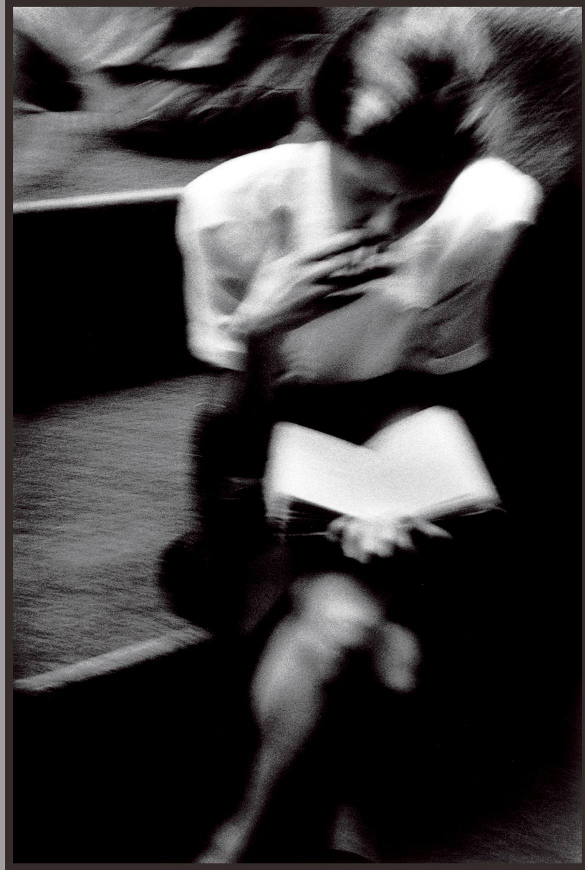

Exploring Text and Emotions

Edited by Lars Sætre, Patrizia Lombardo, and Julien Zanetta

Aarhus University Press

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In memory of
Atle Kittang

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Text and Emotions

Lars Sætre, University of Bergen;
Patrizia Lombardo, University of Geneva;
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The present volume is the second publication generated by the Project "Text, Action and Space".[1] The first volume, *Exploring Textual Action* (2010), focused on textual action and

1 "Text, Action and Space (TAS)" was initiated by Lars Sætre and the late Atle Kittang († 2013) at the University of Bergen in 2006, with Sætre as project leader. Together with Sætre and Kittang, Patrizia Lombardo (University of Geneva, and Swiss National Center of Competence in Research in Affective Sciences) and Svend Erik Larsen (Aarhus University) have been TAS' leadership group from the outset. For this second volume, Ragnhild Evang Reinton (University of Oslo) and Julien Zanetta (University of Geneva, and Swiss National Center of Competence in Research in Affective Sciences) have served as additional members of the editorial group. TAS consists of scholars from Norway, Denmark, Germany, Italy, Switzerland, Austria, Croatia and the United States, and represents a plethora of disciplines in the humanities: comparative literature, Scandinavian, Anglo-American, Germanic, Italian, Austrian and French literary studies, theatre studies, dramaturgy, and film studies. For the general foundation of the project, see the preface and the articles in TAS' first volume: Sætre, Lombardo and Gullestad (eds.): *Exploring Textual Action*, Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 2010.

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performativity and their spatial implications. This volume aspires to contribute to the investigation of emotions and their interaction with the dynamics of textuality and spatiality, showing the essential role of literature and the arts in the understanding of affective phenomena, such as emotions, feelings, sentiments, dispositions and moods. All the articles are explorative in the sense that they work with concrete texts and other art works. As in the first volume, those with greater emphasis on the conceptual aspects are united in the section "Elaborations", while the contributions with a stronger analytical perspective can be found under the heading "Explorations".

Works in literature and in the arts are *texts* in the general sense of the term, that is to say readable and interpretable objects. They represent, express or suggest affective phenomena either via direct description – verbal or visual – or in an indirect way, by allusions or effects of various types, such as the treatment of space, time, angles of vision, perspectives, and stylistic means. The novel, poetry, drama, painting and film offer what can be called a rich account of emotions. In fact, characters and narrators as well as landscapes and objects show emotions in the acute manifestation of an episode or an action (internal or external) as much as in the development of affects through time. The arts also operate upon our minds or, more precisely, they display what we in *Exploring Textual Action* established as performative power, via performative language indeed, but also thanks to the emotion or the emotions they suscitate in us. Emotions have what psychologists call action tendency, which means that they solicit our response either in the external or in the internal world, in gestures or in thoughts, in the body or in the mind, or more precisely in the amalgam that is the body *and* the mind. If I am afraid, for example, my heart will beat and I will try to protect myself from the danger I

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perceive, or perhaps I will turn completely frozen by it. If I feel nostalgia for something, I will react either by being sad for my loss, or by contemplating more joyful aspects of life. If I feel rage for an abuse, I may be drawn to political consciousness or commitment.

We are convinced that it is important today that criticism reflects on the affective dimension of literature and the arts. The consequences of art's affective dimension are of great interest both for ethics and aesthetics; actually, they can show the interconnection of the two spheres and therefore also the cultural interaction between them. Emotions are in fact tied to human values, and values to emotions. How could we, for instance, feel indignation for a social or moral injustice if we were not to value justice? In the arts there is interplay between the emotions they represent, express and suggest, and those triggered by them in us, the readers or spectators. The arts offer axiological knowledge, a type of cognition linked to two kinds of values: those circulating in the world – moral and political values – and those corresponding to aesthetic categories, such as the tragic, comic, sublime, beautiful, ugly, kitsch, etc. The aesthetic experience consists of movements in both directions between the two types and levels of emotions just described.

Since the 1970s, literary and art theories have been dominated first by formalist and then by cultural-studies approaches often disregarding the importance of aesthetic values and the ethical and cognitive dimensions of literature and the arts. In the last decades, the most refined structuralist, poststructuralist and postmodern literary critics have concentrated their analyses on the problem of meaning and on the construction of discourse. Paradoxically, they have avoided confronting what is fundamental in literature and in art – in their various traditional and new forms or media: both their intrinsic value as literature or art, and their ability to

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represent, express and foster human sentiments, actions and beliefs, as well as their impact on us. This avoidance should in part be understood as a healthy rejection of the old literary psychology and the old literary history that explained the meaning and effect of art works by the biography of the author. The poststructuralist and postmodern mistrust of the very idea and the term of mimetic representation indicated a refusal of the passivity implicit in the term: works of art cannot be reduced to the mere mirroring of the world.

In the study of affectivity, Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalytical approaches have stressed instincts and drives, and put a particular emphasis on a few emotional states: anguish, depression, melancholia and mourning. However, our affective life is rich and multifaceted, and – as we know from the simplest experiences of readers and spectators and from numerous works of art – there are many more emotions than those canonical psychoanalytic affective states. Often the interior space has been emphasised at the expense of the relation between exterior and interior spaces; in order to avoid this drawback we pay attention in this volume, as we did in the previous one, to the way in which space is treated in the texts we examine. The role of perception cannot be dismissed, since our senses are immediately connected to our mind, to the body-mind mix already mentioned. Literature and the arts express essential questions for human beings and their interactions: affects are at stake in every aspect of personal and social life, and our study of several different texts includes their emotional framework and their effect upon us.

Therefore, after the so-called linguistic turn, the present research aims at integrating, within literary and arts studies, the affective turn that has influenced several disciplines since the 1980s. In fact, many disciplines – from economics to political science, philosophy, psychology, history, law, biology

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and the neurosciences – have taken an affective turn. The study of emotions which seemed experimentally impossible for disciplines like psychology and the cognitive sciences has now entered their agenda. The great variety of affective phenomena has been the object of many definitions, investigations, hypotheses and tests. For instance, brain-imaging experiments are now commonly undertaken. Topics which have always been common in novels, dramas and films – love, ambition, jealousy, rage, regret, remorse, resentment, trust, nostalgia, disgust and fear – have come to figure in many fields of knowledge. Literary and art criticism should not leave to the experimental sciences the prerogative of theorising those topics. Indeed, literary research can enhance the study of emotions showing that there are writers and artists who, consciously or unconsciously, have outlined theories of emotions with a more compelling grasp of their complexities than the more conceptually ambitious sciences. Writers can be considered as true thinkers of emotions in their theoretical, essayistic and narrative works alike – such as Honoré de Balzac, Stendhal, William Hazlitt, Jane Austen, Flaubert, Marcel Proust, and Robert Musil. An important target of this volume is to highlight the theoretical impact of writers and their experiments with the complexity of emotions.

* * *

The new direction of research into the emotions in the late 1970s and in the 1980s was initiated by some seminal works. We will only list a few, indicating the main trends, but the contributions to this volume will include a more extensive range of works. Albert Hirschman, a true pioneer, in his *The Passions and the Interests: Political Arguments for Capitalism before its Triumph* (1977), broke with the

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habits of political science and economics by considering the role of human passions in the making of the modern market economy. Jon Elster's *Sour Grapes: Studies in the Subversion of Rationality* (1983) showed that the presence of emotions in politics and economics had too often been neglected: he used examples taken from Stendhal, and later, in his *Alchemies of the Mind. Rationality and the Emotions* (1999), he took examples from 17th-century French moralists. In 1988 the economist Robert Frank, in his *Passions within Reason. The Strategic Role of Emotions*, challenged the quantitative and purely cognitivist strand of decision theory: his book launched the provocative thesis that emotions are essential in decision-making, and that often decisions which seem irrational manage to combine both self-interest and social cooperation.

The contribution of analytical philosophy to the study of emotions has been crucial. Just to mention two references: William Lyons, for example, investigated in his *Emotion* (1980) the nature of emotions and the evaluative process inherent in them. He took love as a model, with its many manifestations, and not the basic emotion of fear, typically used as a model in psychology. Ronald de Sousa, in his groundbreaking book *The Rationality of Emotion* (1987), discussed the interplay between reason and affect, showing that emotions have motives, cognitive substance and formal objects, a perspective which later, and with a historical concern, was developed by Martha Nussbaum in *Upheavals of Thought. The Intelligence of Emotions* (2001).

The historical awareness is crucial. In Western thought, the problem of affects goes back to ancient philosophy. The discrepant positions of Plato and Aristotle paved the way for the great divide that continued until Kant and the Romantics. The emotions have been considered as opposed to reason – either dangerous, as in the Kantian contrast between

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the soul (*Seele*) and the intellect (*Vernunft*), or liberating as in the Romantic cult of sentiment. But another approach, expanding the Aristotelian perspective, has theorised that emotions are connected to our judgements, values, actions and beliefs.

Plato, in *The Republic*, condemned the poet as dangerous for society. The songs that were read aloud to the soldiers and moved them had, in his opinion, a negative effect: the pity and the tenderness elicited by those poems put in jeopardy their courage in military activity. In *Phaedrus*, the allegory of the chariot exemplified the three parts of the soul: the charioteer (reason) drives a chariot pulled in two different directions by two horses, one white (the will, the noble, "spirited" part of the soul), the other black (desire, the appetitive part filled with the obscure, irrational and unruly passions). Aristotle, on the other hand, in his *Nicomachean Ethics*, acknowledged the role of emotions in different virtues and their relation to practical and ethical knowledge. In his *Rhetoric* he presented the connections between emotions and evaluations. Much recent work devoted to the study of affects develops Aristotle's definition:

> The emotions are all those affections which cause men to change their opinion in regard to their judgements, and are accompanied by pleasure and pain; such are anger, pity, fear, and all similar emotions and their contraries. And each of them must be divided under three heads; for instance, in regard to anger, the disposition of mind which makes men angry, the persons with whom they are usually angry, and the occasions which give rise to anger. (Aristotle 1990; *Rhetoric*, Book 2)

These few lines pinpoint several important issues: the role of emotions in the formation of opinion, the difference between emotion and disposition, the fact that emotions have an object and that there are internal and external circumstances ("oc-

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casions") bringing out an emotion. The Aristotelian, positive view of emotions was coupled with his approval of the value of art and the emotions it can elicit, such as pity and terror; whatever catharsis might be, it is considered as a positive effect of tragedy on the mind of spectators.

What could be more different than this theory from Kant's sombre condemnation in his *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View* (1798):

> Emotion is like an intoxicant which one has to sleep off, although it is still followed by a headache; but passion is looked upon as an illness having resulted from swallowing poison, or a handicap which requires an inner or an outer physician for the soul, one who knows how to prescribe cures that are generally not radical, but almost always of a palliative nature. (Kant 1996: 157)[2]

Many Romantics, in opposition to the primacy of reason advocated by a large part of 18th-century culture, distrusted reason; and probably some traces of that tradition are to be found in the scorn for *logos* expressed by deconstructionist literary theory. The Romantic veneration of the heart was symptomatic of a curious cultural ambivalence: philosophically, the Romantics were inspired by Kant, who dismissed passions and emotions as pathological (with the exception of one emotion: respect), but literarily and poetically they were enthralled by sentiment. Contemporary work on emotions by analytic philosophers, political scientists and economists also contests the condemnation of affects as intoxication

2 "[Der Affekt] ist wie ein Rausch, den man ausschläft, obgleich Kopfweh darauf folgt, die Leidenschaft aber wie eine Krankheit aus verschlucktem Gift oder Verkrüppelung anzusehen, die einen inneren oder äußeren Seelenarzt bedarf, der doch mehrenteils keine radikale, sondern fast immer nur palliativ-heilende Mittel zu verschreiben weiß." (Kant 1912: 185)

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and illness, and opposes the dark dualistic vision of an eternal war between reason and the emotions. Nevertheless, if Kant's anthropology and ethics put forward a negative vision of emotions, his aesthetics paved the way to the emotional apprehension of nature and of works of art. In his *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime* (1764), and especially in his *Critique of Judgment* (1790), Kant distinguished between the beautiful and the sublime, elaborating on the division established by Edmund Burke's *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757). But above all, the 18th-century thinkers who were concerned with aesthetics broke with a normative understanding of beauty: the ting that they were interested in investigating was not the characteristics of a beautiful object, but the subjective relation with the experience of beauty and its variations according to epochs and cultures.

Modern, postmodern and deconstructionist literary critics, such as Paul de Man, have been deeply attracted to Kant's notion of the sublime (sometimes forgetting the importance of Burke's). As it appears in several articles in this volume, the analysis of the sublime has been and continues to be a major tool to discuss our perception and understanding of works of art. And in our evaluation of the importance of popular art – or of any forms that challenge canonical art – we are still indebted to the Romantics who, like Victor Hugo in his 1827 Preface to his drama *Cromwell*, enlarged the span of the sublime from the tragic to the grotesque.

Already in the first half of the 20th century, the philosopher of language Gilbert Ryle, with his *The Concept of Mind* (1949), tried to overcome the dualism of the body and the intelligence typical of the Cartesian tradition. Not surprisingly, his reflections on the interpenetration of the mind, the body and feeling were often inspired by artistic works, for

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example, by Auguste Rodin's famous sculpture *Le Penseur* (*The Thinker*, 1902; see Ryle 1971a). He greatly admired Jane Austen, and discovered that she frequently used the term 'mind' "to stand not just for intellect or intelligence but for the whole complex unity of a conscious, thinking, feeling and acting person" (Ryle 1971b: 291).

But most importantly for us, at the beginning of the 20th century philosophers and psychologists like William James and writers like Marcel Proust and Robert Musil reoriented our understanding of emotions. Together with the German philosopher Max Scheler, Musil in particular shows the sophisticated role that literature played in this process. He disputed the Kantian tradition, and admitted the blending of sentiment and reason: he suggested that the adjective sentimental should be written *senti-mental*. Musil's theses about affective phenomena can be extracted from several of his essays, in his journal, and in the chapters of *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften* (*The Man without Qualities*), where Agathe finds some pages written by her brother Ulrich on the psychology of the emotions. Ulrich's vision is close to that of the contemporary philosophy and psychology of emotions in their most general assumptions.

The protagonist's unfinished treatise echoes Musil's convictions, which can be summarised in a few points. Above all, the emotions are simultaneously a state and a process, inseparable from a constant modification, and nevertheless identifiable. Ulrich writes that there are nuances of anger, for example, and that anger undergoes a continuous transformation, but in spite of their never-ending metamorphosis emotions can be singled out and differentiated: one cannot confuse anger with fatigue, or sadness with pride. Ulrich argues that there are an infinite number and nuances of emotions; Musil wrote in his journal around 1929: "Sighing, smiling, laughing – they all imply innumerable variants; but we can translate them

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only by using adverbs: in a resigned, ambiguous, scornful, negligent, gay, amused, cordial way" (Musil 1976: 749; our transl.).[3]

The question if there are innumerable emotions or just a few primary emotions and how they cluster has been debated in contemporary psychology, and had already been developed in Hume's critique of Descartes. Hume in fact corrected some of the assumptions Descartes put forward a century before in his study of passions from 1649, *The Passions of the Soul*. For Descartes there are a few elementary passions making up all the others. He divided them into the calm and the violent passions. The calm passions are described as "reflective pleasures and pains", and the violent passions are seen as either direct or indirect (desire, aversion, joy, grief, hope and fear are direct; love, hate, pride and humility are indirect). Hume, in the second book of his *A Treatise of Human Nature* (1739), dedicated to passions, argued against the description of emotion as a static state and tried out dynamic definitions of emotions – or passions, to use the old term, which encompassed several affective phenomena that are today described in another vocabulary ("passions" refer to lasting dispositions, "emotions" to transitory episodes). Against Descartes, Hume maintained that it is impossible and unnecessary to define the nature or the substance of each passion, and preferred to investigate the multiple and contradictory circumstances in which passions arise. For him, as for Musil and several contemporary theorists, human affective life undergoes continuous metamorphosis. The mobility of emotions seemed to him more important than their function

3 "Seufzen, Lächeln, Lachen – haben unzählige Arten, wir können sie aber nur durch Adverbien ausdrücken: resigniert, zweideutig, geringschätzig, nachlässig, fröhlich, belustigt, verbindlich." (Musil 1976: 749)

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or nature; in *A Dissertation on the Passions*, *An Enquiry concerning Human Understanding* (posthumous edition 1777), he showed, for example, how sorrow and deception ascend to rage, rage gives rise to envy, envy to malevolence, and how malevolence revives sorrow.

In the psychological debate of the early 1970s, Paul Ekman continued most of the hypotheses from Charles Darwin's fundamental book in the history of the study of emotions, *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals* (1872). For Ekman, too, emotions are above all functional for the species, and he distinguishes six basic emotions that require specific behaviour and reaction: fear, rage, joy, sadness, disgust, and surprise (Ekman 1971, 1975, 1992). But in the 1980s, the psychologists Nico Frijda and Klaus Scherer broke with the functionalist approach and stressed the fact that the emotions evaluate situations and are motivated. Emotions are therefore virtually infinite in number and in intensity, and types of evaluation or *appraisal profiles* correspond to models of responses, or *response patterning* (Frijda 1986; Scherer 2004 and 2005). These appraisal-directed researches in contemporary psychology are of course distant from the early psychological theory of emotions by William James and Carl Lange in the 19th century (James 1890). The so-called James-Lange theory stressed the role of feeling and of physical arousal, and, for the two pioneer psychologists, the emotions are caused by the physiological changes produced by the stimulus: for instance, we feel sad because we cry.

In the chapters on the nature and formation of sentiment mentioned above, Robert Musil implicitly criticised the theories of emotions that are confined to the causal role of arousal, and paved the way for the evaluation or appraisal theories. For Musil, stimuli can be external and internal, and continuously circulate, since the emotions for him are taken in a web of relations, transformations, motivations and evaluations.

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He insisted on the interplay of the physical and the mental, resisting both the sensualist and the idealist perspectives. The way, for example, in which Musil used the term *Geist* (spirit), which is so charged with German idealism, indicated the interpenetration of the emotions and the intellect. Writing to his friend and editor Adolf Frisé, he explained the major implications of *The Man without Qualities*: showing that sentiment and reason are not enemies but friends, he developed one side – often forgotten – of Romanticism:

> The sense in which I use the word *Geist* in my book consists of both intellect and sentiment and their reciprocal interpenetration. […] And in order to conclude, I must repeat once again that the intellect is not the enemy of sentiment […] but its brother, even if they as siblings are usually distant. The concept senti-mental in the good sense of the Romantics once combined the two components in their unity (Musil 1981: 494-495; our transl.).[4]

Before the Romantic cult of sentiment produced its separation from reason leading to the exaggeration of sentimentality, 17th- and 18th-century Irish, Scottish and English philosophers – Anthony Ashley Cooper, the third Earl of Shaftesbury; Francis Hutcheson, David Hume, Edmund Burke, Adam Smith and Thomas Reid – conducted a debate about passions, sensibility and taste which in many respects anticipates the contemporary affective turn. They reflected upon the way in which human beings like and dislike various things, feel

4 "Der Sinn, in dem ich in dem Buche das Wort Geist gebrauche, besteht aus Verstand, Gefühl und ihrer gegenseitigen Durchdringung. […] Und ich möchte zum Schluss noch einmal wiederholen, dass der Intellekt nicht der Feind des Gefühls ist […] sondern der Bruder, wenn auch gewöhnlich der entfremdete. Der Begriff senti-mental im guten Sinn der Romantiker hat beide Bestandteile schon einmal in ihrer Vereinigung umfasst." (Musil 1981: 494-495)

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pleasure, displeasure, pride and sympathy, and have moral and aesthetic values.

In our introductive and obviously limited sketch of the huge amount of discussion and reflection that has been directly or indirectly responsible for the thinking of the emotions, we would like to mention the appeal of the French historian Lucien Febvre, one of the founders of the Annales School (1929). Febvre, fighting against the tradition of positivist history, took the affective turn before the late 20th-century developments surveyed above: he called for a history of *sensibilité* as early as 1941. Lamenting the lack of a history of fear, joy, sorrow and cruelty, he made clear that no social history can be written without studying the affective life of the past and the cultural differences in ways of feeling – about life, death, family, religion, health and power structures. Reconstructing the *sensibilité* of the past has become a necessary step for several brands of historical and cultural studies (from French cultural history since *Les Annales*, to the British cultural studies of Raymond Williams, and to the New Historicists). Febvre challenged the positivist faith in the written historical document: he considered the visual arts and literature in written and oral forms as essential documents of affective life. The time has come now to reread those historical works in the perspective of linking cultural concerns and theories of emotions. We try to pave the way for such rereading, orienting our explorations to the scrutiny of the emotions in texts of various genres and media. General questions lead to specific analyses, and particular analyses contribute to the general debate.

* * *

Literary and art theory, enhanced by the research of the past with the input of close reading, narratology and textual performativity, can now turn to the affective materials of liter-

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ature and the arts without the fear of falling into the trap of the old psychologism. Roland Barthes used to say that, in intellectual life, things come back in a spiral movement, therefore never at the same place (*e.g.* Barthes 1977: 69). This volume wants to rediscover the link between literature (and the arts) and the emotions, claiming the importance of the literary and art disciplines for the study of affectivity. Hopefully, the contemporary debate in several areas will gain from the reconstruction of the concern for affective dimensions in past and contemporary texts, whose authors, often using a different terminology from the one we use now, put forward a number of fundamental principles for the understanding of emotions.

The arts have a lot to teach to the psychology and the philosophy of emotions. Some contemporary philosophers, such as Martha Nussbaum and Greg Currie, are rightly convinced that literature offers an emotional experience that is richer than real life. This is so since novels and poems represent, express or transform more emotional experiences than ordinary existence, and especially situations we have never known and upon which we are challenged to meditate. In the words of Martha Nussbaum, in her *Love's Knowledge*:

> So, literature is an extension of life not only horizontally, bringing the reader in contact with events or locations or persons or problems he or she has not otherwise met, but also, so to speak, vertically, giving the reader experience that is deeper, sharper, and more precise than much of what takes place in life. (Nussbaum 1990: 48)

Literature can broaden our existential experience. It opens our minds to differences, in space and time, or as Musil wrote in one of his essays where, contrasting the methods of the scientist and those of the artist, he confirmed his interest in the emotions and in the cognitive value of the arts:

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> To be sure, art represents not conceptually but concretely, *not in generalities but in individual cases within whose complex sound the generalities dimly resonate*; given the same case, a doctor is interested in the generally valid causal connections, the artist in an individual web of feeling, the scientist in a summary schema of the empirical data. The artist is further concerned with expanding the range of what is inwardly still *possible*, and therefore art's sagacity is not the sagacity of the law, but a different one. […] Where art has value it shows things that few have seen. (Musil 1990: 7; ital. added)[5]

Literary texts have an advantage over the psychological or philosophical accounts: they offer sustained examples versus brief remarks. Literary accounts are also often, so to speak, richer than what life can offer, since they give readers the opportunity of experiencing, by means of thought experiments and imagination, something they have never lived themselves.

Still, fictions end up being close to the real conditions in which human beings experience emotions. Even within extremely reduced narrative structures, novels, dramas and films present characters grappling with the complex network of emotionally charged episodes and their aftermath. Characters often analyse their emotions after they took place – either in their own voice or through the comments and the style used by the narrator. Free indirect speech is highly invested

5 "Freilich, die Kunst stellt nicht begrifflich, sondern sinnfällig dar, nicht Allgemeines, sondern Einzelfälle, in deren kompliziertem Klang die Allgemeinheiten ungewiß mittönen, und während bei dem gleichen Fall ein Mediziner für den allgemeingültigen Kausalzusammenhang sich interessiert, interessiert sich der Künstler für einen individuellen Gefühlszusammenhang, der Wissenschaftler für ein zusammenfassendes Schema des Wirklichen, der Künstler für die Erweiterung des Registers von innerlich noch Möglichem, und darum ist Kunst auch nicht Rechtsklugheit, sondern – eine andere. […] Kunst zeigt, wo sie Wert hat, Dinge, die noch wenige gesehen haben." (Musil 1983: 980-981)

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emotionally. Moreover, characters often project different scenarios both into the past and into the future. The conditional and the subjunctive tenses pave the way to any type of imagination: readers, narrator and protagonists circulate in a network of external and/or internal events, incessantly making conjectures about what could and should be or have been. This dynamic created by fiction comes closer to human life conditions than the artificial situation in which empirical research takes place through questionnaires or in laboratory experiments. Aren't our emotions in our everyday life connected to our reactions to other people or things or ideas? To situations that might be present or imagined? Aren't human emotions triggered by events and objects in the present, but also in the past and in the future, and therefore in fictional or in possible times? Emotions are inseparable from actions and the space and time – real or imagined – that they incessantly open up.

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in Bergen, Geneva, Aarhus, Berlin, Vienna, Irvine/Deer Isle, Seattle, Ann Arbor and Oslo.

Sadly, one of our core participants, professor Atle Kittang, passed away during the final stages of the preparation of this volume. His importance for the TAS project as well as for the research in comparative literature and inter-disciplinary aesthetic studies in Norway and abroad can hardly be given sufficient merit. In deep gratitude for his academic contributions, his sustained enthusiastic support and cooperation, and for his lasting friendship, we dedicate this volume to the memory of Atle Kittang.

Bergen/Geneva/Ann Arbor, June 2013
Lars Sætre, Patrizia Lombardo, Julien Zanetta

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PART 1:
ELABORATIONS

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Stendhal and Hazlitt's Theories of Emotion

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The arts in general and literature in particular can be said to represent, express, and suggest emotions, and, as proposed by some philosophers (Currie 1992, Nussbaum 1986), do so in a richer way than the majority of psychological and philosophical accounts. Any novel, poem, or drama shows some sort of interplay of events and actions, as well as a variety of passions and emotions – from love to hatred, nostalgia, regret, sadness, joy, sympathy, indignation, envy, jealousy, rage, shame, guilt, pride, etc. The list is virtually infinite, and there is most likely no literary work that does not entail emotional life, as even indifference can be considered an emotional attitude, a negative emotion born out of a refusal to participate in anything. Aside from this generality ingrained in the literary text, a few writers have openly investigated the nature of emotions, and discussed the modes and conditions of affective life in their essays, journals, notes, and correspondence. Their theoretical thinking and literary production nourish

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one another. This essay will consider Stendhal and William Hazlitt as two authors who have contributed significantly to the study of emotions, well before the crucial input of Robert Musil, whose importance has been discussed in the Introduction, and well before the contemporary philosophy and psychology of emotions. These two writers, deeply attached to the 18th-century philosophy of sensibility (Francis Hutcheson, David Hume, Edmund Burke, Denis Diderot), as well as being attracted to the new ideas of the nineteenth century, forged an unusual type of Romanticism exactly at the time of the outburst of the Romantic movement in Europe, a movement deeply influenced by the German idealist philosophy represented by Immanuel Kant, Johann Gottlieb Fichte, and August Wilhelm and Friedrich Schlegel.

I will argue that Stendhal and Hazlitt, contemporaries who met a few times in Florence and Paris, had a similar understanding of human emotions and the role of literature as a privileged means of studying emotional life as a basis of human actions, values, and beliefs. For them, in contrast to the dominant ideology of Romanticism, emotions and sentiments were not just part of an inner mysterious life, but rather important factors linked to actions and to the external world as much as to the inner self; as some philosophers would say, emotions have an object, are motivated, even when the subject doesn't realize it, or realizes it afterwards. Actually, we grasp our emotions only after they occurred, and reason is not a set of preconceived rules, like a tool-box, but the interpreter of people's minds, the self, and nature, said Hazlitt in his essay "On Genius and Common Sense" (published in his *Table Talk: Essays on Men and Manners*, 1821-1822) where he studied the tight interrelation of our impressions, feelings, habits, judgments, and decisions:

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In art, in taste, in life, in speech, you decide from feeling, and not from reason; that is, from the impression of a number of things on the mind, which impression is true and well founded, though you may not be able to analyze or account for it in the several particulars. In a gesture you use, in a look you see, in a tone you hear, you judge of the expression, propriety, and meaning from habit, not from reason or rules; that is to say, from innumerable instances of like gestures, looks, and tones, in innumerable other circumstances, variously modified, which are too many and too refined to be all distinctly recollected, but which do not therefore operate the less powerfully upon the mind and eye of taste. (1952: 31)

For Hazlitt and Stendhal, there was a two-way circulation between the external and internal spheres, a continuous motion of events, emotions, and thoughts.[1] As some contemporary thinkers would say (de Sousa 1982; Elster 1999), emotions, like beliefs and desires, can be conceived either as occurring mental events or as dispositions for such events to occur.

Stendhal and Hazlitt both believed that the intellect and the heart were not at odds with one another, but, on the contrary, interdependent; they both established the ideal of a sober and ironical literary style as the very style that could correspond to the flux of emotional life. The search for a philosophy of emotions is in their case consistent with their search for a form, a literary style fitting to what they theorize.

Stendhal and the rationality of emotions

Stendhal was convinced that his oeuvre challenged the mental habits and the expectations of the majority of his contemporaries in terms of both content and form. This conviction

1 As for Musil.

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appears several times in his works, most notably at the end of his biography *Henry Brulard* (written in 1835-1836, published posthumously in 1890). Although he often expressed his aversion for Classicism and the rigidity of rules – apparent in his early works *Histoire de la Peinture en Italie* (1817) and *Racine et Shakespeare* (1823-1825) – he rejected the current Romantic attitude towards emotions as much as the cultural influence of German idealism and Romanticism. He prized the *Edinburgh Review* and some writers and poets, such as George Byron, over the most obviously evident Romantic poets, such as Wordsworth and Coleridge, about whom Hazlitt was highly suspicious.

In one of his letters from Rome to his friend Louis Crozet (October 1, 1816), Stendhal deplores the influence, within Europe, of Friedrich Schlegel, condemning him as an obscure and scatterbrained thinker:

> The Romantic system, spoiled by the mystical Schlegel, triumphs as explained in the twenty-five volumes of the Edinburgh Review and such as it is put into practice by Lord Byron. The Corsair (three cantos) is a poem where the *expression of strong and tender passions* places the author immediately after Shakespeare. Its style is as beautiful as Racine's. (Stendhal 1968: 828; my transl. and ital.)[2]

The champion of French Romanticism, René de Chateaubriand, invented the melancholic, solitary, and splenetic

2 "Le système romantique, gâté par le mystique Schlegel, triomphe tel qu'il est expliqué dans les vingt-cinq volumes de l'*Edinburgh Review* et tel qu'il est pratiqué par Lord Ba-ï-ronne (Lord Byron). Le *Corsaire* (trois chants) est un poème tel pour l'expression des passions fortes et tendres que l'auteur est placé en ce genre immédiatement après Shakespeare. Le style est beau comme Racine." Mme de Staël, in *De l'Allemagne* (1810), had introduced German philosophy and poetry into France – Kant, Schlegel, Novalis, and Fichte.

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character of René – this extremely successful novel *René* was taken out of *Génie du Christianisme* (written between 1795-99 and published in 1802) and printed separately in 1802. In his long essay on the Christian spirit and religion, Chateaubriand announces the law of the discrepancy between the heart and the intelligence, a credo that became the credo for the Romantic generation, its *mal-de-siècle*. He also disparages all of the splenetic, dejected, gloomy, and inactive heroes or, better, anti-heroes, crowding into the literature of the period:

> By what incomprehensible destiny does man alone form an exception to this law [harmony], so necessary for the order, the preservation, the peace and the welfare, of beings? As obvious as this harmony of qualities and movements appears in the rest of nature, so striking is their discordance in man. *There is a perpetual collision between his understanding and his will, between his reason and his heart*. [...] Does he excel in the sciences? His imagination expires. Does he become a poet? He loses the faculty of profound thought. His heart gains at the expense of his head, and his head at the expense of his heart. (My ital.)[3]

Stendhal was active in the literary debates about Classicism and Romanticism, and, although he always advocated the cause of the Moderns, he tried to avoid the dogmatism of both positions.[4] His enthusiasm for the Moderns led him to

3 "Par quelle incompréhensible destinée, l'homme seul est-il excepté de cette loi [l'harmonie] si nécessaire à l'ordre, à la conservation, à la paix, au bonheur des êtres? Autant l'harmonie des qualités et des mouvements est visible dans le reste de la nature, autant leur désunion est frappante dans l'homme. Un choc perpétuel existe entre son entendement et son désir, entre sa raison et son cœur. [...] Brille-t-il par les sciences, son imagination s'éteint; devient-il poëte, il perd la pensée: son cœur profite aux dépens de sa tête, et sa tête aux dépens de son cœur." (Chateaubriand 1978: 534)

4 As he argues in *Shakespeare and Racine*.

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affirm that the Ancients were not capable of feeling the subtle emotions of the Moderns who are imbued with Christian sensibility and values.[5] Stendhal had a cultural rather than religious interest in Christianity, and could not accept Chateaubriand's vision, rooted in the belief that original sin was the cause of fracture of the primitive harmonious nature of all beings – human beings included. Stendhal considers that the head, the heart, and the body are constantly interrelated whenever an emotion is felt or an opinion formed;[6] he could have accepted the definition of the term "mind" as given by Gilbert Ryle, quoted in the Introduction, as "the whole complex unity of a conscious, thinking, feeling and acting person" (Ryle 1971: 291).

Far from Chateaubriand's Christian pessimism, Stendhal's interest in affective phenomena had an immediate ethical (practical) and aesthetic purpose. Human beings can learn to educate their passions and, by understanding them within themselves and with other people, can live a better life. Furthermore, Stendhal posits that this is what modern men and women want.

Stendhal was interested in the typical eighteenth-century problem of passions and of happiness in particular; as early as 1804 and 1805, when he left Grenoble to go to Paris with the hope of becoming a playwright, he regularly wrote to Pauline. His correspondence is dominated by the idea of the necessity of knowing human passions, what he often calls the "human heart".[7] These letters set out a sort of treatise of emotions.

Pauline was encouraged to identify passions and nuances

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5 See, among many examples, Stendhal's chapter "Nous n'avons que faire des vertus antiques" ("We have nothing to do with ancient virtues"; *HPI*: 152-156).

6 See Stendhal 1968: 117 (Letter to Pauline Beyle, June 1804).

7 He was convinced that only through that knowledge, can we – occasionally, rarely, briefly – experience moments of happiness.

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of passions and distinguish and classify them, along with the various modes of their occurrence, their state, and the circumstances in which they originated and developed. At that time, Stendhal was a reader and admirer of David Hume, who had a dynamic vision of passions. Hume, unlike his predecessor, was not interested in defining and explaining human passions on the basis of what Descartes identified as the primary six in his treatise *Les passions de l'âme* (1649): admiration, love, hatred, desire, joy, and sadness. In particular, Hume writes of the importance in understanding the circumstances in which a great variety of passions occur, blend, and transform. What do we need in order to understand affective life? Stendhal, as an inheritor of the experimental philosophy of the Scottish Enlightenment (essential to the spirit of the *Edinburgh Review*) posits that the first step is to observe and classify. Observation[8] should be directed towards the way people behave in society – Stendhal is sure that the French Salons are wonderful laboratories for that observation! – and should be focused on the self, the way in which one feels. But self-analysis and the study of society are not enough, as Stendhal believed in the power of books, in their action on the soul, and never ceased in recommending "good" philosophy and literature.[9]

Stendhal complained about the poverty of language in expressing the varieties and nuances of emotions, and tried to sketch taxonomies of affective phenomena that aimed to

8 See "Observons donc; cela ne fait qu'augmenter la sensibilité de notre âme, et [sans] sensibilité point de bonheur." "We should then observe: observation increases the sensibility of our soul, and, without sensibility there is no happiness." (Letter to Pauline, August 1804: 144)

9 In his opinion, good philosophy and literature consist of a few, select and far-reaching authors: Molière (Jean-Baptiste Poquelin), Pierre Corneille, Miguel de Cervantes, William Shakespeare, Thomas Hobbes, David Hume, and Jeremy Bentham.

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compensate for the imprecision of language in describing affects. In the same way as Hazlitt, he rejected the idea of a few primary emotions while defending the thesis of a large number of different emotions. For them, an emotion undergoes quick metamorphosis and combines with other emotions. The modern theory of emotions as expressed today by Klaus Scherer suggests that this continual transformation is the result of the speedy, almost or totally involuntary appraisals that are triggered by the emotional episode (Scherer 2009: 572-595).

In 1827, Stendhal writes a letter on the state of philosophy in Paris to his friend Gian Pietro Vieusseux, which identifies four different branches: logics, metaphysics, the knowledge and the explanation of the soul (or psychology), and more importantly what he calls the explanation of emotions (II 1967: 131-132). He is aware that an emotion is not a state, but a process, and that a given passion is coloured by a gamut of emotional nuances; he suggests, for example, that it is necessary to explain what goes on in the mind of people when they feel ambition, revenge, etc. Explaining what happens in somebody's mind while feeling an emotion means admitting that the emotion goes through processes of evaluation (appraisals). It means that an emotion is not a unique, constant state, but an indefinite number of changing feelings, moods, and dispositions always in process; nevertheless one can define a certain emotional field which cannot be mistaken for any other such field.

Stendhal's notion of character was not static but mobile, shaped by the emotional flux, by external and internal circumstances.[10] Stendhal's frequent claims about the ways in

10 See his "Caractères", composed in 1805-1806 together with his friend Louis Crozet. (In Stendhal's *Œuvres intimes I*, 1981: 990-1029.)

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which emotions develop and combine with or repel other emotions required conceptual nuances. Thus, as he writes in his *Journal*, somebody who is overwhelmed by wrath cannot be sad. Melancholy cannot tinge the grandiose despair of the great villain; Iago is all rage, and cannot shed sweet tears (see Stendhal 1981: 215).

The term used by Stendhal is passion, but one can see that he was already moving towards some of the most modern ideas about affectivity, trying to distinguish various kinds and intensities of affective phenomena. A substantial range of affects is described as early as 1804 in a passage of a letter to Pauline, where Stendhal first suggests the difference between passion and emotion, using the terms of "passion" and "state of passions"; then he indicates the link between emotions and ethical problems, values, and norms; and finally, when he mentions Corneille, he conceives of the interplay between affective dispositions, moods, and emotions:

There are *passions*: love, revenge, hatred, pride, vanity, the love of glory. There are the *states of passions*: terror, fear, fury, laughter, tears, joy, sadness, worry. I call all these states of passion, because several different passions could make us terrified, fearful, provoke laughter, tears, etc.

Then, there are the *means of passions*, such as hypocrisy. Then there are the habits of the soul [what one might call dispositions]; some of them are dependent on the senses, some others are useful. We call virtues those which are useful, vices those which are harmful. Among virtues we can count: justice, clemency, probity, etc. And among vices: cruelty, etc. Virtues or qualities that are less useful are: modesty, charity, benevolence, wisdom, etc. Vices or faults that are less harmful: complacency, self-conceit, the inclination to contradict, lying, impertinence, mysteriousness, shyness, absent-mindedness, etc.

Keep in mind that many of these things are at the same time *habits of the soul and faults*. Passion might cause a person to be absent-minded or lying; this is very different from the habit of distraction, of lying – subject of comedies, such as those treated by Regnard and Corneille.

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Think of all these *divisions* of the soul. (Stendhal 1962: 118; my transl. and ital.)[11]

Stendhal often points out the distinction between passions and customs or mental habits both at the level of a single individual ("*habitudes de l'âme*") and at the level of a whole culture ("*moeurs*"). One might speak of a moderate relativism in this case, since he believed that, if passions are common to all humans, changes occur quite often and directly influence the passions; one does not fall in love in the same way in Milan as in Paris, or in the seventeenth century as in the present day.

The arts and tenderness

Stendhal distinguishes between elementary and refined passions. In his *History of Painting in Italy*, he sketches the difference between the Ancients and the Moderns, where modernity starts in the Renaissance with the Chivalry poems. The An-

11 "Il y a des passions, l'amour, la vengeance, la haine, l'orgueil, la vanité, l'amour de la gloire. Il y a des états des passions: la terreur, la crainte, la fureur, le rire, les pleurs, la joie, la tristesse, l'inquiétude. Je les appelle états de passions, parce que plusieurs passions différentes peuvent nous rendre terrifiés, craignants, furieux, riants, pleurants, etc.

Il y a ensuite les moyens de passion, comme l'hypocrisie. Il y a ensuite les habitudes de l'âme; il y en a de sensibles, il y en a d'utiles. Nous nommons les utiles, vertus; les nuisibles vices. Vertus: justice, clémence, probité, etc., etc. Vices: cruauté, etc. Vertus moins utiles ou qualités: modestie, bienfaisance, bienveillance, sagesse, etc. Vices moins nuisibles ou défauts: fatuité, esprit de contradiction, le menteur, l'impertinence, le mystérieux, la timidité, la distraction, etc.

Remarque que beaucoup de ces choses sont en même temps habitude de l'âme et défauts. Une passion peut rendre distrait, menteur; cela est bien différent avec avoir l'habitude de la distraction, l'habitude de mentir, sujets de comédies traités par Regnard et Corneille.

Pense à ces divisions de l'âme" (Letter to Pauline, June 1804: 188).

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cients, for whom physical strength and physical beauty were important values, felt only ferocious passions, such as the sense of justice, love for their home-country, and hatred for the enemy, while the Moderns, touched by love, were apt to feel tenderness and nuanced passions.[12] *History of Painting in Italy* constantly invokes the emotion of tenderness: tenderness of what is represented, like the tender love of the *Madonna with the Child* by Raphael; tenderness of the painter whose soul is capable of feeling many nuances of sentiment; and finally, tenderness in the minds of his readers who should be sensitive to romantic love and to the beauty of the arts.[13]

Many nuances and circumstances of love preoccupied

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12 Admiring the qualities of Raphael, one of the artists who succeeded in expressing the "movements of the soul", Stendhal suggests that he "*s'occupait sans cesse de nuances*" ("was constantly worried about nuances") both in terms of color and emotions (1868: 61). Or, prizing Marivaux and the good actresses playing Marivaux's comedies, Stendhal writes the following in a series of chapters of his history of Italian painting devoted to the question of the difference between the Ancients and the Moderns: "It is in Paris that delicate love has been better depicted, that one has better shown the effect of a word, a glimpse, a look… In Athens, people did not look for so many nuances, for such delicate feelings" (1868: 176; my transl.) "C'est donc à Paris qu'on a le mieux peint l'amour délicat, qu'on a le mieux fait sentir l'influence d'un mot, d'un coup d'œil d'un regard […]. Dans Athènes on ne cherchoit pas tant de nuances, tant de délicatesse."

13 "This unique reader […] will be enchanted by that man on his knees wearing a green gown in Raphael's *Assumption*. He will love that Benedictine monk who plays piano in *The Concert* by Giorgione. He will see in this painting the *great ridicule of tender souls*: that of Werther talking about passions to cold Albert. Dear unknown friend, whom I call dear because you are unknown, abandon yourself to the arts with confidence (1868: 206; my transl. and ital.) "Ce lecteur unique […] aimera ce jeune homme à genoux avec une tunique verte dans l'*Assomption* de Raphaël. Il aimera le religieux bénédictin qui touche du piano dans le *Concert* du Giorgion. Il verra dans ce tableau le grand ridicule des âmes tendres: Werther parlant des passions au froid Albert. Cher ami inconnu, et que j'appelle cher parce que tu es inconnu, livre-toi aux arts avec confiance."

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Stendhal, whose *Le Rouge et le Noir* (*The Red and the Black*, 1830) is one of the most famous love stories of European Romantic literature. Even before studying this passion and all the emotions coming with it in his novels, he wrote his essay *De l'amour* (*On Love*). He presents this work as "a book explaining in a simple, reasonable, so to speak mathematical way the various sentiments that follow one another and are all together called the passion of love" (1926: V; my transl.).[14]

Stendhal's theory of emotions, patiently constructed through many of his works and remarks, culminates in his novels, where the emotional dynamics can easily be seen. In a crucial moment in *The Red and the Black*, the aristocrat Mathilde admits to herself that she is in love with Julien, her father's secretary, after so many modulations in her feelings and behaviour. This occurs almost as a revelation; she thinks about Julien when she is at the opera with her mother and becomes suddenly enthralled by an air, by the beauty of the melody and the song. Simultaneously she identifies with the words pronounced by Cimarosa's heroine as she declares that she is madly in love. The power of the art is such that the aesthetic experience of music and song gives her some knowledge about her true emotions; a flash of self-knowledge does not need a Socratic analysis, but instead erupts with the joint strength of cognition and emotion.

Stendhal's main characters acquire aesthetic and moral

14 "Le livre qui suit explique simplement, raisonnablement, mathématiquement, pour ainsi dire, les divers sentiments qui se succèdent les uns aux autres, et dont l'ensemble s'appelle la passion de l'amour" (*De L'amour,* 1906). Stendhal himself calls his book "a complete physiology of the divine and hellish passion that is love". Triggered by his reading of the new nineteenth-century editions of medieval French love poetry, it collects and analyzes examples from various literatures in the Middle Ages, while reflecting on some generalities about love and identifying cultural and historical differences according to various epochs and countries.

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knowledge out of a double temporality, that is both long term and sporadic. The continuous exercise of psychological analysis and judgment about one's own thoughts and behaviour, and about the behaviour and supposed thoughts of the others accumulates in time. In contrast, the quick intuition and appraisal of one's own emotions emerge in what contemporary psychologists would call an "emotional episode". This might surface in their countenances or bodies, what contemporary psychology calls "arousal", the physical reaction to external or internal stimuli; the characters in the novel often turn pale or red, their hearts beat, and they tremble or faint. This double temporality is significant in the perception of the advantage of the literary descriptions of emotions over the psychological ones; experimental psychology considers an emotion identical to the emotional episode, while literature exposes the difference between the emotional episode and the emotion, where the emotion has a long existence and is interrupted by a myriad of thoughts, desires, values and affective phenomena, and charged with short-term and long-term consequences.[15] The emotion, its transformation, and the evaluation of the emotions all come together at the same time in a rapid movement. Aside from the split between the heart and the brain, there is an interpenetration of the rational and emotional processes that the narrator's quick style tries to capture while assessing, via indirect speech, his own emotion towards his fictional character: sweet and ironic sympathy towards the young woman who is frequently described in the novel as a "sublime soul".

Occupied with thoughts of the future and of the singular part which she hoped to play, Mathilde soon came to look back with regret upon the

15 The philosopher Peter Goldie is interested in the temporal dimension of emotions and insists on the difference between emotional episodes and emotions (Goldie 2000).

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dry, metaphysical discussions which she often had with Julien. Wearied with keeping her thoughts on so high a plane, sometimes she would also sigh over the moments of happiness which she had found in his company; these memories were not untouched by remorse, which at certain moments overwhelmed her.

"But if one has a weakness," she said to herself, it is incumbent upon a girl like myself to forget her duties only for a man of merit [...] she answered the voice of remorse, "I am a weak woman, but at least I have not been led astray like a puppet by outward advantages." (Stendhal 2005; Gutenberg Project; transl. slightly changed. See footnote 16 for French original.)

In Mathilde's mind, her hopes and desires for the future are intermingled with her fatigue for her dreams of glory, which is suggested by the narrator, who ironically ("sometimes also") indicates her regret for her past pleasures in conversing with Julien. The narrator cannot help using a gracious negative sentence ("these memories were not untouched by remorse"), by which he delicately scolds her for her pride, whose effect is the halo of remorse for not being so totally devoted to her self-imposed duty of grandeur. The tenderness of the narrator is quickly superimposed onto Mathilde herself, who, in the following lines, opens up her tender disposition towards the one she immediately after these remarks calls "the poor boy". He is poor, she explains to herself in her internal dialogue, because his "words of love" are bluntly rejected by her. What a complex, conflicting, movable emotional ground in this stream of consciousness! Mathilde is filled with various, contrasting emotions that prepare her for the ecstasy of love for both her lover and for music.

The aforementioned chain of the emotions, connected to the song at the opera and the marvellous music of Cimarosa, acts as a momentary transformation of the young woman whose type of love corresponds to what Stendhal calls "*amour de tête*" (love born out of the brain) in *De l'Amour*: Mathilde

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becomes as sweet and passionate as Mme de Rênal, Julien's lover when he was the tutor of Mme and M. De Rênal's children in a small provincial town:

> The moment she had heard this sublime cantilena ["I must be punished for all the adoration that I feel for him, I love him too well"], everything that existed in the world vanished from Mathilde's ken. People spoke to her; she did not answer; her mother scolded her, it was all she could do to look at her. Her ecstasy reached a state of exaltation and passion comparable to the most violent emotions that, during the last few days, Julien had felt for her. The cantilena, divinely graceful, to which was sung the maxim that seemed to her to bear so striking an application to her own situation, occupied every moment in which she was not thinking directly of Julien. Thanks to her love of music, she became that evening as Madame de Rênal invariably was when thinking of him. (Stendhal 2005; Gutenberg Project.)[16]

16 "Occupée de l'avenir et du rôle singulier qu'elle espérait, Mathilde en vint bientôt jusqu'à regretter les discussions sèches et métaphysiques qu'elle avait souvent avec Julien. Fatiguée de si hautes pensées, quelquefois aussi elle regrettait les moments de bonheur qu'elle avait trouvés auprès de lui; ces derniers souvenirs ne paraissaient point sans remords, elle en était accablée dans de certains moments.

Mais si l'on a une faiblesse, se disait-elle, il est digne d'une fille telle que moi de n'oublier ses devoirs que pour un homme de mérite [...] J'ai été séduite, répondait-elle à se remords, je suis une faible femme, mais du moins je n'ai pas été égarée comme une poupée par les avantages extérieurs. [...]

Du moment qu'elle eut entendu cette cantilène sublime, tout ce qui existait au monde disparut pour Mathilde. On lui parlait; elle ne répondait pas; sa mère la grondait, à peine pouvait-elle prendre sur elle de la regarder. Son extase arriva à un état d'exaltation et de passion comparable aux mouvements les plus violents que depuis quelques jours Julien avait éprouvés pour elle. La cantilène pleine d'une grâce divine sur laquelle était chantée la maxime qui lui semblait faire une application si frappante à sa position, occupait tous les instants où elle ne songeait pas directement à Julien. Grâce à son amour pour la musique, elle fut ce soir-là comme Mme de Rênal était toujours en pensant à Julien" (Stendhal 2005: 668-669).

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In a few lines, the narrator brings together the three main characters of his imagination: Julien, Mme de Rênal, and Mathilde. The rhythm is quick and embraces the inner world of Mathilde: the conversation to herself, the social scene of the opera where she waits for her lover to come to the opera box, and then the sublime movement that takes her away from everything, but not without the participation of the narrator, indicated by the unmistakable marks of indirect speech: "*this* sublime cantilena", "that *seemed* to her to bear *so* striking an application". The interpenetration of the narrator's and character's perception terminates here with a typical procedure by Stendhal. His authorial intrusion is represented by the comparison between Mathilde and Mme de Renâl, an observation which cannot come from Mathilde herself.

Stendhal's stylistic ideal consists of the rapid unfolding of sentences that present different elements: the blending of direct and indirect speech, the quick glosses here and there, the speedy transition from internal to external worlds, from one character to another, from thought to action, from motivation to justification, from life to art, and finally, from art to life.[17]

Stendhal's style, which is mobile, quick, and surprising, his relentless search for a language close to Napoleon's Civil Code, as he famously writes in 1840 to Balzac, stem from an important pair of opposing emotions within the mind of the novelist: admiration and contempt. His admiration,

17 Émile Zola criticized Stendhal's novels and style for being unrealistic and pushing the limits of grammar (Zola 1978: 74). Marcel Proust, however, did not miss the exquisite way in which Stendhal constructed his sentences, nor their effect: "In some ways, beautiful books add a corresponding slice of soul to events. In *The Red and the Black*, every action is followed by part of a sentence indicating what unconsciously takes place in the soul; it is a novel of motive" (Proust 1971: 655; my transl.).

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nourished by his passion for Shakespeare, Cervantes, and Corneille, goes to the simple, precise, unadorned language of historical writing or philosophical reflection. It should be a language close to things – the actions and the emotions that compose reality, which for Stendhal is not the external world so dear to determinism – and close to the way in which people talk. His contempt is directed toward the adorned, emphatic style of his well-known contemporaries, Chateaubriand and Mme de Staël. In his 1840 letter to Balzac, Stendhal writes: "I have considered the beautiful style of M. de Chateaubriand ridiculous since 1802. It seems to me that his style is saying plenty of *small falsities* [sham emotions]" (III 1968: 399; my transl., Stendhal's ital.).[18]

The same ethical and aesthetic contempt is also expressed in the case of Mme de Staël; a flowery style is not true to life and implies self-complacency. In 1806, he writes in his journal that *La Littérature* by Madame de Staël is a boring book filled with "du galimatias enflé, absolument faux" (highly-wrought, artificial gibberish; 1981: 377)".[19] In other remarks, Stendhal does not hesitate in suggesting that she wanted to appear extremely sensitive to her contemporaries and to herself. As for Chateaubriand, the "falsity" or cant Stendhal alludes to is the emotional mechanism of self-deception, by which people misinterpret or misunderstand their own emotions.

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18 "Le beau style de M. de Chateaubriand me sembla ridicule dès 1802. Ce style me semble dire une quantité de petites *faussetés*" (Letter to Balzac, October 16, 1840).

19 Stendhal nevertheless admired one of the early books by Mme de Staël: *De l'influence des passions sur le bonheur des individus et des nations* (*On the Influence of Passions on the Happiness of Individuals and Nations*, 1796).

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Hazlitt: Sentiment against sentimentalism

On the other side of the Channel, Hazlitt, the essayist who admired *De l'amour*, was investigating the same questions that worried Stendhal. The form of the essay itself ideally accounts for the dynamism of research. It is heterogeneous, capable of embracing erudition, examples, storytelling, speculations, and recollections without lingering on any of these elements. The essay does not aim to be a treatise. It is the narrative of ideas as the novel is the narrative of historical and personal events; it is a form echoing the course of the human mind as it leaps from one thought to an impression: from a moral principle to the awareness of an experience; from physical perceptions to sentiments; from a glimpse of the past to the imagination of the future; from the attention given to people to that given to the self. Hazlitt, who liked to call himself a "rambler", alluding to Samuel Johnson's eponymous journal, studied the human mind in all its aspects and activities, and considered emotions to be the basis of politics, social life, the law, and the arts – all of which he discussed in his innumerable articles in various journals of his time, such as the *Edinburgh Review*, *The Morning Chronicle*, and *The Examiner*.

His first work, *An Essay on the Principles of Human Action* (published in 1805), is anchored to the eighteenth-century debate on the emotions implied in social interrelations. He argues for a neutral emotion, the natural disinterestedness of the human mind. While opposing the famous vision of Thomas Hobbes, who was convinced that human beings were moved by self-interest, he adjusts the idea posited by Adam Smith in *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759) of a natural benevolence or sympathy, or of pity, which Jean-Jacques Rousseau hypothesized in his *Discours sur l'origine et les fondements de l'inégalité parmi les hommes* (*Discourse on the Origins of Inequality*, 1754). Interestingly, as for Hume

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and Smith, the faculty that can produce the non-selfish feeling of disinterest is the imagination, that very faculty that is active in the arts both in creators and in readers or spectators: "The imagination, by means of which I can anticipate future objects, or be interested in them, must carry me out of myself into the feelings of others by the same process which throws me forward into my future being, and makes me interested in it" (Hazlitt 1998: 3). The imagination is therefore linked to emotions.

Many examples from Hazlitt establish his closeness to Stendhal on the main points of the motivated character of emotions, their large variety, and the two-way movement between the external and internal spheres. I will stress one important element as the one that can sum up all their similarities in their ethical-aesthetic theory of emotions, reconstructed from their reflections in various works. I will call this element the "Rousseau factor". It is well known that Rousseau had an overwhelming impact on his readers all through the nineteenth century, a "dazzling reputation" as Hazlitt said in his essay on this writer. Stendhal and Hazlitt could not help being fascinated by him. As I have already suggested, they both believed that the emotions and the understanding of these emotions were connected, and that there were a great many subtle emotions. They were equally worried about the confusion of sentiment and sentimentalism. Indeed, they favoured the role of emotions in every aspect of life. Precisely because of their search for the reality of emotions, they were opposed to any emphatic expression of them, which they deemed as fake, as the sign of the self-satisfaction or narcissism where people tell themselves and others that they are very sensitive. Stendhal mistrusted the exaggeration and the pretense of Mme de Staël and Chateaubriand, who indulged in their suffering. Often, he criticized the same attitude in Rousseau; in his diary on July 1820, he wrote: "Even in my most tender

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and melancholic moments, such as today […], the emphatic phrasing of the *Nouvelle Héloïse* causes it to be unreadable to me" (1981: 47; my transl.)".[20]

Both Stendhal and Hazlitt admired Rousseau's beautiful style, especially in his autobiographical works *Les Confessions* and *Les Rêveries d'un promeneur solitaire*; they were, however, highly suspicious of him and the effects of his many writings. He exemplified sentimentalism, the enemy of true sentiments (and the pathway to kitsch). Sentimentalism is self-centered and condescending. The Romantic ethos derived directly from Rousseau's solitary scrutiny of the self. For an accurate psychological definition, one might rely on the description given by Flaubert in *Madame Bovary*, when he sketches the sentimental character of Emma forged by all the stereotypes of the Romantics (Chateaubriand and Lamartine):

> She loved the sea *just* because of its *storms*, and the country only when it was filled here and there with *ruins*. She needed to get out of things her personal benefit; and she rejected as useless all that which did not contribute to the *immediate consumption of her heart*. (Flaubert 1981: 49; my transl. and ital.)[21]

Hazlitt dedicated a whole essay to the problem represented by Rousseau. Not surprisingly, Stendhal's warning against the "small falsities" of Mme de Staël represents an even sharper critique. Hazlitt's essay, later included in his *Round Table*

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20 "Même dans les moments les plus tendres et les plus mélancoliques, comme aujourd'hui […], le tour d'emphase de *La Nouvelle Héloïse* me la rend illisible."

21 "Elle n'aimait la mer qu'à cause de ses tempêtes, et la verdure seulement lorsqu'elle était clairsemée parmi les ruines. Il fallait qu'elle pût retirer des choses une sorte de profit personnel; et elle rejetait comme inutile tout ce qui ne contribuait pas à la consommation immédiate de son cœur."

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(1815-16), starts with a refutation of one of Rousseau's fervent admirers, who, in 1788, wrote a whole book on him, *Lettres sur les ouvrages et le caractère de J.-J. Rousseau*:

> MADAME DE STAEL, in her Letters on the Writings and Character of Rousseau, gives it as her opinion, "that the imagination was the first faculty of his mind, and that this faculty even absorbed all the others." And she farther adds, "Rousseau had great strength of reason on abstract questions, or with respect to objects, which have no reality but in the mind." Both these opinions are radically wrong. Neither imagination nor reason can properly be said to have been the original predominant faculties of his mind. (Hazlitt 1998, vol. 2: 90)

In Hazlitt's opinion, the mind of Rousseau lacks the two fundamental faculties of reason and imagination, and possesses the sham, artificial, exaggerated form of sensibility that is all concentrated on the self: sentimentalism.

> The only quality which he possessed in an eminent degree, which alone raised him above ordinary men, and which gave to his writings and opinions an influence greater, perhaps, than has been exerted by any individual in modern times, was extreme sensibility, or an acute and even morbid feeling of all that related to his own impressions, to the objects and events of his life [...]. His craving after excitement was an appetite and a disease. His interest in his own thoughts and feelings was always wound up to the highest pitch; and hence the enthusiasm which he excited in others. (2: 90)

This type of "tyranny" of the sensibility is successful with readers and highly pervasive; the characters in Rousseau's novels, continues Hazlitt, are projections "of his own being", as opposed to being a study of human affective life and action. The analysis of the self should be just one of the elements of the study of humanity, together with the observation of

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people and the study of good literature and philosophy, as Stendhal suggested to Pauline.

Developing his critique, Hazlitt hints at the difference between sentiment and impulse. The former requires a long temporality, where reason and emotions are scrutinized, while impulse – not to be confused with the involuntary impression by which one can quickly appraise, judge, and decide – is not even an emotional episode but an uncontrollable, almost entirely perceptive, reaction, a passion, understood as the irrational outburst of ardour and obsession. Rousseau, according to Hazlitt, cultivates these impulses: "His speculations are the obvious exaggerations of a mind giving a loose to its habitual impulses, and moulding all nature to its own purposes" (2: 91).

The consequence of this impulsive sentimentalism, this exaggerated attention to feeling, is visible in the style, in the language used by Rousseau. One might also say that his style is a symptom of sentimentalism. Stendhal and Hazlitt fought the same battle against the emphasis of expression:

> Hence his enthusiasm and his eloquence, bearing down all opposition. Hence the warmth and the luxuriance, as well as the sameness of his descriptions. Hence the frequent verboseness of his style; for passion lends force and reality to language, and makes words supply the place of imagination. (2: 91)

Obviously, the blame of what Hazlitt very accurately calls "luxuriance" and "verboseness" implies the search for straightforward language, the opposite of rhetorical emphasis. As for Stendhal, simple, unadorned style does not mean simplicity, but rather the clear-cut capability of being as close as possible to things (and one may label these traits of the human psyche and action "things"). Language itself is emotional in its oral and written tone as well as in its phrasing;

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it is as emotional as a facial expression, such as a blush or a blanching, or a natural gesture such as the beating of the heart. The writer who wants to be true to the language of emotions should be capable of grasping the precision of the soul, the reality of emotional life. Stendhal declared his horror for the "ridiculous" style of Chateaubriand, and constantly strived to find the right idea and expression of it.[22] Against the oratorical sentences of the great French Romantic, Stendhal forged his quick abrupt style; Hazlitt, the essayist, wrote extensively on the question of style, what he called the "familiar style" (in his essay "On Familiar Style"):

> It is not easy to write a familiar style. Many people mistake a familiar for a vulgar style, and suppose that to write without affectation is to write at random. On the contrary, there is nothing that requires more precision, and, if I may so say, purity of expression, than the style I am speaking of. It utterly rejects not only all unmeaning pomp, but all low, cant phrases, and loose, unconnected, slipshod allusions. It is not to take the first word that offers, but the best word in common use; it is not to throw words together in any combinations we please, but to follow and avail ourselves of the true idiom of the language. (1998, 6: 217).

Those who, like Stendhal and Hazlitt, strongly believe that the mind is "the whole complex unity of a conscious, thinking, feeling and acting person", those who reckon that analysis is important for attempting to understand human life, are think-

22 As he wrote to Balzac: "Often I reflect a quarter of one hour in order to choose an adjective. I always try to narrate: 1. with *one idea*, 2. with *clarity* what goes on in the heart […] Insofar as the beauty of a sentence is concerned – its roundness […] I often find that it is a defect" (my transl., Stendhal's ital.). "Souvent je réfléchis un quart d'heure pour placer un adjectif. Je cherche à raconter: 1. avec *une idée*, 2. avec *clarté* ce qui se passe dans un cœur. Quant à la beauté de la phrase, à sa rondeur, […] souvent j'y vois un défaut."

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ers who watch for clarity. It is not the silly clarity of the lack of depth, but the constant effort to reduce the obscurity that inevitably surrounds profound thoughts and ideas as much as possible, and to find a way of disentangling the complexity of emotions, schemes, beliefs, and actions. Anyone, according to these relentless thinkers, ought to beware of the fascination with jargon and the self-satisfaction that haughty words and sentences can produce. Hazlitt expands Stendhal's critique to include emphasis and obscurity: "It is not pomp or pretension, but the adaptation of the expression to the idea, that clinches a writer's meaning: – as it is not the size or glossiness of the materials, but their being fitted each to its place, that gives strength to the arch" (6: 219).

Pompous or artificial language is one with sentimentality; in "Good Writing and Fine Writing", Hazlitt stresses the agreement between true or natural sentiment and concise and precise language. In his review of Sismondi's *La Littérature du Midi de L'Europe* (*The Literature of the South*), he compares the powerful simplicity of Chaucer's descriptions to those of Rousseau's. Once again, Rousseau is used as a negative example, in spite of his attractiveness:

> [t]he difference [is] between good writing and fine writing; or between the actual appearances of nature and the progress of the feelings they excite in us, and a parcel of words, images and sentiments thrown together without meaning or coherence. We do not say this from any feeling of disrespect to Rousseau, for whom we have a great affection; but his imagination was not that of the poet or the painter. Severity and boldness are the characteristic of the natural style, the artificial is equally servile and ostentatious. (Hazlitt 1933, XVI: 55)

As Stendhal regretted the degradation of Romanticism in Friedrich Schlegel's mystic obscurantism, Hazlitt could not approve the yearning for obscurity and confusion of the fol-

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lowers of German philosophy, all those who travelled to Heidelberg, like Coleridge. In one of his essays on the famous Coleridge, whom he admired in his youth and then came to criticize because of his politically conservative ideas and his confusion of conceptions, Hazlitt wrote in 1819:

> He [Coleridge] slides out of a logical deduction by the help of metaphysics: and if the labyrinths of metaphysics did not afford him "ample scope and verge enough," he would resort to necromancy and the cabala. [...] All his notions are floating and unfixed [...] Truth is to him a ceaseless round of contradictions: he lives in the belief of a perpetual lie, and in affecting to think what he pretends to say. His mind is in a constant state of flux and reflux: he is like the Sea-horse in the Ocean; he is the Man in the Moon, the Wandering Jew. (4: 109-110)

The fundamental concurrence of language and sentiments is the best declaration of the belief in the unity of form and content. This is so in both life and art, or in the ethical-aesthetic experience of the arts. In his many essays on Shakespeare, Hazlitt elaborates on Aristotle's conceptions, in a circulation between the imagination of the poet, the fictional world and characters, and the imagination of the reader or spectator. In his essay on *Othello*, Hazlitt comments on the effects of tragedy on our sensibility: "It has been said that tragedy purifies the affections through terror and pity. That is, it *substitutes imaginary sympathy* for mere selfishness. It gives us a high and permanent interest, beyond ourselves, in humanity as such" (1: 112; my ital.).

For Hazlitt, tragedy is "a discipline of humanity", and Shakespeare, whom Stendhal worships, is described in various essays as a writer who can analyze a great variety of human emotions with an expression that is always "true to life". The circulation amongst the writer, the work of art, and the reader or spectator as identified by Hazlitt corresponds

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to the one Stendhal perceives between the "tenderness" of painter, paintings, and viewers in the chapter of *History of Italian Painting*. The warm call for tenderness takes place when he, praising Raphael's nuanced brush, mentions the simple language of Shakespeare, as the one capable of eliciting emotions through extremely meaningful details: "*l'art de passionner les détails*", "the art of putting passion into details" (Stendhal 1868: 118).[23]

The Romantics in general thought of the rupture between the world of art and that of reality, while the simplistic realist school believed in the reproduction of the world. But the Romantic "dissenters" Stendhal and Hazlitt disregarded any narrow-minded conception of reality as external world, and conceived of the power of the arts, their performative strength, precisely because, within the imagination, the arts can develop the social emotion of sympathy, that human emotion that takes us out of the prison of the self.

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23 What could be more moving, he says, than Banquo's simple words spoken in Duncan's castle while his murder is already planned by Lady Macbeth? And he quotes *Macbeth* (Act 1, scene VI):

> This guest of summer,/The temple-haunting martlet, does approve,/By his loved mansionry, that the heaven's breath/Smells wooingly here ...

This sweet remark, which seems banal to insensitive, cold people, is all the more poignant since misery awaits Banquo.

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Emotion and Forgiveness in Literature

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Emotions are difficult to express and forgiveness is hard to elicit. This is a common experience, but not the core issue of most theories. Instead, most theories tend to focus separately on the origin and nature of emotions and on the effects and obscure legal status of forgiveness.[1] Only rarely do they in-

1 *Emotions:* There are numerous encyclopedias and handbooks on emotions and psychology, *e.g.* Lewis and Haviland-Jones 2000, and on appraisal theories, in particular, Scherer, Schorr and Johnstone (2004). Solomon 2004 on contemporary philosophy is useful as is Rorty 1980 (although here the phenomenological approach is reduced, but extensively dealt with in Solomon 2007; Slaby 2006). When literature and the arts come into the picture, most weight is put on the psychological theories and effects rather than on particular aesthetic and cultural issues (Matravers 1998; Robinson 2005; Silvia 2005; Poppe 2012) although the role of narration is discussed (Goldie 2002; Voss 2004; Slaby 2008). Nussbaum 1990 and Herding and Stumpfhaus 2004 are stimulating exceptions with an interart perspective. – *Forgiveness:* Forgiveness is not subject to cross-disciplinary anthologization, but is mostly dealt with in disciplinary confinements (Ricœur 2000; Derrida 2001; Govier 2002; Griswold 2007 (philosophy); Holloway 2002 (theology); Murphy and Hampton 1988; Tutu 1999 (law); Shriver 1995 (politics)), or in relation to specific historical situations like the Holocaust (Améry

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vite reflection on how and why emotions and forgiveness are interconnected, also beyond the troubled expressibility they have in common.

Emotions may find violent and offensive expressions that transgress legal and ethical norms in such a way that forgiveness is called for as an appropriate act. The usual ethical reactions that lubricate our social intercourse may not suffice when we are subjected to an offence we find deeply unjustifiable. Moreover, the need for forgiveness may be propelled by an emotional context of resentment caused by actions that cannot be contained by a legal framework that normally results in a balanced and generally accepted verdict – a random killing spree, child abuse, a mass murder considered to be committed at a moment which was beyond the control of the perpetrator, for instance. An exceptional act of forgiveness may then offer a fragile possibility to obtain an emotional equilibrium that restores the contested sense of justice.

However, when literature takes issue with emotions and forgiveness and their interconnection, it does so most profoundly when the primary focus is precisely the limits of their expressibility. Not only are such limits at the heart of literature as verbal art. But the signification of such limits reaches far beyond fractures in grammar, vocabulary or semantic coding. Such fractures point to the boundaries of the normative universe of a culture that frames both emotional processes and possible acts of forgiveness, as well as determining the formation of collective and individual identities. From this point of view, the aim of the literary use of emotions and forgiveness is to show how identities are shaped in circum-

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1977; Wiesenthal 1997; Brudholm 2008), the rights of indigenous people (Thompson 2002) or post-apartheid reconciliation (Battle 1997). Literary or broader aesthetic issues in particular are not often discussed (French 2001; Larsen 2012a and 2012b).

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stances where they are most challenged and vulnerable, and to investigate how textual strategies are developed to explore and express this condition.

This liminal focus motivates my choice of texts.[2] On the one hand, the texts exemplify identity formation in a cultural boundary zone where emotions and forgiveness play an essential role in different historical (European antiquity) and contemporary cultures (Westernized and Asian cultures). On the other hand, my text selection also explores how three different textual strategies are at work in this process: the emergence, the indirectness and the impossibility of forgiveness. By using examples, the ambition of this study is to circumscribe contrasting positions on the boundary of cultural value systems, but not to unfold a broad comparative study of mutual influences and similarities between literatures, cultures and value systems.

My first example, Euripides' *Hippolytus* (4th century BCE) will set the scene for the workings of this constellation. Here forgiveness emerges as a new and unpredictable form of human interaction. In my second example, the South Korean Yi Mun-Yol's *An Appointment with My Brother* (1994), I will explore the indirectness of forgiveness and at the same time offer a general conceptual framework for a literary approach to emotions and forgiveness. My last example, the South African Rian Malan's autobiography *My Traitor's Heart* (1991), presents a challenge to the very possibility of forgiveness.

2 The historical and cultural changes of the notion of literature, the difference of genres and the role of translation will not be discussed in this context.

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Example 1: Emergence of forgiveness

In Euripides' *Hippolytus* the ambiguous emotion of anger (ὀργή or μένος) is at center stage. In his *Nicomachean Ethics* Aristotle remarks (Aristotle 2001: 1125b26-29) that if anger has the right volume in the right situation, it is a natural and appropriate emotion. If not, it is a dangerous state of mind that should be avoided; it may tip the mental and social balance of the situation and, as in Euripides' tragedy, spill over to the larger social context. Moreover, Aristotle knows no established word to express the optimal and even-tempered (πρᾶος) middle ground between those two positions, called mildness or gentleness: it is an open space of ethical and emotional negotiations to be explored by other discourses than that of philosophy – as is the case in Euripides.

In a fit of anger after hearing claims that his son, Hippolytus, has incestuously attracted his stepmother Phaedra, Theseus calls upon his father, the god Poseidon, to stage retaliation against Hippolytus. The rumors have been circulated by Phaedra herself for two reasons: first, because she, under the spell of Aphrodite, has not been able to resist her passionate infatuation with Hippolytus, and second, because she felt humiliated by his rejection due to his loyalty to the chaste goddess Artemis.

Theseus and Phaedra are overwhelmed by different passions (πάθος) beyond their control. At the end of the day it turns out that Phaedra's accusation is false, and this makes her incestuous desire and Theseus' harsh reaction unforgivable: engulfed in her passions she has offended divine laws, and Theseus has forced a god, Poseidon, to perform an injustice by abusing a god's unconditional promise to satisfy three of Theseus' wishes. Moreover, from the very beginning the whole affair is framed by a conflict between two equal gods, the red-hot Aphrodite and the icy Artemis. Unlike in other trag-

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edies, a court guided by Athena, Zeus or Apollo cannot sort things out in the end. Thus emotional raptures have opened the undefined middle ground between the proper anger that Theseus intended to show and the excessive and dangerous anger he actually produced with no standard language to express his complex position and no known act to redress the balance.

At that point the mortally wounded Hippolytus is brought on stage and, inspired by Artemis, his last act is to forgive his father for having killed him, thereby releasing him from his guilt: "Still, at your bidding I end my quarrel [λύω = set free] with my father" (Euripides 1995: 258-259/v. 1441-1442).[3] When Hippolytus actually performs the act of ending the quarrel, he does so in similar terms: "*Theseus:* And will you leave me with my hands unclean? / *Hipp.:* Oh no, for this murder I acquit [ἐλευθεσώ = set free] you" (260-261/v. 1448-1449). Theseus has not asked to be acquitted and did not imagine that Hippolytus, on the brink of death, would show a capacity to turn the tables. Since forgiveness is unthinkable in the Greek world of honor and shame with hubris (ὕβρις) as a central term (Fisher 1992, Williams 1993), Theseus does not seem to understand what his son is saying: "What is this to say? You set me free of murder?" (260/v.1460).

Therefore, Hippolytus' act of forgiveness may be seen as a disguised humiliation of Theseus by its implicit suggestion that the sovereign king of divine origin is in need of forgiveness; but for the first time in his life Theseus is humbled and at the same time grateful. He accepts Hippolytus' acquittance and thereby also his son's power to change the rules of the game. Hippolytus redefines the meaning of the words 'to set

3 Instead of 'end the quarrel', the previous Loeb translation from 1922 by Arthur Way translates 'set free' with 'forgive'. (Euripides: *Ion, Hippolytus, Medea, Alcestis*. London: Heinemann, 1922: 274-275.)

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free' in such a way that the act of forgiveness overcomes the laws of society and the conflicting interests of the gods. He reshapes the condition for human identity. Having no interpretational frame for the unpredictable (Arendt 1998: Ch. 33) act of forgiveness, it is left to the audience to contemplate how Theseus will live with this new mind-blowing communal act for which he possesses no language. His last line in the tragedy is an accusation of Aphrodite for having caused the disastrous train of events, thus forgetting his own role in the affair. But for the drama as a whole this deficiency of language determines its vitality in the centuries to come because it calls for a continuous rewriting and remediation of the Phaedra story (Planque 2012).

This process involves three aspects with implications for literary analysis: an *internal* aspect related to its plot or to its characters; an *external* aspect connected with the effect of the art work as a whole based on its aesthetic strategies; and a *self-reflexive* aspect, which takes into account the relation between the various media of expression that are used to link emotion with forgiveness.

The internal aspect mostly concerns the social and cultural boundaries. But, as in Euripides, most often literature and other works of art go further and deal with emotions and introduce acts of forgiveness in a broader ontological perspective related to life and death, identity formation, divine laws, crimes against humanity, etc. In this perspective the entire work as an aesthetic act produces emotions in the viewer or reader that transcend particular characters and plot elements.

According to Aristotle's *Poetics* from the 4th century BCE, the plot and fate of the characters evoke *pity* (ἔλεος) and *fear* (φόβος), while the tragedy as a whole generates a cathartic effect (κάθαρσις), that is to say, an emotion-based insight into the shared life conditions embracing the extraordinary events on stage and the everyday lives of the viewers: the limits

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of human power *vis-à-vis* the gods and the cosmos we live in (cf. Rorty 1992). This insight is made visible when some characters, like Theseus caught by his anger fatally and often by mistake – his *hamartia* (‘αμαρτία) – cross the threshold between humans and the gods. The effect is reinforced because such characters are extraordinary enough to be representative of the whole of humankind, and ordinary enough in their failures for each of us to relate to.[4]

In *Hippolytus* the protagonist combines emotions and forgiveness in a hitherto unheard of way. From Antiquity up to the Enlightenment forgiveness was the business of God or the gods only, not of humankind, because the unforgivable was an act committed against the divine will and the celestial laws. That is why the death sentence, and a painful execution preceded by torture, paved the way for the soul to leave the discarded body, the site of the sinful act, to attain perhaps God's forgiveness and thus restore the cosmic balance disturbed by the unforgivable act (cf. French 1983, Hunt 2007: Ch 2, Chamayou 2008, Todorov 2009, Larsen 2012a). Emotions, on the other hand, were considered part of human life and strongest when people react to basic ontological experiences at the limit of human existence. The emotions capture the whole person and his or her identity as an external force – rapture or inspiration. This also corresponds to Augustine's description of the love of God: it is induced

4 Similar ideas can be found in other contemporary cultures. The comprehensive Indian classical poetics of drama, *Natyasastra* by Bharata, a few centuries or so after Aristotle, suggests a parallel type of thinking, although with a more elaborate system of emotions. Here, more special and basic emotions, *bhava*, are linked to the characters and their interaction with the world, whereas the *rasa* is a complex emotional totality that emanates from the aesthetic experience of the performance as a whole and encompasses the entire human life of the viewer in various particular modes (terror, love, etc.) (Masson 1970, and Marks and Ames 1997: 39-65).

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into humans (Augustine 1961). The ontological boundary is given a transcendental foundation.

This separation between outside and divine source and inner effect is transgressed in Hippolytus' act of forgiveness. Although inspired by Artemis, his act is a human decision prefiguring later works in which emotions and their ontological contexts have a human and not a transcendental basis (cf. Cameron 1996; Larsen 2000; Talon-Hugon 2002; Dixon 2004).[5] As earlier, these boundaries are still indicative of the fact that humans may go against what humans are supposed to do, whether in a positive sense like Hippolytus, or in a negative sense like Theseus and Phaedra. Enlightenment in particular, and in marked contrast to what various religions and other metaphysical cosmologies have taught during the previous centuries, promotes the idea that any transgression of ontological boundaries is made by humans. As Lynn Hunt has explained, universal human rights presuppose that all humans are capable of feeling empathy toward any other human being. This inborn capacity constitutes the emotional and self-evident basis of human rights and their derivatives in various legislations. The capacity to forgive, therefore, also comes from within and is entirely human (Neiman 2002, Hunt 2007).

Emotions of awe are reactions that can be released in and by humans when confronted with transgressive material powers, and forgiveness is a possibility that humans can use to elevate themselves above the devastating results of emotional rapture. On such secularized conditions, emotions and forgiveness do more than co-exist; they become two sides of

5 For a historical overview: see the two historical anthologies, Solomon 2003 and Newmark 2008, and essays in Harbsmeier and Möckel 2009 as well as the review article Rosenwein 2002 on the Middle Ages.

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the same coin. Humans are the source and the target of both emotions and forgiveness.

Restricting myself to the art of literature, my aim in the next section is to develop interrelated concepts of emotions and forgiveness that confront boundaries of individual and cultural identity with a focus on the limit of their expressibility. Most concepts of both emotion and forgiveness circulating in the world today are based on the historical changes of European cultural history. Here a claim of universality that originated in the Enlightenment opens a de-historicized view of emotionality as an irrational and spontaneous mental state and, at the same time, of the human capacity to forgive based on the idea of an identical universal potential for empathy (Hunt 1997; Chakrabarty 2000). But as in Euripides, emotions and acts of forgiveness always occur in a cultural context that determines their effect, especially when they meet the constitutive boundaries of that context.[6] Today, this situation is most clearly exposed when the context is pre-Enlightenment as in Euripides, or non-European as in my next two examples.

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6 For an explanation of the culture-specific nature of emotions, see Schweder and Levine 1984 and Marks and Ames 1997. On honor and shame in particular in a historical and cross-cultural perspective in Antiquity, see Fisher 1992; Williams 1993, and in more recent history, see Peristiany 1965; Taylor 1985; Miller 1993, and Nussbaum 2004. Emotional alienation in a cross-cultural context is not an unknown component of literature, and nor is the ensuing difficulty of empathy and the effect on forgiveness, often in a colonial and post-colonial context. Alex Miller's novel *The Ancestor Game* (1992) on Chinese-Australian relationships is but one example as a version of the old East-meets-West conflict (134ff in particular). But the view from within complex Korean culture and from within South African society, as in my examples 2 and 3, gives a more comprehensive picture of the limits of expressibility of emotions and forgiveness and of the power of literature to articulate it nevertheless.

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Example 2: The indirectness of forgiveness

Yi Mun-Yol's *An Appointment with My Brother* has the still ongoing war between North and South Korea as its temporary context, but the broader historical context of the cultural norms of the old unified Korea and Asian ideas of ethics and identity play a decisive role. The division of the country in the still ongoing war, which was only brought to a standstill by the cease fire in 1953, is embodied by two half-brothers who meet for the first time: the narrator Yi Hyeonseop, about 50 years old, from Seoul, and Yi Hyeok, in his forties, from the North. Their encounter takes place over a couple of days in a Korean borderline region in China, a limbo that is neither North nor South and not a unified Korea either. The cultural and emotional context of the novel is defined by the unclear balance between war and peace, by the undefined space of their encounter, and by the fact that Hyeonseop and Hyeok are brothers but foreign to each other at the same time. This context constitutes a complex Aristotelian middle ground where opposing emotions can be negotiated.

What unites them now is their recently deceased father, to whose spirit they both want to pay respect by traditional offerings of food and drink from his home in the South. They perform the customary ritual on the Chinese side, in a neutral limbo, facing North Korea. This is a matter of honor for the eldest son, who – as it emerges – took the initiative for the encounter. But both of them want to use the occasion to reconcile the broken family ties: in the 1950s their father defected from the South as a militant communist, leaving his wife and two children behind in poverty, remarried in the North and fathered three younger children. Both feel partly cheated by their father: the Southerners feel that the family in the North took the father away physically; the Northerners feel that the eldest son left behind was always first in their

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father's mind. Now the father has died of cancer. Atonement, if any, also in view of the national division, is left to the survivors, misguided by their contradictory emotions.

Both brothers are full of stories of pride from their respective homes and past lives. If they revealed any real troubles, they would inevitably lose face and honor and thereby also betray their homeland and family or, alternatively, they may make the brother lose face. Their tacit but mutual resentment remains suppressed, reinforced by a mutual lack of knowledge of what is going on beyond the national division line. However, in spite of their separate lives they share a cultural context based on age-old codes of honor and shame that traditionally exclude acts of forgiveness and expressions of emotions.

But during their extraordinary encounter the old behavioral codes also make such acts possible, although only through indirect articulations that impede the communication between the brothers. For the novel, however, indirectness of speech offers a variety of efficient literary strategies to represent the emergence of the brothers' new emotional relationship resulting in an oblique expression of forgiveness. But before the brothers break the barrier between them, I will leave them for a moment and develop an appropriate conceptualization of emotions to give their encounter a broader perspective, mainly inspired by Martha Nussbaum.

Her take on emotions is rooted in the classical theories of Aristotle and the Stoics, and in modern phenomenology (Nussbaum 2003; cf. Rorty in Rorty 1980: 103-126; Solomon 2007; Slaby 2008; Heller 2009). Following Nussbaum, emotions are, first of all, *intentional*; they produce an involvement with the world and the subjects around us. Hence, emotions imply *evaluation* because they produce a basic sense of the positive or negative relevance for us of our experiences (Scherer *et al.* 2001). Being evaluative, emotions are also *ra-*

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tional, not in terms of formal logic, but in the sense that they have a cognitive dimension by being systematic, repeatable and subject to argumentation and reflexive judgment – in the same way as language, literature and art works are rational. Emotions, in this context, work as deictic phenomena – they point to things we cannot resist involving ourselves with. As intentional phenomena, emotions orient us toward a life world larger than ourselves and, at the same time, they establish our positions as subjects in it. It becomes a *human* life world, which is also *my* life world.

Emotional processes may be composed of more temporary and particular feelings or moods as well as more profound and stable emotions like pride or anger. But taken together emotions connect *totalities* – the world around us and our self as a whole. Together the emotional process and the intended object as a whole form a situation or a scenario[7] in which we partake as subjects (Heller 2009: 25). Hence, being both intentional and cognitive, emotions allow for self-reflection or self-assessment and therefore involve *identity* (cf. Taylor 1985).

This self-reflexivity has two consequences. On the one hand, it determines the *narrative* potential of emotions, suggesting subject-centered moves and actions (Goldie 2002) that may enhance or destroy the cohesion of the subject of emotions and the surrounding world (Voss 2004; Slaby 2008). On the other hand, the potential self-reflexivity opens for a discourse on the nature of emotions themselves, not only a theoretical meta-discourse, but also a didactical discourse in which we *learn* to have emotions and to recognize them. This *learning process* is an important aspect of our identity formation as a cultural process, and therefore determines a cultural

7 On paradigm scenarios, see de Sousa in Rorty 1980: 142ff.

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differentiation of emotional resources as an essential part of their nature. Having emotions is universal, but being culturally embedded they are as diverse as any other universally shared human quality – a sense of beauty, of sexual appeal, of hunger, and of happiness.

From this also follows that emotions are not mental states, but *mental processes* that evolve over time as part of individual and collective identity formation. Hence, emotions cannot avoid being involved self-reflexively with more or less recognizable and coded means of expressions, language first of all. Emotions are self-assertive in the sense that they make us aware of our identity, which situates us in a human life world with a cultural specificity, but also undermines our identity in the sense that emotions constantly challenge it and our capacity to give it a repeatable verbal or other semiotic form. If the psychological or philosophical point of departure for the investigation of the complexity of emotions is their intentionality, literature starts out in the troubled relation of emotions to their media of expression and to their cultural and historical context.

We left the two Korean brothers in a deadlock situation, each of them struggling with the deep-seated emotion of self-pride on the surface, masking a tacit resentment in a chiastic configuration that blocks their communication: the resentment of one is the pride of the other and vice versa. This emotional and communicative knot is tightened by their two mutually exclusive cultural contexts. Nevertheless, after having overcome both practical and mental obstacles they are prepared to meet on the grounds of shared cultural values beyond the horizons of the divided Korea: the ancestral cult and its emotionally loaded values of family related honor and shame.

Precisely at that point in the narrative, self-reflexive and cognitive aspects of emotions are released by the joint act

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of the ancestral sacrifice. The masks begin to fall, helped by heavy drinking. Gradually the brothers reveal the complexity of their real family lives in the two parts of Korea and dissolve their prejudices about the other Korean region. The mutual compassion becomes stronger than the deep-rooted honor and shame. On the level of the characters this development is not verbalized, but it is communicated to the reader by the narrative strategy of double articulation in which the I-narrator, Hyeonseop, verbalizes his emotional recognition, but only as an interior monologue: "Now I have bowed to Father and wept for him together with my younger brother, I felt more at home with the latter" (Yi 2002: 73). They are about to achieve an identity primarily as brothers of the same family. In contrast to the ancestral rite, the act of forgiveness is still as norm-breaking as in the case of Hippolytus, and they are almost incapable of finding a verbal expression, even as interior monologue. To understand this process we will let the brothers recuperate from their hangover and conceptualize forgiveness as a corollary to an emotional development.

The basic assumption is that forgiveness *must* find verbal expression. It is always a *speech* act. Although theories of forgiveness in a philosophical, judicial or theological context take note of this fact, they do so mostly by regarding it as an accidental, not a constitutive feature. But it *is* constitutive, simply because in order to be accomplished, forgiveness has to be understood, accepted and acknowledged by the individual or collectivity that is to be forgiven. Theseus did this when he was taken by surprise by Hippolytus' speech act of forgiveness. Even an infelicitous act of forgiveness has to be opened by a speech act, also when it is reduced to a question regarding a gesture: "May I take this smile as a sign of forgiveness?" – "No way!" Forgiveness is by nature a communicative act. But there is not always a formal, let alone a transcendental, authority behind the utterance of forgiveness

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to guarantee a successful outcome, as is the promise of the Catholic institution of confession. Hence, forgiveness never settles a case once and for all; unlike a verdict but like the questioning of the truth-value of literature, *repetition* is a necessary aspect of its unfolding in a continuous process of a fragile and repeated confirmation with the risk of never reaching a final reconciliation. Forgiveness marks the opening of a communicative space, not its closure.

There are two reasons for this processual nature of forgiveness. First, it rests on a paradox, because the condition of possibility of forgiveness is the crime or other norm transgression that is made explicit by the constitutive speech act of forgiveness (Derrida 2001, Holloway 2002). It does not hide or annihilate the derisive act, but forces people to face it, thereby possibly enabling them to live with it in a challenging process of ongoing confirmation of forgiveness. Second, this confirmation is emotionally situated in a zone where the real but hardly definable 'sense of justice' exists. The relation between emotions and forgiveness is that emotions call for acts, but are not acts themselves,[8] while forgiveness is a verbal act, released, fanned or impeded by emotions and producing an emotional change in the parties involved. The act of forgiveness is a media-specific cultural strategy to transform emotions, but it is also shaped by its emotional preconditions inasmuch as they have a subject-centered narrative, cognitive and evaluative potential as one of their distinctive features.

The nature of forgiveness as a verbal and communica-

8 Phenomenologically inspired theories of emotion (*e.g.* Solomon 2007) regard emotions as acts in the Husserlian sense: all intentional phenomena are acts. I prefer to call them mental processes. In order for them to be acts they must reflect their mediality (see my analysis of acts in Larsen 2010). I agree with Hannah Arendt that we cannot speak of acts with a human subject without assuming a mutual dependence between act and language (Arendt 1998: Ch. 24).

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tive act and its emotional prefiguration give the constellation of emotion and forgiveness a clear literary relevance and vice versa (Larsen 2011). It is evident that literature is predominantly verbal, a set of performative speech acts (Larsen 2010b). Performative speech acts have the capacity to establish a real event that materializes in language without at the same time presenting a truth claim. This is the case with literature, in which authority and truth value always have to be negotiated.

Although verbal, forgiveness is not always explicit as is mostly the case in western individualized cultures where forgiveness is related to responsible individual or collective subjects. But in cultures where the emotional glue of culture, for instance honor and shame, is different, forgiveness is not an option. However, if forgiveness emerges as a possibility all the same, other more indirect acts of atonement may be foregrounded on the boundaries of the communicative resources at hand. This is what happens in Yi Mun-Yol's novel.

The turning point leading up to an indirectly expressed forgiveness that transforms the emotional set-up of the two brothers is an exchange of gifts, mutual bows and words of greetings before they depart.[9] The process is rendered in a mixture of an interior monologue of questioning and explicit dialogue; moreover, the narrator's voice both activates the ancient cultural context of Korea and reflects on the surprising efficiency of everyday language as the brothers use it during their encounter. I put the decisive steps in italics:

> "Please give my love to my brothers and sisters." Then I added, *like one who has made a grave decision*. "And *our mother*, too."

9 On Buddhism and emotions, see Silva 2011 and Silva's contribution in Marks and Ames 1997: 109-123.

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One of my anxious uncertainties after I decided to meet my brother was how to call my brother's mother. Should I call her "mother in the North?" Or "my stepmother?" But none of them seemed appropriate. So, I had been making do with "your mother." But she became "our mother" in my mind at the moment of parting from my brother.

In ancient Oriental law, there were exceptional cases where a second legal wife was authorized by law. To my modern *rational sensibility*, too, my brother's mother was fully entitled to be regarded as my mother. But I was surprised that "our mother" *rolled out of my mouth* so naturally, and started. My brother was *visibly affected*, too. His alcohol-clouded face sobering up at once, he gazed at me for a moment and bowed.

"Please, give my love to my sister and my nephews and nieces. And to *our mother*, too."

"Our mother" seemed to *roll out of his mouth* quite naturally, too. (Yi 2002: 81-82)

The mutual act of saying "our mother" in this cultural context equals an indirect speech act of forgiveness toward the father which includes themselves. It also embraces the families and transcends the division of their two countries by reactivating a context of shared values. The two mothers become one by the use of an identical phrase and the narrator's identical way of describing the speech act: 'roll out of the mouth.' In the new context of their encounter, only the indirectness of speech and supplementary facial expressions are available to the brothers to express themselves. But the narrator also notes his own 'modern rational sensibility', which, in contrast, is built on explicitness. With this reference he shows an emerging awareness that explicitness may constitute the next step in the ongoing process of forgiveness. Due to the necessary indirectness at this stage of their relationship, forgiveness is not a finalized act, but it may initiate an emotional learning process once they have returned.

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Example 3: The impossibility of forgiveness

Where are the limits to forgiveness? This is one of the pervasive questions addressed throughout Rian Malan's autobiography *My Traitor's Heart* (1991), which produces more new questions than answers. Malan is a member of the Malan family with a pedigree that elevates him to the white Boer nobility of the apartheid society. However, he becomes the first Malan ever to stand out as a *kafferbootie* or nigger lover with a constant "yearning to atone for the sins of their fathers" (Malan 1991:370). This emotion, the 'yearning', is reinforced by the steadily growing violence in the black community, inevitable under the oppression from the white society, but also destroying the community's capacity to adopt an open and democratic view of society. From his work as a critical journalist, Malan observes that since the early colonial days of conflict "nothing had been forgotten, and nothing forgiven" (115) on either side.

He has himself a strong feeling of being part of this contradictory cultural set-up, tormented by the personal and cultural contradictions that shape his identity as a white South African of the Malan stock, but with no room to express them, let alone change them. The situation "makes me choke with rage" (328), obviously of the dangerous kind Aristotle warned against: "I should rest my case right here, for fear that I lose control, leap off the page, and tear out the throat of the nearest enlightened white man" (328). His encounter with black as well as white brutality forces Malan to adopt a radical emotional distance to political groupings on both sides. In spite of his rational understanding of the causes of apartheid, he must admit the difficulty if not impossibility of forgiveness.

This emotional *cul-de-sac* is most clearly demonstrated in the final chapter from far away Msinga. It is the story

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about Neil and Creina Alcock, a headstrong and idealistic white couple who move to the village Msinga in order to improve the livelihood of the local tribes in the starving and drought-ridden formally autonomous black enclave of KwaZulu. They set out to found a small community of mutual love and trust, emotionally based on a sense of communality promoting forgiveness as essential for the negotiation of conflicts. Malan realizes that the Msinga project is the most radical test of the viability of this approach. So, if the project fails it cannot be more effectively repudiated that "such communality existed in South Africa" (235), making the Msinga story "the ultimate apartheid horror story" (342) with one of several allusions to Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1893). But the strange fact is that even after the final violent disruption of the project, the surviving wife, Creina, still believes in its basic ideas, which leaves Malan in an interpretational dead-end as hard to escape as his encounter with the black violence.

The Alcocks live on an equal footing with the local Zulus. Neil is fluent in the local language and Creina is not, but she is working with the women to produce arts and crafts to secure some income. They also take abandoned children from the region into their household.

They establish an experimental farm, which after a couple of years and many difficulties with blacks and neighboring whites seems to have found a sustainable ecological and economic foundation.

The worst obstacles are, however, not of a practical nature. The blacks will have to accept that white people can teach them something of value and that land has to be fenced in as private property, although for the common good, in order to secure long-term sustainability. All this is against local conceptions of the land and its people, and the rationally based responsibility for the future is out of joint with the local magic-religious belief in fate determined by the spirits and

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the forefathers. Land cannot be owned, and the survival of cattle and the social power are determined by the spirits, not human planning. The future is not a human concern, only the chance of a gain here and now when it occurs right in front of you, also when it implies theft from the white benefactors. It would be shameful not to steal, given the fact that the ancestral spirits have provided you with a golden opportunity. Keeping honor and avoiding shame in this framework are basic concerns for everybody.

So emotions cannot be mutual, forgiveness is an operational choice for the Alcocks alone, and the development of a shared sense of communality between them and the local tribes is an illusion. It only appears to be a reality as long as it is not challenged by conflicts more deeply rooted in local customs or by a reduced success in farming. The whole business takes a radical turn when Neil is killed in a local skirmish between neighboring tribes in the midst of his peace negotiations. From that moment on, Creina, who is not well equipped in the local language, is isolated – a weak woman without protection and therefore a legitimate prey, also for the black children who have been raised in her house. She is vulnerable, and the blacks would show a shameful weakness had they not stolen what they could put their hands on, now the spirits had given them the chance to enrich themselves. Honor and identity are intimately linked to a successful exploitation of chance, not to a sense of duty or responsibility due to long-term care on her part. The community dissolves and Creina has no role to play.

At that point Malan asks her to tell the story to his tape recorder. She shifts between forgiving the Zulus and opposing them, the first position exposing her defenselessness, the latter her lack of understanding of local customs. In the end she gains some acceptance from the local people; not as a white person or as their benefactor, but as one who is able

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to survive under the local conditions that existed before the Alcocks arrived, now that all traces of their experiment have vanished and only Neil's spirit is there. The dead Neil also provides her with a forefather like everybody else, which gives her a certain status (422-423). Malan realizes that Creina's life conditions are too awesome for his own emotional fabric to grasp and his capacity to forgive, but also recognizes that this is the reality of South Africa.

Creina stands up to the occasion. She did not know what their project would lead to and what it really took to learn to know, live and love it. She declares that at the lowest point, with a couple of death threats being sent to her, she experienced utter "darkness" (409), but also that she had always loved this life, and now she realizes that "love is worth nothing until it has been tested by its own defeat" (409). She chooses to stay on. Here an emotion, love, embraces its own negation to realize its full human potential – beyond mutuality, forgiveness and communality – but, as in the case of Hippolytus, only as an individual position.

As a confirmation of the individual nature of Creina's reconciliation with Africa and of the impossibility to turn it into a general principle, Malan experiences the opposite and equally individual emotion on hearing her story: "for me, it was like standing in the mouth of some diabolical furnace, like staring into hell" (409). There is no Aristotelian middle ground where shared emotions and forgiveness can be negotiated or, as in Yi's novel, an appropriate indirect expression of forgiveness that may generate a shared sense of justice. The humming of the turning tape on which Creina's story is told gradually reveals the horror of her life to him and enables her to formulate and thus recognize her own triumphant and paradoxical sense of love that makes her stay. The literary strategy confronting the individual voice of Malan's autobiography and Creina's taped account both

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open for the possibility of forgiveness as a collective project, but also, through the desperate individual realization of it, shows its limits.[10]

Conclusion: Cultural memory

The final line of Euripides' tragedy is uttered by the choir: "For tales of the grief about the great have greater power to move" (Euripides 1995: 263/v. 1465-1466). The drama possesses 'the greater power to move' that produces a cathartic emotion in the audience, but it also continues to move later audiences. Thus, it transcends the unique forgiving gesture of Hippolytus and any particular performance of the tragedy and suggests a shared human potential for a different communality than that of Theseus' court. The same goes for Creina's love and despair and for the pain of the Korean brothers' separation in the moment of their reconciliation. By way of various aesthetic strategies literature inscribes the intimate relationship of emotion and forgiveness in the cultural memory at large, not as a model to follow, but as a permanent cultural challenge that constitutes the formation of collective and individual identities.

As combined processes of narration, cognition and evaluation, emotions can be learned and therefore they contribute to the collective memory of a culture as in the case of the two Korean brothers. We are also able to recognize and perhaps handle emotional extremes as Malan does when he

10 Desmond Tutu's Truth and Reconciliation Commission (1993-1997) tries to remedy the atrocities of apartheid through forgiveness, but not the results of the clash between traditional tribal cultures and the divided colonial white culture or of the internal atrocities within the black and the white communities (or the colored communities). The Commission has been met with both praise and criticism (Battle 1997; Tutu 1999; Gobodo-Madikizela 2004; Brudholm 2008).

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stops short, 'choked by rage'. Forgiveness is also an act of memory, although in a more complex sense (cf. Ricœur 2000; Larsen 2010a; 2012b), given the fact that it invites us to forget bygone injustice, but precisely by forcing us to remember that it *was* a real injustice. Both emotion and forgiveness become part of cultural memory as part of the self-reflection of cultures when memories are fostered by complex and self-reflexive means of expression like those offered by literature.

Literature's most important contribution to cultural memory by connecting emotion and forgiveness is that it can bring the conflicts, extremes and borderline cases into our collective discursive resources. Hence, literature reminds us that there is no identity formation without emotion and forgiveness as a permanent cultural challenge with 'the greater power to move'.

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Text; Action; Space; Emotion in Conrad's *Nostromo*

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The opening scene of Joseph Conrad's *Nostromo* (Conrad 1951; first published 1904) describes Conrad's imaginary Central American province, Sulaco, as it would be seen from a distance by a ship sailing toward it from the outlying Golfo Placido. This description combines in a spectacular way the four leitmotifs of this collection: text, action, space, emotion. This is especially clear if that opening scene is put in the context of Conrad's "Author's Note" (1917; Conrad 1951: 1-9; this edition just calls it "Note") for the novel and in the context of what he says about *Nostromo* in *A Personal Record* (Conrad 1923). The charge for the authors of essays in this volume is to go beyond a consideration of the way literary texts generate in the reader, by a performative action, an imaginary space within which the events of the work take place. We are now to add to that a reflection on the way these textual actions create not just a virtual space but a pattern of emotions. These might be the emotions of the author as he created the work and wrote it down. They might be the

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emotions of the characters, including those of the narrator, inside the story, so to speak. They might be the emotions generated in the reader by the act of reading.

Since emotions are a matter of hidden subjective bodily feelings, they are notoriously difficult to write about or to convey from person to person. Just to say, "He was fearful," or "She was angry" does not communicate much, since an immense range of feelings may be covered by the words "fear" or "anger." J.L. Austin analyzes this in a witty and powerful essay, "Pretending". He asks, in effect, "How do I know another person is angry, really angry?" Just because he or she says, "I am angry"? Or does the person need to perform some visible action, such as biting the carpet, to make me believe in his or her anger? (Austin 1979: 252-256.) Charles Darwin already puzzled over this issue. In 1872 he published a book called *The Expression of Emotions in Man and Animals*. The distressing lack of a refined literal language or other signs for emotions and a consequent incommunicability of emotions may help explain why neuroscientists and their ilk have interested themselves lately in studying emotions. Perhaps if a certain part of the brain lights up brightly this may mean that the subject is really angry. The distressing limitations in the direct communication of emotions may also explain why poets and novelists are especially adept in expressing and generating emotions indirectly, for example by way of figures of speech, more properly catachreses, drawn from topographical language. This essay attempts to show how Joseph Conrad in *Nostromo* and in his accounts of its genesis uses descriptions of an imaginary space created out of words to generate emotions in readers.

Conrad's "Note" is an extraordinary account of the way a writer's "inspiration" works, at least of the way Conrad's inspiration worked in this case. After finishing the *Typhoon* volume, Conrad went through a period of creative lassitude.

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Nothing seemed worth writing about. Then when he suddenly realized that the central figure in the germ for the novel (Conrad calls him "Nostromo", "our man") could be a "man of character", the whole scene formed itself in his mind, in a burst of creative emotion.

Nostromo begins with an extended, impersonal, objective description of Sulaco as seen from the sea. None of the characters yet appears, as opposed to what would be the case with the beginnings of most novels, for example other novels by Conrad. The description is remarkable in its establishment of an all-encompassing imaginary space, the *mise-en-scène* of the novel. This scene combines wide expanse with hermetically sealed enclosure. Though it is unlikely that Conrad ever read Kant, his description of Sulaco, as I shall show, matches Kant's concept of the sublime not just in a general way, but in technical detail, for example in its odd kind of depthless emotional detachment and in its use of architectural metaphors.

The opening description in *Nostromo* of the topographical expanse of Sulaco was generated by a sudden performative act of creative emotion after a period of uncreative lassitude and anxiety. I say "performative" because the creative emotion leads to the production of the written words that make up the text of *Nostromo*. Those words in turn, when they are read, actively create in the reader's mind and feelings the imaginary world of *Nostromo*. By "imaginary" I mean that this world is created for the reader by the performative power, the textual action, of the words on the page. This world can be entered in no other way, not, for example, by a trip to Columbia and Panama, or by reading books about Latin American history.

The words of *Nostromo*'s opening chapter, as well as the "Author's Note", repay the most careful attention to linguistic detail, as I shall now try to show.

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The "Author's Note" as an account of Nostromo*'s creation*

Conrad opens the "Author's Note" to *Nostromo* of October, 1917, by saying that "*Nostromo* is the most anxiously meditated of the longer novels which belong to the period following upon the publication of the *Typhoon* volume of short stories" (Conrad 1951: 1).[1] The "Author's Note" is in a number of ways an exceedingly peculiar document. What does that mean: "most anxiously meditated"? I suppose what it means seems obvious enough. *Nostromo* is a big novel, Conrad's biggest. It has the largest number of characters whose stories are more or less completely told. It is natural that such a novel would take a lot of planning, a lot of meditative figuring out beforehand and even in the course of writing. Why that meditating should be "anxious" is not quite clear, however. I suppose it is plausible to assume that Conrad was worried about whether he could get such an ambitious novel to come out right. Producing a fictional text is always a matter of anxiety, as is writing a critical text like this one you are now reading.

It is not at first clear, nevertheless, whether Conrad means by "anxiously meditated" no more than what Heidegger calls "Sorge", "care" or "concern" for some task ready at hand, or whether he means something like what Heidegger calls genuine existential "Angst". "Angst" is an anxiety that goes all the way down to the depths of one's being. It exceeds any particular "care" (Heidegger 1962: 228-241; Heidegger 1967: 184-196). What follows in the "Author's Note" makes it clear that Conrad suffered "Angst", all right, over *Nostromo*. The note is precious evidence of the way Conrad's imagination

1 The "Author's Note" is paginated separately in Arabic numerals; the text proper begins the Arabic numbers again from 1.

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worked, at least according to his testimony. He may of course be making it up, romanticizing a prosaic process or ironically inflating it. Conrad was an ironist through and through. After he finished the *Typhoon* volume, says Conrad, he went into a peculiar and disquieting state, at least for a professional writer, which he was, that is, someone who needed to write in order to earn his daily bread. Conrad says there was a "change"

> in that mysterious, extraneous thing which has nothing to do with the theories of art; a subtle change in the nature of the inspiration, a phenomenon for which I cannot in any way be held responsible. What, however, did cause me some concern was that after finishing the last story of the *Typhoon* volume ('To-morrow') it seemed somehow that there was nothing more in the world to write about. (Conrad 1951: 1)

That is pretty terrifying. At one time the writing is going along swimmingly. The ability to write, as Gerard Manley Hopkins puts it in a letter of 1885, comes "like inspirations unbidden" (cited in Hopkins 1967: 288). Conrad writes story after story as though the vein of inspiration could never cease flowing. Then suddenly, involuntarily, through what Conrad calls not a drying up of inspiration, but "a subtle change in the nature of the inspiration", it seems somehow that there is nothing more in the world to write about. His ability to write remains undiminished in strength. That is, I suppose, one definition of "inspiration". Now, however, by way of a "subtle change", nothing seems left as an object on which it is worth taking trouble to exercise that power of writing. Conrad stresses that it is not his fault. It just happened. It was a "phenomenon for which I cannot in any way be held responsible". Nor is this change caused by some change in "the theories of art", Conrad's or anyone else's. Conrad could mean by this, I suppose, either that a change in theories of art could lead to new

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exigencies that might make writing something like *Typhoon* no longer possible, or that certain theories of art, perhaps theories of art's sources, might explain his sudden change of inspiration. No, it was a change in what Conrad calls "that mysterious, extraneous thing" which governs the nature of his inspiration, something wholly outside himself and wholly outside his control. The change just happened, mysteriously. That makes him anxious, as well as causing "concern".

The rest of the "Author's Note" details the steps by which Conrad escaped what might be called, in a Kierkegaardian phrase, this "sickness unto death" (Kierkegaard 1954), and came to write *Nostromo*. It is important to note at the outset that Conrad does not say anything like what critics say about the "sources" of *Nostromo*. For whatever reason, Conrad does not say, "I had been reading Ramón Páez's *Wild Scenes in South America,* Edward B. Eastwick's *Venezuela*, G.F. Masterman's *Seven Eventful Years in Paraguay*, S. Perez Triana's *Down the Orinoco*, Richard F. Burton's *Letters from the Battle-Fields of Paraguay,* and writings on South America by my friend R.B. Cunninghame Graham. These gave me the idea of writing a novel about an imaginary South American country that would amalgamate material from these various books, including South American history, its landscapes, as well as characters' names and personalities drawn from real people as described in these books".[2] Why does Conrad not say that? Why does he hide his "sources"? Was it a somewhat guilty cover-up, or an honest forgetting, or is it evidence that Conrad disagreed by anticipation with modern "art theories"

2 For these sources and several others, see Watts 1990: 23-34. For varying accounts of Conrad's sources and his uses of them, see, for example, Hay 1963: 161-194; Fleishman 1967: 167-171; Watts 1969: 37-42, 206-208; Watts 1990: 28-34; Berthoud 1978: 143-154; Robert Hampson, "Conrad's Heterotopic Fiction", in Kaplan *et al.* 2005: 129-134.

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about the genesis of literary works? In any case, the story Conrad tells in 1917 of the origin of *Nostromo* is quite different from those of modern Conrad critics.

Just what does Conrad actually say about the genesis of *Nostromo*? His account parallels those many times Henry James in the prefaces to the New York Edition of his novels and stories tells the reader how a small germ or "donnée", for example a vagrant anecdote told at the dinner table, produced a big novel when once James's imagination began developing it. In Conrad's case, according to his testimony, he once heard, back in 1875 or 1876, on the only sea voyage he made to South America, or rather to the Gulf of Mexico, of a man who had stolen a lighter full of silver during the turmoil of a South American revolution. A "lighter" is a barge used for transporting goods short distances, for example from the shore out to an anchored ship. The one in *Nostromo* is sail-powered. Years later, Conrad says, quite by accident he "came upon the very thing in a shabby volume picked up outside a second-hand-book shop" (Conrad 1951: 2). This book contained a circumstantial account of that extraordinary theft and of the brazenly villainous man who did it. Sure enough, scholars (John Halverson and Ian Watt) have identified the shabby volume as *On Many Seas: The Life and Exploits of a Yankee Sailor* (1897), by H.E. Hamblen writing under the pseudonym of "Frederick Benton Williams" (Halverson and Watt 1959; Watts 1990: 21). Though, as Conrad says, he had spent only a few hours ashore in Venezuela, when he was "very young" (Conrad 1951: 1), nevertheless, according to him, the account in the shabby volume vividly reminded him of "that distant time when everything was so fresh, so surprising, so venturesome, so interesting: bits of strange coasts under the stars, shadows of hills in the sunshine, men's passions in the dusk, gossip half-forgotten, faces grown dim" (Conrad 1951: 3). The result of this flood of half-forgotten

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memories from Conrad's youth was a sudden reversal of his suspension of inspiration: "Perhaps, perhaps, there was still in the world something to write about" (Conrad 1951: 3). To "invent a circumstantial account of a robbery" seemed to Conrad uninteresting: "I did not think that the game was worth the candle" (Conrad 1951: 3). It was only when it came to him that the thief need not be villainous that the possibility of making a novel out of this anecdote came to him. Here at last would be something worth writing about.

Conrad's expression of this transition is odd in two ways. He says that the sudden notion that the thief might be a "man of character", just that quite narrow shift, gave him suddenly his first glimpse of the whole province of Sulaco. "Man of character", by the way, may be an allusion to Thomas Hardy's *The Mayor of Casterbridge* (1886). The subtitle of Hardy's novel is "The Life and Death of a Man of Character", sometimes given as "A Story of a Man of Character". The phrase "man of character" is ambiguous. It may mean that Nostromo is a distinctive person, as when we say, "He was quite a character", or it may mean that he is upright, moral, a person of unusual integrity. The tiny germ transformed in Conrad's imagination, that thief turned from villainous to good, or at least into a "man of character", gave him the entire novel, or a glimpse of it, like a "little bang" expanding into an entire fictional heterocosmos. Conrad's image is of a dawning. He did not think it out rationally. It just dawned on him, out of nowhere, all of a sudden. That what dawned was a separate imaginary world, Conrad's insistence on Sulaco's isolation and totalizing self-enclosure confirms. Nevertheless, what is outside Sulaco intervenes decisively in the novel's action. That destructive intervention is a central theme of *Nostromo*.

The other oddness is that Conrad speaks of Sulaco not as something he invented but as something he discovered. It was already in existence waiting to be found and described, not

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something he made up out of the materials of his reading. Here are Conrad's exact words:

> It was only when it dawned upon me that the purloiner of the treasure need not necessarily be a confirmed rogue, that he could be even a man of character, an actor, and possibly a victim in the changing scenes of a revolution, it was only then that I had the first vision of a twilight country which was to become the province of Sulaco, with its high, shadowy sierra and its misty campo for mute witnesses of events flowing from the passions of men short-sighted in good and evil.
>
> Such are in very truth the obscure origins of *Nostromo* – the book. (Conrad 1951: 3-4)

In the remainder of the "Author's Note" Conrad goes on consistently speaking of Sulaco as something that was there already waiting to be discovered and then revealed to others through Conrad's written and ultimately printed account. It is as though he were the first explorer of a hitherto unknown country. Sulaco is like one of those blank places on the world map that so fascinated the Marlow of Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* when he was a child, just as Conrad himself was fascinated. Few, if any, blank places still exist for us today anywhere on the globe, or even on the surface of the moon, Mars, Venus, Jupiter, or the sun. We have mapped them all. You can see them all in detail by way of Google.

No doubt Conrad is speaking figuratively when he calls Sulaco a real place he had discovered, but the figure is solemnly, if ironically, with a straight face, kept up through the whole of the "Author's Note". Conrad speaks of his fear that he might, as he says, "lose myself in the ever-enlarging vistas opening before me as I progressed deeper in my knowledge of the country" (Conrad 1951: 4). A moment later the trope defining the writing of the novel as the record of a discovery, not an invention, is given an extravagant and ostenta-

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tious expression. It is compared to what everyone knows is a hyperbolically fantastic work of fiction, a parody of early travel books, Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*. Conrad speaks, no doubt ironically, half-jokingly, and, as he says, "figuratively" (Conrad 1951: 4), of his two years' absorption in writing *Nostromo* as his absence in that imaginary country:

> [M]y sojourn on the Continent of Latin America, famed for its hospitality, lasted for about two years. On my return I found (speaking somewhat in the style of Captain Gulliver) my family all well, my wife heartily glad to learn that the fuss was all over, and our small boy considerably grown during my absence. (Conrad 1951: 4)

What is odd about this and other similar passages in the "Author's Note" is not only that Conrad speaks of the people and places of Costaguana, of which Sulaco was a province, as having a real existence, independent of his language, not as something he has invented through language, but also the way he asserts that only he has access to this strange place and to its people. He says, for example, that

> My principal authority for the history of Costaguana is, of course, my venerated friend, the late Don José Avellanos, Minister to the Courts of England and Spain, etc. etc., in his impartial and eloquent 'History of Fifty Years of Misrule'. True that this work was never published – the reader will discover why [the manuscript gets destroyed by the revolutionary mob] – and I am, in fact, the only person in the world possessed of its contents. (Conrad 1951: 4)

Conrad of course invented Don José and all the rest of the characters, or, perhaps it might be better to say, he "discovered" them by an effort of the imagination, however dependent that imagination was on Conrad's prior reading. The Latin word "inventio" means both discover and make up.

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We can encounter Don José and his "History of Fifty Years of Misrule" only by reading Conrad's book.

Robert Penn Warren expresses this succinctly, in his introduction to the Modern Library Edition of 1951, based on the first Doubleday edition of 1904. This is the text I am citing:[3]

> Long before, in 1875 and 1876, when on the *Saint-Antoine* (running guns for a revolution), Conrad had been ashore for a few hours at ports on the Gulf of Mexico, but of the coast that might have given him a model for his Occidental Province and its people he knew nothing. There were books and hearsay to help, the odds and ends of information. But in the end, the land, its people, and its history had to be dreamed up, evoked out of the primal fecund darkness that always lies below our imagination. (Conrad 1951: ix)

I am dubious about that "primal fecund darkness", which sounds like something borrowed from the Marlow of *Heart of Darkness*, but I'll buy "dreamed up". That's right on. *Nostromo* was indeed "dreamed up". The "Author's Note" specifies just how that happened. The "dreaming up", however, as we now know, was based not just on the sources Conrad acknowledges in the "Note", but on those books about South American landscape and history Conrad had read, and about which he says nothing. He had never been to the west coast of Central America in his life, though he says he landed for brief visits on the east coast, the Gulf of Mexico, whereas his novels and tales about Malaysia were based on extensive first-hand experience.

This difference can be taken as a striking testimony to the

3 The 1904 edition has some important variant readings and passages later excised, differences from the standard Heinemann and Dent editions of the 1920's. C.T. Watts gives an account of these and also an account of differences between the book edition of 1904 and the serial version (Watts 1990: 52-58).

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performative power of reading. Conrad read Cunninghame Graham, Masterman, Eastwick, Páez, *et al.* Out of this he created in his mind, or discovered there as a spontaneous vision, an imaginary Central American country made of the transformation and amalgamation of bits and pieces from all those books that stuck in his memory, or below the level of his conscious memory, undergoing many sea-changes there, into something "rich and strange". When you or I read *Nostromo* something analogous happens. Each reader creates in his or her mind, on the basis of the words on the page, in response to their performative power, a mental image. I call it a virtual reality. This imaginary realm is unique in each case, or perhaps even different in each reading by the same person. Each reading generates a unique vision of the landscape of Sulaco, the town, its inhabitants, and all the events of the novel: the re-establishment of the mine, the murder of Hirsch, the suicide of Decoud, the accidental shooting of Nostromo, and so on. The words on the page become the instigators of a mental cinema or magic show, just as Conrad's reading of those source books was another such instigator. My discourse about *Nostromo* in this essay adds itself to the many other essays about the novel.

In the remainder of the "Author's Note" Conrad goes on to express, in the same mock-solemn, half-ironic way, in a parody of acknowledgments in a book preface, his obligation to the hospitality of the people of Sulaco, especially Mrs Gould and Charles Gould, whom he speaks of as if they were real people whom he had visited for two years: "I confess that, for me, that time is the time of firm friendships and unforgotten hospitalities. And in my gratitude I must mention here Mrs Gould, 'the first lady of Sulaco', … and Charles Gould …" (Conrad 1951: 5). Conrad then goes on at some length, in blatant contradiction to the trope of invention as discovery that he has been sustaining, as opposed to mimetic

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copying, to explain that Nostromo (the character) is modeled in part on a Mediterranean sailor he had known in his early days, "Dominic, the Padrone of the *Tremolino*" (Conrad 1951: 6). Antonia Avellanos, the political radical beloved of the sceptic Decoud, is modeled, he says, in part on Conrad's early schoolboy love, with Conrad playing the role played by Decoud in the novel: "I was not the only one in love with her; but it was I who had to hear oftenest her scathing criticism of my levities – very much like poor Decoud – or stand the brunt of her austere, unanswerable invective" (Conrad 1951: 8). Once more, however, what Conrad says reveals the degree to which Nostromo, Antonia, Decoud, and the rest are not so much "modeled" on their "sources" as radical transformations of these in the alembic of Conrad's imagination. In a similar way, the politics of the novel are "modeled", in part, on Polish revolutionary politics as Conrad knew them in his youth. Antonia's invectives against Decoud's skepticism about politics are a transformation of Conrad's boyhood beloved's invectives against Conrad's waverings. The "Author's Note" ends with an image of Antonia Avellanos as she is today in Sulaco, "awaiting impatiently the dawns of other New Eras, the coming of more revolutions" (Conrad 1951: 9). Conrad adds, in parentheses, "(or can it be the Other)" (Conrad 1951: 8). He means, I suppose, "Can it be that youthful love of mine whom I left forever when I left Poland to go to sea, and whom I imagine, by way of my imagination of the fictitious Antonia, as she may be today".

What A Personal Record *Says About* Nostromo*'s Status as a Virtual Reality*

Conrad takes in *A Personal Record* a strikingly different way of defining the way Costaguana is a virtual reality:

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> I had, like the prophet of old, 'wrestled with the Lord' for my creation, for the headlands of the coast, for the darkness of the Placid Gulf, the light on the snows, the clouds on the sky, and for the breath of life that had to be blown into the shapes of men and women, of Latin and Saxon, of Jew and Gentile. These are, perhaps, strong words, but it is difficult to characterize otherwise the intimacy and strain of a creative effort in which mind and will and conscience are engaged to the full, hour after hour, day after day, away from the world, and to the exclusion of all that makes life really lovable and gentle.... (Conrad 1923: 98)

Conrad's creation of the world of Costaguana is spoken of in this passage as a counter-creation, as something that he had to wrestle with the Lord to obtain, since it is in opposition to His creation. Conrad's writing of *Nostromo* is something like Jehovah's breathing of life into Adam and Eve. This creation of an alternative world, complete with its own landscape and geography, takes place "away from the world", that is, away from God's creation, in a solitary creative struggle that, Conrad says, is like nothing so much as "the everlasting somber stress of the westward winter passage round Cape Horn" (Conrad 1923: 98-99).

We can have access to Costaguana only because Conrad wrote down his vision, whereas Conrad claims he lived there before he wrote it down. Or perhaps the act of imagining Costaguana coincided with the act of writing it down, in what might be called a performative "act of literature", a special mode of speech act. Edward Said, with his usual clairvoyance as a reader, even when what he sees goes to some degree against what he might wish to find or what one might have expected him to find, notices in his own way, in the interview he gave near the end of his life, how *Nostromo* detaches itself from its sources. He expresses this insight by way of the musical analogy that recurs in the interview:

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> … what Conrad is attempting in *Nostromo* is a structure of such monumental solidity that it has an integrity of its own quite without reference to the outside world. Though this is only a speculation, I think that halfway through the book it's as if Conrad loses interest in the real world of human beings and becomes fascinated with the workings of his own method and his own writing. It has an integrity quite of its own—the way, for example, Bach might construct a fugue around a very uninteresting subject, and by the middle of the piece you are so involved in keeping the five, or four, voices going, and understanding the relationships between them, that this becomes the most interesting thing about it. I think there is a similar impulse at work in *Nostromo*. (Kaplan *et al.* 2005: 293)

Said is right on the mark. Having assembled his Costaguana from the imaginative transformation of various miscellaneous materials, Conrad then became more and more absorbed in working out the intertwined destinies of the fictive persons with whom he had peopled his heterotopia. I conclude from all I have said so far that *Nostromo* is a work of literature, not a work of history, autobiography, political theory, ethnography, psychoanalysis, ecology, or travel. I mean by this that *Nostromo* was conceived, written, published, read, and reviewed as a textual artifact within the established genre of literature as it has been defined in the West since the seventeenth century. This is the print epoch and also the period of the development of Western-style democracies with their putative right to free speech. In the case of literature, the latter has meant, as Jacques Derrida says (Derrida 1992: 37), the right to invent anything whatsoever and not be held responsible for its referential or constative value, its value as truth of correspondence. The era of printed literature is now coming to an end in what promises to be a long drawn out agony, as new media replace the printed book: cinema, television, popular music downloaded from the Internet, computer games, and other occupants of cyberspace.

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Sulaco Described "As the poets do it"

That Sulaco is secret, hidden, and unknown, is re-enforced by the topography Conrad ascribes to it. The present tense of the opening chapter works unostentatiously to suggest that the whole scene is timeless, always the same from day to day, month to month, and year to year. Sulaco is close enough to the equator not even to have much in the way of seasons. It is always sunshiny by day and cloudy by night. The entire landscape was there before mankind came. It will still be there when mankind has vanished. The narrator's landfall vision stresses the unapproachability of the Placid Gulf. Since "never a strong wind had been known to blow upon its waters" (Conrad 1951: 6) (an unlikelihood, by the way; any open water will get strong wind some of the time), sailing ships routinely get becalmed for days within sight of the harbor. That is a little spooky, if you think of it. There you are, almost there, but magically suspended just short of the goal by something so seemingly trivial as a chronic lack of wind in that spot on the seaboard. This predictable windlessness, along with the great range of mountains on the inland side, beyond the plain, has for generations, before steam navigation, safely sequestered Sulaco from the outside world, making it almost like an enchanted island or like a sleeping beauty princess. "Some harbors of the earth", says the narrator, "are made difficult of access by the treachery of sunken rocks and the tempests of their shores" (Conrad 1951: 3). Sulaco is protected, rather, "by the prevailing calms of its vast gulf" (Conrad 1952: 3):

> Sulaco had found an inviolable sanctuary from the temptations of a trading world in the solemn hush of the deep Golfo Placido as if within an enormous semicircular and unroofed temple open to the ocean, with

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its walls of lofty mountains hung with the mourning draperies of clouds. (Conrad 1951: 3)

I shall return to the significance of this architectural metaphor, or rather simile.

Conrad says "as if". After this initial landfall view, the narrative perspective moves gradually inward, first with minute descriptions of, on one side (Conrad does not say whether left or right, but it is probably on the right or starboard side of the gulf as you approach from the sea) the Punta Mala, "an insignificant cape", "the last spur of the coast range" (Conrad 1951: 4), and on the other side of the semicircle the much more impressive "peninsula of Azuera", so-called presumably because it looks from a distant sea approach like "an isolated patch of blue mist float[ing] lightly on the glare of the horizon" (Conrad 1951: 4). Azuera is rocky, full of ravines, and absolutely dry and barren, except for the thorny thickets at its entrance.

The narrator tells a folk story, believed by all the poor people of Sulaco, about two gringo sailors and a "good-for-nothing mozo" (Native American; Conrad 1951: 4) who tried to hack their way by machete onto Azuera peninsula to get the buried treasure reputed to be there and were never heard from again, after the smoke from their first night's campfire: "The sailors, the Indian, and the stolen burro were never seen again" (Conrad 1951: 5). Their ghosts, everyone believes, now rich but everlastingly hungry and thirsty, still haunt the ravines and rocks of Azuera. This fable anticipates the fate of all those in the main story whose desires and fantasies are captured by the San Tomé silver mine. *Nostromo* is on one level a somewhat wry and ironically twisted version of a parable or cautionary tale as old, at least, as Chaucer's "Pardoner's Tale": "Radix malorum est cupiditas". You see, I told you that *Nostromo* is a fantasy invented by Conrad.

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The narrator's account then moves through a marvelous description of the distant mountains, the Cordillera, crowned with the snow-covered Mt. Higuerota, to an account of the everlasting diurnal sequence, as experienced by a ship becalmed on the gulf. Clouds rise daily over the mountains, but never quite make it out over the water, except at night. When it becomes pitch black becalmed sailors can hear but not see showers beginning and ceasing here and there on the gulf, though there is still no wind. The narration then moves to circumstantial descriptions of the three uninhabited islets, the Great Isabel, the Little Isabel, and Hermosa (the smallest) that stand opposite the entrance to the harbor of Sulaco. The chapter ends with a sentence about the town of Sulaco itself, out of the direct line of sight from the sea, but visible at a little distance from within the harbor itself, with its "tops of wall, a great cupola, gleams of white miradors [towers] in a vast grove of orange-trees" (Conrad 1951: 8).

This first chapter is a wonderful opening for *Nostromo*. It confirms that Conrad had a clear and detailed vision of the topography in his mind, whatever critics like Berthoud and Hampson may have said about its being a de Certeauvian heterotopia, that is, not always quite making non-contradictory rational sense as something you could put down on a map (Berthoud 1978: 145; Kaplan *et al.* 2005: 131). Conrad, it happens, did sketch a topographical relief map of Sulaco on page 345 of the manuscript. It is reproduced in Eloise Knapp Hay's *The Political Novels of Joseph Conrad* (Hays 1963: 173). I must say the map is a little difficult to interpret. It is hard to decide just which is the Punta Mala, which the Azuera, just where is the harbor, or the town of Sulaco, as they are all described in the opening pages of the novel. Presumably Conrad knew, but he did not put any place names on his map. Cedric Watts, in his admirable small book on *Nostromo*, provides detailed maps of the region and of the

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town of Sulaco (Watts 1990: 64-5). These are developed from Conrad's sketch and from the novel's text. Watts is an expert, so he must know where all these items are located, just how high Higuerota is, and so on.

Two fundamental and related features of this scene-setting opening may be identified. The topographical features are presented in what might be called a materialist mode. They are just the physical elements that happen to be there and that make an impression on the senses of the imaginary narrating spectator. They are barely identified as shapes, as colors, as sounds, with minimal names: clouds, mountains, rocks, sea surface, and so on. They are given, one might say, almost at the level of pure phenomenal sensation rather than of perception. They are named, in Kant's words, "as poets do" ("wie die Dichter es tun"; Kant 1951: 111; Kant 1979: 196), that is, with almost complete literality, in Kant's rather odd view of poetic diction. The topographical features are wholly indifferent to mankind, without prescribed or projected meaning for men and women. That is what I mean by a materialist vision.

This materialism goes along with another related feature. The sort of personifying of the landscape that permeates Hardy's description of Egdon Heath at the beginning of *The Return of the Native*, or Conrad's own description of the African jungle in *Heart of Darkness*, is almost completely lacking here. Nor is there any projection of some metaphysical "darkness" behind appearances, as happens throughout in the stylistic texture of landscape description in *Heart of Darkness*. The topography of *Nostromo* is almost completely depthless. It is like a superficial stage set, with nothing behind it. These topographical appearances are not symbolic. They are not allegorical, at least not in the everyday sense of that word. They do not stand for anything beyond themselves. There is apparently nothing hidden behind them, no por-

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tentous "other", nothing like "the stillness of an implacable force brooding over an inscrutable intention" that is invoked by Marlow in *Heart of Darkness* (Conrad 1923b: 93). The topographical appearances in *Nostromo* are all surface. They have no sympathy for the human actions that are performed with them as backdrop, nor are they antagonistic. They are just implacably indifferent, though even to say that is to humanize them too much. They are just what happens to be there, what the eye can see, the ear can hear. The scene is not teleological. It does not lead to anything, nor is it good for anything. It just goes on repeating itself endlessly as the sun rises and sets, day after day. This radical difference from *The Heart of Darkness* has important consequences for the lives of the people in *Nostromo*, as a full reading would show.

The attentive reader, however, will have noted my qualifications in the words "almost" and "apparently" in the previous paragraph. Such a reader will probably also have noticed that Conrad's description of the Golfo Placido is not quite so straightforwardly literal as I have so far claimed. Let me look again at the passage:

> Sulaco had found an inviolable sanctuary from the temptations of a trading world in the solemn hush of the deep Golfo Placido as if within an enormous semicircular and unroofed temple open to the ocean, with its walls of lofty mountains hung with the mourning draperies of cloud (Conrad 1951: 3).

As the reader can see, the whole landscape of Sulaco is figured architectonically as like an enormous "temple", with its walls the encircling mountains and its roof the sky. It is as if the word "sanctuary" had, by way of the tradition that evil-doers and those subject to temptation can find inviolable sanctuary in a church, called up the image of a temple that looks to me more like a Catholic cathedral whose walls are hung with

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black mourning draperies in honor of some funeral than like a Greek temple. Conrad would presumably have known such churches in his youth in Poland. The figure of the church is superimposed spectrally on the literal scene.

What can we, or what should we, make of Conrad's architectural figure? I have already alluded to Kant. Though I do not imagine Conrad of an evening sitting down to read the *Critique of Judgment*, he just happens to have employed a trope that is remarkably like the well-known one Kant employs in a climactic passage on the dynamic sublime:

> If, then, we call the sight of the starry heaven *sublime*, we must not place at the basis of our judgment concepts of worlds inhabited by rational beings and regard the bright points, with which we see the space above us filled, as their suns moving in circles purposively fixed with reference to them; but we must regard it, just as we see it [wie man ihn sieht], as a distant, all-embracing, vault [ein weites Gewölbe]. Only under such a representation can we range that sublimity which a pure aesthetical judgment ascribes to this object. And in the same way, if we are to call the sight of the ocean sublime, we must not *think* of it as we [ordinarily] do, as implying all kinds of knowledge (that are not contained in immediate intuition). For example, we sometimes think of the ocean as a vast kingdom of aquatic creatures, or as the great source of those vapors that fill the air with clouds for the benefit of the land, or again as an element which, though dividing continents from each other, yet promotes the greatest communication between them; but these furnish merely teleological judgments. To call the ocean sublime we must regard it as poets do [wie die Dichter es tun], merely by what strikes the eye [was der Augenschein zeigt] – if it is at rest, as a clear mirror of water only bounded by the heaven; if it is restless, as an abyss threatening to overwhelm everything. (Kant 1951: 110-111; Kant 1979: 196)

The reader will see how almost all the same elements are here as in the passage quoted earlier from Conrad: sky, sea, clouds, stars, though not the shore as such. Stars are mentioned by

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Conrad in a passage about night time on the Golfo Placido that I have not so far cited: "The few stars left below the seaward frown of the vault shine feebly as into the mouth of a black cavern. In its vastness your ship floats unseen under your feet, her sails flutter invisible above your head" (Conrad 1951: 7). The reader will note the evanescent personifications in "frown" and "mouth", not to speak of "her". The former two are catachreses. In order to name these natural appearances at all, since they have no literal names, words must be brought in from another realm, most commonly, as here, from the human body, which is projected on nature in a self-canceling trope. Though the dark vault of the shoreward sky at night is not really a face, we say it has a "mouth" and that it "frowns". In a similar way both Kant and Conrad speak of the sky as a "vault", *Gewölbe* in German, as though it were a cathedral ceiling.

The passage from Kant distinguishes two different ways of looking at such a scene. One is teleological. It understands things by way of the human goals they fulfill. It sees the sea as a reservoir of fish, the clouds as making rain that irrigates the arable land. As against that Kant puts the non-teleological, purely material, vision that sees things as the eye sees them, as pure "Augenschein", "eye shine", or "eye appearance", prior to any interpretation of their usefulness. This, he claims, is to see the way poets do, in a remarkable confidence that poets are free of ideological distortions or teleological orientations. This seems an extraordinary claim, the more extraordinary the more you think of it. Poets, in a long tradition going back to Sydney and before him to Plato, are, as everybody knows, proverbially natural-born liars, prevaricators, mythmakers, fashioners of magic and deceiving shows. They are masters of tropological deviations from literal naming. Kant, however, sees true poets as telling the truth in a quite specific way, that is, by not deviating from naming what their eyes see, the

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uninterpreted Augenschein. A poet like Wordsworth, with his talk of "something far more deeply interfused", does not at all fit Kant's blithe assumption about how poets see and what they do when they name what they see. Only Friedrich Hölderlin, among German poets, comes to mind as possibly doing it right. Hölderlin's poetry is often disquietingly literal. His major poetry was written of course soon after Kant's *Critique of Judgment*, though not by deliberately following what Kant says. Only objective seeing and literal naming, says Kant, can represent the "sublimity that a pure aesthetical judgment ascribes to this object". Conrad's narrator's initial vision of the Golfo Placido is a sublime seeing and naming of this sort, with a latent presence of strong emotions that Kant associates with a feeling of the sublime. It is against this background of a sublime materialist vision of the scene as a whole that the human stories of *Nostromo* are told.

I claim to have shown that what Conrad says about the genesis of *Nostromo* and what he writes in the opening chapter of the novel are striking confirmation that it is right to juxtapose text, action, space, and emotion as productive concepts in the light of which to make readings of literary works, at least to make a reading of *Nostromo*. I have demonstrated that *Nostromo*, in Conrad's account of it at least, was created in a sudden burst of creative emotion. That emotion followed a prolonged period of painful lassitude in which nothing seemed worth writing about any more. That must have been affectively painful for Conrad, since he was a professional writer who made his living with his pen. The creative emotion that broke the lassitude was the direct correlate of a sudden vision of the scene of the novel. He envisioned in his mind's eye Sulaco as seen from a becalmed ship approaching the harbor from distance and viewing the sea (the Golfo Placido), the shore with its two peninsulas, right and left, the coastal plain, and the snow-covered mountains behind.

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What is remarkable about this sudden shift from lassitude to an intense creativity that lasted for the two years it took Conrad to write *Nostromo* is that it corresponds not to the story but to the scene. It is the correlate of the textual space within which the story takes place. Even more remarkable is that this scene is both generated by Conrad's creative emotion and at the same time generates that emotion. This happens in an undecidable oscillation that I have named with the antithetical Latin word "inventio." The word means both make up and discover. Scholars have shown that Conrad made up the textual space of *Nostromo* on the basis of his reading about Central America (not on the basis of actual experience). Conrad, on the contrary, speaks of it as the sudden discovery within his imagination of a Sulaco and its dramatic surrounding topography. They seemed to be already there waiting to be encountered and turned into a text. This text allows readers to discover Costaguana again for themselves, along with the emotions that the scene generates.

My analysis of Conrad's description has shown its close correspondence to the features of Kant's sublime. The emotions generated by the scene are peculiar, to say the least. On the one hand, Conrad's descriptions of the topographical features of his imaginary Costaguana are, as one might say, "cool". They are slightly detached and ironic, as is often the case with the narrator's voice in Conrad's fiction. This "coolness" is the correlative of the narrator's stress on the indifference and impassivity of the elements of the scene: the preternaturally calm sea, the peninsulas, the islands, the distant town with the plain and high mountains behind it. Those geographical features are just what happens to be there. They neither sympathize with mankind nor are hostile to it. On the other hand, this indifference and impassivity is in close correspondence to the elements of Kant's description of the sublime by way of a sea and sky that are dehumanized, except

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by the architectural metaphor also present in Conrad's text. That indifference generates, at least in me as reader, awe, fear, and a dark foreboding about the kinds of life stories that are likely to be enacted against such a backdrop. That fear and awe reminds me to Pascal's famous assertion in his *Pensées* that the eternal silence of infinite spaces frightens him ("Le silence éternel des ces espaces infinis m'effraie"; Pascal 1.1.3: 206).

My foreboding is certainly confirmed by the somber stories Conrad tells. It almost seems as if those people and events had been generated by the opening scene. They are the only sorts of things that could "take place" against such a background. An example is Martin Decoud's final act of weighting his pockets with four bars of the stolen silver, shooting himself, and falling from his small rowboat into "the solitude of the Placid Gulf, whose glittering surface remained untroubled by the fall of his body.... [T]he brilliant Don Martin Decoud, weighted by the bars of San Tomé silver, disappeared without a trace, swallowed up in the immense indifference of things" (Conrad 1951: 560). Decoud's suicidal state of mind is brilliantly conveyed by indirection through descriptions of the solitude and silence of the island off the coast he hides in with its treasure of stolen silver bars. This episode brings about the emotion of dismay in me as reader, as well as a renewal of the awe, fear, and foreboding generated by the opening pages. These emotions are caused by textual exposure to the same solitude, silence, and cosmic indifference I first encountered in the opening pages of the novel. Decoud's suicide works as a repetition to renew traumatically my first experience of the scene. The repetition happens by way of a human delegate who doubles my own initial response, with lethal results for that delegate. This happens according to what Sigmund Freud, in his explorations of trauma in *Studies on Hysteria* and elsewhere, came to call *Nachträglichkeit*, "*afterwardsness*," a later

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carrying over by deferred action (Freud 2001). A reading of the stories Conrad tells against the backdrop of the immense indifference of things must await another occasion.[4]

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4 For part of that fuller reading, see Miller 2008.

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Topography, Sense and Emotion: The Alterity of Textual Action in Jon Fosse

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With August Strindberg, Henrik Ibsen, Knut Hamsun, Isak Dinesen, Halldór Laxness and a few others, the Norwegian author Jon Fosse belongs to a select group of Scandinavian writers with an international fame. When the Young Vic in London in May 2011 featured its production of his play *I am the Wind*, directed by Patrice Chéreau, Brian Logan's pre-opening night interview with Jon Fosse for the British daily *The Independent* was introduced by the caption "All the world loves his plays. Why don't we?" (1 May 2011). The global acclaim is justified by a wide range of facts. Having written 20 novels and tales, 40 plays, ten poetry collections and two volumes of essays, Fosse has attained worldwide success with numerous translations and more than 700 productions of his plays in 44 countries on all continents.[1]

1 For documentation, cf. Kirsti Mathilde Thorheim: *Tyngda av ein forfattarskap* (2008; "The Weight of an Authorship"), and the web-

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"My plays travel extremely well", states Fosse in the interview, overwhelmed by his international outreach. Referring to both his fiction and his plays, he expresses reluctance, however, to further pursue his theatre success. But whatever he writes his basic ambition remains the same: "I go into the unknown and I come back with something I didn't know about before".

However, global success does not mean that one fits in everywhere. Thus, the second part of the interview headline, "Why don't we?", refers to the limited enthusiasm for his work in Great Britain. There is always a foreignness in Fosse's texts, tugging them towards the edges of both language and experience. This strangeness can hardly be located in his recurring entanglement of major modern themes – the exploration of time, the inner self and love, the liminality of death, and the complex functions of discourse and signs in human life. Rather, it is the "writerly" element of rhythms and repetitions inherent in Fosse's novels and plays that lend a certain foreignness to his otherwise quotidian realism. If anything, he might best be labelled "late modern", not least because of the proximity or the converging between the repetitive-writerly textual practices in his fiction and his plays.

The Independent's interview sheds light on both the complexity of Fosse's texts and their global potential: "Fosse's writing is all about rhythm and silence. [...] His plot-lite, abstract theatre-poems pare back human experience to half-banal, half-mythical simplicity" (Logan 2011). For one thing, the

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sites of Det Norske Samlaget (Fosse's Norwegian publisher), Bergen Offentlige Bibliotek [Bergen Public Library], Nynorsk kultursentrum/Ivar Aasen-Tunet (documentation centre, and preliminary Jon Fosse Archives), as well as Colombine Teaterförlag (Stockholm; Fosse's international theatre-text agency). Oberon Books, London, has published five translated collections and three single volumes of his plays.

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hyphenated adjectives reveal that this "simplicity" may be difficult to grasp and complex to make sense of. But on the other hand, that simplicity provides Fosse's work with an almost transcultural transparency. In the same interview Fosse, from the writer's perspective, explains what his rhythm achieves both in plays and fiction: "In a play, you can use the pauses, the breaks and the silences: what's not said, which is what I'm saying something about, even in my prose", but he also adds: "I write from what I hear". He points to the complexity on the *textual* level: the pauses, breaks and silences are material textual elements extending beyond any particular language, although they are interpreted differently within different cultural norm systems. This translocal aspect may justify Logan's view of his work as "abstract". But every textual detail is, as Fosse says, heard, or seen we may add, that is to say embedded in a concrete perceptual sense experience that he translates into a transcultural textual practice which is "all about rhythm and silence". When that textual practice succeeds, precisely this concrete sensual experience, rendered in a particular language, a particular place and a particular cognitive space, is shifted into a translocal material vision which *says* something about "what's not said" in the routines of everyday life.

Hence, there is no mutually exclusive opposition between a global or translocal outreach on the one hand, and particular, sensual human experiences and languages on the other. In the interview, Fosse explains that he writes in New Norwegian (Norway's second written standard), a language which is both particularly Norwegian and at the same time not really place-bound, because it "is never really spoken by anyone. It is the same with French and German theatre: their theatrical language is not the way you speak in the streets". His choice is not a nationalistic statement, but an insistence on a tension between local experiences and a level of transcultural or placeless humanity.

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The interview lets us understand that *textual practice* in itself, as a material performative process, on the margins of explicability, is crucial to his prose and plays. It is also made clear that space or *topography* is an important imaginative force: his works depict recognisable quotidian universes yet also transgress into unfamiliar aspects of them, the play to be performed at the Young Vic being no exception. Likewise, Fosse testifies to the importance of the *cognitive* or epistemological dimension of his ambition: to enter the unknown and return with an insight he did not have before. It also emanates from the interview that *emotions* play a crucial role for the effects of Fosse's texts. He is quoted for the opinion that his works evolve around characters' "reflections on their inability to articulate how they feel". In the case of the Young Vic's production of *I am the Wind*, director Patrice Chéreau "thinks the play is about depression, which Fosse doesn't deny" (Logan 2011).

The aim of this article is to analyse how the tension between a local, even narrowly localised life-experience, and a transcultural, global vision is articulated in Fosse's work. My general hypothesis is that textual action, emotional effects, topographical visions, and cognitive novelty together form a point of gravity in Fosse's *œuvre*. A corollary of this hypothesis is that affective charges released by the rhythmic and repetitive textuality of his work intermittently interfere with and help transform the rigid existential spaces of Fosse's characters. When their mainly saddened emotional register becomes challenged in the repetitive textual process, then their enclosing experience of the topography they inhabit (as well as their eclipsed and lonesome cognitive outlook) liberates them, at moments, to face an alterity they did not know before.

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Repetition in Fosse: existential grounding and discursive excess

By the use of meticulous formal repetition, a great many of Fosse's plays and novels are set in the remote and secluded areas of a contemporary, sometimes obsolete fjord-parish landscape, placed recognisably either along the Hardangerfjord or at the outlets of the Sognefjord. In Fosse, these areas are wrought with traditional everyday-life attitudes and are in many ways largely untouched by modernisation. Some way distant from the settings looms the bustling city (Bergen), with its modern way of life. In some plays and novels the setting is a highly concentrated section of the city; in these cases the main character originates from a fjord parish. Sometimes, the main setting is the confined interior of a room or a house, or the narrow space of a section of a graveyard. The characters' emotions of sadness and loss unfailingly strike the reader of Fosse's meagerly plotted works as intimately related to the topographical constraints. These emotions are also related to a sense of existential loneliness that is reinforced by dominantly narrow cognitive patterns – in the plays accomplished as an extensive use of perspectivism, and in the novels as a highly subjective first-person narration or third-person focalisation. The iterated formal attention to the constraints of a narrow landscape and a subjectivised experience makes the characters' agonising emotions seem grounded in an eclipsed, lonely life-world.

Yet this is not the whole picture. However minutely the confining limits of landscape and of sense-making experience are installed in his works, representation seems, at the same time, to be imbued with a powerful productive force that exceeds the formal repetition needed to delimit topography and mindset "realistically". When iteratively excessive, that representational force seems to challenge the characters' ex-

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istential emotional gloom. It permeates the recognisable everyday miniatures of landscape and subjective minds with an effect of something strangely indefinite, at times even uncanny.

In tangible, rhythmic modulations his works massively figure repetitions of words, phrases, motifs, events, and of story and conflictual segments in different novel chapters or drama acts, adding a hallucinatory effect to their quotidian realism. Sometimes within the same work, characters are repeated as generational doubles. In the same vein, repetition also comprises the subtle superimposition of time levels, and the juxtaposition in the same scene of characters from different time zones, unaware of each other. Even from work to work and across the genres – subject matters, characters and fragmented yet emphatically reduplicated actional conflicts and story-lines are repeated.[2]

Fosse's use of repetition is an important generator of emotional effect. The oscillation in rhythm and repetition – between formal restraint and excessiveness – brings to view a fundamental paradox that J. Hillis Miller names the discursive predicament of our lives, namely that "[a]n incommensurability between knowledge and action remains the human condition" (Miller 1995c: 215). In Fosse's works, attention constantly shifts. On the one hand, focus is on the "realistic"

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2 Fosse's repetition-in-writing is seen even in the fact that he occasionally, years apart, rewrites an entire work, either a novel or a play, into a reduplication in the other genre. My analytical target below for example, the novel "The Boathouse" (*Naustet*, 1989), has its parallel in the play *Beautiful* (*Vakkert*, 2001). While such rewriting accentuates the phenomenon of generic converging (into 'dramatic prose fiction' and 'prosaic drama' respectively), converging in Fosse represents a field of problems that demand a separate, full-scale study. A variety of works would be relevant materials, above all his three reduplicated pairs of a play and a novel: "The Boathouse" and *Beautiful*; the novel "Lead and Water" (*Bly og vatn*, 1992) and the theatre text *Winter* (orig. 2001); as well as the play *A Summer's Day* (orig. 2001) and the novel *Aliss at the Fire* (orig. 2003).

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gloom phenomenally grounded in a claustrophobic topography captured by the eclipsed consciousness of his main characters. On the other hand, repetition transgresses excessively their formal and phenomenal delimitation of knowing. This topographically and mentally *un*grounded linguistic, discursive doing brings into the play of textual action hitherto overlooked, un-encoded yet powerfully impacting material elements of precisely that locally constrictive landscape, and that local eclipse of cognitive space – showing an as yet unphrased materiality that can extend beyond their local bounds. Such material impacts figure performatively as forceful emotional charges. While yet without a phrasing, they still testify to an alterity beyond the emotional gloom installed and motivated by the strictures of knowing in Fosse's universes.[3]

At the same time, therefore, I presume that Fosse's imaginative use of repetition emphasises the possibility in his characters of an erroneous relation between consciousness and material reality, on a par with an ideological aberration, as Hillis Miller has shown (Miller 1995c: 194). The cognitive challenge interacts with the emotional challenge as well as with the challenge of perceiving the otherness in the landscape as a concrete and disturbing material presence. That impacting presence is brought to the fore as imaging power in an excessively repetitive textual performativity. It is still largely unphrased, yet is within the bounds of a perceptive "visibility" and a possible "sayability" (Rancière 2007a&b). In this perspective, Fosse's textual strategy may well be seen as a critique of stale and constricting ideological patterns in a local complex of cognition, landscape values and feelings,

3 For a discussion of grounded and ungrounded, formal and excessive repetition, and the discursive paradox and predicament of phenomenal knowing and textual doing, see Miller 1982b: 5-6, and 8-16, and Miller 1995c: 215.

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while it is transformed into a discursive practice "all about rhythm and silence", gaining transcultural or global reverberations.

Against this background a more developed hypothesis regarding the dynamic centre of Fosse's work can be formulated: with the repetitive nature of Fosse's texts, emotion, space and cognition are articulated through two parallel processes. First, one process, the formal iteration of likeness, underscores a self-identificatory "mimetic" thrust while encompassing, correspondingly, the subjectivised cognitive and emotional perspective and the spatial locality, both reinforced by their claustrophobic delineation. This mutual contingency basically makes out the thematically portrayed and grounded phenomenal life-world of depicted characters, whose fragmented discourse mediates the experience of uncertainty, pain and existential loneliness to the reader.

A second process, interacting opaquely while flatly with the first, is connected to a materially affective power of excessive repetition. Its interference prompts things' uniqueness in a "resemblance" going strangely awry since its power is not grounded in the delineated spaces of topography and cognition. This textually performed emotional charge begs to differ. It extends across all textual levels, absorbs character and life-world phenomena, and exposes them to an overwhelming material presence of topographical and sensorial fragments. The sensorial experience of such material vision opens up cognitive crevices to be filled by reflection, to be phrased and acted upon by the reader. In this depthless process, grounded phenomenal knowing at moments gives way to an independent discursive doing, textual action.[4]

4 Place, emotion, sense: as pointed out by Shoshana Felman in *Writing and Madness*, in performative utterances *topos*, *pathos* and *logos* are not merely consistent "codes" but repetitional forces, and their

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The following analytical examples of the two processes at work in Fosse's iterative writing are drawn from his novel "The Boathouse" (*Naustet*, 1989).[5] They focus on the spaces of topography and cognition and their interactions with emotionality. In their phenomenal mode, emotions are seen as human feelings contingent upon the grounded forms of landscape perception and sense-making. In the ungrounded mode of textual action, emotionality is seen as an inaugural, materially affective power of otherness. It produces tangible topographical displacements, and disruptions of cognitive excess – as performative openings to epistemological alternatives.

"The Boathouse" – a doubly emotionalised universe

In the fragmented *fabula* of "The Boathouse", a summer's incidents figure as the third case of suppressed yet traumatising rivalry in love between two men, Knut and the "I" (both

heterogenous *interference* renders textual action as a work of difference. Speech acts thus produce inadequating *effects* of *topos* (place), of *pathos* (emotions), and of *logos* (a transparency of meaning). Fosse's theatre texts and novels make no exception. Their textually interacting forces generate miniscule *topographical displacements* (occurring in imaging ruptures), and a *cognitive excess* (that cannot know itself while without transparent meaning, yet seeks to be made visible and phrased). *Pathos* in Fosse thus interacts doubly. It installs recognisable human emotions tethered to topography and cognition. Yet it challenges those feelings in movements of "repetitive opacity" and of "blind displacement of affective, psychic intensities" (Felman 1989: 25-26). *Pathos'* double charge in Fosse seems to collapse the quotidian feelings of sadness, agony and loss into a textually and materially impacting interference with the localised fields of knowledge. In particular, topographical space and cognitive space are affected.

5 Besides Felman, my analysis is inspired by speech-act and performativity theorists in the tradition of Jacques Derrida's take on J.L Austin, such as J. Hillis Miller, Andrzej Warminski, Tom and Barbara Cohen, Paul de Man and Jacques Rancière.

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aged 30), who meet again after ten years. Once best childhood friends in their native fjord parish, they have drifted apart. Since they last met, Knut, who left for the city at the age of 20, has become a music teacher and married a city girl. The "I", a bachelor with no formal training, has lived on in the fjord village, where Knut's urban family visit, his marriage in bickering shambles. At instances with increasingly eroticised overtones, Knut's wife repeatedly entices the "I", who is not insensitive to her passes, yet remains physically uninvolved.

As the turmoil in the triangle installs bereavement of love as the thematic kernel, there is a growing emotional volatility. Their feelings shift between bodily pain and grief, shame and guilt, envy, and even traces of hatred. By repetition within the *fabula*, the local emotional situation is also intensified by memories of previous traumatising rivalries between the men. Suppressed wounds of betrayal and guilt from two juvenile-love bereavements are gradually unveiled. At children's play after school, Knut once intercepted the "I"'s budding love affair, profoundly shaking the comrades' bonds. Later, at a gig with their Saturday-night dance rock-band, the "I" was repeatedly hurt when losing a girl's admiration to Knut's careless intervention. Their friendship irreparably thwarted, the "I" abandoned their shared music commitment. Knut, their leader yet evasive, is ill at ease in his mature life – bashful over his native background, a scoffing misogynist. The agonised "I" has remained a shy loner without a sweetheart, depending on his mother, while in public he is now merely the occasional side-man to the local accordeonist.

By early autumn, the "I" sits completely withdrawn in his room in the attic – "literally" writing the novel. Anguish over the past summer's eroticised incidents and the wounds reopened in him from the distant rivalries induce him to write. In iterative style and content he produces a complex flow of emotionally charged repetitions – of incidents and

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story-fragments, dialogues, phrases and motifs, landscape images, perceptions and memories. Clearly, despite the textual complexities of repetitions, the novel's use of a tormented dramatised writer as a device amounts to a representation of a self, writing in order to understand his unbearable pain. That self is tied to and grounded in a local, recognisable context and nurtures an existential, "literal" belief that a spatially continuous cognition may correspondingly be signified in his iterative writing, as the conclusive truth of an insight.

Here, the thrust for cognitive plenitude takes the shape of Modernity's spatial fullness of form as an iterated *promise* of meaning. For one thing, all of the "I"'s alleged writing is repeatedly rounded off *as* a totality – in that it starts and ends in similar, formally iterated descriptions precisely of himself writing. This goes for the novel as a whole as well as for all its parts and chapter-segments. Second, a handful of images function throughout as formally iterated *Leitmotive*: the physical nearness of the girls (moist lips and breath, dark hair and eyes), Knut's threatening silence, his dancing with one of the "I"'s favourites, and his alleged ignorance of the "I"'s feelings.

However, the grounding of those two iterative compositional devices may also be said to fail. They also shatter the merely formally promised contentual plenitude of truth and meaning, largely while the writer figures as an "I", that is to say as a personal pronoun, a shifter. In churning repetitions he writes about his love bereavements in early and in late youth and his recent summer encounters, to the effect that the fleeting propensity of the massively repeated shifter-trope "I" reaches across a variety of represented as well as possible contexts. Thus, in excessive, affectively charged repetitions, also elements of the fragmented story attain shifter functions, extending across the local contexts of (at least) four discernible time levels, three traumatising betrayal-like incidents,

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three formally arranged novel parts, and a number of chapter sections. Furthermore, story fragments extend across a series of incidental, impetuously intrusive topographical details, at times even comprising two focalising subjectivities within the singular, firm first-person shifter "I". All of these instances undermine the established spatial codes of a confining landscape and constricted cognition. The text of the novel thus turns highly self-referential; shifter-functioning elements reach across a variety of other discursive placeholder contexts. In effect, this turns the text into a temporal slide, a serialisation with affectively charged rupturing shifts that goes way beyond any sustained markers of a spatially unified, grounded plenitude of character action and phenomenal historical time. This serial or temporal iteration is precisely where the "action" in Fosse takes place. It generates a dreamlike textual performativity that intrudes "disturbingly", especially into the narrowly figured fjordscape topography, and into the figured cognitive space of a highly concentrated, subjectivised focalisation.

In a defamiliarising, "hallucinatory" manner, excessive repetition appears to set free, to the one side, a strangely impacting, material imaging power causing topographical displacement, and to the other, an opacity in sense-making that produces an enigmatic cognitive excess. The text, then, is not merely charged with the personal emotional drive to fixate a cognitively referential belief and understanding of the turmoil of saddened feelings, *i.e.* subsuming them under the copied likeness of a constrictive, known universe. It is also charged with a performative creativity that is not governed by any code inasmuch as it is a discursively generated emotional effect of excessive iterations, ungrounded and on the same textual plane. Thus, all repeated things stand out in their differential uniqueness, yet also begin "resembling" one another, as in a dream or a hallucination (Miller 1982b: 5-16). In this

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sense, shifter-functioning components of topography and of vision seem intermittently to break away from referring to singular spatial localities.

The confinement of topographical space

The concentrated fjord-parish landscape is dominantly represented as a stable and lasting entity, a given, delimited topographical object. The repetitional way in which the fjord topography is installed not only renders it with enframing outer limits but also with the literal delimitation given by *frames* in the shape of a window and doorways. Figured, again and again, is the fjord parish's narrow strip of land with its few houses and fruit-gardens, cleaved by the main road stretched out between its two outer points, the grocery store at one end, the community house at the other. Engulfing this narrow, cut-out strip of parish land are the sky above, the high mountains behind the houses on the upper side, and the fjord below with its other row of high mountains on the opposite side, all clad in constant linings of wind, waves, and pouring rain.

The images of this narrow, ovally tube-like topography are iterated time and again, marking its simply being *there*, outside of time and change. The material landscape is objectively external to the characters' subjectivity; motion is occasional and habitual – iterated walking, biking or driving back and forth along the main road, to and from the store or the community house, or going up and down the driveways of homes or the path to the fishing boats. Likewise, the characters' domestic movements are repeatedly described with a stress on the narrow indoor spaces as material frames constituting conditioning limits.

The enframing material limits are reinforced by the boathouse's hatch and doors, and above all by the living-room window in Knut's mother's house. This landscape is the char-

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acters' life-world; it stays the same whether they are inside looking out through the frames or move outside their houses. The formal repetition of this structure on the whole keeps inside and outside, the characters' subjective consciousness and the objective world, apart as separately encoded entities.

When night falls this structure is further underlined. In the deep eventide darkness the boxed-in perspective onto the outside fjord landscape through the window is substituted by the windowpane reflections of the characters looking out, further engulfing them by throwing them back upon themselves. This topography, not least by its windowpane enframement, is accentuated strongly and with ideological overtones. It becomes emblematic of an encoded, fixed and never-changing cognitive grid that hovers over the characters' life world; this is their existential ground. On some rare occasions it is "beautiful" in the superficial, touristlike sense; otherwise, and most often, it is filled with dark emotional states that are marked on the very surfaces of the characters' bodies, incarnated in their external movements and behaviour. It is fair to say that the generative pattern governing the landscape imagery is one of enclosure, in a measure indicative of an aberrational relation between consciousness and material reality (cf. Miller 1995c: 194).

Textually affective openings of the landscape

However, when the slowly churning, formal iteration of landscape elements topples over into repetitive excess, the grounding relation of subjectivity to landscape is momentarily lifted; the figure of inside and outside is cancelled, and the two merge. One example is seen in the representation of the youngsters' kissing-game episode in the boathouse after the children's club, after which the "I"'s first love is snatched away from him. His first infatuated juvenile experience of

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the nearness of bodies and of skin converges with what is the *really* inaugural moment of the scene. All of a sudden, by a radically different sensorial impact, the otherwise confiningly enframed fjord landscape literally intrudes into his body, and he into that of the landscape. The merging of subjectivity and natural materiality installs a freedom of unknown cognitive possibilities only *he* and the reader become aware of.

To capture the emotional, iterative excess involved and the build-up from the grief-stricken local subject/object-demarcation to its unique moment of sudden and sublime cancellation, I here quote at some length. The "I"'s apperception is acute

> when precisely that girl appeared […] from all the school breaks, from all the breaks when you had seen her […] for now she was there, she was near you, with her hair, her body […] when she stood there […] and you stood there, stood there alone […] and then you felt a deep grief that grew inside you. *That was when it started. Then something happened.* Perhaps that was when music came to you. There and then, and later you have not managed to steer clear. […] It was fall, was dark, and we walked along a narrow parish road, in the rain, in the wind […] it was dark, and *we heard the fjord*. The sea that was all the while there. *The waves*. […] The *rain increases*, the *wind blows stronger*, and the *waves* that beat against the shore-line *turn more distinct*. […] Then there is only darkness and rain [, we have] each disappeared into […] a silent community, yes, a community where no-one says anything, but where we are near each other, without being persons for each other […] and then she directs her half-open mouth towards my cheek, the warmth from her lips, her mouth, the moisture, a warm moisture, no more, there in the boathouse, the darkness, the rain […] (67-70, my transl. and ital.). – […] and still, I can feel her moist lips against my cheek, there in the rain, in the darkness, *can hear how the waves rolled, and I perceive this as something that has entered and sits in my body, in my movements. This is how it started*, in the darkness, in the rain, on a road streched out along a shoreline, in an old boathouse, *it was the waves that were constantly rolling, and my skin that grew larger and larger.*

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Her kiss was a mark on my skin, that entered my body, and remained there. (71f; my transl. and ital.)[6]

Here, textual intertwinement emphasises the relation between emotion and topographical space. From the "I"'s isolated loneliness in the emotional confinement of grief, behaviourally marked, even "proscribed" on the "I"'s body by the cramped space of his existential landscape, a sudden inaugural shift is discernible. The text moves to the momentary (while largely unphrased) event of singular natural phenomena torn loose from and displacing the landscape, directly impacting his body (and a de-personalised community) by their sheer iterative affect. Not only the girl's kiss and moist lips, but also nature's darkness, rain, wind and waves intrude and take abode in him. His body and skin abruptly respond,

6 "når nettopp den jenta kom […] frå alle friminutta, frå alle friminutta du hadde sett henne […] for no var ho der, ho var nær deg, med håret sitt, kroppen sin […] når ho stod der […] og du stod der, stod der åleine […] då kjende du på ei sorg som blei stor i deg. Det var då det byrja. Då skjedde det noko. Kanskje var det då musikken kom til deg. Der og då, og sidan har du ikkje komme deg klar. […] Det var haust, var mørkt, og vi gjekk langs ein smal bygdaveg, i regnet, i vinden […] det var mørkt, og vi høyrde fjorden. Sjøen som var der heile tida. Bølgjene. […] Regnet aukar på, vinden blir sterkare, og bølgjene som slår mot fjøra blir tydelegare. […] Då er det berre mørkret og regnet [, vi er] forsvunne inn i […] eit stilt fellesskap, ja, eit fellesskap der ingen seier noko, men der vi er nære kvarandre, utan at vi er personar for kvarandre […] og så fører ho den halvopne munnen sin mot kjaken min, varmen frå lippene hennar, munnen hennar, fuktigheten, ein varm fuktighet, ikkje meir, der i naustet, mørkret, regnet […] (67-70). – […] og enno, kan eg kjenne dei fuktige lippene hennar mot kinnet mitt, der i regnet, i mørkret, kan høyre korleis bølgjene slo, og eg merkar det som noko som har sett seg fast i kroppen min, i rørslene mine. Det var slik det byrja, i mørkret, regnet, på ein veg som låg langs ei fjøre, i eit gammalt naust, det var bølgjene som alltid slo, og huda som vaks seg større og større. Kysset hennar var eit merke på huda, som trengde inn i kroppen, og blei der" (71f).

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breaking their emotional isolation and extending to merge with the waves under the power of a hitherto unformulated material affect. What performatively *happens* and *begins* here in the narrow fjord topography, but by the affective imaging power of rupture (Rancière 2007a&b), is the as yet unencoded, sensorially impacting awareness of the possibility of another constitution of the world than that which is doomed to sadness and grief.

At such moments, then, landscape and subjectivity are suddenly rendered on the same plane (Miller 1982b), their elements attain shifter functions under excessive iterability, whose self-referential play extends across a variety of the narrow landscape's localised geographical contexts and temporal zones (Austin 1957; Jakobson 1975). Performatively, by textual action, a new phrasing of the topographical confine that might lessen its ideological hold, comes to the fore as an option – when countersigned by character and reader to take productive effect (Derrida 1982). Like in our example, imaging ruptures intrude as unencoded material visions in the excessive, affective iteration. "Visible" afresh, landscape is apperceived in its natural immediacy, leaving its material inscription as a direct imprint *inside* the very sensorial body of the character involved, and the reader. This stirs up and mitigates the external marks left on behaviour and bodies by the grounded, ideological constitution of a confining topography. Obliquely, sensorial impacts inside the body stir up its externally marked frozenness, and an alternative discursive space, a possible "sayability" is being carved out (Rancière 2007a&b).

Another example of textual interference between emotion and space intrudes in the devastating episode of the teens' rock-band dance, an occasion on which Knut snatches an incipient love away from the "I" for the second time. Again, the iterative focus on pain tumbles over into emotional excess.

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Images are cut loose from their confinement to the cramped, hurtfully competitive local context of the community house and its narrow outdoor enclave between road and fjord. They also break away from the repressive behavioural relationship between the young men. Massively repeated fragments of the represented episode emanate within a variety of other local plot situations and temporal contexts. These fragments rhythmically traverse the text, emotionally feeding on the materiality of *un*encoded visions: the fjordscape's beating waves, wind and rain, and their iterative rhythm, which even gets redoubled in the music being played. This goes on till the very textual end (139-143), where the divisive episode attains only something near a comprehensive phrasing. Beyond the fjordscape's ideologically invested cognitive grid, subjectivity again merges sensorially with landscape, directly exposed to the rhythmic sound of the waves, obliquely carving out the possible option of a new discursive space of sayability.

The rhythmic element does not function as a second-level, metaphorical "reinforcement" of the emotional turmoil of mourning loss and guilt-ridden gain. On the contrary, subjectivity and landscape elements are blindly displaced, and here take speech-act effect on the same plane, whose levelling affectively opens up for the merging of subjective inside and the outside world of objects and other minds. There is no cognitive closure. With *textually* generated emotional impact, this open-ended repetition suddenly installs the merging of two gazes into each other, the girl's and that of the "I" (141f). Such textual, emotionally "neutral" representation is also seen in the episode's ambivalently open fragments that extend across the text, impacting with the beats of the waves: at each impact, the fragments also open-endedly merge Knut's shameful *guilt* and his aquitting *innocence*: "that girl, at that dance, I turned so strange afterwards, he didn't know, he

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could hardly know, meant nothing with it, couldn't help it" (*passim*).[7]

The new, self-referential discursive space that is carved out by the excessive iterative rhythm of singular natural elements lies obliquely to the side of the overly encoded phenomenal grid of the enclosed topography. In that emerging space, emotional grief, mourning, and even hatred over actual or imminent bereavement are creatively opened up for alternate counter-signing and cognition. That counter-signature, which is left to the reader to decide upon, might well be one of atonement – at least as much as the otherwise proscribed "eternal" gloom and hatred.

A function of repetitive excess is also seen in our third example, taken from the "I"'s final encounter with Knut's wife at the boathouse after the summer dance. Once more, the impact is powered by the singular sensorial imaging of the rolling fjord while triggering an emotional vision of a special kind. The vision here appears in the as yet unencoded figure of an inaugurative memory with universal implications: it reaches endlessly into an atopical past and an open future:

> [I] hear something I had forgotten, *suddenly* I *hear* it. I hear the waves [, the fjord], I hear the waves the way I heard them long ago […] when I was a little boy […] I descend the ladder […] and I *sense the movements of the waves in my body*, step by step down the ladder, and I stand on the earthen floor, feel the smell of earth, hear the waves, and it is dark, all dark. [I see] her black hair, her brown eyes, and the unease is immense in my body […] and *all the while I perceive the unease, and I hear the waves, they roll not like the way they usually roll, but in a special way, like they used to roll before, long ago, yet only that I now hear them through an immense unease*, I walk, fight my way through the brushes

7 "den jenta, på den dansen, eg blei så rar etterpå, han visste ikkje, han kunne vel ikkje vite, meinte ingenting med det, kunne ikkje for det" (*passim*).

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[…] *they roll and roll, through my entire life they have rolled*, over and over again, roll and roll, and I have not heard them for many years […] and *now I hear them through a great unease […] everything is in an immense unease, and in the movement from the waves. I sit here writing* […]. (88-91; my transl. and ital.)[8]

At this textually performative moment the singular landscape vision is unharnessed for renewed cognition, while the local limits of *knowing* are transformed and substituted for the universality of a performative, creative *doing* and *being*. The "unease" represented here is not the saddened everyday pain but part of an as yet unnamed "blind affect" (cf. Felman; Rancière). It figures as a textual material *interference* into the quotidian emotional strictures tethered to the topographical constraints. It is also a remembrance of how things were: may have inaugurally been, and may become and be – afresh. At another instance, a page later, now with overly iterated memory-fragments of the second bereavement episode intertwined with the power of beating waves, the selves of the "I" and Knut literally dissolve into one another, exposed to the de-personalising, yet unformulated while emotionally

8 "[Eg] høyrer noko eg hadde gløymt, brått høyrer eg det. […] Eg høyrer bølgjene [, fjorden], eg høyrer bølgjene slik eg høyrde dei for lenge sidan […] då eg var gutunge […] eg kliv ned stigen […] og eg merkar bevegelsane frå bølgjene i kroppen, trinn for trinn ned stigen, og eg står på jordgolvet, kjenner lukta av jord, høyrer bølgjene, og det er mørkt, heilt mørkt. [Eg ser] det svarte håret hennar, dei brune augene, og uroa er stor i kroppen min […] og heile tida merkar eg uroa, og eg høyrer bølgjene, dei slår ikkje slik dei plar å slå, men på ein eigen måte, slik dei slo tidlegare, for lenge sidan, berre det at eg no høyrer dei gjennom ei stor uro, eg går, baskar meg gjennom buskaset […] dei slår og slår, gjennom heile livet mitt har dei slått, om igjen og om igjen, slår og slår, og eg har ikkje høyrt dei på mange år […] og no høyrer eg dei gjennom ei stor uro […] alt er inne i ei stor uro, og i bevegelsen frå bølgjene. Eg sit her og skriv […]" (88-91).

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unidentifiable textual affect. The perception of the material memory advances momentarily deep into countenance and body: "[…] it cuts itself into the face, sits there, cannot weep, cannot shout, *just is* […]" (92; my transl. and ital).[9] The unidentifiable "it" and "is" mark the performative moment when the textual doing of material vision and memory transforms understanding and knowing into neutral factuality, from whose sensorial images new phrasal power and cognitive understanding may arise.

Our examples show how textual action by repetitive excess turns the nexus of character gloom and confining landscape into neutral, *textually* emotional impacts whose materiality shares properties with the material visions and sensations of the singular natural elements, detached from any pre-encoded topography. The sensation of such natural impacts momentarily destabilises the limits between the suddenly merging subject and natural object. Here, the material object appears as just what the senses sense, for a fleeting moment, cancelling local codes of meaning. Its "vision" overwhelmingly encounters the senses without any proscribed existential grounding, sense or goal, close to Immanuel Kant's notion of the sublime (Kant 1987: 130; Warminski 2001; Miller 2001: 191-192, and 2014: 109-115). It resembles Kant's "eye eyeing" (or any "sense sensing"): an "Augenschein", which sometimes well may be what Fosse says he hears. Fosse offers such inaugural sensations as a critique of ideological patterns, of an aberrational relation between consciousness and material reality. While the "blindness" of that reality lies in its lack of transparent meaning, yet it is made *sensorially* visible, and brought into the reach of a sayability, by being charged with the power of textual repetition.

9 "[…] det skjer seg inn i ansiktet, sit fast, kan ikkje grine, ikkje rope, er berre […]" (92).

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As iteration's pathos not only destabilises the novel's grounded topos of fjord-parish landscape but also interferes into the overly enclosed space of the novel's given, sense-making logos, I will, before concluding, also look briefly into the cognitive space of Fosse's novel: its narrowly confined, subjective focalisation.

From confinement of meaning to cognitive excess

The formal space of cognition in Fosse's works tends to be organised by a highly subjectivised perspectivism. "The Boathouse" is no exception. In an utterly narrow variant, its dominant representational code is first-person direct discourse, formally foregrounding the "I"'s perspective throughout all incidents and time levels. In a fashion similar to that of the topographical space, however, the sense-making space has *two* features. First, formal repetition helps constitute the main character's painful emotional existence. Second, formal repetition intermittently turns into iterative excess, which carries *textually* powered emotional impacts that exceed established meaning.

The basic feature is the formal repetition, in the "I"'s direct discourse, bearing witness to the painstakingly marked, enclosing cognitive stages of his apperception process. This narration runs it course – from any local action to the perception of that incident, then to the mental and emotional image it calls forth, further to the cognitive reflection upon it, and (in some cases) to the formulation of a responsive utterance that eventually may lead to a new localised action. Variants of the pattern can be identified throughout:

[…] I start fishing, inside the islet […] nothing bites, perhaps no fish to catch this evening. […] I perceive a certain unease. I don't know what it is […] the boat comes towards me. […] My unease increases. I don't

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want to turn around. I hear […] the boat comes closer. I have to turn around. I turn around, and I see, she is waving to me […] she asks me if I am catching anything, and I don't know what to answer, I perceive it has gotten darker […] I feel a pang inside me, suppose I have to get away, and why is she here now […] and suddenly it bites […] I turn towards her, she brought fishing luck, I say, have to speak about something […] I look up […] and there […] by the road, I see Knut standing […] and now I perceive that she is quite near me […] have to tell [her] that Knut is standing on the shore, by the road (16-18; my transl.).[10]

All through childhood, youth and in grown-up life the pervasive quality of this subjective confinement dominates the "I"'s cognitive space. Emotionally, it is coloured by gloom, agony, and the threat of imminent loss:

I hear Knut say that why can she never learn, what does she really want, he says, what is she after […] [I] say that I am leaving now, tomorrow [they should come to] the summer's dance. I leave. I walked towards home […] and I didn't want to look down towards the boathouse. I went home, and my unease was stronger […] and I thought I had to get home. I wanted to get away. Didn't want to show myself to anyone […] anymore. I wanted to hide myself, hide myself. I was afraid […]

10 "[…] legg meg til å pilke, på innsida av holmen […] det bit ikkje, er kanskje ikkje fisk å få denne kvelden […] Eg kjenner på ei lett uro. Eg veit ikkje kva det er. […] båten kjem mot meg. Uroa blir sterkare. Eg vil ikkje snu meg. Eg høyrer […] båten kjem nærmare. Eg må snu meg. Eg snur meg, og eg ser, ho vinkar til meg […] ho spør meg om det blir nokon fangst på meg, og eg veit ikkje kva eg skal svare, eg synest det brått har mørkna litt […] det søkk i meg, må vel komme meg bort, og kvifor er ho her no […] og i det same nappar det […] eg snur meg mot henne, ho kom med fiskelykka, seier eg, må snakke om noko […] Eg ser opp […] og der […] i vegkanten, ser eg Knut'en stå […] og no merkar eg at ho er heilt nær meg […] må fortelje [henne] at Knut'en står inne på land, oppi vegen" (16-18).

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was uneasy, afraid, I thought that something wrong […] something unavoidable would happen, something terrible […] (64-65; my transl.).[11]

The governing extent, however, of the repeated solipsistic agony and its transparent, subjectively emotionalised meaning renders its isolation as a possible mis-match to reality. Here, *the other feature* of the cognitive space destabilises the first. Punctually, an oblique discursive space is being opened up, extending across *two* subjectivities and a variety of local contexts. This occurs by an affectively whirling use of shifters – pronominal, adverbial and verbal alike. As in the case of the topographical demarcations, now the confining repetition of the cognitive space evolves into iterative excess, displacing the confined perspective by momentarily merging inside and outside. Actions, perceptions, emotions and reflections also on *Knut's* focalising side are now refracted through the – still operative – sustained perspective of the "I".

This sudden merging across minds affectively interferes into the cognitive space. It occurs particularly in contexts where not only the sadness of existence of both men, but also hatred and guilt are in play. Thus, emotions grounded in situational contexts and identifiable time levels momentarily vaporise under the intrusive power of a "blind affect". These discursive segments and their impacting ruptures address what the characters are unable to fathom:

11 "Eg høyrer Knut'en seie at kvifor kan ho aldri lære, kva er det eigentleg ho vil, seier han, kva er det ho er ute etter […] [eg] seier at eg går no, i morgon [er det berre å komme på bygdafesten]. Eg går. Eg gjekk heimover […] og eg ville ikkje sjå ned mot naustet. Eg gjekk heimover, og uroa var sterkare […] og eg tenkte at eg måtte komme meg heim. Eg ville bort. Ville ikkje vise meg meir for nokon […] meir. Eg ville skjule meg, gøyme meg. Eg var redd […] var uroleg, redd, eg tenkte at det kom til å skje noko gale […] noko uavvendeleg, noko forferdeleg […]" (64-65).

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[After the summer dance and the "I" and Knut's wife's visit to the boathouse:] […] then I saw Knut, down on the road, he saw *me*, *I* waved to him, yet he just shook his head lightly, and *Knut thought* that everything is so long ago, *surely* he saw *us*, *surely* knowing everything, and it shouldn't make any difference, but it was that time, that girl [in the distant past], will no more now, simply just must, cannot, sees *me* standing there, simply must say, meet, do, and he simply cannot just, yet must simply, cannot […] not say anything, surely saw it, he knows everything, *Knut thinks* […] standing there looking up towards *me* (92; my transl., ital. and brackets).[12]

Perceptions, feelings and assumptions traverse and shift across minds, yet also make two minds meet and merge. Textually, this happens as an effect of the repetitive opacity, installing a powerful material, sense-neutral affect, whose speech-acting cognitive excess at times reaches the level of raving "madness" in a vision of otherness.

The emotional interference of a material psychic intensity (Felman) into the novel's cognitive space also surfaces in another segment, held in Knut's focalisation yet all the while refracted by the "I" (122f; 128; 132f). In the merged minds something discursively happens, as it were for the first time *now*, yet also at an inaugural moment at a dislocalised and universal, atopical place a long time ago. In massive shifts between Knut's mind and the "I"'s – in the painfully agonised emotional vicissitudes before, during and after the summer

12 "[Etter bygdadansen og eg'ets og Knut'ens kone si vitjing til naustet:] […] då såg eg Knut'en, nede i vegen, han såg meg, eg vinka til han, men han berre rista lett på hovudet, og Knut'en tenkte at alt er så lenge sidan, han såg oss nok, veit nok alt, og det skulle ikkje gjere noko, men det var den gongen, ho jenta [i den fjerne fortida], vil ikkje meir no, må vel berre, kan ikkje […] ikkje seie noko, såg det nok, han veit alt, tenkjer Knut'en […] står der og ser opp mot meg" (92; my brackets).

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dance – another, instantaneous feeling occurs across both minds: that things "*all of a sudden*, for a very brief while, not so long ago" are "the way it has always been now, the way it was many years ago, *something is there that happens*" (122; my transl and ital.).[13] Once more, all the motifs of guilt, loss and anguish rooted in their life together are tossed *across* their minds, with an impetuously powerful textual emotion. Discursively, this extended – and "excessive" – subjectivity punctually *shares* impacts, opening for completely different beginnings.

Yet in his phenomenal world, the contrasting "terrible thing feared" then recurs within the "I"'s enclosing perspective. By late autumn Knut's wife, whose openness has figured as lascivious in the novel's confined topographical and cognitive universe, has reportedly committed suicide by drowning herself in the city. However, that existentially tragic event in a world grounded in the stale confinement of discursive exchange is forcefully critiqued by the novel's textuality of alterity. *Beyond* that life-world, as we have seen, the "maddening" affective intrusion of iterative excess allows for sudden inaugural imaging impacts into the constrictions of place and mind. The new, emerging discursive space opens up for perception, reflection, and for subjective minds to meet and merge. The "maddening" discursivity does testify to the shared aberrational pains of the two men involved, yet also renders them in a radical discursive difference from all narrow enclosure. That *happens* under the impact of an indifferent and depthless sensation, a material visibility that is offered up as a liberating possibility for life and meaning, not yet achieved. The surfacing, sheer physical import of that sensation is creatively neutral, uni-

13 …at ting "plutseleg, for ei heilt kort stund, ikkje så lenge sidan" er "liksom slik det alltid har vore no, slik det var for mange år tilbake, *det er noko som skjer*" (122; my ital.).

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versal and "equal" to all. Material and ungrounded through excessive repetition, it is set free from limiting purpose and stifling ideological confinement.

Concluding remarks

The novel's emotional impacts are performatively passed over to characters and readers alike – for thought, interpretation, decision, and counter-signature. With a focus on the interaction between the local and the universal in Fosse's art, my analysis has shown "The Boathouse"'s affective displacements by way of its textual interference into existential spaces turned rigid: the saddened feel of landscape and of cognition. I have also given examples of its textual affectivity in the merging and open-ended inclusions of painfully suffering, solipsistic minds. The cognitive excess of affective repetition is a gesture towards a new and alternate universe of meaning and existence. In my reading, the emphasis has been on the doubtless capacity in Fosse's art to see emotionality as liberating discursive interferences. Such moments universally reach out to any discursive being, faced with the "incommensurable predicament of knowledge and action" (Miller). They offer space in which sensorium, imagery and discourse may be re-encoded as a way beyond the narrowly confined, everyday grounding of human existence. Affective materiality therefore matters in the extension of reconciliatory work in language.[14]

14 In similar yet individually nuanced approaches, also my publications 2001-2010 on the work of Jon Fosse and Marguerite Duras discuss problems of performative language and space in modern drama and fiction. Cf. Works Cited.

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Spatial Affects: Body and Space in Philippe Grandrieux's *La Vie nouvelle*

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Emotion and space: cinema! No other art form has had a comparable impact on the collective imaginary of the last century, creating a gallery of innumerable tears, winks and wicked smiles, a universal language of emotional gestures and expressions.[1] No other art form has enabled us to sense space in the same way, opening our eyes to exotic locations as well as the fabric of the everyday, while mapping the movements of human bodies from every possible angle of vision. And now, perhaps, we have had enough.

At least, it is hard to avoid a feeling of slightly sleep-inducing predictability as the emotions are spelled out in the stereotypes of mainstream melodrama, comedy or horror films, or skilfully suggested in the subtle 'realism' of psychological portraits habitually applauded by film journalists. A similar sense of fatigue is noticeable when it comes to renderings of

1 My work on this article was supported by a postdoc grant from the Danish Council for Independent Research.

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space. Even though both Hollywood films and 'world cinema' provide audiences with a steady stream of new, real or computer-generated settings, they rarely amount to more than spectacular backgrounds to more or less worn-out plot lines, or environments illustrating the social and cultural conditions of the characters.

This state of affairs is related to the dominance of narrative in mainstream cinema. The almost exclusive concern with plot and character psychology renders the material surroundings of secondary importance. Similarly, inscribed in the web of actions and reactions rather than being the focus of independent attention, filmic portraits of human emotions often struggle in vain to escape generic conventions and cultural clichés.

Norwegian film scholar Asbjørn Grønstad has argued that a number of recent films have challenged the tendency to treat filmic locations – particularly landscapes – as secondary by "allowing the setting to escape its narrative confinement in order to emerge as the animating force of the work" (Grønstad 2010: 312).[2] Incidentally, many of the films Grønstad mentions in this context – notably Bruno Dumont's *Twentynine Palms* (2003), Carlos Reygadas' *Silent Light* (2007) and Aleksandr Sokurov's *Mother and Son* (1997) – do not only explore the expressive and epistemological potentials of landscape as an end in itself. Rather, they employ them to tell intimate, emotional stories without relying on narrative action and dialogue. The renewed emphasis on landscape, which is certainly of interest in itself, might then also be regarded as a crucial element in an effort to reinvent a cinema of affect.

2 Of course, the use of cinematographic landscape as an independent means of expression was not invented yesterday. As Grønstad points out, it has a history involving such directors as Ingmar Bergman, Michelangelo Antonioni and Andrei Tarkovsky, just to mention a few (Grønstad 2010: 316-318).

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This is not to say that the directors mentioned above constitute a homogenous group or movement. It is a long way from the lush landscapes and lightscapes lending lyrical and symbolic expressivity to the discreet family dramas of Sokurov and Reygadas to the barren, menacing desert of Joshua Tree National Park in *Twentynine Palms*. While the former embed human drama in a cosmic frame of natural cycles, Dumont's long, steady shots of the unmoving desert landscape transmit a sense of its pure materiality, its indifferent hostility towards any attempt at rational control or symbolic interpretation. This uncanny confrontation with the Real echoes the existential solitude of the main characters driving through the desert, a young couple unable to communicate through other means than frustrated acts of violence and bestial sex. In this way, Dumont employs landscapes to depict characters lost in a primitive, almost pre- or post-human world, confronted with a void that leaves them morally and emotionally petrified.

Dumont is not alone in his exploration of this ground zero of the human condition. Interest in the body as the double locus of emotional and spatial orientation in the world – especially in the cases of extreme sensations and disorientation – is shared by other contemporary French directors working on the margins of the industry, such as Catherine Breillat, Claire Denis and Philippe Grandrieux. Although controversial, the works of Dumont, Breillat and Denis have earned their directors' international awards and critical acclaim. By contrast, the films of Grandrieux have not reached a broad audience and have generally failed to impress critics. His first feature film, *Sombre* (1999), an experimental horror film about a serial-killing puppeteer, was generally met with reproof. Similarly harsh reactions to the equally experimental and sombre *La Vie nouvelle* (2002) provoked a group of admirers, led by critic Nicole Brenez, to publish a book in support of the film, which in Brenez's opinion represents "an

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essential moment in the history of forms" (Brenez 2005: 12).[3] While that might be too early to say, certainly Grandrieux's films with their minimal dialogue, elliptical plots, archetypical characters and stylistic inventiveness constitute a radical attempt to break with conventional renderings of emotions and space. Focusing on *La Vie nouvelle* in the perspective of Gilles Deleuze's film philosophy – especially his conceptualisation of the "affection-image" – I will argue that the result is the creation of a distinctive cinema of affect.

Like the films of Dumont, the social relations and affective atmosphere of *La Vie nouvelle* are dominated by extreme violence, terror and degradation. Martine Beugnet has argued that the recent French films focusing on extreme bodily sensations have a "critical edge" in so far as they "engage [...] us emotionally as well as aesthetically with the irrational and the unacceptable" (Beugnet 2007: 40). James Quandt claims, on the other hand, that this wave of "French extremity", as he calls it, is merely an empty repetition of the "authentic, liberating outrage – political, social, sexual – that fuelled such apocalyptic visions as *Saló* and *Weekend*" (Quandt 2012: 9). In continuation of that debate, the last part of my article will offer some reflections on the ties between affect, space and politics in *La Vie nouvelle*.

An aesthetics of disorientation

La Vie nouvelle takes place in an unnamed Eastern European city (it was filmed in Sofia), and features a young American, Seymour (Zachary Knighton), possibly a soldier on leave from Kosovo, who becomes obsessed with a young, possibly Ukrainian prostitute, Mélania (Anna Mouglalis), who works

3 This and following quotations in French have been translated into English by me, unless otherwise stated.

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in a hotel/brothel controlled by the local mafia-leader Boyan (Zsolt Nagy). In order to be with Mélania, Seymour has to betray his friend (lover/father?) Roscoe (Marc Barbé), who ends up as the prey of Boyan's fighting dogs. This rudimentary plot is as easily told as it is hard to follow on screen, mainly because the identities of the characters and the nature of their relationships are not delineated in any conventional manner. There is hardly any dialogue, and few attempts are made to establish a logical narrative progression. Instead, we are presented with a discontinuous, dream-like series of scenes that often centre on the intense, physical interactions of a small ensemble of characters filmed with a heavily trembling, handheld camera monitored by Grandrieux himself. The images often hover between the abstract and the figurative due to the disorienting camera movements, the unusual angles and framings, and the startling chiaroscuro effects of the often strongly under- or over-exposed images, blurring the borders between human bodies and their surroundings.

One of the main effects of this style is to undermine the cinematographic image's usual alliance with what Martin Jay has referred to as "Cartesian perspectivalism" (Jay 1988: 4). As Jay explains, this visual-epistemological regime came to prominence in Western art with the discovery of the central perspective in the Italian renaissance, and found its main philosophical expression in Descartes' ideas of subjective rationality. It entails the idea of a fixed, uniform, geometric space, where objects are subordinated to the visual control of a centrally placed and "allegedly disincarnated, absolute eye" (8). According to Jay, art historians have tended to regard this regime as the exclusive model for modern art up till the 19th century. As he reminds us, however, it was contested both in Nordic renaissance painting and especially in the baroque. Drawing on recent works by Christine Buci-Glucksmann and Rodolphe Gasché, Jay describes baroque painting – with its multiple perspectives, open

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and painterly, rather than closed and linear forms – as "dazzling, disorienting, ecstatic", informed by a "fascination for opacity, unreadability, and the indecipherability of the reality it depicts" (16-17). Furthermore, recalling the distinction between optic and haptic sensation introduced by Aloïs Riegl and elaborated on by Gilles Deleuze, contrary to the ocular-centric renaissance perspectivalism, baroque painting has a strong tactile or haptic appeal (Jay 17; Deleuze 2005: 85-93). Its dominating mode of vision is embodied rather than abstract, directed at the sense of touch as much as at that of sight.

Grandrieux's aesthetics places itself in the tradition of the baroque.[4] His camera is like a brush that erases the boundaries between figures and their surroundings, between foreground and background, creating a visual experience which is nothing if not "dazzling, disorienting, ecstatic". He thereby seeks to capture a sense of the human body traversed and shaken by the life forces in and around it. Instead of the classic hierarchy between subject and object, Grandrieux's stylistic approach in ontological terms seeks to render visible an immanent field of vibrant, dynamic life processes. His camera is therefore drawn to scenes and situations in which his characters most fully embody this fundamental level of human experience: moments

4 In a wider perspective of art history, his work thus belongs to the massive rediscovery of the baroque in contemporary art, comprehensively chartered by Mieke Bal in *Quoting Caravaggio*. Grandrieux himself cites Rembrandt as a major influence (Grandrieux & Vuillard 2005: 191), and the brown hues of the forested, snowy Nordic landscapes of his third and latest film, *Un Lac* (2008), are strongly reminiscent of the Dutch master and his tradition. Another remarkably baroque feature of *Un Lac* (undoubtedly also inspired by the cinema of Robert Bresson) is the number of close-ups of hands – a symphony of pointing and gesturing, recalling paintings like Caravaggio's 1607 *Madonna del Rosario* (incidentally, the film revolves around a virgin adored by her brother and a young pretender); but above all a symphony of tactility, of hands touching water, snow, rock, a horse's skin, other hands.

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when they are "outside themselves" in the grip of intense passion or desire. *La Vie nouvelle* is made up of such situations to the relative detriment of narrative plot and "psychological depth". This is what makes it a cinema of affect.

Affect and emotion

In his essay "The Autonomy of Affect", Brian Massumi, whose philosophical writings are strongly influenced by Deleuze, equates affect with *intensity* (Massumi 1995: 88). Affect is related to the automatic, non-conscious responses of the body (particularly the skin) to external stimuli. These responses can be understood as a crowd of undifferentiated impulses, pressing to be actualised through conscious action or expression. This virtual realm of intensity is not directly accessible to the conscious, qualified experience of a subject, but neither is it exactly outside it. "It is", says Massumi, "immanent to it – always in it but not of it" (94). As a philosophical concept, affect is thus located in "the simultaneous participation of the virtual in the actual and the actual in the virtual, as one arises from and returns to the other" (96). Seen from the side of the actual, affect thus marks an excess of intensity and potentiality in any particular, embodied state. Hence its autonomy: "The *autonomy* of affect is its participation in the virtual. *Its autonomy is its openness*. Affect is autonomous to the degree to which it escapes confinement in the particular body whose vitality, or potential for interaction, it is" (*ibid.)*.

From this point of view, conceptually qualified, situated perceptions and cognitions fulfilling particular functions represent a *capture* of affect. "Emotion", Massumi continues, "is the intensest (most contracted) expression of that capture – and of the fact that something has always and again escaped" (*ibid.*). Non-conscious affect is thus ontologically prior to subjective emotions, in so far as

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An emotion is a subjective content, the socio-linguistic fixing of an experience which is from that point onward defined as personal. Emotion is qualified intensity, the conventional, consensual point of insertion of intensity into semantically and semiotically formed progressions, into narrativizable action-reaction circuits, into function and meaning. (88)

This way of thinking about the difference between affect and emotion is helpful when it comes to Grandrieux's cinema. In conventional films, displays of emotion are most often used as signs pointing to the "inner life" of characters, making visible their reactions to the events of the plot and their motivations to perform certain actions. In *La Vie nouvelle*, Grandrieux attempts to liberate affect from the capture of emotion, so to speak. The characters of the film are not so much psychological subjects as prismatic bodies exposed to extreme sensations and traversed by intense desire. Their expressions and gestures are almost always ambivalent, giving the viewer an unsettling feeling of the myriad of vibrating intensities pressing to break out beneath their skin. Although there is a rudimentary plot as well as (partly) recognisable relations between the characters, there is always a surplus of intensity in their often contingent or even mad actions that cannot be captured by the semantic economy of plot and psychology.

Faces of affect

To encircle and communicate the intensities at play in different affective situations, Grandrieux relies on the close-up. Most of his close-ups show one or more faces signalling affective intensities: the repressed terror of Mélania as Boyan slowly cuts her hair with a hunting knife in the beginning of the film, and Boyan's self-absorbed playfulness as he cuts:

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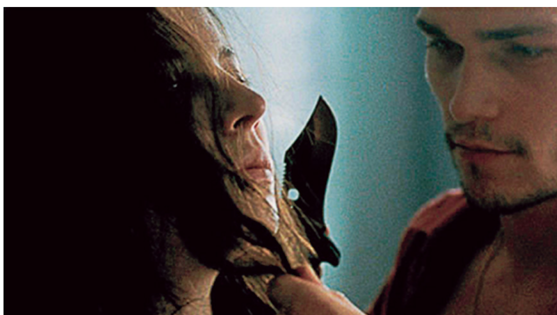

Illustration 1. Boyan cutting Mélania's hair in La Vie nouvelle. *Directed by Philippe Grandrieux and produced by Mandrake Films. Courtesy of Philippe Grandrieux.*

Furthermore, the intense gaze of Seymour ensues as he watches Mélania dance in the scene that follows.[5] These close-ups, and those of *La Vie nouvelle* in general, are examples of that which Deleuze in *Cinéma 1 – L'Image-mouvement* calls the *affection-image*. In conventional, narrative film, the close-up most often functions as *action-image* because it is made operative in a certain "state of things" (*état de choses*), which "includes a determinate space-time, spatio-temporal coordinates, objects and people, real connections between all these givens. In a state of things which actualises them […] affects become sensation, sentiment, emotion or even impulse [*pulsion*] in a person, the face becomes the character or mask of the person" (Deleuze 2009: 100).

However, if the expressive potential of a close-up is released from the narrative or psychological demands of the "state of

5 As Deleuze notes, a close-up is not necessarily of a face; it can perfectly well be a shot of an object, in so far as it is treated like a face, turned into a reflective surface with expressive value in a process of *visagéfication* (Deleuze 2009: 90).

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things", it can become affection-image. This happens when the use of the close-up exceeds the needs of the narrative plot. In this case, the close-up captures an intensive quality considered for itself. Released from the psychology of a particular character, it is therefore, in Deleuze's terminology and in accordance with Massumi's distinction, not an emotion, but an affect: a pure, potential and impersonal block of sensations presented in the work of art as a mere "there is…" (Deleuze 2009: 101; see also Deleuze and Guattari 1994: 154-156.). By disrupting the logic of narrative, the affection-image not only suspends the well-ordered coordinates of the spaces in which bodies move and act (Deleuze 2009: 99), but it dissociates the human face from its conventional role as a marker of individuality, social norms or communicative relations (101-2). Taken to the extreme, the close-up therefore confronts the face with the void, conveying a fear of nothingness.[6]

La Vie nouvelle opens with a scene that uses the affective power of the close-up to create an emotional atmosphere permeating the rest of the film. The first image is a long shot of a row of people slowly moving across a barren, desert-like field. Only their pale faces render them visible against the darkness from which they emerge. In the next shot the group has moved to the middle ground and fills almost the entire frame, yet its members continue to be seen only in a blur due to the heavy tremor of the unfocused camera: it is filming at only six to eight images per second instead of the usual twenty-four, giving the scene a discontinuous, vibrating quality (Beugnet 2005: 181). The images are accompanied by a low, rumbling howl, like the compressed, hollow sound of breath, or steam, passing through metallic pipes. Now the camera begins a jumbled, pulsating movement towards the

6 Deleuze singles out Bergman as the director who has "pushed the nihilism of the face the furthest" (2009: 102).

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group, which comes to a relative rest in a clearly focused, half-profile close-up of a middle-aged woman whose dark eyes stare straight ahead. After a few seconds the movement is repeated, this time closing in on the face of another woman. A third approach ends in a close-up of the wrinkled face of a white-haired, elderly woman, followed by an ultra close-up highlighting a teardrop beneath her eye, while the eerie, rumbling sound intensifies:

Illustration 2. Close-up of old woman in La Vie nouvelle. *Directed by Philippe Grandrieux and produced by Mandrake Films. Courtesy of Philippe Grandrieux.*

After a brief close-up of a young man standing behind the three women, the unsettling scene ends, giving way to a shot of a grass field at dawn with Seymour and Roscoe moving towards the camera.

The darkness surrounding the blurred group of people and the undifferentiated wasteland in which they walk prevent any notion of a fixed location. The dark is not so much a background as an element with which they merge, without ever fully freeing themselves, like the figures in Goya's dark paintings.

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The group is not shown again in the film, its story remains left in the dark. The suffering and fear visible on the faces caught in close-ups are thus unrelated to personal emotions springing from an individual past or motivated by concrete, historical events. The nightly wanderers staring into an unknown space behind the camera are, instead, deeply unsettling images of affect, whose catastrophic cause can only be imagined, but whose reverberations are felt throughout the film in the seismographic tremor of the camera and the rumbling sounds repeated at intervals (see Bahcelioglu 2005: 41).

Visually, the women in the first scene are related to Mélania through her consistent association with the darkness initially shrouding the wanderers. The bar and the corridors of the hotel where she works are dimly lit, and her figure and face often vanish partly or completely in the shadows. The thick layer of black make-up around her eyes functions as a synecdoche for this encroaching darkness that threatens to devour her:

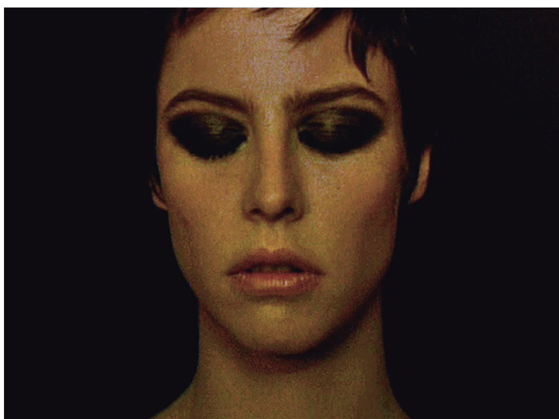

Illustration 3. Mélania in La Vie nouvelle. *Directed by Philippe Grandrieux and produced by Mandrake Films. Courtesy of Philippe Grandrieux.*

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Metaphorically, too, her personal story – like those of the other characters – is as obscure as that of the wandering group. This all gives the impression of a shared catastrophe, of Mélania as an enigmatic incarnation of the mute suffering also sensed in the faces of the older women staring into the night. Mélania's story is thereby given a larger, impersonal dimension of human suffering.

Spatial affects

Grandrieux's camera eye constantly borders on blindness, whether it is moving in the darkened hotel peopled with groping, touching, grasping bodies, or in the excessive light of the winter sun outside. This oscillation between luminal extremes echoes the extreme affective intensities ranging from animal panic to all-consuming desire captured in the close-ups. As I have already mentioned, both lighting and close-ups have an additional effect: the disruption of normal spatial coordinates associated with the tradition of "Cartesian perspectivalism". The principal spatial modality of *La Vie nouvelle* therefore becomes the *any-space-whatever* (*espace quelconque*) discussed by Deleuze as a second type of affection-image.

The filmic any-space-whatever is not tied to one particular framing like the close-up, but to a certain type of spatial construction. Like the affection-image of the face, the power of this image is premised on its disruption of the well-ordered spaces and determinate locations that merely function as changing backgrounds or "environments" for characters moving through the narrative of classical films. Any-space-whatever, Deleuze explains, "is not an abstract universal, in all times, in all places. It is a perfectly singular space, which has merely lost its homogeneity, that is, the principle of its metric relations or the connections of its own parts, so that the linkages can be made in an infinite number of ways" (2009: 113).

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It is a space "released from its human co-ordinates" (125), a "*deconnected or emptied space[...]*" (123): cinematographically, it is a space treated as a face, an autonomous vehicle of expression detached from any clear narrative or symbolic function. From the examples given by Deleuze, it is evident that this effect can be reached both through the choice of locations and through the mode of filmic representation. *La Vie nouvelle* does both.

Clearly, the figure group of the first scene finds itself in an any-space-whatever constructed by lighting and camera technique. In the following scene, where Seymour and Roscoe walk across an indistinct grass field with a highway in the background, we are presented with an any-space-whatever as material location. Their destination is a ruined concrete house standing amid scraps of metal and concrete in the field. Industrial buildings are visible in the background. This is a manifestation of the "vast unused places" that Deleuze associates with the any-space-whatever (124). Neither an identifiable nor an inhabitable location, it does not seem to be created for human dimensions or activities. The metric relation between this place and the brothel/hotel where the story later takes us is unclear. It is impossible to make of them a coherent, spatial whole or to place them on a virtual map. The same goes for the darkened brothel/hotel itself. The sense of spatial disorientation achieved on the formal level by the handheld camera and the lighting is thus doubled by the material choice and the construction of locations.

Only once does the film present the viewer with something like a classical establishing shot, where the scene of action is placed in a larger, recognisable spatial context. The scene begins with an empty, darkened corridor in the hotel. A brightly lit window at the end of the hall opens up a bird's-eye view of the surrounding city. The camera moves steadily towards it at an even pace until the bleak, Eastern European cityscape

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dominated by the straight angles of uniform, concrete apartment buildings occupies the entire frame:

Illustration 4. Bleak cityscape in La Vie nouvelle. *Directed by Philippe Grandrieux and produced by Mandrake Films. Courtesy of Philippe Grandrieux.*

Contrary to what spectators might expect, the movement away from the claustrophobic interior does not result in a visual liberation, for there is no access for the eye to move through the city, no lines opening it up for the gaze. Instead, the buildings in the foreground are like walls barring all entrance to the city; or rather, the city as a whole is like a wall, for all we can see stretching towards the horizon are rows of similar buildings. There are no signs of life. Like the grass field and the ruined building, this does not seem like a place fit for human existence. The large buildings in the background resemble cross-shaped granite gravestones, giving the city the look of a massive graveyard. Rather than providing the hotel with an identity and a spatial location in relation to the city like in a classical establishing shot, the fluid transition from the tomb-like hotel corridor to the city's morbidity establishes a universality of the any-space-whatever, making

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it into the general rule of the film's spatiality instead of the exception.

The concrete wall not only rejects the gaze of the spectator, it returns it. The myriad of empty, blackened windows are like unblinking, vacant eyes – an endless, industrial reproduction of the eyes of Mélania covered in black mascara. The sensation evoked by looking at the panorama is similar to that provoked by the desert landscape in Dumont's *Twentynine Palms*. The feeling of impenetrable, unmoving hostility and the nonconformity to the bodily and existential dimensions of human life pervade both.[7] This uncanny, sensational quality of the cityscape is enhanced by the audio track, in which we hear the same gradually intensifying, compressed rumble as in the film's first scene. The auditory repetition along with the formal similarities between the camera's approaches to bright surfaces in the dark invite the spectator to regard the content of the two scenes as related. But what principle of equation exists between the tear on the wrinkled face of an old woman and the panoramic vista of an Eastern European city? It is perhaps the pressure of this question that has led an otherwise perceptive critic like Adrian Martin to mistakenly assume that the city is Sarajevo (Martin 2012).[8] If it had indeed been the Bosnian capital, the nightly wanderers would be positioned in space and history – they would be fugitives coming *from somewhere*. However, the film does not offer any such direct, causal relation between the buildings without life

7 It is not only in Grandrieux's film that this sensation is connected to the world of industrial urbanity. Dumont's landscapes are not only natural: in the desert of *Twentynine Palms* one almost always hears the sound of an airplane or from a highway, and he films a windmill park with the same uncanny effect as the desert.

8 It might also be due to the fact that Grandrieux visited this city when shooting the documentary *Retour à Sarajevo* (1996), and presumably he got the idea for *La Vie nouvelle* during that trip.

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and the wanderers without a home. The similarity is primarily on the level of affect: both scenes present the viewer with anguished disorientation, the feeling of facing a void.

While we do not witness events in an exact, identifiable location like Sarajevo, yet it is undeniably true that these scenes and the film in general *do* contain several traces of the recent political history of the former communist countries of Europe, including the war on the Balkans (after all, Seymour is an American soldier, and Mélania a victim of human trafficking). *La Vie nouvelle* is not only an aesthetic investigation of the ontology of affect; the disjointed events it portrays also allude to a – generalized, but nevertheless recognisable – socio-historical space. Now, the question is, how do these two dimensions of the film combine? In other words, is there a politics of affect and space in *La Vie nouvelle*?

A politics of affect?

One way of dealing with the status of the socio-historical space of *La Vie nouvelle* is to simply ignore it as irrelevant to the film's main objective. That is the path taken by Greg Hainge, who argues that "We are not here witness to the crumbling of the structures of civilisation but prior to them" (Hainge 2007: 21). Hainge's point – somewhat parallel to my argument so far – is that *La Vie nouvelle* explores the experiences of bodily being in the world on a level ontologically prior to the actions and reactions of subjects and narrative. In his opinion, this entails that:

> we should regard the Eastern European landscapes in which the apparently corrupt and inhuman exchanges of *La Vie nouvelle* take place *not* as a commentary on the political state of countries destroyed by years of war and that have returned to an almost feudal state […] but, rather, as an *aesthetic* element. (19)

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That may sound a little too hasty. Instead of trying to escape the contradiction, perhaps it would be more rewarding and truer to the actual experience of watching the film to embrace it. In doing this, we must remember that affect in the words of Brian Massumi entails "the simultaneous participation of the virtual in the actual and the actual in the virtual". This means we cannot experience the pure, virtual field of intensity in itself, and also that we cannot go to any place "prior" to "the structures of civilisation". Grandrieux's film, in any case, does not take us to such a place. It seeks to give artistic form to the intensity of affect from the point of view of its actualisation in certain characters and actions. It loosens the grip of conventional portrayals of emotion and space and lets the viewer sense the vibrant vitality of the impersonal affects that make subjective emotions possible, but are not exhausted by them. Yet even though the film constantly disorients the viewer, it does not (and could not, strictly speaking) slip into the schizophrenic madness of pure affective intensity. This is clearly acknowledged by Grandrieux's co-writer of the script for *La Vie nouvelle*, Éric Vuillard: "To maintain the project of a film, and not just of simple madness. To keep the thread of action around which the sensations unfold. It is at that double price that we will have a psychic object that could be called 'a film'" (Grandrieux and Vuillard 2002: 12).

So the question remains: what is the exact nature of the link between the visual and formal liberation of bodily affects from their "capture" in narrative and individual emotions, and the "thread of action" with its socio-historical allusions? To answer this question, let us take a closer look at the latter. As we know, the film's narrative centres on the story of a woman whose body is treated as an object to be sold and abused. This de-individualisation is represented as an act of violence filling Mélania with terror. The formal destruction of the conventions of filmic emotions and spaces is thus doubled

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by a social space, where normal civic and juridical norms are absent; a lawless space, where the supposed representative of order, the American soldier Seymour, is as brutal as the gangster Boyan. The social equivalent of the formal experiment of the film is thus ultimately the anarchic violence of something like a Hobbesian state of nature.

The *immediate* historical reference of all this is obviously the phenomena of human trafficking and organised crime in the former communist states of Eastern Europe. Still, the film further relates Mélania's destiny to another disaster – often thought of as the ultimate disaster – in European history, the Holocaust. This reference is evident in the film's second scene, which takes place in the ruined concrete building. In the barren structure a group of young people, including Mélania, are lined up naked in front of Boyan, who is dressed in a long, black leather coat (images from Pasolini's *Saló* immediately come to mind). He slowly moves about, touching and sniffing them as if they were cattle at an auction, before he singles out Mélania and proceeds to cut her hair (a gesture ominously repeated when Seymour cuts Roscoe's hair before betraying him to Boyan). The allusion to the selections and the systematic destruction of markers of personal identity (clothes, ID-papers, hair) that took place on arrival at the Nazi concentration camps is clear.

Émeric de Lastens interprets this reference along the lines of Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben, who claims that the Nazi regime's gradual reduction of individuals into impersonal "bare life" was an essential step towards final annihilation (Lastens 2005: 39). According to Agamben, the production of "bare life" constitutes the essence of the political state of exception, where all rights of the citizen are annulled. Furthermore, since for Agamben the right to decide upon the state of exception defines not only the power of sovereignty in Fascist regimes, but also in modern states in

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general, the camp constitutes "the hidden matrix and *nomos* of the political space in which we are still living" (Agamben 1998: 166). Subscribing to this claim, de Lastens concludes that "the uncertain territory of *La Vie nouvelle* [...] is structurally a camp" (38).

One might of course object that the Nazi extermination depended on a strong state in control of a highly developed technological and bureaucratic machinery, while organised crime in the former communist countries as represented in *La Vie nouvelle* depends on the absence of state control. However, from the perspective of Agamben's speculative thinking this objection is irrelevant, for the point is precisely that the idea of a state or government machinery *and* its absence ultimately coincide in that state of exception which constitutes the hidden essence of any modern state apparatus. From this point of view, the political meaning of *La Vie nouvelle* can be formulated in the idea of violence and suppressive power as the ontological "truth" of human social life. A truth which is supposedly universal (as seen in the group of victims of a nameless catastrophe in the first scene), but which also seems particularly tangible in certain historical situations and places like those of some areas in post-communist Europe – yet still with the Holocaust as the ultimate historical figure of that truth.

This tendency to couple the aesthetic disruption of conventional narrative and psychology with a social pessimism bordering on nihilism also prevails in other recent French films, like in those of Bruno Dumont. As I have mentioned, *Twentynine Palms* hardly contains plot or dialogue. Instead, it equates the unmoving emptiness of the Californian desert of Joshua Tree National Park with the faces of the protagonists to suggest the desperate existential barrenness visible beneath their minimal expressions, and tangible in their sudden outbursts of aggression. When the disaster built up for throughout the film suddenly appears in the end, it literally

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comes out of the desert itself in the shape of three men – presumably soldiers from the nearby Marine Corps training camp – who beat and rape the male protagonist. Dumont thus alludes to the familiar motif in the American western movie tradition of the desert as a place of violence, but dismantles the accompanying idea of the justifiability of the acts committed by the victorious cavalry. Dumont empties the desert, erases it as a site of cinematographically mythologised, political foundation and justice, and makes it the scene of a presumably primordial truth to which he remains faithful in his other films: the meaninglessness of existence expressed in sudden leaps between mute passivity and senseless violence.

It is noteworthy that the desert is also related to justice for Gilles Deleuze, albeit in a very different way. In his book about Francis Bacon – an artist whose works, much like Grandrieux's, hover between the abstract and the figurative – he describes the process of liberating painting from figuration (a process for which Bacon's work stands as an allegory) in the following way: "It is this extreme point that will have to be reached, in order to give reign to a justice that will no longer be anything but Color and Light, a space that will no longer be anything but the Sahara" (Deleuze 2005: 20). For Deleuze, the canvas emptied of figures of meaning equates a state before the human subject in which the material world is given back its true dimensions. As Jacques Rancière remarks in a comment on this passage, "the work of art would only be able to reach this point at the expense of annulling itself" (Rancière 2004b: 7). Likewise – even though this is sometimes suggested by Deleuze – it is impossible to conceive of this prehuman, molecular space as an ideal for social or political life in any direct, practical sense.[9] Nevertheless, it is clear from

9 This dimension of Deleuze's political thinking and its relation to aesthetics is thoroughly discussed in Rancière 2004a.

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the pages of *Mille Plateaux* and the rest of his work that for Deleuze, the potential to escape from the figures of the subject on the trajectories of deterritorialisation and unforeseeable becoming – although always temporary and doomed to be recaptured by the state machinery and despotic signifying regimes – is not just related to destruction, but first of all to the human capacity for emancipatory creation and autonomy. Similarly, Brian Massumi relates the perception of the intensity of affect that escapes actualisation to "*the perception of one's own vitality*, one's sense of aliveness, of changeability (often signified as "freedom")" (Massumi 1995: 97).

So why, then, is it that the desert of affect has changed from an open space of freedom to a place of anguished disorientation and violence in Grandrieux and Dumont? How come *la vie nouvelle* promised by Grandrieux's title, reveals itself as life in the shadow of the Holocaust? This is not just an issue of a "disagreement" between a philosopher and two contemporary directors. It is a development also visible in the recent history of French cinema itself. It can be traced from the political films of Godard, who dismantled filmic conventions in order to construct a critical vocabulary out of their debris, to Grandrieux and Dumont, for whom their destruction reveals only the invariable truth of loss and terror that make a lie out of all social relations and political constructs.

There is of course no simple answer to these questions. In conclusion, though, let me briefly offer a possible mode of explanation. The development in question could be seen as part of a wider tendency in the era of European history which was ushered in by the fall of the communist regimes in the East. At first celebrated as "the end of history" marked by the victory of liberal democracy and the free market, the ensuing narrowing-down of the political spectrum accompanied by the rise of neoliberalism and right-wing nationalism has led to a widespread disenchantment with parliamentary

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politics. The disillusion, however, is accompanied by an impression that no real alternative exists. This situation – often termed "post-political" – could be seen as the background for Grandrieux's film. Its promise of a new life that turns into violent power struggles resonates with the development in many Eastern European countries. And its references to the Holocaust echo the obsession with the catastrophes of history so prevalent at a time when the inability to articulate political alternatives often translates into an ethics of mourning or into denouncements of "totalitarianism", as (in the right-wing version) a synonym for all critical opposition to the status quo, or as (this the radical left-wing version *à la* Agamben and Grandrieux) the hidden truth about the status quo.

From this perspective, there is some validity in James Quandt's denouncement of the "new French extremity" mentioned initially, although he polemically overstates his case when he claims that the film's fascination with extreme bodily sensations is a "narcissistic response to the collapse of ideology in a society traditionally defined by political polarity and theoretical certitude" (Quandt 2004: 9). To my mind, talking about narcissism is beside the point. As my analysis of *La Vie nouvelle* hopefully has indicated, Grandrieux's formal investigation of filmic space and affect is both aesthetically inventive and engaging, and the same goes for Dumont's. However, contrary to what Martine Beugnet claims, the mere capability to engage viewers with the irrational and transgressive is not in itself sufficient to give the films a "critical edge". For, as these films show, from the point of view of a body in pain, all historical differences can easily evaporate and be replaced by a mythology of endless violence. The task of critical cinema might be the exact reverse, namely to reveal the historical determinations of the feelings of despair and pessimism captured by the camera, instead of turning them into ontological truths, while at the same time reconnecting

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the formal experiments of art – the disorientations of affect and space – to the possibilities of freedom.

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Appraisal Theory and the Emotions *Eleos* and *Phobos*: A Contribution of Current Emotion Theory to the Interpretation of Greek Tragedy

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In Sophocles' *Antigone*, the situation becomes irreversible and deeply tragic when Antigone commits suicide in the vault. Against the order of Kreon, the king of Theben, she buries her brother Polyneikes, who attacked the city and whose body was ordered to be left unburied. For her refusal to obey that order, the king sentences her to death, and she is buried alive in the vault. Her groom, Haimon, who failed to save his bride, now kneels in desperation in front of the strangled woman. Kreon, who is also Antigone's uncle and father to Haimon, ultimately regrets the draconian verdict; when he enters the vault, he witnesses the cruel scenery as described above and realizes that he is too late to undo the consequences of his decision.

A messenger reports this disturbing image of the three in the *Exodos* of *Antigone*. Composed about 440 BC, the tragedy celebrated its premiere in Athens (Flashar 2000: 58).

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Antigone was already considered a classic when Aristotle wrote and amended his *Poetics* about a hundred years later (Fuhrmann 1992: 13), where he meticulously described the structure and goals of tragedy. Central amongst these goals is to evoke specific emotions in the appreciation of tragedy. *Eleos* and *Phobos*, the two emotions which are often translated as "pity and fear", are frequently named throughout the treatise as the emotions to be experienced in tragic incidents such as those presented in *Antigone*. Aristotle moreover points out "the nature (or the result) of the emotional experience of tragedy" (Halliwell 1986: 188), and calls it *Katharsis*.[1]

However, Aristotle did not exemplify the nature of *Katharsis* in detail (Fuhrmann 1992; Girshausen 2005). The supporting evidence can indeed be called meagre, with philologist Stephen Halliwell even declaring that a "confident interpretation" of the notion is impossible (Halliwell 1986: 184). The evidence has nevertheless provoked heated discussions and controversies on the meaning of *Katharsis* extending from ancient Greek times down to the present day.

The elicitation of pity and fear in response to Antigone's suicide seems reasonable. However, arguments persist that *Eleos* and *Phobos* describe emotional concepts alien to current experience, and that any contemporary language will fail to depict the notions adequately. Wolfgang Schadewaldt (1991) has argued this point extensively in his controversial 1955 article "Furcht und Mitleid?". However, as for the notion of *Katharsis*, a consensus cannot be reached on a translation that can be considered most adequate to the pair of Greek emotions.

Another Aristotelian source provides further evidence for

1 The term *Katharsis* will not be translated here as I suggest that we should refrain from any replacement by contemporary terms, as Halliwell (1986) and Fuhrmann (1992) do.

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the discussion on the two tragic emotions: the *Rhetoric* presents a full-fledged emotion theory of what the philosopher conceptualized as the spectrum of human emotions. *Eleos* and *Phobos* are among these emotions and are described scrupulously in the *Rhetoric*.[2] As the text addresses mundane contexts, the connection to tragedy is not yet made.

The descriptions of emotions in the *Rhetoric* present specific evaluations as a necessary precursor to the elicitation of emotion. It is commonly recognized that a current cutting-edge psychological approach to emotion research is eventually set in the tradition of Aristotle's theory (Lazarus 2001: 60; Roseman 2001: 82). This contemporary approach is referred to as "appraisal theory of emotion".

In his introductory book *Einführung in die psychologische Ästhetik* (2006), Christian Allesch points out two major approaches to the investigation of aesthetic phenomena: the "from above" philosophical and the "from below" psychological, respectively empirical. He asserts that these approaches are traditionally disparate, leading to a monodisciplinary sterility, and pleads for a complementation (Allesch 2006: 140-145). My article is also an attempt to reconcile these different approaches to aesthetics.

Cognitive scientists show increasing interest in aesthetic research, and their investigations reveal interesting phenomena about cognitive processes underlying aesthetic experience. Neuroscientist Semir Zeki even announces that "no theory of aesthetics that is not substantially based on the activity of

2 There are critics who decline to transfer the *Rhetoric* to the *Poetics*, but Stephen Halliwell "emphatically" promotes the policy of regarding the Aristotelian work as a whole: "we cannot afford to neglect the help which the latter [the *Rhetoric*] provides in the interpretation of tragic pity and fear [...]". Anything else, Halliwell writes, would mean to "drive an unnecessary wedge into Aristotle's thinking." (1986: 175)

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the brain is ever likely to be complete" (Zeki 1999: 1). The research on aesthetic emotions, as emotions in the context of the arts are commonly referred to (Lazarus 1991; Silvia 2005), can and will benefit from the merging of disciplines – in this instance this means bridging theatre studies and philosophy on the one hand and the cognitive sciences, particularly psychological emotion theories, on the other.

The present article investigates the tragic emotions of *Eleos* and *Phobos* using tools provided by appraisal theory. With caution, the consequences for the notion of *Katharsis* are drawn. I will argue that the incident inside the vault in *Antigone* can be conceived as a defining event in the light of current emotion theory.

An introduction to appraisal theory

For long periods, researchers were reluctant to investigate emotions empirically. Behaviorism even declared them to be immeasurable private events and hence suspended them as objects of empirical research. Tribute has to be paid to the psychologists Magda Arnold and Paul Ekman for the reestablishment of emotion as a relevant research topic. Arnold is commonly considered the founder of current appraisal theory. Angela Schorr remarks that since the 1980s the field has virtually "exploded" (Schorr 2001: 28). Today, emotions are considered as an essential faculty of the (human) mind and as a highly relevant research topic for empirical investigation.

Conceptions of emotion have indeed changed. A shift away from the qualitative component of feeling to other modalities of emotion contributed significantly to their measurability. For example, Ira J. Roseman presents the following multimodal scheme of emotion:

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(1) phenomenology (corresponds with feeling);
(2) physiology (corresponds with physiological reaction);
(3) expressions (describing typical facial and postural expressions, etc.);
(4) behaviors (corresponds with behavioral reaction); and finally
(5) emotivations (referring to motivational patterns evoked by particular emotions). (Roseman 2001: 75)

Emotions are moreover accurately distinguished from other affective states, such as "preferences" ("stable evaluative judgements"), "attitudes" ("beliefs and predispositions towards specific objects or persons"), and "moods" (enduring "predominance of subjective feelings") (Scherer 2005: 703-707). Appraisal theorist Klaus Scherer describes emotions as phenomena of relatively short duration, intensive, to a high degree "appraisal driven" – as they are usually elicited by a particular internal or external event – and yielding strong behavioral impacts. Moods, for instance, are of longer duration and less intensive and hence qualify as affective states, but not as emotions (Scherer 2005: 699-704).

Although such descriptions of emotion seem tightly defined and clear, it appears that researchers cannot agree upon what emotions essentially *are*. In the 1980s researchers counted more than one hundred valid scientific definitions of emotion (Scherer 2005: 696), and this number has not yet diminished. Emotions have been described "as among the most powerful of human experiences and […] often sought or avoided with great energy and effort" (Silvan S. Tomkins, quoted by Roseman 2001: 81), or as "a felt tendency toward anything appraised as good, and away from anything appraised as bad" (Magda Arnold, quoted by Schorr 2001: 22). From the perspective of neuroscience, Joseph LeDoux describes emotions plainly as "biological functions of the

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nervous system" (LeDoux 2008: 12). Scherer eventually writes:

> [...] I have described emotion as an evolved, phylogenetically continuous mechanism that allows increasingly flexible adaptation to environmental contingencies by decoupling stimulus and response and thus creating a latency for response optimization [...]. (Scherer 2001: 92)

Remarkably, several emotion theorists even consider it problematic to group different phenomena such as fear, pity, joy and pride under the umbrella of one notion. LeDoux notes that "the various classes of emotions are mediated by separate neural systems that have evolved for different reasons", and he concludes: "We shouldn't mix findings about different emotions all together independent of the emotion that they are findings about. Unfortunately, most work in psychology and brain science has done so" (LeDoux 2008: 16). Psychologist Arvid Kappas identifies emotions as "many-splendored things" (Kappas 2007: 7) and frequently emphasizes the remarkably low cohesion between the components of emotion (Kappas 2011). It is a striking question to pose if the supposition of a holistic conception of emotion is indeed a folk psychological fallacy, deriving from the "meagre" evidence that all of these states have a clear phenomenological-qualitative component. Doubts on holistic conceptions of emotions appear to stem particularly from evolutionary perspectives on emotion, which consider when, how and for what reason in evolution an emotional response pattern developed. Being aware of the adaptive value plays a crucial role in understanding emotions. Definitions such as Scherer's particularly emphasize this aspect and will play a role in the analysis of the Aristotelian notions of *Eleos* and *Phobos*.

In a recent paper Gross and Feldman Barrett identify four primary perspectives on emotion within the many valid ap-

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proaches of the cognitive sciences. Among these four perspectives is appraisal theory (Gross and Feldman Barrett 2011). Despite the fact that appraisal theory is in any case a leading paradigm in current psychology, I want to give some specific arguments in support of the theory.

In an introductory paper, Ira J. Roseman and Craig A. Smith write: "What is appraisal theory? In simplest form, its essence is the claim that emotions are elicited by evaluations (appraisals) of events and situations" (Roseman and Smith 2001: 3). It is the interlude of appraisal that crucially decouples emotions from the stimuli that precede them. Emotions are thus elicited by particular appraisal structures which, in turn, are responses to external or internal stimuli. The appraisal of anger, for instance, can be described as follows:

> […] anger, for example, consists of (a) appraising an event as incongruent with a goal or motive, (b) appraising an agent (typically another person) as blameworthy for the event, and (c) appraising one's potential to cope with the event as high, such as through self-assertion or aggression […]. (Silvia 2005: 346)

I previously mentioned that appraisal theory shows remarkable similarities with Aristotle's theory of emotion. In the *Rhetoric*, the emotion of *Eleos* occurs when the following conditions are met: (a) the present threat of upcoming mischief or annihilation of a fellow man, (b) this mischief is undeserved or unworthy, and (c) the awareness of potentially being jeopardised by the same threat (Aristotle 2007: 100).[3] Such remarkable structural similarities emphasise why appraisal theory seems most promising for the reconsideration of the tragic emotions.

3 Schadewaldt provides a comprehensive summary of Aristotle's definition of *Eleos* (Schadewaldt 1991).

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Another argument in support of appraisal theory stems from the assumption that appraisals as elicitors of emotion provide the means to categorise a potentially infinite number of emotions. Roseman and Smith state "that people from different cultures will systematically appraise seemingly similar events quite differently and thus will systematically experience different emotions in response to those events" (Roseman and Smith 2001: 18). This is to be considered particularly relevant when it comes to the interpretation of emotions conceptualized by ancient Greek thought. Contrary to this, Paul Ekman and Wallace Friesen empirically evaluated six prototypical facial expressions that corresponded with what they identified as basic or primary emotional states. These emotional states – anger, sadness, happiness, fear, disgust and surprise – are hence claimed as universal, pancultural emotions of the human condition and commonly form the basis of the paradigm of basic or discrete models of emotion (Ekman and Friesen 1976).[4] Scherer, however, suggests a different approach which he calls the "component process model":

> Contrary to discrete emotion theories […], the component process model does not share the assumption of a limited number of innate, hard-wired affect programs that mix or blend with each other in order to produce the enormous variety of different emotional states. Rather, the emotional process is considered as a continuously fluctuating pattern of change in several organismic subsystems, yielding an extraordinarily large number of different emotions. (Scherer 2001: 108)

Eventually, proponents of basic or primary emotions cannot neglect the vast variety of emotions and hence invent

4 Different researchers in fact propose different numbers of basic emotions, mostly more than six (Lazarus 2001; Roseman 2001; Sauter 2010).

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secondary emotions as a contingent "blend" of the "affect programs" Scherer mentioned. The appraisal theorist, on the other hand, cannot ignore the fact that certain emotions, such as fear or anger, indeed seem to be universal. Scherer thus conceptualizes predominant and universal "modal emotions" as those which are preceded by "frequently recurring patterns of environmental evaluation results" (Scherer 2001: 108).

Dimensional and discrete models of emotion indeed correspond, but the foci are set differently to a degree that cannot be underestimated. Whereas the first considers appraisals as recurring and to some extent universal, the second claims that emotions themselves are universal. Whereas the second hence speaks of "real" emotions and mixes of these "real" emotions, the first assumes an infinite number of emotions that are not organized within a hierarchy. The first emphasizes experience and learning mechanisms, the second coordination by inheritance. One could draw a shallow conclusion that the second focuses on biology, and the first on culture. What jeopardises the first perspective is the issue outlined above, namely that different organic structures correlate with different emotional states and that cohesiveness between them is low. However, I propose that the dimensional approach advocated by Scherer corresponds more properly with our cultural reality.

However, an emotion theory that sets such a strong emphasis on cognitive appraisal faces the problem that not all emotions are elicited by propositional assessments of stimuli or situations. Besides stimuli-and thus cognitive-independent elicitors of emotion, such as circadian hormonal change, which are regarded separately by psychological emotion theories, appraisal theory is indeed involved in the struggle to account for emotions which *are* elicited by external or internal stimuli, but occur too fast to be preceded by a propositional analysis of these stimuli. Certain impressions, such as a threatening reptile, a dead corpse or a facial expression, evoke immediate,

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involuntary emotional responses. The viewer is literally struck by these pictures.

In response to this, Roseman and Smith state that critics often ignore the fact that the notion of "cognition" embraces far more than propositional "reasoning" processes (Roseman and Smith 2001: 8). Instantaneous mirroring mechanisms, for instance, in which the brain involuntarily simulates emotions communicated by facial expressions of others (Wicker *et al.* 2003), are in fact also "cognitive" and affect us immediately. Richard Lazarus conludes that "Considerable agreement can be found about two main ways in which process of appraising might operate. First, it could be deliberate and largely conscious. Second, it could be intuitive, automatic, and unconscious." (Lazarus 2001: 51)

Appraisal theorists Craig Smith and Leslie Kirby present an elaborate model of emotion elicitation which regards both ways of appraising and emphasises their mutual dependency and influence. First, emotions can be elicited by "reasoning processes" which refer to deliberate and cognizant processes. Secondly, emotions occur automatically and instantaneously via "associative processes". "Associative" processes are not exclusively triggered by "concrete stimuli", but also by "conceptual stimuli", such as "abstract ideas". This indicates that also "associative" mechanisms can be acquired and learned. The model describes the elicitation of emotion as an interaction between bottom-up (associative) and top-down (reasoning) processing (Smith and Kirby 2001). Interestingly, also neuroscientists emphasize this kind of interaction in correspondence to the organic structures of the brain which are involved in emotion processing (Philips *et al.* 2003). The assumption of such interaction between bottom-up and top-down processing is crucial for the interpretation of *Eleos, Phobos* and might also be helpful for an approach to *Katharsis*.

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Eleos *and* Phobos *reconsidered*

Although the translation of *Eleos* and *Phobos* as pity and fear is not deemed incorrect here and gives a good idea of the nature of these emotions, there are also other relevant translations. Schadewaldt, for instance, suggests using pairs of terms: "emotion and lament" for *Eleos* and "horror and shiver" for *Phobos* (Schadewaldt 1991).[5] As a matter of fact, valid arguments can be raised against all translations. Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, for example, who is considered one of the most famous interpreters of *Katharsis* since the 18th century, is accused of contaminating the notion of *Eleos* with Christian ideology by claiming that it corresponds to pity. Schadewaldt argued that the Greeks had no concept of what Lessing conceptualized as the virtuous disposition of pity. In the following sections I will not decide on any one translation of the tragic emotions, but solely focus on understanding their qualities in the light of current emotion theory.

Shadings of the emotional quality of *Phobos* are indicated by its various translations, which are fear, horror, shiver, and sometimes also terror. Emotion theories invariably conceptualize the emotion associated with fear or horror and its physiological component of shiver as a fundamental and universal phenomenon, be it in the framework of Scherer's modal or Ekman's basic emotions. Supposedly no one would neglect the apparent importance of the invariant emotion of fear for the survival of species. Is it then reasonable to consider *Phobos*

5 The analogous German terms used by Schadewaldt are "Rührung und Jammer" for *Eleos* and "Schrecken und Schauder" for *Phobos*. Schadewaldt's interpretation of *Eleos* and *Phobos* is considered controversial today, anyhow, two influential philologists, Hellmut Flashar and Manfred Fuhrmann, approve Schadewaldt's reading of the pair of emotions.

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in the context of tragedy as the mere modal emotion of fear or horror?

The philologist Ulrich von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff once described *Phobos* as the horror evoked by the sight of the horrific face of Medusa (Ulrich von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, quoted by Schadewaldt 1991: 260). The famous Rubens' painting "The Head of Medusa" is a splendid example featuring a vast array of what can be called fundamental, unconditioned fear-eliciting stimuli: spiders and scorpions crawl upon Medusa's face and her snakes are anyway situated in a threatening proximity to her head. Reptiles are considered amongst the oldest predators of mammals (Isbell 2006), herpetophobia is an evolutionary-aroused ancient mechanism, crucial for the survival of species. Medusa herself must constantly associate her snakes with a perilous threat. On Rubens' canvas, her beheading seems to bring no relief – her pale-dead face is still steeped in horror. The abominable cut-throat is spilled with blood and filled with little snakes; it is a superb representation of a disgusting scene that causes horror and shivering.

The painting is full of bottom-up elicitors of fear. We could say that our immediate and appropriate response to such impressions is mainly orchestrated by evolution. For the greater part of human history it made perfect sense to avoid and flee at the sight of these stimuli, such "associative" processes can hardly ever be suppressed, and the arts keep a trace of those fundamental anthropological reactions to the environment.

The tragedy *Antigone* features such basic fear-stimuli, and the description (or depiction) of Antigone's suicide can be considered as an image of fear in the described sense if the intellectual components are put aside. We perceive a strangled, tantalised body with a dead-pale face, a horrified screamer embracing the lifeless body and a shivering observer. We immediately grasp the horrified faces as such and mirror the emotion. The tragic mask shows a remarkable resemblance to

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the basic facial expression of fear. Greek Tragedy in general deals with violence and bloodshed, so it seems reasonable to assume that one of the tragic emotions targets these components. The presence of pure cruelty, without any regard to the complex plot of tragedy, evokes the modal emotion of *Phobos*.

As indicated by the description extracted from the *Rhetoric* outlined above, explaining *Eleos* appears to be a more complex task. Especially the notion of undeserved or unworthy mischief calls for the conscious evaluation of Antigone's death as being unjustified. By referring again to Antigone's suicide, I want to exemplify how the same incident that elicits *Phobos* also has the potential to elicit *Eleos*.

For illustrative purposes, let us first assume again that we have no particular knowledge of the play 'Antigone': we do not know who Antigone, Kreon and Haimon are. We only know of the messenger, describing the image of a young woman that strangled herself in the vault; a young man on his knees and an older man witnessing the scene. With sparse knowledge, the report would evoke just such an image. With more detailed knowledge of the tragedy, we would perceive the societal constellation of events behind the incident: a princess has strangled herself, a prince is on his knees, and a king stands aside.

However, there is more to know in order to heighten our lamentation: the woman hanging is the bride of the young man and the niece of the older man; the groom is the son of the older man, who is the uncle of the dead woman and the father of the desperate groom. We slowly come to sense the degree of agony of the *Exodos* of 'Antigone'.

Complete knowledge reveals the full magnitude of the catastrophe culminating in this single image: we see a young woman who has decided to commit suicide; she was a princess who buried her brother and thus violated the order of

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the king, her uncle, who had forbidden burial of the traitor. We see a son who has failed to convince his father to spare his niece; he is the groom who was incapable of saving his bride from the wrath of his father; a lover who came too late, who witnessed the desperate suicide of his beloved. We see a king who in a state of *Hybris* has used his authority too rigorously and sentenced his niece to death by burying her alive; he, the uncle, realised his severe mistake too late; a mistake that consists of nothing less than the refusal to bury the dead and the command to bury the living. We see the heirs of Oedipus. We recognise Antigone, Haimon and Kreon and are overwhelmed by *Eleos*. We come to understand the tragic dimension of the drama.

Only a certain complexity of the plot can create the arousal of such a degree of *Eleos*. The more we know, the richer the picture of *Eleos* will appear. *Eleos* is not a modal emotion. Instead, its complexity suggests that it is a historically and culturally specific experience. *Eleos* demands intellectual capacities and propositional appraisal, in this context the explicit knowledge of Antigone's, Haimon's and Kreon's identity, of their (close) relationship and the actions that finally led to the tragic incident of Antigone's suicide. This knowledge is a necessary ingredient to experience the horrific picture of strangled Antigone; it is also a reason to pity and lament, and to feel *Eleos*. Moreover, we need a system that provides the framework for these identities, relations and actions and the proper appraisal of them. *Eleos* demands culture. *Eleos* has to be considered as culturally evolved emotion that has been given birth by the Greeks. Appraisal theory and particularly dimensional or modal models of emotion can account for such contingent emotions that are alien to modern societies.

Eleos is hence to be considered as the result of "reasoning" top-down processes. The emotion strikes us as intensely as *Phobos*, perhaps even more so. *Phobos* necessarily emerged

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early in the course of evolution, whereas *Eleos* arose later as a consequence of cultural specificities and necessities.

It is also important to keep in mind that the boundaries between "associative" and "reasoning" processes are blurred, and that we might not judge *Phobos* simply as "primitive" and *Eleos* as rather "intelligent" emotion. One of the indications that this is true is the rather equivalent treatment of the emotions in the *Rhetoric*. There is no value in giving advantage to any of the two emotions because it is their complementary arousal that is pointed out as a specification of tragedy. As a matter of fact, in the recent discussions of the concept of *Katharsis, Eleos* has gained significantly more attention from philologists than *Phobos*. But the tragic emotions complement each other in order to ultimately form a tragic picture. Antigone's suicide is not only a picture steeped in gore displaying essential threats; it is also a picture of profound human error and failure. Both aspects elicit their appropriate emotions, constituting one experience; an interesting thought for appraisal theory.

Ultimately, the third crucial aspect of tragedy on the side of the audience is *Katharsis*. It emerges through *Eleos* and *Phobos* and finally constitutes Antigone's suicide as an aesthetic experience. As a conclusion of my article, I want to make a few remarks on the possible role of *Katharsis*. Scholars commonly give *Katharsis* an essential role in the reception of tragedy. It appears surprising in this context that Aristotle mentions *Katharsis* only once throughout the *Poetics*. In this single allusion, the notion is essentially connected to the emotions of *Eleos* and *Phobos*. As there is no mention of it in the *Rhetoric*, the conclusion seems valid that *Katharsis* has something to do in particular with the arousal of emotions experienced in the context of tragedy. In my view, Aristotle indicated a fundamental difference between *Eleos* and *Phobos* in mundane and artistic contexts by furnishing the emotions

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in the context of the reception of tragedy with *Katharsis*, having realised that certain aspects of aesthetic experience are fundamentally different from mundane experience.

Psychologists have described aesthetic experience as an interaction between bottom-up and top-down processing, bottom-up referring to basic perceptual processes and top-down to an "intentional shift" of these or a process of "cognitive control" (Cupchik *et al.* 2009, Leder *et al.* 2004). *Katharsis* might be associated with such top-down processes: witnessing the incident of strangled Antigone, and thus going through the emotions of *Eleos* and *Phobos*, the appreciator is alleviated by the simultaneous insight into the artistic nature of the events as the they are presented. The incident is reappraised accordingly and eventually turned into a *scene*. *Eleos* and *Phobos* become aesthetic emotions.

Hence, when the incident of Antigone's suicide occurs, we perceive on the one hand an image of violence, pain and death: *Phobos*. On the other hand, we see an undeserved collapse of fortune into misfortune, an inadequacy of the world, the downfall of Oedipus' heirs: *Eleos*. Finally, in a truly contradictory manner, we see that we have emotions in the face of fictitious incidents; we see what Antigone, Haimon and Kreon presently are, namely *dramatis personae*: *Katharsis*. The picture of strangled Antigone ultimately resolves in the perceptual triptychon of (tragic) aesthetic experience, composed by *Eleos*, *Phobos* and *Katharsis*.

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A World of Emotions – Mediality in the Works of Pierre Alferi

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A family projected as shadows on the walls of their Parisian home, living their lives through the incoherent babblings of a two-year-old, and understood on the basis of the nonsensical writings of his five-year-old brother: three examples of the intricate ways in which the emotional ties of a family are explored through their absorption into more or less lucid medialisation in Pierre Alferi's second novel, *Le Cinéma des familles* (1999).

Le Cinéma des familles is an ambitious and ambiguous work that places itself between different tendencies in contemporary French prose. On the one hand, Alferi's novel is fairly conventional in its setup, in the sense that it takes shape as an account of the main character's life from childhood into adulthood, while the family serves as the frame and theme of the narration. But on the other hand, Alferi's varied and playful prose with its detours into dramatic and lyrical forms provides a powerful deconstruction of all the expectations of narrative cohesion attached to the genre. It is not only a

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family novel, it is also, however subtly, an autofictional account, or, perhaps more precisely, as it has been phrased by Jan Baetens, "an act of defiance" (2010: 67)[1] in the face of the sentimental self-absorption in the wave of autofictional prose that has swept through French literature during the last twenty or thirty years.

Alferi's use of this particular genre is not merely an innocent example of literary experimentation, but a conscious attempt to reflect on the potential of literature, particularly that of French literature, at a time when tradition no longer seems to provide adequate descriptions of the world around us. At least this is the French experience, that of a people whose habit it was to provide intellectual, philosophical and artistic answers to all our questions on the basis of the nation's great literary and intellectual heritage, but who today, in a world changed by globalisation and radicalised capitalism, struggles to provide any answers at all. The French wave of autofictional accounts has been read as the literary strain of this impotence. It stands as the symbol of a literature that has turned away from the world towards the inner workings of the subject and the text itself.[2] One could argue, however, that Alferi turns to autofiction precisely to overcome this limitation, by highlighting how even this genre can be the vehicle of a playful experimentation with literary forms whose object and aim, the world, are the very opposite of form.

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1 Baetens' article appears in a special issue on the work of Pierre Alferi in the journal *SubStance*, featuring a number of excellent articles and covering the majority of his works.

2 A notable symptom of and a counterforce to this state of affairs is the one heralded in the manifesto for a new *Littérature-monde*, which calls for the exploration of new worlds in French literature along the following lines: "The world, the subject, meaning, history, the 'referent': for decades these have been bracketed off by the masterminds, inventors of a literature with no other object than itself" ("Toward a 'World-Literature' in French" 2009: 54).

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The precise manner in which this "worldliness" of Alferi's takes shape while breaking with the narrative schemas of contemporary French literature certainly calls for a nuanced exploration. Here, I will endeavour to show that one of the key themes in the movement from form to world lies in emotion. Or rather, I will bring out – in *Le Cinéma des familles* and later works – how Alferi's works investigate the critical potential of textual practices by emphasising the interplay of two different registers of poetic practice: one that is singular, relying on the potential of literature to affect others through intensity; and one that is of a more complex nature exploring the limits between individual and collective structures of emotion as they appear in textual and linguistic practices, such as literature. I use the term literature cautiously since Alferi is one of the leading figures in a new generation of French poets and authors who, above all, are characterised by their ability and eagerness to explore and cross generic and artistic boundaries in their search for expression. Olivier Cadiot, Tanguy Viel, Franck Leibovici, Anne-James Chaton and Alferi are but a few of several contemporary artists whose work extends across a variety of fields including poetry, prose, music, cinema and, in Alferi's case, also philosophy, and their forms of experimentation can hardly be discarded as purely formal investigations. The aim of their border-crossing activities is not so much to develop transmedial forms of expression as such, but rather to truly facilitate the understanding of the different media as vehicles of the communication of emotions, "different intuitive methods" (1995: 4), as Alferi succinctly describes it in the manifesto "La mécanique lyrique", which he wrote in collaboration with Cadiot.

In a globalised world, where new media and multimedial technologies increasingly combine text, images, sound and film into new forms of expression, it becomes clear that the borders between art forms no longer correspond to different

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kinds of thought and perhaps never did. In his recent *Premediations: Affect and Mediality After 9/11* (2010), Richard A. Grusin develops the concept of mediality to describe this situation as a structure of power.[3] Inspired by Michel Foucault's lectures on *Governmentality*, Grusin emphasises the role of medialisation in the organisation of a people *for* governance, and accordingly the importance of media-critique for the analysis of power (72-77). Mediality thus designates not only a present condition – living in a time when the processes of remediation are accelerated – but also a specific analytical take on the role media play in contemporary society. Media in the broadest sense of the word, including not only what we ordinarily understand by the term, but also broader categories of language and visuality as well as narrative and generical forms.

Alferi's practice, as it unfolds within this group of younger authors, is directly aimed at bringing the world back into literature by exploring the ways in which language and writing partake in the medial landscape of today. His understanding of writing is therefore largely consistent with the idea of writing as medium that Grusin presents, examining the role writing and language play for the formation of different social entities such as relationships, families and communities. So when the narrative *Le Cinéma des familles* is jumbled, when it uses different registers and alludes to different art forms, the point is not, as it could be imagined, to undermine representation, nor to undermine the institutional status of the work of art. Alferi's narrative and linguistic contortions

3 Grusin's work here builds upon his work with J. David Bolter in their *Remediation: Understanding New Media* (1999). Here they clearly show how different forms represent different registers for the remediation of affects, perceptions, thoughts and emotions that are already in a sense both mediated and remediations of previous affects etc.

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serve to reproduce the experience of the protagonist's childhood as it was felt in a world where feelings and emotions were primarily experienced in medialised forms. Alferi's aim is to explore the ways in which emotions are linguistically medialised in order to show, and criticise, the ways in which language reflects the realities of contemporary society by acting as a medialisation of emotions.

The affects of language

Grusin's reflections on mediality are written with reference to and in discussion with Brian Massumi's philosophy of affect as it is presented in his *Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation* (2002). Here Massumi argues that the radicalised mediality of the last decades accentuates fundamental problems in the theories of representation and representation critique that dominated the cultural sciences in the twentieth century. The new mediality necessitates novel theoretical developments that highlight the direct bodily and sensorial impact of expressions, and Massumi therefore places the questions of art and aesthetics at the heart of the discussion. Following Massumi, we recognise that whereas old and new media alike are not exclusively representational, their impact far more resides at the level of the non-conscious. Following Spinoza, Massumi terms that impact *affect*. While the level at which sensations take impact is either too small or too large to be registered as meaning, yet the sensations are nevertheless highly powerful and readily transferable through structures of intensity: "Affects are *virtual synesthetic perspectives* anchored in (functionally limited by) the actually existing, particular things that embody them" (Massumi: 35). Affects, then, are virtual in that they are non-conscious, synesthetic in that they transcend the traditional divisions between media and genres, and perspectival in that they are always anchored

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in a singular event. Massumi's thought receives its strength precisely from the combination of those features. That combination allows for the analysis of phenomena of a medialised culture as affects with a real and felt impact, despite, or even because of their ephemeral nature.

Massumi's thoughts are interesting in my context since, in a comprehensive and challenging way, they place emotions, codified and dissimulated as affects, at the centre of artistic expression. And furthermore, his descriptions of the exteriority of emotion are strikingly parallel to the exteriorisation of family life, so characteristic of Alferi's first novel. In *Le Cinéma des familles* emotions are always mediated, not in the sense that they are represented, but rather in the sense that emotions are always presented and present as medialities that intervene and partake in the exchanges between the various family members.

"– Raquimara drompitolon dupourilugamè? / – Caramalou l'ontélechelle!" (Alferi 1999: 7) is the phrasing of the two first lines of the novel, the barely discernible words of the parents as they are transcribed by Tom, the narrator's older brother. In Tom's rendition, the family's language is transformed into a landscape of pure rhythm that, despite its illegibility, becomes affectively synonymous with home for the narrator: "In there I found something that talked to me that seduced me, a rhythm an articulation".[4] While the older brother's language resembles the linguistic attempts of the youngest in the family and provides an alternative to the rule-governed speech of the parents, it also represents an alternative that is constituted through miming the parents whose speech is in many cases equally undecipherable to the ears of the youngsters. The

4 "J'y devinais quelque chose qui me parlait me séduisait, un rythme une articulation" (Alferi 1999: 8). Unless otherwise indicated, all translations from the original French are mine.

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construction of language within the confines of the family is displayed as a complex dialogue between the children's experimental exploration of the capability of the body to produce sound, and the "logos" of the parental speech. "Where was the familiar? In deflected grammar or in measured words? Where the exotic? In the words of the brother or the grammar of the parents?"[5] While the "domestication" of the baby through language is presented as a process not governed by conventional rules, language here, on the contrary, makes its own rules as a medium whose textual effects negotiate between various affective forms of alienation or exoticism. Language is played out between the family members; it is not what binds them together.

The descriptions of family life in Alferi's novel portray the exteriorisation of what used to be emotional ties to the degree where they could almost serve as an illustration of Massumi's account of the exteriorisation of sensation. "With the body the 'walls' are the sensory surfaces" (14), Massumi states, using the echo as the model for his description of sensation as a reverberation between its impact and the "feeling of having a feeling" (13). The echo extends as a sonorous effect between surfaces, not on the surfaces, just as language is played out between the family members, not in or as a connecting link between them. Affect amounts to the intensity created by this reverberation, or as in our present example, to the intensity of the linguistic interactions between the adults and the children that constitute the novel.

The resonance between the exteriorisation of sensation in Massumi's account and in Alferi's novel becomes even more apparent when Alferi turns to cinematic metaphors and de-

5 "Où était le familier? Dans la grammaire infléchie ou les mots sur mesure? Où, l'exotisme? Dans les mots du frère ou la grammaire des parents?" (Alferi 1999: 15).

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scription. As its title suggests, cinema is a prevailing theme in the novel, and Alferi looks to cinema precisely because it is the art form that demonstrates most clearly the exterior nature of affect. In cinema everything is played out on or projected onto the screen, just as language in Alferi's novel is a screen upon which the emotional "ties" of the family are projected. The cinematic appears in various forms throughout the novel. An example is when the life of our protagonist, the younger brother, is presented in the shape of a pastiche of Robert Flaherty and Zoltan Korda's film *Elephant Boy* (1937). At other instances, the daily life of our family is referenced as a catalogue of possible films. And a particularly telling example is when the narrator turns into a camera, a *cameramoi* or camera-I. This device not only shows us the family as it would appear in the limiting perspective of the framed cinema image, but also reflects upon the way in which the camera movement's narrative framing influences the affective colouring of the scene: "Moving forwards: Anxiety […] Moving backwards: Melancholy."[6] These affects are inherent neither to matter nor to persons. They appear as anxiety on the narrative surface created between the narrator and the narrated – *le monde*, as he terms it – when the world comes towards him. In similar fashion they appear as melancholy when the world seems to leave the receding *cameramoi*. The affective does not connect the subject to the world, but comes into being as interference between the two domains. Accordingly, the world or the worldliness of Alferi's prose is not a product of representation. Language doesn't copy the world of his childhood, but becomes the world of his childhood – it is the space where his childhood becomes a world. *Le Cinéma des familles*, then, employs cinematic metaphors whose func-

6 "Travelling avant: Angoisse […] Travelling arrière: Mélancolie" (Alferi 1999: 59).

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tion it is to underline the projection of self and of world onto the screen of language in the form of affects.

Between affect and emotion

The relationship between literature and cinema in Alferi's work is complex and deserves a closer scrutiny than space allows for here.[7] For now, it suffices to say that the function of the metaphor of cinema in Alferi's language is, by contrast, to emphasise the medial nature of language, and by his treatment of the relationship between cinema and the affect, to highlight the relation between mediality and affect. Owing to its mechanical nature, cinema embodies the transformation of emotions and impressions into transferable affects, as described by Massumi. However, what seems to interest Alferi is not only the elevation of emotions to the level of the affective in the search for the precision or intensity of the phrase, as described above, but also the perhaps more complicated ways in which these affects are reinscribed into different contexts through reading, seeing or remediation.

In his work Massumi alludes to this passage, using the very concept of *emotion* to signify this reentry of affect into context, albeit negatively:

> Emotion is qualified intensity, the conventional, consensual point of insertion of intensity into semantically and semiotically formed progression, into narrativizable action-reaction circuits, into function and meaning. It is intensity owned and recognized. (Massumi: 28)

Affect opposes the consensual, and emotion represents the mere reterritorialisation of the active and transferable affects

7 See Met 2005, and Berquin 2006.

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into the commonplace, according to Massumi. However, in my view, and in the works of Alferi, the relationship is less definite. The task is not merely to produce affects from emotions, but also to examine how this process constitutes itself as a poetic metabolism, exchanging between internal and external states: transferable affects and contextual emotions.

This difference testifies to two different conceptions of the role of language and media in Massumi and Alferi, respectively. Massumi – a philosophy professor with a PhD in French Literature – and Alferi – an author with a PhD in philosophy – are both highly influenced by the thought of Gilles Deleuze. In Massumi, who has translated a number of Deleuze's works into English, this is felt not least in his treatment of the concept of *affect*, which is inspired not simply by Spinoza, but more precisely by Deleuze's interpretation of Spinoza, a key figure throughout his oeuvre. In Deleuze the opposition between affect and emotion is emphasised far more than in Spinoza's own writing, undoubtedly because the transformation of emotion into affect tallies with Deleuze's own vitalistic line of thought, favouring the body over the social determinations of the *logos*.[8]

Deleuze's influence is also evident in Alferi's works, albeit in a very different form. For instance, this can be seen in his short book on poetics, *Chercher une phrase*, where his views on poetic practice are summed up in the short tenet: to search for a

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8 See *e.g.* Deleuze and his co-author Félix Guattari's interpretation of Spinoza's concept of affect in *A Thousand Plateaus*, incidentally translated by Massumi, who underlines this interpretation in his notes on key terms, where he defines affect in Deleuze and Guattari's understanding as: "a prepersonal intensity corresponding to the passage from one experiential state of the body to another" (Deleuze and Guattari: xvi).

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phrase.[9] Understanding poetry as *phrase* testifies precisely to a view of language that sees it as practice before signification: "Because the phrase is, first of all, the operation that each new phrase has to practise on itself to be invented: the very act of phrasing. Every phrase was phrased – invented, before being used – recovered."[10] The distinctly Deleuzian feel is added to this conception of language as concerning itself rather than reproducing the world when Alferi continues to insist that it is exactly through this self-referential practice that language engages with the world: "In inventing their rhythm, the phrase as experience rediscovers the things themselves."[11] The phrasing practice of poetic language is just another way of moulding and shaping reality, allowing the rhythms of language to engage with the rhythms of the things that surround us. This interpretation distinguishes itself from that of Massumi in that the emphasis is far less on the turn towards the corporeal than on the process of passage, the ways in which language becomes world and the world becomes language.

To better understand this difference it is necessary for a moment to turn towards Alferi's philosophical work, before returning to his poetic practice. A reflection on the nature of language akin to that in *Chercher une phrase* can namely be found in Alferi's philosophical doctorate *Guillaume d'Ockham, le*

9 In grammar the French *phrase* designates what in English is termed *sentence*. However, as the French *phrase* carries the same connotations – like *expression* and *saying* – and derivates – *to phrase*, *phrasing* – as its English counterpart, I have kept the original term in my translation. However, it is important to keep this ambiguity in mind, not least in connection with Alferi's contortions of the sentence structure in *La Voie des airs*, which I'll return to later.

10 "Car, la phrase est, d'abord, l'opération que chaque phrase nouvelle, pour s'inventer, dut pratiquer sur elle-même: l'action même de phraser. Chaque phrase fut phrasée – inventée, avant d'être employée – reprise" (Alferi 2007: 23).

11 "En inventant leur rythme, la phrase comme expérience retrouve les choses elles-mêmes" (Alferi 2007: 35).

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singulier (1989). William of Ockham is, according to Alferi, one in a long line of monistic thinkers including John Duns Scotus, Baruch de Spinoza, Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz and, in another time and another world, Gilles Deleuze. However, Ockham distinguishes himself in the fact that his monism is less ontological than performative. It is not a systematic and potentially metaphysical belief in the monistic nature of the world, but what Alferi terms "A minimalist ontology",[12] a philosophical practice dedicated to the singularity of expression. The apparent simplicity of the Ockhamian razor must not be mistaken for a belief in universal principles or the unity of being, because it is rather an expression of a methodological and practical humility that recognises the perceptional limitations of the situation. Singularity is thus the ideal for the philosophical utterance, but it is an ideal that is necessarily multiplied through the philosophical process as it traces and explores different problems and situations. This is precisely the nature of philosophy in the sense that it is characterised as not having a place, a field of inquiry, but, on the contrary, that it is a practice that incessantly crosses borders to other domains of thought: "The philosopher crosses boundaries not to eliminate them, but on the contrary to delineate and adjust them."[13] Singularity, in Alferi's reading of Ockham, is thus the preconception of any utterance, but it is a preconception that is always undermined or multiplied by the process of writing, or, simply, by the process of life. The singular is the instant that serves as the basis for an exploration of life lived in flux.

This early philosophical reflection is important to the understanding of Alferi's treatment of affects in *Le Cinéma des familles* and his other earlier works. In Alferi the production

12 "Une ontologie minimaliste" (Alferi 1989: 462).

13 "Le philosophe passe les frontières non pour les annuler, mais au contraire pour les marquer et les ajuster" (Alferi 1989: 473).

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of singular, transferable affects is never the goal. Instead, his works revolve around the examination of the processes that lead to and from these affects, scrutinising the borders and border crossings made by and in the phrases of literature. A condensed example of this can be found in his collection *Kub Or* (1994), named after the prominent brand of stock cubes in France.[14] It consists of seven sets of seven poems, containing seven verses with seven metrical feet, each performing what Alferi himself has described as a double strategy, in the sense that it seeks out the lyrical fractures and the semantic compression of everyday images.[15] Semantic soup bones fold up and fold out a singular emotion or impression, as in this description of the folding and unfolding of the room and the world performed by the TV set:

en cas de transport tombée
la nuit boum ou sur le coup
de vingt heures pincement
vivement contempler le
tronc vert cravaté sur fond
bleu exécrable oui mais
qui vous en apprend de belles

petit écran

(Alferi 1994: n. pag.)[16]

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14 The collection has accordingly been translated into English by Cole Swensen under the title *OXO* which alludes to the English brand of stock cubes.

15 As it is also described in *Chercher une phrase*, pp. 57-62. See also Disson 2005.

16 Swensen's translation reads: "should you happen to deeply/feel as night falls or right at/eight p.m. a sharp almost/quick resort to the green/neck-tied torso against the/execrable blue background/yes but who's got the real goods/*boob tube*" (Alferi 2004: n. pag.).

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This image is at first presented without any explanation. The explanation comes as an afterthought in the form of subtitles, as Alferi terms it, presented below each cube. The form is characteristically broken up and the first verse throws us unprepared into a construction that creates as many questions as it answers: the glaring blue of the news studio creates the background for the presenter's torso, *le tronc vert cravaté*, who ritually enters the room when night falls, *boum*, at eight o'clock to appease the troubled mind, *en cas de transport*, with good, perhaps too good, stories, *de belles*, from the world.

The subject is remarkably absent in this poem, as it is throughout *Kub Or*, and the affects alluded to in the *transport* in the first verse are as cleverly depersonified as any in *Le Cinéma des familles*. Similarly, the sudden onset of night and the blue flare of the screen serve as markers of intensity that have a structuring role in the poem, not through their semantic content or function, but through their purely affective nature. However, the point of *petit écran,* as in the other poems of the collection, is not only to display a scene from everyday life in its affective intensity, but also to reflect on the very process that makes this transformation possible. The small square of the television screen becomes an image of Alferi's poetry which, in its small squares, concentrates and transmits affects in the same way as the TV chiastically links the viewer installed in his private space on one side and the world on the other. Alferi's form is rigorous owing to the limitations imposed by his formal choices, but also free in the sense that images and expression are allowed to stand by themselves. The expression is at once complex and straightforward, as everyday images, such as the apparition of the news presenter on the screen, are fragmented and placed in a context that leaves them at once meaningful and defamiliarised, making the manifestation of the poem that of a

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compact unity that remains open and interacting, or in other words a medium, that structures and orchestrates affects for consumption.

This structural exchange is comparable to the structure alluded to by Brian Massumi in a second definition of the concept of emotion:

> Affect is autonomous to the degree to which it escapes confinement in the particular body whose vitality, or potential for interaction, it is. Formed, qualified, situated perceptions and cognitions fulfilling functions of actual connection or blockage are the capture and closure of affect. Emotion is the most intense (most contracted) expression of that *capture* – and of the fact that something has always and again escaped. Something remains unactualized, inseparable from but unassimilable to any *particular*, functionally anchored perspective. (Massumi: 35)

In this understanding of emotion, which differs significantly from the one cited earlier, Massumi both underlines the intensity of the state and creates the possibility for an interpretation that places emotion between the affective and the strictly semantic. Emotion is the point where the two domains converge, but, as such, also where the escapism of affect is allowed to reinscribe itself into the collective. On the one hand, emotion is the capture of affect, the interpretation of the bodily into something socially acceptable. But, on the other hand, emotion is also, or can be, a concentrated reinterpretation of the social order through affect.

In the poem this interchange is reproduced in the chiasm connecting the TV viewer and the world in the form of a movement from the emotional and practical transactions of everyday life, only alluded to in the *transport* of the first verse, to a concentrated state as consciousness is sharpened by the two affective markers of intensity, only to be rereleased with the television signal and led through the screen

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towards the world. This structure emphasises the role of the poem as an act of transference, not only on the semantic level, but also on the level of affects. Or rather, it highlights how the affective nature of the poem, the intensity of the image, does in fact not stand alone but is itself a point of transference. The poem is a threshold or medium between different realms, the realm of the reader and that of the writer, the threshold on which affects take on emotional significance.

Alferi's poetry and even his novels thus endeavour to explore this passage through intensity as the medial function of poetic expression. They probe into the way in which everyday impressions are detached from their place in the consensual schemas of function and meaning, through which we perceive our daily lives, and appear as poetic intensities, affects. At the same time, however, these intensities are reinserted, through reading and poetic dialogue, as qualified emotions in the narratives of lives; *de belles* from another world that colour our present, but never without a slightly disconcerting tinge of uncertainty induced by the volatility of affect.

Communities of language

Emotion in the work of Alferi is thus not, as Massumi tends to present it, the mere domestication of affect, but a limit demarking the difference between the bodily, the purely affective, and the position of this body in a community, where bodily perceptions must be both masked and made communicable in order for the body to exist as part of a collective. This is not an entirely new understanding of the concept of emotion. It is comparable to, for example, the discussion of the social role of emotions conducted within the social sciences under headings such as psychosocial studies or social

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cognition theory.[17] In such theories, emotions are understood as a mediator between inner affects and the rules and dogmas of social life.

However, in Alferi, the exploration of the role played by emotions is directed less towards an understanding of the relationship between the subject and the collective, and more towards the medial role played by language in this process, the relationship between singular, affective utterances and language as a carrier of collective, political and even historical meaning. This is where Alferi departs from the autobiographical strand of contemporary French literature as described earlier in my article. Authors from Claude Simon and Marguerite Duras to Jean-Philippe Toussaint, and even Michel Houellebecq, have addressed the collective, the crisis of French history, and the crisis of modernity itself through an examination of the subjective and the personal, often using personal memories as a more or less symptomatic substitute for a collective frame of reference that has been lost, whether it be history, the nation or religion. Alferi chooses another path, focusing instead on language as a carrier of collective significance, a medium that is placed between the singular and the collective.

This becomes increasingly clear in Alferi's later poems and novels, where the rigorous form of *Kub Or* is broken up in favour of experiments seeking to combine the prosaic with the poetic, such as in Alferi's latest collection of poetry, *La Voie des airs* (2004). Here the 'medial' nature of language is directly associated with the image of air that already introduces itself in the title of the collection. The title is characteristically ambiguous, presenting the air as a pathway, a medium for

17 *E.g.* when Michael Rustin highlights the role of emotions in the constitution of the Bourdieusian habitus (Rustin: 31). See also Leary: 332.

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the transportation of something, while simultaneously alluding to the expression *voie d'eau* for a leak in a boat, as an indication that the air is also something pushing to get in, to inflate speech, threatening to explode the entire construction of the collection. But there are other possible interpretations. The title is, of course, homologous to *la voix des airs*, the voice of the air as a reminiscence of one of the core concepts of *Chercher une phrase*, namely the idea that literature is a voice, a voice carried by the air that flows past the vocal cords. *Airs* of course alludes not only to air, as underlined by the plural, but also to a melody, the contrast between *voix* and *airs* bringing the expression *l'air et la chanson* to mind, referencing the opposition and interrelatedness of appearance and reality, appearances which can of course also, in French as in English, range from mere attitudes to artistic expressions. And other possible interpretations can surely be found.

The richness of the title is impressive in itself, but what is interesting is that all these possible interpretations revolve around the same basic problem: the role of speech and voice as a medium, as something that is placed between other things – author and reader, appearance and reality – but as something which also has a life of its own, an interpretation Alferi has encouraged in an interview:

> The poems explore this image-idea of an "element" like the air, water, which is empty, since this is where things circulate, but which still has a consistency at a given moment, which is invested with forces, tensions, and which therefore grips, falls. It is our common element. (Loret 2004)[18]

18 "Les poèmes explorent cette image-idée d'un 'milieu' comme l'air, l'eau, qui soit à la fois vide, puisque c'est par là que ça circule, et qui ait quand même sa consistance à une moment donné, qui soit investi de forces, tensions, et qui donc prenne, précipite. C'est notre élément commun."

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We get a sense of the air as a medium, or more precisely “l’air froid est conducteur”, as in the opening poem of the collection:

Ton oreille ouvre sur un monde
invisible comme tu es
invisible et me fais jacasser
dans un bout de plastique
depuis la chambre basse
d’une voix basse après
cette horreur d’hibernation –
sur les pentes enneigées
du quartier une jambe
après l’autre
a tracé une ligne après l’autre
c’est tellement nouveau –
ici je ne parle à personne
et tout le monde entend
l’air froid est conducteur.
(Alferi 2004: 7)[19]

The coldness of the air in this short quotation attests precisely to the duality addressed in the interview: the air is empty yet invested with forces and tensions. The poem depicts an empty, snow-covered landscape, where the air, the medium itself, becomes the sole source of meaning, or rather the air conduces meaning if, and only if, the tension between the invisible *je* and *tu* is maintained in a state of indeterminacy.

The poem exemplifies a number of the syntactically formal

19 “Your ear opens up onto a world/invisible as you are/invisible and makes me chatter/into a piece of plastic/from the low chamber/in a low voice after/this horrific hibernation–/on the snowy slopes/of the neighbourhood one leg/after the other/has traced a line after the other/it’s fairly new–/here I talk to no one/and everyone listens/the cold air acts as conductor”.

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traits that have replaced the typographical formalism of *Kub Or.* Every poem in *La Voie des airs* is a sentence, often interspersed with dashes, but with only one full-stop placed at the very end. These are of course not conventional sentences, but constructs that challenge the cohesiveness of the sentence by exploring the relations included in the utterance. In most poems, this is achieved, as it is above, by manipulating and distorting the relationship between the uttering *je* and the listening, receiving *tu*. Here it is the absent *tu* that allows for the construction of a world that is possible only with that absence. This poem is not an act of communication, but rather a construction of a recipient that is only there in so far as the cold air conducts a tension that constructs a community within language: *je* talks to no one and everyone listens, intends and participates as language defines both sides of the equation.

As the opening act, "Ton oreille ouvre sur un monde" sets the scene for the collection. However, as the reading progresses, it becomes increasingly clear that the community of language addressed is not a philosophical construct, but has its origin in singular impressions and relations, and that the signifying intensities, which are defined above as a formal quality of the air, are almost always the affects induced by these impressions. Examples include solitude, anger and love, or, here, the feeling of not being in one's place:

Le sentiment de n'être à sa place à la table
nulle part – l'étrangeté dont la scène
est frappée
n'importe quand on aime
à défaut de la juste mesure de la distance
se retrouver je ne sais où ensemble –
le compte-fil où la sensation doit prouver
son acuité adamantine une fois chaque jour

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– la couleur, la coupe, la clarté, le poids –
écrase l'œil
un grand-angle à présent
éloigne le centre de la pièce
étale ses bords – que voit-on?
une main minuscule au bout d'un bras interminable
(Alferi 2004: 55)[20]

As in the previous examples, "Le sentiment de n'être à sa place à la table" is structured around a few select markers of intensity: *frappée, acuité adamantine, écrase*. These radical affects challenge the common-sense descriptions of emotions, loving *à defaut de la juste mesure de la distance*. The affects of love have the potential of lifting you out of the everyday, but its intensity must stand its test, like the diamond being valued. This valuing eye underlines that the process is reciprocal. The affect pulls you from the community and even yourself, but this state can be suspended in two different ways: in the negative, when the affect doesn't possess the intensity to sustain itself, or in the arguably more positive sense of offering another perspective on the world, as it is suggested in the closing verses. The affective removes us, but this very movement allows for new ways of seeing the world – distorted and contorted, but also clearly and sharply to the point where it denies the very possibility of seeing. This is an eyeless seeing to equate the personless communication of

20 "The feeling of not being in your place at the table/nowhere – the strangeness with which the scene/is hit no matter when you love/ by default to the right degree from a distance/to find yourself who knows where together –/the magnifying glass where the sensation must prove/its adamantine acuity once every day/– the colour, the cut, the clarity, the weight –/crushes the eye/a wide-angle of the present/lengthens the centre of the room/spreads out its sides – what do you see?/a minuscule hand at the end of an interminable arm" (Alferi 2004: 55).

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"Ton oreille ouvre sur un monde", and it has clear parallels to the cinematic manipulation of space and emotions in *Le Cinéma des familles,* leading to a very valid question: *Que voit on*? What do you see when the eye has been crushed, when the affects have taken on a life of their own?

The answer is not clear, and how could it be? The key is perhaps captured in the *on* of the question. Who is trying to see here? Not the I, which is again remarkably absent, but the neutral *on*, which appears as not much more than a function of the text, or of language. The *on* probes the possible reemergence from the depersonified state of affective rapture to a collective level: is there something to be seen, a state that negotiates between the blindness of affect and the not-seeing of decorum? It is in this probing of the exchanges between affects and emotions that Alferi departs from the more philosophical descriptions of the categories presented by Massumi. In his presentation, affects are the key to artistic expression. What lies at the heart of Alferi's textual practice are emotions, or rather the relationship between affects and emotions, as it is manifested in language. Affects and emotions serve a crucial role in the understanding of language, and poetic language in particular, as a medium that negotiates between singular and collective states. Alferi's task as an author, as he describes it in *Chercher une phrase*, is to explore how the phrase travels between these two domains, how it separates itself through the intensity of affect and how it is reinserted as part of collectivity as emotion – "revenir à la langue maternelle", as he terms it (Alferi 2007: 17). It is not an exploration of the collective through the personal or the autofictional, but an exploration of the emotional collective through affective singularities that manifest themselves in language – a linguistic practice that treats language as a reservoir of common experiences open to reinterpretation and interaction beyond all borders.

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Alferi, and others with him, point to a new road forward for French literature. He brings out a worldliness that forsakes neither tradition, nor the medialised realities of today, but, on the contrary, explores how tradition, as it is embodied in poetic language, can be used to understand the world of today. An interpretation of the world as emotions that amounts to an exploration of the medial structures not only of the social and political world, but also of poetry and literature itself.

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PART II: EXPLORATIONS

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Portrait of a Lady: Painting Emotion in Jean-Luc Godard's *Vivre sa vie*

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Life and death are at strife in every detail;
here you see a woman, there a statue,
there again a corpse.

Honoré de Balzac[1]

By the end of 1961, Jean-Luc Godard, author of the much praised *Breathless* (*À bout de souffle*, 1960), faces a first turn in his career. After the harsh critical reception of *The Little Soldier* (*Le petit soldat*, 1960), he spends a year without releasing any movies, abandons numerous projects, and is in want of a new impulse. His producer, Pierre Braunberger, comes up with the idea of a film on the theme of prostitution. It should be a "portrait of a profession socially declassified", representing the precarious conditions of daily life in Paris. Godard accepts it at once, but his interest, unlike what his

1 "La vie et la mort luttent dans chaque morceau: ici c'est une femme, là une statue, plus loin un cadavre" (Balzac, *Le Chef d'œuvre inconnu,* 1994: 42).

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producer imagined, lies less in the neorealist depiction of the margins of society, than in the path that leads a character to the *decision* of becoming a prostitute. Crossing the influences of the reportage, the documentary, the short Brechtian play, and the Nouveau Roman,[2] Godard multiplies the layers of references and solicits, once more (after *The Little Soldier* and *A Woman Is a Woman,* 1961), the participation of his wife, Anna Karina, to play the central character of Nana.

After having left her husband Paul, this "young and pretty *vendeuse*"[3] dreams at first of becoming a cinema actress while selling records. However, noticing that it is hard to make both ends meet, the step to prostitution is quickly made. She then falls under the control of a pimp, endures the harshness of the everyday routine and eventually dies, coldly shot in a sordid trade. Nana, by her name alone, refers not only to the book by Émile Zola retracing the life and times of the Parisian courtesan, but also to its 1928 cinema adaptation by Jean Renoir, and, anagrammatically, to Karina's first-name, Anna. Following the inspiration of Roberto Rossellini's *Fioretti,* the film unfolds in a series of twelve "tableaux" (cf. the title: "*Vivre sa vie* – Film en douze tableaux"), twelve stations marking Nana's passion, her slow decay from wife to whore, until her crude murder. The blanks in between of these tableaux, and the ellipses they can create, are sometimes more important than the "story" itself, as a negative proof of the portrait that Godard intends to sketch.

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2 Godard admits that the script has been written in the style of Michel Butor's *Modification* (De Baecque 2010: 206).

3 "Jeune et jolie vendeuse". In the first draft of the script, Godard puts an emphasis on the verb "vendre" that will ironically encompass both of her professions, from the record seller to the prostitute. The trailer of the movie kept the trace of this: Nana "gives her body"/ "donne son corps" but "keeps her soul"/ "garde son âme" (Godard 1962: 7).

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Vivre sa vie: the title refers, at first, to a fixed expression, that the English translation renders by "My Life to Live", or "It's My Life". But it also relates to a certain type of *thought experiment*: an injunction to live the life of Nana ("live her life"), and to experience, through the different tableaux, the various stages of her existence. François Truffaut, still friend at that time with Godard, precisely entitled his laudatory review of the movie: "Que chacun vive sa vie" / May everyone live his/her life", stressing the optative signification of empathising with the different paths to which she is led. But this projection into the future is not due to chance. The aim of Godard is clear from the start: Karina has a face, a face that he wants to *paint* through the variety of its changes.

Through the different layers of *Vivre sa vie*, I will discuss, precisely, the notion of the portrait as Godard defines it, or, rather, as he tackles it without ever getting blocked by a strict definition. I shall, for this purpose, decide to concentrate uniquely on his different choices in filming the face of Nana. By "painting emotion" in my title, I mean to seize the *portrayable* face, intercept a portion of time where the visage, the facial expression, develops features that are similar to the painted model that Godard has in mind. And even though one could easily argue that, in a portrait, the body counts as much as the face in the representation of emotion, I choose to focus solely on the face of Nana, by observing the way Godard manages to seize it and depict it as if Karina were a model posing to his light. This path will lead me from the clear and lively face of the opening of the film, to the gentle outcome that resolves into death. I shall argue that the emotions captured in the face of Nana reflect our participation in the film itself.

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Faces of Life: Profiles and looks to the camera

One of the issues of the artist, according to Godard, is to "seize the life" (Godard 1985: 51; my transl.)[4] that hides in his model, be it with a brush or with a camera. Beyond any debate opposing one art to the other – even though he conceives cinema as being in a fecund rivalry with painting – he needs to bring up certain solutions, choices and aesthetic strategies to show a face, and frame the emotion he desires to catch, by borrowing pictorial settings or compositions. Questions are immediately raised: What type of face to show? Should the look catch the beholder as well? Should the face be incessantly present and the body remain nonexistent, or not?

We are welcomed, at the very start of *Vivre sa vie,* by a reference to the tradition of the portrait. On a dark background, a twisting streak of light draws the outline of Nana's profile, first from the left, then from the right. The "*Circumductio umbrae*" (the outline of the shadow), traces a shape to be memorised, as in the myth of Dibutade who followed with a piece of charcoal on the wall the contour of her lover's shadow. Dibutade, at the origin of this legendary device,[5] needed a surrogate to cope with his absence, a sign, an "expression of nostalgia in response to death" (Pommier 1998: 20).[6] The fixed shape of the shadow would distinctly represent him, who had gone to war, and who might never be coming back. In the same way, the shadow of Nana, rather than opening the space where the face can expand and inscribe itself,

4 "saisir la vie." – When not otherwise indicated, translations from the French into English in the following are mine.

5 According to Pliny the Elder, in the thirty-fifth chapter of his *Natural History*, Dibutade, "in love with a young man", "drew in outline on the wall the shadow of his face thrown by the lamp" (Pliny 1961: 373).

6 "… l'expression d'une nostalgie en réponse à la mort."

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initiates a temporality that will be revolving around her lines until her fatal end. A certain type of *templum* is raised from the start, a frame, a delimited space where the premonitory lineaments are placed as referent for a face that we have not yet encountered but that will be the point around which the whole movie will revolve.

Immediately following this, the first shot of the film does not make it any easier. Godard blocks the way to the face and introduces his actors from behind. Nana, in a falling-out with Paul, her former husband, is seen collar up and shoulders down, persistently looking at the counter in front of her. The actors' voices, muffled and absent, are filtering through the thickness of the bodies. There is no possibility of ascribing those voices to a face. It's a blunt sight. The face disappears – and we are left with the few glimpses we can catch in the mirror. But, as Jacques Aumont notes: "a portrait does not always implicate a face. There are portraits without faces, and of course, faces without portraits" (Aumont 1992: 23).[7] Thus, the coat, the shivers, the trembling voice, the blurry reflection are not only outskirts but *valid features* of the portrait, representative indices of a whole that we have, piece by piece, to collect. Furthermore, in this same scene, the speech seems to be as obtuse as the sight. After Nana repeats successively "Why would you care?"[8] in five different ways, one starts to wonder about these "ratés". Are these speech impediments? Caprices of the director? No, instead they are a way of letting a voice play on the meaning of a sentence that has been listened to too often. Speech floats, drifts by, but carries the same amount of explosive intensity. For the language that his

7 "Il est des portraits sans visage, et bien entendu, des visages sans portraits."

8 *"Qu'est-ce que ça peut te faire?"* The dialogues of the film are drawn out of the script published in *L'Avant-scène Cinéma* (1962).

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character speaks counts, in the portrait Godard is sketching, as much as the positive image, and constitutes another complex receptacle for emotions.

A few moments later, the discussion continues around a pinball machine. Paul, caught in his game, recounts to Nana some amusing sentences in the student essays that his father had to correct. Among those, one – the story of the chicken [la poule] – seems to be particularly striking to Nana: "The chicken is an animal with an outside and an inside. Remove the outside, you find the inside. Remove the inside, you find the soul."[9] Following Nana like a shadow, this short fable will indicate the rough path she'll have to go on to acquire an inside, a soul that, at moments, will glitter on her face, and flicker away.

At length, the back of Nana turns around and her face is offered to us, frontally. Not only her face, but her gaze as well. As if piercing through the screen, the two clear eyes of Anna Karina dash out and summon us to glance back at her. In the look of a portrait, as Jean-Luc Nancy reminds us, "the whole face becomes an eye" (Nancy: 2000, 76).[10] Indeed, the look follows us, as we seem, precisely, to follow her. For in *Vivre sa vie*, the position of the camera is one of a witness. At first, there is no confusion of instances, no dramatic empathy: to *follow* Nana in her misery path is, so to speak, the only objective. There again, Godard's first comment on the movie announced his position:

> The film isn't about *spying* on Nana (like Reichenbach), nor about *hunting* her (like Bresson), nor about *surprising* her (like Jean Rouch),

9 "La poule est un animal qui se compose de l'extérieur et de l'intérieur. Si on enlève l'extérieur, il reste l'intérieur…Et quand on enlève l'intérieur, alors on voit l'âme" (Godard 1962: 9).

10 "Tout le visage devient un œil."

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but only about following her: nothing else than being good and fair (like Rossellini). Indeed, as goes the song of *Lola Montès*, Nana who is gracious, that is full of grace, will know how to keep her soul while giving her body. (Godard 1962: 5)[11]

Through the memory of the cinephile, we are led to situate Nana among these manifold references. She appears to us dressed with all these layers of screen, coated with the souvenirs of former actresses, directors' choices, lights and frames. However, after having installed us in the passive position of the spectator, we are drawn out and solicited by Nana's looks. This blank and frontal attack from the shot comes back punctually, nuancing the gradation of the decay where Nana is conducted.

Illustration 1. Nana's looks to the camera (© Films de la Pléiade).

The first scene that comes to mind takes place when Nana, after having been caught stealing for the first time, is interrogated severely at a police office. The tight shot, darkened by the *contre-jour* that pushes her against the window pane, the secluded space and the stuffy atmosphere absorbing the

11 "Il ne s'agit pas d'épier Nana (comme Reichenbach), ou de la traquer (comme Bresson), ni davantage de la surprendre (comme Jean Rouch), mais seulement de la suivre: donc rien d'autre que d'être bon et juste (comme Roberto Rossellini). En effet, comme le dit la chanson de *Lola Montès*, Nana qui est gracieuse, c'est-à-dire pleine de grâce, saura garder son âme tout en donnant son corps."

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air of the room provoke her lost and empty look through the screen. "What would it be if you were at my place", she so seems to say; Roland Barthes has remarked that in a look "the borders of active and passive are unclear" (Barthes 1982: 280).[12] Puzzled, taken aback, Nana can only mutter hesitatingly the most suitable Rimbaud line – "I…I is Another",[13] and the shot melts into dark.

A few scenes later, another look to the camera is caught, when, discussing with Yvette, a sidewalk colleague, she gets carried away by her ideas. Belonging so much to the instant, her enthusiasm and her train of thoughts lead her to a light and slightly mawkish conclusion – "And life…is life." She then breaks into laughter. Beyond the tautological proposition, Nana offers at that point a total forgetfulness; the look afterwards is one of confusion tinged with distress, like emerging from the vapours of her ideas. Even though the reference of such a shot, as Godard himself claims, is to be found back in the free looks of Bergman's *Monika* (1953), Nana's plainness emphasises instead her consciousness of her condition and the realisation of the precariousness of her status, like in a painting by Manet – the *Absinth drinker*, for example, or even the *Bar aux Folies Bergère*. Nothing is to be related to a confident assertion, nor a proud and steady gaze. The vulnerability, oscillating in laughter close to tears, gushes from each pore.

But the portrait need not be as positive. It can occur, as we have already seen, on the margins of the face; in one's own speech, for instance. According to Godard, language is as representative, in terms of identity and singularity, as the visual features of a face. It could then be qualified as an "intellectual portrait", or a portrait that isn't dealing with

12 "… les frontières de l'actif et du passif sont incertaines."
13 "Je…je est un autre."

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the modalities of appearance. For instance, in the antepenultimate tableau, Nana begins, in a café near the Châtelet, a loose discussion with an "inconnu". Like M. Jourdain, in Molière's *Middle-Class Gentleman*, who "has been speaking prose without knowing anything about it",[14] Nana "fait de la philosophie sans le savoir" and starts an argument with a famous philosopher of the time – Brice Parain, a prominent figure of the Parisian intellectual life. For Godard, who will use these incursions of the non-fictional life into his films, this character meant a lot: "In my movies, I need to take people that can say their truths while staying in my own fiction. And I ask them that their truth support my fiction, otherwise my fiction collapses" (Godard 1985: 25).[15] The role of Parain functions as an intercessor. He lifts up Nana and initiates her into what he calls "a higher life" ("une vie supérieure: la vie de l'esprit"). From the beginning when Nana simpers ("D'you offer me a drink?"), until she realises that the topic itself is much bigger than expected, her attitude turns totally.

Contrary to André Bazin, who praises Jean Renoir's "dress of reality without stitches", Godard wants an extremely abrupt and jerky editing of the scene; the indication of the script is very clear: "each time that a character speaks voice over, we see the other in close up" (Godard 1962: 22).[16] Although the actors are told what to do exactly, Godard grants them a margin of liberty to let himself be surprised by the turn that they give to the scene. He will call this method, which he will use later in *Pierrot le fou* (1965) for example, the

14 "… il y a plus de quarante ans que je dis de la prose sans que j'en susse rien."

15 "Dans mes films, j'ai besoin de prendre des gens qui peuvent dire leurs vérités tout en restant dans ma fiction à moi. Et je leur demande que leur vérité supporte ma fiction, sinon ma fiction s'effondre."

16 "… chaque fois qu'un personnage parle en off c'est l'autre qui est en gros plan."

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"definitive by chance" method (Godard 1985: 48).[17] During the dialogue, the camera jumps from one side to the other and surprises Nana while the philosopher is still talking, and then brutally comes back to his face, without following at all the pace of the exchange.

This intensifies, accordingly, the abruptness and unexpectedness of her questions: are we to talk? What are we to say? Can one survive by living a silent life? Are talking and thinking one and the same thing? And all of Nana's interrogations converge to the same ideal of a silent exchange that would not need language, a communication that would not rely on such a system: "It would be beautiful indeed to be able to live without speech…as if we would love ourselves more", says Nana. This scene, though seemingly unrelated to the proper discussion on the conception of the portrait, functions as a necessary complement to it. If Nana cannot cope with the different situation in which she finds herself, the presence of a guideline enounced by such a character as the philosopher helps her to *bear a resemblance* to her own language, and collides the inside with the outside. Speech is not useless, it is a rare value that one cannot give away and waste simply because words betray us. Thus concludes Parain, on the virtue of asceticism: "One has to go through the death of life without talking".[18] That is why, if one can succeed in this silence, the resemblance of words and their meaning will reassemble, just as in a portrait. Nana pauses after this sentence, which sounds to her ears just like a verdict; she then turns hurriedly to look at the camera, through the screen, in our direction, literally confronting her astonishment. The inscription of the face, connected to the characters' discussion of language, confronts us as well, in the same movement.

17 "Ce que je veux, c'est le définitif par hasard."
18 "Il faut avoir passé par la mort de la vie sans parler."

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Faces of Death: Soul and supplement

In a painting, a face is suspended in time, because it represents one particular instant. While in a film, if a face holds still, nothing can stop time. Conscious of that tension setting painting and cinema apart, Godard takes temporality as a tool of portrayal. In *Vivre sa vie* it is as if he slowly creates a face, excavates it out of earth, revealing it or, in the etymological sense, *inventing* it. Close to what could be called a literal lesson of darkness, Godard comments on the search for such an effect: "It is as if we had to dig the shots out of the night; as if these shots were dwelling at the bottom of a well and that we had to drag them out in the light" (Godard 1985: 47-48).[19] Hence, when Nana goes to the cinema to see *The Passion of Joan of Arc* by Carl Theodor Dreyer, Godard takes a sequence of the film and blends it into the story of his protagonist. Renée Falconetti, who plays Joan, possesses what Godard calls the "face of a soul" (Godard 1985: 121),[20] making the screen become suddenly "transparent". And while Joan is questioned by Antonin Artaud, in the role of the monk Jean Massieu, Nana is placed exactly in the same spot in the counter-shot. The silence reigning in the theatre seems to suspend both time and space: Falconetti and Karina seem to hover, in contrast, on a non-existent background. And the work done on the close-ups intensifies the game of identification and affiliation that Godard plays, increasing the brutality of the association (the Maiden of Orléans as a prostitute).

19 "C'était comme s'il fallait arriver à extraire des plans de la nuit, comme si les plans étaient au fond d'un puits et qu'il fallait les attirer à la lumière."
20 "Le visage d'une âme."

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Illustration 2. Renée Falconetti as Joan of Arc (© Gaumont/Films de la Pléiade) and Nana at the movies (© Films de la Pléiade).

Reflecting on the price one could attach to a portrait in the sixteenth century, Jean-Luc Nancy notes: "The portrait can conquer its artistic dignity only under the condition of being the portrait of the soul or of interiority, as suggested by tradition. But this does not mean that the portrait is the portrait of the exterior appearance but that it takes the place of this appearance, exactly on the painter's canvas" (Nancy 2000: 25).[21] In a 1963 interview released shortly after the film, Godard puts this *je ne sais quoi* in his own words:

> The most important pictures are portraits. There is Velazquez. The painter who wants to render a face renders only the exterior of people; and yet, there is *something else* that makes its way through. It's very mysterious. (Godard 1985: 51)[22]

21 "C'est ainsi que le portrait ne conquiert sa dignité artistique qu'à la condition d'être, dans les termes de la tradition, portrait de l'"âme" ou de l'intériorité, non pas *plutôt* que l'apparence extérieure, mais bien *au lieu de* cette apparence, à sa place même, à même sa parution opérée sur la toile du peintre."

22 "Les plus grands tableaux sont des portraits. Il y a Velazquez. Le peintre qui veut rendre un visage rend uniquement l'extérieur des gens; et pourtant, il y a quelque chose d'autre qui passe. C'est très mystérieux."

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It is this "something else" that constitutes the issue of the film's last tableau. In itself, the genre of the portrait – since the XVIIth century, at least – implies the notion of *surplus* or *supplément*: the representation of interiority or of the soul emerges from the skin. Life that seems to spread out of the painted face is associated with the excess of life beneath the flesh. Under the *envelop*, the preciousness lies more in the *lifelikeness* of the model than in the precision of the outline. But these arguments are valid for painting. What happens when they get transposed to cinema? As André Bazin claims in his essay on "Cinema and the Other Arts", "impurity" is a constitutive quality of film. Beyond its recent history, it "assimilates" what the other media and arts have been developing, borrowing here and there both technical and plastic solutions. This assimilation culminates in one of the last scenes of the film: the transposition or loose adaptation of Edgar Allan Poe's *Oval Portrait*.

The tale of Poe follows this line: a first-person narrator, wounded, sleeps in a deserted castle, and, while reading at night, he remarks on the wall of his room an incredibly vivid portrait. Appalled and amazed, he immediately consults the book that relates the story of this painting. It is where Godard chooses to start: in a close shot, we see the young man, as the narrator of the story, absorbed in his reading but looking furtively at Nana. Supporting his inspection, the leitmotif of the music starts over again, like in the continuous circle that leads the look from the model to the painting, and, in parallel, from the book to the model – just as if the book wanted to create the model, shaping it to its fantasy. Interrupting the silence of the reading, the music sways and the dialogue between Nana and the young man is not heard but transcribed with subtitles. This relates this scene both to the discussion with the philosopher and to Dreyer's *Joan of Arc*, where the dialogue between Artaud and the Falconetti

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were written on the screen as well. The anguish, the despair and the tears of Joan, relayed by those of Nana, sheds a crepuscular light on the stillness of the scene. Nana's staring face floats out of time, as the narration goes on. As Jacques Aumont points out: "The mute-face is an enlarged face, but also, more profoundly and more immediately, a face of time […] It is not about seeing the face as a book, in which one could read the passage of time […] but rather about showing time itself" (Aumont 1992: 100).[23] In the present case, we see explicitly both the book, translated by Charles Baudelaire, and the face – the young man hiding behind the book.[24] We shouldn't forget that Poe had another denomination for this tale, perhaps more eloquent for our topic: it should have been entitled *Life in Death* (Poe 1978: 659). For it summarises the tension that runs through this short tale: by drawing a painting out of Life, you acknowledge the supremacy of art but also vouch for a Life that is less viable, less vivid than the portrait. The painter, "entranced before the work he had wrought", exclaims: "This is indeed *Life* itself!" (Poe 1978: 660), before his model dies.

By installing this link to the painted picture, Godard restores a suspended time that goes against narration. Nana is filmed as a model, in figuration, carefully choosing the pauses, controlling her image, head chopped by the multiple frames. Godard insistently frames her head inside the pane of the window, and juxtaposes it to the photography of Elizabeth

23 "Le visage-muet est un visage agrandi, mais aussi, plus profondément et plus immédiatement, un visage du temps […] Il ne s'agit pas, en effet, de voir le visage comme un livre, sur lequel s'écriraient les traces du passage du temps […] Il s'agit bien de faire voir le temps lui-même."

24 As Godard remembers it, this scene was created the morning of the shooting, when Nana asks: "Where did you find the book?" The answer "I found it here" was not, according to Godard, a lie (De Baecque 2010: 211).

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Taylor, balancing the composition. In his reading of the tale, Godard cautiously skips the part where Poe talks about the rivalry between Art and "natural" Beauty – the lovely maiden of the story, wife of the painter who kills her by painting her portrait, is "hating only the Art which was her rival". He blurs, therefore, the meaning of what "Life" is: he shows life – *i.e.* the "*life-likeliness*" of the painting – but to do so he also needs to kill the model for the sake of a wider or longer lasting Life on the screen.

Just after the reading scene, the music stops and silence falls again: Nana wishes to go to the Louvre, the young man doesn't. Nana then replies: "But why? Art, beauty, it's life…" After the scene with the philosopher, it is yet another announcement of Nana's death at the end of the film. Of course, the reasons are somewhat different. Death, in the case of the philosopher, was an ascetic goal to strive for. Death, here, realises the ideal of art. And, for the first time Nana seems happy, liberated from the sordid universe through which we had to follow her, the first time she really "vit sa vie" / "lives her own life", art catches her back, and makes her die, exactly like in Leonardo da Vinci's precept: "learning to live, he was learning how to die." And although time is a construction or a notion in painting, in film it is felt bodily – it is a reality that the spectator cannot avoid. It relates us back to Jean Cocteau's word: "The camera is shooting death at work. Painting is motionless; cinema is interesting for it captures life and the mortal side of life".[25]

One last point: the voice-over of the narrator is Godard's, which introduces a biographical incidence on the scene. And

25 "La caméra filme la mort au travail. La peinture est immobile; le cinéma est intéressant, car il saisit la vie et le côté mortel de la vie." Godard himself quotes Cocteau's sentence in an interview of 1962 (Godard 1985: 40).

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when Godard dubs the young man, whose voice we never hear throughout the film, he pronounces these words: "It's our story: a painter painting his wife". In this way he crosses the borders of fiction, granting the sentence a double meaning. At the same time he alludes, through Poe and Baudelaire's conjoined voices, to his own practice: the director-painter-translator who cautiously captures each breath of his model, its *life-likeliness* with all that it implies. Godard attests to this fact: "When I film a face, there's two things: I film this face because I need it for the movie; but behind this, another thing appears, it's the face of the actor himself. And in the way I need to capture it, this changes the goal I was striving to reach" (Godard 1998: 54).[26] In the same mode, Godard pauses in the reading of the tale and asks Nana abruptly: "Do you want me to continue?" The portrait speaks again and falters: "Yes". *Ogni pittore dipinge di sè* – Every painter paints himself: not only is he present in every stage of his work, he also leaves this necessary trace which implicates his first emotion, up until the point where art and life are blended and indistinct.

The more Nana progresses, the more masks she tears away. One can perceive, through the different *tableaux* where she appears, as in Rembrandt's self-portrait or Velazquez's Philip of Spain, her evolution as a model, as well as the approach of the painter. From birth (the opening scene of the film) until death (the Edgar Poe tale), we follow the life of a portrait. The way in which Godard portrays Nana goes from the avowal of the portrait to its denial. And little by little, she reassembles her resemblance until the scene of the oval

26 "Quand je filme un visage il y a deux choses: je filme ce visage parce que j'en ai besoin pour le film, mais derrière cela apparaît autre chose, le visage de l'acteur lui-même. Et le processus qui consiste à photographier ce visage. Et ça change toujours le but initial que je poursuivais dans le film."

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portrait. The only precise delineation of her face that could appear to us is shuffled through a multiplicity of unfinished paintings – according to Godard's own wish: "A film is a series of sketches: we have to let people live their life, not looking at them for too long, otherwise we can't understand a thing" (Godard 1985: 51).[27] The epigraph, drawn from Montaigne's essay "Of Managing the Will", inscribed on the first profile of Nana, went in the same way: "a man has to lend himself to others, and only give himself to himself".[28] Beyond a clear reference to her profession, the fundamental principle of the portrait is there underlined: keeping one's soul without giving the body. Godard renders the face as a receptive and volatile surface, ductile enough to allow, on the exterior envelope as well as within, the passages of emotion and the traces of time, on the exterior as well as on the interior. *Vivre sa vie* remains then at the threshold of representation, an ideal feature in between the dynamic visage of life and its lethal promised reflection. To "film a thought in motion" (Godard 1985: 51)[29] was Godard's first intention, and to leave the camera, as a discrete spectator, to be the "sole witness".

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27 "… le film est une suite d'esquisses: il faut laisser les gens vivre leur vie, ne pas les regarder trop longtemps, sinon, on finit par n'y plus rien comprendre."

28 "Il faut se prêter aux autres et se donner à soi-même."

29 "… filmer une pensée en marche."

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The Economy of Emotions: Sympathy and Sentimentality in Victorian Culture

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> [I] went more than once to [Dickens's] celebrated readings, and I must confess that while ... I have seen every one in the hall in a flood of tears, and furthermore noticed that Dickens himself could hardly bear up under the weight of the woes he was creating, I could not share the sentimental wave, and could not hear that the pathos rang true. But then I fear I have not much sympathy with paper sorrows. (Jane Frith cited in Kaplan 1987: 71)
>
> [In] the reign of Sentimentality ... the generous Affections have become well nigh paralytic. The greatness, the profitableness, at any rate the extremely ornamental nature of high feeling, and the luxury of doing good; charity, love, self-forgetfulness, devotedness and all manner of godlike magnanimity, – are everywhere insisted on. [But] were the limbs in right walking order, why so much demonstrating of motion? The barrenest of all mortals is the Sentimentalist. ... He is emphatically a Virtue that has become, through every fibre, conscious of itself; it is all sick ... it can do nothing [except] keep itself alive. (Carlyle 1896-1899: vol. 3, 9-10)

The two comments above – one by Dickens's younger contemporary and family friend, Jane Frith, the other by the Victorian philosopher and critic Thomas Carlyle – point up the

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excessive emotionalism often associated with early-Victorian writing, a pathetic strain which, by the time of Dickens's death in 1870, was the source of comedy as much as embarrassment, famously captured in Oscar Wilde's 1895 response to the most notorious of Dickens's moments of pathos, the death scene in *The Old Curiosity Shop*: "One must have a heart of stone to read the death of Little Nell without laughing" (cited in Walsh 1997: 307). Beyond the sentimental excess, however, Carlyle's comment in particular indicates the connections between emotions, economy and morality that are central to an understanding of early Victorian culture.

As numerous commentators have noted, the sentimentality of the early Victorians extended far beyond the confines of literature.[1] In reaction against what seemed to be the joint forces of Benthamite Utilitarianism, advancing industrialisation and laissez faire capitalism, the cult of sentimental benevolence was instrumental in promoting 19th-century charity and social legislation. At the same time, to say that the socio-economic function of sentimentality was uncontested even in the early decades of the century would be doubtful, and by mid-century, the time of Carlyle's critical attack above, any consensus with regard to the proper place and role of an ethic of emotions in the social sphere was openly breaking down. Probably the most articulate Victorian opponent of sentimentality, Carlyle's advocacy of "thrift" or economy in feeling stems from a perception of its social inefficacy. Sentimentality is not just a case of uneconomical expenditure – a wasteful show of excessive emotion – but of an irreversibly devalued currency. For Carlyle the social reformer, the "windy sentimentality" of moral philosophy can only offer an inefficient Benevolence and Charity in place of the government-run

1 See for example Kaplan 1987; Todd 1986; Walsh 1997.

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social programmes which to his mind were necessary to deal with poverty, disease and unemployment (Carlyle 1896-1899, vol. 4: 109; Kaplan 1987: 127).

The 1840s and 1850s are generally portrayed as decades of severe poverty and deep divisions in British society, a time when repressive social conditions appeared to threaten moral responsiveness, and the social and physical sciences seemed to devalue human nature as the product of historical environment or random physical forces. It is hardly surprising, then, that this should also be a time of active renegotiation, by different agents and in a range of discourses, of the nature, meaning and value of emotions, in the public sphere and in the recently conceived space of the social. As part of a discussion of these renegotiations, the present essay proposes to revisit two much read novels – Charles Dickens's *Hard Times* (1854) and Elizabeth Gaskell's *North and South* (1854-1855) – both of which may be understood as arising from the cultural moment in question.

These texts contribute to an understanding of affective phenomena not because they probe affective depths or emotional landscapes, but because they bring into focus a specific turn in what must surely be among the liveliest and most engaging moments in the cultural history of emotions. Both texts are habitually categorised as 'novels of social reform', 'condition of England novels' or, more narrowly, 'industrial novels'.[2] Both address contemporary social divisions with stated aims of 'healing' or 'harmonising' hostile relations, and both enter into the social project of Dickens's journal *Household Words*, in which they were published, within a month of each other, in serial form.

It is significant to our discussion, moreover, that these

2 See for example Lodge 1967; Butwin 1977; Elliott 1994.

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novels exist in continuity with journalism, the emerging discipline of sociology and the current professionalisation of social work, and that their intervention into the on-going construction of emotions is best understood as discursive events. Addressed to a predominantly middle-class audience (though Dickens's editorial policy did aim to include a working-class readership), the novels and their discursive context are concerned to identify policies and practices amenable to achieving sympathetic understanding across boundaries of class and, ultimately, a shared ideal of 'civilised society'. In this respect the novels align themselves with the aims of social translation and mediation pursued by contemporary sociologists.

Before exploring this particular engagement with the economy of emotions, however, it is instructive to consider briefly the cultural meanings of emotion at this time – specifically sentimentality and sympathy – against a historical and conceptual backdrop.

The sympathetic revolution

Much has been written about Victorian sentimentalism as originating in what Eric Hayot terms "the sympathetic revolution" of the 18th and 19th centuries. This was a period during which the citizens of Europe and America "experienced a dramatic expansion of the human and geopolitical space toward which the average member of their societies was presumed to be emotionally responsible", to the extent that, by the mid-19th century, "sympathy, and the moral responsibility that abetted it, found itself engaged in social reform movements designed to establish affective and material relationships with a wide variety of living beings, including the poor, the mentally ill, prisoners, slaves, foreigners, and even animals, whose troubles had not been the subject of serious

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institutional or personal concern only a century or two earlier" (Hayot 2009: 6).

As numerous scholars before Hayot have shown, this "cultural revolution" borrowed its philosophical justifications from thinkers like David Hume and Adam Smith, and took its religious ones from liberal Anglicanism. It found literary expression in the great 18th-century novels of sensibility, which praised a sympathetic disposition and a capacity for refined feeling. "[E]ncouraging moral growth in those new bourgeois subjects to whom appeals for compassionate reform were so frequently addressed", the literature of sensibility "was effectively schooling generations of gentlemen and gentlewomen in the observation of sympathetic scenes and the performance of the emotions appropriate to them" (Hayot 2009: 7). 18th-century ideas about sympathy and the moral sentiments became the operative ethic of many Victorian writers, including Dickens, supporting the widely held belief that human beings possess natural goodness and that spontaneous feeling is the basis for proper human relations. With the alienating and dehumanising aspects of modernity threatening to separate feelings from actions, human beings from their natural sentiments, the subject of much 19th-century literature was precisely the need to restore and repossess natural human feelings.

Viewed from a 21st-century perspective, Dickens stands as the Victorian writer who was most prolific in showing the moral sentiments at work. Convinced, like so many of his contemporaries, by the power of sentimental tears to dissolve individual and social barriers, his writing shows him less interested, as Fred Kaplan points out, in analysing patterns of feeling than in dramatising the situations that produced them. Thus the more notorious set scenes, like Nell's death mentioned above, need to be seen in the context of the culture's belief in the therapeutic nature of tears and the moral lessons inherent to the coffin and the tomb (Kaplan 1987:

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49). As we shall see, however, rather than an excess of tears, *Hard Times* presents its readers with other sources of sympathy presumably more in sync with the realities of life in an industrial capitalist economy.

Sentimentalism on the defensive

Eric Hayot's "sympathetic revolution" emphasises continuity: the long-term implications of the "sentimental education" operating in the humanitarianism of the 19th and 20th centuries. Other commentators, however, point to the defensiveness that seems to be sentimentalism's defining feature from the beginning. Fred Kaplan and Richard Walsh write about Victorian sentimentality as a protest against the advances of philosophical and scientific realism on the one hand and technological modernity on the other, seeing it as "a late and occasionally shrill stage in a vigorous rear-guard action to defend human nature from further devaluation" (Kaplan 1987: 5-6). For Janet Todd, "sentimentalism was always on the defensive", opposing the individualistic and thrusting values that were transforming Britain into an industrial and imperial power (Todd 1986: 129). Todd places Adam Smith's *Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759) as the last major work in a long line of British moral philosophy engaged in a systematic attempt to link morality and emotion, showing that the pressures against such a link are present even within Smith's theory, which presents sympathy as a moral duty rather than an original spontaneous feeling. The political economy espoused in *The Wealth of Nations* (1776), moreover, was far more influential in defining Victorian economic thought, with the famous assertion that "[i]t is not from the benevolence of the butcher, the brewer, or the baker, that we expect our dinner, but from their regard to their own interest" (Smith 1986: 27).

Apart from the economic argument, the pressures against

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sentimentalism were variously, partly politically, motivated. As Todd's history of sensibility has shown, attacks on sensibility as anti-community, decadent, immoral and amoral came from numerous sources from the end of the 18th century, not least from rationalist and later utilitarian philosophy. Increasingly, sensibility was considered suitable for a growing mass-audience of the illiterate and for women, who were "marginal to the economic and social enterprise" (Todd 1986: 129). In Britain, John Godwin's *Political Justice* (1793) introduced utility as the first concern of ethics and social organisation, with rational action and result superseding sentimental intention and response. For Godwin, like Carlyle above, the sympathy aroused by a particular spectacle is mere self-indulgence. True virtue must consist in disinterested concern for the welfare of society, now seen more as the large stratified nation than as the small familial fellowship of sentimentalism – a concern, moreover, that will be discovered not through feeling but through reason: "It is to the improvement of reason … that we are to look for the improvement of our social condition" (cited in Todd 1986: 140).

Victorian renegotiations

The interest pertaining to Dickens and Gaskell's interventions in the affective field, as already indicated, derives from the particular cultural moment in which they are embedded. Not least, this was a moment at which the sciences were rethinking affective taxonomies and epistemologies, a time when 'science' was increasingly being promoted as the safest foundation for ethical conduct (Otis 2002). At the same time, as we know, the technological and social processes of modernisation were producing new spaces and social relations. Writing in 1848, Marx and Engels describe the draining of emotion that defines life in the modern industrial city, where

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personal worth has resolved into exchange value and even the family, stripped of its "sentimental veil", has been reduced to "a mere money relation" (Marx and Engels 1848: 7). In the wake of this modernisation, science constructs the 'social' as a new space, marked by contradictions: on the one hand a realm of 'theories' and 'studies', of sociological investigation and legislative intervention; on the other, an extension of natural laws in which a policy of non-interference suggests itself as a logical consequence (Otis 2002).

It is into this context that the social problem novel introduces writing as what may fruitfully be thought of as 'social work'. Gaskell and Dickens explicitly aim for social reform, inviting readers to complete the text through forms of social and political action. Both novels argue the importance of affective relationships and appropriate emotional performance within the social organism.

Hard Times presents what to its detractors appears as a polemical and sentimental critique of a mid-Victorian industrial society dominated by laissez faire capitalism and Utilitarian thinking, which together reduce workers to units in the economic machine and substitute calculation and statistics for emotions. The argument informing the plot is well known, summarised by David Lodge and others in a few simple tenets: Utilitarianism as social and educational philosophy leads to a damaging impoverishment of the moral and emotional life of the individual, which in turn shows itself in a general inability to deal with the human problems created by industrialism. On the one hand, a philistine and emotionally impoverished middle class withdraws its sympathy from a suffering working class; on the other, workers deadened by dehumanising processes of mechanisation and quantification are left without the sensibility required both for the imaginative understanding of other classes and for identifying with the moral sentiments as a civic ideal.

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Much of Dickens's argument is carried by the famous opposition between Fact and Fancy, introduced on the opening page and running through the entire novel. The facts of materialists, Utilitarians and manufacturers are set against the fancy of working-class folklore, fairy tale, and popular forms of entertainment such as the circus: sources of imaginative and affective training which shows itself in moral action through the examples of Sleary, the circus director, and Sissy Jupe, the child of the circus. The plot effectively punishes the exponents of fact and rewards the exponents of fancy, the exception being the worker-protagonist Stephen Blackpool, who dies, having fallen down a disused shaft, a martyr to industrial expansion.

Beginning in serial form on 2 September 1854, a month after the completion of *Hard Times*, *North and South* returns to the industrial theme, repeating the call for sympathy to solve the problems of industrial society. North and South as geographical regions also stand for the major split in the mid-century social sphere: the industrial north and the mercantile south representing the separation of classes resulting from industrial capitalism. To heal the divide of the "two nations", Gaskell introduces her Southern protagonist Margaret, a model charitable visitor who sympathetically attunes her charitable work to the new social context she encounters in the North, thus performing the vital function of mediating between workers and masters.

The narrative makes it clear that it is Margaret's affective schooling (through exposure to art and high culture) that has equipped her with the imaginative sympathy and sensibility required to perform this role. Encountering the unfamiliar culture, language and traditions of the northern working class, Margaret embarks on an interpretive venture that gradually allows her to understand, adopt and mediate linguistic and cultural practices across classes. By the end of the novel,

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Margaret's sympathetic visiting has become the model for the relations set up between workers and master, by means of which differences are reconciled and former opponents brought together in a collective enterprise. Reconciliation between North and South is further achieved with the marriage between the Northern industrialist and laissez faire capitalist, Thornton, and the Southern philanthropist and exponent of the values of beauty, charity and the emotions, Margaret.

Hard Times has been criticised for offering only a "vaguely defined benevolence" as a cure for the ills of industrial society (Lodge 1967: 87), presenting a plea for charity and imaginative understanding in the face of the industrialist's withdrawal from social contact with the working classes ("not drawin nigh to fok, wi' kindness and patience an' cheery ways"), as well as the habit of treating workers as numbers not credited with souls or human emotions (Dickens 1969: 182). The novel's generalised benevolence, moreover, is made dependent on "Fancy": not the transformative Imagination of Romantic theory but – through the moral example of the circus director Sleary – bread and circus; a "relief", a "vent", a "holiday", "an honest dance", "some occasional light pie" (Dickens 1969: 67-68; Lodge 1967: 87). Similarly, the ending offered by *North and South* is frequently faulted for its alleged retreat from the public sphere into a romanticised private reconciliation.

Such criticisms actualise the view of Victorian sentimentalism as defensiveness and "rear-guard action" (Kaplan 1987: 5-6), leaving us with the question of whether it is indeed politically naïve, evasive and retrograde to focus on the individual encounter and the role of the emotions in the social organisation as both Dickens and Gaskell do. In order to think through such questions it may be useful to recall what Jürgen Habermas and Charles Taylor write about the conjunction between sympathy and the economic, discursive and

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social structures we think of as modernity. More precisely, this involves considering, firstly, the connections between emotion and modern spatial and economic structures; secondly, the place of the emotions in the modern distribution of rationalities.

Among the social and economic conditions for the sympathetic revolution, it has been argued, would be the beginning of new kinds of public and private space, most significantly that feature of modern society that is often called, with Jürgen Habermas, the 'public sphere', understood as involving a new kind of social imaginary as well as a new type of public opinion. Habermas's book *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* considers the emergence in Western Europe in the 18th century of this unprecedented public opinion, which takes the form of a consensus arising among the emerging bourgeoisie, within a socio-discursive space that Charles Taylor describes as "metatopical" (Taylor 1992: 222-223, 229). The ground of this sphere is "print capitalism": books, pamphlets, and newspapers, circulating from a plurality of independent sources and discussed across a range of public fora. At the end of all this is public opinion in the new sense: a metatopical agency structurally independent of the political constitution of society; a discourse of reason located outside power, which nevertheless is normative for power (a power, incidentally, which is increasingly exercised by the bourgeoisie itself) (Taylor 1992: 223-224).[3] In a context such as this, as Charles Taylor observes, a pamphlet or editorial would present itself as a speech act addressed to a whole public, "the

3 It should be noted at this point that to speak of a discourse of reason independent of the political constitution of society is not to posit a harmonious, a-political public space. Habermas in particular gives emphasis to the material contingencies that restrict both the access to, and the operations within, what is effectively a bourgeois public sphere.

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reader incorporating into the meaning of the printed object an awareness of potentially limitless others who may also be reading" (Taylor 1992: 226; 241).

In Habermas's argument, the economy is the first mode of society of the new sort, constituted purely extrapolitically. Thus, part of the background to the rise of the public sphere as Habermas and Taylor expound it is the saliency given to the 'private' economic agent who operates in a sphere of exchange with others, a socio-economic relation that does not need to be constituted by authority and that amounts to an extrapolitical and secular, ideally self-regulating system: an 'economy' in the modern sense of Adam Smith (Taylor 1992: 250).

The second background Habermas picks out is the intimate sphere, the world of the family and its affections, which has as one of its fruits the 18th-century cherishing of sentiment. The newly defined intimate realm of close relations was part of the background against which the public sphere emerged – because it belonged to the domain of the extrapolitical and secular 'private', and because the intimate domain had to be defined through public interchange, both of literary works and of criticism. People who never met came to a mutually recognised common mind about the moral importance of experiencing fine, noble, or exalted sentiments, and about the moving power of particular literary works (Taylor 1992: 251-252).

Drawing on the arguments of Hayot, Habermas and Taylor, then, we may conclude that the sympathetic revolution – the ethic of affections and sentiment – is contingent not only, as Hayot says, "on modernity's dream of a universal subject" (2009: 6), but on some of its social and economic organisations: it may be understood as conjoined with the rise of the public sphere and new kinds of private space, further, with the phenomenon called "print capitalism", and with a liber-

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al-capitalist economic system in the sense of Adam Smith.

To fully understand Dickens and Gaskell as being involved in something other than rearguard action, however, it is useful to look at another aspect of modernity than the rise of the public sphere: the cultural rationalisation that leads to the separation into autonomous spheres and rationalities under the control of the specialist. In the essay "Modernity – An Incomplete Project", Habermas recalls Max Weber's characterisation of cultural modernity as the separation of reason into the three autonomous spheres of science, morality and art, with the appearance of a cognitive-instrumental, a moral-practical and an aesthetic-expressive rationality.

The project of modernity formulated in the 18th century by the Enlightenment philosophers, as Habermas understands it, "intended to release the cognitive potential of each of these domains from their esoteric forms … to utilize this accumulation of specialized culture for the enrichment of everyday social life", to prevent their "separation from the hermeneutics of everyday communication" (1998: 9). The literature of sentiment may be understood as being informed by the Enlightenment project. As history has shown, however, the separation of rationalities increased with the institutionalisation of the fine arts as independent activities and, from the middle of the 19th century, the emergence of an aestheticist conception of art (Habermas 1998: 9-10).

To recapitulate: Habermas proposes that we understand the emotional education of sentimentalism in the context of the transformation of the public sphere and of the economy of human relations, and in the conjoined rationalities of the Enlightenment project. As we have seen, moreover, the changes taking place between 1750 and 1850 that we term sociological and technological modernity call for a changed understanding of sympathy at this time. On this background I propose the following: that our two novels, rather than

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being caught up in rearguard sentimentalism and defence of the emotions, are actively involved in a project of discursive reconfiguration. I argue that the serialised novels together with the editorials and articles of *Household Words* constitute a metatopical, nonlocal space. Rather than being aesthetic objects, they are speech acts involved in reassessing the value and place of emotions in the changing topography of public and private domains of 19th-century industrial society.

If sympathy involves both the moral-practical and the aesthetic-expressive rationalities, we might say that Dickens attempts to reconnect the two with cognitive-instrumental rationality and to show that they are necessary to the hermeneutics of everyday life that keeps a social organism healthy. This is the argument of the novel, but it is also enacted in the novel's insertion in *Household Words*. Joseph Butwin has shown that *Hard Times* exists in a continuum with the investigative aims and methods of journalism, social science and social reform movements. The same applies to *North and South*.[4] For both novels it is the affective training provided by 'low' as much as 'high' art and everyday cultural practices that keep us human and assist the hermeneutic venture, and it is the discursive exchange among fact and fiction, practices and rationalities that allows each novel to contribute to the topical redistribution of emotions.

4 The fact that *North and South* was seen as an engagement with social work and the emerging discipline of sociology is indicated by a 1928 article on "The Sociological Significance of the Novels of Mrs. Gaskell" in the social science journal *Social Forces*, which sets out to demonstrate how Gaskell's fiction builds on her practice in social work, and that both fiction and practice anticipate and contribute to the theories and methods of modern case work (Johnston 1928).

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Hard Times

As Joseph Butwin argues, the novel of social reform sets out to initiate action in an audience of the general public rather than among a community of 'readers'. The power of public opinion in the 1850s was closely linked with the press, a link that was clearly understood by novelists aiming to sway public opinion on social issues. Dickens's stated ambition at the initiation of *Household Words* in 1850 was to unite the function of the newspaper and the novel. The "Preliminary Word" to the first number of *Household Words*, 30 March 1850, celebrates "fancy" and the "Imagination" and promises to reveal the "thousand and one tales" too often obscured by the smoke of the factories (cited in Butwin 1977: 170). Four years later, *Hard Times* echoes the principles of the journal as they were stated in the first issue, most prominently the belief in the redemptive power of fancy, the defence of popular amusement, and the warning against severing the link between emotions and morality.

Dickens's other contribution to the first number of *Household Words* is an article called "The Amusements of the People", defending popular amusements (here vaudeville theatre) as a vestige of imagination and human emotion in industrial society. The article claims the right – like the circus director Sleary in the novel four years later – of amusement and fancy for the lower orders: "We believe that these people have a right to be amused"; "there is a range of imagination in most of us, which no amount of steam-engines will satisfy" (cited in Butwin 1977: 171).

The argument of *Hard Times* has been faulted for its alleged incompletion or ellipsis, its failure to present a coherent analysis, and for resorting to benevolence as a clearly insufficient solution. The ellipsis, however, is filled in by the context of the journal. As Butwin's study points out, the instalments of

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Hard Times are the only signed articles in *Household Words*. The name Charles Dickens appears above each one, and the readers are invited to take the novel as the editor's own comment on 'the times', and to move from the fiction into other reports on current events. The strike in the novel is framed by articles about the current Preston strike; the fictionalised rendition of urban slums and conditions in the textile mills is complemented by articles on the London poor and factory safety appearing before and after the serialisation of the novel.

Stephen's complaint on preventable accidents (as he lies dying) is highly elliptical, a reminder to his beloved Rachel that the shaft has been the cause of many deaths and the subject of many petitions by the miners, along with a brief reference to another industrial victim, Rachel's sister, who died as a result of "sickly air" (Dickens 1969: 290). Significantly, emotion in this death scene is at a considerably lower pitch than in the drama of Little Nell. Rather than the excess of tears of the traditional set scene, Dickens provides the middle-class reader with sources of sympathy in the sentimental narrative and its display of the inherent goodness and humanness of the working class, as well as the tragic ending for the worker-protagonist. In the last instance, however, the emotional appeal of the serialised novel is made largely dependent on the discursive context: the articles on factory safety and the on-going campaign for reform filling the pages of the journal – like the description of a worker whose life has been "mangled … out of him" in an unfenced shaft, or the youth mutilated and killed by the "pitiless monster" of a machine (cited in Butwin 1977: 180; 183).

Dickens's argument in the discursive space composed of the instalments of the novel and the journalistic frame of *Household Words* is to condemn the absence of emotion in the modern industrial city, in utilitarian philosophy and laissez faire capitalism. Interestingly, however, Dickens's discursive

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intervention also constitutes an attack on the misplaced expenditure of emotion within the capitalist market economy, whether as a strategy for the proletariat or for industry. The novel's thoroughly unsympathetic portrait of Slackbridge, the union "demagogue", is often commented upon for its typically middle class prejudice and fear of radical agitation. The same anxiety was expressed in Dickens's editorial statement four years earlier, where the working-class agitator is indicted as a panderer "to the basest passions of the lowest natures", their very existence "a national reproach": "And these, we should consider it our highest service to displace" (cited in Butwin 1977: 170).

In the journal as well as the novel, then, a mix of fact and fancy, reason and emotion is proposed as a cultural strategy to defuse and replace the affective appeal (and perlocutionary effect) of the demagogue. In place of passionate speech, the emotionally based morality of working class culture is enlisted to persuade middle-class readers of the deserving nature of the workers' cause, thereby arousing middle-class sympathy to speak and act on their behalf.

Six months after the conclusion of *Hard Times*, as an introduction to the 11th volume of *Household Words*, Dickens restates the case against misplaced emotionalism. His target in the article "The Other Public", however, is no longer the revolutionary agitator but the manipulation of the "shark's prey" – a credulous and easily manipulated public of the uneducated poor – by entrepreneurial "boosters" of various kinds (Butwin 1977: 172; 174). Dickens, like Carlyle, rejected the new art of advertisement, of which the American example represented the worst excesses. For both advertisement and promotion, with their machinations and manipulations, "quack medicines" and "seven-foot hats" represented a callous misuse of imagination, of emotive speech acts and the capacity for affective response, for entrepreneurial, money-

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making purposes. Significantly, one of the "'smart' Showmen" Dickens attacks in the article is the circus director P.T. Barnum – as Butwin points out, a kind of Sleary of the market who has made fancy into big business by tapping what Dickens saw as a basic human need, the need to be amused (1977: 173). Barnum, in Dickens's rendition, is the shark who has perfected the art of manipulating imaginations and emotions for maximum profit, who knows that the power of fiction is to sell, and who gives his name to the perverted art of manipulative, inflationary speech: "Barnumizing" (Butwin 1977: 173).

A perverse logic of deflation and inflation seems to be the law of the economy of emotions in the industrial market place: one minute too costly for profitable investment, the next a cheap expenditure, everywhere in excess. Between the absence of emotion in mechanised society and the excessive emotion of the agitator and the advertiser, however, Dickens carves out an alternative place for the emotions: in the middle class hermeneutic enterprise of "drawin' nigh" to the lower class "wi' kindness and patience an' cheery ways", and in the potential for working-class imaginative stimulus still present in the everyday urban environment: circus, fancy and fairy-tale.

Stimulating 'fancy' in middle-class as well as working-class individuals is crucial to the project of class harmony. The concluding paragraphs envision a future in which imaginative sympathy has become everyday practice, with Louisa Gradgrind, daughter of the middle-class Utilitarian and wife of the laissez faire industrialist, "trying hard to know her humbler fellow-creatures", and Sissy Jupe, the child of fancy and the circus, continuing to teach "childish lore … imaginative graces and delights" to her own children (Dickens 1969: 313). In a final address to public opinion, Dickens the editor-novelist challenges the reader to promote similar

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things: “Dear Reader: It rests with you and me, whether, in our two fields of action, similar things shall be or not. Let them be!” (314).

North and South

Where Dickens’s proposition may be lacking in practicality, Gaskell’s novel offers a practical model for class sympathy within the capitalist enterprise. This is a model which takes into account the changing relations within the newly defined ‘social’, and which proposes a particular sympathetic and hermeneutic strategy which is both within and beyond the framework of an industrial economy. The social sphere, as constructed by 19th-century scientific and sociological discourses, may be understood as a blurred ground between the old public and private, not least because the rise of social science and the professionalisation of social work linked care and philanthropy to the public domain and to the economy. With the new discourses the emotionally based caring in the private space was also defined as social and linked to the economy, constituting the private home as both public and private, commercial and beyond the market.

Entering into debate with contemporary sociology and journalism, Gaskell’s novel takes part in the ongoing practical as well as imaginary construction of the social sphere. As Dorice Williams Elliott has shown, contemporary reviewers placed the novel in the context of the current controversy surrounding the figure of the (charitable) female visitor, a debate which was not so much over *whether* the poor were to be helped as about *how* and *by whom*. Fears were raised that charitable female visitors might antagonise the poor or interfere with the practices of the professional, male social worker. Manuals, lectures and other printed material instructed women on how to conduct such visiting, emphasis-

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ing the social and political importance of correct personal contact with the poor: by means of "friendly interchange of feeling" and "intimate knowledge of … wants and habits", "impregnable barrier[s] of attachment" would arise, safe from "political convulsion" (Elliott 1994: 30). In this climate one contemporary reviewer commends *North and South* for presenting a model lady visitor who performs the vital function of mediating between classes with "humility and deep sympathy" and without threatening the position of the paid male social worker: the value of the kind woman's call is shown as "incalculable" and therefore outside the professional market where such services are bought and sold (cited in Elliott 1994: 22).

However, as Elliott also shows, *North and South* does in fact suggest a model within the capitalist enterprise. In this respect, too, the novel enters into current controversies surrounding the place of sympathy in the public (economic and social) domain. With widespread fears that hostile relations between classes (evidenced in a series of strikes and lockouts during the 1840s and 1850s) would jeopardise trade and threaten the nation's prosperity, a range of schemes were proposed to reconcile classes, many of them favouring personal contacts as the best way towards socio-economic harmony. Examples of such schemes were the interpersonal exchanges proposed between middle-class women and their servants, female visitors and poor families, and "collegial friendships" between middle-class males and working men, such as the model tried out by the Christian Socialist reformer F.D. Maurice and his fellows at the Working Men's College.

In Gaskell's novel, Margaret's visiting becomes a model for the relations set up between workers and master: a co-operative dining room initiated by the master, managed by the workers, and patronised by both. Influenced by Margaret's sympathetic visiting, her affective relations with workers

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based on imaginative interpretation of feelings and needs, Thornton explains the nature of his social "experiment": a scheme "carried on by that sort of common interest which invariably makes people find means and ways of seeing each other, and becoming acquainted with each other's characters and persons, and even tricks of temper and modes of speech. We should understand each other better, and I'll venture to say we should like each other more" (Gaskell 1973: 40). If not likely to prevent future strikes, Thornton's social vision is one that sets out to add bonds of understanding and affection to the cash nexus, a type of social management that invests in personal contact as much as in the dogmas of political economy.

From the beginning, Margaret's hold on the imaginations of Thornton as well as the workers derives from a moment of affective display. Initially her effort to prevent violence by putting herself in the way of the stones thrown at Thornton by an angry crowd of locked-out workmen is seen as an inappropriate demonstration of emotion. On acquaintance, however, Margaret appears to be setting new standards for emotional expenditure, presented as a being of individual sympathy and strong attachment, thus establishing her authority as class mediator. Significantly, Margaret and Thornton's marriage, an emotional contract, is also an economic transaction, enabling the continuation of the capitalist, as much as the sympathetic, enterprise. With Thornton's factory threatened by bankruptcy, it is Margaret's offer of her inheritance – "old" money from the southern land-based economy, as opposed to Thornton's "new" – that saves the day. Margaret's sympathy and emotional power, channelled into practical action in the sympathetic hermeneutics of the everyday encounter, becomes the model for a new ideal: a tempered capitalist economy in which sound affective investments yield emotional as well as economic dividends for all.

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Concluding my argument in this essay, I would say there is sufficient ground to revise the view of Victorian sentimentalism as a defensive rearguard – an anti-modern product of modernity and capitalism, protesting in vain against their dehumanising effects. Clearly, the reconfigurations of emotion taking place at this time complicate any simple attempt at aligning sympathy with sentimental excess or idealist retreat from social, material and economic realities.

The ideas of Habermas and Taylor reminded us of the historical contingencies of the 18th and 19th-century sympathetic revolution: its grounding in a particular version of capitalist economy as well as in a particular distribution of private and public spheres in relation to institutionalised power. Habermas also served to thematise the connection between sympathy and the Enlightenment project of drawing upon complementary rationalities. Habermas's public sphere is (among other things) the space for the affective education of sentimentalism and the discursive redefinition of the social value and place of emotions.

Dickens and Gaskell continue this venture in a changed historical context, debating the proper expenditure of emotions in industrial society at a time when the reconceived space of the social cuts across and redistributes old limits of public and private; when liberal democracy reforms notions of citizenship, while liberal capitalism depersonalises human encounters, defines human relations in terms of the cash nexus, and channels affective investment into fetishisation and propaganda: both designed to move masses rather than individuals. In this situation Dickens and Gaskell align themselves neither with Carlyle's advocacy of thrift nor with Godwin's bracketing of the moral emotions as irrelevant to a disinterested concern for the welfare of society. Instead,

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as we have seen, both novels seek out arenas for individual encounters – not the small familial fellowships of sentimentalism, but the opportunities for everyday communication existing within the large stratified nation that is 19th-century Britain. The success of the hermeneutic venture depends on a combination of rationalities: the cognitive-instrumental rationality of scientific and economic reasoning balanced against the affective (and moral) training of art and popular culture. While emotion is crucial to the project of class harmony, it is equally important that emotion be steered into appropriate channels, away from the negative affective politics of socialist demagoguery and capitalist fetishisation.

Where Carlyle's advocacy of sentimental thrift was based on a view of its social inefficiency, then, Dickens and Gaskell's discursive interventions in the economy of emotions suggest ways of tempering the capitalist enterprise by rethinking emotional expenditure as a site for sound investments. More than they are credited with, this rethinking takes place in particular, rather than generalised, terms: as an argument in favour of emotional balance; of sufficiency against surplus and excess. Both writers seem to understand that sympathy and emotions are contingent upon cultural and historical frameworks as well as evolving social relations and spaces. The affective hermeneutics they propose is a strategy for cultural translation that works with, rather than against, the 19th-century redistribution of spaces, emotions and rationalities, and with an awareness that in the complexity of the Victorian socio-economic enterprise, the economy of emotions amounts to more than a question of thrift over expenditure.

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Emotional Turbulence on a Floating Stage in Melville's "Benito Cereno"

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"All this is very queer now, thought Captain Delano, with a qualmish sort of emotion; but as one feeling incipient sea-sickness, he strove, by ignoring the symptoms, to get rid of the malady."

Melville, "Benito Cereno", p. 64.[1]

Reading "Benito Cereno," Herman Melville's classic tale of the hidden revolt aboard the slave ship the *San Dominick*,[2] with a focus on Captain Amasa Delano's mood swings, is like being witness to the emotional equivalent of a rapidly fluctuating barometer: even though Delano does his utmost to suppress all suspicions, what goes on aboard the ship time and again triggers his feelings of unease, discomfort and danger. But as quick as these emotions flare up, just as soon do

1 All further quotes from "Benito Cereno" are given as page numbers in parentheses.

2 The story was originally published in three parts in *Putnam's Monthly Magazine of American Literature, Science and Art* in 1855, and reprinted in a slightly modified form in *The Piazza Tales* the following year.

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they abate. Sometimes no more than a change of scenery is needed, while at other times Delano has to perform hard mental labors to come up with plausible explanations for the odd behavior he encounters. No matter which is the case, though, almost as soon as he has managed to drive his suspicions away they find ways to re-enter his mind.

This recurring pattern of emotional tension building up only to subsequently be released continues right up to the moment when the truth of the *San Dominick* is finally revealed to Delano and to the readers: he has stumbled into a slave revolt where the rebels have killed most of the crew and taken command of the ship. The reason he has failed to realize this is that the leader of the slaves, Babo, has orchestrated an ingenious plot in order to make him think that the former captain – the Spaniard Benito Cereno – is still in charge.

Delano's emotional reactions alert us to an interesting character trait: just like a pendulum set in motion, if left to its own devices his mind will fairly soon return to its initial state. The actual contents of this generic emotional state are indicated by the anonymous third-person narrator when he states that "[w]hen at ease with respect to exterior things, Captain Delano's nature was not only benign, but familiarly and humorously so" (71), as well as the wry remark that the captain was

> a person of singularly undistrustful good nature, not liable, except on extraordinary and repeated incentives, and hardly then, to indulge in personal alarms, any way involving the imputation of malign evil in man. Whether, in view of what humanity is capable, such a trait implies, along with a benevolent heart, more than ordinary quickness and accuracy of intellectual perception, may be left to the wise to determine. (35)

In other words, if Delano's mind was a thermodynamic system, it would be one fairly close to equilibrium, to which it

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quickly returns if disturbed. As such the story can be read as a series of exterior fluctuations, time and again causing the captain to momentarily veer away from this preferred emotional state, each time resulting in his mind attempting to find the shortest path back.

For this reason, it is necessary to look into exactly how and why Delano's reactions are triggered throughout the first and third part of "Benito Cereno".[3] One can find keen readers who have touched upon the importance of these mood swings,[4] but to my knowledge the question of emotions has yet to be addressed in a sustained manner for the whole story. As I will argue, understanding these erratic twists and turns of Delano's mind is in fact crucial for several different reasons. First, by constantly drawing our attention to Delano's strong emotional reactions, as well as to his ongoing attempts at self-reassurance, the narrator is able to effectively indicate to the reader that there is something important hovering just beyond the captain's reach, something which he suspects is

3 With regard to the question of emotions, these two are obviously the most important, as opposed to the second part: Benito Cereno's declaration to the court in Lima. In the following, I will have little to say about the latter, except that the earlier omnipresence of Delano's emotions can be said to make it seem all the more official and detached by comparison – the court not being interested in feelings, but in verifying facts – thereby helping to strengthen the sharp contrast of tone between the different parts.

4 For example, Nelson (1998) uses Delano's emotions as the starting point for an interesting reading of the scene where he encounters a female slave and her child; Ryan (2003: 69-74) analyses the importance of the emotion of *benevolence* in the story; Tawil (2006) argues that when it comes to the captain's attempts at self-reassurance, "the narration describes his emotional state in language drawn from a familiar nineteenth-century discourse of sympathy" (Tawil 2006: 39); while Robbins (1997) argues that Melville infused Delano with traits taken from the sentimental novel, typically associated with female authors, in order to turn the captain into "a negative model" (Robbins 1997: 554) for the readers of the explicitly anti-sentimental *Putnam's*.

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there, but is unable – and at some level perhaps also unwilling – to properly grasp. For the narrator, Delano's fluctuating emotions thus function as a very effective means of conveying the fact that the captain's understanding of what he experiences is flawed and limited, and that his judgments are not necessarily to be trusted.

In addition, the recurring dynamic of emotional ebb and flow also plays an important part in creating what has been noted as one of the story's defining features: the suspense resulting from its thoroughly unsettling and nightmarish mood. As one contemporary reviewer put it in the September 1856 edition of *The Knickerbocker Magazine*: "The tale entitled 'Benito Cereno,' is most painfully interesting, and in reading it we became nervously anxious for the solution of the mystery it involves" (Anon., in Burkholder 1992: 20). If Samuel Otter is correct in his claim that "Benito Cereno" "pivots on issues of awareness, drawing readers into unexpected spaces, disorienting and implicating them" (Otter 2010: 275), I want to argue that the keen attention the narrator pays to Delano's various emotional reactions, as well as his various strategies for indicating their inadequacy as responses to a given situation, is perhaps the story's perhaps most important means of achieving this effect. Understanding what brings about the captain's changing states of mind, as well as how this is described by the narrator, is therefore of the utmost importance if one wants to come to terms with the "textual action" of the narrative; how it ensures the readers' psychological participation by creating a situation in which they come to experience a vague and puzzling anxiety resembling that which haunts its main character. Through skillfully drawing our attention to Delano's emotional discomfort and his failed attempts to fully regain his composure, the narrator manages to affect us.

In the following, I would like to discuss two interrelated topics the narrator repeatedly draws upon in order to explain

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why these fluctuations occur. On the one hand, there is an abundance of references to acting, to the theater and to theatricality throughout the narrative; on the other, he alerts us to Delano's strong concern with people acting in correspondence with his expectations. As I see it, these two topics are central for understanding how the narrator structures the emotional ebb and flow of the narrative. After first presenting the two separately, I will show how they come together in the story's shaving scene, in which Delano thinks he is seeing Babo joyfully shaving his master, whereas in reality the former slave is simultaneously taunting and threatening Benito Cereno with a razor to his throat.

A first glimpse of Delano's wild mood swings

The reader is made aware of the first of the many emotional reactions that Amasa Delano will come to experience throughout the story as soon as he initially sets eyes on the *San Dominick*. The year is 1799. With his ship, the *Bachelor's Delight*, the American captain has cast anchor in the harbor of the island of St. Maria, off the coast of Chile. One gray morning, it is here that the slaver slowly comes into his view. As an experienced sailor he immediately notices that something is amiss: "To Captain Delano's surprise, the stranger, viewed through the glass, showed no colors" (35). We also learn that this surprise, miniscule as it is at this point, "might have deepened into some uneasiness" (35) – the lack of colors a potential sign of pirates – were it not for his aforementioned tendency of thinking the best of everybody. In addition, his momentary doubt is further allayed when he notices the ship's awkward navigation:

> But whatever misgiving might have obtruded on first seeing the stranger, would almost, in any seaman's mind, have been dissipated by observing

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> that, the ship, in navigating into the harbor, was drawing too near the land; a sunken reef making out off her bow. This seemed to prove her a stranger, indeed, not only to the sealer, but the island; consequently, she could be no wonted freebooter on that ocean. (35)

Continuing to watch the ship's progress with interest, Delano eventually decides to lower his whale-boat, setting out to find out what is wrong and if he might offer any help. This initial incident functions almost as a blue-print for all that is to follow: something unexpected causes Delano to worry, but each time, he manages to rationalize what has happened, trying to ensure himself that he has no real need for concern. As the story progresses, it will become increasingly difficult to regain his emotional equilibrium, at least for more than short stretches at a time.

Once aboard the *San Dominick*, the first assaults on Delano's good moods are all the more elegant for being almost imperceptible – this both to the captain himself and to the reader. Immediately after Delano sets foot on deck, for example, the narrator describes how he is "surrounded by a clamorous throng of whites and blacks, but the latter outnumbering the former more than could have been expected, negro transportation-ship as the stranger in port was" (38). While the phrase "more than could have been expected" carefully avoids bluntly stating that something is not as it should be, it indicates that this might well be the case.

This is just the first of several instances where our attention is subtly drawn to Delano's initial lack of concern. Soon thereafter, it is for example stated that "[p]erhaps it was some influence as above is attempted to be described, which, in Captain Delano's mind, heightened whatever, upon a staid scrutiny, might have seemed unusual; especially the conspicuous figures of four elderly grizzled negroes" (38). The same narrative strategy is employed here, suggesting that

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these four elderly oakum-pickers – as well as the six slaves polishing hatchets of which we are subsequently told – *might* have struck Delano as odd, but do not. In fact, we later learn that at first he barely registers their presence: "But that first comprehensive glance which took in those ten figures, with scores less conspicuous, rested but an instant upon them, as, impatient of the hubbub of voices, the visitor turned in quest of whomsoever it might be that commanded the ship" (39). In other words, whereas Delano only casts a quick glance upon those around him, it is the narrator who prolongs that glance into a "staid scrutiny," thereby suggesting to the readers that they do the same, making us see that there might be more to these ten slaves than the captain is aware of. The narration, in fact, is full of similarly oblique hints. Even if many of these are so vague and unimposing that they will perhaps only be noticed on repeated readings, taken in combination they play an important part in the creation of the story's disturbing atmosphere, where first-time readers not familiar with the plot will soon begin to feel that something is wrong, but with little chance of figuring out just what.

Setting foot on a floating stage

Since it is given as a possible explanation for Delano's lack of interest in these ten "conspicuous" figures, this "influence as above is attempted to be described" warrants further investigation. The phrase refers to the preceding passage, where the narrator compares the act of boarding a new ship to that of entering "a strange house with strange inmates in a strange land" for the first time (38). As he sees it, although there are similarities,

> in the case of the ship there is this addition; that the living spectacle it contains, upon its sudden and complete disclosure, has, in contrast with

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the blank ocean which zones it, something of the effect of enchantment. The ship seems unreal; these strange costumes, gestures, and faces, but a shadowy tableau just emerged from the deep, which directly must receive back what it gave. (38)

Before having a closer look at this quote, it should first be mentioned that several of the story's many commentators have noted a strong theatrical undercurrent running through "Benito Cereno".[5] In fact, what Delano experiences might well be described as a play – or what Otter terms a "racial theater" (Otter 2010: 267) – performed for his eyes alone; for, as Michael Paul Rogin deftly puts it, "[t]here is no action until the drama of the *San Dominick* is over, only acting" (Rogin 1985: 210). As we learn near the end of the story, the mastermind behind this performance is Babo, who has forced Benito Cereno and the remaining members of the crew to back up a false story intended to allay Delano's suspicions, so that during the night the former slaves might take over the *Bachelor's Delight* by force. Babo is not only responsible for imagining the script and transferring it to the stage, but also plays the crucial part of trusted servant to Cereno, never leaving his enslaved master unattended in their visitor's company. In addition, he has a hand in almost everything else that happens, improvising ruses and diversions whenever need be, as can be seen in the false imprisonment of the giant Atufal, as well as the shaving scene. When, during the latter, the narrator comments that Babo, with his comb, scissors and brush, was executing "other impromptu touches evincing the hand of a master" (74), the statement can thus just as well be said to apply to how smoothly the slave manages his theatrical illusion, at least up to the moment when Cereno thwarts his

5 On the theatrical aspects of the story, *cf.* Rogin (1985); Sundquist (1993); Baker (2001); DeGuzman (2005), and Otter (2010).

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plans by leaping into Delano's whale-boat, leading to the eventual quelling of the revolt. If it is correct to view what takes place aboard the *San Dominick* as a performance,[6] the ship itself can be seen almost as a floating stage, as indicated by the narrator's description of Delano's eye, at one point, "falling continually, as from a stage-box into the pit, upon the strange crowd before and below him" (65).[7]

With these theatrical aspects in mind, the narrator's comparison of ships and houses takes on additional meanings: what comes into the audience's view when the front curtains are raised at the beginning of a play can well be thought of as a "sudden and complete disclosure" of a "living spectacle", and the mimetic effect often sought by theater to make the audience forget that what they are seeing is not real could be described as an "effect of enchantment". Even if the quoted passage is not explicitly about the *San Dominick per se*, it can also easily be related directly to Delano's experiences: there is for example no doubt that he does find the "costumes, gestures, and faces" aboard the ship strange.

In addition, "shadowy tableau" is a very apt description

6 Additional support for this can be found in the plethora of references to the theater, to acting and to the stage in "Benito Cereno." To give but a few examples, the four oakum-pickers are said to "act the part of monitorial constables" aboard (42), as well as "act the part of old dominies" to the rest of the slaves (48); in retrospect Benito Cereno stresses "how hard it had been to enact the part forced on [him] by Babo" (100); "scene," "gesture," and "posture" are repeatedly used to describe what Delano sees; Cereno and Babo are described as "acting out […] some juggling play before him" (73-74), as well as "enacting this play of the barber before him" (74); the narrator mentions "the theatrical aspect of Don Benito in his harlequin ensign" (74); and the slaves, after Delano finally realizes what is going on, are described as "with mask torn away" (85).

7 For an analysis of how this quote should be understood in connection with the divisions separating American theater audiences along socioeconomic lines (seats in the stage-box being so expensive that only the elites could afford them), see Baker (2001).

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of the *San Dominick*, as it first comes into Delano's view. In part, it is shadowy because the story's magnificent, very cinematic opening sequence is painted entirely in tones of gray. Functioning almost like a literary equivalent of a filmic tracking shot *avant la lettre*, here the narrator slowly zooms in on a once grand ship now in a severe state of "slovenly neglect" and "sad disrepair" (37), populated by shadowy shapes: "other dark moving figures were dimly descried, as of Black Friars pacing the cloisters" (36). Like the story as a whole, the ship is also shadowy because what takes place upon deck is thoroughly ambiguous, merging opposing elements without providing any clear answers on how the combination should be understood.

Second, what is exhibited by the narrator can precisely be said to be a succession of tableaux – that is, thematic units in theater indebted to history painting, functioning almost as still photographs, freezing the action.[8] This corresponds well with what Delano experiences, right down to the actual freezing of movement several times seen: Benito Cereno at one point looking down, only to "maintain[…] this posture so long" that his guest, "almost equally disconcerted," turns away from him (43); Delano warning off some unruly slaves, immediately causing them to "pause[…], just where they were, each negro

8 Maria DeGuzman rightly stresses the importance of the tableau as "the allegorical means by which" Melville's story "is constructed" (DeGuzman 2005: 54), as well as highlighting the form's roots in theater and painting: "Melville's 'Benito Cereno' is a configurated tableau as much as any piece of writing may approximate this traditionally visual form that was and still is painterly first and, in imitation of painting, theatrical or performative as well" (DeGuzman 2005: 53). While this point is important, I do not agree with her conclusions with regard to the racist attitudes supposedly informing "Benito Cereno." In my opinion, one of the problems of this view is that it overlooks the fundamental and sustained distance between the narrator and Delano which the investigation of the role of emotions in the story helps bring to light.

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and negress suspended in his or her posture, exactly as the word had found them – for a few seconds continuing so" (66); and the expressive silence of the chained Atufal, at one point described as "monumentally fixed at the threshold, like one of those sculptured porters of black marble guarding the porches of Egyptian tombs" (78).

These tableaux at times also resemble the related form of the *tableau vivant* ("living picture") – art works staged with the use of living, immobile bodies.There is for example no doubt that the scene near the end of the first part where Babo, knife in hand, has jumped after Cereno into Delano's boat, only to be pinned down by the American with his right foot, can be seen as an ironic tableau vivant recreating the *San Dominick*'s stern-piece, which shows "a dark satyr in a mask, holding his foot on the prostrate neck of a writhing figure, likewise masked" (37).[9] This centrality of the tableau yet again points to the theatrical quality of everything which takes place aboard the *San Dominick*, not only upon deck, but also below.[10] From the present perspective it is also important that the narrator lets Delano's emotional turbulence bookend many of the story's various tableaux, his rising inner turmoil for example causing him to walk off from one situation and into a new one. While a play divided into acts would typically manage the transition between them through the raising and lowering of the front curtains, the narrator, in other words, to a large degree manages the transition between the tableaux through the raising and lowering of Delano's anxieties, which in turn helps to increase the suspense felt by the reader or

9 On the importance of the stern-piece as an interchangeable emblem of the various power relations found in the story, see Altschuler (1975).

10 As Rogin alerts us to, "Don Benito and Babo are continually 'withdrawing below,' [...] as if they are actors regrouping behind the stage before the curtain opens on the next scene" (Rogin 1985: 210).

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momentarily turn it down a notch. The frozen solidity of the tableau thus functions as an important contrast to the captain's fluctuating and increasingly short-lived emotional states.

If we now return to the narrator's attempted explanation for the captain's initial lack of surprise or worry, it is highly relevant that he points to the very passage in which the theatrical aspects of the ship first become evident, and in which the notion of the tableau – to DeGuzman a "significant hermeneutic clue to the reader" (DeGuzman 2005: 54) – is given. What the narrator's explanation amounts to, then, is that Delano, as if expecting a visit to a new ship to be almost like a visit to the theater, at first cannot be bothered to worry simply because what he sees is strange to him.

This initial lack of concern over the theatrical is not to last long, though. As soon as Delano's worries begin to increase – as they soon thereafter slowly, but surely begin to do – the narrator will repeatedly invoke theatricality in those situations where the captain is overcome with worry. One example of how the theatrical metaphor is mobilized towards such ends in the story can be seen when Cereno and Babo at one point suddenly leave Delano without explanation, starting to whisper together. The captain has the impression that he is the topic of their conversation, something which deeply affects him. Even if he does his utmost to appear calm, his mind is in overdrive trying to find a satisfactory explanation for this equally impolite and suspicious behavior:

The singular alternations of courtesy and ill-breeding in the Spanish captain were unaccountable, except on one of two suppositions – innocent lunacy, or wicked imposture.

But the first idea, though it might naturally have occurred to an indifferent observer, and, in some respect, had not hitherto been wholly a stranger to Captain Delano's mind, yet, now that, in an incipient way, he began to regard the stranger's conduct something in the light of an inten-

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> tional affront, of course the idea of lunacy was virtually vacated. But if not a lunatic, what then? Under the circumstances, would a gentleman, nay, any honest boor, act the part now acted by his host? The man was an impostor. Some low-born adventurer, masquerading as an oceanic grandee; yet so ignorant of the first requisites of mere gentlemanhood as to be betrayed into the present remarkable indecorum. That strange ceremoniousness, too, at other times evinced, seemed not uncharacteristic of one playing a part above his real level. [...] But the Spaniard was a pale invalid. Never mind. For even to the degree of simulating mortal disease, the craft of some tricksters had been known to attain. (52)

Here we see how Delano's mind first considers "innocent lunacy" as an explanation for Cereno's conduct, only to decide against it in favor of "wicked imposture," the implications of which are even more troubling to him than those of the former. This happens in a passage filled with theatrical references – "act the part now acted", "masquerading", "playing a part above his real level", etc. – all of which are applied by the narrator in order to explain the presence in Delano's mind of that figure which Melville would in 1857 make the subject of a novel of its own: the confidence man. The narrator thus stresses the artificiality of Cereno's behavior in his explanation of why Delano decides that the Spaniard must be an impostor, but as with most other conclusions the captain comes to aboard the *San Dominick*, this one too proves to be short-lived; as the narrator puts it: "From no train of thought did these fancies come; not from within, but from without; suddenly, too, and in one throng, like hoar frost; yet as soon to vanish as the mild sun of Captain Delano's good-nature regained its meridian" (52).

Interestingly, what finally enables the captain to rid himself of the troubling idea of Cereno as con-man is the Spaniard's profile, the nobility of which is so obvious to Delano that he could not doubt it:

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> Glancing over once more towards his host – whose side-face, revealed above the skylight, was now turned towards him – he was struck by the profile, whose clearness of cut was refined by the thinness incident to ill-health, as well as ennobled about the chin by the beard. Away with suspicion. He was a true off-shoot of a true hidalgo Cereno. (52-53)

In other words, what manages to dispel the fear and distress instilled by the artificiality of Cereno's behavior is the relief felt by Delano – who thus proves himself to be an amateur phrenologist of sorts – when he notices that the Spaniard's outward appearance corresponds to his own preconceived ideas of what real nobility naturally must look like. This faith in that which is thought to be in accordance with nature brings us to the narrator's second strategy for presenting Delano's emotional fluctuations to the readers: to the captain, there is nothing more important than proper behavior and people staying in their ordained places, based on parameters such as race, rank and gender. His deeply ingrained expectations all take for granted that there is a natural conduct for different groups. In general, whenever he experiences something which strikes him as corresponding to this ideal he finds comfort in it, whereas behavior thought to be unfitting or unnatural will have the opposite effect.

Delano's expectations

This fact becomes evident if we backtrack to Delano's first real worries aboard the *San Dominick*, starting to show upon initially meeting Benito Cereno. Quickly coming to doubt the Spaniard's abilities as a captain, Delano deems his lack of authority and experience to be a probable cause of the miseries and the surprising lack of order around him:

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> Captain Delano was not without the idea, that had Benito Cereno been a man of greater energy, misrule would hardly have come to the present pass. But the debility, constitutional or induced by the hardships, bodily and mental, of the Spanish captain, was too obvious to be overlooked. (40)

Such use of double negatives as can here be seen ("was not without"), often in combination with various qualifiers ("hardly"), are encountered over and over again in the story. On the one hand, they function as an effective means of drawing our attention to Delano's emotions – in this case it seems fair to say that what is expressed is the conflicting combination of the compassion and condescension he feels towards Cereno. On the other, they also alert us to the fact that these emotions are presented by an ironic narrator who wishes to indicate their shortcomings as responses to the situations that cause them to arise, subtly but consistently infusing the reader with doubts about the captain's hermeneutical abilities.

Puzzling and troubling as Cereno's behavior is to Delano, there is one thing that instinctively helps him take his mind off these doubts: "Marking the noisy indocility of the blacks in general, as well as what seemed the sullen inefficiency of the whites, it was not without humane satisfaction that Delano witnessed the steady good conduct of Babo" (40-41). Once more we see how "not without" is used by the narrator in order to create an ironic distance between himself and Delano,[11]

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11 See also how "not without" is applied in the following sentences, all of which function as a way of indicating the narrator's ironic attitude to Delano: "it was, therefore, to tell the truth, not without some lurking reluctance, or even shrinking, it may be, that Captain Delano, with apparent complaisance, acquiesced in his host's invitation" (47); "it was not without something of relief that the good seaman presently perceived his whale-boat in the distance" (57); and "Walking forward to the mainmast, he stood awhile thinking over the scene, and not without some undefined misgivings" (74).

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but this time the phrase is applied in order to show how the captain finally manages to find something positive to focus on. As is clear from the description of the "negro" as having the reputation of "the most pleasing body servant in the world" preceding the narrator's assessment of Delano's reaction, the captain is here finally capable of finding (what he believes to be) a correspondence between his expectations and his actual experiences, resulting in his "humane satisfaction." For the moment this allows him to take his mind off the puzzling lack of correspondence in ample evidence almost everywhere else aboard the *San Dominick*: black slaves being unruly and white sailors not doing anything to stop them, as well as Cereno acting nothing like Delano would expect from a man in his position, neither as captain, gentleman or as host.

As Delano's mind becomes increasingly plagued by a world which in many ways strikes him as turned on its head, we will see that whenever such perceived correspondences occur, they always allow him to find momentary respite from his worries. As Cereno and the white sailors rarely act as he expects them to, these moments when Delano's expectations seem to be met are for the most part connected to the African slaves. For example, at one point he chances upon a sleeping black woman with a child feeding at her breast – in terms of his racial stereotyping "like a doe" with her "fawn" (60).[12] Waking,

Countless other examples where "not" is utilized to similar ends can be found: *cf*. the various instances of the phrase "could not but", as in "could not but ascribe" (42), "bethink" (45), "impute" (46), "smile" (47), "look" (53), "infer" (54), "marvel" (67), and "think" (69).

12 For an analysis of Delano's tendency of dehumanizing the black slaves, but in a way where he praises them for the traits he thinks they have in common with animals, see my "Man or Animal? 'Benevolent' Dehumanization in Melville's 'Benito Cereno'" (2011).

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delightedly she caught the child up, with maternal transports, covering it with kisses.

There's naked nature, now; pure tenderness and love, thought Captain Delano, well pleased.

This incident prompted him to remark the other negresses more particularly than before. He was gratified with their manners; like most uncivilized women, they seemed at once tender of heart and tough of constitution; equally ready to die for their infants or fight for them. Unsophisticated as leopardesses; loving as doves. [...]

These natural sights somehow insensibly deepened his confidence and ease. (60-61)[13]

This ability of what is perceived as "natural sights" to "insensibly" drive away Delano's worries and cares, or, if he is already at ease, to strengthen and "gratify" his positive mindset, can equally be seen in how nature itself repeatedly manages to soothe his fears.[14] The returning breeze for example inspires a "brisk confidence" in him (80), and the sight of "the benign aspect of nature, taking her innocent repose in the evening" makes him forget his dread of the chained Atufal (83).

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13 In *National Manhood* (1998), Dana D. Nelson gives a thorough and interesting reading of this passage, focusing on why exactly the sight of the black woman offers Delano comfort. Unfortunately, she casts the relief he feels too much as a singular exception from an otherwise constant state of worry aboard the *San Dominick*, thereby ignoring the story's fundamental dynamic of emotional ebb and flow: "This sight, *unlike others before it*, calms the nervous Massachusetts captain as it reconfirms his sense of universal right-order" (Nelson 1998: 2, my italics).

14 The sight of that which is familiar to Delano also has the same effect. For example, whenever he catches sight of either the *Bachelor's Delight* or his whale-boat, *Rover*, his mood instantly improves. Or as the narrator puts it when the sight of the latter at one point enables Delano to put the bewilderment he is feeling out of his mind: "the sight of that household boat evoked a thousand trustful associations, which, contrasted with previous suspicions, filled him not only with lightsome confidence, but somehow with half humorous self-reproaches at his former lack of it" (64).

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But as in his interactions with people, Delano also has expectations concerning the proper, "benign" behavior of the natural world, as well as its continuing subordination to culture. As pointed out by the narrator, what ironically comes to dispel the captain's newly regained confidence soon after the encounter with the black woman and her child is nothing but a properly "natural sight": Delano's attention is drawn towards the massive decay eating at the *San Dominick*. Thus seeing nature in the process of recapturing that which man has built, "gradually he felt rising a dreamy inquietude, like that of one who alone on the prairie feels unrest from the repose of the noon" (61). In other words, when nature acts in accordance with his expectations, it supplies him with the peace of mind he craves, but in failing to meet them through exhibiting an agency of its own, as it were, it too can increase his level of emotional unrest.

Shaving-time comes

Having pinpointed the two means by which the narrator explains Delano's emotional fluctuations, it is now time to see how the two are repeatedly applied to create the shifting dynamic of one of the story's most famous scenes (or, better still, tableaux): that in which Babo shaves Benito Cereno. What should first be stressed is how the shift from the previous tableau comes about: the *Rover* finally arrives with food, resulting in a general positive and hopeful mood which also affects Delano, "for the time oblivious of any but benevolent thoughts" (67). This is not to last long, though, as Cereno inadvertently manages to contradict the story he has earlier given, causing his guest's bewilderment and suspicions to rise once more:

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"Tell me, Don Benito," continued his companion with increased interest, "tell me, were these gales immediately off the pitch of Cape Horn?"

"Cape Horn? – who spoke of Cape Horn?"

"Yourself did, when giving me an account of your voyage," answered Captain Delano with an almost equal astonishment at this eating of his own words, even as he ever seemed eating his own heart, on the part of the Spaniard. "You yourself, Don Benito, spoke of Cape Horn," he emphatically repeated. (68)[15]

It is Babo who manages to break this potential deadlock, taking advantage of the sounding of the ship's bell to remind the Spaniard that it is time for his supposed daily shaving, as well as suggesting that Delano accompany them, a "sociable plan" the latter is "not unpleased" with (69), for the time being allowing him to put his astonishment out of his mind.

Entering the cuddy, Babo sets about shaving Cereno. As the narrator makes clear in a deeply ironic passage, Delano finds real enjoyment in watching the slave at work: "There is something in the negro which, in a peculiar way, fits him for avocations about one's person. Most negroes are natural valets and hair-dressers; taking to the comb and brush congenially as to the castinets, and flourishing them apparently with almost equal satisfaction" (70). Babo's staging of the happy and attentive barber can be said to correspond perfectly to the captain's preconceived ideas of "natural" behavior for "negroes", strengthening his already good mood:

15 Delano's comment is said to result in Cereno turning "in a sort of stooping posture, pausing an instant, as one about to make a plunging exchange of elements, as from air to water" (68), his body thereby creating yet another frozen tableau.

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like most men of a good, blithe heart, Captain Delano took to negroes, not philanthropically, but genially, just as other men to Newfoundland dogs.

Hitherto the circumstances in which he found the San Dominick had repressed the tendency. But in the cuddy, relieved from his former uneasiness, and, for various reasons, more sociably inclined than at any previous period of the day, and seeing the colored servant, napkin on arm, so debonair about his master, in a business so familiar as that of shaving, too, all his old weakness for negroes returned. (71)

Behavior deemed to be proper and natural yet again has an almost immediate effect on Delano, but the joy and ease caused by the sight of Babo going about his business is somewhat diminished by the obvious terror it inspires in Cereno, who shudders in fear. In what can be seen as a precise comment on the ever ongoing struggle between the rational mind and the emotions which infect and haunt it, undermining its autonomy, the narrator states the following:

Altogether the scene was somewhat peculiar, at least to Captain Delano, nor, as he saw the two thus postured, could he resist the vagary, that in the black he saw a headsman, and in the white, a man at the block. But this was one of those antic conceits, appearing and vanishing in a breath, from which, perhaps, the best regulated mind is not always free. (72)

Again the theater is invoked to describe an occurrence leading to yet another emotional fluctuation, presenting what Delano sees in terms of a scene where the action is stopped and the actors, in their respective roles of executioner and victim, momentarily frozen in their postures.

Interestingly, the view expressed here that even the "best regulated mind" might not always be free of "antic conceits", is at odds with the strong valuing of rationality at the expense of the body and of emotions in Melville's time, pointed out by

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Matthew Rebhorn in his "Minding the Body: *Benito Cereno* and Melville's Embodied Reading Practice" (2009). As he argues, not contemporary phrenologists like Johann Caspar Lavater and the brothers Orson and Lorenzo Fowler, but also American medical discourse in general, saw the mind as supreme champion of the body, treating it, as put by the Fowlers, "as its galley-slave" (quoted in Rebhorn 2009: 163).

Rebhorn correctly stresses how the narrator can be said to pull the rug out from under Delano's strong faith in the rationality and superiority of the mind through drawing our attention to the silent and involuntary reactions of the captain's own body throughout the story, for example through "the apprehensive twitch" Delano at one point feels "in the calves of his legs" (47), having to pass by the six hatchet-polishers.[16] For this reason, there can be said to be a strong correlation between the body's silent speech and Delano's emotional reactions, both being, at least to a certain degree, outside the purview of the rational mind, acting counter to it and with their own agendas. In "Benito Cereno" emotions can therefore be said to represent not the opposite of rationality, but perhaps a different sort of rationality altogether, even if it is one which Delano does his utmost not to listen to; as he sees it, in a moment of ease, his worries are nothing but "phantoms which had mocked him" (83).

What comes to dispel those particular "antic conceits" which made Delano think of Babo and Cereno as executioner and victim at the block is the subsequent loosening of the

16 The question of the body's nonverbal communication is perhaps even more acute in Benito Cereno, since he is constantly sending out bodily signs and gestures at odds with his verbal utterances, signs which are picked up by the narrator, but which Delano constantly fails to decipher; as Otter puts it: Cereno's "body involuntarily communicates the distress that he has been forbidden to speak" (Otter 2010: 269).

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piece of cloth which the former has tucked under the latter's chin, showing it to be a Spanish flag. An enthusiastic "love of bright colors and fine shows" (71) forming part of Delano's image of what Africans are like, he thinks the unorthodox choice must be the result of the slave's (supposed) natural love of all things colorful and "gay" (72).[17] Thus, once more a perceived correspondence between Delano's ideas about natural behavior and what he experiences allows him to take his mind off his previous worries.

The two captains picking up their discussion of the *San Dominick*'s voyage, Babo brings to life one more diversion when Delano politely expresses his doubts about the story: in what seems an accident, he cuts Cereno with his razor, drawing blood. The sheer terror shown by the Spaniard immediately causes his guest to banish all worries that the former might have been plotting against him:

> Poor fellow, thought Captain Delano, so nervous he can't even bear the sight of barber's blood; and this unstrung, sick man, is it credible that I should have imagined he meant to spill all my blood, who can't endure the sight of one little drop of his own? Surely, Amasa Delano, you have been beside yourself this day. (73)

Here we see that Cereno *not* acting as fit for a man of his position is given a twist: instead of once more causing Delano's worries to soar, the sheer ridiculousness of a captain who cannot even stand the sight of a few drops of blood causes relief. Troubled by what does not correspond to his expectations, if something comes across as too obviously not

17 When this explanation is suggested to Babo, the narrator states that the captain's "playful remark did not fail somewhat to tickle the negro" (72), which is more or less the closest we ever come to learning anything about how the former slave perceives the play he has set in motion, as well as Delano's part therein.

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right, it will have the opposite effect on Delano, whose mind, as time passes and his worries threatens to overcome him, increasingly seems to scramble for *anything* that can help him ease his fears. This can also be seen when Cereno, having somewhat composed himself, goes on with his story, every so often interrupted by Babo continuing his shaving. Combined with further theatrical references from the narrator, this behavior of master and slave strikes Delano as so artificial that his suspicions are first heightened, only subsequently to be lowered:

> To Captain Delano's imagination, now again not wholly at rest, there was something so hollow in the Spaniard's manner, with apparently some reciprocal hollowness in the servant's dusky comment of silence, that the idea flashed across him, that possibly master and man, for some unknown purpose, were acting out, both in word and deed, nay, to the very tremor of Don Benito's limbs, some juggling play before him. Neither did the suspicion of collusion lack apparent support, from the fact of those whispered conferences before mentioned. But then, what could be the object of enacting this play of the barber before him? At last, regarding the notion as a whimsy, insensibly suggested, perhaps, by the theatrical aspect of Don Benito in his harlequin ensign, Captain Delano speedily banished it. (73-74)

In other words, the theater can serve to wrest away Delano's peace of mind, but also to restore it. The artificial bothers him, but paradoxically, if something becomes too obviously artificial, it is taken as evidence that it *cannot not* be true.[18]

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18 The same sort of paradoxical logic can also be seen at work in Delano's reflections upon Cereno's impertinent questions about the cargo and crew of the *Bachelor's Delight*, as well as how well armed the sailors were, etc. At first the questions strike him as extremely suspicious, for "[d]id they not seem put with much the same object with which the burglar or assassin, by day-time, reconnoitres the walls of a house? But, with ill purpose, to solicit such information

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Upon Babo finishing his task, the transition to the next tableau comes when Delano, withdrawing to the deck, ponders what he has seen, "not without some undefined misgivings" (74). These reflections are interrupted by the emergence of Babo, bleeding from a wound to his cheek. With a further theatrical reference, the reason is described as given in a "wailing soliloquy" (74): Cereno has (supposedly) cut his servant as punishment for the small cut he received. Feeling compassion for Babo, Delano concludes that "this slavery breeds ugly passions in man" (75), yet does nothing: "Presently master and man came forth; Don Benito leaning on his servant as if nothing had happened. But a sort of love-quarrel, after all, thought Captain Delano" (75). Having had his emotions wildly fluctuate back and forth between moments of ease and joy, on the one hand, and moments of fear and doubt, on the other – as well as a lot of the different emotional states in between – all in the span of one scene or tableau, Delano is thus as puzzled as ever by what goes on.

Why emotions matter

As I hope to have shown, Delano's emotional fluctuations are central for propelling the story onward and for constructing its suspenseful and haunted mood. For this reason, it is somewhat puzzling that – the aforementioned contributions notwithstanding – so few critics have bothered to properly address the question of the captain's emotions. One potential

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openly of the chief person endangered, and so, in effect, setting him on his guard; how unlikely a procedure was that? Absurd, then, to suppose that those questions had been prompted by evil designs. Thus, the same conduct, which, in this instance, had raised the alarm, served to dispel it. In short, scarce any suspicion or uneasiness, however apparently reasonable at the time, which was not now, with equal apparent reason, dismissed" (56-57).

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reason for this is that, to many scholars, there are so many other, seemingly much more serious and pressing concerns to Melville's story, first among these the questions of slavery, in particular, and human evil, in general. This being the case, one could ask, would not writing about emotions equal a depoliticizing and trivializing of what is undoubtedly still a very significant story? This would have been a valid objection, had it not been for the fact that it overlooks how these political questions simply cannot be properly answered if the narrator's elegant handling of Delano's distress is neglected. To ignore his emotional turbulence means turning "Benito Cereno" into a totally different story, and any understanding of what it is trying to tell us about slavery or evil that does not take this into account is bound to fail at some level or other.

If one does take Delano's emotional reactions seriously, though – and particularly those of the story's third part – a possible answer to the question which has long puzzled and divided critics, namely that of the text's own attitude to slavery, begins to emerge. Taking place after the slave revolt has been quelled, but before reaching Lima, where the legal depositions of the second part are given, the brief conclusion begins with Delano finally having regained the emotional equilibrium so far denied to him. Now that Cereno's previous behavior has been fully explained and the black slaves been put in chains, the two captains can finally meet as equals: as the narrator puts it, they "had many cordial conversations – their fraternal unreserve in singular contrast with former withdrawments" (100). If we look at Delano's comments during this part, we find the American captain in a splendid mood, genially expressing his gratitude to Cereno, as well as acknowledging that he misread what took place and misjudged the Spaniard. As they both agree that in the end it was exactly this happy misreading which saved their lives, his self-reproach does not seem to go very deep.

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Obviously then, Delano is not long in putting what has happened behind him, and his optimistic words to Cereno are telling evidence that he clearly has no intention of letting himself be bogged down by the past: "the past is passed; why moralize upon it? Forget it. See, yon bright sun has forgotten it all, and the blue sea, and the blue sky; these have turned over new leaves" (101). It is only when these optimistic words turn out not to have the intended effect on Cereno, who suddenly relapses into his old, gloomy ways, that Delano yet again is invaded by emotions he cannot control: "'You are saved,' cried Captain Delano, more and more astonished and pained; 'you are saved; what has cast such a shadow upon you?'" (101). Cereno's answer – "[t]he negro" (101) – finally brings their hitherto pleasant exchange to a grinding halt; as the narrator puts it: "There was silence, while the moody man sat, slowly and unconsciously gathering his mantle about him, as if it were a pall. There was no more conversation that day" (101). When the narrator goes on with the story, Delano is never again mentioned.

The silence of the scene and the slow, unconscious gestures of Cereno – his demise foreshadowed by the description of his mantle as a pall – can yet again be seen as indications of the tableau. The last moment when we see the two captains together is thus one in which they are frozen, the Spaniard on his way to his death in the monastery on Mount Agonia, where he will be faced by the impaled head of Babo, "that hive of subtlety" (102) whose shadow has broken "his body and mind" (100); the American caught forever suspended in a moment where he is described as "more and more astonished and pained". If one is looking for what the story has to say about the pressing political issues it addresses, it is therefore surely not unimportant that the narrator's last act towards Captain Amasa Delano – a man of a conscience so good that he never thinks it worthwhile to ponder his own involvement

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in that which has come to pass – is denying him the safe haven from emotional unrest which he had been searching for all through the story and which by now he had seemingly regained. It is precisely by one last time drawing our attention to Delano's emotional distress that the narrator can be said to cast him, too, under Babo's enduring shadow.

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Emotion, Knowledge, Alterity: Aesthetic Experience in Proust

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Overwhelming emotional experiences play a key role in Marcel Proust's *À la recherche du temps perdu*. In his classical study of Proust in *Études sur le temps humain*, Georges Poulet analyses the privileged moments constituted by involuntary memory in Proust's universe, where a sensation from the past is suddenly revived by a similar sensation in the present. The *madeleine* episode is of course the emblematic example of this kind of scene. The recognition of a sensation provoked by involuntary memory produces a sense of deep happiness and joy in the character that experiences it, as it establishes a sense of continuity between the subject's past and present, offering the subject the possibility of constructing personal identity through artistic creation (Poulet 1972: 422-430). The emotional response to a particular sensorial impression thus constitutes an integral and central part of the exploration of major questions concerning selfhood, memory, time and art in *À la recherche du temps perdu*.

The story of Marcel becoming a writer may thus be consid-

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ered to thematise, in its distinctive way, the performative potential of affect in literature. This article will try to contribute to such a reading of Proust by focusing on the intertwining of emotional responses activated by works of art on the one hand and by interpersonal relationships on the other in the essay "Sur la lecture" and in *Un amour de Swann*, *La Recherche*'s second volume. Effects and possible interpretations of a parallel association of love and space in both texts will also be discussed.

Two recent critical works confirm the actuality of the relationship between reading and emotion in Proust. Inge Crosman Wimmers' *Proust and Emotion. The Importance of Affect in À la recherche du temps perdu* (2004) and Adam Watt's *Reading in Proust's* À la recherche. *'Le Délire de la lecture'* (2009) both focus on the awakening of emotional reactions in the reader *of* and *in* Proust's texts. Crosman Wimmers combines insights from cognitive psychology and reader response theory (Ricœur, Iser). She argues that emotional involvement in the plot of the novel creates a motivated reader that interacts with the text through role playing, projection and transfer of emotions and identification with the characters. The self-discovery in the text thus may give the reader new insights into his or her own self (Wimmers 2003: 162-166). Adam Watt focuses on an aspect of reading in *La Recherche*, namely that reading has the capacity of sharpening and heightening our sensitivity and perceptivity to the outside world. In this way, reading is linked to the processes brought about by involuntary memory, and so contributes to the recuperation and the sense of continuity of the self. To read Proust, according to Watt, is to examine and rediscover the sensorial and the suffering self (Watt 2009: 165).

Both of these contemporary critics, not unlike Poulet, consider the sensorial and the emotional reactions activated through the art experience as a means of self-knowledge,

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and thus as related to a dialectical interplay of emotion and cognition initiated by art. Martha Nussbaum has proposed a similar reading of Proust in *Love's Knowledge*. Nussbaum argues that the reading of novels and the specific form of insight they provide should be considered as a necessary and correcting supplement to philosophy in the search for truth, especially as far as understanding of the emotions is concerned. This is because knowledge of the heart can only come from the heart, as she expresses it (Nussbaum 1990: 262), not from emotionally detached intellectual activity.

By means of its narrative structure, and by allowing the reader to identify and empathise with characters and share their emotional turmoil, the novel awakens sensitivity and bodily experience through which the general rules of ethics and philosophy are put to the test. The emotional and embodied knowledge literature provides may thus join moral philosophy in the quest for a deeper understanding of the self. In this particular regard, Nussbaum quotes precisely Proust, according to which the reader of a novel becomes the reader of his own heart (Nussbaum 1990: 47). As Nussbaum sees it, the reader's emotional response to art constitutes in itself a heuristic piece of self-knowledge.

Moreover, Nussbaum considers any attempt to grasp emotions by means of cognition alone as a form of self-protection and self-deception that keep vulnerability at a comforting distance, and so suppress and distort its own presupposed object of research. And she claims that such stratagems are characteristic of the way Proust's Marcel relates to his feelings for Albertine (Nussbaum 1990: 261-274).

J. Hillis Miller, in his readings of Proust, also stresses literature's ability to activate emotions. But rather than considering this latent emotional potential of literature as an ally of the intellect, Miller points to an unsurpassable gap between cognition and emotion. While emotions triggered by novels,

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according to Nussbaum, enable and deepen self-knowledge, Miller, by contrast, focuses on the way these emotions confront the reader with alterity, or with the impossibility of knowing the other. Believing and engaging emotionally in a fictional universe is to a certain extent akin to investing emotionally in another person whose inner life also remains out of one's reach. In this sense, Miller states, our passionate relationship to art resembles our relationship to other human beings. Referring to *La Recherche* in *Speech Acts in Literature*, Miller affirms that we live necessarily in "perfect ignorance of those we love" (Miller 2001: 181). Because the hearts and minds of others are not open to knowledge, as Husserl maintains in his fifth *Cartesian Meditation*, the emotions we direct towards others should be regarded as performative matters of faith, and as antipathetic to knowledge. In fact, as Miller perceives it, the impossibility of knowing and grasping is a condition for arousing our passion, and for both the existence and the efficiency of performative language. To Miller, the difficulties involved in relating to the unknowable alterity of the other determine and illuminate Marcel's various performative positioning in *La Recherche*.

The incompatibility of knowledge and passion is also Emmanuel Lévinas' main point in his article "The Other in Proust", where he reads *La Prisonnière* as a story that dissociates love and cognition. He considers Marcel's ever more vertiginous impossibility of knowing Albertine in the novel as the very basis of love, in the sense that it embodies the encounter with the other as wholly other, evoking the absence of Albertine within her very presence: "[T]his non-love is precisely love, the struggle with what cannot be grasped (possession, that absence of Albertine), her presence" (Lévinas 1989: 165). What interests Lévinas in *La Prisonnière* is thus a subject/object correlation established by faculties other than intentionality and cognition.

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While Lévinas is reluctant, in his article, to comment on the connection between our relationship to art and to the other, such a parallel is one of Miller's main points in his readings of Proust. He argues that literature awakens our emotions in demanding a performative response from us similar to the one's we direct at people we love (Miller 2001: 182), so that the reading of novels constitutes a parallel experience of relating to alterity. On this central point, we may note that Miller partly agrees with Martha Nussbaum, in the sense that she regards emotional investment in novels as educational role-playing for the reader (Nussbaum 1990: 281). But at the same time, as we have seen, the two of them defend opposite positions as far as a possible dialectic between knowledge and the emotions is concerned.

On the basis of Nussbaum's and Miller's different approaches to Proust's work concerning emotion, self-knowledge and alterity, my analysis will examine whether emotions activated by reading in "Sur la lecture" and by listening to music in *Un amour de Swann* do in fact teach Marcel and Swann something. Do emotions involved in the art experience enable what should be considered as a form of knowledge, or do they rather expose and clarify the limits of cognition? And do emotional experiences triggered by art in Proust's work first and foremost confront the subject with the other, or rather contribute to a broader and more nuanced sense of self?

I will start by turning to the reading experience in "Sur la lecture".

"Sur la lecture": Loss of self and spatial experience of otherness through reading

"Sur la lecture" was written as a preface to Proust's French translation of John Ruskin's *Sesame and Lilies*. The text was

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first published as an essay in *La Renaissance latine* in 1905, and its title was later changed to "Journées de lecture", by which name it is also still known today. In the essay, Proust develops and explains his own theories on the experience of reading partly in polemic opposition with the ideas of Ruskin expressed in *Sesame and Lilies,* who compares the reading of books to instructive conversations with wise men from the past, opening new worlds to the readers and broadening their knowledge. Proust, on the other hand, believed in a fundamental difference between conversation and social interaction in the "real" world, and the very special relationship between self and otherness brought about in the experience of reading. A closer consideration of Proust's text will illustrate these particular aspects of the phenomenon of reading.

Immediately, "Sur la lecture" resembles a novel rather than a theoretical essay, and indeed could be mistaken to be a scene from *À la recherche du temps perdu*. For Proust starts by relating in a poetic way his personal reading experiences from childhood – evoking the lazy summer holidays in the countryside spent in the company of an exciting book. The opening scenes of the essay thus recall the universe of Marcel's Combray. But at the same time, already in the essay's first sentence, the paradoxes concerning the relation of the reading experience to the outside world are brought to the fore: "There are perhaps no days of our childhood we lived so fully as those we believe we left without having lived them, those we spent with a favourite book" (99).[1] The days of our childhood where we lived the most intensely were the days we never participated in, because we spent them plunged into another universe: that of a chosen book. Proust's point

1 "Il n'y a peut-être pas de jours de notre enfance que nous ayons si pleinement vécus que ceux que nous avons cru laisser sans les vivre, ceux que nous avons passés avec un livre préféré" (9).

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seems to be that reading awakens a certain sensibility in us that first and foremost makes us more perceptive towards the world that surrounds us, and not towards the universe of the novel itself.[2] This paradoxical coexistence of absence and presence in the relationship between the reader as subject and the world is further illuminated throughout Proust's essay.

Proust goes on describing the little boy trying to find the peace necessary for reading his book undisturbed through the day – in the morning, at lunch time, in the afternoon and finally in bed in the evening before going to sleep. Paradoxically, however, we do not learn anything about the action and characters in the book he reads, and consequently nothing about his specific emotional reactions to it, apart from the fact that it is all consuming. Instead, the various noises and distractions around him which he tries to avoid are described – people asking him questions that need answering, for instance. Any kind of real social interaction is regarded as an intrusion into the private and quiet world of reading, whereas objects in the changing rooms surrounding him while reading seem to have another kind of presence which somewhat respects, supports and even enriches the reading, like "the clock and the fire which speak without asking you to answer them", and thus appear as "very respectful of reading" (100),[3] or the church bells he hears outside, "not addressing me but the whole countryside, all the villages, the peasants isolated in their fields, they did not make me raise my head at all, they went by me, carrying the hour to distant lands, without seeing me, without being aware of me, and without

2 As we have just seen, this is something that Adam Watt also stresses in his analysis of reading in Proust.

3 "la pendule et le feu qui parlent sans demander qu'on leur réponde", "très respecteux de la lecture" (10).

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disturbing me" (108).[4] What becomes evident in these last quotes is that the places surrounding the reader start appearing as metaphors for the activity of reading itself, or for the relationship between the reader and the world outside, since the reading subject becomes a paradoxical unifier of inner and outer life. Stated in the terms of Gérard Genette, Proust makes metonomy and metaphor coexist and intertwine (Genette 1972: 41). And so the reading experience seems to merge into the space in which it takes place, acquiring a kind of spatial or tactile quality.

Interestingly, at this point in his essay, Proust pauses to make a somewhat surprising detour on William Morris' theory of decoration, according to which a room is only beautiful to the extent that all the things in it have a distinct and clear function. Proust's bedroom, where he read as a child, he says, was however the opposite of the kind of room proscribed by Morris, as it was filled with peculiar objects of all sorts having no practical purpose whatsoever. But this, to Proust, constituted its very beauty, as he explains in lengthy and poetic descriptions of the room's details. The many metaphors in these passages indicate in fact that the room is not only beautiful to the child, but takes on church-like qualities: the bed itself resembles an altar; beside it a glass, a sugar bowl and a water carafe form a holy trinity of liturgical objects on the night stand, and a white tablecloth covering the dresser makes it resemble a communion table. These various objects are of no use to the boy – in fact some of them make it impossible for him to open and shut the window of his room without assistance. But they fill the room, he says, "with a silent and

4 "ne s'adressant pas à moi, mais à toute la campagne, à tous les villages, aux paysans isolés dans leur champ, elles ne forçaient nullement à lever la tête, elles passaient près de moi, portant l'heure aux pays lointains, sans me voir, sans me connaître et sans me déranger" (22-23).

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multifarious life, with a mystery in which my person found itself lost and charmed at the same time; they made of this room a kind of chapel" (105).[5]

Thus, metonymically and metaphorically, the room where the reading takes place also *becomes* the reading, in the sense that the reading experience takes on the qualities of the room described. To read is to decorate one's inner life, and the more gratuitous the objects we fill it with appear to be, the more joy the reading brings us. It is the sheer distraction and escape involved in reading that attract and charm us, Proust seems to say. But what fills our minds or inner rooms while reading also indicates a path into a new space in mysterious, unobvious ways. The effects of reading are like holy objects revealing a higher dimension, something transcendent to the world and horizons of the reader, and at the same time something that he can touch and feel, and that becomes a part of him and stays close as long as he keeps on reading. In this way, the reader finds and loses himself at the same time in this strange room that the activity of reading opens up, as the co-presence right next to each other of the verbs "trouver" ["found"] and "perdre" ["lost"] in the last quote suggests. The religious dimension of this scene may also indicate that the reality brought to life in the act of reading demands that the reader trusts the emotional power of objects that testify of its existence. To enter the chapel of reading is to invest emotionally and sincerely in a reality that strictly speaking isn't there.

On the following pages, Proust further develops the notion of a parallel between reading and the experience of entering a strange room. It is when you are confronted with what you

5 "d'une vie silencieuse et diverse, d'un mystère où ma personne se trouvait à la fois perdue et charmée; elle faisaient de cette chambre une sorte de chapelle" (18).

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do not know, with what is different and inaccessible, that you feel exalted and happy: "As for me, I feel myself living and thinking only in a room where everything is the creation and the language of lives profoundly different from mine, of a taste opposite to mine, where I find nothing of my conscious thought, where my imagination is excited to feel itself plunged into the womb of the non-ego" (106).[6] And he exemplifies this kind of invigorating experience of loss of the conscious self by describing what it feels like to stay in a hotel room in an anonymous provincial town.

Such a room where one is a guest, Proust says, is particularly stimulating because of the otherness one experiences in the midst of the physical traces of other persons who have lived there. Through sensual descriptions where touch and contiguity are central elements ("to sit with it in a kind of free promiscuousness on the sofa", "to touch everywhere the nakedness of that life", "walking barefoot on its unknown carpet" (107)[7]), Proust shows us how the hotel room provokes a simultaneous and paradoxical impression of intimacy and alterity.

As soon as one opens the door to the room, "one has the feeling of violating all the life that has remained scattered there, of taking it boldly by the hand" (106).[8] One feels embarrassed entering and occupying a room filled with the absent presence of another. Or even something much stronger

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6 "Pour moi, je ne me sens vivre et penser que dans une chambre où tout est la création et le langage de vies profondément différentes de la mienne, d'un goût opposé au mien, où je ne retrouve rien de ma pensée consciente, où mon imagination s'exalte en se sentant plongée au sein du non-moi" (19-20).

7 "s'asseoir dans une sorte de libre promiscuité avec elle sur le canapé", "toucher partout la nudité de cette vie", "marchant pieds nus sur son tapis inconnu" (21).

8 "on a le sentiment de violer toute la vie qui y est restée éparse, de la prendre hardiment par la main" (20).

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and more sinister than embarrassed, as the verb "violer" in the French text literally also means "to rape" (and to break the law, *i.e.* commit a criminal offence). And the idea of the intimate life of the bedroom being disturbed by the guest entering it seems enforced by the use of the personal pronoun "elle", or "she", which repeatedly refers to it in the passage, instead of the feminine noun "vie" [life] itself, especially as the pronouns are combined with the just cited metaphors clearly evoking the secret life of the room as a woman (who sits next to the narrator on the sofa or holds his hand). In analogy with what happens when reading word by word a book written by someone else, one's movements in the hotel room, "by pretending to be the master of that room full to the brim with the soul of others" (107),[9] coincide physically with those of the others who have stayed there, up until the point where one has the impression of going finally to bed together in the evening under the same white sheets. Thus, through Proust's implicit metonymic metaphors, the sense of space, reading experience and intersubjective relationship are merged, and emotions and potential actions of tenderness and violence intertwine. At the same time, the spiritual and holy dimension is still present in or contiguous to the erotic scenario suggested in the description of the hotel room, as "close by the church rings for the whole town the hours of insomnia of the dying and of lovers" (107).[10]

Proust's conclusion in "Sur la lecture", stating that reading is a friendship, confirms an analogy between aesthetic and interpersonal relationships. But at the same time, the friendship established by reading, "unencumbered with all that makes

9 "en jouant le maître dans cette chambre pleine jusqu'aux bords de l'âme des autres" (20).

10 "tout près, l'église sonne pour toute la ville les heures d'insomnie des mourants et des amoureux" (21).

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up the ugliness of other kinds" (122) of relationships,[11] has nothing of the masquerade and snobbism characterising social relationships in real life. Reading allows the subject and the other to meet in silence, without intermediaries, in an experience where they both are equally present and absent. In that sense, it reinstitutes the original and pure sincerity of the friendship. The reading experience introduces us to spiritual life without constituting it, in arousing our desire rather than giving us answers. It activates our entire emotional register, from pleasant feelings of tenderness and love to the pain of panting and sobbing (109), and in that way brings about something which is incontestable and that exists in real life, yet without allowing us to fully grasp the objects that trigger our emotions.

This hybrid or paradoxical quality of reading is also perceived as a spatial experience by Proust in the account of the feeling of deception and void that appears as one finishes reading: "Then, what? This book, was it nothing but that?" (109).[12] When the book is put away, its characters in which one has invested more attention and tenderness than in persons in real life will forever disappear, and the enormous fictional space unfolded before us while reading will contract into "a very narrow place in the library of the notary public, between the undistinguished annals of the *Illustrated Magazine of Fashion* and the *Geography of the Eure-et-Loir*" (110).[13]

The emotional contiguity to the world that reading brings about thus teaches us to see without grasping or bringing fully into focus what we see. As the last line of the article illustrates,

11 "débarrassée de tout ce qui fait la laideur des autres" (44-45).
12 "Alors, quoi? ce livre, ce n'était que cela?" (24).
13 "une place fort étroite dans la bibliothèque du notaire, les fastes sans prestige du *Journal de Modes illustré* et de la *Géographie d'Eure-et-Loir*" (25-26).

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again by the use of metaphors related to touch, the world made present to us through reading appears as both unreal and undeniably concrete, "appealing in its whole aspect a little too positively to the mind, overexciting a little, as should not be surprising on the part of a ghost from a buried past; yet there, in our midst, approached, pressed against, touched, motionless, in the sun" (129).[14] And at the same time, as the formulation "au milieu de nous" ["in our midst"] seems to suggest, the emotions triggered by the reading experience appear to problematise in a similar way the distinction between self and other. Discussing the possible therapeutic effects of reading in a passive and depressive person, Proust speaks of reading as "an intervention which, while coming from another, takes place in our innermost selves, which is indeed the impetus of another mind, but received in the midst of solitude. [...] The sole discipline that can exert a favourable influence on such minds, then, is reading" (117).[15] The bodily and psychological reactions that emotions awaken in me constitute a contact with the world that distinguishes me as subject from the outside world in a less clear way than is the case in relationships established by cognition alone. Proust's essay has indicated that this particular kind of relationship with the world constituted through reading is very much akin to interpersonal relationships. In order to further explore and understand this connection, I will now turn to *Un amour de Swann*.

14 "s'adressant dans tout son aspect un peu trop directement à l'esprit, l'exaltant un peu comme on ne saurait s'en étonner de la part du revenant d'un temps enseveli; pourtant là, au milieu de nous, approché, coudoyé, palpé, au soleil" (54).

15 "une intervention qui, tout en venant d'un autre, se produise au fond de nous-mêmes, c'est bien l'impulsion d'un autre esprit, mais reçue au sein de la solitude. [...] La seule discipline qui puisse exercer une influence favorable sur de tels esprits, c'est donc la lecture" (36).

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Loving and knowing: Un amour de Swann

There are several examples of books being read in *À la recherche du temps perdu*. But *Un amour de Swann* doesn't really seem to be the obvious volume to provide them. For experiences of art in this part of the *Recherche*, notably the scenes evoking "la petite phrase de Vinteuil", which will constitute the material for my analysis here, do not concern reading at all, strictly speaking, as they are accounts of the effect of music on the main character in this volume, Charles Swann. The sonata by the fictional composer Vinteuil accompanies all the different stages of Swann's love affair with Odette, which is the story's main theme. The five performances of the piece in the novel show, respectively, that the music at first actually triggers Swann's falling in love with Odette, and how it soon grows in emotional importance by becoming the "national anthem of their love". When later Swann's love is almost completely suffocated by feelings of jealousy, the sonata partly consoles him, and is partly cursed by him for being the *entremetteuse* that first arranged his meeting with Odette. And finally, the performance of the sonata in Mme de Saint-Euverte's salon takes on a therapeutic role for Swann in the sense that it revivifies his past feelings for Odette, helps him liquidate them and thus restore his peace of mind.

On the basis of hints given in the text, several attempts have been made to suggest what music or composer Proust had in mind when writing about Vinteuil. But precisely because the music in question is fictional, and thus has no verifiable existence outside Proust's text, it could be argued that the scenes concerned may just as well be regarded as reading experiences rather than experiences of listening to music. While such a discussion is not my main purpose here, I nevertheless hope to show that metaphors and other parallels between the two texts will justify the approach of "Sur

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la lecture" and *Un amour de Swann*, by allowing them to illuminate one another.

When Swann sees the courtesan Odette de Crécy for the first time, she doesn't really interest him; neither does he find her particularly attractive. His infatuation with her only starts when they both assist at a piano performance of Vinteuil's sonata given in Madame Verdurin's salon. In recognising a particular motif in the music, later referred to as "la petite phrase", "the little phrase", Swann realises that he has heard the piece once before, without knowing its composer's name. The musical experience overwhelms him with a strong feeling of joy and well-being, poetically described in great detail in all the five occurrences in the text of the sonata being performed. From the very start, the little phrase awakens emotions of love and lust in Swann:

> This time he had distinguished quite clearly a phrase which emerged for a few moments above the waves of sound. It had at once suggested to him a world of inexpressible delights, of whose existence, before hearing it, he had never dreamed, into which he felt that nothing else could initiate him; and he had been filled with love for it, as with a new and strange desire (228).[16]

The connection between artwork, performativity and emotion could scarcely be more obvious, as the "petite phrase" brings about feelings in Swann that he has never experienced before, let alone known to be possible. But the music is also intimately related to an intersubjective relationship, as the

16 "Cette fois il avait distingué nettement une phrase s'élevant pendant quelques instants au-dessus des ondes sonores. Elle lui avait proposé aussitôt des voluptés particulières, dont il n'avait jamais eu l'idée avant de l'entendre, dont il sentait que rien d'autre qu'elle ne pourrait les lui faire connaître, et il avait éprouvé pour elle comme un amour inconnu" (206).

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"petite phrase", in the French original text, is constantly referred to by the personal pronoun "elle" ["she"], to such an extent that we tend to forget the pronoun's actual reference – a textual strategy already encountered in "Sur la lecture".[17] When talking immediately afterwards to Odette about his musical experience, Swann finds her simplicity delightful. In fact the emotional reaction set off by that music needs some kind of object to direct itself towards, and Odette is there, ready to become the object of his desire:

> The little phrase continued to be associated in Swann's mind with his love for Odette. He was well aware that his love was something that did not correspond to anything outside itself, verifiable by others besides him; he realised that Odette's qualities were not such as to justify his setting so high a value on the hours he spent in her company. [...] But the little phrase, as soon as it struck his ear, had the power to liberate in him the space that was needed to contain it; the proportions of Swann's soul were altered; a margin was left for an enjoyment that corresponded no more than his love for Odette to any external object and yet was not, like his enjoyment of that love, purely individual, but assumed for him a sort of reality superior to that of concrete things. This thirst for an unknown delight was awakened in him by the little phrase, but without bringing him any precise gratification to assuage it. With the result that those parts of Swann's soul in which the little phrase had obliterated

17 It can be objected that the pronoun "elle" in itself doesn't seem to be felt as gendered in French in the sense that the French language doesn't have any equivalent to the neutral personal pronoun "it". However, the little phrase is also immediately, as we shall see, represented by the metaphor of an unknown and beautiful woman one passes in the street. Combined with this use of metaphors, the choice of referring repeatedly to the musical motif as simply "elle" instead of opting for a more precise substantive or nominal phrase thus seems to have a specific literary purpose and effect, namely to stress the parallel between the relation to the musical motif and interpersonal relationship.

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all concern for material interests, were left vacant by it, blank pages on which he was at liberty to inscribe the name of Odette (258-259).[18]

The emotional process Swann undergoes here clearly recalls "Sur la lecture" and the feeling of void that the reader is left with when finishing a book. The entire fictional universe suddenly vanishes, but the emotions and desires in the reader remain, unfulfilled, leaving behind them an open void they have carved in the reader. Similarly, the little phrase has the ability to broaden and intensify the range of emotions that Swann is capable of feeling, by expanding the proportions of his soul, as the text expresses it. At the same time, we note that his love for Odette and his love of music resemble each other in the sense that both emotions are perceived by Swann as something that "did not correspond to anything outside itself, verifiable by others than him" (258). Swann seems preoccupied with a sense of gap or discrepancy between the excessive intensity and precision of his emotional reactions and the actual objective value of the objects they are directed towards.

18 "La petite phrase continuait à s'associer pour Swann à l'amour qu'il avait pour Odette. Il sentait bien que cet amour, c'était quelque chose qui ne correspondait à rien d'extérieur, de constatable par d'autres que lui; il se rendait compte que les qualités d'Odette ne justifiaient pas qu'il attachât tant de prix aux moments passés auprès d'elle. [...] Mais la petite phrase, dès qu'il l'entendait, savait rendre libre en lui l'espace qui pour elle était nécessaire, les proportions de l'âme de Swann s'en trouvaient changées; une marge y était réservée à une jouissance qui elle non plus ne correspondait à aucun objet extérieur et qui pourtant, au lieu d'être purement individuelle comme celle de l'amour, s'imposait à Swann comme une réalité supérieure aux choses concrètes. Cette soif d'un charme inconnu, la petite phrase l'éveillait en lui, mais ne lui apportait rien de précis pour l'assouvir. De sorte que les parties de l'âme de Swann où la petite phrase avait effacé le souci des intérêts matériels, les considérations humaines et valables pour tous, elles les avaient laissées vacantes et en blanc, et il était libre d'y inscrire le nom d'Odette" (233).

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This last parallel between love of art and love for another person in Proust may be related to J. Hillis Miller's analysis of the relation of passion to performatives in literature, which I mentioned in my introduction. As we have no direct access to the inner lives of others, we may relate to them not by means of cognition, but only emotionally and performatively through acts of faith and trust: "Confidence and apprehension are separate spheres that do not touch except at some uncrossable frontier. It is a 'charming' law of nature that love and knowledge are incompatible" (Miller 2001: 182). The original signification of the term "charm" is related to magic, or the bringing into being, often by means of speech acts, of something which is out of our reach, supernatural or simply non-existent. Miller draws on this etymological signification of the word "charm" by establishing a parallel to the fact that literature has the ability to mobilise our emotions in demanding from us a response based on confidence rather than certainty or scientific facts, not unlike the way we must learn to relate to the people we love through trust and through emotional investment that comes without guarantees: "Poetry is a charm, charming. […] All speech acts that work, that are felicitous, are charming. They work magically, like a charm" (Miller 2001: 182).

The word "charme" has already appeared in the last quote from *Un amour de Swann* ("cette soif d'un charme inconnu" / "this thirst for an unknown delight"). The piano player performing the sonata in her salon is also called a "charmeur" by Mme Verdurin, and the word is repeated in several of the scenes relating the emotional effects of "la petite phrase" on Swann.[19] Similarly, in "Sur la lecture", Marcel is charmed by the church-like qualities of the room he reads in. The charm

19 See for instance, in the French original p. 208, p. 235 and p. 343, and in the English version p. 231, p. 261 and p. 379.

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of Odette and the charm of music, in analogy with the all absorbing powers of a novel, appear to have the paradoxical ability to place Swann in the presence of, or indeed in *touch* with something distant, intangible and volatile, as the numerous spatial metaphors in these passages suggest.

"Caressed by the art work that passes me by": Aesthetic experience as contiguity

Un amour de Swann is a third-person narration, focusing on Swann's own experience of his love story with Odette. Through the predominant use of internal focalisation and free indirect speech, Swann's innermost thoughts and perceptions are presented from within, partly formulated in his own words.[20] Consequently, the many spatial metaphors associated with art experience in the text also appear to be Swann's own account of the impact the little phrase has on him. At first, the spatial quality he attributes to Vinteuil's sonata seems to be a way of grasping and controlling it intellectually. He visualises the music geometrically as an extension, dividing it into recognisable sections, until finally "he had before him something that was no longer pure music, but rather design, architecture, thought, and which allowed the actual music

20 At the same time, the question of focalisation in *Un amour de Swann* obviously poses a more complex and logical problem, since the third-person narrator in this particular part of *La Recherche* is still Marcel, the same narrator that talks to us in the first person in the other volumes of the work. While he elsewhere tells us the story of his own life in which he himself is both protagonist and narrator, he here relates a love story from Swann's life that took place before Marcel's birth. Being consequently restricted by the limitations any homodiegetic narrator must respect, notably the lack of omniscience, Marcel cannot relate Swann's feelings and sensations from the character's own perspective. But still, he chooses to do so, thus adding another layer of perspectivism and relativism to the narrative.

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to be recalled" (228).[21] This need to rationalise may recall and partly explain Swann's tendency to justify and legitimise his infatuation with Odette by comparing her to various art works (a disposition he shares with Marcel). One way to interpret this is that Swann seeks to remove the emotional component of both his love of music and his love for Odette by relating to both only through distant reflective scrutiny. Thus, according to Martha Nussbaum's perspective, precisely by situating himself in a safe place where the destabilising effects of love can no longer reach him, Swann partly misses out on what the emotion of love is about, like loss of control and giving in to vulnerability. In this sense, he seems caught in the same kind of self-deception that characterises Marcel and his analysis of his feelings for Albertine (Nussbaum 1990: 261-268).[22]

In this perspective, each performance of the little phrase appears to correct Swann's intellectualising and mastering self-protection. For the music opens up imaginative, dream-like landscapes to Swann which are undeniably perceptible without really being there: through "the narrow frame of a half-opened door, in the far distance, of a different colour",

21 "il avait devant lui cette chose qui n'est plus de la musique pure, qui est du dessin, de l'architecture, de la pensée, et qui permet de se rappeler la musique" (206).

22 Swann's stratagems appear to provide an example of a paradox also pointed out by Joshua Landy, according to which, in certain contexts in Proust, "intellect keeps us ignorant", in the sense that it constructs "endless 'pretexts' for doing what we already wanted to do and believing what we already decided to believe" (Landy: 10). To Landy, however, this happens not because the intellect suppresses emotion, but rather because desire corrupts the intellect. He thus nuances Nussbaum's analysis of both rationalisation and of love's relationship to knowledge: "Pain is not equivalent to love; love is not equivalent to knowledge; and rationalization may well be more acceptable in Proust's world, perhaps even more essential, than Nussbaum is prepared to admit" (Landy: 208-209).

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the little phrase appears as only just perceptible, with indistinct contours, "velvety" because of an interposed light, "belonging to another world" (238).[23] Often scarcely seen at an enormous distance, the motif ambiguously materialises as unattainable and withdrawn at the very moment it is revealed, as the description of the fourth performance of the sonata in the text illustrates:

> Then they were silent; beneath the restless tremolos of the violin part which protected it with their throbbing *sostenuto* two octaves above it – and as in a mountainous country, behind the seeming immobility of a vertiginous waterfall, one descries, two hundred feet below, the tiny form of a woman walking in the valley – the little phrase had just appeared, distant, graceful, protected by the long, gradual unfurling of its transparent, incessant and sonorous curtain (288).[24]

We note that the apparition of the little phrase is associated with paradoxes or incompatible qualities, like the immobility of a waterfall and the transparency of a curtain. Transparent, the curtain at the same time protects the musical motif (there are two occurrences of the verb "protéger" in the passage) from our perception, allowing us barely to sense its presence. Or *her* presence, should we probably say, as the motif is again explicitly represented as a woman, by means of the metaphor "promeneuse".

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23 "le cadre étroit d'une porte entrouverte, tout au loin, d'une couleur autre, dans le velouté d'une lumière interposée, la petite phrase apparaissait, […] appartenant à un autre monde" (215).

24 "Mais ils se turent; sous l'agitation des trémolos de violon qui la protégeaient de leur tenue frémissante à deux octaves de là – et comme dans un pays de montagne, derrière l'immobilité apparente et vertigineuse d'une cascade, on aperçoit, deux cents pieds plus bas, la forme minuscule d'une promeneuse – la petite phrase venait d'apparaître, lointaine, gracieuse, protégée par le long déferlement du rideau transparent, incessant et sonore" (260).

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A similar image of the walking woman is repeatedly used to evoke the little phrase. As we have seen, already in the first performance of the sonata in the text, Swann compares it on two occasions with a "passante", a beautiful woman one passes in the street, and then suddenly meets again by surprise.[25] Later the verb "passer" is also linked to the phrase, both in the sense of passing by,[26] and in the sense of touching, passing the hand over someone: "What matter though the phrase repeated that love is frail and fleeting, when his love was so strong! He played with the melancholy which the music diffused, he felt it stealing over him, but like a caress which only deepened and sweetened his sense of his own happiness" (259).[27] In all of these examples, the words "passer" and "passante" chosen to embody the characteristics of the little phrase imply something contiguous or even tactile, and yet something volatile and out of reach that disappears as soon as it has arrived. And in the last quote, we note, this paradoxical quality has the ability to awaken and intensify mixed feelings of melancholy and happiness in Swann, and to make him momentarily let go of his mastering reflective distance.

The associations between the little phrase and the caress evoke similar qualities. In addition to the idea of contiguity

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25 The noun "passante" (207) that Proust employs as a metaphor for the motive is possibly an allusion and homage to Baudelaire's poem "À une passante" in *Les Fleurs du mal*.

26 "la faire passer seule dans le couloir" (234) / "make it pass unattended" (259), "lui maintenir encore un moment de toutes ses dernières forces le chemin ouvert pour qu'il pût passer" (339) / "to keep the way open for a moment longer, with all its remaining strength, so that the stranger might pass" (375).

27 "Qu'importait qu'elle lui dît que l'amour est fragile, le sien était si fort! Il jouait avec la tristesse qu'elle répandait, il la sentait passer sur lui, mais comme une caresse qui rendait plus profond et plus doux le sentiment qu'il avait de son bonheur" (234).

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and touch, the word "caress" also evidently stresses the sensual component of the emotions triggered in Swann by the motif. When Madame Verdurin introduces the sonata for the first time to Swann in her salon, she says that he is going to be "caressed aurally" (227) by it. The original French formulation is even more concrete, physical and explicitly erotic: "c'est vous qu'on va caresser, qu'on va caresser dans l'oreille" (205). But the intertwining of musical caresses and real physical caresses is most obvious in the third performance of the sonata, taking place in Odette's flat, where Swann implores her to play Vinteuil's piece to him while she kisses him and he caresses her, up until the point where making love and consuming music almost seem to coincide completely:

> He would make Odette play it over to him again and again, ten, twenty times on end, insisting that, as she did so, she must never stop kissing him. [...] Then she would pretend to stop, saying: "How do you expect me to play when you keep on holding me? I can't do everything at once. Make up your mind what you want: am I to play the phrase or do you want to play with me?" and he would get angry, and she would burst out laughing, a laugh that soon transformed and descended upon him in a shower of kisses (259-260).[28]

In fact, Swann seems to know very well what he wants, and that is to avoid choosing between listening to the little phrase and exchanging "des petites caresses" – he wants the two activities to merge into one (and so possibly at the same time

28 "Il la faisait rejouer dix fois, vingt fois à Odette, exigeant qu'en même temps elle ne cessât de l'embrasser. [...] Alors elle faisait mine de s'arrêter, disant: 'Comment veux-tu que je joue comme cela si tu me tiens? je ne peux tout faire à la fois, sache au moins ce que tu veux, est-ce que je dois jouer la phrase ou faire des petites caresses?', lui se fâchait et elle éclatait d'un rire qui se changeait et retombait sur lui, en une pluie de baisers" (234).

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disguise and legitimise his pure physical lust as some sort of intellectual and respectable appreciation of art). The perceptible closeness of both the musical motif and the beloved woman, having concrete and direct effects on his body, make him want to break down the frontier between perceiver and perceived, between subject and object, and erase the tangible presence of otherness by assimilating and melting it into his own being, in a cannibalistic or vampire-like way:

> [T]he idea that she was none the less in the room with him still, by the piano, at that very moment, ready to be kissed and enjoyed, the idea of her material existence, would sweep over him so violent an intoxication that, with eyes starting from his head and jaws tensed as though to devour her, he would fling himself upon his Botticelli maiden and kiss and bite her cheeks (260).[29]

Even though the desire of two lovers melting into one may appear to be a worn-out cliché, and despite the apparently ridiculed and caricatured portrait of Swann in this particular scene, the passage illuminates a profound problem examined with great seriousness in Proust's text.

Through the interplay between desire and sense of space in several passages, the wish of becoming one visualises in a strikingly clear way the complex connections between emotion, alterity and knowledge. There is for instance one scene towards the end of the novel, when Swann's love is nearly completely overtaken by feelings of jealousy and paranoia, where he makes a new visit to Odette's home, and is suddenly struck by the prosaic concreteness of the physical objects

29 "l'idée qu'elle était cependant restée là, près du piano, dans le moment actuel, prête à être embrassée et possédée, l'idée de sa matérialité et de sa vie venait l'enivrer avec une telle force que, l'œil égaré, les mâchoires tendues comme pour dévorer, il se précipitait sur cette vierge de Botticelli et se mettait à lui pincer les joues" (234-235).

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present there. This tangible presence of things calms him, and seems for a moment to convince him of the fact that his various imagined scenarios of an unfaithful Odette exist only in his mind. In order to make them disappear for good, the solution would seem to be to eliminate the spatial distance between Odette and himself which nourishes his jealous mind, and to invite her into his flat, making her home his own. "Ah, if fate had allowed him to share a single dwelling with Odette, so that in her house he should be in his own" (326),[30] Swann thinks to himself. But this wish only performatively fosters a new long imagined scenario in the text, making Odette every bit as fictitious and intangible as before, and ending with the promising prospect of his own familiar interior – lamps, armchairs etc. – being infused with Odette's mysterious sweetness and density. We may interpret Swann's desire of sharing a household with Odette as a desire of sharing perceptions and conscience with another person, as the metaphors of "Sur la lecture" have also already indicated in a similar way. He basically wants to infuse the *res cogitans* with the qualities of the *res extensa*. But, as stated in the terms of J. Hillis Miller, because the inner life of the other will necessarily remain closed to the self, the only way to get close to the other seems to be through emotional investment, like Swann's wishful thinking, or through other forms of performatives.

Even though the other thus stays out of the self's reach, whether alterity is associated with a work of art or a person, the very manifestation of otherness, indirect though it may be, nevertheless produces very concrete effects on Swann's body that simply cannot be ignored, and that alternately also become objects of his reflection. At first, in accordance with the idea from "Sur la lecture" that reading sharpens our

30 "Ah! si le destin avait permis qu'il pût n'avoir qu'une seule demeure avec Odette et que chez elle il fût chez lui" (294).

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senses, the little phrase intensifies Swann's ability of perception, and is compared to the way that the odour of roses in the humid air of the evening "has the power of dilating one's nostrils" (227).[31] The little phrase also executes its powers by putting a smile on Swann's face (231/208), by causing him to transpire and having to sweep the sweat off his forehead and monocle with his handkerchief (377/341), by forcing his lips, involuntarily, to make the motion of a kiss (378/342), and, through the effect of rhythm and pace, by making him breathe deeper and more slowly (259/233). And finally, in the last performance of the sonata, the recognition of the little phrase causes him so much pain that he feels the urge to scream (375/339) and then has to reach to his heart with his hand, as though he is about to suffer a heart attack.

Similarly, the little phrase has the ability to mobilise Swann's entire sensory apparatus. In addition to his hearing, which the music obviously activates, his sense of touch is also brought to life as a response to the effects of the little phrase. Moreover, on several occasions, metaphors associate the motif with fragrance and Swann's reactions to it with sense of smell, whereas eyesight, the sense most intimately associated with reason, is almost absent from the accounts of the little phrase's effects. In fact, Swann is repeatedly said to be momentarily blinded as the musical motif draws near.

One particular passage relating the last performance of the sonata in the text, in Mme de Saint-Euverte's salon, illustrates clearly how the little phrase, in bringing back memories of the happy days spent in the company of Odette, awakens Swann's senses to life: the feeling of chrysanthemum petals pressed to his lips, the smell of the heated iron of the barber doing his hair before leaving for Odette's, the ice-cold drives

31 "comme certaines odeurs de roses circulant dans l'air humide du soir ont la propriété de dilater nos narines" (206).

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back home again in his carriage in the evening; everything forming a "network of mental habits, of seasonal impressions, of sensory reactions, which had extended over a series of weeks its uniform meshes in which his body found itself inextricably caught" (376).[32] Thus, on the one hand, the very concreteness and specificity of what stays nonetheless "volatile" and out of reach is not appropriated by Swann through his bodily reactions to it, but instead takes his body prisoner, alienating it by making its otherness completely invade it, something which is also powerfully communicated through the imagery in the text presenting Swann's increasing jealousy as a tumour growing inside him, taking over his entire being and threatening to put an end to his life. But at the same time, the last performance of the sonata does in fact seem to help him to finally acknowledge this sense of loss of control, and indeed to encounter his own suffering self by becoming it once again, even though this only takes place inside the protected and virtual setting of an art experience:

And Swann could distinguish, standing motionless before that scene of remembered happiness, a wretched figure who filled him with such pity, because he did not at first recognise who it was, that he had to lower his eyes lest anyone should observe that they were filled with tears. It was himself (377).[33]

32 "toutes les mailles d'habitudes mentales, d'impressions saisonnières, de réactions cutanées, qui avaient étendu sur une suite de semaines un réseau uniforme dans lequel son corps se trouvait repris" (340).

33 "Et Swann aperçut, immobile en face de ce bonheur revécu, un malheureux qui lui fit pitié parce qu'il ne le reconnut pas tout de suite, si bien qu'il dut baisser les yeux pour qu'on ne vît pas qu'ils étaient pleins de larmes. C'était lui-même" (341).

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Closing remarks on emotions and knowledge

As the last example from *Un amour de Swann* shows, Swann repeatedly tries to grasp what happens to him emotionally, and to understand what causes his suffering and misfortune. Through the effects of the little phrase, Swann is subjected to dialectic interplay between an intensified sensibility opened up in him by music and his intellectual processing of these experiences. And at the end of the novel, he seems to have acquired a new and nuanced kind of self-knowledge and so to have been changed by art, in the sense that he has come to understand and acknowledge the deceptive and potentially harmful nature of his distanced and idealising approach to the world and to others. His new knowing is thus brought about by feeling, and may as such be considered as a form of embodied cognition and as a heuristic piece of self-knowledge, in accordance with Martha Nussbaum's interpretation of Proust's work.

At the same time, there seems to be a world of difference between the recuperating euphoria of the *madeleine* scene and Swann's painful and reluctant recognition of self at Mme de Saint-Euverte's. One way of interpreting this is to consider Swann's final insight as limited and partial, as his need to control intellectually the world around him seems to stubbornly persist and cling on to its illusions when faced with the opacity of alterity. The little phrase does not convince him of the necessity of being able to trust without guarantees and *without knowing* – it doesn't teach him "how to fall", to borrow a formulation from Martha Nussbaum (Nussbaum 1990: 274-285). Art may confront us in concrete, life-like and tangible ways with inaccessible phenomena which undermine and negate us as mastering, reflecting selves, and thereby show how such phenomena constitute a natural and incontestable part of everyday human life. This is something that Swann does not come to fully accept or reconcile himself with. Both

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"Sur la lecture" and *Un amour de Swann* have suggested that the otherness of others may constitute such a phenomenon, notably through the spatial and tactile qualities associated with the art experience and with interpersonal relationships in both texts.

Proust's fine-tuned imagery of tactility may thus point to an interpretation of the art experience as the establishment of a relationship to the world conflicting with cognition – one that reveals and stresses the limits of cognition rather than enabling or enriching it. The focus on the pure proximity, materiality or texture of phenomena involved in the art experience in "Sur la lecture" and *Un amour de Swann* gives a strong sense of "a direct relation to something that both gives and refuses to give itself", to quote Lévinas's conclusion of his interpretation of *La Prisonnière* in "L'Autre dans Proust" (Lévinas 1989: 164), and may also evoke the sheer density and closeness of surfaces analysed in "Langage et proximité" as an event prior to intentionality, signification and expression (Lévinas 2001: 315-319).

Finally, stated a bit differently, what my reading of both "Sur la lecture" and *Un amour de Swann* fundamentally exposes is the idea of embodiment and emotional anchorage as a condition of or a necessary correction for cognition. As Merleau-Ponty perceives it in his reading of Proust's little phrase in *Le Visible et l'invisible*, literature, music and passions reveal aspects of reality with the same precision as science, but in showing us how ideas are intrinsic to and undistinguishable from bodily experience – like the opposite yet interwoven sides of the same cloth (Merleau-Ponty 1964: 195-204). Through the activation of sensations and emotions, art can ensure the embodiment of ideas, in ways that may correct or complement science and philosophy, by teaching us how the dense texture of blurring veils may be a necessary condition for seeing clearly.

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Emotional Mapping in Jean Rhys' *Good Morning, Midnight*

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When my first love affair came to an end I wrote this poem
I didn't know
I didn't know
I didn't know.
Then I settled down to be miserable.

Thus writes the Dominician-born British writer Jean Rhys in her unfinished autobiography, *Smile Please* (1971), and she sums up her situation as a young foreign girl in London in the following way: "He had money. I had none" (114). The words might be applied to her fictive heroines as well as herself, although it is worth noting that the analogy between life and fiction is more poignant in terms of emotions than of plot. To be more precise: in her fiction the interaction between emotions and place is highlighted while action or plot is reduced to a minimum. "Her business was with passion, hardship and emotions: the locality in which these things are endured is immaterial", Ford Madox Ford once claimed. But as Katie Owen points out:

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In fact 'locality' was in no way immaterial to Rhys, a writer highly sensitive to her surroundings, and already in *Quartet* it is apparent how she will use place, with increasingly striking, cumulative effect to express her heroine's emotions. [...] Interiors are vital to Rhys's fiction too; as well as streets [...], she wrings every hotel room in her work – and there are many – dry of emotional significance. (Qd. Rhys 2000: xiv)

The words are relevant to everything Rhys writes. Emotion matters, and so does locality. However, even if places are linked to the heroine's emotions, the relationship between place and emotion is hardly an unambiguous one. On the one hand, places may confirm hope or despair; on the other hand, they may challenge or even invert memories and experiences. In neither case is the reader given much in terms of explanation. Rhys herself, always acutely aware of the stylistic and literary demands upon a writer, formulates it like this: "a novel has to have shape, and life doesn't have any" (1979: 10).

Jean Rhys' four contemporary novels – *Quartet*, *Voyage in the Dark*, *After Leaving Mr Mackenzie* and *Good Morning, Midnight* – were written between 1928 and 1939, and are set in either Paris or London or both, and they all have a female protagonist who struggles for life, money and survival in a hostile context. The protagonists' main project is simply to maintain life; they do not have money, home or any sort of security except the temporary protection provided by various men. The only thing they possess is a linguistic competence and a gift for observing human nature, without being or aspiring to be artists. They do not write or paint, they do not even talk very much, on the whole they do very little – and they do it alone. They are homeless and bereft, representatives of the alienation and strangeness of the city – inseparable from the public space they inhabit, whose streets and cafés and hotel rooms seem to absorb them. "Nobody else knows me but the street knows me," as Sasha, the main character of

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Good Morning, Midnight, says about herself ([1939] 1969: 25), the novel which will be the main focus of my discussion here.

All Rhys' texts, including her last and most famous novel, *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966), written after she was rediscovered as a writer in the fifties – for many years it was generally thought that she was dead, and her books were long out of print – embody and generate a discussion of the struggle between individual emotions and society's norms. The former are embedded in the spatial structure of memory as well as in a timeless present, the latter are generally (but not exclusively) represented by various powerful men. Power equals money, and money is more often than not connected to the male, as we saw in the introductory quote.

"[I]n a deep sense all human emotions are in part about the past, and bear the traces of a history that is at once commonly human, socially constructed, and idiosyncratic", Martha Nussbaum writes in *Upheavals of Thought* (2001: 177). This is certainly true of *Good Morning, Midnight*, but the novel may be said to broaden this observation by making precise locations into a mirror in which the past becomes visible. Human emotions are set in time, but time, and history, are embedded in a spatial structure which helps visualise the past, and to a certain extent blur the distinction between past and present, private and public.

My essay will discuss how Jean Rhys' urban novels display the necessity of reducing the urban map in order to master or control external and internal emotional pressure. It will deal with the interaction between inner and outer spaces and "maps", and investigate whether the system of the map serves to compensate for the invasion of unwanted emotions, or whether the protagonist is in fact owned and known by her surrounding space rather than being in control of it. I will venture to show how the texts establish relations between

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consciousness, language and topography, which indicate an interaction between a physical and a mental world, and between life as it is lived now and memories from the past. Hence, my essay also examines the way in which a work of art may illuminate the relation between emotional life and space.

Introducing the map of Good Morning, Midnight

Good Morning, Midnight is the last of Jean Rhys' contemporary novels. Its main protagonist, Sasha Jansen, travels to Paris from London for a fortnight's holiday – from a rough past and a dreary present. During her days in Paris she tries to avoid memories from the past as well as new emotional involvements, and the novel depicts her struggle to master her environment. The plot is reduced to a minimum: she meets René, a handsome gigolo with a mysterious past, she gets to know a couple of Russians who have a painter friend, and she tries to keep her ghostlike hotel neighbour at bay, but in a final scene ends up in bed with him instead of René. Despite her attempts to the contrary, the present is intersected with memories from the past. Rhys presents a limited map of rooms, streets, cafés and people, and the result is a text which both in expression and movement acquires a minimalistic form, based on the protagonist's need for avoidance – of words, emotions and memories. Because locations are often personified, a typical Rhys formulation is: "this place tells you…". On the one hand, certain locations engender certain memories and emotions: London demands money while Paris necessitates forgetting; the right bank speaks bourgeois respectability while the left bank wears a more bohemian mask. On the other hand, locations also transcend a strict social system or attitude. Money, and the worry about money, intersect every human encounter and interaction, regardless

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of time and space. In the end changing places seems to be an illusion hiding the fact that every move is an eternal repetition of the same fundamental condition of loneliness.

As in Rhys' other urban novels, the city is seen through the eyes of the solitary woman, and the style and rhythm of the text is inextricably interwoven with the urban landscape in which it is set. Both past and present are located in places: "It was always places that she thought of, not people", as the narrator says about the main character Julia Martin in *After Leaving Mr Mackenzie* ([1930]1971: 9). When Rhys presents situations and types connected with the Anglophone milieu on the Parisian left bank, her protagonists are more on the periphery than at the centre of it, distanced from the literary or artistic set-up. Her Paris consists of back streets, cheap hotels and impasses, and her women are outsiders in what Ford Madox Ford labelled "the living heart" of the Latin Quarter (qd. Benstock 1987: 449).

The setting also signifies how different topographies connote different social groups, yet at the same time her texts reflect a certain instability when it comes to topography and character. When new people arrive, they may settle in more or less the same area, but they also transcend the traditional segregation between social groups. The city was growing rapidly, and early 20th-century Paris was a place for change and transition, a juxtaposition between the old and the new, the homely and the alien – a meeting place for people of various backgrounds and nationalities. Jean Rhys' description of Julia in *After Leaving Mr Mackenzie* exemplifies this: "her career of ups and downs had rubbed most of the hall-marks off her, so that it was not easy to guess at her age, her nationality, or the social background to which she properly belonged" (1971: 12).

Characters and events in *Good Morning, Midnight* are based on a skeleton of streets and hotel rooms, and the text

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consists more of places and spaces than of plot. The handling of the setting is the main compositional principle of the novel; it governs the protagonist's movements as well as her emotions, with the two being linked together in the sense that her location determines what she feels and remembers. Paris is the main setting, but memories function as interrelated spaces which transcend the present locations. Of the novel's four parts, part three is an analepsis giving the history of Sasha's marriage and pregnancy but with little background, and few if any explanations. This part is set from beginning to end in specific locations, the important ones given in italics, thus emphasising the way they determine what happens, but also reversing the relation between private and public so as to underline which is the more important. The chapters open like this: "… *the room at the Steens'*" (1969: 95) / "… *The room in the hotel in Amsterdam that night*" (98) / "… *The house in the Boulevard Magenta*" (116; all dots are Rhys'). The metonymical relation between place and memory is made explicit when the great capital is turned into a small stuffy room: "Well, London. … It has a fine sound, but what was London to me? It was a little room, smelling stuffy, with my stockings hanging to dry in front of a gas-fire" (95). The setting is a catalyst for past and present experiences and emotions; it engenders memories and hopes for change, the latter less pertinent than the former, and on a more overall level it demonstrates literature's ability to unfold the intersection between specific places and emotional life.

Sasha's dealings with the urban environment, her fight against what she perceives as its invasion, is the main dramatic conflict of the novel, but this fight is connected to the emotional impact of the city, its indoor and outdoor rooms. The bareness of the language points to the way in which her mental programme for survival in the city is outlined. "Planning it all out. Eating. A movie. Eating again. One drink. A

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long walk back to the hotel. Bed. Luminal. Sleep. Just sleep – no dreams" (19). The linguistic control is parallel to the minimal map; the main clauses get shorter and tighter while Sasha's life and programme close in. Life is cut to a minimum, and the city is reduced to a controlled walk between certain cafés, streets, rooms, as if the map signifies the need for existential order. Not surprisingly perhaps, the system is fragile and collapses more often than not. Hovering between the two cafés she perceives as friendly and hostile respectively, she chooses the wrong one, as if bound by a destructive logic which unmasks her as lacking control of both her surroundings and her emotions. Thus, the system of the map proves to be an inversion of the irregularity of the mind.

The interaction of city and narration, space and text, is established from the very first page. Not only does the book open with a personification, the city itself as a *dramatis persona*, by way of a hotel room that speaks – "Quite like old times, the room says. Yes? No?" – but Sasha is introduced as inextricably bound by her own schedule: "I have been here five days. I have decided on a place to eat in at midday, a place to eat in at night, a place to have my drink in after dinner. I have arranged my little life" (9). In order to control the city, she has reduced it to a programme – a topographical system which keeps memories and emotions at bay: "The thing is to have a programme, not to leave anything to chance – no gaps. No trailing around aimlessly with cheap gramophone records starting up in your head" (18). In other words, she avoids the slow strolling in the manner of the leisurely city walker because aimless walking may engender dangerous thoughts. Instead she invokes a movement pattern based upon a limited map – Place St. Michel, Boulevard St. Germain and Gare Montparnasse – aimed at avoiding memories.

Sasha's emotional map is in other words interwoven with her topographical map. In fact, the two are hardly distinguish-

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able, and her emotions come to the surface as interactions with an environment where present and past are blurred, to the extent that what happens appears almost timeless and changeless. Events are fixed as images in her mind, images that are more often than not given a precise topographical address. In comparison, the temporal dimension is vague. Although the present has an exact date, September 1937, the historical events of the day are absent. Apart from a brief reference to Franco's Spain the novel seems to be devoid of world history, but the people she meets are all foreigners, vagrants, outsiders, belonging neither here nor there – as if to underline an overall insecurity and instability characteristic of the time. When it comes to the protagonist's personal history, it too is presented in the elliptical style characteristic of the book as a whole: she has been married, she has had a baby who died, money is a recurrent problem, and at one point she tried to kill herself but now lives on a small legacy in London. Sasha Jansen, if that is indeed her real name, is in a curious way both bound by and beyond the interactions of her environment; she is so to speak set in the past and sees Paris from a perspective of the past, projecting her history onto the setting and making Paris her beloved as well as her antagonist: "Paris is looking very nice tonight. … You are looking very nice tonight, my beautiful, my darling, and oh what a bitch you can be!" (15) Connecting city and woman, the words display her as a self-conscious ventriloquist for male attitudes, thereby unmasking them by showing them up as clichés.

The emotional impact of hotels

Let us take a closer look at how rooms, hotel rooms in particular, play an important and significant part in Rhys' œuvre. The hotel room epitomises the fragile zone between private

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and public, inside and outside, which forms the novel's urban *and* emotional map, and belongs to the city in the same way as cafés and streets do. In Ayako Muneuchi's words: "the hotel is not a place for fruitful self-discovery: it simply provides the architecture that frames her heroine's desolate experiences in the modern city" (2006: 129). Hotels function as hiding and resting places, but they are easily invaded by what their inhabitants seek to avoid; money decides where and how long one is allowed to stay, and strangers threaten one's privacy: "public eyes are internalised even in the architecture of the hotel" (Muneuchi 2006: 136). In short, these cheap hotels which are habitats for poor artists and vagrants of different sorts are houses without being homes, "anywhere out" rather than "somewhere in", to paraphrase John Casey's phenomenological distinction between house and home (1993: 102). Sasha moves between them, trying to find a safe and comfortable one, always seeking protection from the outside world but only temporarily finding it.

We have already seen how *Good Morning, Midnight* opens with a room welcoming her back, ensued by the following image: "There are two beds, a big one for madame and a smaller one on the opposite side for monsieur. The washbasin is shut off by a curtain. It is a large room, the smell of cheap hotels faint, almost imperceptible. The street outside is narrow, cobble-stoned, going sharply uphill and ending in a flight of steps. What they call an impasse" (1969: 9). *After Leaving Mr Mackenzie* also opens with a room – even the card the landlady hands her customers is reproduced on the novel's first page – and like the hotel room in *Good Morning, Midnight*, it functions like a *mise en abyme* for emotions and the text as a whole:

After she had parted from Mr Mackenzie, Julia Martin went to live in a cheap hotel on the Quai des Grands Augustins. It looked a lowdown

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sort of place and the staircase smelt of the landlady's cats, but the rooms were cleaner than you would have expected.

[...]

Julia paid sixteen francs a night. Her room on the second floor was large and high-ceilinged, but it had a sombre and one-eyed aspect because the solitary window was very much to one side.

The room had individuality. Its gloom was touched with a fantasy accentuated by the pattern of the wallpaper. (1971: 7)

Indeed, hotel rooms are far from neutral settings; all rooms have an emotional impact on the inhabitant: a wallpaper can be erotic, some rooms are friendly, others threatening. In *Quartet* Marya's room is described thus: "The room was large and low-ceilinged, the striped wallpaper faded into inoffensiveness. A huge dark wardrobe faced a huge dark bed. The rest of the furniture shrank away into corners, battered and apologetic" ([1928] 2000: 14).

Rooms recuperate emotions from past and present, and settings function both on a metonymical and a metaphorical level, pointing to suffocation, drowning and enclosure. The impasse connects location and protagonist as well as connoting a closed situation with no escape; the toilet downstairs, named the lavabo, is the nearest place to hide in, as well as being associated with waste and drowning. Hence, interiors serve to connect the main character with her surroundings, while at the same time they may evoke the cold and lonely quality of rooms as well as of mental states. The coffin is a leitmotif in *Good Morning, Midnight*, suggesting the double quality of death and confinement – the extreme and ultimate result of the wish to be left alone, as in the image of the London room Sasha has retired to: "Saved, rescued and with my place to hide in – what more did I want? I crept in and hid. The lid of my coffin shut down with a bang. Now I no longer wished to be loved, beautiful, happy or successful. I

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want one thing and one thing only – to be left alone" (1969: 37).

Locality is tainted with emotion, and emotion is engendered by memory. Locality is never neutral or innocent, all "new" rooms are already infested with what has been. Paris, and the rooms of Paris, external as well as internal, are overwritten with memories, and the rooms chosen by the protagonist increasingly lose their individuality and become a timeless and placeless space of the past: "This damned room – it's saturated with the past. … It's all the rooms I've ever slept in, all the streets I've ever walked in. Now the whole thing moves in an ordered, undulating procession past my eyes. Rooms, streets, streets, rooms" (91). The past has invaded the present. The protagonist tries to shelter herself against emotions, but the effort involved in employing a room to that end leads to a disillusioned conclusion:

> A beautiful room with a bath? A room with a bath? A nice room? A room?… But never tell the truth about this business of rooms, because it would bust the roof off everything and undermine the whole social system. All rooms are the same. All rooms have four walls, a door, a window or two, a bed, a chair and perhaps a bidet. A room is a place where you hide from the wolves outside and that's all any room is. Why should I worry about changing my room? (33)

Rhys explores the longing for new and better surroundings by paradoxically dismantling the whole possibility for change. She does this by exploiting the language of advertisement, cliché and text books – cuts it down to a minimum so as to signify life's basic necessities, going from "a beautiful room with a bath" down to "a room", eliminating words on the way. In the end we are left with a basic definition of what a room is, namely a hiding place from society's "wolves", and told that changing a room changes nothing,

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as everything is in a fundamental way already set and fixed. Once and for all the text undermines any utopian vision of "a room of one's own". The paragraph is an echo of similar words a few pages previously, where Sasha in Sylvie Maurel's words "incorporates the jargon of the hotelier" (Maurel 1998: 123), ironically echoing phrases and bits of conversation concerning "A room. A nice room. A beautiful room with bath". The recurrent vision about a nice room is the text's ironic refrain, a refrain contrasted by cockroaches, unfriendly staff, bad smells and invading neighbours, thus emphasising that the vision about a nice room is presented only to be undermined as an illusion about what is possible. At times, descriptions of interiors function like a literary *Stilleben* emanating pain, longing, moments of happiness, as if to say that the many rooms which speak to Sasha about her past are the real protagonists of the novel – their textual function turning them into personified 'forces' having more control over her than vice versa.

The power of the mask

A sense of displacement runs through the novel, and this is reflected in the way the protagonist presents herself to the world. If a room is a place for hiding from the world, clothes, make up and hairdo are similarly a way of disguising oneself. Appearance is part of the public mask, signifying one's relation to the external world. To dress is synonymous with entering a specific cultural and gendered context. Choosing the right hat or hair colour is pertinent to how one is treated. However, masking can go wrong, as when Sasha's old fur coat signals a wealth there is no basis for. The mask works when one is able to pass by unnoticed, while to be stared at is synonymous with wearing the wrong mask. The environment we glimpse through Sasha's narration is like a play with

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masked characters behaving according to a social script where the division between belonging and not belonging engenders the "acting", and where being is bound up with appearance. To be, and to speak, is already to wear a mask, and there is no escaping the social play which increasingly takes the form of a drunken nightmare: "All that is left in the world is an enormous machine, made of white steel" (156). Clothing speaks, just like the rooms: the hat shouts "Anglaise", while clothes may be a label saying "middle class, no money".

Rhys is preoccupied with masks, caricatures, gestures: her protagonists' gift is for observing others and interpreting social signs. Also, the Rhys woman has an acute awareness of her own self in relation to others. At one point Sasha visits a painter in a room with African masks on the wall, and she identifies its hard looks with her experiences of gazes thrown at her in cafés where people stare and condemn her. She also interprets her own face as a mask; seeing herself in a mirror after crying and drinking she comments upon her face as this "tortured and tormented mask" (37). Interestingly, the mask is regularly connected to hard and violent expressions, devoid of humanity. Thus, it seems that for the mask to be successful it must hide emotion and vulnerability, thereby making the doll the perfect, albeit ironic, female image: "watching those damned dolls, thinking what a success they would have made of their lives if they had been women. Satin skin, silk hair, velvet eyes, sawdust heart – all complete" (16).

Being part of the crowd of displaced persons, foreigners with no fixed place of origin to return to, is a characteristic of the Rhys woman – whether young or middle aged. Living on the margins of society, having nothing of value except their looks, it becomes important to them to wear the right mask. Wearing a mask of respectability which at the same time attracts people who can provide money, comfort or both is, however, a play that is bound to fail. In the same way as

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moving in and out of hotel rooms has replaced any notion of home, masks have replaced faces, and the uncertain zone in which the woman exists is reproduced in her masking. The mask motif combines the city's exterior and interior locations with the extreme feeling of vulnerability which motivates the protagonist's actions. She makes herself up to survive. Hence, "mask" is a common denominator for the relation between the self and her environment.

However, if we were to distinguish between face and mask, *être* and *paraître*, we could call *face* the vulnerable individual unable to hide herself and her feelings sufficiently, and *mask* society's internalised norms which demand indifference – "the self-control necessary to keep up appearances", as it is called in *After Leaving Mr Mackenzie* (1971: 21).

This split between self and other is reproduced in *Good Morning, Midnight* in the first-person narration, which often reads like an interior monologue, or rather dialogue – "two voices, one censoring the other" (Maurel 1998: 106). Those voices signify a split position between the woman who observes and the woman who speaks, between the one who dreams and the one who reflects, between the woman who mimics society's voice and the woman protesting against the very same society. It is Sasha's voice alone which carries the shift between opinions, attitudes and emotions that a third-person perspective takes care of in the other Paris novels, *Quartet* and *After Leaving Mr Mackenzie*. Her interior dialogue suggests how the emotions Sasha tries to keep at bay invade her in the form of an extra voice commenting and criticising her.

Love and compassion

All emotions have an ethical implication, according to Martha Nussbaum, and even "good" emotions like compassion and

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love can go wrong if they fail to work outside the private realm and ignore the legitimate concerns and demands of people different from us. Emotions are bound to a complex cognitive register which involves the sensual as well as the evaluative faculty, and they are subject to change. Nussbaum's cognitive view involves a developmental dimension, opening up for the hope "that a change in thought will lead to changes not just in behavior but also in emotion itself, since emotion is a value-laden way of seeing" (2001: 232). Nussbaum goes on to say that

> Language […] is not everything in emotion: emotions can be based on other forms of symbolic representation. But the fact of language does change emotion. The fact that we label our emotions alters the emotions we can have. […] A person who does not know the emotional "grammar" of his or her society cannot be assumed to have the same emotional life as one who does know this "grammar". To be able to articulate one's emotions is *eo ipso* to have a different emotional life. (2001: 149)

Nussbaum's analysis of emotion as judgement and object evaluation seems to imply that being human is being able to change for the better. In Rhys, by contrast, the power of habit and memory points to the fact that neither behaviour nor emotion ever seem to change. Emotion is certainly analysed as a value-laden way of seeing, but the notion of change is fundamentally different in the optimistic philosopher and the fatalistic writer. In Rhys' moral universe emotion may, however, to a certain extent be modified and controlled by planning and evaluating. Thus, it is part of the cognitive register, epitomised in the protagonists' two voices, demonstrating how analysis and sensual reaction are two sides of the same coin. It is nevertheless a split consciousness that comes to the forefront, which underlines another fundamental characteristic of the human condition, namely that "sense

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and sensibility" more often than not are enemies rather than friends. Nussbaum's hope that a change in vision may lead to a change in behaviour as well as in emotion itself is confirmed in the negative in Rhys, in the sense that the notion of *change* is disclosed as an illusion, or worse, a privilege for the privileged. The linguistic and analytical capacity which is part of the protagonist's personality point in the opposite direction of Nussbaum's developmental outlook.

Rhys may thus be said to offer an alternative analysis of emotion. Her protagonist is able to analyse and articulate the difference between her own emotional "grammar" and society's, but her linguistic competence and social awareness do not lead to any change in her emotional life. In fact, the novel is engendered by the division between the vulnerable woman and "organised society" in terms of emotional "grammar". The result of this split is decline, depression and death. In the final scene, where Sasha rejects her gigolo friend yet nevertheless desperately hopes he will come back, another man enters the room – her dreaded ghostlike neighbour, the commercial traveller clad in his white dressing gown: "I look straight into his eyes and despise another poor devil of a human being for the last time. For the last time. … Then I put my arms round him and pull him down on to the bed, saying: 'Yes-yes-yes…'" (159).

These are the novel's last words. While most critics tend to interpret this scene as an epiphany, Sasha's "yes, yes, yes" being understood as a turning point and a yes to a new life, I find no basis for this interpretation. In an illuminating article, Rachel Bowlby writes: "But in the light of the double occurrences of 'he doesn't say anything' and 'for the last time', the triple 'yes' offers no sense of a positive iteration". But she does not take this view further to implicate the heroine's actual death (1992: 35). Even Ayako Muneuchi, who argues that at the end of the novel Sasha acts "from the position

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of death", interprets her welcome of the hotel neighbour in terms of a "resurrection", albeit not an optimistic one: "In the end, the role of a public woman is the only possible life that this theatrical, public, and voyeuristic space of the hotel has offered her" (2006: 139).

In my opinion the scene represents a culmination of the death images which run through the novel, from the Emily Dickinson poem which lends the novel its title and functions as the novel's epigram, welcoming the approaching night ("Good Morning, Midnight"), via references to suicide and drowning. The novel feeds on recurrent images of ghosts, quotes from Racine's *Phèdre* as well as from Billie Holiday's suicide song "Gloomy Sunday", to name but a few. Besides, adjectives like "narrow" and "cold" contribute to the atmosphere of decline and depression, and it becomes increasingly clear that the hotel room represents an amalgamation of inner and outer locations, and more importantly serves to blur the distinction between the material and the mental: "But much too strong – the room, the street, the thing in myself, oh, much too strong …" (108). By invoking Molly Bloom's yes, from James Joyce's *Ulysses*, Rhys does not give her heroine a new life, but lets her embrace death via the dreaded man in white, an obvious death symbol. Molly's acceptance is repeated, but the meaning is reversed. The return to Paris has turned out to be a last voyage and a farewell. The ending makes it clear that Sasha has come back for the last time, and been forced to accept the dark morality of her environment: no hope or change is possible for the damned and the drowning. The two stanzas of the Dickinson poem that function as an overture to the novel confirm this interpretation. It is night – and death – which comes back to greet her, subsequent to the day's – life's – rejection of her:

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Good Morning, Midnight!
I'm coming home,
Day got tired of me –
How could I of him?

Sunshine was a sweet place,
I liked to stay –
But Morn didn't want me – now –
So good night, Day![1]

Taken together, the many references to death imply that it is not, therefore, an emotional catharsis which takes place in the novel's ending, but rather the reverse: while life up till then has been an attempt to keep emotion at bay by controlling the environment, this system collapses at the end.

Rhys' novels confirm the view held by those who see erotic love as dangerous and as something close to a disease. Rhys seems to ally with what Nussbaum says in reference to Proust, that "this type of love can never be rendered morally acceptable, or even morally cooperative" (2001: 460), obliterating rather than helping compassion and concern for others. In short, erotic love disturbs ethics. Besides, in Rhys the disgust often connected with sexual love is embedded in a gendered vision: men are sexual eaters, while women are left hungry for love. The misogynist tendency in sexual love is presented as inherent in society's power structure, as sex and money are connected.

Good Morning, Midnight discloses the discrepancy be-

1 The poem quoted in *Good Morning, Midnight*, is slightly altered from the original (1862), whose two first stanzas run thus: "Good Morning – Midnight –/I'm coming Home –/Day – got tired of Me –/How could I – of Him?/Sunshine was a sweet place –/ I liked to stay – /But Morn – didn't want me – now –/So – Goodnight – Day!" (Dickinson [1970] 1986: 203).

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tween the individual's need for love and compassion, and society's favouring of indifference and success, epitomised in how Sasha's project of control inevitably fails when confronted with "organised society". It also seems to say that erotic love is not compatible with compassion, to the extent that erotic love is primarily connected with self-satisfaction, while compassion involves being able to take the adversary's view. It is thus a harsh world view that Rhys presents us with. To broaden the picture: in *After Leaving Mr Mackenzie* the necessity to perform a strict division between erotic love and compassion in order to be in control and keep up appearances is demonstrated through the perspective of Mr Mackenzie, who is the protagonist Julia's former lover and benefactor, but who looks back on his previous infatuation with her as an "insanity, for which he was not responsible" (1971:19). Mr Mackenzie embodies bourgeois society and its view on emotions: "The secret of life was never to go too far or too deep" (20):

> He had discovered that people who allow themselves to be blown about by the winds of emotion and impulse are always unhappy people, and in self-defence he had adopted a certain mental attitude, a certain code of morals and manners, from which he seldom departed. He did depart from it, but only when he was practically certain that nobody would know that he had done so. (18)

Julia, by contrast, he sees as "a female without the instinct of self-preservation" (20).

The difference between them is reflected and reenacted in their dealings with the city. While Mr Mackenzie moves between set locations, having fixed places for meals, drinks and meetings, Julia is drifting about, "blown about by the winds of emotion" (18). She is of course let down, yet not only by the unsympathetic Mr Mackenzie, but also, and in a

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way more cruelly, by the next man in her life, Mr Hornsfield. He does understand and sympathise with her, but he also understands, unlike her, that in order to control your life you have to keep emotions like compassion and pity at bay: "Once you started letting the instinct of pity degenerate from the general to the particular, life became absolutely impossible" (34). Mr Hornsfield realises that to pity someone in particular means to be responsible for them, in consequence of which he leaves Julia to stay in squalid hotel rooms and boarding houses while he himself withdraws to the safety of his book-lined home, the two settings epitomising two incompatible worlds. The result is that Julia, the woman with no instinct for self-preservation, ends in a state of poverty both in terms of money and emotions, unaffected by other people's misery. "And it was funny to end like that – where most sensible people start, indifferent and without any pity at all. Just saying: 'It's nothing to do with me. I've got my own troubles. It's nothing to do with me'" (136).

Concluding remarks

I started this article by suggesting that the protagonist of *Good Morning, Midnight* creates a programme for daily life, a "mapping" in terms of movement and actions – a system made to compensate for the invasion of unwanted memories and emotions. However, the map proves to be more fragile than anticipated, and prone to break down from the very start. In addition, the setting, including the social norms embedded in it, turns out to be stronger than the individual, and in the end breaks Sasha down. While *Good Morning, Midnight* has been my main example for demonstrating how emotions and urban settings are interwoven in Rhys' oeuvre, the same seems to be the case for her other contemporary novels, *After Leaving Mr Mackenzie* in particular. Both nov-

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els analyse the complex relation between emotional life and space by demonstrating the negative relation between the individual's possibility for change and the environment which determines her.

Emotions are not free, Rhys seems to say, they are entangled in social relations and settings which function as a sort of superstructure for the individual. The vulnerable individual finds herself unable to fit into society's emotional repertoire or "grammar", where emotional indifference, and the ability to hide your feelings are the founding pillars. Rhys' novels investigate the fragile relation between what one may label (individual) face and (social) mask. Her literary method discloses how emotions like love and compassion have lost their ethical relevance and meaning in a world where success equals self-sufficiency, and money and gender decide which emotions you are allowed to have. The idea of emotional indifference is recuperated in the city: cultivating social masks – masks which necessitate the right balance between the individual and her external world – is a way of surviving the harsh urban reality. In *Good Morning, Midnight*, the heroine's failure to acquire this balance constitutes her tragedy.

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A Political and Emotional Experience of Aesthetic Transcendence in Marguerite Duras' Film/Text *India Song*

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Artworks say what is more than the existing,
and they do this exclusively by making
a constellation of how it is, "Comment c'est".[1]
Th. W. Adorno: *Aesthetic Theory* (2007: 175)

The French writer and filmmaker Marguerite Duras is, like many artists of her generation, profoundly affected by the human catastrophes of the 20th century, and the major part of her literary and cinematic work may be seen as a way of coming to terms with the traumas of our culture, *e.g.* the experiences of colonialism, Nazism, World War II, Shoah and Hiroshima. Her writing is based on an attentiveness to

1 "Die Kunstwerke sagen, was mehr ist als das Seiende, einzig, indem sie zur Konstellation bringen, wie es ist, 'Comment c'est'" (Adorno 1977: 200-201).

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the atrocities that have gone along with the modernisation process, and, apparently, her intention is to produce a social awareness of what Walter Benjamin calls the barbaric reverse of civilisation[2] in her audience and make the reader or spectator morally sensitive as well. This she does by calling on his or her sentiments. As a modernist, Duras does not try to affect the reader through realistic narratives, or by appealing to recognition and identification with fictitious characters and their emotions, but rather by undermining the usual way of experiencing and thereby causing her audience to face the trauma of horror and torment. "Suffering conceptualized remains mute" (2007: 24), Adorno maintains in *Aesthetic Theory*, and to Duras, the only way of approaching the horror, which in itself surpasses everyday experience, is to create an emotional shock of transcending the limits of cognition, meaning and rationality and of catching a glimpse of the abyss of *non-sense*. So, the shock is a precondition for a political or historical insight.

Memory plays an essential part in making the audience acknowledge the barbaric reverse of modern history, and, consequently, most of Duras' texts and films deal with questions of recalling, reiterating, destroying, and (re)constructing images of the past. To her, the artwork is in itself an act of memory, and as such recollection is inscribed in an aesthetic sphere and hence related to aesthetic categories such as the beautiful and the sublime – and transcendence. For that reason, the literary or cinematic memory act may allow the reader or audience to approach suffering and experience an emotional insight into the traumatic past of Western culture.

In this essay, I will take a closer look at the film and text *India Song* to examine how Duras deals with aesthetic tran-

2 Cf. the VIIth thesis on the philosophy of history (Benjamin 1974: 696).

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scendence, and its emotional impact, as an important aspect of the memory process and as a means of confronting suffering and death. The possibility of disrupting ordinary life and ways of thinking in order to approach traumatic experiences is the main concern of the film, both thematically and when it comes to the film itself as an artwork, and in its relation to the audience.

India Song

The historical setting and implied topic of *India Song* are imperialism and the European colonisation of India. The film belongs to the so-called India cycle, which includes three novels and three films that Duras wrote and made between 1964 and 1976. All of them revolve around two women, Lol Valérie Stein and Anne-Marie Stretter, and the same figures, themes and incidents circulate between the texts and films in intertextual recurrences. *India Song* was originally commissioned as a play for Britain's National Theatre in 1973, and was made into a film that premiered at the 1975 Cannes Film Festival. It is based primarily on the novel *Le Vice-consul* from 1966. However, it is not an adaptation, but more like a reminiscence of the novel, or a film/text trying to remember what happened in the book. The action takes place in a colonial setting of European diplomats in India in the 1930's, and the main character, Anne-Marie Stretter, is married to the French ambassador. The film covers the two last days of her life and depicts a reception at the embassy and a trip she takes with her lovers to an island in the estuary of the Ganges the following day. Although the location is India, we only hear about the Europeans, who spend their lives in luxury, living in a kind of golden ghetto, behind high fences, and secluded from the anonymous masses of poor Indians. There is no *Empire writes back* in this book/film. We are

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caught within a colonial perspective, and from that viewpoint the Indians are not individualised human beings, but a mass of bodies suffering from hunger, death and leprosy. At the same time, however, Duras tries to show how the horror of death and misery surrounding the embassy is an integrated part of colonial life and seeps into the existence of the Europeans, although they try to keep it out. Mentally, their life resembles the non-life and numbness of the poor masses of India. Besides, two of the characters belonging to the diplomatic circles, Anne-Marie Stretter herself and the vice-consul of Lahore, epitomise an opening towards the outside: the wife of the ambassador due to her promiscuity and capacity for boundless love, and because she is "a leper, of the heart" (1992: 130),[3] and is associated with a beggar woman roaming around in the vicinity of the embassy; the vice-consul because he has shot at the lepers in the gardens of Shalimar, an insane act which, nonetheless, makes the horror surface by imitating the violence inherent in colonialism. Her love and empathy and his madness are completely inexplicable to the diplomatic community, and hence the two main characters embody a transgression and a crack of absolute *non-sense* and insanity in the conventional life of the diplomats. Their behaviour calls forth a feeling of unease and anxiety in the European community, but represents, nevertheless, a possibility for the whites to get a glimpse of the repressed horrors of their culture.

The film *India Song* is, as intimated above, an effort, on the part of Duras, to create a similar crack in the everyday experience of her audience, enabling us not to know about the evils of colonialism and imperialism (we already know about them), but to sense them at a different mental level, so

3 "Une lèpre, du cœur" (1973: 128).

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to speak, and to recognise them emotionally as a fundamental part of our lives and of modern society. So Duras makes use of a series of avant-garde procedures in order to pull the spectator out of his normal appreciation and into the universe of the film. The opening is paradigmatic of this endeavour to make us feel exiled and deprived of ordinary frames of cognition. It shows a sunset in a tropical region, which means that the sun goes down much more quickly than we are used to, but still the sequence feels very long, since the image does not move or change until the sun has completely disappeared. On the soundtrack we hear the beggar woman singing a song from Savannahket and babbling words in a language we do not know. The scene is extremely beautiful, but also painfully static; there is no telling scenery, characters or meanings to help us understand. In the book *India Song* Duras describes another opening, but she seeks the same effect of slowness and standstill. Based on what she writes in the book, the film is supposed to start with a dark screen, and we are meant to hear the melody "India Song", a tune from between the two wars, played several times at the piano, before the darkness begins to dissipate. Duras writes: "It is played right through, to cover the time – always long – that it takes the audience, or the reader, to emerge from the ordinary world they are in when the perfomance, or the book, begins" (1992: 122).[4] With this long drawn-out introduction she puts the spectator into another sphere of awareness and forces him to slow down and adjust to the rhythm of the film, thus making him sensitive to the memory process he is going to take part in.

After the prelude, we see remnants of what was told in *Le Vice-consul*, and the images of the film follow the "action"

4 "Il est joué tout entier et occupe ainsi le temps – toujours long – qu'il faut au spectateur, au lecteur, pour sortir de l'endroit commun où il se trouve quand commence le spectacle, la lecture" (1973: 13).

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of the novel, but reduced to a minimum, as if the story has fallen into pieces. At the same time we hear four voices talking about Anne-Marie Stretter and the vice-consul in India, but they also speak of what happened earlier, the passionate encounter with her great love Michael Richardson in particular, which was narrated in the first book of the cycle, *Le ravissement de Lol V. Stein*. These voices are the narrators of the film. They are disembodied and anonymous, we don't know who they are or where they are, but it is clear that they do not know the persons involved and that they were not present at the time of the alleged scandalous actions. Even so, they endeavour to remember something that happened long ago, in the 1930's.

In a subtle way, the voices figure as representatives of the spectators, activating them and pulling them into the memory process. At the end of the opening scene of the film, while we hear the beggar woman and watch the sunset, two of the voices start asking questions. It is as if they are sitting in the movie theatre together with us talking about what we and they see and hear. The first time Anne-Marie Stretter is in the picture, or rather: a photograph of a woman, one of the voices says: "Anne-Marie Stretter..." (1992: 123) as if it discovers her at the same time as we do. And when we hear distant laughter, sitar music and fishermen, the other voice pronounces: "Listen... Ganges fishermen... Musicians..." (131).[5] The voices merge with the spectators, and the mental space where the act of remembrance takes place might just as well be ours. They represent our "'internal reading' voice" (139)[6] and articulate a shared endeavour to remember and grasp the story of the vice-consul and the woman of the Ganges. As Duras writes in the introduction to the text, the

5 "Écoutez... Des pêcheurs du Gange... Des musiciens..." (1973: 38).
6 "sa voix 'de lecture interne'" (1973: 57).

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narrative technique "made it possible to let the narrative be forgotten and put at the disposal of memories other than that of the author [...]" (120).[7] By way of the voices off, she makes the film into a mental space of remembrance, occurring in the minds of the spectators or readers. This impression is strengthened by the way the camera pans or glides inside and outside the embassy building, as if the objective were our eyes looking around. As a result, the act of memory becomes itself a new event occurring when we watch the film. And this new event resembles the past incidents, since the recollection, like the passion of Anne-Marie Stretter and the madness of the vice-consul, also results in a disruption of the ordinary way of sensing and comprehending. We are ravished, captivated, exiled and lost, just like Lol when she unexpectedly witnessed the excessive love of Anne-Marie Stretter and Michael Richardson. So remembering the events from colonial India implies, in *India Song*, an experience of transcendence and a sensation of apprehension and bewilderment accompanying it.

In Duras transcendence does not give access to some metaphysical or divine absolute, but is immanent and more related to Benjamin's notion of *profane illumination*. She is here in line with a tendency in early modernism, as many literary works of the 20th century prolong the metaphysical heritage of romanticism in a secular form. They are faithful to metaphysics *im Augenblick ihres Sturzes* (1966: 400), "at the time of its fall" (2007: 408), as Adorno puts it. The English philosopher Simon Critchley writes in his book on Wallace Stevens (2005) that modern poetry transfigures ordinary things by elevating them into a kind of higher sphere. Poetry relates

7 "... a permis de faire basculer le récit dans l'oubli pour le laisser à la disposition d'autres mémoires que celle de l'auteur [...]" (1973: 10).

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to the prosaic world, and sticks to real life, but it also tries to enchant and deepen reality through the imagination. So, according to Critchley, modern poetry prolongs the romantic consecration of art, but simultaneously it is profoundly realistic. “As such, poetry is an elevator, an enlargement of life”, he writes by referring to Stevens. “But what is essential is that poetry should produce this elevation ‘in words free of mysticism’ [...], in words that do not purport to any intuition of a transcendent reality [...]” (2005: 43). Poetry gives rise to a sanctification of things, minus transcendence; it is a sort of immanent transcendence. Adorno, on his part, affirms that artworks are enigmas, not mysteries, because they give an appearance or impression of transcendence, while at the same time they interrupt or cut off the relation to the absolute and “deny what they would actually like to be” (2007: 167).[8] Immanent transcendence is related to basic aesthetic notions such as aura, epiphany and the sublime, all of them giving rise to a feeling of going beyond everyday sensations and emotions. Aesthetic experience involves an experience of a “more”, of something exceeding the material or physical aspect of things, and this “more” may provoke a sense of delight, bliss or horror.

In *India Song* the immanent transcendence is dual. It resembles the negative aspect of the sublime, the one foregrounded by Lyotard, *i.e.* the terrifying confrontation with the incomprehensible and the abyss of nothingness. But it also has a more positive aspect, relating more to beauty and the concept of *aura*, as an appearance/illusion or *Schein* of the absolute. For that reason there is a double movement in *India Song*:

8 “The enigma of artworks is their fracturedness [Abgebrochensein]. If transcendence were present in them, they would be mysteries, not enigmas; they are enigmas because, through their fracturedness, they deny what they would actually like to be” (Adorno 2007: 167).

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destruction and illumination. On the one hand, Duras undermines meaning and narrative coherence in the film, hence confronting the spectator with the abyss of *non-sense*. On the other hand, this is counteracted by a kind of beauty that invades the film and produces a comforting sense of elevation in the spectator. The dual emotional effect of anxiety and delight is brought about by Duras' way of dealing with remembrance.

Recalling the past

In the course of the film it becomes clear that the memory act is bewildering, because recalling past events, paradoxically, also involves ruining and forgetting them. As mentioned previously, the darkness gradually dissipates in the opening scene described in the book, and two of the voices start talking. In a way, they pull the dead out of oblivion. Very slowly a big Indian residence can be distinguished, clearly belonging to Europeans: furniture, curtains, a piano, a park and a fan in the ceiling. It takes a long time before we can see the people in the room, and when we do, they blend with the objects. In the book Duras depicts this in the following way: "As the light grows we see, set in this colonial decor, presences. There were people there all the time" (1992: 123).[9] They are inserted into the decor, and come out of it little by little. The sentence in italics (cf. the French original) expresses a sort of surprise, as if it puts into words the impression we as spectators have when we become aware of human beings in the interior. The figures are lying or sitting without stirring. "The three people

9 "Avec la lumière grandissante on découvre – serties dans le décor colonial – des présences. *Il y avait des gens*" (1973: 16).

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seem struck by a death stillness", Duras writes (1992: 123).[10] Simultaneously, the voices say that Anne-Marie Stretter died in India and is buried in the English cemetery. When the figures start moving, it is as if they come out of death: "The woman in black and the man sitting near her begin to stir. Emerge from death" (124).[11] The man and the woman begin to dance, and gradually the voices start to remember.

Nevertheless, the film simultaneously makes it quite clear that the characters are dead and cannot be resuscitated and become alive again. The persons appearing on the screen lack vivacity and seem lethargic or indolent, and their absence is materialised in gestures and attitudes. The non-synchronic relation between the image and the soundtrack creates a similar effect. A gap between what we hear and what we watch pervades almost all of the film, and does not only concern the anonymous narrators, whom we never see. In the long sequence from the reception we can hear bits and pieces of the dialogue between guests who are part of the scene, but the dialogue sound is outside the frame of the image. Even when the main characters appearing in the image speak, there is a disparity between words and image. We can see Anne-Marie Stretter dancing with a young attaché and the vice-consul, and we can hear them talk, but they do not move their lips. It is as if their speech comes from some other place. Duras explains that she wanted the audience to see Anne-Marie Stretter and the two men and hear them talk, but she did not want the story to come alive again, *faire revivre l'histoire* (Duras 1975: 19). So the characters are more like ghosts, dead and alive at the same

10 "Les trois personnes sont comme atteintes d'une immobilité mortelle" (1973: 17).

11 "La femme habillée de noir et l'homme qui est assis près d'elle se mettent à bouger. Sortent ainsi de la mort" (1973: 18).

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time, existing in an afterlife in our memory, and the events of the past remain ungraspable and lost forever.

Likewise, the representation of space in the film emphasises the lack of reality when the events are transferred into an imaginary room of recollection. In the centre of the longest sequence of the film, the reception at the embassy, is placed a big mirror. We see the main characters moving into and out of the picture, and of the mirror, but we do not always know if we are looking at the real person or at the reflection in the mirror. Sometimes we see both at the same time. The result is that the film not only shows pictures of something, but also reflection mechanisms referring to other pictures: a classical meta-problem. Ropars-Wuilleumier writes that if the novel is *un miroir que l'on promène le long d'un chemin* – a mirror that one carries along a road (Stendhal) – then *India Song* makes this road uncertain by showing the mirror itself (1979: 10). Leslie Hill maintains that the mirrors in *India Song* stage the events as if they happened right in front of our eyes, but they also imply an absence of what is embodied and make it doubtful whether the story really happened, or if it is envisioned merely in our memory (Hill 1993: 105). These avant-garde techniques, refuting the realistic illusion, inscribe death and absence in the memory image and exhibit the distance between life and its return as reminiscence. Reconstructing past events also means a destruction of them, and they slip out of the grasp of memory. The use of the narrating voices adds to this sense of something escaping recollection.

The voices

In the first part of *India Song* two young girls speak, and they recall very little of what happened, while at the end of the reception, in the second part, two other voices supplement them and gradually take over the narration. They are

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older and remember more; Dionys Mascolo and Marguerite Duras herself read their voices. But nobody recalls the entire story. The narration is deficient, the voices have a "mémoire détruite" (Duras 1973: 17),[12] a damaged memory. What they relate are only "scraps of memory"(1992: 133),[13] and so the voices fail to reconstruct the past. They only tell bits and pieces, commenting on what we see and hear, often in the form of questions and answers. I'll give one example.

At the beginning of the film, when Anne-Marie Stretter and Michael Richardson are shown dancing, the voices just barely remember:

Voice 1: The French embassy in India…
Voice 2: Yes.
[*Pause*]
Voice 1: That murmur? The Ganges?
Voice 2: Yes.
[*Pause*]
Voice 1: That light?
Voice 2: The monsoon.
Voice 1: …no wind…
Voice 2: …it will break over Bengal…
Voice 1: The dust?
Voice 2: The middle of Calcutta.
[*Silence*]
Voice 1: Isn't there a smell of flowers?
Voice 2: Leprosy

(1992: 124).[14]

12 This has not been translated in the English version. It simply says: "Their memory" (1992: 123).
13 "débris de mémoire" (1973: 40).
14 "VOIX 1: L'Ambassade de France aux Indes…/VOIX 2: Oui./VOIX 1: Cette rumeur, le Gange…?/VOIX 2: Oui./*Temps*./VOIX 1: Cette lumière?/VOIX 2: La mousson./VOIX 1: …aucun vent…/

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The use of dialogue allows Duras to develop a narrative technique which destabilises the authority of the narration and creates what Susan Cohen calls a *discourse of hesitation* (1993: 154). The voices recall a story that has already been told in *Le ravissement de Lol V. Stein* and *Le Vice-consul*, and most of the linguistic material is derived from the two novels, but fragmented, full of blanks and silences, and cut down to a minimum. So it is not only the story that is lost in the reconstruction, but also the narration, since it consists of amputated quotations from the novels. The voices in the passage above refer to the French embassy and Calcutta in *Le Vice-consul*. We may guess a residence near the Ganges, surrounded by misery, leprosy, and the heat during the monsoon, but the voices suggest that something has crumbled into dust, when one of them asks: "…The dust?", and the other one answers: "The middle of Calcutta" as if Calcutta, the centre of the horror to be remembered, is destroyed, and only dust remains. In this manner, the narration is invaded by doubts, pauses and ignorance, and the past events slip out of the grasp of the voices. They pull the story out of oblivion, but their act of remembrance causes simultaneously its destruction. As a reminiscence of *Le Vice-consul* and *Le ravissement de Lol V. Stein*, *India Song* is a ruin.

So, the failure of memory to let the story come alive again is taken literally in the lifeless images of the film, the non-synchrony between image and sound, and the fragmented narration. This failure shows that recollection in *India Song* is interwoven with the question of transcendence. The film and our "internal reading" are indeed trying to remember some-

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VOIX 2: (*continue*) …elle va crever vers le Bengale…/VOIX 1: …Cette poussière…?/VOIX 2: Calcutta central./*Silence.*/VOIX 1: Il y a comme une odeur de fleur…?/VOIX 2: LA LEPRE./*Silence*"
(1973: 18-19).

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thing that escapes comprehension and rational discourse, as the extreme experiences of madness, horror, and the boundless love embodied by Anne-Marie Stretter cannot be verbalised or conceptualised. Duras' answer to this impossibility is a mutilated and fragmented rendering of the past, which undermines meaningful communication, while at the same time it hints at the horror. But precisely for that reason, it represents a possibility of approaching death and the torment of India, in spite of the muteness of suffering. In this manner, she tries to make the spectator emotionally attentive to the terror and barbarism inherent in Western civilisation.

Reenacting the past

Duras writes in the introduction to the text that the story is put at the disposal of other memories than that of the author, and these are "memories which might remember, in the same way, any other love story. Memories that distort. That create" (1992: 120).[15] As indicated above, the voices' ignorance contributes to the destruction of the original story about Lol, Anne-Marie Stretter, Michael Richardson and the vice-consul; but at the same time their recollection is productive. The events of the past move into other regions and minds, so that something similar to the original story might circulate in new versions. Hence, the love affair is, in *India Song,* set free from the dance in S. Thala and the horror of India in the 1930's, and is transported to the film and the voices and reenacted in their memory process. And so we, as spectators, not only take part in the recollection and oblivion of the past, but also get emotionally involved

15 "[...] mémoires qui *se souviendraient* pareillement à n'importe quelle autre histoire d'amour. Mémoires déformantes, créatives" (1973: 10).

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in what happens to and between the voices when they seek to remember the story.

The narrators are not indifferent to the events they talk about; all of them are deeply concerned, but they are not affected in the same way. "Voice 1 is consumed with its passion for Anne-Marie Stretter. Voice 2 is consumed with its passion for Voice 1" (1992: 121),[16] Duras writes in the text. The word *brûler* (consume, burn) indicates that the voices are exposed to the same peril as the persons in the love story: they are also consumed by passion. Consequently, both voices are in danger and threatened by insanity and loss of linguistic control. They are "tinged with madness" (1992: 121),[17] when they talk they are "in a state of transport, of delirium" (1992: 121),[18] and in the course of the film they gradually fall silent and vanish. The two older voices react differently to the story. They are not struck by madness, but voice 3 is also at risk when hearing about the lovers of the Ganges: "For Voice 3 is exposed to the danger, not of madness, like Voice 1, but of suffering"(1992: 121).[19] This is the same kind of danger Anne-Marie Stretter is exposed to because she is receptive to the horror of India and to the mortal gaze of the vice-consul. For this reason, voice 4 is worried and cautious when relating the story.

As a result, the most important thematic element of the India cycle, the transcending experience of passion and anguish, reappears on the textual level. The voices not only reconstruct fragments of the past: desire and suffering are also restaged in the act of recollection. Put together the four voices represent

16 "La voix 1 se brûle à l'histoire d'Anne-Marie Stretter. Et la voix 2 se brûle à la passion pour la voix 1" (1973: 11).
17 "atteintes de folie" (1973: 11).
18 "Elles délirent la plupart du temps" (1973: 11).
19 "La voix 3 est en effet exposée au danger – non pas de la folie comme voix 1 – mais de la souffrance" (1973: 106).

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two aspects of linguistic communication: meaning-production and the undermining of significant language, in the form of madness or silence. Anne-Marie Stretter's promiscuity and the madness of the vice-consul disturb the immobility of life and open an abyss within the sheltered world of the Europeans by reflecting or pointing at the horror of India. The disruption of madness in the voices has a similar effect on the narration of the story. Since Duras has put the voices in the darkness with us, the spectators, what happens to them affects us as well, the effect being a momentary feeling of transcendence, which creates gaps in our usual linguistic handling of the world. The emotional effect is a frightening experience of bewilderment and loss.

As stated above, the concept of immanent transcendence is related to the aesthetic notions of aura and the sublime, and the experience of transcendence produced by *India Song* implies the activation of both. So far, I have primarily considered the darker side of transcendence, the fear-provoking sense of losing conceptual and linguistic control and of being confronted with horror and the loss of meaning. Duras is clearly inspired by both Bataille and Blanchot, and by the idea of art as a transgression of regular life and communicative language. More importantly, however, void and effacement in *India Song* are linked to a certain historical and social setting, European colonialism and the poverty of India produced by imperialism. Consequently, she is also in line with Adorno's view that the experience of silence and nothingness in works of art is historically determined and may offer a potential for emotional responsiveness to the horror and the barbaric reverse of civilisation. By telling a story about European diplomats in India in the 1930's and creating an aesthetic experience of transcendence in the spectator through the act of memory, Duras makes us remember and recognise repressed aspects of our culture and history. This is not pri-

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marily a question of knowing about it intellectually, but of experiencing it on a deeper emotional level. In this manner, Duras keeps the wound open through the aesthetic experience of transcendence. It is combined with social consciousness and historical insight, yet it is not simply sentimental, but also opens a room for thought and recognition. In that sense, what one might call the negative aspect of transcendence is joined by a constructive aspect as well. It implies a potential for historical awareness and for actually facing *comment c'est,* "*how* it is", as Adorno puts it with reference to the title of Beckett's poetic novel (Adorno 2007: 175). Eventually, acknowledging the state of affairs might bring hope.

However, this involves a danger, the same mortal peril as the two young voices of the film are exposed to. According to Julia Kristeva, reading Duras is a risky business, as she takes us too close to the void of death, trauma, and melancholy. Nothing in her writing or films can save us from what Kristeva calls *la maladie de la douleur*, the malady of grief: no redemption, no catharsis and no sonorous word-music can compensate for the absence of meaning as in Mallarmé and Joyce, she declares (1989: 222). Duras merely offers *une esthétique de la maladresse*, an aesthetics of awkwardness, and a negative form of transcendence leading us into the abyss of nothingness. Nevertheless, there is, in my view, more to the experience of transcendence in *India Song,* since it in fact includes, contrary to Kristeva's allegations, a more uplifting aspect too, closer to beauty and the notion of aura, understood as a profane experience of an indefinable "more".

The song

In the India cycle, where sonority and music play an important part, both thematically and textually, transcendence is linked to audible qualities. Many critics emphasise the sig-

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nificance of the gaze in Duras, particularly in *Le ravissement de Lol V. Stein*, which circles around a kind of voyeurism. Lol wants to see the couple Anne-Marie Stretter and Michael Richardson and make their excessive passion visible. But she does not succeed, because being affected by love in a Durasian sense entails leaving the region of the visible and comprehensible. Lol can only know something about the frozenness of life and when it is disrupted, but she cannot envisage the unknown that the disruption might lead to. But perhaps she can hear something? We are told that she is able to hear a fissure in the voice of her friend Tatiana, and if we take a closer look, it becomes clear that the sense of hearing, after all, is privileged in Duras' universe, because it may capture what escapes vision, not conceptually, but vaguely, and by appealing to the spectator's sense of beauty.

In the India cycle as a whole there is a development from sight and visibility to hearing and listening. The filmmaker Duras seems to neglect the image in favour of the sound. As mentioned above, the images are often static and lack vivacity; the sounds, however, are more vivid. When the motionless figures on the screen look more dead than alive, we can hear noise from fishermen, music from sitars or from the surf and the birds in the estuary of the Ganges. In the reception scene the music and the voices of the guests give a lively impression compared to the almost paralysed figures in the picture. Where the image expresses death and immobility, the sound utters life and movement. The imaginary room of recollection contains both.

The same goes for the voices. Duras describes them as soft and refreshing: "The voices are like breaths of coolness, gentle murmurs" (1992: 132),[20] they exhale something fresh

20 "Les voix sont comme des fraîches exhalaisons, des murmures très doux" (1973: 40).

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and enlivening. This they do primarily by virtue of the sound and sonority. The story they tell is a ruin, their speech is fragmented and approaches silence, but at the same time the voices vibrate with vividness and *sing* the legend of Anne-Marie Stretter:

> The voices, interwoven, in a climax of sweetness, are about to sing the legend of ANNE-MARIE STRETTER. A slow recitative made up of scraps of memory. Out of it, every so often, a phrase emerges, intact, from oblivion (1992: 132).[21]

All the texts in the India cycle show signs of unnatural and sophisticated language whose qualities are nonetheless unquestionably musical. Repetitions, assonance, alliteration, and rhymes accentuate the sonority, and together with a sometimes unusual rhythm and syntax (what Kristeva calls the awkwardness of Duras), this creates an elaborated and artificial language similar to the literary style of the Bible. Susan Cohen (1993: 200) writes that Duras' prose is an echo of oral myths and legends, which were often sung or recited. Her idiom is sometimes closer to Racine and religious ceremonies than to a more natural intonation and way of speaking. One of the voices in *India Song* says that Anne-Marie Stretter is *une chrétienne sans Dieu*, a Christian without God, and so is the text or the film itself. It bears a resemblance to holy writing and recital, and it inspires a sense of transcendence and an uplifting "more". But it is a secular transcendence without a heavenly above, perhaps closer to the enigmatic elusiveness that Valéry indicates when he states that: "Beauty

21 "Les voix entrelacées, d'une douceur culminante, vont chanter la légende d'Anne-Marie Stretter. Récit très lent, mélopée faite de débris de mémoire, et au cours de laquelle, parfois, une phrase émergera, intacte, de l'oubli" (1973: 40).

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may require the servile imitation of what is indefinable in things"(1984: 681).[22] Therefore, what Kristeva describes as a clumsy aesthetics in Duras is in fact combined with aura and poetic qualities.

India Song brings this musical aspect a step further, since the film, as its title suggests, is itself a song: it sings about the lovers of the Ganges and the horror of India, and as a work of art it is permeated by music, sounds and a certain rhythm. All the movements in the film, both those of the characters and of the camera, participate in a sophisticated choreography, and the figures move in and out of the image like ballet dancers. The sense of hearing appears to have been more important than vision for the way the film has been edited. The music determines the tempo and atmosphere of the entire film. Duras says herself that the choreography is part of a technique of preventing naturalism (1975: 19). But it is also a reiteration of the dance in S. Thala as represented in *Le ravissement de Lol V. Stein*. Not only is Anne-Marie Stretter's dancing with Michel Richardson a pale revival of the moment of passion, but through its rhythm and choreography the whole film constitutes a reappearance of the lovers' original dance. It is constructed by way of numerous repetitions; again and again we see different figures passing through the image dancing: Anne-Marie Stretter with the young attaché, Michael Richardson or the vice-consul. Almost identical scenes recur; the persons move slowly through the embassy building or the park. "India Song", "Heure exquise" and Beethoven's "14th variation on a Theme by Diabelli" are played over and over again, we hear the cries and the song of the beggar woman at regular intervals, and many lines are repeated by the voices.

22 "Le beau exige peut-être l'imitation servile de ce qui est indéfinissable dans les choses". The English translation is taken from Walter Benjamin (2006: 287).

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Past events reappear in the imaginary room of memory, where they are deformed, disfigured and almost impossible to recognise, but at the same time they persevere, and the film or the song breathes a kind of life into them. "It is in the revival of time through the imaginary that life recovers its breath", Duras declares (quoted from Marini 1985: 12).[23]

So *India Song* does not only try to recall the dancers of S. Thala, but is in itself a dancing reminiscence of them. Paul Valéry writes that dancing rejects "the ordinary state of things" and produces "the idea of another state, an extraordinary state" (1980: 1396).[24] When dancing, the body breaks out of its daily activities and is released from the purposes of practical life. According to Valéry, walking is the prose of human motion, (1397);[25] the body is used for a purpose, while in the dance it does not go anywhere yet has a physical presence while being integrated into musical patterns: "To start pronouncing poetry is to enter a verbal dance" (1400),[26] he asserts, inspired by Malherbe's famous dictum. Similar ideas are at work in the India cycle. Music and bodies converge in the dance, and dancing becomes for that reason a poetic emblem of how both passion and horror, which are shut out of social life and ordinary experience, may live on in the rhythm and music of *India Song*.

Hence, in my view, the alleged awkwardness of Duras' writing, her dangerous *esthétique de la maladresse*, is blended with a musicality and a sense of the extraordinary. For that reason transcendence in *India Song* is twofold. On the one

23 "C'est dans la reprise des temps par l'imaginaire que le souffle est rendu à la vie" (transl. by Jon Haarberg).

24 "l'état ordinaire des choses"; "crée aux esprits l'idée d'un autre état, d'un état exceptionnel" (my transl.).

25 "la marche, cette prose du mouvement humain" (my transl.).

26 "Commencer à dire des vers, c'est entrer dans la danse verbale" (my transl.).

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hand, it possesses an alarming aspect hinting at death and nothingness, yet making it possible for the spectator to confront the unbearable reverse of Western culture. On the other hand, the destructive impulse is intertwined with aesthetic beauty which has a soothing emotional effect and makes the confrontation tolerable. So when Duras invites the spectator into her film and the memory work of the India cycle, she incites him or her to take part in a dual experience of transcendence: both a political recognition of the abyss of horror, and a sense of beauty or of an aura, which somehow makes the recollection endurable. It is, however, almost impossible to distinguish the one from the other; as Blanchot puts it, describing another novel by Duras, *Détruire dit-elle*: "It is not only music (beauty) that reveals itself as destroyed and yet reborn: it is, more mysteriously, *destruction as music*, to which we are present and in which we take part" (1997: 116).[27] Hence, the immanent transcendence in *India Song* may be considered a response to Adorno's statement in the epigraph of my essay: by making a constellation of how it is, *comment c'est*, the film says something more than what merely exists (*das Seiende*). And by doing so, the film creates an emotional gap in our ordinary comprehension and makes us sensitive to the reverse side of our culture, while at the same time it saves us from the void of total *non-sense* and insanity.

27 "Ce n'est pas seulement la musique (la beauté) qui s'annonce comme détruite et cependant renaissante: c'est plus mystérieusement, à la *destruction comme musique* que nous assistons et prenons part" (Blanchot 1985: 135).

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“Labour of Love”: The Emotional Turn in R.M. Rilke’s *Die Aufzeichnungen des Malte Laurids Brigge*

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In a poem from 1914, appropriately called “Die Wendung” (“The Turn”), Rilke sums up, with the clarity of hindsight, the changes his poetry underwent during his deep personal and poetological crisis during the years between 1906 and 1912. His poetry had until about 1907 concentrated on a minute exploration of poetic perception. At some point, however, he starts expressing doubts about this poetics. This is what he writes in “Die Wendung”:

Denn des Anschauns, siehe, ist eine Grenze.
Und die geschautere Welt
Will in der Liebe gedeihen.

Werk des Gesichts ist getan
Tue nun Herz-Werk.[1]
(Rilke II: 82)

1 “For to watching, you see, there is a limit. / And the world that’s looked at / wants to thrive in love. The work of the eyes/the face

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These lines state what Rilke had to change: the sole focus on seeing, seeing with the eyes, had to give way to a more comprehensive mode of perception based on the human heart. The world, Rilke contends, wants to "thrive in love". From 1907 onwards Rilke's work gives an ever-increasing priority to the concepts of love, heart, feeling and emotion ("Gefühl"). These terms all point to and are summed up by the imperative in "Die Wendung": to "do the work of the heart". As in virtually the whole of cultural history, the heart in Rilke is the seat of the deepest emotions of the human being. Whether the meaning of the word "Herz-Werk" is the work that the heart urges one to do, or a work in which the heart and all that it stands for has the priority, the imperative implies nothing short of installing the heart as the foundation of perception, epistemology and thus poetics: the heart is to be the ground on which both understanding and poetic creation must be based. Rilke claims that his former relationship with the objects was based on intellect rather than emotion, on naming and hierarchic categorisation rather than on love and passion, solidarity and community with the world. Rilke realises that he has touched the limit ("die Grenze") of his poetics: his eyes have not seen all there is to see; and therefore his vision has to change. From now on Rilke seeks to transform the merely optical – intellectual, *i.e.* distanced – perception to one based on "the life of the feelings" ("das Leben der Gefühle"; Rilke VI: 999). He wants to engage in what he terms "Herz-Werk", or indeed "labour of love" ("Arbeit der Liebe").

One of the earliest expressions of this shift in his poetics is found in Rilke's novel *Die Aufzeichnungen des Malte Laurids*

[in Rilke "Gesicht" refers both to face and eyes] has been done, / now do the work of the heart". All translations are, unless otherwise stated, my own. For the few quotations of poetry I quote the original in the main text, translations into English in the footnotes. For prose the procedure is the opposite.

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Brigge (1910).[2] In this bewildering assembly of lyrical prose Rilke documents the existential turmoils which this change in poetics caused him. Malte, Rilke's alter ego, undergoes a host of trials in his attempt to develop new modes of seeing and feeling. In this article I will outline what is at stake in this shift of perspective in what I term Rilke's emotional turn. Emphasis will be put on Rilke's epistemology of the heart. Most attention will be given to Rilke's concept of the "great lovers", since they embody the emotional ideal. For these lovers love has to do with something both mental and sensual. Indeed, Rilke's epistemology of "Gefühl" creates a relation of body and mind, tactility and the thoughts and mental activities.[3] This relation is so deep that there is even a link between the heart itself and the *hand*. Together these form a principle that ultimately, Rilke believes, could be the basis of a new vision of being in which emotional and corporeal closeness and interconnectedness between human beings, and between human beings and objects, will replace the existing order.

2 A strange assembly of diary, memoirs and lyrical prose – there are 71 notes – this work defies categorisation (Rilke on one occasion referred to it as his "Prosabuch"); nevertheless I refer to it as a novel. It represented a constant problem to Rilke, who started it in 1906 and unable to see where he was heading, completed it only in 1910. During this time the poetry of Rilke underwent considerable alterations. As a result *Malte* is a strange and seemingly incoherent patch-work of episodes and recollections that in sum bears all the hallmarks of being of a key-work in the Modernist dissolution of the symbolical form of the *Bildungsroman* and its relatively firm organisation of events. There is a lot of research on this (Warning 2003; Emrich 1960: 182; Emmel 1975: 223; Engelbrecht 1984). Even though some of the passages obviously deal with experiences that could be organised on a temporal axis, it is not possible to reconstruct a line of gradual and successive development.

3 Unlike the English word 'emotion', the German "Gefühl" means both emotion and sensation, and encompasses physical as well as mental expressivity.

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i. The emotional turn – Rilke and Malte in Paris

Three years before finishing *Malte*, Rilke writes a letter to his wife in which he informs her about a major breakthrough in his aesthetic outlook, and his thoughts about the novel he is struggling to complete. It is one of the letters in which Rilke deals with the enormous impact the study of the paintings by Paul Cézanne had on him. The painter, he says, exposed "the ultimate possibility of love" ("die äußerste Liebesmöglichkeit"; Rilke 1983: 51). Cézanne, Rilke says, is important in the development of his programme of "sachliches Sagen", which denotes his attempt to represent objects in a non-objectifying and non-instrumental way. "Sachliches Sagen" is a motto which covers the poetic endeavours of all these years, but in this letter Rilke goes further by glossing it as an ethics of love which is converted into an artistic principle. Rilke is increasingly aware that in conventional perception things are subsumed under pre-arranged and pre-governed systems that ultimately imply the dominance of the viewer over the viewed. In Cézanne's paintings Rilke finds expressed a "love that has persevered [bestanden hat]"[4] for the details of everyday life, the banal as well as the ugly ones, a "devotion/

4 "Behind [hinter] this devotion/abandon [Hingabe] begins, with the small things first, the holiness: the simple life of a love that has persevered [bestanden hat], that without priding itself with it approaches everything [zu allem tritt], unaccompanied, inconspicuous, without a word. The real work, the plethora of tasks, everything only begins behind [hinter] this perseverance [Bestehen]." "Hinter dieser Hingabe beginnt, mit Kleinem zunächst, die Heiligkeit: das einfache Leben einer Liebe, die bestanden hat, die ohne sich dessen je zu rühmen, zu allem tritt, unbegleitet, unauffällig, wortlos. Die eigentliche Arbeit, die Fülle der Aufgaben, alles fängt erst hinter diesem Bestehen an [...]" (Rilke 1993: 51). Rilke's idiosyncratic language often resists translation: "Bestehen" here alludes to a conundrum of different meanings: to pass (a test), to persist and to persevere. Persevere is what comes closest here.

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abandon [Hingabe]", which "begins with the small things first" and allows the very material of those objects to come to the fore released of the coercions and hierarchies of the subjective gaze. Rilke believes that the condition for such a representation is the persistent, patient, lonely and unassuming "Hingabe" to the thing, and this will subsequently help to undo the conventional boundaries between objects and subject. Ultimately, Rilke envisages this love as an attempt to create a true and non-instrumental connection between the subject and the object, between the artistic mind and art's material.[5]

Significantly, in this same letter about Cézanne Rilke also treats the hero of his novel, Malte: "And for the first time I grasp the fate of Malte Laurids. Is it not that this test was beyond him, that he did not pass [bestand] the reality test, although he was convinced that it was necessary, up to the point that he instinctively searched for it and it started to cling on him and never left him? Once written, the book about Malte Laurids will be nothing but the book about this deeper insight, demonstrated on somebody for whom it proved to be too monstrous [ungeheuer]?"[6] The test [Prüfung]

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5 The theme of love was *en vogue* in phenomenological philosophy too, in part to counter the divide between subject and object. For instance, with the ontological definition of man as an *ens amans,* a loving being, the phenomenologist Max Scheler thought he had found a principle which might not only be the basis for a new phenomenology, but would also ultimately (re)create a harmonious relationship between man and the world. Already in his first major work, *Zur Phänomenologie und Theorie der Sympathiegefühle und von Liebe und Hass* (1913), Scheler lays the foundation of his love ontology, which he continues to develop till his last work, "*Philosophische Weltanschauung*" from 1929.

6 "Und mit einem Mal (und zum ersten) begreife ich das Schicksal des Malte Laurids. Ist es nicht das, daß diese Prüfung ihn überstieg, daß er sie am Wirklichen nicht bestand, obwohl er in der Idee von ihrer Notwendigkeit überzeugt war, so sehr, daß er sie so lange instinktiv aufsuchte, bis sie sich an ihn hängte und ihn nicht mehr verließ? Das

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that Rilke refers to here is the one posed by the main conflict of the novel, namely that of love: Is Malte able to love, like Cézanne, the small(est) things of everyday life? Rilke here suspects that Malte will eventually fail this test, and even if the published novel indeed elaborates the programme of love there is nothing in it which makes certain that Malte will master the new mode. Indeed, the tensions between the old and the new poetics persist throughout the book, and although certain motifs and metaphors, as we will see, are subjected to reversals, the novel allows for no certain conclusion as to the outcome of the test put before Malte.

From the start of the novel the protagonist Malte seeks a new way of seeing in order to apprehend primarily the chaotic world of modern Paris. Malte is aware that faced with this new reality he must learn how to see. But the task is a deeply frightening one, and just as frequent as the phrase "Ich lerne sehen",[7] is Malte's avowal of fear and the phrase "Ich fürchte mich". Malte must go through several stages of confusion and anxiety before he realises that the codes of perception he has so far adhered to rather closes the world off and instals alienation and loneliness, and that he therefore must find a new mode of perception, one that *opens* the world.

But at the beginning of the novel all this is only dimly clear to Malte. The Paris that presents itself to this 28-year-old, delicate but impoverished aristocrat that has left his native Denmark is a modern metropolis that offers views and ex-

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Buch von Malte Laurids, wenn es einmal geschrieben wird, wird nichts als das Buch dieser Einsicht sein, erwiesen an einem, für den sie zu ungeheuer war" (Rilke 1997: 51-52).

7 I quote from Manfred Engel's superbly commented edition of *Malte* (Rilke 1997). The translation I use is the one by Michael Hulse (Rilke 2009). Rilke's German is at times highly idiosyncratic and is difficult to render in English. I have slightly altered some passages in Hulse that I believe to be imprecise or downright wrong.

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periences that completely tear up the aspiring poet. Malte, threatened by sinking even further down in the social hierarchy, is an unwilling but exact observer of frightful and bizarre agonies. His records include the most harrowing experiences: there are numerous accounts of a city that brims with poverty and human despondency; Malte painstakingly describes people slowly dying from gruesome illnesses and does not leave out any details of the estranged and perverted existence in the city. But although he presents minute descriptions of all these things, people and places, he always questions his ability to see adequately and render the scenes accurately.

Behind these tortuous self-doubts lies Malte's paranoid fear of facing the realities of the city. His growing feeling of terror is amply shown in his depictions of the exterior reality, of things, faces, gestures, and the threats they spell out to the individual.[8] To Malte life in a great city means to be forced to open up one's self like a window (cf. 2009: 4), and to face the penetrating force and invasion of virtually everything and everyone he comes across. He believes that not only people – like the outcasts of society and destitute people, (Rilke 1997: 36-37) or the ill ones (Rilke 1997: 50ff; 56; 60ff) – but also sounds or smells, or even the most inconspicuous and apparently harmless objects and phenomena aim at his physical and mental breakdown. To Malte everything is like a virus – an image he sometimes uses (Rilke 2009: 48) – forcing its way

8 It is likely that Rilke learnt a lot about the impacts of modern urban life on the individual from his former university teacher, Georg Simmel, who developed his influential theories in the famous essay "Die Großstädte und das Geistesleben". N.H. Donahue has explored the influence of Simmel's theories on *Malte*, and maintains: "In fact Simmel's categories for psychological response to urban life provides the inner scaffolding for Malte's notes and observations" (Donahue 1992: 198).

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into the mind and body of man, where it causes anxiety and pain.

Malte's explanation of this frightening state of the world where every single object is violent and intrusive is that in the great urban spaces the long process of commodification of objects and humans alike has reached its peak, and that the total alienation that results from it uproots all beings: "Things have by now been observing this for centuries. No wonder they are corrupted, if they lose the taste for their natural, silent functions and want to take advantage of existence just as they see it everywhere taken advantage of. They try to get out of their uses to which they are properly put; they grow listless, neglect their uses, and people are not at all surprised to catch them on a jag" (Rilke 2009: 118).[9] With objects now having the power and will to overturn the ruling (man-made) order and dominating practices, anything could happen: phenomena believed to be subdued and inactive awaken and start acting on their own. The history of man's empire might be near its end and things might strike back and either re-establish the lost balance or even gain the upper hand.

Malte sees all this happening around him, and believes he is not only right in the middle of it, but also the main target of it. The novel thus insists on conveying Malte's predicament: wanting to see, Malte cannot endure doing it. "I offer resistance, although I know that my heart has already been ripped out and I could not go on living even

9 "Die Dinge sehen das nun schon seit Jahrhunderten an. Es ist kein Wunder, wenn sie verdorben sind, wenn sie den Geschmack verlieren an ihrem natürlichen, stillen Zweck und das Dasein so ausnützen möchten, wie sie es rings um sich ausgenutzt sehen. Sie machen Versuche, sich ihren Anwendungen zu entziehen, sie werden unlustig und nachlässig, und die Leute sind gar nicht erstaunt, wenn sie sie auf einer Auschweifung ertappen" (Rilke 1997: 153).

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if my torturers were to leave me now" (Rilke 2009: 34).[10] The urge to learn to see might actually be Malte's attempt to gain control over the numerous sounds, gazes and gestures that he is continuously confronted with. But Malte, being too weak an individual to ward off this outer reality and to stay impenetrable, is endangered by virtually everything and everyone, and, as he insistently reiterates, he is likely to succumb at any moment.

Malte shows the existence in Paris to be estranged and perverted, and living there man is constantly threatened by the loss of individuality. But can this be changed? Is a productive, non-anxious relationship with things and the sick and poor outcasts possible?

ii. "Die gewaltigen Liebenden" – the intransitive love and the epistemology of the heart

After those initial depictions of horror, some pages out in the book, Malte's language for a moment exhibits a much less expressionist and almost sober, peaceful tone. In a letter he records what has happened since he came to Paris:

> It is a great city, great, full of curious temptations. […] I have yielded to these temptations, and this has resulted in various changes, if not in my character, then in my outlook on the world, and at all events in my life. Under these influences, I have formed an all together different conception of everything under the sun; certain differences now mark me off from other people more than anything ever did in the past. A world transformed. A new life full of new meanings. At the moment I am finding it a little difficult, because it is all too new. I am a beginner in the circumstance of my own life. […] Do you remember Baudelaire's

10 "Ich wehre mich, obwohl ich weiß, daß mir das Herz schon heraushängt und daß ich doch nicht mehr leben kann, auch wenn meine Quäler jetzt von mir abließen" (Rilke 1997: 47).

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incredible poem 'Une Charogne'? It may be that I understand it now. Apart from the last stanza, he was quite right. What was he to do after such an experience? It was his task to see, in these matters that were terrible but only seemingly repellent, the abiding essence of being that lies below all that is. There is no choice, and no refusing. Do you suppose it was chance that Flaubert wrote 'Saint Julien l'Hospitalier'? That, it seems to me, is the crux: whether a man can bring himself to lie down beside a leper and warm him with the heart's warmth, the warmth of nights spent in love – only good could come of such an action. (Rilke 2009: 47)[11]

Instead of horror Malte here speaks of a new "outlook on the world", a new "life", "a different conception of everything". The shift is sudden and seemingly unpremeditated. But all the more startling is the difference between the ideal that Malte now embraces and what the reader has so far read. The new ideal involves not only the ethical imperative of not turning away and of taking everything into one's mind,

11 "Es ist eine große Stadt, groß, voll merkwürdiger Versuchungen. [...] Ich bin in diesen Versuchungen erlegen, und das hat gewisse Veränderungen zur Folge gehabt, wenn nicht in meinem Charakter, so doch in meiner Weltanschauung, jedenfalls in meinem leben. Eine vollkommen andere Auffassung aller Dinge hat sich unter diesen Einflüssen in mir herausgebildet, es sind gewisse Unterschiede da, die mich von den Menschen mehr als alles Bisherige abtrennen. Eine veränderte Welt. Ein neues Leben voll neuer Bedeutungen. Ich habe es augenblicklich etwas schwer, weil alles zu neu ist. Ich bin ein Anfänger in meinen eigenen Verhältnissen. [...] Erinnerst Du Dich an Baudelaires unglaubliches Gedicht 'Une Charogne'? Es kann sein, daß ich es jetzt verstehe. Abgesehen von der letzten Strophe war er im Recht. Was sollte er tun, da ihm das widerfuhr? Es war seine Aufgabe, in diesem Schrecklichen, scheinbar nur Wiederwärtigen das Seiende zu sehen, das unter allem Seienden gilt. Auswahl und Ablehnung giebt es nicht. Hältst Du es für einen Zufall, daß Flaubert seinen Saint-Julien-l'Hospitalier geschrieben hat? Es kommt mir vor, als wäre das das Entscheidende: ob einer es über sich bringt, sich zu den Aussätzigen zu legen und ihn zu erwärmen mit der Herzwärme der Liebesnächte, das kann nicht anders als gut ausgehen" (Rilke 1997: 64).

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even the ugliest things, for instance a putrefying carcass, as described in Baudelaire's famous poem. This of course Malte has been doing from the first passages in his notebook, albeit with disgust and fear. But here he introduces a completely new and different perspective. Instead of expressing horror, he now talks of love and of the heart; instead of going on about the intrusive and dangerous powers of outcasts and objects, he stresses the need to see them as exponents of being ("Seiende"), and he now wants to *include* them in his life and protect them. And he goes much further: the scene in Flaubert's *Saint Julien l'Hospitalier* that Malte refers to evokes both a sexual intercourse and a mystic union with a horribly mutilated leper on the verge of dying: the young nobleman Julien covers the outcast with his own warm, naked body. This is now the ideal of Malte's future life, the "crux" of his task, and the essence of Rilke's emotional turn: to warm the poor and sick people with his own heart. With this and the notion of "Herzwärme der Liebesnächte" ("the heart's warmth during the nights of love"), Malte breaks ground for a new way of addressing the world and a relationship with other people completely at odds with the one he has so far entertained. Now, it seems, Malte wants to become someone that can extend both the physical and mental feeling of love to everyone and everything.

This new "outlook" does not, however, completely invalidate optical perception, but seeks to enhance it with the mental and bodily aspect of love. Malte writes extensively on love, especially on "women in love". In his image of love there are four predominant features: the lovers are almost exclusively women, the love is one of absolute loyalty to the beloved, the intensity of it is enhanced by its negativity, and it may transfigure the world. This is what he writes about the "great lovers":

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> For centuries they have performed all of love; they have always played the entire dialogue, both parts. For the man merely repeated what they said, and did it badly. And made it difficult for them to learn, with his inattention, his neglect, his jealousy, which was itself a form for neglect. And nonetheless they persevered day and night, and grew in love and misery. And from among them, under the pressure of endless privations, have come forth those powerful women in love, who were greater than their man even as they called to him, who grew beyond him when he did not return […]. (Rilke 2009: 97, transl. slightly altered)[12]

In his picture of female love, Rilke reuses elements of the famed medieval courtly *amour du lointain*, but changes the roles: in his vision of this love the women play the active part, whereas the men are merely the frail and ultimately insignificant objects of this emotion. This he connects with his idealisation of female purity. Malte's examples extend from women he sees around him, in museums or in the streets or in his own family, to historical figures (he mentions Sappho, Gaspara Stampa, Héloïse, or the Portuguese nun Maria Alcoforado, for instance).

The great difference between the love exposed by these lovers and the one held by most others lies in its non-objectifying quality ("intransitive"; Rilke 2009: 161). A great lover loves without possessing the beloved person. But still she sustains the emotion because her love does not need to be requited

12 "Sie haben Jahrhunderte lang die ganze Liebe geleistet, sie haben den vollen Dialog gespielt, beide Teile. Denn der Mann nur nachgesprochen und schlecht. Und hat ihnen das Erlernen schwer gemacht mit seiner Zerstreuung, mit seiner Nachlässigkeit, mit seiner Eifersucht, die auch eine Art Nachlässigkeit war. Und sie haben trotzdem ausgeharrt Tag und Nacht und haben zugenommen an Liebe und Elend. Und aus ihnen sind, unter dem Druck endloser Nöte, die gewaltigen Liebenden hervorgegangen, die, während sie ihn riefen, den Mann überstanden; die über ihn hinauswuchsen, wenn er nicht wiederkam […]" (Rilke 1997: 114).

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to be fulfilled (Rilke 2009: 132). It is not terminated by the loneliness of the lover, on the contrary it is intensified and even made infinite by it ("endlos"; Rilke 1997: 209). Often these women even seek to enhance the negativity and the pain inflicted by the absence of the beloved in order to maximise the "longing" ("Sehnsucht"; Rilke 2009: 155), "grief of the heart" ("Herzleid"; Rilke 2009: 155), and the "farewell" ("Abschied"; Rilke 2009: 158). Such a love, Malte maintains, will be changed into a glowing light that will last for ever. In an aphorism he says: "To be loved means to be consumed by fire. To love is to glow bright with an inexhaustible oil. To be loved is to pass away; to love is to endure" (Rilke 2009: 161).[13] Probably this idea is most famously expressed in Abelone's song: "Ach, in den Armen hab ich sie alle verloren, / du nur, du wirst immer wieder geboren: / weil ich niemals dich anhielt, halt ich dich fest" (Rilke 1997: 204).[14] This non-objectifying and non-possessive ideal of love is a paradoxical figure typical in Rilke's poetological thinking: unity is never interesting to him if it does not include negativity. The "intransitive love" is thus another of the figures in Rilke's works in which the notion of completion is thought of as that which encompasses the explicitly unattainable "other side", and integrates what is explicitly negative or cannot be integrated.[15] Such a lover unites herself with this negativity

13 "Geliebtsein heißt Aufbrennen. Lieben ist: Leuchten mit unerschöpflichem Öle. Geliebtwerden ist vergehen. Lieben ist dauern" (Rilke 1997: 206).

14 "In their arms I lost them, body and soul, / but you, you only, are born ever anew; / because I never held you, now I hold you" (Rilke 2009: 160).

15 A formulation of this important figure is to be found in a letter to the Countess Sizzo from 6.1.1923: "wie der Mond, so hat gewiß das Leben eine uns dauernd abgewendete Seite, die *nicht* sein Gegenteil ist, sondern seine Ergänzung zur Vollkommenheit, zur Vollzähligkeit, zu der wirklichen heilen und vollen Sphäre und Kugel des *Seins*. [...]

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and contains the absence of the beloved in her yearning body, inscribes it in the loving heart, and thereby opens a potential of infinite emotion. This emotion is then turned towards all beings and is the power that enables these lovers to break down all conventional barriers; it may even, Rilke believes, instigate the transfiguration of the world by redeeming it from decay and transience.

The place where Rilke locates the centre of this love is the heart. This is in keeping with the traditional topos of the heart. "The heart communicates the basic human emotions: love and sympathy, passion and suffering" (Høystad 2009: 230), and it "becomes an image of these emotions" (Høystad 2009: 12). Rilke, however, goes further: for him the space of the heart and its pulsating activity is the foundation of a highly idiosyncratic epistemology and poetology. In the texts written during these years Rilke describes the heart as the place for both reception and production. In a short text from 1907 called "Die Bücher einer Liebenden" ("A Loving Woman's Books") which provided many ideas for *Malte*, the heart is described as something endlessly receptive (in which everything is "taken up and in" ("aufnehmen"). Empowered by the non-objectifying love, the heart then transforms all

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Ich will nicht sagen, daß man den Tod *lieben* soll; aber man soll das Leben so großmütig, so ohne Rechnen und Auswählen lieben, daß man unwillkürlich ihn (des Lebens abgekehrte Hälfte) immerfort mit einbezieht, ihn mitliebt – was ja auch tatsächlich in den *großen Bewegungen der Liebe, die unaufhaltsam sind und unabgrenzbar,* jedesmal geschieht!" (Rilke 1985: 54; my ital.). ("like the moon certainly life has a part/aspect/page perennially turned away from us that is *not* its opposite, but its supplement to perfection, to completeness, to the really whole/hale and full sphere and ball of being. [...] I do not want to say that man ought to *love* death; but one ought to love life so generously, without calculation and selection, that one involuntarily always includes and experiences it (the half of life turned away) – which always, as matter of fact, takes place in the *large inexorable, boundless movements of love*!" (my ital.).)

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impressions into waves of energy – "rays of [...] emotion" (Rilke 2009: 163) – not "consuming" its objects, but illuminating them with its sheer emotive power. The heart is "ready to offer the whole of love" (Rilke 2009: 155),[16] and the heart may even "think" (Rilke 2009: 206). In Rilke's works, then, a heart filled with love is vested with the force to instigate a rethinking and change of existing parameters of how the world is categorised. But Rilke is even more speculative: he imagines that the emotion of which the heart is capable is something that has a spatial dimension of its own. "You felt/sensed how your heart grew capable of an immense reality, unstoppably" (Rilke 2009: 151; transl. enhanced);[17] or "Louise Labé [...] promised her pain as if it were a larger world" (Rilke 2009: 153).[18] This "immense Wirklichkeit" and "größerer Weltraum" are early formulations of that phenomenon that Rilke some years later calls "Weltinnenraum" (verbally "the interior-space of the world"), which is a space of interiority expanding in the exterior space undoing all boundaries and hierarchies and in their stead creating a free, undulating exchange of energies between all beings. "Weltinnenraum" is the realm in which all things, all beings living and dead, plants and animals, absent and present phenomena, and all layers of the past, are interconnected and non-hierarchially tied together and still free within a continuous space without barriers ("ununterbrochene Welt"; Rilke VI: 1018). In this emotional space everything communicates and everyone feels

16 "dieses entschlossene Herz, das bereit war, die ganze Liebe zu leisten bis ans Ende" (Rilke 1997: 199).
17 "Du fühltest, wie dein Herz sich unaufhaltsam steigerte zu einer immensen Wirklichkeit" (Rilke 1997: 194).
18 "Louise Labé [...] versprach ihr den Schmerz wie einen größeren Weltraum" (Rilke 1997: 196).

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related and even united with everyone else, "embracing and embraced".[19]

The decisive factor of what I have here called the epistemology of the heart is the intransitiveness of love. This non-objectifying attitude is also what makes it such a different mode of perception. Just as these lovers do not have to be carnally united with the loved one, they do not want to fixate and possess that which they behold. There is a link between how they relate to the desired one and to the world. Instead of "consuming" the "beloved", in this love one learns to "shine the rays of his emotion through the beloved" (Rilke 2009: 163; transl. slightly altered).[20] Recollecting his scrutiny of the face of Abelone, his aunt and the prime example of this kind of love, Malte writes: "I hope I may never forget how it felt when you looked at me. How you wore your look, holding it on your back-tilted face as if it were not firmly attached" (Rilke 2009: 81).[21] These lovers do not put the persons or the things they see in pre-arranged systems; they do not convert the sensory data of the exterior world into concepts or make them subjects in their minds, but let them rather remain "et-

19 "umarmend und umarmt." are the last words from the third stanza of the poem in which "Weltinnenraum" is first explicitly mentioned, "Es winkt zu Fühlung fast aus allen Dingen" (1914). The first explorations of this productive notion in the universe of Rilke are the short prose texts "Erlebnis I" and "Erlebnis II" (1913).

20 "Langsam hat er gelernt, den geliebten Gegenstand mit den Strahlen seines Gefühls zu durchscheinen, statt ihn darin zu verzehren" (Rilke 1997: 209).

21 "Ich wills nie vergessen, wie das war, wenn du mich anschautest. Wie du dein Schauen trugst, gleichsam wie etwas nicht Befestigtes es aufhaltend auf zurückgeneigtem Gesicht" (Rilke 1997: 108). (NB: The translation fails the original meaning: In Rilke's works "Schauen" frequently refers not only to power of looking; but also to the face and to what one sees: By looking at someone's look and face, on might, like in a mirror, see the representation of what that person's beholding. Accordingly, "nicht Befestigtes" refers to what is seen by her.)

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was nicht Befestigtes", something free and not fixated. This is a mode of perception which has transcended the Cartesian dualism between the things themselves and the mind of the subject, and it has certainly abandoned the system of central perspective, *e.g.* the superimposition of geometry, and ultimately of subjectivity, on the sensory multiplicity of the world, and which thus subjects it to stable laws of perception.

On the contrary, instead of imposing unity on the world and attributing value and meaning to its objects from an external point (which is the logic underpinning the idea of the central perspective), the non-objectifying emotional epistemology of the loving heart allows for a non-manipulated and non-unifying cognition of the multi-perspectivism of reality, *i.e.* it allows to see and feel the different objects of the world at once and at the closest range and to experience a simultaneity of multitudinous presence. This space is "open", indeed it is "*the* open" ("das Offene"), Rilke maintains, meaning that the human heart annihilates the barriers and distinctions created by the instrumental reason which has for so long formed man's consciousness.[22] Thus, Rilke's mature work can be read as a critique of human consciousness which has, in the words of Heidegger, made man stand "opposite" ("gegenüber") the world, and create numerous barriers between himself and it, rather than being *in* the world (Heidegger 1957: 260-264). Rilke's epistemology of the feeling heart, Heidegger says, is determined to change the mere looking on the world which implies categorising and systematising it, towards a true community of objects and humans, animals and plants, to be tied together in a bond of mutual love. This space of feeling is

22 "Das Offene" is a concept in the 8th Duino Elegy, which elaborates the difference between conventional human consciousness and the mere being in the world which characterises the "Kreatur", the natural being, particularly animals and insects.

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brought about when a loving mind acts in the midst of the objects and human beings and takes part in them with the transfigurative force of emotion and the warm presence of her body. Then there is, as Malte wrote in his letter, "no choice, no refusing" (Rilke 2009: 47), no rejection, no distance, no critique, no barriers. Only then one might succeed in opening the space and experiencing what was hidden and mute, and establishing closeness and communication between all beings, dead and alive, visible and invisible, absent or present. To write the "work of the heart" and to do the work that the heart bids you to do is to attempt to realise this Orphic task.

What ultimately accounts for Rilke's speculations about the heart is that he conceives of it as the centre not only of emotion, but also of imagination and poetic speech. Being the origin of emotion, the heart must also be the origin of poetry. In order to fulfil the Orphic task set for poetry, namely to redeem the world from instrumentalisation and restore it to its happy polyphonic splendour, every ambitious poem must be concrete and based upon real experiences and feelings. The poetic expression the love finds is "Klage", the "complaint". There goes a line from the *Malte* novel to the Orphic love poetry in *Sonette an Orpheus* (1923), which in essence celebrates Orpheus' abiding love for the lost Eurydice as the necessary condition of poetry. The *Duineser Elegien* (written 1912-1922) are also informed by this Orphic epistemology of the heart and also use the rhetoric of the lover's complaint in order to sing and to praise and rescue the phenomena of the world.

iii. "a mosaic of the most compelling life"– Abelone, love and perception

In this subchapter I will present some extracts of the passages in the book that demonstrate how the epistemology of the

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heart is turned into practical action and indeed creates an interior space of interconnectedness. In this passage, one of the few idyllic and truly happy episodes from Malte's childhood, love and perception are linked in a way that seems to be very close to the ideal way of relating to the world.

The note dealing with this episode starts with Malte deploring his inability to read properly. He remembers that he, despite reading a lot from very early on, instinctively knew that he was really incapable of reading accurately (Rilke 1997: 166). It was not until a sunny morning in July, he recalls, during his childhood at home in Denmark, that he got an idea of how it should be done by observing his mother's younger sister, Abelone, gathering berries in the garden: "[…] and if I joined her in the summerhouse she would claim to be reading. On that particular Sunday morning, the book was indeed beside her, albeit unopened; but she seemed more than fully employed in carefully stripping red-currants from their little clusters with a fork" (Rilke 2009: 130).[23] In a sense Abelone is right when she claims to be reading. The link between harvesting and reading lies on a very basic level, *i.e.* in the etymology of the German word for reading, "lesen", which also means to harvest, to pick out, grapes and grain etc. It is clear that reading here is not only a metaphor of understanding books, but also of relating to a phenomenon in a wider sense by letting oneself be absorbed by the object one has turned to just in the way one is absorbed by a book. This is how Malte depicts the scene:

23 "und wenn ich sie in der Laube traf, behauptete sie zu lesen. An dem einen Sonntag-Morgen lag das Buch zwar geschlossen neben ihr, aber sie schien mehr als genug mit den Johannisbeeren beschäftigt, die sie vorsichtig mittels einer Gabel aus ihren kleinen Trauben streifte" (Rilke 1997: 168).

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It must have been one of those early mornings one gets in July, fresh and rested times when joyful and spontaneous things are happening all around. From a million tiny irrepressible impulses, a mosaic of the most compelling life is assembled; things vibrantly intermingle, and move out into the air, and their coolness makes their shadows vivid and lends lightness and spirit to the radiance of the sun. No one thing in the garden stands out above the rest; all things are everywhere, and one would needs be a part of it all, if nothing were to be missed.

In Abelone's humble employment, moreover, the whole scene appeared afresh. It was such a happy notion, to be doing that very thing, and precisely as she did it. Her hands, bright in the shade, worked together so lightly and dextrously, and the round berries leaped mischievously from the fork into a bowl lined with dew-matted vine leaves, where others were already heaped, red and blond, gleaming, with the good seeds within the tart flesh. (Rilke 2009: 130)[24]

To experience the totality of the joyful and "vibrant" activity", this "mosaic of the most compelling life" of the brimful garden, it is not sufficient to see it with your own eyes, which of course implies distance. Instead one must, Malte says, be in the middle of it and participate in it. Such participation is mastered by Abelone, who is one of Malte's prime examples

24 "Es muß dies eine von jenen Tagesfrühen gewesen sein, wie es solche im Juli giebt, neue ausgeruhte Stunden, in denen überall etwas frohes Unüberlegtes geschieht. Aus Millionen kleinen ununterdrückbaren Bewegungen setzt sich ein Mosaik überzeugtesten Daseins zusammen; die Dinge schweigen ineinander hinüber und hinaus in die Luft, und ihre Kühle macht den Schatten klar und die Sonne zu einem leichten, geistigen Schein. Da giebt es im Garten keine Hauptsache; alles ist überall, und man müßte in allem sein, um nichts zu versäumen.

In Abelonens kleiner Handlung aber war das Ganze nochmal. Es war so glücklich erfunden, gerade dies zu tun und genau so, wie sie es tat. Ihre im Schattigen hellen Hände arbeiteten einander so leicht und einig zu, und vor der Gabel sprangen mutwillig die runden Beeren her, in die mit tauduffem Weinblatt ausgelegte Schale hinein, wo schon andere sich häuften, rote und blonde, glanzlichternd, mit gesunden Kernen im herben Innern" (Rilke 1997: 168).

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of a great lover. By her very doing, Abelone, in Malte's view, is able not only to represent, but also to recreate all of this hectic activity ("the whole scene appeared afresh"). Her concordant hands fulfil the operation of bringing these precious round berries, without breaking them, over into the vessel that contains the fruit perfectly. By her hands she participates in the most fundamental way in what she does, she is right in the middle of it. The depiction of the harvesting with its imagery of ripeness and preserved roundness denotes a perfectly soft and delicate touch. Processes or passages of transposition are important in the novel, but usually they involve noise or violence ending in the breaking of the vessel or the spilling over of what is to be contained. In Malte's view, these are tokens of the estranged and perverted lives of modern man who cannot live in peace and harmony with the things and phenomena of the non-human world, which annoy and enrage him. This scene of Abelone plucking berries conveys a completely different picture: here there's no distortion, no breaking up.

The harvest finished, Abelone turns to the book Malte is reading from, Bettina von Arnim's *Goethe's Briefwechsel mit einem Kinde* (*Goethes Correspondance with a Child*), a semi-fictional story based on the love letters Bettina addressed to Goethe in 1807 and the answers the poet sent her. Abelone, however, finds Goethe's answers uninteresting because he was unable to fathom the deep truth in this kind of love. Then she takes the book and starts reading one of Bettina's letters herself. Her voice resembles a "song", Malte says, and what she reads and how she does it has a spatial dimension in the sense that "it was taking place somewhere in the vast open spaces high above me, out of my reach" (Rilke 2009: 131). Malte records that at the time he could not understand the meaning of all this, but that he was profoundly touched by it, and that he thought that he would later come to understand

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the significance of what he had been seeing: "I do not know how much I took in, but it was as if a solemn promise had been made to me that one day I should understand it all" (Rilke 2009: 131).[25] By these last words ("dieses alles") he suggests that Abelone's harvesting abilities, her recreation of the landscape with her hands as well as her reading and interpretation of Bettina's love letters are actions that are all related by a profound link, a link which is still invisible to Malte.

In the following passage, which again deals with the present, Malte writes that the "solemn promise" is still being "kept", and that he has now come to understand what it all was about and what her extraordinary abilities derived from, namely love. Abelone and Bettine by now have become more or less the same person to him.

That promise is still being kept. At some time or other, that same book found its way among my books, those very few books I shall never part with. Now it opens at the passages I happen to have in mind too, and when I read them I cannot be certain that it is Bettine I am thinking of or Abelone. No, Bettine has become more real within me; Abelone, whom I actually knew, was like a preparation for her, and now, for, she has completely merged into Bettine, as if she had been transmuted into her absolute self. For that strange creature, Bettine, brought space into being with all of her letters, a world of spacious dimensions. From the very start she was present in everything, as if she already had her death behind her. Everywhere she entered into the profound depths of being, herself a part of it, and whatever happened to her was an eternal part of Nature; there she recognized herself, and pulled back with something akin to pain; she pieced herself together again, laboriously, as if inferring herself from the tales people tell, and conjured herself up like a spirit,

25 "Ich weiß nicht, was ich davon verstand, aber es war, als würde mir feierlich versprochen, dieses alles einmal einzusehen. [...]" (Rilke 1997: 170).

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and endured herself [held herself out]. (Rilke 2009: 131-132; alternative transl. in brackets added by me.)[26]

Abelone and Bettine are both exponents of the unrequited love and therefore reach a level of perception that embraces all reality, that enables them to be in what they see, to corporeally participate and be "present in everything", as Malte says. Their emotion is so intense that it has a spatial quality: Abelone creates space in the garden and by reading Bettine's letters; and Bettine by her love "brings space into being". By opening up their heart and letting their relation to the world be governed by the emotion of love they relinquish their own subjectivity, transcend their individuality and become *dividual*, disseminated ("ausgebreitet") and in a certain sense "ubiquitous" ["überall"]. Rilke uses "aushalten" as a reflexive verb: "hielt sich aus". Thereby he plays with the expressive potential that compound verbs with separable prefixes have in German. He may certainly mean that Abelone/Bettine "endures" herself, which the translator Michael Hulse opts for, but it is just as much in keeping with the context, and with Rilke's general *praxis*, to translate it with the stress on "aus",

26 "Das Versprechen erfüllt sich noch immer, irgendann ist dasselbe Buch unter meine Bücher geraten, unter die paar Bücher, von denen ich mich trenne. Nun schlägt es sich auch mir an den Stellen auf, die ich gerade meine, und wenn ich es lese, so bleibt es unentschieden, ob ich an Bettine denke oder Abelone. Nein Bettine ist wirklicher in mir geworden, Abelone, die ich gekannt habe, war wie eine Vorbereitung auf sie, und nun ist sie mir in Bettine aufgegangen wie in ihrem eigenen, unwillkürlichen Wesen. Denn diese wunderliche Bettine hat mit allen ihren Briefen Raum gegeben, geräumigste Gestalt. Sie hat von Anfang an sich im Ganzen so ausgebreitet, als wäre sie nach ihrem Tod. Überall hat sie sich ganz wie ins Sein hineingelegt, zugehörig dazu, und was ihr geschah, das war ewig in der Natur; dort erkannte sie sich und löste sich beinah schmerzhaft heraus; erriet sich mühsam zurück wie aus Überlieferungen, beschwor sich wie einen Geist und hielt sich aus" (Rilke 1997: 170).

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implying the opening or the dissolution of the self. Thus it is not primarily a question of enduring herself, but of opening herself up: "held herself out". Loving in this way implies the opening of the strictures of identity and selfhood, and sharing the force of the feeling heart with the world.

This way of thinking about individuality is in stark contrast to the fear of opening himself up that Malte expressed in the first parts of the book out of dread of the dangers posed by the intrusive features and objects of city life. Now this figure has been entirely reversed: out of love one actually might be strong enough to let oneself be invaded by the things one sees and touches, and thereby tie a new and closer bond with the world. The process, Rilke underlines, is not without pain. In the language of *The Notebook* becoming permeable in this sense means that one crosses the lines of life and death: "From the very start she was present in everything, as if she already had her death behind her" (Rilke 2009: 132).[27] Or, even clearer: "And as for herself, I suspect she feared nothing other than that uncanny transformation that goes unnoticed because all of the evidence for it seems entirely alien to us, and we put it aside" (Rilke 2009: 161).[28] The lovers cross all boundaries, even the one to the realm of death, "at the other side" (Rilke). The evocation of this "ghostly metamorphosis" again reverses a notion or a figure that was heavily invested with negativity and fear in the first part of the book: to change or to be someone else. But due to the organisation of the notes such reversals – there are several of them – do not constitute

27 "Sie hat von Anfang an sich im Ganzen so ausgebreitet, als wär sie nach ihrem Tod" (Rilke 1997: 170).

28 "Und sie selbst: ich vermute, sie fürchtete nichts als jenes gespentische Anderswerden, das man nicht merkt, weil man beständig alle Beweise dafür, wie das Fremdeste, aus den Händen läßt" (Rilke 1997: 206).

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evidence that Malte has learned to be a practitioner of the epistemology of the heart.

iv. "Arbeit der Liebe" – touch and love: the hand

The activity of the great lovers is often linked to the metaphor of the hand. The stress on Abelone's hands in the episode in the garden is typical. The hand is man's foremost instrument, with which he works and toils and changes the pre-given materials and makes his mark upon the world; and it is also the instrument of writing and artistic creation. The hand is thus the member that establishes contact between the inner and the outer world (Goodall 1989: 55).[29] From the "middle period" onwards Rilke conceives of emotion and love as *work*. The achievements of the heart – "Herz-Werk" – are not brought about by sudden inspiration but by a gradual process and continuous effort involving exertion, discipline and patience. In this "labour of love" (Rilke 2009: 88), the hand plays a significant role. To Rilke the hand is the human member not only of actual toil, but also of feeling and emotion, and importantly of touch. Indeed he joins them all in the concept of "Gefühl". In one of his latest poems he says: "Inneres der Hand. Sohle, die nicht mehr geht / als auf Gefühl" (Rilke II: 178).[30]

Malte deals extensively with the hand in his notes. Earlier in the book, he evoked the very end of the human language by prophesising that the hand would one day no longer follow

29 Goodall discusses the "hand" in the light of Freud's theories of the "uncanny" and Rudolf Otto's book on religous dread (*The Idea of the Holy*), and lucidly explores the phallic dimensions of the metaphor of the hand in Rilke's novel. The notion of touch is left out, however.

30 "Palm of the hand, sole that no longer walks / but on feeling" (my transl.).

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the intention of the one who possesses it but write words on its own without any meaning for human beings (Rilke 1997: 48). A passage from his childhood, when in a vision he sees his own hand cutting itself loose from him (Rilke 2009: 61), is another example of Malte's worst anxiety, the untying of the bond between the hand and the mind, a token of the disjointing of the body itself and of the irretrievable loss of integrity. In the reading scene, however, all this is changed: Abelone's hands suggest a universal concordance and unity without fear of losing oneself. Malte often depicts the lovers using their hands: Abelone harvesting in the garden; the young lonely girls sitting in the museum drawing (Rilke 1997: 112-114) or recollecting "this kind of soft life of slow and never wholly elucidated gestures" (Rilke 2009: 85).[31] Particular importance is given to sewing or weaving. When Malte and his mother admire their beautiful pieces of lace (Rilke 2009: 88-89), they evoke these women. Studying the lace they are plunged into a world where all the feelings of women in love are objectified and can be re-experienced. With its roots reaching back to Penelope weaving and patiently waiting for Ulysses, lace in Rilke's view is so to speak the emblem of the toil of emotion, of "Gefühl" and remembrance. By touching the fine fabric of knitted threads, Malte and his mother re-experience and visualise the emotions of those who made them and engraved their love into their work. In one of the *parerga* to the novel, a short text from 1907 that deals with one of the great lovers, the Portuguese nun Maria Alcoforado, Rilke compares the famous letters she wrote with lace: "With these letters from the seventeenth century a love of inimitable work has been preserved for us. As in old lace the threads of pain and loneliness are joined together in an inconceivable

31 "ein leises Leben langsamer, nie ganz aufgeklärter Gesten" (Rilke 1997: 112).

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way in order to make flowers, a path of confusing flowers".[32] Lace, in other words, can be read as letters, expressing the emotion of the woman that has made them; and knitting or weaving is as expressive as writing. There are many hints in Rilke's works that all objects ought to be perceived as being just as fine and complex in their texture as lace or any woven work, telling their full story and revealing the truth about themselves when the mere seeing with eyes is accompanied by a hand that touches its numerous loops, twists and braiding. For Rilke emotions set real, physical marks, and are carved into the material and are thus a constitutive part of any handmade object. In a letter to the Polish translator of the *Malte* novel, Rilke calls objects "vessels" ("Gefäße") in which one finds "human" traces ("Menschliches"),[33] that is the emotion invested in the making as well as in the use of them. Only a perception that also works by touch – and by love – is able to perceive the comprehensive narratives and fathom the full emotional *reservoir* of these objects.

What Malte and his mother experience by unwinding the lace bobbin is very similar to Abelone's reading session. In both episodes one comes very close to the ideal perception act since it involves not only the gaze, but also tactility. Perception here is not only optical, rather the materiality or plasticity of things are an invitation to touch them. A perception based on the optical and the tactile as coextensive sensing acts does not hold the world at bay, but plunges itself in it and takes part in the things. In this sense it undoes the boundary between

32 "Mit diesen Briefen des siebzehnten Jahrhunderts ist uns eine Liebe von unvergleichlicher Arbeit erhalten. Wie in einer alten Spitze so laufen in ihnen die Fäden von Schmerz und Einsamkeit auf unbegreifliche Weise zusammnen, um Blumen zu bilden, eine Bahn verwirrender Blumen" (Rilke VI: 1002).

33 I refer to the letter to Witold Hulewicz from 15.11.1925 (cf. Rilke *Briefe* 3: 898).

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object and subject. This enlarged perception mode is an idea which was common at the beginning of the 20th century. Not only Rilke, but also Hugo von Hofmannsthal, or indeed the great German art historians at the time (Kurt von Hildebrand, Heinrich Wölfflin, or Aloïs Riegl)[34] explore haptic perception as an alternative or a supplement to mere optical seeing. At the time, then, there is a widespread tendency to criticise the conventional seeing and the regime of central perspective with its focus on the subjective gaze in order to counter the Modern predicament of dissolution and hypertrophic subjectivity, estrangement and *Angst*, and to restore a cohesive community or companionship between human beings and the phenomena of the world. Rilke's emotional turn and epistemology of the heart is a poetic version of this attempt to rethink being itself.

v. "Do the work of the heart" – Concluding remarks

Malte is a young aspiring writer, and the novel can be read as a document of a writer striving to find his own idiom and a new method. In the letter where Malte announces the great change he has undergone since he arrived in Paris, his mention of Baudelaire and Flaubert suggests that the epistemology of love that they stand for is also a poetological programme. This is in keeping with the emotional turn proposed by Rilke in other texts from these years: poetry must express and propagate "das Offene"/"the open", the space of feeling and closeness in which all beings, visible and invisible, absent or present, communicate with each other.

One catches a glimpse of this emotional space in the de-

34 The contrast of haptic and optical is a key to understanding the discussions in German art theory at the end of the 19th century. Gilles Deleuze draws heavily on Riegl in his famous book on Francis Bacon, *Logique de la sensation* (1981). For a short history of the main conflict lines, see Woodfield (1994); and further Podro (1984).

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piction of the garden scene, where everything seems to "intermingle" in harmony, and "no thing stands out above the rest", where all seemed "spontaneous" and "vibrant" with life. Malte understands that to be able to represent such a scene one must be in it, like Abelone, participating in it, humbly, with body and passionate emotion. The neatness and care showed by Abelone's hands in bringing the berries into the bowl allegorises the perfect representation that Malte as an author strives for: the gentle transposition of reality into the bowl of poetry without cracking any of its components. Such gentleness in poetry is achieved by a non-objectifying representation only, by the non-possessive rays of the heart, which is only brought about by the experience of love. In the works subsequent to the *Notebooks* Rilke exalts this love to be the very essence of poetry. In "Die Bücher eines Liebenden" Rilke writes: "it's just a small step from a lover's devotion to the transport of the lyrical poet".[35] To have the force and spirit to create poetry one must have learned to endure the loneliness of the unrequited love; one must be able to let the pain opened by this negativity be a place of endless production of emotion. This emotion is the complaint, the despair, the heart's sorrow about the state of the world, but it is also praise and Orphic song with a potential to redeem the loss and to heal the pain: "And now one grasps that there must come songs out of this interior, day and night; for planted in a heart everything has become voices and communicates and whispers and cries out".[36] The heart, the origin of emotion and ethical action is a metaphor of the origin of poetry.

35 "denn es ist nur ein Schritt von der Hingabe der Liebenden zum Hingerissensein des lyrischen Dichters" (Rilke VI: 1016).

36 "Und nun begreift man, daß man aus diesem Innern Lieder kommen müssen, Tag und Nacht; denn in ein Herz verpflanzt, hat alles Stimme bekommen und redet untereiander und flüstert und ruft hinaus" (Rilke VI: 1018).

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In the letter to his wife with which this article started, Rilke writes that he is not certain that Malte will be able to reach this level of insight. Even though Rilke made the breakthrough to the *Duineser Elegien* and *Sonette an Orpheus,* it is not certain that Malte will ever reach a full understanding and mastering of the notion of this new epistemology of love, or that he will ever be able to open up for things and be among the phenomena in the way Abelone could. The book is on the verge of proclaiming the new epoch of the "work of the heart", but it still relapses into the anxiety of the mere seeing, the warding off of exterior reality. The last note, however, states that the prodigal son – which is probably an allegory of Malte – is about to learn to do the "Arbeit der Liebe".

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An Absence of Character: Subjectivity and Emotions in Martin Crimp

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The British playwright Martin Crimp is well known for aesthetic innovation and new types of performative art, which lead to the significant absence of character in his work. However, neither the precise textual nature of this absence, nor the way it functions as the precondition for an intensified emotional response both on stage and also between the stage and the audience, have received the attention they richly deserve in the analysis of Crimp's plays. This article examines the innovative structure of *Fewer Emergencies* (2005), in which Crimp presents three short scenarios about fragmented identities, confronting us with a significant absence of character. In the three scenarios, in which the act of storytelling is itself dramatised, Crimp moves away from a "solid" concept of character (defined by staged presence and embodied oneness) towards a dissemination of subjectivity in dialogues (assigned

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to anonymous speakers) about absent characters and events.[1] Being distributed between multiple voices, this subjectivity requires a synthesising effort by the audience without standard references to traditional types of characters or speech acts. The audience is left with an enhanced emotional investment in the plays, a formal appeal that Crimp, as we shall see, intensifies with strong thematic emphasis on emotions such as horror and anxiety. This dramaturgy of absence echoes the form and style of Crimp's ground-breaking play *Attempts on Her Life* (1997),[2] and elaborates upon themes explored in his previous work, including his persistent examination of subjectivity in language. With his characteristic tone of voice and inventiveness of form, Crimp furthers Samuel Beckett's vivid and experimental effort to rethink subjectivity in theatre and drama; plays such as *Attempts on Her Life* (1997), *Advice to Iraqi Women* (2004), and *Fewer Emergencies* (2005) paved new ground for the theatre, in terms of both textual and performative aesthetics. The point I will make in this paper is that paradoxically, as it were, the type of absence evoked by Crimp actually leads to the presence of an enhanced emotional response.

1 Characters are the persons, in a dramatic or narrative work, endowed with moral and dispositional qualities that are expressed in what they say – the dialogue – and what they do – the action. A broad distinction can be made between the two dominant approaches to character and characterisation in Crimp's work: in plays dominated by the dramatic method – *e.g. The Country* (2000) and *The City* (2008) – Crimp presents the characters talking and acting and leaves the audience to infer the motives and meaning behind what the characters say and do. In *Attempts on Her Life* (1997) and *Fewer Emergencies* (2005), in which the act of storytelling is itself dramatised, the actors intervene authoritatively in order to describe, conjure and often evaluate the actions and motives of absent characters.

2 See Sierz (2006: 49-56); Middeke (2011: 88-92); Dennewald (2004: 43-71).

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Often shaped as fragments rather than stories, Crimp's plays illustrate his use of sharp, satirical language in conjunction with strong images of human suffering to create social and political critique free of common sense and rhetorical clichés. In *Attempts on Her Life* (1997), for example, Crimp subjects the conventional notion of character in theatre and drama to meticulous deconstruction. In the course of the seventeen scenarios, we are presented with different stories about a woman called Anne (also Anya, Annie, Anny and Annushka – perhaps it is the same name in different languages), but the true nature of her identity is never revealed. As a whole, the construction of her identity takes the form of a "free play" of signification beyond the control of stable interpretation. Instead of a dramatic representation of actions and characters, Crimp gives us multiple passages of dialogue about "Anne", who has different, incompatible identities: a lover, an artist, a terrorist (of left and right persuasions), a porn star, a refugee, and even a brand-new car… And unlike more conventional plays, where the identities of characters are clearly marked, the dialogue about this elusive character is voiced by a number of anonymous speakers (a dash at the beginning of a line indicates a change of speaker):

> – 'I feel like a screen.'
>
> – She's lying there, isn't she, with the tube in her poor thin arm, looking terribly pale, whiter in fact than / the *pillow.*
>
> – 'Like a TV screen,' she says, 'where everything from the front looks real and alive, but round the back there's just dust and a few wires.'
>
> – 'Dust and a few wires.' Her imagination…
>
> – She says she's not a real character, not a real character like you get in a book or on TV, but a *lack* of character, an *absence* she calls it, doesn't she, of character.
>
> – An absence of character, whatever *that* means…
>
> (Crimp 2005a: 229)

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In this example, quoted from the sixth scenario entitled "Mum and Dad", the reality of the main character's fragmented state is revealed to us: the character ("little Annie") feels like a disconnected screen, all surface and no depth. In fact, during the whole course of the seventeen scenarios, Anne is continually and consistently defined by an absence in body and essence, that is to say without a recognisable appearance and identity. She only has a suspended presence in the unstable and floating speech of others. If her body or essence is, at times, close to an embodied presence or to an identity, it only happens in passing and only in order to be dismantled in various ways: loss of memory, loss of language, loss of place etc. This is the general logic of absence in Crimp's work.

But this motif of absence is not restricted to Crimp's masterpiece of 1997. It also defines the tragic fate of the characters in more conventional plays such as *The Country* (2000) and *The City* (2008), in which characters (embodied by actors) are defined by actions and events. The principal issue for my analysis, however, is the way in which the theme of absence, or absence itself, is married to the presence or evocation of emotion in *Fewer Emergencies* (2005), which can be read as a follow-up to *Attempts on Her Life*.

Fewer Emergencies explores an absence of character in a manner that follows the epistemological path of poststructuralism, and yet Crimp manages to combine this endeavour with his own brand of strong emotional content and political engagement.[3] If we observe this absence of character through

3 Crimp's fragmented dramaturgy and its representation of subjectivity and contemporary society is akin to the philosophical critique of Jean Baudrillard. Both point to late modernity's expulsion of "depth" and "truth" in favour of surface and contingency. In fact, *Attempts on Her Life* opens with an epigraph taken from Baudrillard's essay "The Mirror of Terrorism" of 1990: "No one will have directly experienced the actual cause of such happenings, but

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the lens of contemporary drama theory, Crimp's work can be placed within the theoretical frameworks of Elinor Fuchs' *The Death of Character* (1996) and Hans-Thies Lehmann's concept of *Postdramatic Theatre* (2001).[4] But unlike Fuchs and Lehmann, who both focus on the deconstruction of dramatic character within contemporary theatre and drama in relation to poststructuralist theories of subjectivity, and therefore tend to dismiss the emotional content of contemporary plays, I aim to explore how the notions of subjectivity and emotion are bound up with the form and content of *Fewer Emergencies*.

Subjectivity and emotion

The most direct path towards an understanding of the particular intersection between subjectivity and emotion in the works of Crimp may be found by way of a detour through his satirical short story *When the Writer Kills Himself* (2005):

When the writer kills himself, the other writers feel like they've been punched – just here – in the stomach. They're up on the marble roof of a cathedral – in Milan, as it happens – and when they hear the news they stagger towards the edge and only just save themselves from toppling off. So. The writer has killed himself! What a terrible thing!

---

everyone will have received an image of them" (Crimp 2005: 198). Following Baudrillard's notion of simulacrum, *Attempts on Her Life* revels in poststructuralism and consumer culture: the thought-provoking scenario "The threat of international terrorism™", in which terrorism becomes a trademark on a par with "Vogue™", "Diet Pepsi™", "Fantasy Barbie™", "Fantasy Ken™", and "God™", is a case in point (Crimp 2005a: 241-244).

4 Cf. Poschmann 1997; Birkenhauer 2005; Worthen 2005. For an insightful reading of Crimp's work that is at once both clear about the status of subjectivity within contemporary theatre and also sensitive to the structure of his plays, see Martine Dennewald's "An den Rändern der Identität: Überindividuelle Figurkonzeptionen bei Crimp, Kane, Abdoh und Foreman" (2004: 43-71).

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It's like being punched – just here – in the stomach! They gaze up at the stone saints on their pinnacles. The clear blue sky starts spinning. (Crimp 2005a: xi)

As typical of Crimp's more experimental theatrical works (*e.g. Attempts on Her Life*, 1997), the events are narrated by someone outside the story, who refers to the characters as "he", "they", or simply by their occupation, *e.g.* "the writers", "the critics", and "the directors". *When the Writer Kills Himself* is a story about a tragic suicide within the theatre community, but the chillingly ironical third-person narrator turns tragedy into satire as the self-deception and hypocrisy of the writers are exposed to ridicule and scorn.[5]

In the opening passage "the writers" experience the emotional impact of their fellow writer's tragic suicide. Here we find another signature of Crimp's style of writing, for the narrative distance is suddenly disrupted by the utterance "just here", drawing the reader's attention to the body of the subject of the utterance. Given that the verbal expression "just here" functions as a *proximal* marker, understood in this instance as close to the speaker, the body of the speaker becomes the site of the emotional impact. The writers, we are told, feel like they have been punched in the stomach. And as the story develops, this important motif intensifies, as the body becomes a site of sorrow, lament, envy, anger, and self-doubt. At night, for example, the writers "find themselves waking up in the dark with an unpleasant feeling in their mouths: they've been grinding their teeth. All this homage, all this reverence: the dead writer is getting on their nerves" (Crimp 2005a: xii). And insofar as the work of the dead writer is now finally "understood" and reassessed by the critics in "long and

5 For more on the issue of Crimp's satire, see Sierz 2006: 142-156.

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reverential reviews", the artistic and existential significance of the tragic event finally dawns on the other writers: "How sensible to die! Especially in the theatre! […] We too (they think) would like to die – only we're too old, and have too many responsibilities" (Crimp 2005a: xii).

In this passage, the ironical narrator suddenly changes from the distanced third-person "they" to a far more engaged position of an inclusive "we." Here, the narrator casts him or herself in the role of speaker for the body of writers who seem to share the same unwelcome thought. We – the readers – are thus led also to believe that the narrator shares these thoughts and emotions with the rest of the writers. In the last paragraph of the text, this belief is developed even further, when the change of the pronoun is made permanent, as the collective body of writers is gathered for a final celebration at the theatre: "We writers feel fresher and more alive than we have for months. We clap our hands. We pour out another glass of wine – even if the white is by now unpleasantly warm. Each of us looks at the fool opposite, and wonders what that smile means" (Crimp 2005a: xiv).

In this incisive satire about writers and critics, which brings to mind Roland Barthes' seminal essay about the so-called "Death of the Author" ("La mort de l'auteur") from 1968, the theme of absence, or absence itself, emerges from the overwhelming experience of death. The text, however, is not about the death of the author (in the strict sense of Barthes' essay), but about the *experience* of loss and death. It is about the emotional state evoked by the image of death. And the textual articulation of subjectivity, as I have stated at the beginning of this article, follows the epistemological path of poststructuralism in a manner that strengthens this existential anxiety: Crimp's mode of writing posits the human subject not as originator or shaper of the work, but as a site of "enunciation" within the discursive framework of

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the text. According to the theory of Émile Benveniste (and subsequently Barthes), the concept of *l'énonciaton* (usually translated into the uncommon term "enunciation") is based on a distinction between "what is being said" (*l'énoncé*) and "the act of saying it" (*l'énonciation*), sometimes simply translated into "statement" (*énoncé*) and "utterance" (*énonciation*).

The concept of enunciation, in short, refers to the discrete and always unique act by which the language is actualised by a speaker (Barthes 1977; Benveniste 1971: 217-222). The subjectivity discussed here, then, has to do with the capacity of the speaker to posit him or herself as the "subject". For Crimp and Barthes, however, "writing is that neutral, composite, oblique space where our subject slips away, the negative where all identity is lost, starting with the very identity of the body writing" (Barthes 1977: 142). Asserting that "the author is never more than the instance writing, just as I is nothing other than the instance saying I," Barthes denies the presence of the author in the text: "language knows a 'subject', not a 'person', and this subject, empty outside of the very enunciation which defines it, suffices to make language 'hold together', suffices, that is to say, to exhaust it" (Barthes 1977: 145). In other words: Barthes' essay redefines the subject as an "effect" or "function" engendered by the internal play of textual language. This is one of the central arguments of "La mort de l'auteur", when Barthes denounces the author as a figure invented by our society and critical discourse in order to set limits to the inherent free play of meaning in any literary text. Crimp's work is driven by an equally strong epistemological scepticism about the constitution of the human subject and a culture of criticism tyrannically centred on the author – "his person, his life, his tastes, his passions" (Barthes 1977: 143).

The satirical aspect of *When the Writer Kills Himself*, which can be read as a commentary on Barthes' poetics, or even as a

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parody of it, gets right to the heart of Barthes' seminal piece: "When asked to give interviews about the dead writer, it is only with extreme reluctance that they accept. When asked to explain the significance of the work, they rub their eyes with their knuckles as they patiently reply that its significance lies precisely in its resistance to explanatory discourse" (Crimp 2005a: xii). In this passage, tragedy becomes satire as Crimp deliberately manifests an attitude of amusement toward the self-absorbed attitude of the writers. Formulated as a critical observation of a certain type of person (writers, critics, directors) or institution (the theatre community), Crimp's satire is also, and perhaps primarily, a method of critique. It refers to someone or something as the "butt of a joke" that exists outside of the work itself. His work always oscillates between chillingly cold irony and the manifestation of strong cultural anxieties, as in the narrator's description of the reaction of other writers and their attempts to diagnose the texts of the dead writer as thinly veiled suicide notes: "When the sick feeling has gone, the writers make their way back down the spiral stairs and head straight for their bookshelves. They pull out the works of the dead writer and examine them for clues" (Crimp 2005a: xi).

However, we experience a strong sense of irony and satire when the writers attempt to decipher and explain the meaning of theatre texts by seeking traces of the man or woman behind the work: "Hold the pages up to the light and it's like a watermark or a security-feature in a bank note: each sheet of paper turns out to be indelibly marked 'suicide'" (Crimp 2005a: xi). In this comic passage, clues pointing to the reality of his tragic fate – "suicide" – are indeed present, but the whole notion of the hidden voice of the singular person, the author 'confiding' in us, is profoundly alien to the structure of Crimp's satirical narrative. On the one hand, there is a deep sense of irony and a rejection of contemporary theatre culture and criticism. On

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the other hand, however, the writing itself has a strong sense of tragedy: it springs from the experience of loss; it obsessively returns to the unavoidable image of death.

Illustration 1. Actors Steen Stig Lommer, Tammi Øst and Henrik Birch in Face to the Wall *("Ansigtet mod væggen", directed by Jacob F. Schokking, Café Teatret, Copenhagen 2008). Photo: Thomas Petri.*

Fewer Emergencies

The strong intersection between subjectivity and emotions such as loss, horror, fear, and cultural and existential anxiety as discussed in *When the Writer Kills Himself* is even more

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evident in the theatrical works of Crimp, as can be seen in his short play *Fewer Emergencies* (2005), a trilogy that follows a similar path both in terms of form and content. However, most of the dramaturgical principles I will explore are not expressed in terms of a single narrative voice, but through dialogue performed by shifting constellations of actors.

Fewer Emergencies interweaves three short scenarios written for the theatre: "Whole Blue Sky", "Face to the Wall", and "Fewer Emergencies".[6] Crimp's triptych juxtaposes a close-knit family in domestic crisis ("Whole Blue Sky"), unspeakable public violence ("Face to the Wall"), and a surreal account of a boy who is trying to protect himself from the world outside his bedroom window ("Fewer Emergencies"). The focus of each scenario revolves around a character that we never see. The triptych format, which brings to mind the favoured form of Francis Bacon's grotesque paintings, presents three studies for a portrait of a single figure (a woman, a man and a child), set in one textual frame. In each scenario, the portrait of the unseen character is discussed by a group of nameless speakers, who meditate on the story of the isolated figure. In fact, the three scenarios are "hinged" together by the recurring motifs of suffering selves, set against a gloomy suburban nightmare.

The first scenario, "Whole Blue Sky", presents a story about a premature marriage:

2 She gets married very young, doesn't she.
3 Does what?

6 Two of the pieces, "Fewer Emergencies" and "Face to the Wall", were originally written and performed in 2002. In 2005, however, Crimp decided to add a prequel, "Whole Blue Sky", to complete the trilogy.

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2 Gets married, gets married very young, and immediately realises–
3 Oh? That it's a mistake?
2 Immediately realises–yes–that it's a mistake.
3 She doesn't love him.
2 Oh yes, she loves him, she definitely loves him, but it's a mistake all the same.

(Crimp 2005b: 7)

As the scenario is written for three actors, the dialogue is a conversation between three anonymous speakers. In fact, the situation is shaped like an argument – or a game of invention – in which a group of speakers are cast in the roles of third-person narrators; the speakers do not represent a character within the events related but stand "outside" those events.[7] As the scene progresses, we – the audience – must ask ourselves: Who are these narrators? Are they actors rehearsing a play? Writers working on a script? Or is this the internal dialogue of a woman who suffers from depression and schizophrenia? These questions, however, remain unanswered. Furthermore, in addition to the absence of named characters, the time and place are marked as "blank" (Crimp 2005b: 5), and the speakers are simply indicated by a number at the beginning of each line. Yet Crimp emphasises that speaker number 1 must be played by a female actor. The choice of speaker 1's gender, I would argue, is important because it establishes an ambiguous correlation between this female and the topic of the speakers' conversation: a woman who presumably suffers the sad fate of an unhappy marriage. Indeed, at one point Crimp's rather sparse stage directions quite deliberately emphasise this cor-

7 By elevating discourse above character and action, Crimp "displaces" the primary elements of drama in order to establish distance – or what Brecht called "Verfremdungseffekt" – in place of the illusion of reality aimed at in conventional drama (Brecht 1963: 155-164).

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relation as speaker 1 "*silently counts, using her fingers*", the years of her unhappy marriage (Crimp 2005b: 15).

In the beginning, the woman falls in love with a man. "She definitely loves him," we are told, "but it's a mistake all the same" (Crimp 2005b: 7). What starts as passion becomes marriage, marriage becomes pregnancy, the baby "cements the marriage" (Crimp 2005b: 9), and soon enough motherhood gives way to depression. She sees her whole life, we are told, stretched out in front of her like a "corpse", or perhaps it is "more like a motorway at night–a band of concrete stretched out in front of her with reflective signs counting off the miles–mile after mile after mile" (Crimp 2005b: 7). And indeed, the story of her life is presented to us like an unending slideshow of gloomy and depressing images. Although we are initially told that the family "make a picture of happiness" (Crimp 2005b: 9), the "Whole Blue Sky" is soon clouded by images of domestic dispute and violence. These images, which torment the soul of the main character, seem to have a sickening reality but, in fact, we see no trace of the real events. The horror is conveyed to us through the dialogue of the three speakers, and everything that happens takes place within the discursive framework of the dialogue (or perhaps more accurately: the actions and motives of the absent character are constructed during the course of the dialogue between the three speakers). With nothing but dialogue – a game of language played by the three unnamed speakers – at his disposal, Crimp fills the stage with the imaginative landscape of the life story of the absent figure. However, the story itself and the performative manner by which the woman's identity comes to life through discourse tell us that our knowledge of other people and the world they inhabit is incredibly limited.

At the end, the story suffers the same fate as the main character, who finally succumbs to a mental state characterised

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by the breakdown of thought processes:

1 Is that understood: I don't want to hear you talk about it ever again.
2 In front of the guests.
1 In front of the guests. In front of anyone. Not tonight and not ever again.
2 Says who?
1 I'm sorry?
2 Says who: not tonight and not ever again.
3 Says who? Says Mummy.
1 Says what?
3 Says Mummy.
1 (*smiles*) Not says Mummy, sweetheart, not says Mummy: says the voice.

(Crimp 2005b: 20)

The second piece, "Face to the Wall", is a story about a massacre at a primary school – much like the high-school massacre of Columbine in 1999 or later killing sprees of the same kind – told by four speakers, who attempt to re-enact the terrifying events. At the beginning of the piece, the speakers set out to recollect the shocking actions of the killer, in order to comprehend the motive behind them:

2 Yes? says the teacher, How can I help you?
1 Shoots him through the heart.
3 Shoots the teacher right through the heart.
1 The children don't understand–they don't immediately grasp what's going on–what's happened to their teacher?–they don't understand–nothing like this has ever / happened before.
3 Nothing like this has ever happened before–but they do understand–of course they understand–they've seen this on TV–they've stayed up late as a special treat and they've seen this on TV–they know exactly what's going on and this is why they back away–instinctively back away.
1 Okay–so they back away–the worst thing they could do–back away–but they back away–they back away against the wall.

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2 Against their pictures on the wall–'My house'.
3 'My cat'.
2 'Me and my cat'.
3 'My house', 'Me and my cat', 'Me in a tree', and it's interesting to see the way that some of them / hold hands.

(Crimp 2005b: 25-26)

In this lucid example, Crimp's dramaturgical approach and sensitivity to violence resemble one of the characteristics of Greek tragedy, namely the presentation of terrifying events, not to the eye of the audience, but to the ear by the report of a messenger. And, just like the conventions of the tragic messenger scene, Crimp's evocation of violence through dialogue functions as a dramaturgical device that triggers a powerful emotional response in the audience. Because we are definitely not spared any details of the horror evoked, either in this short exchange or elsewhere. Moreover, Crimp amplifies the effect of terror and pity when he juxtaposes the horrifying images of violence with the children's innocent drawings of houses, cats and trees. In short, the sensations of horror occur when the comforting notion of "home" is shattered by the contingency of violence. In the narrative of the speakers, the children "instinctively hold hands" as they flinch away from "the warm metal of the gun" (Crimp 2005b: 26-27), but the killer shows no sign of conscience or remorse when he shoots the children one by one. Indeed, the tone of the speakers is equally callous: "He shoots child A–in the head [...] He moves on to child B. He shoots child B–in the head" (Crimp 2005b: 27).

The lack of empathy – and, more importantly, the lack of motive – which is much debated by the speakers is left to hang unexplained for the whole scene: "Life's treating him very well", "His job is fine–well paid and rewarding", his wife is "charming and tolerant", and his "children are

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fine" (Crimp 2005b: 28). In short: the killer is an average person, living a perfectly normal and happy life, with no background wound/story that can justify or explain the random act of violence: "So he's not a sympathetic character," speaker 3 concludes, "We can't feel for him", "Cry for him", "He's never suffered", "Experienced war", "Experienced poverty", or "Torture" (Crimp 2005b: 32). This theme of (lack of) identification correlating with (lack of) emotion guides the nameless speakers into a debate about a multitude of self-contradictory explanations. Indeed, the seemingly random ideas for potential motives are brought to the point of absurdity when speaker 1 suggests that the killer feels angry when the postman is *sometimes* late: "It's not the postman's fault–he knows it's not the postman's fault–sometimes there are problems sorting the letters–the machine for sorting the letters has broken down, for example, and the letters have been sorted by hand–or perhaps there are lots of parcels and every parcel means a conversation on the doorstep" (Crimp 2005b: 33).

Similarly, the scene of violence is located not as something seen, but as a "space" known and evoked by the nameless speakers: "He moves to child C. Child C tries to duck away. But to no avail. But to no avail. He shoots child C–good–in the head" (Crimp 2005b: 27). The violent event itself is located in the "collective" imagination of the speakers, but what is physically absent is made even more present in the context of the mind's eye. In his lucid reading of Crimp's theatrical works, Martin Middeke observes that this "deflection of action into narrative excellently succeeds in diverting both representation and perception of graphic violence into the realm of imagination – a strategy that does not make violence seem less disturbing but rather creates an atmosphere of spellbinding emotional intensity" (Middeke 2011: 95). This important relationship between the structure

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of the play and the emotional content is also sketched out by Aleks Sierz: "Crimp's innovative trilogy of short plays *Fewer Emergencies* (Royal Court, 2005) uses a radical form to tell three familiar stories – an unhappy marriage, a school massacre and a street riot. In each case, a small group of unnamed speakers narrate the stories, all of which collapse under the weight of their own emotional content" (Sierz 2011: 60). In other words: "Whole Blue Sky", "Face to the Wall" and "Fewer Emergencies" all share this dramaturgical approach to the aesthetic experience of violence: the emotional impact of violence is triggered through dialogue and narration, not by visceral images or physical actions, and the violence itself has no reality outside of the instance of discourse that defines it.

The dialogue constitutes the basic building block of Crimp's plays. It is worth noting that each scene is a spoken exchange, an argument, between multiple anonymous speakers. It is also worth noting that there is a fair amount of beautifully crafted repetition and intentional redundancy in Crimp's dialogue, perhaps partly because he wishes to add a sense of confusion and spontaneity to the scene. In fact, there are numerous examples of verbal redundancy and uncertain speech patterns, during which the speakers are working out what they wish to say. In the three separate scenarios, then, redundancies and repetitions expose and express meanings and emotions that would otherwise be imperceptible to the audience. In *The Full Room* (2002), Dominic Dromgoole captures an important aspect of Crimp's dialogue when he asserts: "The accuracy with which he catches the insecurities of modern speech, its need for affirmation and terror of exposure (the 'isn't it?', 'doesn't it?', 'don't we?', that lurk after every phrase are never spoken here, but always felt), that accuracy becomes strangely transfixing, and beautiful" (Dromgoole 2002: 62-63). And, certainly, Crimp's characters

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share a strange love for phatic speech patterns, saying things not to communicate meaning but to keep the conversation going. In "Face to the Wall", these phatic patterns become apparent when the speakers constantly correct, comment upon, or even reinvent the story as if they were in fact situated in the middle of a brainstorming session. The phatic elements, I would add, increase together with the self-referential elements when the verbal exchange is at its most heated emotional state. Notice, for example, how speaker 1 stutters and repeats himself during one of the most horrific sequences of the dialogue:[8]

1 An aerosol–that's right–that's good–of blood–which he hadn't foreseen–he hadn't foreseen the aerosol of blood–or the sound–is this right?–this is right–or the sound of the distressed children when his head was on the white pillow–on the white pillow–don't help me–when his head was on the white pillow picturing the scene–but now–don't help me–but now it's clear–now the picture is clear–and there's another sound–what's that other sound?–don't help me, don't help me–the sound of his heart–no–yes–yes–the sound of his heart–the sound of his own heart–the sound of the killer's heart sounding in the killer's head–that's right–that's good–which he hadn't foreseen–he hadn't foreseen the sound of his own heart in his own head–filling his head–his own heart filling his head with blood–popping his ears–popping his ears with blood–like a swimmer–not swimmer–don't help me–like a diver–this is right–diving into blood–he's like a diver diving into blood–that's right–that's good–very good–down he goes–down he goes away from the light–diving into blood–popping–popping his ears and what are you staring at?–eh?–eh?–what are you staring at?–turn away–look away–no–turn away–that's right–turn away or you're next–be quiet or you're next–that's right– that's good–you saw what happened to child A, you saw what happened to child B, you saw what happened to child C–you

8 In the stage directions, the gender of speaker 1 is indicated as "male" (Crimp 2005: 23).

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saw what happened to child C–you saw what happened to child C–no–yes–no–don't help me.
Pause.
Don't help me–
4 You saw what happened to child D.
1 Don't help me–you saw what happened to child A, you saw what happened to child B, you saw what happened to child C–you saw what happened to child D, so–so–you saw what happened to Child D, so–
4 So shut the / fuck up.
1 YOU SAW WHAT HAPPENED TO CHILD D, SO SHUT THE FUCK UP. CUNT. CUNT. LITTLE CUNT. I SAID DON'T HELP ME.
Long pause
3 So he's not a sympathetic character.

(Crimp 2005b: 30-31).

Here Crimp is showing a struggle against the loss of memory. Speaker 1 seems to have forgotten what to say. Losing track, he constantly interrupts and questions himself (*e.g.* "is this right?–this is right"), but stubbornly refuses to be prompted by the others, hence the repetition of the utterance "don't help me". In fact, speaker 1 explodes when another speaker takes over. Again, it is open to interpretation whether he has forgotten his lines or is suffering from true emotional distress. In terms of both identification and the theatrical state of enunciation, it is important to notice how speaker 1 gradually dives into the mind of the killer.

To articulate his gory vision of the killer's fractured consciousness, he constructs an overwhelming series of symbolic images. Like most creations of the mind in the world of Crimp's sinister and morbidly humorous plays, these images seem to have a strong emotional impact on the speaker: he slowly takes on the role of the killer. And when he finally addresses the absent victims (in performance, I would add, the outburst is likely to be directed at the audience and/or actors for dramatic effect), the growing uncertainty and

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conflicting emotions are reflected in the violence of his outburst: "YOU SAW WHAT HAPPENED TO CHILD D, SO SHUT THE FUCK UP. CUNT. CUNT. LITTLE CUNT. I SAID DON'T HELP ME". This dramatic transformation, in which Crimp – as in the case of "Whole Blue Sky" – establishes an ambiguous correlation between speaker 1 and the central character of the killer, is immediately juxtaposed with the hilarious and somewhat redundant conclusion from speaker 3: "So he's not a sympathetic character" (Crimp 2005b: 31).

From the instant we hear about the killing, we are waiting for the obligatory moment when the motive is revealed. Crimp does two things to prevent this from happening. Firstly, he delays it: in the course of the dialogue the speakers lose track of all the possible explanations, and consequently they fail to uncover a convincing motive. Secondly, in a final twist, the seemingly inevitable culmination of the dialogue is interrupted by a *Twelve-Bar Delivery Blues* song:

Son son, your daddy's not well
Son son, your DADDY'S A SHELL

There's another person
Speaking these lies
There's another person
Looking out through my eyes.
Son son, he's filing reports
Son son, he's PROMPTING MY THOUGHTS.

(Crimp 2005b: 35)

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Illustration 2. Actors Steen Stig Lommer, Tammi Øst and Henrik Birch in Face to the Wall *("Ansigtet mod væggen", directed by Jacob F. Schokking, Café Teatret, Copenhagen 2008). Photo: Thomas Petri.*

In the end, then, we find a thematic pattern that "hinges" the first two scenarios together: both characters (woman and man) are terrorised by internal voices "prompting" their thoughts. What is most striking about "Whole Blue Sky" and "Face to the Wall", however, is not the dissemination of subjectivity into an anonymous murmur of voices (embodied by actors), but the way in which Crimp approaches the juxtaposition of absence and emotion. As we have seen in both plays, Crimp's writing – despite the distinctive humour and

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self-reflective irony – strives above all else for an emotionally charged dialogue, in which the all-pervading sense of absence is tied closely to a certain terror and despair at the core of modern life.

The last, title scenario "Fewer Emergencies" echoes this formal and thematic pattern as we are told about the abandoned child, Bobby, who becomes trapped in his own miniature world. Locked away by his overprotective parents, Bobby finds himself wounded and trapped in the house, while violence rages in the streets. Given that Bobby is also the name of the woman's first-born child in "Whole Blue Sky", we could conclude that this scenario stages another fragment of the same story. The central motif of the story now, however, is not depression, but a state of fear and paranoia. It all begins with a simple conversation about the situation in Bobby's neighbourhood: "Well things are improving. Things are improving day by day," we are told (Crimp 2005b: 41). The happily married parents have locked Bobby in at home, while they – just like the parents in "Whole Blue Sky" – have gone for a boat ride. And, as we have come to expect, the evocation of simulation and anxiety, which resemble central motifs found in the previous scenarios, soon emerges from Bobby's story:

1 They're smiling–that's right–in spite of themselves. Or rather–no–correction–they know they're smiling–but equally they know the kind of smile they're smiling resembles the kind of smile you smile in spite of yourself.
3 Say that again.
1 I can't say that again, but what I can say is that they still sing that little song.
2 They don't.
1 They do.
2 They don't.

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1 They do, they do, they still sing that little song like something you hear in the supermarket.
3 Or in the DIY superstore, or on the porno film–when the swollen cock on the porno film goes into the swollen cunt.
2 So things are looking up.
1 Things are definitely looking up–brighter light–more frequent boating–more confident smile–things are improving day by day–who ever would've guessed?
2 Mmm?

(Crimp 2005b: 42-43).

Here, the use of explicit language is designed to shatter the simulation of happiness. And as the secret song that the woman refuses to sing to her child in "Whole Blue Sky" reappears within the context of "Fewer Emergencies", the narrative correlations between the two separate scenarios thicken. Just like the parents, who are trapped in a simulation of contentment as "the two of them could set sail like that towards the world's rim" (Crimp 2005b: 43), Bobby is trapped in the dreamlike world presented to us by the speakers. For Bobby, however, the more frequent boating means more absence. The child is locked in "for his own protection" (Crimp 2005b: 45). Furthermore, despite the many improvements to Bobby's neighbourhood, which, for example, include the removal of 'unwanted' elements such as "Mexicans", "Serbs", and people who don't clean up "their own dog-mess" (Crimp 2005: 44), the streets are filled with the imminent danger of violence, riots, and emergencies. In fact, speaker 1 determines that: "Things *are* improving–less rocks are thrown–less cars completely overturned–less shots fired–there are fewer emergencies than there used to be–but all the same, there's an emergency on right now. It's on right now. And I'm sorry to say that one of those shots came through the kitchen window and caught poor Bobby in the hip" (Crimp 2005b: 46-47). To the extent that this scene is also concerned with the stag-

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ing of verbal exchange, a game of language played by three nameless speakers, this utterance gains the performative effect of "doing-by-saying" when speaker 1 takes on the role of authority within the context of the dialogue.[9] By way of polite persuasion and convincing repetitions, the others are led to believe by speaker 1 that a stray bullet does injure Bobby in this very instance. Crimp deliberately and self-reflectively plays with the speaker's linguistic capacity to invent and generate mental images of actions, spaces and emotional states.

In *Fewer Emergencies*, this game of invention is taken to its utmost extreme when we are told about the key to use in emergencies:

1 Cupboards–that's right–of precious wood installed by joiners for all of Bobby's things–all of the things Bobby will need in life for pleasure and for emergencies.
2 Candles?
1 Well naturally there are candles, boxes of matches, fresh figs, generators and barrels of oil. But there's also a shelf full of oak trees, and another where pine forests border a mountain lake. If you press a concealed knob a secret drawer pops open–inside is the island of Manhattan. And if you pull the drawers out, spilling the bone-handled knives and chickens onto the floor, spilling out the chainsaws and the harpsichords, there at the back, in the dark space at the back, is the city of Paris with a cloth over it to keep the dust out. There's a wardrobe full of uranium and another full of cobalt. Bobby's suits are hanging over

9 See Austin 1962; Benveniste 1971; Derrida 1988. In "Analytical Philosophy and Language", Émile Benveniste supported J.L. Austin's theory of performatives, but demonstrated that a performative statement is nothing outside of the circumstances that make it performative. A performative utterance, as Benveniste puts it, is an act of authority. Anybody can shout "I declare a general mobilization," Benveniste explains, but if the proper authority is lacking, such an utterance is no more than words. Without authority, then, the performative utterance "reduces itself to futile clamor, childishness, or lunacy" (Benveniste 1971: 236).

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a Japanese golf course. His shoes share boxes with cooked prawns. On one little shelf there's a row for universities–good ones–separated by restaurants where chefs are using the deep-fryers to melt gold and cast it into souvenir life-sized Parthenons. And hanging from the shelf, like the Beethoven quartets and fertility clinics, is the key, the key to use in emergencies, the key to get out of the house.

(Crimp 2005b: 45).

In this example, the infinite topography of the drawer hides an unreal landscape of madness and imagination. Or to put it metaphorically: there is a secret world inside Bobby's "house" – a huge and varied world full of landscapes, islands, cities, monuments, objects, etc. – but Bobby is trapped, despairing, in this world. He wants to reach the key. He wants to open the door. He wants to share his secret world with the dangerous people outside his house. "He must be mad," we are told (Crimp 2005b: 47). In the end, the wounded child attempts to climb the spiral stairs, desperately reaching for the key, but never quite reaching his goal: "That's right, Bobby-boy. Watch the key. Watch the key swinging" (Crimp 2005b: 49). This supreme moment of bathos epitomises how Crimp, through the conjuring of an absent character and indeed even absent world, evokes powerful emotions – here the cathartic emotions of terror and pity – simultaneously tinged with underlying humour derived from the ludicrousness of the image depicted solely through the spoken word.

In conclusion

In this article we have seen how the specific absence of character in Crimp's *Fewer Emergencies* brings particular emotional landscapes into play: depression ("Whole Blue Sky"), terror ("Face to the Wall"), and paranoia ("Fewer Emergencies"). It is in these three short plays – seen collectively as the study

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of three clustered features of characters – that Crimp has chosen to present his gloomy vision of the constitution of the human subject. These three scenarios stand out, therefore, as a sequence of stories about "absent" characters and their hollow, meaningless lives. They do not, however, offer us a consistent three-act narrative, according to traditional dramatic practice. They offer a juxtaposition of emotional states (depression, terror, paranoia), but in spite of, or rather because of the absence of an embodied subject on stage to which they can be permanently attached, the emotions emerge with extraordinary intensity because they can only be located in the viewer. Oscillating as he does in his plays between very ironic and comical language and images of the utmost terror and violence, Crimp finds in this dramaturgy of absence a stimulus more potent and emotionally charged than that which traditional dramatic form can normally offer.

This exploration of the absence of contentment and fulfilment in modern life is not just restricted to Crimp's more formally innovative work, such as *Fewer Emergencies* and *Attempts on Her Life*. It also defines the tragic fate of the characters in more conventional plays such as *The Country* (2000) and *The City* (2008). Whether Crimp writes about a married couple who succumb to a mere simulation of love, as in *The Country* (2000: 366), or portrays a writer who – just like Bobby – resides in a vast city of "invented characters", as in *The City* (2008: 62), his work never fails to evoke a terror and despair at the core of modern life. Consequently, the aesthetic strength of Crimp's plays does not lie merely in the absence of characters or the deconstruction of conventional dramatic form. Nor does it derive solely from the constant oscillation between irony and pathos. It emerges from the cruel, dense and meticulously controlled dialogue that holds a remarkable ability to engage the audience simultaneously in enthralling discursive spaces and heightened emotional states.

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