective, mechanical apparatus.

Similarly, the Zapruder film has mostly been scrutinized through magnifications and distortions in scale, as well as decelerations in projection (Simon, 52). Such physical and temporal alterations underline an interesting contradiction by the ways in which they articulate an aesthetic of the film that requires it at once to be film and to stop being film. On one hand, to interpret the Zapruder film, it must be slowed down, divided in stills, emphasizing that the twenty-four frames per second move too fast, and thereby exposing the medium's inherent opacity. On the other hand, the measurements of time and space in the Zapruder film are based on the medium's ability to simulate movement and require the film to be played at normal speed. In "Stillness in the Moving Image," Laura Mulvey explores this incompatibility between cinema and photography by comparing respectively the two media in these terms: "[o]n one side, there is movement, the present, presence; on the other, immobility, the past, a certain absence" (136). In fact, the two films play on the border of the photography/cinema binary, but also between the present and the past tense. As mentioned earlier, *Blow Job* plays on immobility and both films share the quality of an instant pastness. Nonetheless, at the same time, they both ambiguously stay in the present tense through their resistance to closure and their openness to new interpretations and projection. Complete pastness can only emerge when there is no more potentiality, when events are converted into totalizing narratives. In that sense, they seem to acknowledge and trigger contradictory forms of spectatorship, playing on their own temporal and mediative ambiguities. Furthermore, the Zapruder film physically answered the problem of its own alteration and denaturation as film. As explained by Simon, the few copies that were made were subjected to "so many alterations [that] they frequently lose their recognisability and attain

varying degrees of abstraction. [...] A human body becomes patterns of lines, forms and light and dark" (46). Such material limits of the medium are also present in the Warhol film, being integrated into its cinematography. Grundmann underlines the way "the film's highly concrete image tilts over at times into semi-abstract segments, showing the young man's head shrouded in darkness or bathed in light" (3). This abstraction ensues from the medium's limits: an excessive amount of light burns the pellicle and an insufficient amount of light does not activate the chemicals on the pellicle. In this regard, through such emphasis on their materiality, the two films acknowledge their descent from photography. Such an emphasis on restituting the images into their material support reaffirms their physical presence. Both films not only emphasize the limits of mechanical reproduction, but also deny the immediacy and truth-revealing capacity of cinema by questioning its ontological status.

In conclusion, I do not want to reject Benjamin's and Baudrillard's vision, but rather illustrate how this vision is inseparable from Western culture's faith in the objectivity of mechanical reproduction and meaningfulness in general, as well as from its dream of non-mediation, pure representation and bodiless images. Benjamin's vision is not only applicable to the majority of the artifacts of the 1960's in terms of their representation-as-possession aesthetic and the way they cultivate the fiction of immediacy, but also has probably never been more applicable than in the contemporary moment, in which images have become digitally free from materiality and reproducible without any alteration. The aesthetic of the 60's is particularly relevant as an historical turning point between the advent of mechanical reproduction and perfect reproducibility in the way it laid the groundwork for re-articulations of a vision of the aura based on a self-conscious rejection of the fiction of pure representation and a resistance to closure in the service of an embracement of *in potentia* and narrative openness. The *Zapruder* film and *Blow Job* deny the fiction of immediacy and hyperreality by emphasizing their distance both from the spectator (by refusing the visible as extension of the body and from the reality it depicts (through the temporal gap between the event, its representation and its conversion into meaning,) in that respect, such limitations of the medium give authority back to these artifacts by the way they impose their physical and temporal terms through their narrative content rather than through their materiality. The two films underline their own epistemological impasses, and in so doing, they both promise and reject the truth-revealing capacity of cinema. Such an approach marks the 60's as a transitional moment, leading towards a postmodern aesthetic sensibility of self-consciousness and playful contradiction. Ultimately, through the films' foregrounding of the limits of filmic recording and reproduction, the feeling of presence associated with the aura of pre-industrial artwork can be re-imagined for a new historical context.

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