

# Shawangunk Review

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The *Shawangunk Review* is the journal of the English Graduate Program at the State University of New York, New Paltz. The *Review* publishes the proceedings of the annual English Graduate Symposium and literary articles by graduate students as well as poetry and book reviews by students and faculty. The views expressed in the *Shawangunk Review* are those of the authors and not necessarily those of the Department of English at SUNY New Paltz. Please address correspondence to *Shawangunk Review*, Department of English, SUNY New Paltz, New Paltz, NY 12561.

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## From the Editors

Volume XX of the *Shawangunk Review* features the proceedings of the 2008 English Graduate Symposium, “Holocaust Literature: History, Memory, Representation,” directed by Dr. Jan Zlotnik Schmidt. On behalf of the Graduate Program and the entire English Department we would like to thank Professor Schmidt for arranging an excellent program and for editing the symposium section of the *Review*. Six of our MA students presented essays at the symposium, and the distinguished scholar Dr. Marianne Hirsch, Professor of English and Comparative Literature and Director of the Institute for Research on Women and Gender at Columbia University, was the respondent and keynote speaker. Professor Hirsch has generously granted us permission to publish her keynote address, “Street Photographs: ‘Before, During, and After the Holocaust,’” and we are deeply appreciative of her contributions to the symposium and to the present volume of the *Review*. The 2008 Symposium keynote address was designated the Holocaust Memorial Lecture and co-sponsored by the Louis and Mildred Resnick Institute for Jewish Studies, directed by Dr. Gerald Sorin.

The expanded poetry section of this year’s *Review* contains, in addition to poems by New Paltz faculty and graduate students, poems by friends of the New Paltz community and the work of two French poets with translations by a former New Paltz undergraduate English major.

Also included herein are three outstanding essays selected from those submitted in last year’s English graduate courses.

The 2010 English Graduate Symposium, entitled “From Country to City and Back Again in the Long Nineteenth Century,” will be co-directed by Dr. Jackie George and Dr. Jed Mayer. A call for papers will soon be posted.

The submission deadline for Volume XXI of the *Review* is December 15, 2009. We welcome poetry, book reviews, and critical essays concerning any area of literary studies. Students writing theses (ENG 590) are encouraged to submit an abstract. Please see submission guidelines on page 149.

We ask readers to provide information regarding achievements of our current and former graduate students for the “News and Notes” column. For example, we would like to know the details of conference participation, publications, grants, and honors, as well as news regarding progress of our MA graduates in PhD programs and reports about teaching and employment activities.

Many thanks to Jason Taylor for layout, typesetting, and production supervision.

# I Introduction

## Holocaust Literature: History, Memory, Representation

*Jan Zlotnik Schmidt*

It is a pleasure to write this introduction to the Twentieth Annual English Graduate Symposium, held on April 28, 2008, for it signaled the central place of Holocaust Studies and the critical study of Holocaust Literature in the English Department. The title of the symposium—Holocaust Literature: History, Memory, Representation—reflects the wave of research and scholarship in the field. The first scholars in the discipline were historians who insisted on the primacy of fact in their reconstruction of the era. They contended that only a thorough comprehension and interpretation of primary evidence could begin to document or to explain the catastrophe and that any fictional representation of the Holocaust world would call into question and thus diminish the significance of the actual historical events. In tandem with this critical and theoretical approach was the notion that the Holocaust itself erases language. As Geoffrey Hartman suggests, “The enormity of the event, we are told, blocks thought and leads to a black hole that swallows the haunted interpreter” (1). It has taken several generations of Holocaust scholars and writers to put forth the convincing idea that literature is a powerful mode of representing and embodying the realities, the emotional truths of experience, and the particulars of the era, in ways that presentation of fact cannot possibly accommodate.

After the initial work on the Holocaust done by such historians as Yehuda Bauer, Lucy Dawidowicz, and Raul Hilberg, notable literary scholars including Lawrence Langer and Geoffrey Hartman did turn to examining the work of the first generation, their oral and written testimonies and memoirs, their poetry and fiction, to focus on ways in which their work contributed to an understanding of the era. Now three generations have passed, many of the survivors have died, and while their words remain, an urgent need still exists to represent the Holocaust—to grapple with its incomprehensibility and resistance to embodiment in language at the same time that there is a moral imperative to represent aesthetically a vision of the time. What characterizes the present state of Holocaust Studies is its openness to multiple forms of representation; its re-examination of first-generation texts through different critical lenses; and its commitment to academic study of new and/or neglected texts and voices.

This Graduate Symposium focused on multiple forms of witnessing and representing the Shoah and considered some of the challenges and struggles for artists, both first- and second-generation and beyond, who choose to convey a vision of this horrific time in history. Central questions included the following:

- ◆ What forms of representation portray the truths of this landmark era?
- ◆ What are the differences between historical and literary truth?
- ◆ How do writers and artists break new ground and find new modes of representing the event as the Shoah becomes distanced in time and more fossilized in memory (through reiterated visual images and film portrayals)?
- ◆ What is the dynamic in first-generation modes of witnessing? How does the writer deal with his/her Holocaust self and world and post-Holocaust experience? What tensions between these worlds are evident in the work?
- ◆ What constitutes the stances of second- and even third-generation witnesses who must engage in what Marianne Hirsch in *Family Frames: Photography, Narrative, and Postmemory* defines as “postmemory”: memory “mediated not through recollection but through an imaginative investment and creation” (22)—a process of imaginative confrontation with the events of the Shoah?

The first panel, “First-Generation Voices,” focused on first-generation texts and contextualized them through different critical lenses. In “An Ethical Interpretation of Charlotte Delbo’s ‘None of Us Will Return’: Survivor *Écriture Féminine*,” Stacy Dore explores Charlotte Delbo’s modes of witnessing and stylistic strategies evidenced in her memoir of her time in Auschwitz through the lens of Hélène Cixous’s *écriture féminine*, demonstrating how Delbo employed embodied language to resist the erasure of self imposed by the Nazis in the concentration camp universe. In “Queer Representation in Holocaust Memoirs,” Nicholas Wright examines the treatment of the gay experience during the Holocaust by two memoirists, Pierre Seel and Gad Beck. He uses Bakhtin’s concept of hybridization and scholar Charles E. Bressler’s further differentiation of two forms of hybridization—polyphonic vs. non-polyphonic rhetoric—to analyze the ways in which the two writers depict their Holocaust pasts and the mark that the past has left on their psyches and states of being after the war. In “The ‘Negative Chronotype’: Communicating the Incommunicable in Ida Fink’s ‘Traces’ and ‘A Spring Morning,’” Marissa Caston explores Fink’s notion of a “scrap of time,” “a certain time not measured in months and years” (Fink 39)—the time of the Holocaust—a time that exists outside of normal time—and its impenetrability to memory and to narration. The essay explores both the stances of the survivor and of the witness who strive to understand this “trace” of the past.

The second panel, “Postmemory: The Second-Generation and Beyond,”

concentrated on works by artists and writers affected by the “longest shadow” of the past (to use Geoffrey Hartman’s words): those subsequent generations affected by the Holocaust. Alexandria Wojcik, in her study of Czech New Wave cinema’s portrayal of the Holocaust, “Closely Watched Films: The Holocaust in Czechoslovak Cinema,” examines how several Czech filmmakers portray Holocaust realities as a coded means of exploring Czech national identity and oppression during the Soviet era. She focuses on Czech complicity with the Nazis as an abandonment of “Český,” the humanistic spirit of the Czech people. In “Necessary Evil: The Divided Self and the Failure of Redemption in Kurt Vonnegut’s *Mother Night*,” Lucas Kane analyzes Vonnegut’s complex portrayal of a protagonist who is both collaborator with the Nazis and undercover agent for the Americans in order to reveal the moral ambiguities evident in the seemingly heroic poses during the time, the shadowy lines between good and evil, and the impossibility of redemption. Finally, in “‘Gretel in Darkness’: Persistence of the Coded Subtext in the Simulated,” Lea Weiss, in her treatment of Louise Glück’s poem, examines the complex stance of the post-Holocaust witness and of human beings’ moral complicity in the events of the Shoah—even generations later—for one theme of the poem is that people in a post-Holocaust world have inherited the cultural memory of that era and a shared history of wounding, complicity, and guilt.

Dr. Marianne Hirsch, the invited Graduate Symposium and Holocaust Memorial speaker, Professor of English and Comparative Literature and Director of the Institute for Research on Women and Gender at Columbia University, has done much to advance research in Holocaust Studies. Author of *Family Frames: Photography, Narrative, and Postmemory* (1997) and *Teaching the Representation of the Holocaust* (co-edited 2004), she has done pioneering work on cultural memory, visuality, and gender, particularly on the representation of World War II and the Holocaust in literature, testimony, and photography. Her keynote address, “Street Photographs: ‘Before, During, and After the Holocaust,’” challenges the central Holocaust historiography that we have come to accept—the account of the Jewish experience before, during, and after the Holocaust. Instead, she proposes that street photographs, Eastern European photos from family albums or collections—photos from the time before the Holocaust and the early years of the war—suggest that this chronology may be only one selected narrative imposed upon this time frame. By examining photos of Jews taken by street photographers on the main avenues of Cernăuți, Romania, Hirsch demonstrates how this evidence may tell a very different story, one, for example, in which the possibilities of an ordinary daily life existed even during a time far into the war years: “They can also tell us something about moments of relative normalcy that exist even in extreme circumstances and provide us with glimpses into tranquil instances that helped to keep some hope of survival alive.” Her work suggests how multifarious Jews’ experiences of the war were and how incomplete our own pictures of

the time were. These photographs, Hirsch contends, become significant “points of memory” that not only bring back a moment in time during the war, but also actively prompt us to reconsider and to re-envision the Jewish experience during the war. The photographs not only represent the past, but also engender our active reconsideration and memorialization of that tragic time in our history.

The panelists’ essays and Dr. Hirsch’s keynote address attest to the vibrancy of Holocaust Studies at the present moment and the continued outpouring of creative works attempting to represent the Shoah. Moreover, the symposium also reveals human beings’ impulse to counter destruction with creation and the moral imperative to witness atrocity as part of our human condition.

### Works Cited

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- Hartman, Geoffrey. *The Longest Shadow: In the Aftermath of the Holocaust*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 1996.
- Hirsch, Marianne. *Family Frames: Photography, Narrative, and Postmemory*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997.

## II Keynote Address

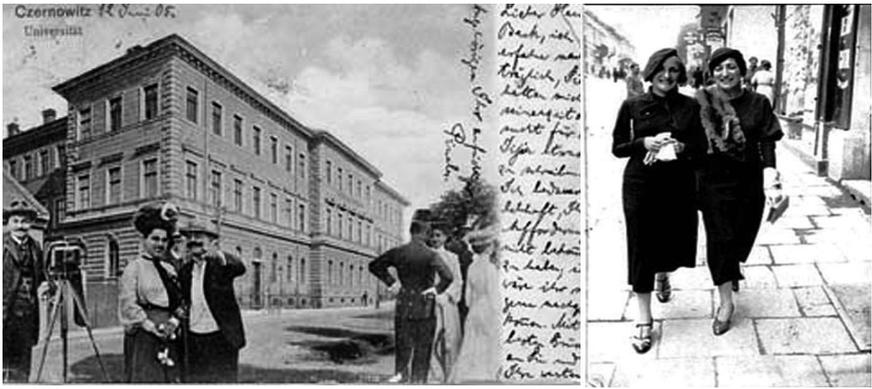
### Street Photographs: “Before, During and After the Holocaust”

*Marianne Hirsch and Leo Spitzer*

Like in so many other European and American cities in the decades between the First and Second World Wars, street-photographers on the main pedestrian shopping and coffee-house streets in Romanian Cernăuți (formerly Austrian Czernowitz) photographed passers-by and strollers—earning money by selling small prints of the images taken. The photographs were made with portable, compact, tripod mounted box cameras using foldable optical viewfinders and single speed shutters tripped by a non-removable cable. The image was exposed on 2.5 x 3.5 inch direct-positive paper (sometimes on postcard stock with an imprint of a photographic studio) that was developed on-the-spot in a tank attached to the camera. This relatively quick procedure—a predecessor of “instant” Polaroid technology—permitted photographers to offer the public inexpensive finished souvenir pictures to take home or, in cases where the photographers were sponsored by a studio, the opportunity to order enlargements or more formal posed portraits.<sup>1</sup>

Numerous street photographs exist in the family albums and collec-

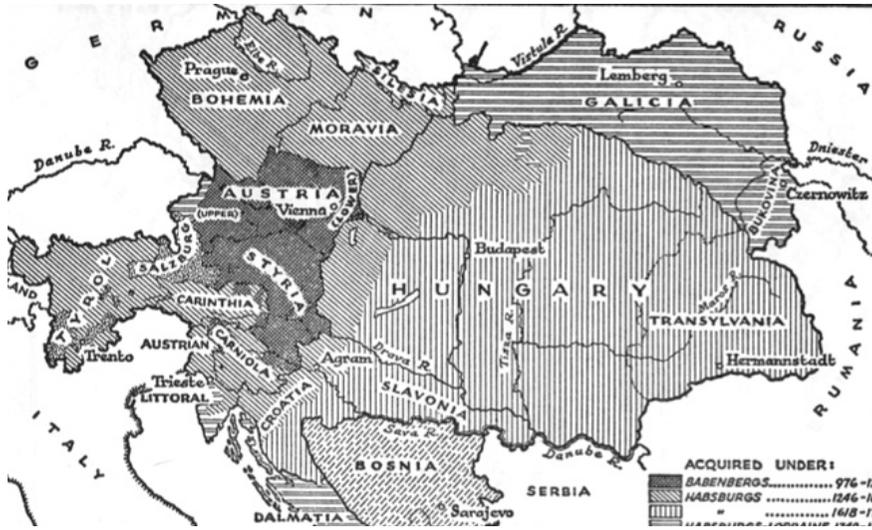




tions belonging to Jewish Czernowitz/Cernăuți emigrants or their present-day family relations, and over the course of the past few years (through word-of-mouth interest and an internet list-serve request) we acquired copies of many such images—some from the 1920s, the majority from the 1930s, but also a few that particularly stand out, from the Second World War years, the early 1940s.

We began to think about these vernacular images when, in the summer of 1998, our parents/in-laws, Lotte and Carl Hirsch, visited the USHMM photo archive where they had been invited to donate some of their family pictures from Czernowitz/Cernăuți, the Eastern European city where they were born, grew up, and survived the Holocaust.<sup>2</sup> The photos were intended to enhance the museum’s small archival collection of images from that city and the Bukowina province of which it had once been the capital.

Of all the various family, school, and tourist photographs they brought along to donate, the archivist was most enthusiastic about the ones taken on the



city's main commercial street, the Herrengasse. From every European city or town, she emphasized, she wanted to have at least one pre-Holocaust photo showing Jews in normal circumstances, walking comfortably and confidently down its main street. In light of the archivist's desire to acquire photos of East European Jews in circumstances of pre-Holocaust "normalcy," it is fascinating to consider what these Czernowitz/Cernăuți street photographs *do* and *do not* in fact reveal to us—about the place, about Jewish life in that city before and during the war, and about the role of family photos in individual, social, and cultural memory.

Certainly, when one looks at the street photos of passers-by and strollers, in almost all of them the persons centrally depicted seem to project a sense of confidence and comfort. In the vast majority of the street photos we acquired in our research, that characteristic seems as consistent as the fact that the people pictured are usually walking, on the move—subjects of a quickly snapped photo, not a posed one. The street photos are telling objects, portraying how individuals perform their identities in public: how they inhabit public spaces and situate themselves in relation to class, cultural, and gender norms. Indeed, the desire to recall and display such a performance may be one factor explaining why persons bought and kept the original photos (or their enlargements), and why they exhibited them in family albums. When they



are then transferred from a personal/family holding to a public archive—as in Lotte and Carl Hirsch’s Holocaust museum donation—these images, at the juncture of private and public, of domestic and urban space, bridge a gap between memory and history.

Conveyed within these street photos is the essence of all of photography: the photographic “capture” of an image at a particular moment in time—the fact that a photo (in the pre-digital era) is assumed to “adhere to” its referent and as such, as Roland Barthes has observed in *Camera Lucida*, “in Photography [we] can never deny that *the thing has been there*,” that the image depicts something “‘that-has-been’ . . . absolutely, irrefutably present” before the camera.<sup>3</sup> Hence the documentary value of photographs to an institution like the Holocaust Museum that aims to construct an authoritative historical archive while also hoping to reactivate and re-embody it as memory. Each of the street photographs also reflects a place and a space—an urban street location depicting buildings (in often recognizable architectural style), as well as storefronts, display windows, and commercial signs. These are background to the street strollers, to be sure, but they also carry information about the larger social context in which life in this city took place. That “information,” which Barthes called the “studium,” contributes to historical understanding.<sup>4</sup> At the same time, the connection between the viewer and the individuals depicted in the images—whether these viewers are contemporaries of the subjects in the photo, familial descendants, or more distant, unrelated, observers—provokes the work of memory and what we have termed postmemory: the inherited remembrance of subsequent generations.<sup>5</sup> In fact, like all photographs, these street photos also reflect something “already deferred” (to quote Barthes again), not only the instant of time when they were snapped but the change-over-time central to their historicity—change between photos of the same subject, as well as of different subjects on the same street, taken at different moments in time, and change between the time when these photos were actually snapped and the present time when we, as viewers, look at them.<sup>6</sup>

Persons who look at these photos, whether in private collections or in public museum holdings, do of course bring knowledge to them that neither their subjects nor photographers would have possessed. Not only may these viewers be able to contextualize the images historically, inserting them within a broader tapestry of cultural/collective or personal/familial remembrance, but they also bring to them an awareness of future history—of events-yet-to-come that could not have been known to the subjects of the photographs at the time when the photos were taken. This is at the heart of the Holocaust Museum archive’s desire for them: in the archive’s conception, they reveal a normalcy and a social integration that was then violently disrupted and destroyed with the beginnings of persecution, ghettoization, and deportation. Familial descendants might recognize in the photos some of the fabric of family life that had been passed down through stories

and behaviors, while extra-familial viewers might connect to them in a different way: through their own repeated exposure to a shared transgenerational archive of private and public street images that provide visual glimpses into urban life of the past. The very conventional nature of street photographs, and their place in the family album, invites an “affiliative” and identificatory look on the part of viewers.<sup>7</sup> Through such a look, viewers can project familiar faces and scenes onto them, adopt them into their own repertoire of familial images, and, in this way, use them to re-embody memory.

When viewed as nothing more than as historical documents, however, the street photos from Czernowitz/Cernăuți are quite limited. On first glance, we might in fact see them as the archivist had hoped—as images of urban Jews in apparent comfort, strolling down a busy main street of an Eastern European city in the years before the outbreak of the Second World War, seemingly belonging to the place, indistinguishable from other persons who share their economic background. In Lotte Hirsch’s collection of street photos, and in all the others we have amassed and viewed, the clothing worn by the strollers—generally fashionable and frequently elegant if not ostentatious—suggests their class situation and affluence, their membership in the city’s bourgeoisie, and their public assertion of this fact.

Indeed, in their seemingly casual walk down the city’s main avenues, and their apparent willingness to let themselves be photographed and to purchase the prints, the persons photographed seem to be publicly displaying their freedom to inhabit and to claim public spaces and to move through them, *flâneur*-like, at ease and in leisure within the urban landscape, declaring their unmarked presence there, glancing about but also ready to be looked at and to be seen.

And yet what remains invisible in these photos, or hardly perceptible behind the palpable display of Jewish bourgeois comfort, is the assimilationist trajectory that this class identification manifests and represents. Only through a comparison and contrast—with “shtetl” Jews residing in Cernăuți’s nearby villages or with less affluent working-class Jews (or with impoverished non-Jews relegated to the background and perhaps invisibility in the photos)—can



My great-aunt Neke. Her 2nd husband Max Orlband had a shoe shop in the Hauptstrasse.  
Submitted by David Citrin



one begin to gain a concrete visual sense of the class mobility and differentiation that Habsburg-era Jewish emancipation had engendered and enabled here. These are the historical, economic, and cultural layers that the snapshot of one moment in time cannot possibly reveal.

But perhaps even less apparent in the street photographs than this is the fact that the city through which the strollers move is no longer Czernowitz, the “Vienna of the East,” the liberal, predominantly German-speaking city with which the large Jewish bourgeoisie there had so strongly identified. Physical evidence of the transformation of the Austrian Czernowitz into the Romanian Cernăuți, to be sure, can be detected in some of the images: street names have been changed, and they as well as the

store signs and placards are written in Romanian, not in German. The ideological environment accompanying the Romanian take-over, however, is hardly evident: the reality that, not long after the political transfer to Romania at the end of World War I, the region’s new rulers instituted a strict policy of Romanianization which had immediate dire consequences for Czernowitz Jews. Under its rubric, the Romanian language was instituted as the language of transaction in business and governmental affairs and as the primary language of instruction in state schools. Romanian-born nationals were also privileged in professional and public appointments and promotions, and Romanian cultural institutions and nationalist values were fore-grounded to the detriment of others. Jews were relegated to the status of Romanian “subjects” not “citizens,” and many of the emancipatory civil and political rights that they had acquired were taken away from them. Most ominously, the street photos do not even hint at the existence and rapid and virulent growth of Romanian anti-Semitism and Fascism in the decades of the 1920s and 1930s—the increasing restrictions, quotas, discriminatory exclusions, harassment, and violence that Jews came to face and endure under Romanian rule.

The photos, moreover, cannot disclose to us the contradictions at the heart of the city strolls: that the middle-class Jews depicted within them continued in large measure to live, and walk through the streets, as though they were really

still in Habsburg Czernowitz and not in Romanian Cernăuți. In all likelihood, the conversations they had with each on their street walks, in the stores, at the cafés, like those at home, were in German and not in the mandated Romanian. In not being able to reveal their subjects' adherence to the language and life-ways of the past, the photos cannot expose either the nostalgic yearning for a lost world of yesterday or the resistance to Romanization and the restrictive political and ideological environment that is, in effect, taking place even at the very moment that they are being snapped.

"In spirit," the poet Rose Auslander wrote of this interwar period, "we remained Austrians; our capital was Vienna and not Bucharest."<sup>8</sup> The poets depicted in the photos at right—Alfred Margul-Sperber, Paul Celan, and Selma Meerbaum-Eisinger—all wrote in German throughout the period of Romanian rule. Without the benefit of historical contextualization, therefore, the pre-Shoah "normalcy" and "comfort," and the documentation of Jewish "belonging" that the Holocaust Museum archivist wanted the street photographs to display, is significantly compromised.

Nowhere does the limitation of the chronological schema of "before, during and after the Holocaust" that structures the museum archive's selection and display intent appear more problematic than when we consider the Cernăuți street photographs from 1942 and 1943. Not only do these photos break the museum's frame,





30 Ilana Shmueli mit ihrer Mutter um 1943 in Czernowitz.



Courtesy of City Derner & Berthold Geisinger. Picture taken in May 1943! Notice the men (Berthold Geisinger on left and Heini Stup on right both are wearing the Star of David on their clothes. Submitted by Lilian Madfes

they challenge any straightforward historical reading of the album and the archive. And, we want to suggest, they also fracture the family album’s affiliative look.

Depicted at left are two photos dated “1943” and “around 1943” that exhibit Jews wearing the yellow star. Yet, in every other way, these images very much look like the street photos from the pre-war era. Some two years before these photos were snapped, however, in the fall of 1941, about two thirds of the city’s Jewish population—around 40,000 persons—were deported to the ghettos and forced labor camps in Transnistria, an area between the Dniestr and Bug rivers that Romania had annexed from Ukraine, where about half of their number perished. Those who were still able to remain in the city, like the subjects of these photos, endured severe restrictions, strict curfews, and were obliged to wear the yellow star. Men were routinely taken off the street to do forced labor. In the summer of 1942, there was a second-wave of deportations to Transnistria or further east, across the Bug River, into German administered territories, and to an almost certain death. By 1943, therefore, when these street photos were allegedly taken, it was not at all clear that there would not be further deportations or “cleansings” of Jews.

In all likelihood, during such a time of extreme oppression and totalitarian persecution, photography itself—and public photography especially so—came under suspicion

as a potentially threatening instrument of surveillance and exposure. The street itself becomes quite literally, in the terms Walter Benjamin uses to describe the ominous Paris photographs of Eugène Atget, “the scene of the crime.”<sup>9</sup> And yet, these street photos seem to refuse to testify to the alarming context in which they were taken. Like in pre-war times, the Jews depicted in them are walking through the city—ostensibly on the former “Herrengasse”—and are having their pictures taken by a street photographer. Most curiously, they also purchased the photos after their development. Their stroll seems “normal,” as though the temporal and political moment in which their photos were snapped and the mark of “otherness” that they were publicly forced to display with the yellow star, were hardly relevant.

The two photos are certainly different: Ilana Shmueli (now an Israeli writer and poet) and her mother do perhaps look somewhat apprehensive; only the young Ilana is looking at the photographer while her mother looks straight ahead, seemingly avoiding the photographer’s gaze. This photo shows the two women on a bare and isolated street, perhaps at a time of day when few others are out walking around. They appear to be, in every sense, exposed. The three young people in the Geisinger/Stup photo look more carefree: two of them are smiling, and the third, Bertold Geisinger, on the left, while looking somewhat puzzled at the photographer, does not appear to be intimidated. In this image, the street is busy and the photo reveals a great deal of the contextual information that we seek in such images: street signs in Romanian, fashionable clothes, affect and gesture that truly present a snapshot of a moment. And yet, both photos raise the same set of questions: How could their subjects walk down the street during this terrible time with such apparent ease and freedom? Why did the photographer, surely not Jewish, take pictures of Jews who were so publicly marked by the yellow star. Was his interest merely in selling the print—a monetary one only—or were there other motivations as well? How did he look at his subjects, how did he see them? Did he view his own role as that of a witness to victimization, or as a disengaged bystander distanced from the fray? And why, in turn, did the walkers stop to buy the street photo? Can we interpret their purchase as an act of defiance or resistance against the humiliation to which they were subjected? Or did they buy it in the same spirit that the other street photos had been bought, with a sense of a future—with the intent or will, in other words, to archive it within their family album or collection and, hence, to transmit their story, this particular story, to generations yet to come?

Looking at these photos now, we need to be sensitive to Michael André Bernstein’s warning that reading the past backward through retrospective knowledge can be a dangerous form of “backshadowing”—in his words: “a kind of retroactive foreshadowing in which the shared knowledge of the *outcome* of a series of events by narrator and listener is used to judge the participants in those

events *as though they too should have known what was to come.*"<sup>10</sup> Yet the task of looking at photos from the past requires the ability to expose and maintain an awareness of the disjunction between the incommensurable temporalities of then and now. What, in this sense, can these truly incongruous photos tell us about the past, about our present relationship to it, and about photography's evidentiary value?

As historical documents, we again see that they raise more questions than they answer. They do indeed testify to differences between Cernăuți and other East European cities like Łódź or Warsaw, where no such commercial photos of Jews walking on streets outside of the ghettos could have been snapped at this time. They can also tell us something about moments of relative normalcy that exist even in extreme circumstances and provide us with glimpses into tranquil instances that helped to keep some hope of survival alive.

But it is as memorial objects that these street photographs pose the greatest difficulty. If these photos were bought and placed in family albums in the effort to transmit history and memory, they challenge the postmemorial viewer—viewers in subsequent generations—by resisting and defying the affiliative look that characterizes family photos. On the one hand, they appear to fit into the family album like the other street photos from an earlier period. On the other, we would argue, our perception and apprehension of the yellow stars arrests and confounds our look, rendering us unable to integrate the Jew star into the entire picture that we see. In each photo, the star is Barthes's punctum as detail, but a detail that, once perceived, annihilates the rest of the image. In Barthes's words, it "rises from the scene, shoots out of it like an arrow, and pierces [the viewer]."<sup>11</sup> The total image, in its apparent normalcy, cannot hold or absorb that detail: we either separate that detail out, or we refuse to see it at all. In Benjamin's terms, the star is the "shock" that "bring[s] the mechanism of association in the viewer to a complete halt." Only captions, Benjamin insists, can enable speculation and understanding. Without them, images remain "bound in coincidence."<sup>12</sup>

The Geisinger/Stup photo is instructive in this regard. While, as the caption added by Lilian Madfes (who gave us the photo) states, the men visibly wear the star, the woman in the middle, smiling and not looking at the photographer at all, wears something that looks like a large white kerchief in the same spot on the left where a star would have been displayed. Is she perhaps not Jewish and not in fear of being seen without the star? Or might the star be covered by her hand, perhaps for the instant the photo is snapped, or by the kerchief itself? At the center of the photo, wearing a bright white blouse, she is the figure that immediately attracts our gaze, and the kerchief provides us with an alternative focus within the image—an alternative punctum that permits us to block the stars from view long enough so we can take in the entire scene. Our look follows the trajectory of the color white that dominates the photograph: when our eyes move from

the white raincoat, to the kerchief, to the white socks, they are momentarily able to bypass the two stars. Momentarily, because, unavoidably, the stars attract our gaze, making it difficult to see anything else. The stars, invisible at one moment, become hypervisible, and thus shocking and arresting, at another. And it is this visual oscillation between the wildly divergent details of the image that allows us, finally, to look at this picture and adopt it into the family album.

Indeed, it is the similarity between these wartime photos and the prewar ones that challenges the chronological schema of “before, during and after” that we have come to take for granted in Holocaust historiography and memorialization. These street photos from war-time Cernăuți point to a different, a more layered and overlapping chronology than the one structuring the Holocaust museum’s photo archive and its permanent exhibition.<sup>13</sup>

## Notes

1. For explanations of the technology of street photography see “Scott’s Photographica Collection” in <<http://www.vintagephoto.tv>>.
2. For historical and cultural background on Czernowitz see: Andrei Corbea-Hoisie, ed., *Jüdisches Städtebild Czernowitz*, (Frankfurt am Main: Jüdischer Verlag im Suhrkamp, 1998); Hugo Gold, *Geschichte Der Juden in der Bukowina*, 2 vols. (Tel Aviv: Olamenu, 1962); Herald Heppner, ed., *Czernowitz: Die Geschichte einer ungewöhnlichen Stadt* (Köln: Böhlau, 2000); Florence Heymann, *Le crépuscule des lieux: Identités juives de Czernowitz* (Paris: Stock, 2003); Marianne Hirsch and Leo Spitzer, “‘We Would Not Have Come Without You’: Generations of Nostalgia,” *American Imago*, vol. 59, No. 3, Fall 2002; Marianne Hirsch, “Uprooted Words on a Bookshelf in Chernivtsi,” *PMLA*, vol. 121, no. 5, October 2006; Hermann Sternberg, *Zur Geschichte der Juden in Czernowitz*, (Tel Aviv: Olamenu, 1962).
3. Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1981) pp. 76-77.
4. Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, pp. 25-27, 41.
5. For postmemory, see Marianne Hirsch, *Family Frames: Photography, Narrative and Postmemory* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997); M. Hirsch, “Surviving Images: Holocaust Photographs and the Work of Postmemory” in Barbie Zelizer, ed., *Visual Culture and the Holocaust* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2000), pp. 215-246; M. Hirsch, “Marked by Memory: Feminist Reflections on Trauma and Transmission,” in Nancy K. Miller and Jason Tougas, eds. *Extremities: Trauma, Testimony and Community* (Urbana: Illinois, 2002), pp. 71-91. Also see, Andrea Liss, *Trespassing Through Shadows: Memory, Photography & the Holocaust* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998).
6. Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, p. 77.
7. Hirsch, *Family Frames*, pp. 93-94, 254-256.

8. Rose Ausländer, cited in Carola Gottzmann, ed., *Unerkannt und (un)bekannt: Deutsche Literatur in Mittel- und Osteuropa* (Tübingen: Francke, 1991), p. 209.
9. Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations* (New York: Schocken, 1969), 226.
10. Michael André Bernstein, *Foregone Conclusions: Against Apocalyptic History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), p.16.
11. Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, p. 26
12. Walter Benjamin, "A Short History of Photography," in Alan Trachtenberg, ed., *Classic Essays on Photography* (New Haven: Leet's Island Books, 1980), p. 215.
13. A longer version of this essay will appear as an article in *History and Theory*, December 2009.

### III | Symposium Papers

#### An Ethical Interpretation of Charlotte Delbo's "None of Us Will Return": Survivor *Écriture Féminine*

Stacy Dore

Charlotte Delbo, a French resistance fighter during WWII, imprisoned in Auschwitz from January 1943 until January 1944 (Langer ix), composed her trilogy, *Auschwitz and After*, as her record of those experiences. In her memoir Delbo desires to make people “see” (“*Il faut donner à voir*”) her experiences, which she believed to be “unthinkable” (*Auschwitz* 4). In order to convey the inexplicable, she bombards the reader with imagistic writing, the product of what she terms “deep memory.” This writing, she explains, emerges from the “skin of memory,” a mental place which “preserves sensations, physical imprints. It is the memory of the senses” (“Voices” 77-79). Writing in this way, she seeks to subvert the traditional relationship between signifier and signified and to recreate the sign in order to make her readers “see” the suffering that she experienced and witnessed. With this process in mind, I will explore Delbo’s writing as an example of what Hélène Cixous termed *écriture féminine*, the “indefinable” practice whereby women literally write themselves, their bodies, into the text. This feminist examination must exist in tandem with the fact that *Auschwitz and After* is a Holocaust text. Therefore, I will examine Delbo’s text as survivor *écriture féminine* through close-reading of two moments of the absence of language and of the body in the text.

The writing of *écriture féminine* is literally the writing of the body into the text. Hélène Cixous states in “The Laugh of Medusa”: “Woman must write her self: must write about women and bring women to writing, from which they have been driven away as violently as from their bodies—for the same reasons, by the same law, with the same fatal goal. Woman must put herself into the text—as into the world and into history—by her own movement” (2039). Although Cixous did not believe that this practice had specific definitions (or rather, constraints), there are elements of *écriture féminine* that can be pinpointed and that reside in Delbo’s writing. *Écriture féminine* is the writing of the space between, of both the presence and the absence. It is also the writing of those things that have been silenced or distorted to serve the patriarchal machinery of the socially constructed binary oppositions. It is reclamation of that which has been stolen, both body and speech. This project is done by rewriting the self that has been written by others. Exploring Holocaust literature through a French feminist theoretical per-

spective is to make implicit comparisons between the patriarchal authority which oppresses and subjugates women and the Nazi (also patriarchal) authority that annihilated the Jews and thousand of Others.

There is a historical debate in Holocaust studies concerning the application of a gendered interpretation. In 1998, Gabriel Schoenfeld called into question the legitimacy of combining Holocaust and gender studies (Baumel 197). Judith Tydor Baumel has been working in the combined fields for some time; she has encountered numerous responses to the question of gender. She remembers while doing research at the Yad Vashem historical museum being shown a statue that was thought to be female. When she corrected her guide, he replied “But what does it matter if the statue is of a man or a woman? After all, by the end of the war, everyone looked alike, didn’t they?” (198). In addition to this response, she has also encountered scholars who question the importance of such an approach, or who demand it be legitimized in some way. There is fear that the gendered approach calls into question the idea of the “collective Jewish fate” of Holocaust sufferers. Or that a discussion of female suffering in the Holocaust will lead to the misunderstanding that the Nazis had “targeted women and not Jews” (199).

Charlotte Delbo was neither Jewish nor male. However, she experienced the Holocaust in the same camps as the Jews, and she specifically identifies herself and others in the camp as “these women” throughout her memoir. Before the term “gender” was coined as a biological descriptor, before the ideas of social-constructed gender roles, there was the Holocaust (Baumel 196). The people who experienced that horror lost weight, hair, breasts, menstruation, and control over bodily functions. Yet Delbo did not question whether or not she could experience the ordeal as a woman. In fact, though the Nazis practiced multiple techniques of dehumanization, they still categorized people according to gender. Delbo’s uniform was a dress. She was in the women’s camp, with other women—mothers and daughters. It is necessary to be conscious of the ethical implications in Holocaust interpretation. Thus, as Delbo saw herself as female, her writing deserves to be interpreted from that perspective.

As Delbo also is writing as a survivor of the Holocaust, it is important to recognize that her writing is not only for herself. Myers, in research about survivors, states: “The literature of survivors is really the shame and anguish of survival reversed into testimony for the sake of others who cannot themselves testify to the crimes committed against them” (277). Delbo writes not only for her self—her mind and her body—but also for those (women) who did not survive, who have been eternally silenced. By writing the dead into the text, she is attempting to give those women back their bodies and their speech. The interpretation of her text that follows can then best be described as survivor *écriture féminine*: recognition of the indelible ink, the number, on her woman’s arm and its imprint on her words.

In the chapter “Thirst,” from the first volume of her memoir, Delbo recounts a moment when she experienced a literal inability to speak, noting that it is “the state of being dead” (*Auschwitz* 70). She is thirsty, so thirsty that the need for water consumes each moment of her thoughts. She writes: “One obsession remains: to drink” (71). She lives to seek out water, ignorant of the dangers of doing so. She is alone in her need, because she cannot speak: “Lips try to speak but the mouth is paralyzed. A mouth cannot form words. . . . The muscles of the mouth want to attempt articulation and do not articulate. Such is the despair of the powerlessness that grips me” (70). This excerpt, an example of deep memory, seeks to “expose the naked self divested of its heroic garments, a self cold, filthy, gaunt, the victim of unbearable pain” (Langer xiii). Delbo writes to make the reader “see” the realities of her suffering. Her speech has been literally stolen from her by those who deny her adequate water. She thinks only of the water, of a wet mouth, of a tongue that is not “a piece of wood” (*Auschwitz* 142). Without speech, silenced, she feels like she is dying. When she is given even a little water “words,” “sight,” and “life” return (72). Finally, she is able to drink all that she needs: “I would have liked to lick the side of the pail. . . . I had drunk. . . . My belly was enormous. . . . Speech was returning” (144-45).

The need for water represents the need for speech. The tongue is Delbo’s symbol for the “body” of speech, the physical aspect of her that suffered most from lack of water. Being denied water, having speech stolen, made her feel as if she were losing her sanity, her vision, her life. Her belly swollen from the water symbolizes her “rebirth” as one who can speak. As Cixous suggests: “women are body. . . . For a long time it has been in body that women have responded to persecution. . . . Those who have turned their tongues 10,000 times seven times before not speaking are either dead from it or more familiar with their tongues and their mouths than anyone else” (“Medusa” 2050). Delbo’s awareness of her loss of language in the camps is transformed into a simultaneously real and symbolic image of thirstiness. Through this image of deep memory she is able to convey the experience of the camp. The denial of her need to drink by her persecutors drove her to near madness; her silence felt like death. The ultimate reclamation of language, the return to life, began in the moment when she was able to drink from the pail, when she had nothing but her need for water/speech. Cixous writes: “when there is nothing . . . there is still a spring, which is language” (“Free” 209-10). The language was what she had to have, because the language was the one thing she could possess. Her full ability to access language was completed by the act of writing, through presentation of the writing to the reader in this metaphorical form. The original sign, thirst = need for water, is transformed into thirst (silence) = need for water (speech) through the symbolic, deep memory writing.

The body is a recurring symbol of complexity. It begs contemplation not only of the body of woman, the body of the writer, but also the body in the camp.

The woman in the camp is woman without body, without that which literally has been starved and stolen from her. Fittingly, Delbo conveys the body most often in a synecdochical manner. In the following excerpt, “Morning,” it is not quite light, but the “masses of women” are outside for the morning roll call. It is still winter. Delbo describes herself fainting:

Each breath drawn in is so cold that it stops the whole respiratory system. Skin ceases to be the tight protective covering for the body. . . . The lungs flap in the icy wind. Wash out on a line. The heart is shrunk from cold, contracted, constricted till it aches, and suddenly I feel something snap in there, in my heart. My heart breaks loose from my chest and everything that holds it in its place. I feel a stone falling inside me. . . . How good one feels, free of this fragile, demanding heart . . . a heart at the end of its resources. (*Auschwitz* 64)

This image is one of the parts of Delbo. Delbo feels the cold that chills her incoming breath. She feels that her skin, the outer part of her body, is no longer “protective.” It does not feel tight. Her lungs without tight skin around them seem to “flap.” She subverts the normative, refreshing image of newly washed clothes hanging to dry in the sun with one of horror. It is not sunny; it is cold and still dark. There are not clothes on the imaginary line; those are her lungs, barely connected to her.

Her heart is “cold, contracted, constricted”; it “aches.” The alliteration emphasizes her focus on her fragility. The heart is a “stone” that is “fragile” and “demanding.” The juxtaposition of the metaphor of the heart as a “stone” with the personified characteristics of being both “fragile” and “demanding” emphasizes the ambivalent tone. Her heart has been transformed in the camp; it is needy, cold, and numb. It is unable to do anything for Delbo now; it is “at the end of its resources.” The heart represents the pre-Auschwitz self, which tries to leave her. The “one” that remains, the Auschwitz self, feels “good” as her other self “breaks loose.” The early self has escaped momentarily, out of the cavity of the chest that symbolizes the camp and “everything that holds it in its place.” The “everything” represents the guards. This escape provokes feelings in the remaining “one.” With the use of the ungendered third person, Delbo seeks to call attention to all of the “one[s]” in the camp.

The choice of the synecdoche is twofold. First, the whole camp community is made up of parts that are individual people. It is a mass of people, “of women” (64). Three times she repeats in this section, prior to the earlier excerpt, the phrase “I am standing amid my comrades” (64-66). By representing her self this way, as a part, Delbo emphasizes that the whole of Auschwitz is comprised of individuals. Each individual woman is more than a body; she is a comrade. She is a whole person, with a chest holding lungs and a heart, with feelings of cold and of goodness, with awareness of the resources needed to survive.

The second effect of the synecdoche is to reconfigure the image of woman so that it subverts the established binary opposition. In *The Madwoman in the Attic* Gilbert and Gubar have noted that in traditional patriarchal writings of women, the female is represented as having the status of an object “reduc[ed] to extreme stereotypes (angel/monster),” based on ascribed characteristics (2026). Woman is represented by the patriarchy as having “good” parts (i.e., silence and submission resulting in virtue) or “bad” parts (i.e., speech and sin resulting in madness.) By depicting herself in parts, Delbo is redefining what those parts are and from what standpoint they will be described. It is not a question of sin or submission, of sanity or madness. For Delbo it is a matter of survival and death, of the body and selves and the space between. It is about which “one,” which part of the whole, will come out on the other side to speak for those who didn’t survive. Cixous writes: “If there is a ‘propriety of woman,’ it is paradoxically her capacity to deappropriate unselfishly: body without end, without appendage, without principle ‘parts.’ If she is a whole, it’s a whole composed of parts that are wholes, not simple partial objects” (“Medusa” 2052). By writing her self (and her comrades) symbolically as parts that represent the whole of Auschwitz, Delbo redefines her status. She is no longer the object, the silent female victim. She is the speaking female survivor. Her parts, her selves, are not “partial objects.” Each self (before, during, after) is its own self. Likewise, each comrade, each woman, was a whole self subjected to suffering. It is not that ideas of virtue and sin, of sanity and madness are not apt to the discussion of the Holocaust. It is that it is time for a different perspective on stereotypical depictions of women, a realization that such extremes do not fit into a description of survival.

Through the exploration of moments of the absence and recovery of language and the representation of the body in *Auschwitz and After*, characteristics of Delbo’s writing as *écriture féminine* become clear. She presents her sense memories imagistically, in order to give the reader the perspective necessary to begin to understand the journey her body and her language have taken. As her writing is the product of her deep memory, it allows her to examine the sign that is language. As Cixous explains, “the dispossessed live in language. . . . these are the great masters of the signifier, for language is their universe” (“Free” 209-10). Delbo uses parts of her body as both literal and figurative symbols in order to convey abstract and perhaps inexplicable realities. She consistently presents binary oppositions, some implicitly, others explicitly, in order to examine the space between them and, in effect, to subvert them by this very process of examination. Cixous theorizes that “[i]f woman has always functioned ‘within’ the discourse of man, a signifier that has always referred back to the opposite signifier . . . it is time for her to dislocate this ‘within.’ . . . to make it hers, containing it, taking it in her own mouth, biting that tongue with her very own teeth to invent for herself a language to get inside of” (“Medusa” 2050). Perhaps no woman knows her “tongue” (her

body and her language) more intimately than Delbo. She uses it ultimately to recreate the sign: to craft moments of deep memory in order to write herself and to attempt to “explain the inexplicable,” the nature of the Holocaust universe.

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## Queer Representations in Holocaust Memoirs

*Nicholas Wright*

People have never had a problem disposing of the past when it gets too difficult. Flesh will burn, photos will burn, and memory, what is that? The imperfect ramblings of fools who will not see the need to forget. And if we can't dispose of it we can alter it. The dead don't shout.

—Jeanette Winterson, *Oranges Are Not The Only Fruit*

Pierre Seel was born on the sixteenth of August 1923, a son of Alsatian Catholics, and ceased to exist as a fully functional being on November 1941 when dogs at Schirmeck-Vorbrüch ate his dear friend Jo as Pierre watched. His life spans Hitler's retirement from the political arena after his failed attempt "to incite an armed insurrection" on May 1, 1923 and Alfred Rosenberg's establishment of a Special Action Team for Art to search, to seize, and to systematize "art that the Jews were trying to conceal" (Yahil 174). He stands between one man implementing anti-Semitism in Germany and another man assaulting Europe's humanistic principles of rationality and aesthetics.

Gad Beck, né Gerhard Beck, was born on the thirtieth of June 1923, a son of a middle-class *Mischling* family, and stopped living as a whole human in 1942 when his lover Manfred Lewin refused liberation from an assembly camp. His life spans Alfred Rosenberg's call to re-issue *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* and the transport of 55,145 Jewish people to the Chelmno extermination camp in the Wartheland from Łódź (Yahil 322). He stands at the threshold of Germany's second stage of political anti-Semitism and Poland's first stage of constructing seven more camps.

These two men bear witness to queer experience during the Holocaust, the worst variation of *Götterdämmerung*, through their memoirs and personal narratives: *I, Pierre Seel, Deported Homosexual* (originally published in 1994 in France under the title *Moi, Pierre Seel, déporté homosexuel*) and *An Underground Life: The Memoirs of a Gay Jew in Nazi Berlin* (originally published in 1995 in Germany under the title *Und Gad ging zu David*). Seel's memoir records his torture, humiliation, and survival of camp life, forced military service in the German army during the war, and life as a married man. Beck's narrative recounts his life as a *Mischling*, a half-Jew and half-Christian, a homosexual, and an adolescent resistance leader in Berlin, Germany.

These men make up a small sampling of what Klaus Müller, a historian and consultant for the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C., calls "forgotten victims—those groups of Holocaust victims who for a

long time were not acknowledged as such: the mentally and the physically handicapped, prostitutes, alcoholics, the victims of forced sterilization, and all those who were labeled as "asocial" (Heger 8). Scholars of the Holocaust, specifically, and literary critics, generally, must make Seel's and Beck's stories our concern, must adopt them into part of our world because their truths expand and stretch our understanding of the Holocaust. We must look at them, evaluate them, think about them, and conjecture about them. Seel and Beck assert and confirm that sexual identity and sexual desire became a burden and shaped and determined a prisoner's fate.

Before understanding particular stories, let us focus on facts. To understand the queer story of the Holocaust we begin with statistics. Statistically, close to one hundred thousand gay men were arrested, mostly from German Christian families; an estimated ten to fifteen thousand were sent to concentration camps; and fewer than ten are known to be still living (Paragraph 175). Legally, a German Penal Code, existing since 1871, called Paragraph 175, made sodomy, sex excluding vaginal sex, a crime. (The law remained in effect until the late 1960s.) Historically, the most important event for gay men in the Holocaust occurred on June 28, 1934, known as the Night of the Long Knives, when Hitler ordered Ernst Röhm, a Nazi who formed the SA, and three hundred other Reich enemies' executions. In early July 1934, Hitler cited Röhm's putative homosexuality as further justification for his murder and vowed to cleanse the entire Nazi party of homosexuals; he followed his guarantee with arrests beginning in October and November of 1934 (Plant 211).

Seel's and Beck's histories presented in their memoirs push the representation of gay experiences to another marker because the lexicon available to these men during the Holocaust and the lexicon available now differ, yet these men appropriate our contemporary grammar of queer existence. *I, Pierre Seel, Deported Homosexual* and *An Underground Life: The Memoirs of a Gay Jew in Nazi Berlin* can also be understood in terms of Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of hybridization: "a mixture of two social languages within the limits of a single utterance, between two different linguistic consciousnesses, separated from one another by an epoch, by social differentiation or by some other factor" (358). Scholar Charles E. Bressler has further divided hybridization into two kinds of rhetoric: non-polyphony and polyphony.

According to Bressler, non-polyphony is a rhetorical mode in a text where premeditation, authorial worldview, and truth are at the forefront. The author never digresses as he creates a coherent, cogent, and concise story. He compiles events and concepts; he arranges items in a particular way, a neat, well-organized state. Often the material begins with familiar, scene-setting, or unsurprising bits and pieces; the idea ends in a new, detailed, and surprising way. Polyphony, as a rhetorical mode, contains no hint of premeditation, no sniff of authorial worldview;

instead, the text concerns itself with active consciousness: gathering experience, both imagined and real encounters, both partially imagined and partially real events, and ordering them (Bressler 46). Overall, the textual object becomes more and more malleable, as it becomes the alternative of all alternatives: perhaps even the mirror of the self. The experiences that the men write about elude the urge to order their gay identity into conventional memoirs; instead, Seel and Beck write sepulchral, steely, and sardonic narratives where they are at times in control and other times allow their past to write the tale.

The memoirs begin with a sense of control, non-polyphony, when we notice the epigraphs that relate to theme. Pierre Seel uses the words of the medieval poet François Villon: “For one pleasure a thousand pains.” Seel singles out homosexuality as the cause of sorrows. Generally, when we read Holocaust literature, we expect Judaism to be the cause of distress. Gad Beck chooses Enlightenment German-Jewish philosopher Moses Mendelssohn’s poetic lines: “Search for truth, / Love beauty, / Wish for good, / Do what is best” and Voltaire’s lines from *Candide*: “What is that—optimism?” “Oh, it is the insanity / to claim that all is well, / even when you are feeling bad.” Here, Beck understands the outcome of homosexuality in his world; it would be supremely ironic for all to be well when Germany thinks of homosexuality as madness and lunacy. These lines encapsulate the books and serve as alternative ways to enter into the discussion.

While the epigraphs send a message about the consequences of gay identity during the war, the memoirs’ opening lines reinforce their non-polyphonic purposes as they demonstrate narrative control. Seel opens with: “I was seventeen years old, and I knew cruising the square located on the route between my school and my home was risky” (1). Here he embraces how his desire created the possibility of peril. Beck commences with: “Once upon a time there were five sisters” (5). Gad Beck narrates about how groups of people, not only himself, lived during the Holocaust and kept alive the glimmer, the fairy tale. Using these framing devices, Seel and Beck confirm I. A. Richards’s thoughts in *Practical Criticism*: without knowing the direction in which a text is developed or focused readers obtain meaning, and not necessarily the author’s message, through their own effort and skill (Hirsch 16). Readers, then, believe that these men are in control of their narratives and their identities. Furthermore, we can anticipate the way in which their memoirs will go, but that claim is invalid.

To examine polyphony, the other kind of rhetoric, I find the most productive examples appear where these men begin to write what Eve Sedgwick calls “publicly intelligible signifier[s] for gay-related epistemological issues,” particularly coming out of the closet (14). Pierre Seel’s writing demonstrates an introspective, philosophic, and investigative version of polyphony; his coming out narrative is littered with questions. For example, he asks:

Didn't all this indicate that I already liked men? When did it finally hit me that I was homosexual? No doubt with those incidents and others that I've forgotten. Young as I was, I realized that this difference would create an unbridgeable gap between me and my family. At fifteen, I was perplexed by the question of how to live like that and what was to become of me. (10)

Seel uses “this” and “that,” “those” and “others” to act as antecedents that hold all the experiences he remembers and forgets, willfully or un-willfully. Yet, this memory loss never suggests that he cannot realize that homosexuality creates unbridgeable gaps between people. Pierre’s concern for his family certainly created a baffled and bewildered man who cannot successfully negotiate living a homosexual life. Unable to react, Seel left an aspect of his self behind.

Gad Beck explains his coming out in four sentences:

I came out, as you say nowadays, in a totally nonchalant fashion; it just happened. I never had any feeling that it was wrong to accost my teacher in the shower. It happened spontaneously, just like when my dog wants a sock to chew on and simply jumps up and grabs it. I never talked about it openly with my parents, but it wasn't necessary. (22-23)

What intrigues me about this passage is the line “I came out, as you say nowadays” because it illustrates the action of telling and reflecting in the moment. Beck needs to describe phrases—admitting something openly, especially one’s homosexuality and the spontaneity of sex—that refer to the same person: himself. In order to have the same relationship, he appropriates “coming out,” a term beginning in popularity in the later twentieth century. Thus Beck demonstrates how an event can be partially imagined and partially real. Furthermore, Beck’s notion of coming out complicates standard coming-out narratives that focus on feelings, particularly wrong feelings, because his involves a series of actions—“want,” “jump,” and “grab”—not a series of emotions with a moral value.

To conclude my discussion, let us look at the final sentences of their memoirs and wonder: will non-polyphony win or polyphony? In the fifth and final chapter, “Out of the Closet: A Painful Testimony,” Seel explains that he has been seeking legal recognition and remuneration without any luck for fifty years. Filled with rage and feeling like screaming, Seel asks: “To what quixotic red tape is my struggle ultimately tied?” (140). No one answers his questions; instead, Seel imagines strolling “through cemeteries that do not exist, the resting places of all the dead who barely ruffle the consciences of the living” (140). Without luck, Seel ends his narrative with: “When I have finished wandering, I go home. Then I light the candle that permanently burns in my kitchen when I am alone. That frail flame is my memory of Jo” (140). The mention of “Jo” in the final lines does remind readers of the dedication page, but the emphasis on the images of the “candle” and

“frail flame” and how they memorialize Jo connects not to premeditated rhetoric, but to polyphonic discourse. The candle stops burning when? Once Pierre Seel is recognized? Once Pierre Seel and all the other homosexuals are recognized as deportees? The question turns back to us.

Gad Beck’s memoir ends in his liberation. After being held in a Jewish hospital turned Gestapo prison, receiving broken bones and bruises from bombs, Beck loses hope of surviving. The concern for his life increases when a “ragged, shot up, wasted” Russian soldier entered his cellar room and asked in Yiddish: “Is there anyone here named Gad Beck?” Beck concludes this event, and his memoir, with these words: “I raised my hand wearily. He looked at us and announced solemnly, “*Brider, ir zayt fray!*” Brothers, you are free!” (163, italics in original). Here “free” reminds readers of the epigraph, the beginning of non-polyphony. Yet the irony inherent in that term makes it closer to polyphony.

Since these texts end with polyphonic discourse, I wonder how Seel and Beck survived and lived the knowledge of their Holocaust legacies. For instance, how do they relate to Charlotte Delbo’s conception of revenants? Delbo, an Auschwitz survivor and French resistance leader, eloquently addresses this query in these lines from “Prayer to the Living”:

you’ll never sleep again  
if you believe  
these ghostly phantoms  
revenants returning  
yet unable to tell  
how. (230-31)

These men “died” during the Holocaust because of their profound and passionate attachment to men. Seel explicitly embraces this fact; Beck despairingly conceals this love. Seel and Beck are revenants, the queer kind, the Holocaust sort. They struggle, quite elegantly, to tell their tales of pain and optimism.

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## The “Negative Chronotope”: Communicating the Incommunicable in Ida Fink’s “Traces” and “A Spring Morning”

Marissa Caston

In “Ida Fink’s Scraps and Traces: Forms of Space and the Chronotope of Trauma Narratives,” Ruth Ginsburg uses Bakhtin’s conception of the “chronotope” as a basis for her discussion of Ida Fink’s “Traces,” noting that, for Bakhtin, a “chronotope is not simply an additive sum of the epistemological categories of time + space, but a category of intrinsic connectedness. . . . there is no disengaging the one from the other” (210). Bakhtin’s assertion of the “intrinsic connectedness” of time and space inadvertently encourages Ginsburg’s development of the “negative chronotope,” or a way to demonstrate “what it may mean to be *non-human* in a certain space and time” (210), because her “negative chronotope” both depends upon and contests the relationship between time and space that Bakhtin advances; whereas Bakhtin’s “chronotope” privileges time over space, Ginsburg’s “negative chronotope” privileges space over time. Even though Ginsburg accepts the “intrinsic connectedness” of space and time, she points to an inadequacy of Bakhtin’s theory of narrative structure: Bakhtin’s very logical link of space and time applies neither to narratives that “grasp the fleeting *movement* of an evaporated trace” (210) nor to narratives that communicate trauma. Bakhtin’s “chronotope,” then, relies upon the acceptance of the supremacy of linear logic and chronological structures, structures that deem space inferior.

Ida Fink challenges the often privileged position of linear thought and suggests that fiction carries with it unflinching truths; by opening *A Scrap of Time and Other Stories* with the assertion that she wants “to talk about a certain time not measured in months and years” and that the time “measured in months and years” does not succeed in burying “the other time under a layer of years” (3), Fink points to the reliability of “the ruins of memory” (3) and the ability of those “ruins” to combat the restraints of chronological time in order to offer valid visions of a shattered past. In not only “Traces” but also in “A Spring Morning,” Fink’s narratives of trauma critique Bakhtin’s notion of the chronotope so that, when considering the impacts of the Holocaust on people, space and time still surface as inseparable, but time no longer dominates space, because “Traces” and “A Spring Morning” evidence the need for a “negative chronotope,” or “a chronotope of trauma” (Ginsburg 210), a way to indicate the disintegration of temporal perceptions of both the universe and of the self.

In “Traces,” Fink pulls truths from the “ruins” as she places the memory of a witness next to a blurred photograph and gives precedence to the words of

the witness, since the photograph shows the propensity of linear time to cloud, and render incomplete, truths that it does not, and cannot, own. In the opening of “Traces,” a narrator, possibly the person interviewing the woman, forms an indelible connection between the witness and the photograph the witness sees by asserting: “Yes, of course she recognizes it. Why shouldn’t she? That was their last ghetto” (135). Referring to the witness in the opening lines as “she” and to the photograph that elicits her words as “it,” the narrator establishes a connection between the woman and the picture that simultaneously establishes distance between the past and the present, between the interviewee and the interviewer, and between time and space, because “she” is never referred to by name and the narrator does not define “it” as a photograph until the start of the next paragraph. The interviewing voice of “Traces” views the photograph as evidence and the words of the woman to whom it speaks as necessary for the clarification of that evidence. That Fink opens “Traces” with a narrative voice that cannot piece together for itself the meaning of the photograph suggests that, to the narrator, both the words of the interviewee and the images in the picture hold crucial significance, but as Sara R. Horowitz observes in *Voicing the Void: Muteness and Memory in Holocaust Fiction*, the photograph serves an entirely different purpose for the witness being interviewed than it serves for the interviewer, since “[t]he photo prompts the pouring forth of narrative and tears, both of which the survivor had previously suppressed, both of which the survivor now grudgingly releases” (225). The “pouring forth” of which Horowitz speaks allows the narrative to communicate the horrors of one moment in time by surpassing the actual boundaries of time, boundaries that ultimately prevent the photograph from conveying the complete truth without the words of the witness.

Yet, the picture still functions as “a double freeze. It freezes a frozen moment in a spatial mark, soon to be obliterated by snow, as we are reading the story. The traces in the snow are doomed to oblivion, they can only be observed in a spatial image—in an accidental photograph” (Ginsburg 214). The picture, to a limited extent, does succeed in communicating through a medium not dominated by time, because in the picture the footprints can never be erased by the snow that will inevitably fall later, on that cold February day, and the direction of the small footprints can never be altered in order to placate those forced to look at them in the future; however, the picture cannot speak and it cannot make clear how tiny the footprints actually are, where the footprints are headed, or the origin of the footprints, for “as a historical document, the photograph rings true but incomplete” (Horowitz 225). Only the nameless woman, the lone survivor of the ghetto, can communicate the incommunicable, and her struggles, not the struggles of the photograph, are the struggles of the text. By juxtaposing fictional images with fictional words, Fink demonstrates in “Traces” that “if narrative ‘thinks’ a life, if it traces its disappearance, it does so chronotopically” (Ginsburg 210), as its struc-

ture mirrors the intricate workings of the mind. A fictional narrative, comprised of fictional evidence, can indeed “think a life,” doing so softly and silently, in a realm that pays as much attention to, and places as much value in, the pauses and hesitations of human speech as it does to the actual coherent utterances; it is possible and necessary, then, to “think a life,” but when dealing with traumatic events that have shaken, altered, and rendered vulnerable the psyche of a victim, it is neither possible nor necessary to “think a [time].”

The time that the narrative cannot think involves not only the time of the event and the time that has passed between the event and the present recounting of the event, but also the time that conditions the woman, even as she speaks, to “prefer not to be reminded” and to “instantly restrain” the “first tears” that fall from her eyes (Fink 136-37). As the first tears fall, though, the narrative pushes the photograph into the background and allows the words of the witness to make “the truth of an utterly inconceivable reality seem real and believable” (Ginsburg 207). The photograph cannot do for the narrative, and for the world, what the woman’s words can do, since the unclear photograph, even as it provides visual evidence of mass murder, fits neatly into the realm of linear logic, until the witness identifies it; only after the woman speaks can the narrative succeed in “arresting the time of a quasi-untold event in a space in the snow, in traces that are evaporating while it happens in the background, Fink’s ‘negative’ chronotope freezes a scrap of unthinkable time in an elusive yet detailed space that screams, as it were, the truth of the event” (Ginsburg 207). Readers, while hearing the words of the narrator and the witness, look with the narrator at an indiscernible image that combines life and death, and by looking see dehumanized spirits, lives un-lived, and stories untold. The narrative becomes a place unrestricted by time, a place where otherwise overlooked truth reigns supreme; it communicates the truths that the photograph cannot communicate on its own.

The picture, by itself, freezes an empty space comprised of deathless life and lifeless death, but the short story, as a whole, presents a place with three layers: “the empty one in the photograph, the one in her memory, which is superimposed on that image to gradually fill in its emptiness and present its absences, and the one in which both are contained—the woman, and the others, in front of the photograph and before the ‘story’ is told” (Ginsburg 215). Fink strategically sets the framework for the development of these three layers with the opening lines of the narrative, when the narrator refers to the witness as “she” and to the photograph as “it.” In the beginning of “Traces,” both the interviewer and the readers of the text find it convenient to consider the woman and the photograph mere pieces of a puzzle called evidence, and the witness’s words a missing piece to that puzzle, but as the interview progresses, both readers of the text and the interviewer find themselves forced to look at the photograph in new ways and surrender the comfortable authority associated with linear logic to a mode of unthinkable thought,

since of the three textual spaces, “[t]he latter is the view presented to us, readers, arrested, frozen before the untold story” (Ginsburg 215). That the story is never told, though, suggests that even though the narrator and the reader look with the witness into a dark emptiness, only the witness can fill that emptiness, give it light, and that light will come when the question—“why shouldn’t she?”—relinquishes any and all validity.

The question that comprises the second sentence of the narrative—“why shouldn’t she?”—remains a silent force throughout “Traces,” evident when, during the interview, the woman prefers “not to be reminded” and “pushes the photograph away” (Fink 136). The accepted conceptions of chronological thought, that both interviewer and reader consider normal and safe, condition the woman to “instantly restrain” her tears and to entertain the notion that her own existence might be easier should she decide not to recognize the photograph, not to remember. Yet, in the sudden instance when she “changes her mind and asks that what she is going to say be written down and preserved forever, because she wants a trace to remain” (136), the goals of both interviewee and interviewer intersect, thereby allowing the spatial associations that are the witness’s memory to become valid evidence, to leave, in the words of the narrator, “[a] trace of those children. And only she can leave that trace, because she alone survived” (137). For the woman, the trace that she will leave after the “short break” will, in one respect, liberate her from a past that has condemned her to death; the story she will tell later will make it so that, years from now, when the photograph becomes too blurred and cracked to recognize the footprints, gazers on the photograph will still know what happened on that frigid day of a not-so-distant past.

In order for both narrator and reader to embrace the uncertain authority of spatial associations, then, they must look into the void that is the photograph with the witness, realizing all the while that even though they can see the emptiness of an eternalized death sentence, only the woman, the survivor, can feel it, and thus successfully communicate said sentence, on her own terms, but in “A Spring Morning,” Ida Fink further complicates the layers of witnessing by placing the interior monologue of a dead victim, Aron, in juxtaposition with the eyewitness account of a passive bystander, when the narrative focuses first on the nameless onlooker, who sits with friends at a bar and tries to tell them of a child’s murder. The spectator, who “stood right near the bridge and watched the Sunday procession attentively, full of concern and curiosity” (39), is only able to hear Aron, the father of the dead child, make a comparison of the Griezna River to “the dirt-yellow color of beer” (39), which ultimately leads him later that afternoon to ask his friends in the restaurant to “Listen to this: Here’s a man facing death, and all he can think about is beer. I was speechless. And besides, how could he say that?” (39). The witness, “the former secretary of the former town council,” who sits in the bar after the traumatic occurrences of the morning, knows nothing of the

sleepless night that Aron encountered the day before, of the horror of watching his own little girl lose her childhood before her death, or of the desperation required to part with his child, if that parting means that the child might live.

Like the narrator's question that opens "Traces" and lingers still, the question toward the beginning of "A Spring Morning" creates a complex divide between voices of authority, between past and present, and between time and space, because when "the former secretary of the former town council" asks his friends, "how could he say that? I made a point of looking at it, the water was like water, just a little dirtier" (39- 40), he shows that a distance similar to that existing between the interviewee and the interviewer in "Traces" exists between bystander and victim. After spending the opening three paragraphs of "A Spring Morning" describing the viewpoint of an observer incapable of understanding the truths of the situation, Fink then zeroes in on Aron, his wife, and his daughter earlier that morning, before, during, and after the Nazis arrive at their home; in so doing, she makes clear that beer is not on Aron's mind at all as he finds himself forced to carry his baby to her death. Similar to the way in which the interviewer in "Traces" cannot imagine, in the beginning, why the woman would not be able to recognize the photograph, the man standing on the bridge cannot imagine the true thoughts going through the victims' minds, in particular, their longings to do anything to take away the pain of the progression of time that attempts to carry out their destructions.

That Fink spends only three paragraphs focusing on the observer's thoughts and conversations and six and a half pages focusing on the thoughts and conversations of Aron, Mela, and their daughter implies that the author herself places more weight on the thoughts and conversations of the victims, and that without the words and thoughts of the victims, the truths given to the world are untruths. The interior monologue of Aron shows that, as "the man and his wife and his child walked along the edge of the road by the sidewalk" (44) the man was trying, with every ounce of his strength, "to find some chink through which he could push his child back into the world of the living. Suddenly he was thinking very fast. He was surprised to see that the trees had turned green overnight and the water had risen" (45). In the seconds before the murdered man compares the water to beer, he is looking at the natural world in a way that he never has before, taking it all in and realizing that, like footprints in the snow, which might indicate life, the movement of the river and the changing colors of the leaves signify active existences. His main wish, as he marches toward the train station, is for "the strength that flowed from [his daughter's] silky, warm, young body" (45) to continue to flow. He dreads his daughter becoming a "trace" that the "the possessor of an Aryan great-grandmother," who "could stand there calmly and watch them in peace" (39), will feel obliged to leave. The one who "watched them in peace" does leave a "trace," though, a "trace" based on the observations of a mind neither

aware of the constraints and inadequacies of linear time nor aware of the sometimes damaging and silencing effects that can result from the peaceful comforts of temporal logic.

The observer on the bridge is, like a photograph, evidence, and also like a photograph the observer on the bridge cannot communicate the entire truth of the events that took place on the spring morning in question, because the observer has no way of knowing that, before announcing that the “[t]he water is the color of beer,” Aron considers that same water on “that quiet spring morning” as “the only sign of nature’s revolt” (45). All of his senses merge in a desperate attempt to “gather up the colors and smells of the world that he was losing forever” (45), so it is only natural that to the man on the bridge the victim’s associations make very little sense; the man on the bridge has never marched to his death with his child in his arms. In a world dominated by linear thought, it is impossible to ever know what Aron thinks as he walks to the station that morning, because Aron dies soon after making the comparison of water to beer; the world Ida Fink creates, however, places unsurpassable authority in the words of a different voice, one who can simultaneously create and communicate with compassion and intelligence the final thoughts of Aron and invite readers to realize that the response of the owner of the bar to the bystander’s question, that “maybe the guy was just thirsty, you know?” (40), forces Aron, and all victims, to suffer still and dooms them to walk forever to their deaths.

Yet, Aron’s monologue is imagined, and the words of the witness on the bridge provide the only “logical” account of that spring morning. As a result, the narrator’s insertion of Aron’s thoughts positions the truths within Aron’s psyche as analogous to the truths of Holocaust fiction; without the creative forces that produce short stories, the realities of many peoples’ lives will go unnoticed, undocumented. A humanity content to function in accordance to linear logic neither acknowledges nor understands the actual associations implicit in the necessary “imaginative intercession” that Fink presents: “Fink’s story makes clear that without fiction— without the narrator’s imaginative intercession—the murdered man’s life, fate, and feelings, the tragic indignity and the superfluous cruelty of his sufferings would remain untold, and hence unknowable” (Horowitz 14). The strategic positioning of the bystander and the victim also suggests that Ginsburg’s “negative chronotope” is at work in this short story, too, as it helps to make “the tragic indignity and the superfluous cruelty of his sufferings” known by foregrounding “the role of the eye in both the perspectival structuring of the narrative and the reading situation” (Ginsburg 214). Whereas in “Traces” Fink constructs the narrative so that “the fictional photograph created by a watching eye epitomizes the process by which all are made to follow the traces from one scene to the other, and beyond the text, to the site of execution” (Ginsburg 214), in “A Spring Morning,” she substitutes the observer on the bridge for the photograph and substitutes the

imagined monologue for the woman being interviewed.

The three-layered place that comprises “Traces,” then, also comprises “A Spring Morning.” The first layer, “the empty one in the photograph,” can be found within the dialogue that the passive bystander has later that day at the restaurant, because like the photograph, the eyewitness account he offers is neither false nor true; it is incomplete, and incompleteness deems both the photograph in “Traces” and the observer’s words in “A Spring Morning” inadequate. The words of the onlooker, like the photograph, succeed in freezing a moment in time, in offering a “double freeze,” but the freezing that the bystander advances when discussing the event with acquaintances later on in the restaurant only illustrates a partial truth; because of what his eyes saw, the people with whom he speaks will know what happened on the morning in question. He succeeds in telling others that he witnessed a group of innocent men, women, and children forced to walk to their deaths, but those listening to him at the bar will never know how Aron felt; they will never know that Aron was neither thirsty nor thinking about beer as he walked. Aron’s emotional trajectory surfaces as a crucial piece of evidence, one that clarifies and enlightens. Similar to the inability of the photograph in “Traces” to make clear the size of the footprints, the words of the observer cannot make clear the extremity of Aron’s pain in “A Spring Morning.” As a “historical document,” the nameless observer’s account also “rings true but incomplete” (Horowitz 225); without Aron’s sensations, the account that the Aryan non-victim gives seems null and void.

The second place, “the one in her memory, which is superimposed on that image to gradually fill in its emptiness and present its absences,” is the imagined interior monologue of Aron. While the words of the interviewee in “Traces” clarify the unclear and lend light to perpetual darkness, Aron’s thought processes do the same in “A Spring Morning,” but as the contents of Aron’s mind “fill in” the “emptiness and present” the “absences” of the passive observer’s words (Ginsburg 215), they communicate an immediate necessity only alluded to in the interview situation of “Traces.” The difference between the interview situation and the conversation in the bar is that in the interview the interviewer still has a chance of questioning the victim, of knowing her account, but in the bar conversation that chance does not exist because the people walking alongside the river are presumably dead. Consequently, whereas in “Traces” the truth comes out gradually during a conversation and then supersedes the image of the photograph, in “A Spring Morning,” the six pages that are the imagined interior monologue present themselves without adequate transition in order to supersede the words of the Aryan observer. No transition will do. The length and intensity of Aron’s imagined monologue does for the text of “A Spring Morning” what the comparably gentle structure of a conversation does for the text of “Traces”: it makes clear that the previously known truth falls short of sufficient significance and evidences the notion that “measuring the available eyewitness report with the interior mono-

logue, we find that here the more ‘factual’ account eclipses the truth. For it is the absent story made present by radical imagining that confronts the mass murder that has occurred” (Horowitz 14).

The third place, the one that readers of the text see and the one “in which both are contained—the woman, and the others, in front of the photograph and before the ‘story’ is told,” is the text of “A Spring Morning” itself, as observers of the text watch the process of truth distorted becoming undistorted, of spatial associations undoing the damage that linear logic has done. The “negative chronotope,” then, allows Aron and his family and all who walk beside the river that morning to confront, in death, the passive bystander on the bridge. Just as the interviewed survivor confronts the photograph in “Traces,” the victim, Aron, confronts the person whose words inevitably decide what is true and what is not in a world that seems indifferent to his death and to his life. With the “negative chronotope,” Fink makes it so that her readers can determine for themselves what is true and what is not only after she makes clear the dangerous inadequacies of ways of living that depend solely upon comfortable, linear logic. When Fink writes in “A Spring Morning” that “thanks to him and to people like him, there have remained to this day shreds of sentences, echoes of final laments, shadows of the sighs of the participants in the *marches funèbres*, so common in those times” (39), she not only points to the irony of the text but also points to the irony of all of our lives. The witness in “Traces” shows that in order to “witness” a crime of mass proportions, one must summon the courage to believe that more pain exists than can ever be communicated through a photograph. In “A Spring Morning,” it also seems clear that only by developing the audacity to question can we observe that the “echoes of final laments” and the “shadows of the sighs of participants” are often distorted, “shadows” and “echoes”; they cannot express the inexpressible. The incommunicable can only be communicated when listeners understand the limitations of their own modes of communication, when they hear the untruths implicit within their own logical proceedings.

If Ida Fink’s use of the “negative chronotope” in “Traces” and “A Spring Morning” evidences the need for secondary witnesses to challenge their own conceptions of logic and truth, then it also reminds survivors of the need for them to believe in themselves and their memories. The world needs them to believe in their own voices. In *Memory Perceived: Recalling the Holocaust*, Robert N. Kraft observes that sometimes, as a result of living in a present that adheres solely to temporal modes of thought and expression, survivors learn to doubt their own validities, because they “know their memories represent real events, but they no longer believe that such torment could be inflicted and that anyone could survive. They wonder aloud how others could possibly believe their memories if they do not believe their *own* memories” (145). As seen in the interviewed survivor’s “instantly restrained” first tear in “Traces,” the world in which we all find ourselves

forced to exist communicates, maybe without realizing it, that it might be better for everyone if people hide the emotional truths of their lives and of their pasts. Fink's use of the "negative chronotope" allows us to believe, though, that in "Traces" a desperately needed truth "culminates in a future, beyond the text when 'she,' the woman, will actually 'tell.' At that point, the frozen silence of the past and the numb, almost inhuman restraint of the present will dissolve . . . but that will be elsewhere" (Ginsburg 216). Perhaps, by "elsewhere," both Ginsburg and Fink refer to the imagined monologue of Aron in "A Spring Morning," for "the numb, almost inhuman restraint of the present" can only "dissolve" when listeners render themselves vulnerable enough to share conceptual authority with those who can no longer speak.

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## Closely Watched Films: The Holocaust in Czechoslovak Cinema

*Alexandria Wojcik*

“This is not Amerika!”

We stood in the snow silently agreeing with the transport policeman as the tramvaj trudged toward Malestranska. Thrown off the tram for leaving our passes tucked under our mattresses with our passports, we trekked through the Doctor Zhivagian terrain of Prague winter to the Faculty of Philosophy at Charles University. While passing the postcard scenes I mailed home weekly, I wondered if the beauty of the city of many spires was really breathtaking or if it was merely the cold that left us breathless. Looking around me, I knew we were no longer in America.

As I walked from the Faculty to the Ebel café in Old Town Square for a latte and an informal language lesson with the barista, socialism cast its shadow on me from above the square. Upon Letná hill a peeling red metronome resembling a sickle and hammer ticked away my semester in Prague. Constructed atop a massive concrete pedestal, the metronome is the ugly gravestone of sorts for the world’s largest statue of Stalin. The statue stood for only seven years until it was blown up under a later regime. Praguers still whisper of its sculptor’s suicide the day before its unveiling. Despite democratic freedom, Comrade Stalin still watched over the city.

Tour guides led travelers through Prague’s streets paved with the history Praguers watching from the apartments above were denied throughout generations of occupations. The tourist saw only beauty; the Prager sensed despair. From the Kolej near Petřín hill to the Faculty by the Vltava were the empty symbols of history. The saints that blessed pedestrians on Charles Bridge remained unsanctified in the atheist country. The statues remained mere wishing stones, meant to be kissed, on the path to Old Town Square. Likewise, the cathedrals that were built with acoustics for choirs were now concert halls while the Jewish Quarter was an Eastern European strip mall of sorts selling knick-knacks and Pashmina scarves to tourists.

The fog froze and hung itself outside the concrete and linoleum Kolej Komenskeho and remained hanging there until my May departure. The taxi drivers were perpetually drunk and snoring in the yellow flickering Communist era dormitory lobby. Often I drifted down the hill from Prague Six through the gates of Prážky Hrad. I would peer over the Castle walls at the disconcerting juxtaposition of neon modernity and bloody history evident in Prague’s cityscape. Standing in the tower in Saint Vitus’s Cathedral, I could distinguish the TV Tower in Žižkov

from the Astronomical Clock in Old Town. Sculptures of naked babies with embedded barcodes crawl up and down Žižkov's Communist relic while saints and vices keep time in Old Town Square. These architectural monuments to a Czech chronology of sorts were built from the ruins of Czechoslovak history.

The ebb and flow of fascism throughout the history of former Czechoslovakia has created a national identity crisis that historians have since termed the "Czech Question" (Bartosek 148). The Republic of Czechoslovakia was formed in 1918 only to become a German protectorate two decades later in 1939. The Czech Republic's history complex thus derives in large part from this relationship between Czechoslovakia and Germany (148). Regime changes later in the century, including the Soviet establishment of the Communist party in Czechoslovakia at the end of the Second World War, likewise contributed to this Czech question. This Prague Spring of 1968 promised "socialism with a human face" ("Timeline"), yet later that summer Soviet-led Warsaw Pact troops invaded Czechoslovakia despite agreements made a mere seventeen days prior to cease such maneuvers (Valenta 55).

The first free elections since 1946 were held in 1990 during the Velvet Revolution. A year later, the Soviet troops completely withdrew from the country. The Velvet Divorce concluded two years later in 1993 when Czechoslovakia divided into two independent countries, the Czech Republic and Slovakia ("Timeline"). Until the Velvet Divorce, "the Slovaks had no independent political existence for 1000 years (from the tenth century), and the Czechs for 300 years in the modern period (from the seventeenth century)" (Bartosek 143). The term *Český*, the Czech equivalent of "American," describes something synonymous with Czech national identity. The historic struggle to define "*Český*" derives from the history of systematic oppression of the Czechs and the Slovaks.

As the history of former Czechoslovakia is one of occupations and revolutions, or betrayal and redemption, Czechoslovak cinema documents the same cycles. While Czech cinematic history begins in 1898, the Czech New Wave movement in Czech cinema does not emerge until the 1960s. This movement uses the Czech cinematic tradition to support its break from Socialist Realism. Czech New Wave thus represents a "cinematic movement away from fascism and toward something really Czech" (Liehn 6).

A rather disproportionate number of Holocaust films emerged from the Czech New Wave era. These films use the setting of the Second World War to project the Czech sense of a greater historical context. While Czechoslovak Holocaust films acknowledge and memorialize the Jewish experience during the Second World War, political protest certainly permeates the genre. Indeed, "the fate of the Jews became a coded symbol for aspects of the contemporary political malaise that could not be given direct and detailed expression" (Isaac 137).

The Czech Holocaust films *The Cremator*, *Divided We Fall*, and *The Shop on Main Street* all portray the many betrayals of a nation under occupation. To

define “Český,” these films document the political protest of the Czech people and the subsequent redemption of the truly Czech. Using the Holocaust as the horrific background for these films, the Czech New Wave projects the various voices of dissent throughout post-World War Two Czechoslovakia. Socialist societies such as Czechoslovakia throughout the 1950s and 1960s supported portrayals of anti-Semitism as representative of one of the evils of other regimes’ fascism (Isaac 137). Indeed, *The Cremator* defines anti-Czechs as Nazis of all nationalities; occupying oppressors as represented by the Germans in this genre are not Czech. Likewise, the passive and the apathetic are not Czech. *Divided We Fall* and *The Shop on Main Street* characterize Czechs as resisters. Redemption is present in these Czechs’ triumphs over any initial reluctance to resistance and even initial resemblance to Nazis.

Czech cinema defines the betrayal of “Český” through its portrayal of solidarity, or lack thereof, in the Second World War. This sense of betrayal is represented by characters of Nazi collaborators, whether they register to join the SS or merely stand by. Betrayal is manifest in Juraj Herz’s 1970 film *The Cremator*. There is little, if any, opportunity for redemption in this dark portrayal of one madman’s love for death, which supersedes his love for his own family and his love for his own nation. In Karl, the film’s villainous funeral director, the Nazis find “just the kind of personality they are looking for to the preside over the crematoria in the concentration camps” (Isaac 137). Indeed, “his mental deterioration is linked to the rise of Nazism” (Hames 224). Karl rejects his Czech blood for the potential drop of German blood within him. This German blood is symbolic of all evil: even one vial is enough to justify the murders of one’s family and thus the systematic massacre of millions. He thus begins to reject and denounce his Czech friends and acquaintances. It is no coincidence that their arrests begin when Karl first raises his arm in a Nazi salute. Upon realizing his wife is half-Jewish, Karl murders her. He likewise kills their son and makes several unsuccessful attempts to take their daughter’s life.

Though Czechs stand united at the end of Jan Hrebek’s 2000 film *Divided We Fall*, the film is shrouded in layers upon layers of betrayal as the meaning of “Český” confronts the characters throughout the film. Indeed, the film’s protagonist apparently betrays his country when he joins the anti-Semitic efforts of an old co-worker, though Josef Cizek really joins Horst only for the sake of survival. From the sidewalk outside the Cizek’s apartment, Josef seems as German as the songs he sings and the soldiers who occupy the city’s streets. A neighbor thus questions Josef and Marie Cizek’s national identity when he spits on their doorframe and mutters “They’re Czech: They should be ashamed.”

Reality is thus distorted by these multiple betrayals by the film’s end. When the war ends, the Czech resistance point their guns at betrayers in a Nazi-like desperation for clarity. The resistance nearly shoot Josef until David, a Jew whom

the Cizeks save, emerges from the Cisek pantry as if from the grave. While Czech blood may indeed stain Josef's hands in his decision to join Horst, Josef and Marie also betray the Nazi regime in helping David elude death.

Czechoslovaks are torn apart in Jan Kadar's 1965 film, *The Shop on Main Street*. Greed, and thus betrayal of Česky, condemns complacent Slovaks as complicit with the Nazis. On the eve of Jewish deportations from present-day Slovakia, Tono Brtko is assigned the position of "Aryan controller" of Mrs. Lautman's button shop on Main Street. In accepting the position his Fascist brother-in-law offers him, Tono is essentially accepting the totalitarian regime and thus betraying his own occupied nation. Drunk off several bottles of bribes of sorts and in awe of a shiny cigarette case most likely stolen from a Jew, Tono is driven by greed. Status-starved Evelyn Brtko cares only for all the gold and jewels apparently hidden beneath the nearly-bankrupt Mrs. Lautman's floorboards. Indeed, "the motivation of Tono's wife [Evelyn] and brother-in-law in welcoming the new regime is fairly transparently that of power and material wealth, rather than ideology" (Hames 38).

The relationship between Mrs. Lautman and Tono is one of deception. Due to her deafness, communication between the characters is nearly impossible. Tono thus fails to tell Mrs. Lautman the truth about his role as "Aryan controller" and the impending deportations: "The deception continues until all the Jews are deported but, by some bureaucratic error, the old lady is left off the list" (Hames 38). Out of fear of the accusation of hiding a Jew, or worse, of being a "Jew Lover," Tono desperately tries to force Mrs. Lautman to leave with the other deportees. Upon failing, he pushes her into a closet. After the deportation subsides and the soldiers withdraw from the storefront, Tono discovers Mrs. Lautman to be dead and hangs himself.

Those Czechs who embody "Český" either survive the film or rise again for the closing credits. Those characters who betray the definition of "Český" are redeemed in their realizations of the cruelty of complicity during the Second World War. In Czech New Wave films the redemption of the true Český heart is represented in the revival of the characters as if summoned from purgatory to take a final bow in the film before moving onto the afterlife.

The complete Nazification of Karl in *The Cremator* obliterates all potential for redemption in the film. Though his daughter survives his German-like killing spree, she resembles the veiled Lady Death who appears ominously at the film's end, suggesting the inevitable death of "Český" in the film. However, Praugers may sigh and nonchalantly utter "A proc ne," Czech for "whatever," meaning something more like "que sera sera" rather than the sense of absolute defeat "whatever" connotes, at the end of this cult-classic because "Český" is as absent from the film as redemption: Karl is never really Czech.

The betrayals of the characters of *Divided We Fall* unite them in the end.

David's survival is representative of the survival of Český. In the film's redefinition of Český as a sense of Czech spirituality, the film's characters are redeemed in their solidarity. Despite the grim ending of *The Shop on Main Street*, Tono's guilt redeems him in the afterlife. In the film's conclusion, the shop's doors open as Tono and Mrs. Lautman depart from their bodies, the shop, and the fascist state in a haunting waltz past the town band. In this marriage of sorts, Tono reclaims his Slovak identity. Likewise, as characters from both *Divided We Fall* and *The Shop on Main Street* rise from the dead, they essentially overcome the Nazi regime.

*The Cremator* may be "a criticism of collaboration. . . . It can also be interpreted on a more general level as a criticism of the Czech tradition of survival at any cost" (Hames 224). Karl's impending insanity, as portrayed through various distortions of the camera lens, is a condemnation of followers of fascist regimes. *Divided We Fall* likewise critiques conformity. The Cizeks have more than David hidden in their pantry and, unlike other Czechs of the time, seem to have an eternal pot of coffee and a bottomless bottle of liquor to offer to even unexpected guests. Through its depiction of the daily rituals set inside the Cisek's apartment within the context of an era of external disruption, the film condemns apathy: Czechs who simply stand aside while oppressive occupations march through Prague are as complicit as the collaborators themselves. *The Shop on Main Street* also criticizes fascism. The Holocaust thus becomes a metaphor for all human suffering, especially under fascist regimes. During an absurd dance routine in this film in front of the wooden monument erected as a tribute to the Nazis, the construction suddenly reminds the viewer of the statue of Stalin that once stood over Prague. Thus, these three films use the horrors of the Holocaust as the subject of Czech political protest and the setting for assertion of Czech national identity. Czech films, as cinematic witnesses of the Holocaust, project the long history of occupation, betrayal, redemption, and revolution in former Czechoslovakia onto the background of the Second World War. Historically silenced, Czechs and Slovaks document the many layers of each generation's social and political discontent through reels upon reels of film.

Upon returning to Prague via a few rolls of film finally printed and piled onto my bookshelf, I paused for a moment in Old Town Square to stare at the tragedy of a certain pigeon. The saxophonist in black is playing his fifteen minute rendition of "Only You" by the statue of Jan Huss who points to Kafka's apartment. The tourists come and go. The winos and the students stand around the fast food stand holding paper cups of hot grog before walking home or to the next pub. The tourists come and go and do not see the rebellion in the mundane. The ghosts of Stalin and socialism add grey shadows cast from Letná hill to the crevices between the cobblestones in the black and white photo. The pigeon is bleeding. The blackness of the Nazis and communism leave a pool of negative space in the center of the photo.

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## Necessary Evil: The Divided Self and the Failure of Redemption in Kurt Vonnegut's *Mother Night*

Lucas Kane

In literature the themes of guilt and redemption are often linked; even when guilty characters do not redeem themselves, they typically refuse a chance to do so, and so doubly earn their guilt. No such chance for redemption exists in Kurt Vonnegut's *Mother Night*. The story is narrated by the novel's guiltiest character, Howard W. Campbell, Jr., and if he makes no attempt to exonerate himself or atone for his actions, neither does he avoid taking responsibility for them. Rather, Vonnegut uses this protagonist, an American Nazi and radio propagandist, to complicate and problematize a discussion of good and evil, breaking down any attempt to polarize the two and asking whether the former can exist when accompanied by the latter. The book might have equally borne the title "Necessary Evil," for it is into this idea that *Mother Night* most strenuously inquires and, in doing so, casts its gaze not only upon those who were involved, directly or indirectly, in the Holocaust, but upon any who would attempt to justify the heinous or unethical in the name of the greater good.

The crux of the story of Howard W. Campbell, Jr. is the moral dilemma of the undercover agent. Campbell is an American living in Berlin at the onset of the war; he is approached by the American government and asked to use his connections and popularity to infiltrate the Nazi party as a spy. Campbell becomes a radio broadcaster working under Joseph Goebbels, and his outwardly hateful and bigoted speeches, sent out over the airwaves, actually contain coded messages that are listened to by, among others, the President of the United States. At the conclusion of the war, Campbell is simultaneously branded a war criminal by the masses and a hero, one of the Allies' most valuable spies, by the few who knew the nature of his work. The novel's principle action takes place fifteen years later, after Campbell has gone into hiding, when he is found and captured by Israeli Nazi hunters. *Mother Night* represents his memoirs, recorded while awaiting trial. During this period, Campbell is certain that he will be convicted and neither bemoans this fact nor makes an attempt to avoid the guilt resulting from his complicity in the machinery of the Nazi party.

By affording Campbell the role of the text's narrator, Vonnegut forces the audience into a position of sympathy for the protagonist from the outset. As is typical of Vonnegut's narrators, Campbell comes across as sane, observant, urbane, and amiable. It is difficult to ascertain how the audience should react to him, and Vonnegut complicates the sympathy any audience naturally generates toward a text's protagonist by emphasizing repeatedly the horror of the system in

which he is complicit. By this device, the book begins the process of complicating any resulting discussion about good and evil, one that is further problematized by his relationship with the winning side in the war, a war whose chief players are often polarized across a spectrum of “good” and “bad.”

The audience’s ability to judge Campbell morally is complicated further by his explicit morality. Campbell is a consummate Vonnegutian narrator, one who applies his sanity and rationality to moral problems and comes to insightful conclusions. Shocked by the cognitive dissonance displayed by a white supremacist who nonetheless maintains friendships with minorities, he launches into his description of the “totalitarian mind”:

I have never seen a more sublime demonstration of the totalitarian mind, a mind which might be likened to a system of gears whose teeth have been filed off at random. . . . The missing teeth . . . are simple, obvious truths, truths available and comprehensible even to ten year-olds. . . . That was how Rudolf Hoess, Commandant of Auschwitz, could alternate over the loudspeakers of Auschwitz great music and calls for corpse carriers. (168-69)

Campbell makes his most strident moral sermon when he is accosted by Bernard B. O’Hare, a former private in the U. S. Army who arrested Campbell after the German surrender and, after learning of Campbell’s whereabouts in New York City, repeatedly expresses both his regret at not having killed Campbell during his capture and his desire to enact his own judgment now. “That’s all the glory you deserve,” Campbell chastises O’Hare after breaking his arm and throwing him out of his apartment:

That’s all the glory any man at war with pure evil deserves. There are plenty of good reasons for fighting . . . but no good reason ever to hate without reservation, to imagine that God Almighty Himself hates with you too. Where’s evil? It’s that large part of every man that wants to hate without limit, that wants to hate with God on its side . . . that punishes and vilifies and makes war gladly. (190)

By confronting a character so imbued with self-righteousness and so possessed of the demonizing hatred so often leveled toward war criminals, Campbell is symbolically confronting not only those who would view him as a monster, but anyone who can justify hating another human being. By doing so, he links the mindsets of the demonized Nazis with those who would do the demonizing. It is an effective statement, yet it is possible to wonder, based on this, whether or not Campbell is trying to excuse himself from participating in such a system by blaming those who were willing to act on the beliefs that he himself promoted. An earlier passage, in which Campbell explores the absurdity of his propaganda, suggests this: “I had hoped, as a broadcaster, to be merely ludicrous, but this is a hard world to be ludicrous in, with so many human beings so reluctant to laugh, so

incapable of thought, so eager to believe and snarl and hate” (122). Yet just before this, Campbell considers the proposition that “a propagandist of my sort was just as much a murderer as Heydrich, Eichmann, Himmler, or any of the gruesome rest,” and he concludes “that may be so” (122).

The most complex moral situation in which Campbell considers both himself and others comes when, arrested by the Israelis and awaiting trial, he meets Adolf Eichmann, who has also been recently apprehended. Though Goebbals and Hoess make brief appearances early in the novel, Eichmann is the only Nazi allotted enough dialogue to truly speak for himself. As they are both languishing in prison, Campbell makes use of their conversation to confront Eichmann with the question of guilt that permeates the story. Eichmann asserts that he does not accept any guilt for the deaths of six million Jews and, when further probed, reveals that he believes his defense—that he was “taking orders”—will be sufficient for acquittal. Campbell is shocked by the naïveté underlying the justification and is spurred to consider the difference between Eichmann and himself:

The more I think about Eichmann and me. . . . The more I think that he should be sent to the hospital, and that I am the sort of person for whom punishments by fair, just men were devised. . . . Eichmann cannot distinguish between right and wrong . . . not only right and wrong, but truth and falsehood, hope and despair, beauty and ugliness, kindness and cruelty, comedy and tragedy, are all processed by Eichmann’s mind indiscriminately. (126)

The Eichmann of *Mother Night* is, of course, a literary creation, but the specter he casts and his characterization as one who “cannot distinguish between right and wrong” bring to mind Hannah Arendt’s thoughts on his trial and her conception of “the banality of evil,” whereby ordinary citizens are capable of participating in great atrocities simply by accepting the justification of the state and doing their jobs. “The trouble with Eichmann,” she writes in *Eichmann In Jerusalem*,

was precisely that there were so many like him, and that the many were neither perverted nor sadistic, that they were, and still are, terribly and terrifyingly normal . . . this new type of criminal . . . commits his crimes under circumstances that make it well-nigh impossible for him to know or to feel that he is doing wrong. (276)

Campbell goes on to note that “my case is different. I always know when I tell a lie, am capable of imagining the cruel consequences of anybody’s believing my lies, know cruelty is wrong” (126). By detailing the difference between the notorious war criminal and himself, and suggesting that he, and not Eichmann, is more deserving of trial and punishment by “just men,” Campbell suggests that to distinguish right and wrong and knowingly commit wrong is more reprehensible than the alternative, a position that parallels most legal systems. At the same time, the

parallels between the Eichmann of *Mother Night* and the conclusions reached by Arendt about evil's "banality" suggest that ignorance and thoughtlessness are as much—if not more—to blame for large-scale atrocities than is the sort of deceptive complicity practiced by Campbell.

The recurring question throughout *Mother Night* is "can one do evil in the act of doing good and justify the outcome as good?" Though the book never asks or answers this question directly, the answer it suggests is no, that a good outcome does not permit a necessary evil, and that justifying it inevitably taints the good. Though, in the text, his intelligence contact refers to him as a hero, Campbell never acknowledges this term or applies it to himself, nor does he ever describe his actions as a secret agent as requiring any courage, loyalty, or strength. Although he, like Eichmann, could use the defense that he was following orders—orders, in this case, that came from the winning side—Campbell makes no attempt anywhere in the novel to assert that his role as a spy excuses his destructive rhetoric, at no point feels sorry for himself, and indeed, when comparing himself to Eichmann, suggests that he, not Eichmann, is the one who deserves to be tried.

Vonnegut explores this idea of complicity, survival, and guilt—of the legitimacy of following orders—early in the novel, in his portraits of the Israeli guards who watch Campbell's cell. Two of them are Holocaust survivors. One, Andor Gutman, confesses to Campbell that in Auschwitz he was a member of the *sonderkommando*: the prisoners assigned to lead victims into the gas chambers and dispose of their remains. Gutman cannot fathom his own reasons for joining the *sonderkommando*, describing the call for corpse-carriers that often came over the loudspeakers:

"After two years of hearing that call over the loudspeakers, between the music," Gutman said to me, "the position of corpse-carrier suddenly sounded like a very good job."

"I can understand that," I said.

"I can't," he said. . . . "Volunteering for the Sonderkommando—it was a very shameful thing to do." (7)

Gutman's inability to reconcile his own survival with the guilt he feels for his complicity in the system that exterminated so many is immediately contrasted with the second guard, Arpad Kovacs, who survived the war by relying on his "Aryan" looks and joining the SS. Kovacs feels no guilt for his actions and sympathizes with Campbell's situation: "Tell them the things a man does to stay alive!" he exhorts Campbell. "What's so noble about being a briquet?" (9). Kovacs's situation is more similar to Campbell's than any other character's in the story, and like Campbell, the reader may regard Kovacs as the hero he deems himself to be:

"I was such a pure and terrifying Aryan that they even put me in a special de-

tachment . . . to find out how the Jews always knew what the SS was going to do next. . . .” He looked bitter and affronted, remembering it, even though he had been that leak. “I’m happy to say . . . that fourteen SS men were shot on our recommendation.” (10)

Kovacs, facing extermination, on the one hand, and a life of complicity within a murderous system, on the other, chooses the latter and feels no remorse, instead taking pride in the good he was able to effect through his deception.

These explorations of the nature of complicity and guilt in those who survived the machinery of the Holocaust are a recurring theme in Holocaust literature, and they find a resounding echo in Primo Levi’s ambiguous analysis of concentration camp survival, *The Drowned and the Saved*. In the essay “The Gray Zone,” Levi discusses the story of Chaim Rumkowski, who presided over the Łódź ghetto for four years, until its liquidation and his execution. During his strange reign, he fashioned himself as both a collaborator who helped to send his fellow inmates to their deaths at Auschwitz and as a savior who helped to keep his people alive in a time of enormous hardship. “Who was Rumkowski?” asked Levi, answering that “in his story it is possible to recognize in an exemplary form the almost physical necessity with which political coercion gives birth to that ill-defined sphere of ambiguity and compromise” (67). And though Levi insists that “no tribunal would have absolved him,” he also offers that

there are extenuating circumstances: an infernal order such as National Socialism exercises a frightful power of corruption, against which it is difficult to guard oneself. It degrades its victims and makes them similar to itself, because it needs both great and small complicities. (68)

Levi may not have wished to absolve Rumkowski, but neither did he wish to condemn him, and he sought a certain sort of sympathy by suggesting that “perhaps . . . we are all mirrored in Rumkowski, his ambiguity is ours” (69). Though Levi is far more troubled by the nature of complicity under duress than Arpad Kovacs, he nonetheless searches himself for a measure of empathy and solace, refusing to judge Rumkowski and insisting that “willingly or not we come to terms with power, forgetting that we are all in the ghetto” (69).

Campbell, who remained ignorant of the details he was broadcasting and thus, unlike Kovacs, is incapable of knowing the good he may have done, finds no such solace for himself and instead is only able to focus on his divided identity. This is echoed thrice: first, in the introduction to the book, where Vonnegut writes: “this is the only story of mine whose moral I know. . . . we are what we pretend to be, so we must be careful about what we pretend to be” (v). Though the book is considerably more nuanced than the moral its author attributes to it, these words hang over the novel’s entirety, recurring in the scene where Campbell

finds out from his contact that he unwittingly broadcast the news of his own wife's death: "This news . . . somehow upset me more than anything in the whole of my adventure. . . . It represented, I suppose, a wider separation of my several selves than even I can bear to think about" (140). The motif of the fractured self culminates on the final page, where Campbell, facing the prospect of being acquitted by forthcoming evidence of his role as a spy, writes: "I think that tonight is the night I will hang Howard W. Campbell, Jr., for crimes against himself" (202). Such a verdict suggests that Campbell is not content to excuse his complicity on the grounds that his actions contributed to victory, and that the true crime against himself is that such a division nullifies his heroism and thus destroys any reason he has for existing.

With his verdict, Campbell answers for himself the question of whether or not it is permissible to commit a necessary evil in the name of a greater good, and it is this moral—more nuanced than the one Vonnegut offers, though related—that haunts *Mother Night*. That questions of complicity, guilt, and necessary evils weighed on Vonnegut the man as well as Vonnegut the author is further evidenced in his introduction, where he refers to his witnessing of the firebombing of Dresden, an incident that informed so much of his literature. Vonnegut does not excuse his country for what he refers to as a "massacre," nor, by extension, can he excuse himself for his complicity.<sup>1</sup> The unredemptive shadow conjured up by *Mother Night* suggests that we should all look to our own complicity in such systems, for to ignore it consciously in the name of effecting good, like Campbell, divides ourselves and negates whatever good that we might strive to do, while to ignore it unconsciously, like Eichmann, ensures our culpability in a system of thoughtless atrocities.

## Notes

1. Dresden was "supposedly an 'open' city, not to be attacked since there were no troop concentrations or war industries there . . . but high explosives were dropped on Dresden by American and British planes. There was no particular target. . . . The hope was that they would create a lot of kindling and keep firemen underground. And then hundreds of thousands of tiny incendiaries were scattered over the kindling. . . . It was the largest massacre in European history, by the way. And so what?" (vi).

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## “Gretel in Darkness”: Persistence of the Coded Subtext in the Simulated

Lea Weiss

Louise Glück's poetry is one of economy; allusions and pastiches form the narrative foundation from which her historically novel textual meditations emerge. As suggested by a number of her books' titles—*Averno*, *The Triumph of Achilles*, and *The Seven Ages of Man*—Glück, the 2003 U. S. Poet Laureate, frequently situates her poems within a mythologic or folkloric context. Indeed, in “Gretel in Darkness,” published in 1975 in her second volume of poetry, *The House on Marshland*, Glück employs a classic German fairy tale, “Hansel and Gretel,” to foreground her poem in an almost archetypal context. The poet, however, refashions this folk narrative, altering its thematic structure and plot. In so doing, Glück creates a simulation with a coded setting—the Holocaust—and problematic subtext—the comparable guilt and responsibility of both aggressor and victim (roles simultaneously enacted by the poem's persona). This simulation, in turn, encourages readers to consider the process whereby they may, when confronted with such potentially historically conceived elements, frame or limit their textual understanding according to the constraints or expectations of cultural memory.

The poem's literary referent, “Hansel and Gretel,” is a fairy tale plagued by its possible conceptual resonance for contemporary readers with an historic event, the Holocaust. Though the story is not predicated upon a depiction of genocide, its central event (Gretel's pushing of the witch into the oven) and cultural context (it is the most well-known German fairy tale) potentially render the narrative historically grotesque (Reinhart 203). In “‘It is but one turn in the road and I would be a cannibal’: The Theme of Hansel and Gretel in Contemporary American Poems by Women,” Werner Reinhart suggests that “several components of the tale pro[vide] a metaphorical background for the literary analysis of a characteristically ‘German’ mentality [and] poems which retell the story of Hansel and Gretel raise questions about the preconditions, opportunities, and social functions of a poetical practice ‘after Auschwitz’” (204). Readers of “Hansel and Gretel,” and, consequently, “Gretel and Darkness,” are urged to consider the manner in which the violence of the tale might fulfill a structural, social need, though such an inquiry might, in this context, hazard the readers' valuation of Hansel and Gretel and those they may signify, WWII-era Germans, as villains or “other.”<sup>1</sup> Contemporary poets such as Glück, likewise, have grappled with this folk narrative in their attempts to contextualize it and seek within its culturally-specific, yet concurrently archetypal, framework the reasons for individuals' (and by extension, peoples') cruelty and ostracism of one another.

“Gretel in Darkness” opens with Gretel’s mimetic assertion: “This is the world we wanted. / All who would have seen us dead / are dead” (1-3). The world in which the persona finds herself is not a “once upon a time” realm, but “this” world, which signifies the milieu in which both the titular character and reader find themselves. Glück synchronizes the narrative and actual (both of which evince the order of the simulacrum) by making the reader textually complicit: he or she is part of this “we.” In the line, the persona’s repetition of “dead,” additionally, indicates her strident sense of justice: those who would have killed Gretel and her companion “are dead.” The phrase, functioning also as a lament, evokes “our dead,” signifying those compatriots lost in the “we’s” emancipative process. In the verse, aggressors and victims are homophonically transposed and joined, indicating the persona’s problematic conceptual separation of the two.

In the second stanza, the persona advances to her meditation upon memory and identity: “Now, far from women’s arms, / and memory of women, in our father’s hut / we sleep, are never hungry” (7-9). The pattern of caesurae (after “now,” “women,” and “sleep”) punctuates the phrase and exemplifies the persona’s awkward reconciliation. The stops, emphasizing the terms preceding the breaks, form a new phrase: “now women sleep.” In the lines these sleeping women—the stepmother who has died in Gretel’s absence and the witch she has murdered—are the personifications of her lingering, subconscious memories and fears. Though she has returned home, she may not enjoy its peace, hazarded by dormant, yet still existing, threats. The persona, moreover, oxymoronically states that she is far from women’s arms; yet she may never be far from such arms as she is herself a woman; her identity is, in part, a simulation informed by the women she has encountered. By virtue of gender, she is linked to the witch and her stepmother and is, correspondingly, rendered a victim, indeed, her own victim. Gretel experiences the self-loathing of the victim-turned-aggressor.

In line ten, the persona asks, “Why do I not forget?” In Glück’s cosmology, the answer is manifold. In part, what Gretel has done, she has done to herself. Her nature, similarly, as a witness and holder of cultural memory necessitates her recollection of those who have died (and those she has killed) so that she may live. Gretel, referring to the witch’s murder, states: “and it is years” (12). To Gretel, the memory of the act is still extant; it is constantly recapitulated, recalled, and simulated. Unlike the fairy tale, which occurs in the archetypal and ahistoric “once upon a time,” the poem occurs in the present simulacrum, in Gretel’s consciousness.

Up to this textual point, Glück has neither alluded to nor directly simulated images connotive of the Holocaust, likely indicating her authorial reticence to fashion explicitly the poem as a Holocaust text. The victim-aggressor duality has, instead, been attended to merely within “Hansel and Gretel’s” folkloric context. In lines seventeen and eighteen, however, Glück incorporates terminology that

may well ground the story in a specific epoch. The persona states, "I see armed firs, / the spires of that gleaming kiln." "Firs" and "kiln" alone may be explained within the fairy tale's milieu: they may signify, respectively, the trees surrounding the witch's house and her oven. "Gleaming spires" proves more problematic. At no point in the fairy tale is an analogous detail expressed, intimating that now the poem has potentially moved out of the literary into the hyper-real. The reader, forced to contextualize "gleaming spires," might recall imagery associated with camp crematorium chimneys or watchtowers, such as those of Auschwitz. Suddenly, Gretel is transformed from a child who has killed a witch to one who has pushed a victim into a crematorium. "Armed firs" may, accordingly, denote the coniferous trees, armed with needles, so common in the forests of and surrounding Germany or connote Gretel's experience of being surrounded and trapped. Having uncovered the poem's possible coded setting, the reader may now explain line six's "her tongue shrivels into gas" and conjecture that the witch, via Gretel's actions, has been gassed. This act prevents Gretel from forgetting; and Gretel almost seems to be voicing the Holocaust survivor's mantra: "Never forget." In this case, however, it is the aggressor who may never forget her actions: Gretel is relentlessly plagued by the simulacrum of memories. Such psychological dissonance indicates the paradox inherent in the fairy tale's resolution. Gretel questions how one may resolve those terrors preceding the genre's frequently felicitous ending.

The poem's denouement is preceded by Gretel's horrific query: "Am I alone?" (21). Eschewing Hansel's former counsel, she directs her question to either an impersonal audience or herself, revealing her internal exile and shame. She responds: "Spies / hiss in the stillness, Hansel, / we are there still and it is real, real" (21-23). Glück emphasizes the onomatopoeic effect of "hiss" by reiterating the signifier's phonemic components in "spies," "stillness," "Hansel," and "still." In the persona's nightmare, "Hansel" is a hiss that spies utter and an accusation, as the maintenance of Hansel's safety was the motive for Gretel's crime. To ensure Hansel's and her own survival, Gretel commits murder, an action facilitating her transformation from victim to assailant; in this manner, Hansel, Gretel's co-protagonist, is her antagonist, as well. For Gretel, the sight of Hansel, coupled with guilt and memory, is sufficient to ensure that, in her mind, she and Hansel "are there still . . . [in] that black forest and the fire in earnest" (23-24). The "black forest" functions dualistically: it may recall the darkness of night and Gretel's internal state (both signaled by the poem's title) and simulate the poem's German landscape.

Glück's repetition of "real" removes the poem from the liminality of the fairy-tale landscape, grounding it in the near present. Gretel asserts that her abuse by the witch, violent response, and subsequent guilt are real. The statement signals Glück's complication of the real; for, if what literary characters experience is the real, then the reader must investigate the nature of his or her own reality and the

manner in which that reality may be, like art, a simulation. If, however, the events Gretel details exist in both the literary and the actual sphere, then the reader is encouraged to conclude that such events concurrently simulate historical incidents, in this case, likely those of the Holocaust, and, subsequently, infer Gretel's supra-poetic identity, an element Glück never explicitly depicts. The fairy-tale Gretel's characteristics and actions, which, as Reinhart notes, evoke such Teutonic traits as loyalty, bravery, and cleverness, may intimate her capacity to serve as a signifier for an idealized Germanic ethos. In "Gretel in Darkness," conversely, these virtues, when untempered by empathy or compassion, become vices; and Gretel, the initially disenfranchised and prostrate, then transgressive figure, may, when historically contextualized, signal that segment of the German populace who, strained by WWI reparations, turned to aggression and Nazism to regain political power and primacy.

The witch, an individual banished by virtue of her nature or status to a forest, may signify the "other." The reader, when contextualizing this character thus, might consider those who during the Holocaust or the era preceding it were comparably "othered," such as European Jewry. The critic James E. Young goes so far as to remark that Jews often serve, both in Holocaust and post-Holocaust literature, as archetypes of "victimhood and [the] sacrifice of innocents" (122). Like the witch, in the pre-WWII era, Jews were considered outsiders, as evidenced by their coincident voluntary and involuntary sequestration in *shtetlach*, ghettos. Additionally, in medieval literature, Jews were equated with the anti-social forces or entities signaled by "Hansel and Gretel's" witch and were, at times, depicted as cannibalizing children.<sup>2</sup> When the fairy-tale Gretel murders the witch, she frees her sphere of the negative forces the witch embodies, consequently creating "the world" desired in the poem's opening, a reality that might, in the poem's coded subtext, evoke the one desired by the Nazis, a Jew-free realm.<sup>3</sup>

Gretel experiences and represents the guilt any survivor of trauma may feel; she is, however, a non-traditional survivor.<sup>4</sup> As the poem's probable historical context suggests, she signifies any individual who participates in genocide or, at the very least, murder. She does not signify the Holocaust survivor, per se, but one, instead, who survived that era and its associated atrocities. Her guilt is that of activity—she is personally responsible for death—whereas Hansel's is that of gaze—he watches during the killing. Hansel, however, may forget; Gretel, may not. By displacing the witch and assuming her position of power (or, in the poem, anti-power), she metaphysically inherits her nature and role, that of the feared outsider. In the fairy tale, Gretel must push the witch into the oven to prevent the witch from doing the same to her. Such a justification, nonetheless, is invalidated in the unfolding contexture of "Gretel in Darkness," wherein comparable rationales become the "spies [that] hiss in the stillness."

By becoming the aggressor, Gretel may not claim the rights of the self-de-

fending victim: her brutality transforms her into the transgressor. In this respect, Gretel is Glück's personification of the *bilderverbot*, the image that by virtue of its relationship to extreme tragedy and suffering must not be represented. Were Gretel allowed to remain a positive and untroubled character, then the *bilderverbot* she represents, humanity's often denied complicity in aggression and extermination, both conceptually signaling the Holocaust, would be emptied of its negative signification. To Gretel, "that gleaming kiln" is the damning, forbidden, suppressed memory that thrives in her subconscious (much as the Holocaust thrives in ours). Glück's treatment of the *bilderverbot* intimates her contemplation of a sentiment such as Theodore Adorno's that "to still write a poem after Auschwitz is barbaric." As her very creation of the poem suggests, there must be poetry after the Holocaust, an event so singularly tragic that, as Young notes, it "would in itself become a kind of precedent for all that follows" (99); yet the subject must be treated with the subtlety any historical event demands. As Glück seems to intone, the expression of such delicacy, a nuanced treatment of abstractions such as good and evil, must point to the inability of images or poetry, simulations, to signify wholly that existing in the problematic, nebulous real.

In "Gretel in Darkness," Glück creates her own dystopic, anti-fairy tale. By situating the poem in a contemporary setting, Glück asserts that the account it conveys is a narrative for all eras, particularly our own, that it is, indeed, "real," and that for all its readers, the shared nature of guilt, regret, and, paradoxically, humanity's recurrent triumph by means of brutality is this "fire that burns in earnest." Glück rejects the utopia proffered by the fairy tale's denouement as such a state, enacted by cruelty and castigation, may only exist in the simulated, narrative realm. In "Gretel in Darkness," Glück perverts this fairy-tale ideal, which, by virtue of its contemporary implications, is rendered a postmodern heterotopia, a simulacrum revealing the inadequacy and injustice of the Holocaust and post-Holocaust world, which, ultimately, "keep[s] the wri[ter] and the rea[der] . . . locked within the concentration camp of [the] mind" (Young 103-04).

## Notes

1. The term "German," rather than "non-Jewish German," "non-Catholic German," or "non-homosexual German," etc., is used to connote those Germans who were not specifically targeted for extermination during the Holocaust.
2. Thus, the probable textual connection between the witch and Jews is conceived in terms of vitriolic cultural stereotypes, rather than the assignation of blame upon pre-Holocaust European Jewry.
3. Nevertheless, such tenuous interpretive negotiations are paradigmatic of the difficulty encountered when inferring and applying one-to-one, historical correspondences; and the reader should be wary, in this context, of reductively condemning all non-

Jewish Germans as reprobates and Jews as impotent victims.

4. Edmond Jabès, likewise, in *The Book of Questions*, considers the liminality of such designations as “survivor,” “victim,” and “Jew” within Holocaust literature. In the text, a character states, to fellow concentration-camp internees: “You are all Jews, even the anti-Semites, because you are all marked for martyrdom!” (Jabès 163). A later passage seems to comment on figures such as “Gretel in Darkness’s” witch: “Ah, the dead are all Jewish: strangers to themselves and others” (199).

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## IV Poetry

### *The Shawangunk Review: French Connections*

H. R. Stoneback

For more than a decade *The Shawangunk Review* has, from time to time, published French poets with whom the editors and New Paltz faculty and graduate students have special connections. For example, we have printed the poems and translations of Catherine Aldington (poet, translator, crusader for Provençal causes, and daughter of one of the original Imagist poets—Richard Aldington); we have also featured the poetry and translations of Roger Asselineau of the Sorbonne—for half a century one of the leading Americanists in France, poet, and translator.

In this issue, we are pleased to present the work of two French poets, André Spire and Yves Nedonsel. In July 2007 I directed the Imagism Conference at Brunenburg Castle in Italy—home of Mary de Rachewiltz, poet, translator, daughter of Ezra Pound, and curator of the Pound Archive. (Her poem “Rereading Whitman” was featured in Volume XIX of this review.) At that conference several New Paltz faculty and graduate students had the pleasure of meeting Marie-Brunette Spire, writer and professor at the University of Paris. Her father, André Spire, was one of the early Imagist poets and Ezra Pound’s friend and colleague. Spire (1868-1966) had a long and distinguished career as writer and activist. In his youth he was wounded in a duel with an anti-Semitic columnist during the Dreyfus Affair. Active in various social and literary causes, Spire, both before and after his work with Pound in the Imagist Movement, was a leading Zionist advocate. Important works by Spire include *Poèmes juif* and *Poèmes d’ici et de là-bas*. The two poems presented here—in French and with accompanying English translations by Alex Andriess Shakespeare (a former student at New Paltz now in the PhD program at Boston College)—suggest Spire’s place in French letters of the twentieth century.

Yves Nedonsel is a contemporary French poet. Centrally involved in the dramatic events of “Soixante-huit” (the French student revolution of 1968), he has for a long time been a farmer, a *viticulteur*, a wine-maker who tends his vineyards, his *vignoble* outside Aix-en-Provence in the south of France. In the summer of 2008, I visited Nedonsel’s vineyards again, drank his wine that I have loved for more than quarter of a century, and introduced him to several former New Paltz students who accompanied me. One of the latter was Shakespeare, aficionado and translator of the Nedonsel poems here published for the first time.

## A la France

André Spire

O pays adorable  
Toi qui absorbas tant de races,  
Veux-tu m'absorber à mon tour?  
Ta langue modèle mon âme.  
Tu m'obliges aux pensées claires.  
Tu forces ma bouche à sourire.  
Et tes grandes plaines si soignées,  
Et tes forêts aménagées,  
Tes forêts où l'on n'a plus peur,  
Et la mollesse de tes lignes,  
Tes fleuves lents, tes villes, tes vignes.  
Me voilà plus qu'à moitié pris.

Est-ce que je vais aimer les joutes de paroles,  
Les fanfreluches, les rubans;  
Les cafés-concerts, les petits théâtres;  
Les décorations, les salons?  
Est-ce que je vais être sur de moi-même?  
Est-ce que je vais être au carré  
Comme tes jardins maraîchers,  
Mince, exténué, épuisé  
Comme les chênes taillés de tes haies?  
Vais-je métalier près de terre  
Comme tes dociles pommiers?  
Vais-je compter sur mes doigts des petits vers rimés  
Pour des minaudières, vaporeuses de tulles?

Politesse, moi aussi tu voudrais m'affadir!  
Blague, tu voudrais jouer à rétrécir mon âme!  
O chaleur, ô tristesse, ô violence, ô folie,  
Invincibles génies à qui je suis voué,  
Que serais-je sans vous? Venez donne me défendre  
Contre la raison sèche de cette terre heureuse.

## To France

*translated by* Alex Andriesse Shakespeare

O beloved land,  
You who have absorbed a multitude,  
Do you want to absorb me, too?  
Your tongue shapes my soul;  
You oblige me to think clearly.  
You force my mouth to smile.  
And your vast meticulous pastures  
Your manicured forests,  
Your forests where no one need be afraid,  
Your sweet mollifying shapes,  
Your gentle rivers, villages and vineyards.  
I'm more than halfway yours already.

But do I have to love the endless wordplay,  
Frills and ribbons;  
Café-concerts and *petits théâtres*;  
Decorations and drawing rooms?  
Must I be self-possessed?  
Must I be squared away  
Like your vegetable gardens?  
Narrow, extenuated, exhausted  
Like your avenues of pruned oak?  
Do I have to fall flat to the ground  
Like your docile apple orchards?  
Do I have to count on my fingers little doggerel verses  
For ladies' handbags, lined with vaporous lace?

*Politesse*, you want me, too, overcooked!  
*Blague*, you want me to joke, shrink my soul!  
O warmth, sadness, violence, folly,  
Invincible genies to whom I've pledged,  
What would I be without you? Come defend me now  
Against the arid reason of this happy earth.

## Paris

André Spire

O reprends-moi, recueille-moi, apaise-moi,  
Ville indulgente.  
Sauve-moi, défends-moi de ces hautes montagnes,  
Où le ciel, les torrents et les cimes blessés  
Ne parlent que de mort.

J'avais cru en fuyant tes lumières fiévreuses,  
Trouver, dans l'air allègre,  
La santé, la justice, et la simplicité.  
Je n'ai vu que des ruines  
Où des volontés durers criaient:  
Obéis-nous.

O ville claire,  
Que des hommes bâtirent à la taille des hommes,  
Lance tes avenues au-devant de mes pas.  
A l'entour de mon corps jette comme un réseau  
Tes rues affectueuses et pleines de sourires.  
Au-dessus de mon front étends la courbe sobre  
De ton ciel modéré. Et je me croirai libre.

## Paris

*translated by* Alex Andriesse Shakespeare

O take me back,  
Collect me,  
Calm me,  
My old haunt,  
My indulgent town.  
Save me,  
Defend me,  
From those tall mountains  
Where the sky and storms and broken treetops  
Speak of nothing but death.

I used to believe  
If I could leave  
Your feverish lights  
I'd breathe fresh air,  
*Allegro*,  
I'd find health,  
Justice and simplicity.  
I saw nothing but ruin in you  
Where obdurate *want* cried out:  
Obey me.

O bright town,  
Men build you for men, they  
Throw your avenues down before my step.  
All around my body, networks are thrown up, scaffolding . . .  
Your familiar streets flood with smiles while,  
Over my head, your moderate sky hangs  
In a sober arch: I will believe myself free.

## Autopsie d'une Semaine

Yves Nedonsel

### LUNDI

Le gris plombé des nuages torves  
Me fait songer aux longs silences  
Où se prosterne la Sainte Alliance  
Entre le Rien et l'Absolu

### MARDI

Les discours s'entrecroisent  
Se compliquent, s'embrasent  
Tout heureux d'étaler  
Leurs symboles ravalés  
Ravaudés, maquillés  
Pour enfin ne briller  
Que des restes aseptiques  
De pourquoi trop simplistes  
Pour que ces quelques mots  
Vous atteignent, machines,  
Sous les stocks d'images  
Que déversent des mages  
Surnommés spécialistes,  
Mandarins des géôles  
Où s'entassent les jours  
Enfermés dans des tours  
Clôturées de grands murs  
Recouverts de froidures  
Qui font dire qu'il est doux  
De crever dans son trou

## Autopsy of a Week

*translated by Alex Andriesse Shakespeare*

### MONDAY

The grim clouds' leaden grey  
Has me dreaming of a long silence  
Where lies the Holy Alliance  
Between Nothing and the Absolute

### TUESDAY

Our speeches intersect,  
Complicate, flame out  
All too happy to parade  
Their debased symbols  
Renovated, repainted  
To shine forth at last  
The aseptic fragments  
Of simplistic questions  
For only these few words  
Reach you, machines,  
Under the stock of images  
Unreeling magi.  
Nicknamed 'specialists,'  
Those big men on the cell-block  
Who pile up the days  
Locked in towers  
Boxed in between high walls  
Who will say that it is sweet  
To die in one's hole

VENDREDI

On m'a parlé d'hier  
Pour m'acheter demain

On m'a charrié d'idées  
Putassières ridées

On m'a saoulé de rêves  
Tordus qui s'entrecrevent,  
De reliques, d'odeurs  
Chavirées de langueur

Je n'ai vu que des masques  
Dégueulant sous les miasmes  
De grosses fesses bien molles  
Qui tremblotent, s'affolent  
Dès que tombent les coups  
De l'horloge-saillie  
Celle-là même qui fait  
Se dessiner les rais  
De deux soeurs jumelles  
Qui se battent et s'emmêlent  
Pour cerner d'où jaillit  
La grande peur d'hier;  
Pour savoir qui devra  
S'accoupler à la pioche,  
Cette horreur qui creuse  
Nos demeures terreuses  
A l'image sans fard  
Du grand vide plumard

FRIDAY

They spoke to me yesterday  
Trying to sell me tomorrow

They have me smuggling ideas  
Wrinkled venalities

They have me drunk  
On crooked dreams  
That blow themselves up  
On relics, on odors  
Overwhelmed by languor

I saw only masks  
Vomiting in the miasma  
Of fat buttocks soft as hell  
Quivering, panicking  
About the blows  
Of the mantle-clock  
The same one that conjures,  
Illumines the contours  
Of two twin sisters  
Who wrestle, contort  
Only to trace the gushing source  
Of yesterday's terror;  
Only to know who among us must  
Couple like a pickaxe,  
Like the horror that shovels  
Our mud-brick dwellings  
Over the unmade visage  
Of a big empty bed

SAMEDI

J'ai deux coeurs imbriqués  
S'opposant deux esprits;  
Dualité pernicieuse  
Où se mangent les heures

J'ai deux tripes emmêlées  
Qui s'étripent-boyau  
J'ai deux tripes vrillées  
A deux coeurs étranglés

J'ai deux coeurs étripés  
Machonnant les années  
J'ai deux tripes écoeurées  
Dégueulant leurs idées

DIMANCHE

Le vent qui gifle  
Les troncs d'arbre figés  
Nous injecte sans fards  
La barbouille d'un siècle  
Qui se gicle l'horreur  
Sous ses airs blasés

SATURDAY

I have two twined hearts  
Opposing two minds;  
A pernicious duality  
Where the hours are served cold

I have two tangled guts  
That disembowel one another  
I have two tendrilled guts  
And two strangled hearts

I have two gutted hearts  
Gnawing on the years  
I have two disheartened guts  
Vomiting up their ideas

SUNDAY

The wind that slaps  
The deep-rooted trunks of trees  
Injects us, unpretentiously,  
With the stain of a century  
Oozing horror  
From its bored yawn

## **Je suis deux . . .**

Yves Nedonsel

Je suis deux  
                  dans un creux  
L'un attend  
                  l'autre se pend  
De savoir sans miroir  
Le futur qui suppure

**I am two . . .**

*translated by Alex Andriessse Shakespeare*

I'm split  
                  in the pits  
One half waits;  
                  the other hangs himself  
To know, without mirror,  
The suppurating future

## Things forbidden to say

David Appelbaum

Thirst in a glazier's dream  
waters to pluck a cold eye  
and smack with fat red lips.

But it's too warm for love  
under heavy wool covers  
where sleep jams the joints

the dog wants breakfast.

There, from a counter window  
the image looks through  
the outside deck of the glass

grains rasped powder white  
in never-written night script  
that melts in its own grasp

## Icarus

David Appelbaum

It's men, casing  
the green day fog  
inside a rusty screen  
that jumps like a brake

tricks of the trade  
the secret maiden flight  
follows closeting  
this young redneck

who drops like perfume  
heavy with boy dare  
into the pea green

below slaves' scythes  
capped by a plume  
hell's sallow smoke



*Canis major*

David Appelbaum

dying dog's paw  
mounds cupping  
nothing

sequenced  
in the card catalog  
of things  
come undone

in time  
no one says  
dying this way  
is death  
as such

pave stones  
do walk  
in the night

## The Ambiguity of Snow

David Appelbaum

Dog wishes, buried  
in squinty sun  
may never sprout

deeper dreads down  
under may deface  
even terror's stun gun  
before bright dawn

pours on white cloth  
buffered over white  
strain and shows no  
blood on the collar—

but the dead ground,  
bone's crypt, dazzles,  
unwinds a drape to hide  
a corpse stuffed in.

## Parked between the Valley Fields in the Warm Wind and Rain

Donald Junkins

Down from the red dahlia and the morning glories on Hawks  
Road where our out of season lily leans,  
my windshield blurs in the sweeping autumn rain,  
and it fogs. Pellets rap, and the wind rocks  
the car, then stills. This is Child's Cross Road  
where the guest workers groom the rainbow fields  
in the sun, where the quiet mocks the battlefield  
photos from far away lands, those loads  
of body bags. I remember a childhood day  
in the fall when it was warm like this in the rain  
and I watched horse chestnuts fall from Mrs. Hamerstrom's  
tree next door. I went out in the rain and pried  
the brown shiny nuts from their spiked autumn jackets  
as white and soft inside as ermine-lined lockets.

## October in Our Town

Donald Junkins

Now when the autumn ague draws old hips  
again, and the marathon-worn joints are dry  
to the bone, I sit beneath the green maple sky  
in the sun, watching the green hummingbird hover. He sips  
the last rose in mid-flight, backs up, and is off in a blur,  
a dwarf woodcock in silks. These maples, too, hover  
in the early autumn silence under the cover  
of the blue autumn sky. Soon they will be the honor  
guard of the season, but not today, and in  
good time they too will receive the wind  
in less supple grace. Genesis again.  
Old Jacob wrestles all night, in the newer version,  
with his hip out of joint, not an angel but a man.  
Something about autumn, about a sojourn.

## **Ballad: The Crow's Ransom Notes (*derrie derri-da downe*)**

*for Jacques Derrida: R.I.P October 8, 2004 & for D. A.*

H. R. Stoneback

I was preparing a concert performance  
of "The Three Ravens" when the invitation  
came to do a keynote on John Crowe Ransom  
and the legacy of the New Criticism

*with a downe derrie derrie derrie downe downe*

They wanted me to speak of how Ransom  
had been held hostage by literary theory  
in recent decades, his views distorted,  
the New Critics vilified by disciples

*with a downe derrie derrie derrie downe downe*

of Derrida they said: my mind was inside  
the old ballad, which version to sing, about  
the crows or ravens which pluck out the eyes  
of the beloved gentleman, or the satire

*with a downe derrie derrie derrie downe downe*

But the heart of the ballad was the death  
of the new slain knight and how the faithful mourned:  
his hawks, his hounds, the fallow doe, and how  
the crow's dark ransom was redeemed by love

*with a downe derrie derrie derrie downe downe*

The nonsense refrain echoed behind my eyes  
all day until I read the *New York Times*  
and learned of the death of Jacques Derrida  
from a dim ill-tempered obituary

*with a downe derrie derrie derri-da downe*

The song still sang in my head as I read  
of Derrida's so-called *defense of Nazi*  
*De Man* and how *Deconstruction* led only  
to *Nihilism* and the *Death of the Canon*

*with a downe derrie derrie derri-da downe*

Then it came to me how I'd heard all this  
before, when they tried to bury the so-called  
*New Criticism*: they were my teachers at  
Vanderbilt—I knew how they read what they loved

*with a downe derrie derrie derrie-da downe*

And when I lived in Paris I had learned  
a different Derrida—the man who said  
*I love the Canon!* who sensed all the ghosts  
who read like Ransom the vanished author

*with a downe derrie derrie derrie-da downe*

Both men turned into *false schools* by puritan  
dogmatists who plucked out their eyes their vision:  
narrow *americademics* who could not  
comprehend the work of mourning, the death

*with a down derrie derrie-ransom-da downe*

of the author, the scripture of otherness,  
and how uncertainty is always at  
the heart of belief. Both men betrayed by false  
disciples—*plucked out their eyes and ate their*

*with a crow caw caw derrie-ransom-da downe*

*barthes the crows the crows the ravenous foucaults.*  
They die so *primly propped so sternly stopped*  
(as John Crowe Ransom sang in his old ballad)  
and all I want to do now is sing for them:

*with a downe derrie derrie derrie downe downe*

No keynote no crowing just this song to mourn  
and take my place among the faithful few  
as ghosts pass: *God send every gentleman*  
*such hawks, such hounds, and such a leman*

*with a downe derrie derrie derrie downe downe*

## Fresh Tracks: Only the Private Snow Matters

H. R. Stoneback

If you know when snow started you can count  
how many creatures walked over your ground  
between maybe nine pm and midnight.

And if you know how to read snowspoor right  
you can name how many cats and wild turkeys  
sleepy skunks dogs stray bears and coyotes  
drifted over your *terroir*—in moonblessed  
freshfallen snow, illumined palimpsest.

Then you note in evanescent traces:

*nothing walks straight in snow, all moves sideways,*  
impelled by divagation, curiosity,  
all movement has a lateral gravity.

You stand stonestill in midnight hiatus:

bonecold, go inside thinking next day is  
soon enough to study curious motion.

*Mais où sont les neiges d'antan:* next noon  
farouche nightsnow architecture's vanished,  
chastity of unsunned unsullied snow ravished  
by growling plows, busy neighbors, salt-trucks.

The snow's gone public, all is disrupted,  
crooked trails melted away at the edges,  
covered, shoveled, evidence blurred, hedged:

Tracks all ski-skittery and tat-tattered.

It's only the private snow that matters.

## **Fool's Family Album**

William Trowbridge

This is Fool's Crest smile,  
stained with humble pie.

His license smile  
on his learner's permit.

His blend in smile,  
somewhere in the picture.

His singles bar smile,  
after four Mai-tais.

His have a nice day smile,  
some read as "Kick me."

His may I help you smile,  
which scares the children.

His line in the sand smile  
and Chamberlain blink.

His who me smile,  
nimble as dead meat.

His my turn smile,  
if it's ever his turn.

His true love smile,  
lonely as Orion.

## Fool Enters Corporate Woods

William Trowbridge

The sun swerves its hot rod past Security  
and onto the herringboned lawns,  
where windows fire from every angle  
and ricochets flash among trees  
posed to look exactly like themselves.  
Fool watches its fishtail getaway,  
brash as snatching flowers off the dead.

He makes his bobble-headed way  
among rock gardens that bring up flowers  
smelling like coffee grounds and toner-  
sprinkled carpet. As in Fool's angelic life  
at Empyrean, Inc., the reigning power  
is unseen, and everything must be  
duplicated for the next quarter.

For a moment, Fool's back straightens  
at what sounds to him like the Exodus  
theme from *The Ten Commandments*.  
Anthem of reprieve? Nope, just those  
underground conduits hymning power  
into the few hands meant to fondle it.

Lost among lobbies buffed bright  
as mausoleums, Fool clutches  
his portfolio of door prizes and certificates  
of participation, which he thought might land him  
a comfy slot in Inventory. But his power tie's  
binding and his Florsheims pinch. When a door  
opens, he bolts for daylight, juking topiaries,  
cowlick rising through the Brylcreem.

## Lift

Dr. to Cher: “Those aren’t bags under your eyes:  
they’re your breasts.” —*Awful Plastic Surgery*

William Trowbridge

Each year another gorgeous face  
contracts at the corners as if held  
to flame, eyes stretched back  
and lips protruded like we did  
when the teacher couldn’t see.  
In London, Ava Gardner  
took two hours every day  
braiding her hair in back  
to stretch away the crow’s feet  
and the ruffles, to freeze  
that slackening beneath her chin.  
Time melts a face at cheek  
and jowl to a sad imposture  
of that welcome one which slipped  
off yesterday, before we noticed.

## “The Night Watch” 1642

Robert H. Waugh

Selves process all together out of the dark,  
spears flash all-of-a-which-way, faces too that look  
to be a sight. You pick each other up,  
you play to each other, varied eyes present  
a telling comment, noses, jaws and cheeks awry,  
in profile or forthcoming: all men work  
to be an item entered in the book  
of was or of forthcoming, bear the shape  
of wishes after dark, your element

and your solution. Drums roll to begin,  
and all's a rush and race to enter in  
to place. You lift the banner; you swing out  
the partisan; you glance up to the sky  
frowning as though you still were in some doubt  
whether the time and tide were set right to the eye;

there's you push out your pig-snout like a cork  
bobbing out of the background oil, your hook  
and line a-dangle fishing down for you  
in the slippery backwaters; in a raked oak-  
leaf casque you rush through, but design is not enough  
and never will your visored vanished look  
come forth, it's like that dog, its snarl and bark  
hunts the dead drum to heaven where it too  
beats up the bounds; and you, girl, in your broke-

up glow of light, you float up with your horn  
and look of Flora or Jephtha's daughter born  
to carry the company through to a high-up light,  
you balance the partisan blade just off  
center: give us a drink, girl, you're a sight  
to cheer us. It's the weather, I've got me a cough

like a death of the damp. The faces fork, the torque  
of light spins off the partisan so much  
admired in its day. It's like we look

to see if that's the look of things that we  
take in so much abstracted, light in lace, to load  
the musket bolt upright or crooked, cock  
it and fire, left right, though no one can foresee  
once the parade's in stride whether the march  
will come together, whether it's a lark

for you to march along so happy in  
your company, whether once you begin  
you'll fall out of step on the cobbles and long  
before it's over fall away. The broad  
way of the city's set; for now you'll hang  
along of us to watch for the eye of God.

## Father Kafka His Long Lost Helmet

Lynn Behrendt

I dream a turtle bites my ear  
tree falls between two houses  
cat in a sunlit painting  
becomes a crow that lands  
dead on my shoulder  
and last night tire tracks  
white cat the baby didn't grow  
food on black plates bricks  
and glass in a field  
a man deciphering bus routes  
kitten sliced by box cutter bank robbery  
flowers turn into coats of arms teeth  
open a red birthday box  
with yellow bow my son's face  
full of blood machinery deer dust and ink  
diary thrown into the fireplace  
two guys with sunken eyes  
carry wet suitcases and a swaddling cloth  
snow dwarf lawn ornament  
an ordinary llasa apso dog that lives in the hospital  
rods and cones falling uncontrollably out of vagina  
a library with nothing but a miniature shadow box  
in which toy silver-plated people wash tiny clothes  
and I cannot find where that smell is coming from  
Hopper figures sit on a porch all facing the same direction  
strangely large rooms sparsely furnished  
spiders that burrow under the skin then  
I am running with him running then he's gone  
turned into cement I cut open a snake  
inside: 2 men 1 cook and a golden retriever  
old man with yellow eyes climbs a rickety staircase  
screwdriver drags deep across a red sports car  
I find father Kafka his long lost helmet  
while Keebler elves grow corn inside your body

## If This is New Jersey

Lynn Behrendt

If this is New Jersey I must be delusional  
if these are catacombs you must be horns on highway's edge  
fringe of owl semblance wizened and persimmon like  
if this is Fra Angelico that must be the Tiber down there  
if this is your rib then where is your hand hard held  
if this isn't a device then I'm not either if it wasn't we weren't you dig  
if this is dirt I'm covered having rolled in it thoroughly  
if this is dawn I'm shards

I'm sure this can't be California

if this is Tallahassee I missed my exit  
if this is Des Moines, oy, I didn't mean it  
if this is murder then why are you so good at it  
I mean if this is mortar can you conjoin  
if this is a wall I am a climber  
if this is a well I'm a tosser-into  
if this hurt you the scattering sky I

if this is an end I am no one's lucky clover  
if this is Saskatchewan I wear this watch upon  
if this is not my arm then whose is it  
If this is New York then why isn't this war movie over yet  
if this is Werner Herzog then I am wishful thinking  
and that doesn't mean anything though a tall ship perhaps  
if this is there I am so harbor damned and bound  
if I do and if I don't understand that this meat this morsel  
if this is a tower where is the tippety-top  
if this is a torrent where is the choppy turret  
if this building falls will I get out in time or turn  
if this fallow budding fills will I stitch it back  
if I sent this if I sorted it all out if I said so if I  
if this is Germany *achtung* why me, this frost on a sill  
in this particular fruit basket I played the plum  
if this is saying I am sternum lighter fluid bone bearer  
if this hellhole they call Here is truly here I

if this is wary I am null  
if this is Wachovia I am Washington  
if this is mutual we have all unfurled flag-like at last  
if this is holy hair rollers muchacho or brittle matchstick  
if this is Munsey you could've fooled me  
if this is or sounds like a stiff sermon regurgitated  
if this you see repeat after me if this you see repeat

if this wax museum sells discount tickets will you buy one  
if this is warranted for one year can I return it on day # 365

if this is Detroit I must be detritus  
if I am shit then you are shinola, a shindig, a sure thing  
if this is innocent I am New Jersey New Brunswick Newcastle  
Newtonian facts about light particles in fact the whole east coast  
but this sure does not look like Africa  
not like a caucus not kernel or tern or mine

## Dead / Squirrel

Laurence Carr

Lies in the middle of the road. Flat on his back. Arms outstretched.

There's a blink of reverence. As drivers turn their wheels around him.  
Who wants to wash squirrel guts off hubcaps?

The silent sky opens and the great red-headed turkey vulture descends.  
So close you can count her finger feathers.  
She smells the carrion from high above and circles till it's safe to swoop.

And with one talon thrust she takes up the once was, now isn't  
into her grasp and carries it skyward.

Who wouldn't give their eyeteeth for this moment?

To lie on a country road, arms stretched wide, and in a wink-  
that boundary that outlined you—  
is gone.

Soaring up off away.

The winged messenger delivering you, the message,  
to points unknown.

Leaving behind only the road with its graying asphalt,  
its fading white lines,  
and its yellow mustard blooming on its shoulder.

## Afterward

Whilst thee the shoars and sounding seas  
wash far away, where'ere thy bones are hurl'd  
Look homeward Angel . . . —John Milton, *Lycidas*

Joann K. Dejudicibus

Replay it. Open the file  
stuffed in the folder of memory—  
the student film with crackling sound,

the image of him falling down  
blindly from cliff as  
“shears . . . [slit] the thin-spun life.”

Backdrop: Technicolor dream green  
trees sway neon against disbelief,  
a few dead leaves anticipating fall . . .

How does inanimate rock  
become predator? Its silence,  
but for a bone-cracking kiss,  
turns gravity's inaudible  
plea of guilty to a denial of murder.

Serene water becomes suspect;  
an accomplice in the crime of accident,  
a selfish sucking beast, a  
captor of fall's diving leaves:

kamikaze yellow, lime-bronze, and  
orange-russet fly, sinking into the arm-  
less embrace of abyss.

A few float, but coming back to the  
surface does not guarantee life.

Light stabs through branches, one-  
thousand spotlight daggers  
cutting vision, acupuncture cornea.  
Your screams sound far-off.  
This is someone else's catharsis.

Birds chirp as if nothing is happening,

but they are right, and the call lands  
soundless. Can't words bring him back?  
Bring breath and heartbeat, smile and blink?

Or do they only come too late,  
afterward.

## It Is Marvelous To Sleep Together

*after Elizabeth Bishop's "It Is Marvellous To Wake Up Together"*

Joann K. Dejudicibus

It is marvelous to fall asleep together  
at the same minute; marvelous to hear  
the rain knock steadily on the roof,  
to feel the air cold  
as if electric heat were visible  
from the black clang of radiators by our side.  
All over the roof the rain sizzles  
on the car's hood to the light tapping of acorn kisses.

A storm is going or staying our way  
and pricking up ears on dogs and deer.  
If lightning fell on our dreams now,  
it would skip past nightmares and  
seep deeply into our veins in quick  
pricks, dance through our bodies laid out  
like a god's feast, heating our blankets  
and the coffee grown cold in the pot.

Safe there in the night, lying on our backs,  
all things transform into desire,  
since always to want us there must be the  
dark reminders of silence, the bedside pile  
of reading undone, the clothes tossed aside  
in holocaust fervor, the frenzied tattoo  
of absence, where our fingers could touch

as the weather might transform into something  
quite different, as the air changes pressure  
or lightning winks wickedly one-eyed  
and we blink without our thinking mid-kiss  
despite our fear that glimpsing love be missed.

Like the moon and the night,  
though marvelous, we do not sleep together.

## For My Darling and His Future Wife

*after Anne Sexton's "For My Lover, Returning To His Wife"*

Joann K. Dejudicibus

Today I went on a hike  
while you drove to the island.  
I ran through sugar maples,  
past blackberries and over fern—

My feet tripping away on the  
chert and quartz that had kissed  
the rubbery bellies of your boots  
like ancient lovers.

Emerging from Eden, entering town  
I saw the woman you love:  
All legs; hair and eyelashes pouring  
from her center like honey from the sun.

I felt small, round, and tart, like a blackberry.  
She is all green. I am coffee grinds and mud.

The spice roots of her lips have pressed  
the mint leaves of yours for years.  
They make the sweetest, coolest tea.  
Hang onto her like a Virginia Creeper.

Climb her like an oak. Her swaying limbs  
will hold swinging children.  
I give you back the kiss. I give you consent.  
Go to her. She is your island woman, home grown.

As for me, I am the blackberry's juice.  
My stain will fade.

## Day Lily

Dennis Doherty

Orange lily lolls its languid tongue  
with the yellow spit toward  
gullet, and the morning call  
begins, and again I'm unsettled  
and happy, to be alive still  
to lilies, disturbed to love  
and loath to die.

Submit again back through  
the darkness of her succulent  
tube, against the shudder of  
sugared chlorophyll rilling upstream  
to crown at the fingering day,  
ooze and display for beetle and bee.

Down to the throbbing white tubers  
and their kinking veins  
that suck the ghosts of bones  
off granules of sand  
along which they slink,  
past seasons of hatches, hunts,  
and leaves, collective eastern  
woodlife, this populate common earth.  
O lily, don't lead me here and leave!

## Lunar Eclipse

Dennis Doherty

Is it enough to know that it happens  
right now up the stairs, out the front door,  
climbing in the upper eastern oak branches,  
pulling their shadows along sparkling  
and play-printed ice echoes of girls and dog  
in a sexy tango of touch-my-sun?

Is it enough to know that others watch  
for me, do the work of witness, to tell  
what really came to pass, and how; the bulge  
of specific ocean and continent  
with animals and boats and streets with names  
asserting relationship across that  
distant and alien cold shouldered orb?

When I can sit here and taste the copper  
communion of old nights under the act?  
The event I tell could be any shade  
from any glade—no things but in ideas.  
I dreamt I flew arms wide in cinnamon  
winds of cold grace over jade forests  
and dizzy bridges from droll shores—so did.  
But Lola stands in her boots with the stars  
and the moon's new cloak. I should go, and hope.

## August Storm on Graham Lake

Jonathan Gates

Uplake five miles, or more, cat-scratch lightning  
Tears and slices the charcoal Northern sky.  
I've learned to wait, not rush too quickly for shore,  
For after the presaging rain dimples the lake  
And puffs of wind shiver across the water,  
A grey-black calm creeps over me and hovers  
While impending gusts, slant rain, and the deadly storm draw near.  
The lake's eagle hides and croakers in the mud fall silent.  
In these few moments I cast for one last bass,  
Pausing to catch at tigers in red weather  
Then reach for the oars and guide my boat back to shore.

## Night Life

Jonathan Gates

The last red streaks blue into violet  
as night falls on the lake which greens, grays, and blackens  
leaving me to search the distant shore for markers:  
for the boulder's shadow in the reeds  
and the three pines that tower over camp.

We've been left with only a canoe paddle,  
no oars; and the motor won't start:  
We didn't plan well.

I shiver as I did when I saw the fox dart on the shore  
as we made our way to the boat after dinner.

Now the moon has risen, merely a crescent among drifting clouds  
and fears flicker like fireflies dying in an old soda bottle.  
Yet for our lack of planning, we have been rewarded,  
not with more fish, nor a loon's hollow moan,  
but with stillness as we float on the night between two dawns.

## Cotan's Prayer\*

Jonathan Gates

A quarter note quince, a whole note cabbage  
A less-than whole melon, and a cucumber:  
These notes suspended on an airy staff  
Fall to the windowsill silently.

A set piece, still life, caught in the window  
Of another master who joins the choir  
Of artists casting shadows with seeds,  
Leaves, stripes and slices.

More like five loaves and two fish than a banquet,  
A cask of water rather than flowing wine,  
A woman at a well instead of men gathered at Temple,  
And a lone mustard seed, no mountain.

String for a vine, props for a painting  
A prayer in four notes offered for  
Contemplation of things natural yet divine  
Whispered at the dawn of a blossoming morn.

\*Inspired by Juan Sanchez Cotan's painting "Quince, Cabbage, Melon and Cucumber"  
(1603)

## Instructions for a Spy

Andrew C. Higgins

You find your reputation's been besmirched,  
let's say, over drinks one night, or better yet  
via a mysterious text from bendablebrett  
@thirstforme.com. But you've been churched  
in all the finer points of subterfuge  
and so don't know just what you could've done wrong.  
Or what you could've been *caught* at doing wrong.  
Whatever it was, you claim you were just a stooge.  
Your best plan, though, was to keep your mouth shut tight.  
"Own nothing," the incarcerated say.  
Refuse them even the spark that could ignite  
the little fire, the blaze that would light the way,  
the slow red burn that would lead them, would invite  
their flashlights in, where they find you, held at bay.

## For Faye, in Tidal Pools

Andrew C. Higgins

Because the seaweed breathes on a rising tide,  
Because the rose hips turn orange in a hot July,  
and the ring-billed gull can pivot on one wing,  
and dive.

Because the crabs dash madly from the upturned rock,  
Because the brine shrimp spiral in turbulent pools,  
I write for you my daughter, secure in cities,  
and alive,

master of braids, shoe-averse, self-tattooed,

because you spot the vultures in the August sky,  
because you bring me fists of wild garlic,  
I fear

you will weave them into your yellow, unwashed hair.

## Fidelity

*for Robert H. McDuffie Sr.*

Brad McDuffie

“I let the lawn get away from me . . .” Papa’s  
voice trails off into the blue dusk of Jacksonville.

“Once your grandmother got sick I had to  
let go of something.”

I nod, Niska Trail is hushed like a churchyard.  
At dawn we watched the blue jays at the feeder  
making clothesline dives from the Holt’s white Crape-Myrtle  
tree, winged ribbons

they hide in the silver stars of the Live Oak.

“I used to open the window for Cherry  
to watch them. Sometimes she’d sit out on the porch  
with me all morning.”

Behind us the old wood swing’s broken in two,  
hanging like masts from an old cross-beam after  
a storm passes. When it breaks, Rachel laughs, her  
eyes bright behind the numb pain. “I’ll tell you,” Papa  
is saying, “the wren,

boy, he don’t back down from them bigger birds. No,  
he stands his ground all right.” He talks about how  
the hawk circles, how jay-birds call it off from  
the high branches of

the Short-Needle Pine. “We done lost her, Brad, been  
almost a year now.” The pain of sixty-years  
stings at his eyes. I look back over the lawn’s  
yellow skeleton

where we once played Red Rover. Rachel’s eyes are  
Rose-of-Sharon red. “That’s a Red Maple there—  
it’s slow growin, and that Magnolia that came  
up from a seed.” Micah,

our youngest child, fights off sleep, over-tired.

“That swing’s done gone old. ’Bout time for a new one

anyhow." I hold Micah tight, rocking him, letting the wind lull him

to sleep. Fidelity is letting go of what you love most year after year. "I'll get the lawn back," he says. Later that night we take all the pictures down from

the wall and paint the big living room wall gold. "It's gonna rain," he says as we are cleaning up. I watch the yellow halo burn around the red moon. I can

almost hear the clouds etch against it as they pass. That night making love feels like wrestling an angel for a blessing—our children dreaming below our bed.

## On Through to Sundown

*for Sparrow*

Brad McDuffie

We stop by where your grave lies beyond Black Creek—  
thunder clouds rolling through Catskills blind the road ahead—  
it is still unmarked where eight crosses  
shade the Sister's sleep.

The cross on the end is broken. Stoney speaks  
to Matt about mending it—this much holds true.  
At your funeral we lingered here for hours  
telling old stories.

Driving in grey silence down Hudson, we fol-  
low you on though to Sundown, rivers attend-  
ing our way up Rt. 28A. A brookie  
rises on Mongaup

where water pools below the footfall's elision  
and light stains the air above the hemlocks,  
I speak to you there above the Rondout's head-  
waters: "Mother, sing

Barbara Allen one more time for me." My lost  
mariner of time needles over the neck  
of the west in every direction, cracked  
like crystal over

the mainspring. Roads snake by the Lower Hudson  
Valley streams, our guides on through to Sundown.  
I do not know your river beyond Sundown,  
Mother. I shadow

cast the slip-streams as light needles through the Ashes  
high above—the line tangled in a Sapling.  
"Mother, sometimes I'm with you in *Notre Dame*,  
and in *Saintes-Maries*

and singing in your kitchen, Durendale's hearth."  
Now I'm with you on Esopus, the water  
quietly wakes over stones in the flat light

watching as he speaks

to you from the shore, casting beyond Sundown.

We stop in Phoenicia under a full moon,  
the river's rushing calls us beyond the night  
on through to Highland.

## **Tenderly**

Shonet L. Newton

I will murder you tenderly  
my fingers woven on your throat,  
you whimper and coo and plead  
like a young, pathetic puppy.

I will cut your blood out  
and write a memoir of sweeter,  
dry days filled with latent lust,  
before I emptied out your rust.

I will maim your memories  
with ancient arsenic and time,  
while your life oozes and ebbs  
in our soft, disastrous bed.

I will murder you tenderly  
but I will not bury you.  
Your myriad remains will stay  
with me, to keep others away.

## War Pantoum

Shonet L. Newton

The men eat fire  
raw and ready  
like fireflies  
that explode at night

raw and ready  
to die in battle  
and explode into the night  
every time they kill

they die in battle  
a little more each time,  
the times they kill  
are endless and enduring

a little more each time  
like fireflies  
that endlessly endure  
the men who eat fire.

## Prodigal

James Sherwood

Half a life wrestling with angels  
and the smoky devils of misdirection:  
The Son stares into his smiling face  
at threefivesevennineeleven  
doesn't recognize a thing doesn't  
remember a thing before fifteen.  
Muted impression of a boy on a hill,  
children playing like ants a lightyear away.

A hell decade and a purgatory half spent  
searching for the ghosts of Laius and Jocasta  
in blackened teaspoons and amber nectar  
in chemical ecstasies clawing from an abyss of self.  
Biting the hand that feeds twice too many times  
forces redefinition, reassessment—  
Bagels from dumpsters: Manna from Heaven.  
Solace: A place out of the rain.

Run and break and burn;  
the slow self-immolation accelerates,  
flames lick away at the past, the future falls.

February hospital room a  
quiet cocoon—  
a quickening.  
Hushed voices encourage  
a lamb to stand, where, caul peeled, staring  
wide-eyed at the snow outside, he  
receives a new way to see, crystalline.  
How many of us are allowed two lives?

He eases through shadows  
on unsteady legs, crawling from the ruin,  
understanding that the currency of old myth  
can be traded for new.  
Carrying nothing more than contrition,  
something less than hope—

the Son rises and walks through the door  
and heads home.

## **Now: Light Rain and Freezing Rain and 32°F**

James Sherwood

says my blinking forecast. Sounds about right.  
These past weeks are icestormy, pogonip nights  
dropping tinkling crystalline dust on every surface,  
sugared walks, latticelike doilies and then frozen water,  
leaving crackling shellacked branches  
raining icemelt in the morning warmth, quiet cracking clock-  
faces in still pools, lucent medallions, ice-cakes floating into  
gray days and white nights and diffuse moons, road salt and  
sand walks and the plow-scrape scarring parking lots.  
Hot coffee and doughnuts in the mornings before class,  
I pass the rising cloud breath of crowds, looking for safe footing.  
Under all this, it's still green, anticipating the shortening shadows  
marking the inching arc of the sun by day, the clasped buds  
tight and pensive, motionless, waiting.

## Untitled

Lea Weiss

The seedlings so constrained in their tight pots—  
Their coiled roots search for that which would  
Hold them up and by extension in.  
They coil round their boundaries and become  
The boundaries of themselves, naked in the  
Wet air, and vulnerable to all that would  
Fly, gust, or graze. They are all lined, awaiting  
The fetid soil hot, reminding  
One that all growth is the decay of fallen  
Leaf, stem, man. Their stems must not be broken,  
Though roots be damned to darkened earth and walls.  
All care on the green that grows and feeds the eyes.

## Lotus-Eater

Lea Weiss

I

The noon chill early.  
Walls crease in the corners  
Upon the meeting of the side board.  
Vases and wall hangings of men with ocean wave left and fire lateral.

II

When I speak the body politic,  
I pull mosquito pines from medusa curls,  
Stick and rock debris.

When I found you Odysseus,  
You cried like an Aeolian wind,

And now, your glasses straightened, and your bald head newly shorn  
(like oldenglish *sceap*),  
Camel suited, lined in mystery leather,  
Farewell to Circe,  
You sailing make for home.

III

The intercostal muscles only fibers  
Our organs seep without,  
Navel collecting seamless.

IV

Patroclus cooks the feast  
With Trojan warhorse meat  
And demon femur-sticks.

V

The pissants scurry in the red crag,  
Plaited hair makes for arm bands.  
Come out from the sun  
And ford this recluse.  
He's spread a serape for the child in  
The brown-haired arm.  
There's a note in the air,  
And he sings of what he shapes.

## V | Selected Essays

### Killing to Create: Gloria Anzaldúa's Artistic Solution to "Cervicide"

*Temperance K. David*

In Gloria Anzaldúa's prose poem "Cervicide," a young girl, named Prieta, unwillingly murders the family pet, a fawn, to prevent her father's imprisonment. The author's footnote to the title recommends reading the poem as allegory: "In archetypal symbology the Self appears as a deer for women" (127); by extension, the "cervicide" or killing of a deer is also a "suicide" or Self-murder. Although Prieta's hands wield the fatal hammer, circumstances diminish her culpability; she knows *la guardia*, the game warden, and his hounds are patrolling her home territory, and the "penalty for being caught in possession of a deer [is] \$250 or jail" (126). The threat of the warden's arrival is enough to send Prieta's family into a panic; to avoid the severely destabilizing influence of the Repressive State Apparatus (to borrow an Althusserian term) upon their economy and social unit, the family is compelled to kill their beloved *la venadita*.

The fawn's murder seems tragically inevitable. The family cannot set Venadita free because, domesticated, she will only "seconds later return"; they also cannot hide her because "*la guardia*'s hounds would sniff Venadita out" (126). Even the instrument and manner of her death are, in part, determined by the State; because the warden is close enough to hear gunfire, the family must choose between a knife or hammer—relatively unwieldy and likely more painful means. Moreover it is, specifically, Prieta who must kill Venadita, the Self. Prieta's father is absent and her "mother couldn't do it. She, Prieta, would have to be the one" (126). The mother's matter-of-factly stated inability to kill Venadita narrows the logical scope of the fawn's signification: if Venadita is the Self who must be killed, and if Prieta is the only one who can kill her, then Venadita is also Prieta—the two are one. Only the Self can kill the Self, and therefore the one who kills the fawn is the fawn, i.e., Prieta.

Color specifies both identity and association: "Prieta" is a nickname for "one who is dark skinned" (127), while Venadita's fur is "tawny" and "spotted," "the most beautiful thing Prieta had ever seen" (126)—no other characters in the poem have color. Additionally, an ambiguity produced by the close alternation of sentence subjects further aligns these figures: "The weight folded her body backwards. A thud reverberated on Venadita's skull, a wave undulated down her back. Again, a blow behind the ear. Though Venadita's long lashes quivered, her eyes never left Prieta's face" (126). The arching of Prieta's back as she lifts the hammer, and the

undulation of Venadita's back as she experiences the first blow, suggest a shared physicality; here, Venadita gazes at and *with* the eyes of her killer.

The female gender also marks the Self's powerlessness. Anzaldúa describes both Prieta and the fawn as daughters of, essentially, ineffectual mothers: Prieta's mother "couldn't do it"—could neither protect nor kill the Self for Prieta—while a "hunter had shot [Venadita's] mother," greatly decreasing the fawn's chances for survival (126). To live, these daughters must rely upon a patriarchal economy: while Prieta's father is too financially important to be sent to jail for the sake of the fawn/girl, Venadita is "bottle-fed," that is, made physically dependent upon a culture that both creates and prohibits her dependency. Here, culture constructs the individual "first as kin—as sister, as father, as *padrino*—and last as self" (40); the family unit is more important than the female child. Circumstances *call for* Prieta's suicide, she "would *have to be* the one" (126, my emphasis) to kill the fawn. Interpellated by ideology, Prieta recognizes and performs her clear function or role within this situation, which is to kill her Self:

It is indeed a peculiarity of ideology that it imposes (without appearing to do so, since these are 'obviousnesses') obviousnesses as obviousnesses, which we cannot *fail to recognize* and before which we have the inevitable and natural reaction of crying (aloud or in the 'still, small voice of conscience'): 'That's obvious! That's right! That's true!' (Althusser, *Lenin* 172)

In "Cervicide," the Self belongs to the State. The family, particularly Prieta, is not permitted to nurture or possess a Self that is not "always-already" owned by the State. Although the domesticated fawn, when released back into the wild, returns to the family, the fawn's "choice" is irrelevant because its presence constructs the family as thieves of State property. Although they possess firearms, a .22 and 40-40, there is no discussion of using these to defend Venadita against the unquestionably more powerful State. State violence and ideology (evident in familial relations and priorities), then, move the Subject to self-destruct: "Prieta found the hammer. She had to grasp it with both hands" (126). It is always-already "obvious" that a Self cannot be permitted to live and develop outside the domain of the State. The State's authority is so perfectly absolute that not only does the situation demand Venadita's murder, but it also becomes necessary to hide and bury any sign of her former existence.

In its particular relation to Prieta, the fawn's narrower scope of signification describes the "intimate terrorism" (42) experienced by the woman of color living in a borderland culture. Prieta, as also-Venadita, is given no choice but to be motherless, dependent, domesticated, and suicidal: "Alienated from her mother culture, 'alien' in the dominant culture, the woman of color does not feel safe within the inner life of her Self. Petrified, she can't respond, her face caught between *los intersticios*, the spaces between the different worlds she inhabits" (42). Like

Althusser's Subject that is always-already interpellated by ideology, Anzaldúa's identity is constructed by culture:

Culture forms our beliefs. We perceive the version of reality that it communicates. Dominant paradigms, predefined concepts that exist as unquestionable, unchallengeable, are transmitted to us through the culture. Culture is made by those in power—men. Males make the laws; women transmit them. (38)

The dominant culture constructs the border-dweller as a negation, in the author's case: not-white, but also not-Mexican, not-Indian; not-male, but also not fully-female either. The border-dweller's several categories of identity are constructed oppositionally, canceling each other out, so she cannot "legitimately" or "authentically" participate in (i.e., share power with) any one identity. Anzaldúa suggests that the dominant culture prevents the educated, lesbian woman of mixed ethnicity from being at peace with herself; she is unceasingly harassed and invalidated.

Growing up in a male-dominated, working-class Mexican culture (itself dominated by a male-dominated Anglo culture), Anzaldúa was discouraged from education, reading, and art-making, since these were neither practical nor feminine enough:

I would pass many hours studying, reading, painting, writing. Every bit of self-faith I'd painstakingly gathered took a beating daily. Nothing in my culture approved of me. *Habia agarrado malos pasos*. Something was 'wrong' with me. *Estaba mas alla de la tradicion*. (38)

Educated, nevertheless, at an Anglo school, Anzaldúa similarly learned to deny those "psychic experiences" (58) and "spirit world" beliefs (60) recognized within her Mexican and Indian cultures: "I accepted their [Anglo] reality, the 'official' reality of the rational, reasoning mode which is connected with external reality, the upper world, and is considered the most developed consciousness—the consciousness of duality" (58). As a border-dweller, Anzaldúa's Subject is doubly-denied her experience of reality by these conflicting, competing, and occasionally overlapping ideologies. When the ideologies overlap, she will be unaware that she is "inside ideology" (Althusser would suggest that we, as subjects, are always inside ideology) until (if ever) that part of her ideologically-constructed identity is denied by an incongruous experience or competing ideology. When the Subject is formed by opposing ideologies, she is a house divided against itself; neither "us" nor "them," she is in ideology's border-territory, the dominant culture's collective unconscious, a "vague and undetermined place created by the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary" (25). The Subject cannot develop a locus from which to act, so her subject-formation is in stasis, paralyzed.

Anzaldúa describes this painful paralysis as *la Coatlicue*: "the symbol of the underground aspects of the psyche. *Coatlicue* is the mountain, the Earth Mother

who conceived all celestial being out of her cavernous womb” (68). After she is killed, Venadita is buried in the earth, safely (for Prieta and her family) hidden from the awareness of the State in the individual and/or collective unconscious; yet Venadita’s scent influences the behavior of the hounds, and her absence is present for the mourning Prieta. Through Venadita’s death, then, the State effectively defines Prieta as painfully lacking and incomplete, a border-dweller who fails to be defined by the dominant values. For Prieta, her Venadita-self is repressed in the unconscious, albeit in *Coatlicue*, “Frozen in stasis, she perceives a slight / movement—a thousand slithering serpent hairs, / *Coatlicue*” (69). Although Prieta kills and buries Venadita, her sorrow signifies a Self at ideologically odds with the State: “Wailing is the Indian, Mexican and Chicana woman’s feeble protest when she has no other recourse” (55). The perceived loss of Venadita causes Prieta to develop *la facultad*: “anything that takes one from one’s habitual grounding, causes the depths to open up, causes a shift in perception”; this painful shift, Anzaldúa explains, “makes us pay attention to the soul, and we are thus carried into an awareness—an experiencing of soul (Self)” (61).

In his essay “Creative Writers and Daydreaming,” Freud suggests that inappropriate wishes become repressed by the conscious mind to avoid violent conflict with the Subject’s environment. The unconscious mind, so theorized, allows these submerged wishes to be acted upon only in dreams and fantasies, that is, in the liminal, border territory between the unconscious and conscious mind. Because the dominant culture constructs Prieta as painfully lacking a Venadita-self, it (presumably) also constructs a desire within the Subject to find a solution to her pain, to act. Until (if ever) full self-expression is possible, Prieta’s Venadita-self will be dreamed or fantasized. As Freud suggests,

[a]ctually, we can never give anything up; we only exchange one thing for another. What appears to be a renunciation is really the formation of a substitute or surrogate. In the same way, the growing child, when he stops playing, gives up nothing but the link with real objects; instead of playing, he now *fantasies*. He builds castles in the air and creates what are called *daydreams*. (510)

Prieta does not bury Venadita without burying some aspect of herself; that is, Venadita’s condition is always-also Prieta’s. Both are covered in dust. Burying her Venadita-self and all of its attached desires—i.e., her psychological repression—obstructs her from creating a fully-formed identity: “My resistance, my refusal to know some truth about myself brings on that paralysis, depression—brings on the *Coatlicue* state” (70). When the object of repression is so entirely unacceptable to the ideologically-constructed consciousness of the Subject, when fantasies and daydreams fail to provide a necessary or satisfactory “outlet” for this repressed object to emerge, the Subject is forced to act. As long as the Venadita-self is repressed, Prieta will be in pain; she must find a way to return Venadita to the world:

When I don't write the images down for several days or weeks or months, I get physically ill. Because writing invokes from my unconscious, and because some of the images are residues of trauma which I then have to reconstruct, I sometimes get sick when I *do* write. I can't stomach it, become nauseous, or burn with fever, worsen. But, in reconstructing the traumas behind the images, I make 'sense' of them, and once they have 'meaning' they are changed, transformed. It is then that writing heals me, brings me great joy. (92)

Making meaning from trauma, Prieta can change the dominant ideology that constructs her as incomplete and lacking.

"Living in a state of psychic unrest, in a Borderland," Anzaldúa writes, "is what makes poets write and artists create" (95); *la frontera* is a state of mind. The writing process, for Anzaldúa, produces an anxiety similar to that experienced by the in-between identity of Chicana or queer: there is "a lot of squirming, coming up against all sorts of walls. Or its opposite: nothing defined or definite, a boundless, floating state of limbo where I kick my heels, brood, percolate, hibernate and wait for something to happen" (94). The anxiety is similar because, for the creative writer, the writing process engages and/or creates a psychological border territory, a liminal space for the passage of repressed or stored images and wishes to present themselves to the conscious mind. Inasmuch as the creative process is, in this way, a negotiation of ideology, the writer/artist necessarily must negotiate her identity.

In order to create (to put images and ideas together in new ways, in combinations that would be considered "new" or original in the dominant culture), the writer/artist enters a "trance" state as she engages, sifts, sorts, and permits particular wishes/images to emerge and be manipulated by her conscious mind. Virginia Woolf, in her 1931 speech addressed to The Women's Service League, posthumously titled "Professions for Women," describes the necessity of killing the ideologically-constructed "selfless" feminine identity, or "Angel of the House," before a woman can even begin to write: "Had I not killed her she would have killed me. She would have plucked the heart out of my writing" (883). The Subject who is not fully defined by the dominant culture, whose voice is Other, must confront and invalidate an ideology that denies the full expression of her experience: "you cannot review even a novel without having a mind of your own, without expressing what you think to be the truth about human relations, morality, sex" (883). In the same vein, Anzaldúa declares: "To write, to be a writer, I have to trust and believe in myself as a speaker, as a voice for the images. . . . I cannot separate my writing from any part of my life. It is all one" (95). To kill her "Angel of the House," Anzaldúa must "reprogram" her consciousness: "This involves looking my inner demons in the face, then deciding which I want in my psyche. Those I don't want, I starve. . . . Neglected, they leave. This is harder to do than to merely

generate ‘stories’” (92-93).

Once the writer overcomes her initial self-doubt, she can begin to engage her unconscious mind, as Woolf says: “a novelist’s chief desire is to be as unconscious as possible.” (“Professions” 884). The writer must make her conscious mind passive, somehow receptive, to allow her unconscious to deliver what it will; the conscious mind cannot know ahead of time what it needs from the unconscious. Woolf uses a fishing metaphor:

I want you to imagine me writing a novel in a state of trance. I want you to figure to yourselves a girl sitting with a pen in her hand, which for minutes, and indeed for hours, she never dips into the inkpot. The image that comes to my mind when I think of this girl is the image of a fisherman lying sunk in dreams on the verge of a deep lake with a rod held out over the water. (“Professions” 884)

Like Woolf, Anzaldúa discusses trance as an essential part of her creative process. If, however, the writer/artist cannot make “sense” of the wishes and images presented by her unconscious, that is, if she cannot find a way to re-present and negotiate these repressed ideas with the dominant ideology, she will remain with *Coatlícue*: “It is her reluctance to cross over, to make a hole in the fence and walk across, to cross the river, to take that flying leap into the dark, that drives her to escape, that forces her into the fecund cave of her imagination where she is cradled in the arms of *Coatlícue*” (71). This painful stasis, if allowed to last, can lead to a self-annihilating fragmentation, unless the writer/artist uses the creative process to create a more expansive and resilient identity. In “A Sketch of the Past” Woolf explains that for her writing restores the shattered, scattered Self: “I go on to suppose that the shock-receiving capacity is what makes me a writer. . . . [Writing] gives me, perhaps because by doing so I take away the pain, a great delight to put the severed parts together” (*Moments* 72). When the writer/artist succeeds, “the repressed energy rises, makes decisions, connects with conscious energy and a new life begins” (Anzaldúa 71). Not only does negotiation between the conscious and unconscious minds produce images that are “new” within the dominant ideology, but it allows the artist to re-create her Self.

Althusser suggests a special relationship between “real art, not works of an average or mediocre level” and ideology: “What art makes us see, and therefore gives to us in the form of ‘seeing,’ ‘perceiving,’ and ‘feeling,’ (which is not the form of knowing), is the ideology from which it is born, in which it bathes, from which it detaches itself as art, and to which it *alludes*” (“Letter” 1482). What Althusser describes as the “internal distantiation” produced by “real art” (Balzac and Solzhenitsyn are his examples) may be the result of this intermixing, synthesizing, and juxtaposing of conscious and unconscious elements; in other words, this effect may be a byproduct of the artist’s simultaneous engagement, in “trance,” with both her ideologically-formed consciousness and what is rejected by ideology and

repressed in the unconscious. Bad art would merely reproduce ideology; it would be either perfectly acceptable (and, therefore, unremarkable and unmemorable) or wholly rejected (it would fail to be effective in its challenge to ideology).

The Subject's experience of rejection from the dominant culture, allows (forces) her to perceive, at least unconsciously, those repressive and ideological State apparatuses that create her as Other. Anzaldúa describes *la facultad* as "the capacity to see in surface phenomena the meaning of deeper realities, to see the deep structure below the surface" (60), suggesting that those who are rejected by the dominant culture can better perceive its multiple faces. As the rejected subject is interfaced by ideology and what ideology rejects, she develops "an instant 'sensing,' a quick perception arrived at without conscious reasoning. It is an acute awareness mediated by the part of the psyche that does not speak, that communicates in images and symbols which are the faces of feelings, that is, behind which feelings reside/hide" (60). The artist's particular sensitivity to the connection between the repressed, unconscious self and the ideologically-formed conscious self is, perhaps, what allows her work to be aesthetically pleasing to others; that is, the artist communicates what everyone intersected by ideology experiences and, so, her audience recognizes something "true" in her work.

Freud suggests, "our actual enjoyment of an imaginative work proceeds from a liberation of tensions in our minds." By negotiating formally repressed images or ideas with the conscious mind, formally re-presenting them in a "disguise" or through symbols, etc., the artist/writer enables "us thenceforward to enjoy our own daydreams without self-reproach or shame" (514). In order to make sense of and evaluate this imagery, to accept it or reject it, the audience will necessarily engage with the ideology that shapes them. For Anzaldúa, Western European culture produces art "dedicated to the validation of itself," to reproducing the State; tribal art, she suggests, performs a different cultural function: "The works are treated not just as objects, but also as persons. The 'witness' is a participant in the enactment of the work in a ritual, and not a member of the privileged classes" (90). In this way, the "participant," it would appear, is encouraged to become co-creator of both Self/ideology/culture through art: "When invoked in rite, the object/event is 'present'; that is, 'enacted,' it is both a physical thing and the power that infuses it" (89). The ideologically-constructed Self becomes, through ritual, an idea interacting with other ideas, transforming herself on the level of ideas: "The ability of story (prose and poetry) to transform the storyteller and the listener into something or someone else is shamanistic. The writer, as shape-changer, is a *nahual*, a shaman" (89). The artist's role is to lead the audience-participants into the dark, forbidden, repressed, rejected, Other, liminal aspects of the Self—into the border-territory—where they can actively contribute to the process of forming a whole Self and borderless culture:

My “awakened dreams” are about shifts. Thought shifts, reality shifts, gender shifts: one person metamorphoses into another in a world where people fly through the air, heal from mortal wounds. I am playing with my Self, I am playing with the world’s soul, I am the dialogue between my Self and *el espíritu del mundo*. I change myself, I change the world. (92)

Making meaning from pain and offering an opportunity through art for others similarly to “negotiate” meaning, Anzaldúa’s artist-shaman changes culture and ideology; if she is constructed by ideology, as Althusser would suggest, then, she is also constructed by ideology to change ideology: her pain forces her to act. “My soul makes itself through the creative act,” Anzaldúa writes: “It is constantly remaking and giving birth to itself through my body. It is this learning to live with *la Coatlique* that transforms living in the Borderlands from a nightmare into a numinous experience. It is always a path/state to something else” (95). As long as there are borders defining a culture, there will be those who are outside, Other, who are positioned by the culture to challenge its definition of itself. Prieta-Venadita is positioned by the dominant culture to mourn her Self and, thereby, to protest or resist the values of the State and family. If the artist/writer is the culture’s mechanism for transforming itself, it appears she also has some say in the ideology that forms her. Venadita’s murder becomes, eventually, the impetus for change, renewal, rebirth.

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## Playing in Traffic: “Red Light, Green Light” and the Deployment of Power

*Eric Hess*

I must confess, I do not remember much from my early childhood. The few memories I have of my life before the age of eight seem hazy, out of focus, surrounded by dark borders: blurry, worn 4x6s, rather than the scrapbooked 5x7s of more recent memory. One of these rare memories from this time is of playing outside in my backyard. I don't remember when exactly—some of the dozen or so trees lost in Hurricane Gloria aren't there in my mind, but after years of staring at that now-treeless terrain, I can't imagine my backyard with them and am still amazed when I see pictures. Or why—it could have been an early birthday, though it may also have been some summer holiday celebration, and it could well have been a conflation of several different occasions. Yet I remember pretty clearly (as clearly as anything else from that time in my life) playing “Red Light, Green Light,” a simple game that seems rather silly now.

In the game, one person is “it”; as I remember, this was usually my father to start with. He would stand at one end of the yard, while my cousins and I (I don't remember having friends at that age) would stand at the other, spread across the yard in a line running east to west. The object of the game was to advance to an imaginary line south of where we stood, demarcated by my father's position. He would start the game by yelling “green light” and turning around so to have his back towards us children, a command and maneuver that would get us moving towards the other end of the yard. We could walk, skip, gallop, or run as we liked, but we all had to be ready and attuned to his pronouncement of the other half of the titular line. When my dad would yell “red light,” he would spin around, and if anyone was found still to be moving toward the finish line, they were caught and had to return to the start. Whoever could reach my father first without getting caught would subsequently receive the honor of being “it” and embodying the traffic control for the next round of play.

What strikes me today about this game is not how fun it seemed to me then, nor how relatively clear and fond my memory of playing it has remained, but rather the degree to which that game, in its small scale, seems to have incorporated so much of what I have come to understand about the way in which the “world” operates. By “world,” I am referring to the movement over the past several decades, by way of “an irresistible and irreversible globalization of economic and cultural exchanges,” to what Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, in the preface to their 2000 manifesto *Empire*, explain is a global order that has emerged along with the global market and global circuits of production, “a new logic and struc-

ture of rule—in short, a new form of sovereignty” (xi).

Hardt and Negri point to the work of Michel Foucault, citing its importance in revealing “the material functioning of imperial rule” and the operation of Empire in our world (22). According to Hardt and Negri, Foucault’s work allows for the recognition of two important concepts crucial to understanding this new form of sovereignty: first, the tracing of “a historical, epochal passage in social forms from *disciplinary society* to the *society of control*,” and second, “the *biopolitical* nature of the new paradigm of power” (22-23). Hardt and Negri explain that “[t]hese two lines of Foucault’s work dovetail with each other in the sense that only the society of control is able to adopt the biopolitical context as its *exclusive* terrain of reference” (24). At the risk of over-simplifying, Hardt and Negri assert that Empire exercises power not periodically from a centralized point of sovereignty more or less external to the body of the subject, as it had in disciplinary society, but rather that, in the society of control that Empire represents and reproduces, power is implanted within the body of the subject and is exercised across the social body at all times.

Granted, it might seem a bit trivial to consider a fondly-remembered childhood game within the context of a critique of hegemonic power, yet Foucault himself points to the importance of the family as “one of the most valuable tactical components of the deployment [of sexuality],” and thus in generating and reproducing biopower within the subject. Still, one might object that if the game of “Red Light, Green Light” were to have any political import whatsoever, it would seem to represent the old order of disciplinary society and have little to do with the biopolitics of Empire.

Initially, this might appear to be true; to a certain extent, “Red Light, Green Light” does represent the older order of disciplinary society. After all, the traffic control, the person who is “it,” the father (Lacanian may make of that what they will) is the singular, centralized sovereign consistent with Foucault’s characterization (though decidedly less severe) in *The History of Sexuality* of “one dedicated to impeding them, making them submit, or destroying them” (136). The announcement of “red light,” the spin, and the apprehension of those still moving is a public spectacle, similar, in certain ways, to “the spectacle of the scaffold”; as Foucault writes in *Discipline and Punish*, the power of such a monarch was “a power which, in the absence of continual supervision, sought a renewal of its effect in the spectacle of its individual manifestations; of a power that was recharged in the ritual display of its reality as ‘super-power’” (57). Without this public display of power, of pronouncing the name of the violators and sending them, their bodies, back to the beginning-point of the procession, the edge of the playing space, the game would be decidedly different.

According to the rules, the game was little more than the person who was “it” deciding when the light would turn from green to red, catching those still mov-

ing after the pronouncement of the latter, and sending their person back to the beginning, yet this does not accurately reflect the game as it was actually played. Inevitably, my cousin Patrick, six years my elder, would get caught trying to sneak forward a few inches, then deny it. If my dad were to play by the rules, Patrick would have to go back to the beginning, but he wasn't going to budge, neither from his spot nor his story. My dad could have picked him up and brought him back to the beginning, he could have even hit him I suppose, but the punishment wouldn't have fit Patrick's crime, and it certainly wouldn't have made for a very fun game. Patrick likely would have quit, and the rest of us likely would have lost the enthusiasm to go on; as Foucault writes, "the great spectacle of punishment ran the risk of being rejected by the very people to whom it was being addressed" (*Discipline and Punish* 63). The game would have come to an abrupt end.

Rather than go inside and face the ire of my mother, aunt, and uncle, my dad would find a way to keep the game going. As Foucault would write of the reform of the French penal system in the eighteenth-century, "[t]he reform of criminal law must be read as a strategy for the rearrangement of the power to punish, according to modalities that . . . increase its effects while diminishing its economic cost . . . and its political cost" (80-81). Instead of engaging in an argument with my cousin that he could only lose, my dad would ask the rest of us what we saw. My brother Evan and I both would explain that we thought we saw Patrick move, but weren't sure; my cousin Deirdre would swear that Patrick didn't advance even an inch, while my cousin Nora would explain that Patrick sidled forward a good half foot (not a direct quote) while my Dad was looking at his sons.

In light of the impromptu testimony, my dad would explain that, based on the evidence, he believed it to be fair for Patrick to take six large steps backwards, then asked the rest of us what we thought. We would agree, and Patrick would glare at Nora as he took six large steps away from my father. Thus, my father was able, in the words of Foucault, to "[d]efine new tactics in order to reach a target . . . [f]ind new techniques for adjusting punishment to it and for adapting its effects[, l]ay down new principles for regularizing, refining, [and] universalizing the art of punishing . . . [and r]educ[e] its economic and political cost be increasing its effectiveness and by multiplying its circuits" (89).

By "breaking" the rules, the game could continue to go on, yet the way it was played would be changed. No longer did it represent fully the disciplinary society, but rather began to operate like the society of control, which Hardt and Negri describe "as that society . . . in which mechanisms of command become ever more 'democratic,' ever more immanent to the social field, distributed throughout the brains and bodies of the citizens" (23). Sure, it was my dad's doing, yet as Foucault writes of the deployment of sexuality, it "start[ed] from a hegemonic center" before "eventually the entire social body was provided with a 'sexual body'" (*History of Sexuality* 127). Though my cousins and I had yet to reach the finish line, we

had all begun to become “it” simultaneously.

My dad had disciplined all of us in one fell swoop, not by sending each of us back to the beginning, or even one of us for that matter, but rather by involving us all in the juridical process. Foucault writes that “[t]he success of disciplinary power derives no doubt from the use of simple instruments; hierarchical observation, normalizing judgement and their combination in a procedure that is specific to it, the examination” (170). The solicitation of information did a lot more than help to “punish” Patrick. On the one hand, it taught us all interrogative techniques, the questions asked by sovereign power in order to maintain its order. They became something that we would use ourselves not only after we had won a round and got to announce “red light,” but also when we were trying to win a round and we saw someone else try to advance illegally. On the other hand, it taught us that, by ways of these techniques, my dad could know what happened even if he didn’t see. Moreover, we were now capable (encouraged, in fact, by the object of the game) of identifying, interrogating, and reporting from the field of play, each participant a satellite spotlight.

We were now playing in a Panopticon. It didn’t really matter if my dad turned around or not, or, when he did, whether he surveyed the entire field of play; we were all watching each other, making absolutely sure that we stopped appropriately so that we could ascertain whether there was anyone who hadn’t. My brother Evan would announce that I dragged my back foot, pointing to the divot I had made, and while he looked to my father for approval, I was already taking two large steps backwards, hands in air signaling surrender. As Foucault writes of the Panopticon, Jeremy Bentham’s ideal prison and “the” point of transition between the disciplinary society and the society of control, the major effect was “to induce in the inmate a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power[, s]o to arrange things that the surveillance is permanent in its effects, even if it is discontinuous in its action[, and] that the perfection of power should tend to render its actual exercise unnecessary” (*Discipline and Punish* 201). Soon enough, “Red Light, Green Light” had evolved into an elaborate footrace, with several stops and starts, synchronous and sublime, punctuating the all-out sprint. We were not so disciplined because we feared punishment, nor so calculating in our movements because we were required to be; we were all having fun competing with each other, and no one wanted to be left out. As Foucault would write about the power emblematic of the society of control, a “consequence of this development of biopower was the growing importance assumed by the action of the norm, at the expense of the juridical system of the law” (*History of Sexuality* 144).

Certainly, this story is a bit exaggerated, a bit idealized, perhaps even a bit more so than is to be expected with processes of remembering and relating; after all, this whole shift in power couldn’t have happened before a single round was

completed, could it? Nonetheless, it is remarkable how quickly after the rules were established and the first person was sent back to the beginning that the game began to be moderated not by the singular, sovereign stop-light, but by every participant, each checking each other while they checked themselves. And this diffusion of sovereign power from the one to the many, which nonetheless maintained the operation of the game, is not the only remarkable aspect of “Red Light, Green Light” as it pertains to the exercise of power in contemporary society.

The diffusion of sovereign power in the game is not a wholly repressive power. In fact, the discourses that facilitate the deployment of the bio-power emblematic of the society of control “are not once and for all subservient to power or raised up against it” (*History of Sexuality* 100-01). Publicly schooled in the discourse of the examination, participants accused of moving after the pronouncement of “red light” could easily use interrogative techniques to their advantage to challenge the claim of the traffic control and to maintain their position within the field of play; the participants are thus empowered. Yet, as Baudrillard writes in “The Precession of Simulacra,” “capital,<sup>1</sup> immoral and without scruples, can only function behind a moral superstructure, and whoever revives this public morality (through indignation, denunciation, etc.) works spontaneously for the order of capital” (14). Even if the discourse(s) that help to deploy power throughout the participants in the game are used locally to empower the participants in individual instances, the utilization of the powerful tactics nonetheless reinforces the emerging/existing order; the particular traffic control may be challenged, even found to be unjust, but the game never is.

Similarly (despite my reminiscence), the deployment of biopower does not wholly eliminate “cheating”; in fact, in the process of producing a discourse through which power can be deployed, the game may enable participants to find a “better” way to subvert its rules. Yet in this way, my backyard became the sort of colonial space upon which Hardt and Negri’s conception of Empire is founded. As Homi Bhabha asserts throughout *The Location of Culture*, the power of colonial systems/logics continually produces both excess and ambivalence in order to perpetuate their (dis)order (see, e.g., “The Other Question,” 95). Thus, in “Red Light, Green Light” cheating (a form of excess) is not simply sanctioned, but encouraged (and thus, ambivalent); the game provides ample opportunity to cheat, which not only keeps the game fun and exciting for those involved, but makes certain that transgression proceeds in a prescribed, recognizable manner that allows sovereign authority, dispersed as it may be among a constellation of subjects, to exercise its power, and to do so in a way that never threatens, but always ensures, its reproduction. In disseminating its sovereignty through the (re)production of biopower, “Red Light, Green Light” rendered each member of my family, each player of the game, a hybrid, colonial subject. As Bhabha writes in “The Other Question,” “[a] repertoire of conflictual positions constitutes the subject in colonial discourse”

(110), and as the game progressed, we each experienced the pleasure and pain, the “fixity and fantasy” (110) of becoming the accused, the accuser, the informer, the judge, the jury, and the executioner—each unwittingly perpetuating a conflict of “mastery/defense, knowledge/disavowal, absence/presence” to which Bhabha accords “a fundamental significance for colonial discourse” (107).

Perhaps most striking about the game’s continued reproduction is the image of power that it presents to participants. Though populated with hybrid subjects throughout, the playing field is still divided between the person proclaimed “it” and those striving to win the round. Even though those participants racing toward the finish exercise sovereign power, and in fact help to exercise that power in a more efficient way, they nonetheless look to the sovereign stop-light for assurance and still strive to replace the traffic control. As Foucault explains, we continue to remain “attached to a certain image of power-law, of power-sovereignty, which was traced out by the theoreticians of the right and the monarchic institution,” and can be traced back to the institutions of power that marked the Middle Ages (90). As such, the structure of the game hides the operation of power and makes it seem, as was acknowledged at the outset of this analysis, as though it represents the old order, which it in fact only simulates. Imagined as a game with a single sovereign disciplining a number of bodies as they try to advance to a promised-land obscures the deployment of power throughout the game; focusing on the traffic control makes it difficult to see the way in which the players discipline themselves and each other, not only to recognize and reprimand transgression, but also to make the game more competitive and pleasurable. Perhaps that is why “Red Light, Green Light” is such an enjoyable game; as Foucault writes, “power is tolerable only on condition that it mask a substantial part of itself [and its] success is proportional to its ability to hide its mechanisms” (86).

This extended consideration of “Red Light, Green Light” may itself seem silly, sillier than the game itself. Yet just as the game is able to hide its deployment of power within its play, so too may games in general hide their tactical function within the society of control. Similar to Baudrillard’s characterization of Disneyland as a world that “wants to be childish in order to make us believe that the adults are elsewhere, in the ‘real’ world, and to conceal the fact that true childishness is everywhere” (13), “Red Light, Green Light” engages in the embodiment of biopower while facilitating the fiction that power exists as it once did, in the singular person of a sovereign. Writing off the game as child’s play, explaining its operation as merely a “game,” obscures the political and economic role that all cultural productions play in reproducing the existing order. Those who want to change that order may need to envision new ways of playing.

## Notes

1. Capital here seems roughly synonymous here with Hardt and Negri's conception of Empire.

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Epistemological Palimpsest: A Consideration of  
Subjectivity and Objectivity in Sir Thomas Browne's  
*Religio Medici*

James Sherwood

Montaigne asked, “que sais-je?” (“what do I know?”), but Browne tells us exactly what he knows, or rather he tells *himself* in a personal essay, which having been “communicated unto one, became common unto many” (*RM*, “To the Reader”). We may think of writing as thinking slowed down, and often with a degree of artifice—a particular style, register, tone. Browne’s *essai* is an attempt to codify thoughts in his (he would have us understand) under-30-year-old-self. If we read it as a public document, do we make sense of the personal tone? If a personal manifesto, what does it suggest about Browne’s psyche? Is he trying to “shore up” his understanding of life or death? Is he sure, and merely putting it on paper for himself? Why *write* it, then, particularly if we think of the *idea* of the essay as a way of crystallizing one’s standpoint? Either he is sure and is writing it for one reason, or he is unsure and is writing it for another. We see in Sir Thomas Browne’s work an interesting paradox: where the opposition between faith and reason for some might induce a sort of cognitive dissonance, Browne manages to make them complementary. *Religio Medici* is, by turns, a personal expression of faith, an exploration in natural theology, a call for temperance and moderation, and a justification of one’s own moral and social calculi. It is, in some sense, a position statement, which—originally conceived—was to remain semi-private. Browne’s *essai*, his ruminative musing upon myriad topics, always prizes faith above all, but manages a sort of non-contradictory fusion of religious and rational thoughts. More strikingly, he does this in a time of religious uncertainty and upheaval, and while avoiding any direct attack on any particular faction, he unassumingly makes a case for toleration, rooted in the *via media*.

What this paper seeks to treat, then, are the following ideas: that Browne’s essay can be read as either a private document, a public one, or both, depending upon the version being examined and the reader’s perspective. Browne originally penned it as a private musing, then modified it for the public eye, or at least used the piracy of the text to resituate it ideologically. Through examining the content of the *Religio* itself with an eye to the language and syntax through which it is composed and presented and to the context(s) of the publication, we may gain a better understanding of how the text means and how it was meant to mean.

## Browne's Calculus: The Religion (and Politics) of a Doctor

Why is the *Religio Medici* the religion of a doctor? Browne opens the writing *in medias res*, as if turning from an ongoing conversation to a new subject: "For my Religion, though there be several Circumstances that might perswade the world I have none at all . . . I dare without usurpation assume that honourable Stile of a Christian" (I.1). Browne mentions three reasons why people might think otherwise: the old expression from the Latin ("Among three physicians, two atheists"), the "natural" course of his studies as a doctor focusing on the natural world, and his "indifferency" in discussions of religion, where a lack of zealotry may imply a lack of belief. He then states that he is indeed a Christian. What is notable is that Browne is making a case for religious (and other types) of subjectivity. Ingo Berensmeyer, in his paper "Rhetoric, Religion, and Politics in Sir Thomas Browne's *Religio Medici*," notes that "[t]he book, already in its title, is original and unusual for the insinuation that religion can be reduced to subjective experience and belief" (122). Berensmeyer is correct; the title suggests the religion of *a* doctor, certainly not all doctors, much less all members of the laity. Already we are in the zone of contention—is this a public or private matter? Certainly it seems as if it is private from the start. So Browne is a Christian, but what *kind* of Christian is he?

Browne goes on to note that he is part of the reformed church, the "Reformed, new-cast Religion, wherein I dislike nothing but the Name" (I.2). The name he objects to is the term "Protestant." He also takes care to note that those of his religion have "reformed *from* them, not against them" (I.3, italics mine). Browne's rhetoric is one, according to Berensmeyer, of "conciliation, nonviolence, even passivity" (116). He is clearly showing that those who disagree with his opinions are not enemies, that he bears them no enmity. He is circumspect, choosing his words carefully, aware that words contain power. If this is truly a private document, why such subtlety? The subjective nature of Browne's perspective becomes crystal-clear when he says that

there is no Church whose every part so squares unto my Conscience; whose Articles, Constitutions, and Customs seem so consonant unto reason, and as it were framed to my particular Devotion, as this whereof I hold my Belief, the Church of England; to whose Faith I am a sworn Subject, and therefore in a double Obligation subscribe unto her Articles, and endeavour to observe her Constitutions. Whatsoever is beyond, as points indifferent, I observe according to the rules of my private reason, or the humor and fashion of my Devotion; neither believing this, because Luther affirmed it, or disproving that, because Calvin hath disavouched it. . . . In brief, where the Scripture is silent, the Church is my Text; where that speaks, 'tis but my Comment: where there is a joynt silence of both, I borrow not the rules of my Religion from Rome or Geneva, but the dictates of my own reason. (I.5)

And this is where the interesting paradoxes begin. Browne is a man who continually attempts to square experience and reason with that which resists reason. Yet it is a bold statement to suggest that the orthodoxy of the church (whatever that church might be) is insufficient and that one needs to plug the chinks with the cement of one's own ideas. It is easier, to be sure, when one belongs to a reformed church like the Church of England, and yet we see people lesser-known than Browne being hanged for related offenses, such as heresy or merely saying the wrong thing at the wrong time. I refer here to witchcraft trials and similar public events, which Browne was certainly aware of because, as Ronald Huebert points out, he was himself a witness to two trials personally (131).

Much like his views on religion, Browne takes a moderate political position. He attacks no one except "the multitude," which really gets his dander up. He displays repugnance for the "mob," especially in the context of opposing viewpoints; he would rather people all "get on board" than hurl invective back and forth. He goes so far as to liken the multitude to a "monstrosity," saying: "that great enemy of Reason, Virtue and Religion, the Multitude: that numerous piece of monstrosity, which, taken asunder, seem men, and the reasonable creatures of God; but, confused together, make but one great beast, and a monstrosity more prodigious than Hydra" (II.1). Thus, it seems, *dissension*, or at least disharmony, is for Browne an upsetting idea. The very idea of a cacophony of voices, clamoring for change, fighting amongst themselves, seems to arouse psychic distress for him. Browne, with his quiet, introspective temper, wants people to "just get along." While a private opinion, if we approach the document as public, his commentary on political disunity may be read as a plaintive whine, one voice openly calling for tolerance. An interesting question is whether Browne objects to religious and political maneuvering on a purely aesthetic basis, his constitution running counter to disharmony, or whether his objection runs deeper: that the nature of vehement public debate challenges a need to be allowed to maintain one's own private opinion. If the *via media* is the predominant mode, Browne remains able to voice his opinions. If this is to change, he might not be allowed this right, and if this is the case, he might be called to public account someday.

The seventeenth-century political and religious spheres are inextricably intertwined, despite Browne's desires. His opinions, therefore, must necessarily be phrased with caution, if he is writing with an audience in mind. We see examples of the careful way in which Browne addresses the larger questions of orthodoxy and faith when he discusses conversion, saying: "Persecution is a bad and indirect way to plant Religion" (I.25), and later, "particular Churches and Sects usurp the gates of Heaven, and turn the key against each other; and thus we go to Heaven against each others wills, conceits, and opinions, and, with as much uncharity as ignorance, do err, I fear, in points not only of our own, but one anothers salvation" (I. 56). Here Browne raises the idea of a *forced* objectivity, and the pitfalls

therein. The first statement is one against coercion, as Browne believes that one must come to faith on his own, and the second, a condemnation of orthodoxy itself, again foregrounding a personal journey and subjective understanding of God. One note that rings a bit sharp is his veiled attack on those who consider themselves “elect”: “The number of those who pretend unto Salvation, and those infinite swarms who think to pass through the eye of this Needle, have much amazed me” (I.58). Yet it is not a direct assault, rather an excuse to humble himself, for he goes on to note that he is “below them all” and will “bring up the rere in Heaven.”

### The Calculus Broadened: Natural Theology, Faith, Reason, Science, Medicine

Browne mouths the Anglican boilerplate, but focuses on tolerance and toleration; some scholars consider him Latitudinarian, some Deist, some Fideist, and a host of other labels besides. What does the *Religio Medici* tell us about his standpoint(s)? Other than his direct references to the Anglican church, the overwhelming tone is one of awe at the natural world, a basis for a sort of natural theology. Nature is an emanation of God, suffused with Spirit. Browne’s theology melds with the knowledge he has gained from his studies in science and the practice of medicine. His studies in anatomy and physiology have given him a context in which to situate loftier ideas, but always ultimately deferring to God, to the “Hand of God” or to the “Finger of God.” He says, in I.16, “[i]n brief, all things are artificial; for Nature is the Art of God.” This is an odd synthesis of Platonic and Christian ideas, and for Browne it is a schema onto which he maps much of his musings. In the tension between reason and faith, religion trumps all, but only because the natural world is a manifestation of God; it is God as *designer*, as artificer, as artist: “my humble speculations have another Method, and are content to trace and discover those expressions He hath left in His Creatures, and the obvious effects of Nature” (I.13). This is a perspective that is rooted in experience, empiricism, and the sensual/sensible world, yet it leaves room for amazement and wonder. One can dissect a frog or a cadaver and still be awed at the complexity of either, especially given the incomplete seventeenth-century understanding of physiology. In his discussion of spirit(s), this idea of wonder recurs: “[n]ow, besides these particular and divided Spirits, there may be (for ought I know,) an universal and common Spirit to the whole World” (I.32). Used in this sense, the idea borders on the heretical, an almost Animistic, pagan idea, especially when contrasted with the following, which is much more Christian in tone: “I am sure there is a common Spirit that plays within us, yet makes no part of us; and that is, the Spirit of God, the fire and scintillation of that noble and mighty Essence” (I.32). So we see a clear dis-

inction between the spirit of God and those other spirits that infuse the natural world. This is noteworthy because Browne has no problem reconciling the two. His schema is loosely mapped on classical ideals: “The severe Schools shall never laugh me out of the Philosophy of Hermes, that this visible World is but a Picture of the invisible wherein, as in a Pourtraict, things are not truely, but in equivocal shapes, and as they counterfeit some more real substance in that invisible fabrick” (I.12). Here Browne notes that nature is a manifestation or emanation of God. Browne attempts to make sense of the world and commits these ideas to the written record. If the text is subjective and personal, we understand that Browne pens his own thoughts without much care to his audience because *there is none*, at least that he is directly speaking to during the writing act. When the text becomes a public document, what he has said gains polemical importance owing to the controversial nature of the assertions.

Browne’s understanding of nature allows him to make sense of the universe: “Thus there are two Books from whence I collect my Divinity; besides that written one of God, another of His servant Nature, that universal and publick Manuscript, that lies expans’d unto the Eyes of all: those that never saw Him in the one, have discovered Him in the other” (I.15). He speaks as a “heathen.” The natural world is an instructor, providing lessons for those who take care to observe: “Indeed what Reason may not go to School to the Wisdom of Bees, Ants, and Spiders? what wise hand teacheth them to do what Reason cannot teach us? . . . in these narrow Engines there is more curious Mathematicks; and the civility of these little Citizens more neatly sets forth the Wisdom of their Maker” (I.15). The “social” insects, as modern science calls them, are exactly that: social. They have miniature societies, which are idealized, harmonious, microcosmic versions of our own. In this, the *organization* is what grabs Browne’s attention, but even more strikingly, he sees the hand of God as designer, for how could something like this arise spontaneously? It is as if Browne is jealous of their civility, and as we have seen, he is none too pleased with the behavior of his own society.

For Browne, reason and faith are reconcilable, and while he makes much of the processes of reason, he finally defers to faith. One of the more famous passages from the *Religio* is the following:

As for those wingy Mysteries in Divinity, and airy subtleties in Religion, which have unhing’d the brains of better heads, they never stretched the *Pia Mater* of mine. Methinks there be not impossibilities enough in Religion for an active faith; the deepest Mysteries ours contains have not only been illustrated, but maintained, by Syllogism and the rule of Reason. I love to lose my self in a mystery, to pursue my Reason to an *O altitudo!* (I.9)

Perhaps he is speaking of the scholastic questions of theology, attempts at guessing how many angels might be able to dance on the head of a pin, or matters of

medieval canon law. Whatever the questions are, Browne does not need answers for everything; there are questions with which he will not engage. Browne is occupied with the questions that he can answer to his satisfaction, and those that he cannot, he is willing to leave alone.

Yet reason is the basis for his understanding. Browne sits with questions and teases out answers, turning them in the light and examining them from different directions; he *is* stretching his *pia mater*. The *essai* as we are defining it seems congruent with Browne's description of his process: "Where there is an obscurity too deep for our Reason, 'tis good to sit down with a description, periphrasis, or adumbration; for by acquainting our Reason how unable it is to display the visible and obvious effects of Nature, it becomes more humble and submissive unto the subtleties of Faith" (I.10). While Browne is (unintentionally) making a case for writing as empirical process, the end product is contingent upon faith; shortly afterward, he says, speaking about biblical questions like the nature of the serpent in Genesis: "Yet I do believe that all this is true, which indeed my Reason would persuade me to be false; and this I think is no vulgar part of Faith, to believe a thing not only above but contrary to Reason, and against the Arguments of our proper Senses" (I.10). Of the two texts he takes his instruction from, the Bible and the natural world, the Bible wields authority, and it is the Bible that informs his own text.

We have seen how Platonic and classical ideas influence Browne's thinking, and *logos* reigns in the realm of reason. Browne draws upon older ideas like the Great Chain of Being, a comfortable hierarchy in which to situate his observations of the natural world, which, as we have noted, are ultimately attributed to God. This idea is concrete when he says: "Now, if you demand my opinion and Metaphysics of their natures, I confess them very shallow; most of them in a negative way, like that of God; or in a comparative, between ourselves and fellow-creatures; for there is in this Universe a Stair, or manifest Scale of creatures, rising not disorderly, or in confusion, but with a comely method and proportion" (I. 33). The hierarchy is clear, and this construct is helpful to systematic thought and logical order. Earlier, he notes: "an easie Logic may conjoyn Heaven and Earth in one Argument, and with less than a Sorites [series of syllogisms], resolve all things into God. For though we christen effects by their most sensible and nearest Causes, yet is God the true and infallible Cause of all" (I.18). According to Browne, we make sense of the world through our natural observations and then apply logic in order to bring them into alignment with the rest of our calculi. Browne, in a clever rhetorical move, merges form with content when he says: "As Reason is a Rebel unto Faith, so Passion unto Reason: as the propositions of Faith seem absurd unto Reason, so the Theorems of Reason unto Passion, and both unto Faith. Yet a moderate and peaceable discretion may so state and order the matter, that they may be all Kings, and yet make but one Monarchy" (I.19). Here we see how

reason and faith are reconciled, yet Browne is employing a syllogism in order to make his point! The Monarchy is the hierarchy ruled by God, and Reason, Faith, and Passion—all important and necessary members of the court.

Browne is a doctor and amateur scientist, and his interests are in part what make the *Religio Medici*, literally, the Religion of a Doctor. His studies in anatomy and physiology have raised new questions for him, and his attempts to square science with faith lead to interesting ideas. His discussion of the soul sounds analytical: “amongst all those rare discoveries and curious pieces I find in the Fabrick of Man, I do not so much content my self, as in that I find not, there is no Organ or Instrument for the rational Soul; for in the brain, which we term the seat of Reason, there is not anything of moment more than I can discover in the crany [skull] of a beast” (I.36). Elsewhere, he discusses the distinctions between man and beast, suggesting in one section that the difference is man’s possession of a soul (prompting this very investigation), but in another that man’s capacity for reason is the difference, and in still another that it is man’s capacity for religion.

Consistency is not Browne’s forte, despite his best efforts. We do see how these reasoning processes do play out in Browne’s overall understanding; his scientific observations lead to gorgeous metaphors like the following: “Those strange and mystical transmigrations that I have observed in Silk-worms, turned my Philosophy into Divinity. There is in these works of nature, which seem to puzzle reason, something Divine, and hath more in it then the eye of a common spectator doth discover” (I.39). The metamorphosis of a larva to pupa to moth is magical and boggles the mind of almost anyone who has seen the various stages. It is not hard to see how Browne sees the hand of God at work or play in the universe.

The doctor speaks directly to the audience and, more importantly, to himself, when he says: “Men that look no farther than their outsides, think health an appurtenance unto life, and quarrel with their constitutions for being sick; but I, that have examined the parts of man, and know upon what tender filaments that Fabrick hangs, do wonder that we are not always so; and, considering the thousand doors that lead to death, do thank my God that we can die but once” (I.44). We see a glimpse here of the meditative nature of the essay. Much of the second section turns on a consideration of life and death, and afterlife, and it is through his profession that Browne has close contact with the physical aspects of mortality. Fragile life may end in myriad ways. For Browne, this topic is important, if only for his discussion of what he finds much more important: the afterlife.

### The Calculus Deepened: Views on God, Death, Resurrection, Salvation

Who is God to Browne? Browne is a skeptic of sorts, but again, his skepticism is

mitigated by belief. Ultimately, he's happy to leave well-enough alone, trusting in Divinity. Reason is a tool given by God and utilized in order to try to make sense of the world around us and of God its creator. Browne often employs the *via negativa*, defining that which cannot be comprehended by defining what it is *not*. This is clear when he states: "For even in things alike there is diversity; and those that do seem to accord do manifestly disagree. And thus is man like God; for in the same things that we resemble Him, we are utterly different from Him" (II.2). His impression of God seems to be that of the artificer or designer, the sort of deity Deists agree upon: the architect.

The second half of the *Religio* turns to death and the afterlife. We know Browne is sensitive to mortality, but the essay functions as a means of attempting to resolve existential crises, a way of reiterating his own position on death, and in this, we see Browne gently wrestling with the ideas of loss and the potential gains in the afterlife:

I am not so much afraid of death, as ashamed thereof. 'Tis the very disgrace and ignominy of our natures, that in a moment can so disfigure us. . . . This very conceit hath in a tempest disposed and left me willing to be swallowed up in the abyss of waters, wherein I had perished unseen, unpityed, without wondering eyes, tears of pity, Lectures of mortality. (I.40)

We again see the doctor foregrounded. As one who has treated a multitude of ailments—some no doubt terminal—with varying degrees of efficacy, Browne has no qualms about telling us what life holds in store. This works both ways, however; what is a warning to the (hypothetical) reader is also a way of crystallizing Browne's own personal thoughts on the matter, a reinforcement of the "upside" to death. Death, for Browne, is not a happy or good thing; he's not rushing headlong into the grave, and he mitigates the terrible aspect with his faith, using these ruminations on death as a moment for self-effacement: "And therefore at my death I mean to take a total adieu of the World, not caring for a Monument, History or Epitaph, not so much as the bare memory of my name to be found any where but in the universal Register of God" (I.41). This deliberate self-annihilation is a way to humble himself, to glorify God, and to push aside the frightening aspects of mortality with the promise of salvation and afterlife. Browne is very clear on this, and regardless of whether we consider the document a public or private one, the import of what Browne says cannot be overstated. He notes that "[f]or the World, I count it not an Inn, but an Hospital; and a place not to live, but to dye in. The world that I regard is my self; it is the Microcosm of my own frame that I cast mine eye on; for the other, I use it but like my Globe, and turn it round sometimes for my recreation" (II.11). Salvation is the important thing; it is the balm that soothes and ought to be, according to Browne, one of the most prominent foci in our lives.

Browne states that “[t]here is no Salvation to those that believe not in Christ, that is, say some, since His Nativity, and, as Divinity affirmeth, before also; which makes me much apprehend the ends of those honest Worthies and Philosophers which dyed before His Incarnation. It is hard to place those Souls in Hell, whose worthy lives do teach us Virtue on Earth” (I.54). Here we see Browne trying to square damnation with the existence of the virtuous dead, much as Dante does in his *Inferno* with the pre-Christian pagans. Instead of constructing a fiction, Browne simply states that when the pagans hear of Adam, they will be very surprised, and suggests that it would be insolent to question the “Justice of [God’s] proceedings.” This is where reason fails, and faith will have to do. While Browne tries to make sense of everything within his observance, some ideas simply do not fit, and at these times he defers to mystery. According to Huebert, “Browne’s habit of piling qualification upon qualification, of offering a number of ways to grasp a single idea, of allowing for changes and instabilities within his own mental geography, can test the patience of any reader” (130). His multivariate attempts to make sense often confuse, though it appears that Browne himself notes no inconsistency.

Rarely is Browne cynical, but there are sprinkles of what might be called “bleakness” here and there. He discusses the *possibility* of the resurrection and the afterlife not occurring: “The life, therefore, and spirit of all our actions is the resurrection, and a stable apprehension that our ashes shall enjoy the fruit of our pious endeavours: without this, all Religion is a Fallacy, and those impieties of Lucian, Euripides, and Julian, are no blasphemies, but subtle verities, and Atheists have been the onely Philosophers” (I.47). In other words, there *must* be a resurrection and an afterlife, for if there is not, *everything* loses meaning.

Even were this the case, suicide cannot be the answer, and Browne is adamant in his proscription against it: “that can allow a man to be his own Assassine, and so highly extol the end and suicide of Cato. This is indeed not to fear death, but yet to be afraid of life. It is a brave act of valour to contemn death; but where life is more terrible than death, it is then the truest valour to dare to live” (I.44). One hears the Hippocratic Oath here, as well as a statement of faith, and a humanitarian plea for courage in the face of adversity.

Ultimately, Browne acknowledges that heaven may be attainable right here on earth. The sense of heaven is one of completeness, a freedom from want. One can almost taste the desire for an experience of the numinous, which is exactly what Browne describes here:

where the Soul hath the full measure and complement of happiness; where the boundless appetite of that spirit remains compleatly satisfied, that it can neither desire addition nor alteration: that, I think, is truly Heaven: and this can onely be in the enjoyment of that essence, whose infinite goodness is able to termi-

nate the desires of it self, and the unsatiable wishes of ours: wherever God will thus manifest Himself, there is Heaven, though within the circle of this sensible world. (I.49)

Browne is a believer, but he, like many or most believers, needs reassurance. The essay is exactly that: a “list, periphrasis, or adumbration” designed to reinforce that which makes sense, and to make sense of that which resists sense, and to allow for the wonder at that which resists all attempts at reason. Having looked at Browne’s belief system, we turn to a discussion of structure, and how the content of Browne’s essay relates to the form.

### The Structure of the *Religio Medici*: From Public Discussion to Private Prayer

The composition of the essay mirrors its content. Anne Drury Hall, in her excellent study “Epistle, Meditation, and Sir Thomas Browne’s *Religio Medici*,” discusses the ways in which the form relates to the material presented. Pointing out that the bulk of the essay is written as if to a close friend or intimate, Hall notes that the overall “genre is ‘a meditation in the epistolary mode’” and that “the work is distinctly epistolary in addressing a restricted audience in a tone of conversational immediacy” (234). The intimate tone of the essay suggests subjectivity, yet the nature of the text as a public document complicates our understanding of it. Hall goes on to note that this style is what makes Browne’s opinions hard to disagree with; he’s an agreeable sort to begin with, and the tone mirrors the emotion. By employing a conciliatory manner and speaking of tolerance and moderation, Browne manages to draw listener/reader in, to disarm him, to say “look here, fellow, there’s no reason to argue, have a listen to what I have to say.” More importantly, the range of the text is broad, in that the register changes throughout; according to Hall, “[w]hat gives the *Religio* its wide and yet subtle range . . . is the combination of this [epistolary] style with one almost antithetical to it—the somber, withdrawn, and sometimes lyric prose of devotional texts” (236). The organization of the text is first to discuss or raise an idea, and turn it about—ideas we have seen earlier, like faith, science, or medicine. The discussion then incorporates a *volta* of sorts, and the section ends with a prayer or meditation. When Browne does this, there is a clear delineation between the sections, and in some cases, he tells us exactly what the prayer is. We see this turn in I.13, where the discussion of God’s wisdom ends, and after the signal word “therefore,” the prose develops into loosely iambic rhyming couplets for several lines: “Search while thou wilt, and let thy Reason go, To ransome Truth, even to th’ Abyss below; Rally the scattered Causes; and that line, Which Nature twists, be able to untwine. It is thy Makers will, for unto none

But unto Reason can He e're be known." The essay concludes with a poem, one that reads like a hymn. Another instance has Browne *telling* us that the poem is a bedtime prayer he wrote for himself and that he recites it every night. This is a very personal sort of sharing; we don't run around telling our friends and colleagues about our nighttime rituals, much less in an essay. But what if we are to consider the text as the equivalent of a diary entry? If Browne really never intends it to move outside of a very small contingent of intimates, then the anxiety of his response to sudden publication is justified. Hall considers these sections "confessional meditations," which are "an organization of experience that affords the soul a way of keening in the face of threatening forces beyond human comprehension: the power of evil, the inevitability of death, the uncertainty of the afterlife" (236). This is on the mark. Browne is writing the essay for a hypothetical audience, yet it is a means to reaffirm his own beliefs. Furthermore, the overall structure is a macrocosm of the sections, and according to Hall, "[t]he urbane epistolary style is strongest at the beginning, the serene meditative style strongest at the end" (238). Like "Hydriotaphia, or Urn-Burial," *Religio* begins with a conversational style and ends on a much more somber note. Considering the reception of the text, we note that Browne is taking care with the structure of the essay. If he were only writing as a personal exercise, then why craft it so carefully, with such acute awareness of meaning. This attention to composition shows awareness that the essay might someday reach a larger audience. One possible answer lies in Browne's careful framing of his opinions and fairly clear *caveats* to his audience.

Browne constantly equivocates, always reminding us that what he is setting down is only an opinion, that he is only putting forth his own musings for us to consider: "I could never divide myself from any man upon the difference of an opinion, or be angry with his judgment for not agreeing with me in that from which perhaps within a few days I should dissent my self" (I.6). This is his way of saying "what I believe to be the truth is subject to revision at any given point in time." Browne is very concerned with truth, but keenly aware that truth is notoriously hard to pin down, and he knows that he has no corner on the market. Browne repeatedly sprinkles in little tidbits that let us know that he is not trying to "perswade" us of anything. This suggests that the document is of a truly private nature.

When Browne speaks of anything remotely controversial, he is careful to rhetorically distance himself from the idea itself. On opinions that others might consider heretical, he says:

'Tis true, that men of singular parts and humours have not been free from singular opinions and conceits in all Ages . . . [there are] many things untouch'd, unimagi'd, wherein the liberty of an honest reason may play and expatiate with security, and far without the circle of an Heresie. (I.8)

He suggests that to merely *think* about these ideas, to ruminate upon them, is nothing to give offense. He says this in a time in which society and government *do* persecute, prosecute, and imprison or kill dissenters. Browne *does* distance himself, and to this end, he says: “This is the Tenor of my belief; wherein though there be many things singular, and to the humour of my irregular self, yet if they square not with maturer Judgements, I disclaim them, and do no further father them, than the learned and best judgements shall authorize them” (I.60). So he goes out of his way to mitigate the potential fallout from either the right people misunderstanding his words, or the wrong people *correctly understanding* his words.

Browne’s opinions are various and sundry, and he must be aware that even among his close friends there may be dissenting ideas; he remains humble, or so he would have us believe. This is problematized when we look closely at the text, noting that he does manage to contradict himself, despite his best intentions, though we must admit that we do see the thought processes of one who is razor sharp, who does have a calculus that is consistent, *most of the time*:

I envy no man that knows more than my self, but pity them that know less. I instruct no man as an exercise of my knowledge, or with intent rather to nourish and keep it alive in mine own head then beget and propagate it in his. . . . I cannot fall out or contemn a man for an error, or conceive why a difference in Opinion should divide an affection; for Controversies, Disputes, and Argumentations, both . . . if they meet with discreet and peaceable natures, do not infringe the Laws of Charity. (II.3)

Here, Browne sets up a series of checks against accusations of . . . what? Egotism? Grandstanding? Soap-boxing? We cannot be sure, but the language is decidedly defensive. Browne uses the discussion of charity, a long section in the second half of the *Religio*, to forestall criticism, either private or public. He goes on, saying: “No man can justly censure or condemn another, because indeed no man truly knows another. This I perceive in my self; for I am in the dark to all the world, and my nearest friends beheld me but in a cloud” (II.4). This is a clear case for the ultimate idea of subjectivity, and it works as a sort of *caveat* for Browne. He throws light on his most intimate thoughts, yet he pulls back, saying, “who are you to judge me?” The answer is clear.

### Subjectivity Revisited: A Final Assessment

Sir Thomas Browne’s essay is many things: it is a genre-bending text that was ostensibly composed in one mode, and was forced into another. It was intended for an audience of one (or two) but, once published, became a different animal entirely. The register, tone, diction, and other characteristics point towards subjectivity, as does *some* of the content. If it is so private, why write it? One possible answer

is the one I began with, which is that the *essai*, as a form, is useful to crystallize one's own thoughts, without regard to who might read it. The complication arises when one considers that the artifice of writing—the deliberate slowing down of thoughts, the writing to *whom*, the careful choice of words—is, by its very nature, an act that *presupposes* an audience. Even if Browne were to say to us—if right now, the spirit of Browne were to manifest itself and carry on a conversation with us—that it is personal writing, that because it was truly meant for one and yet communicated unto many, it is then private, I contend that Browne would be mistaken. It is both, simultaneously a private and public document, and it was before Browne ever saw it published.

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## VI | News and Notes

In this column we feature news from current and recent graduate students: honors, achievements, publications, conference papers, progress in PhD programs, and other news.

1. Twenty of our MAs continue their progress in PhD programs: Lawrence Beemer (2002) at Ohio University; Michael Beilfuss (2005) at Texas A&M University; William Boyle (2006) at the University of Mississippi; Danielle Bienvenue Bray (2004) at the University of Louisiana, Lafayette; Nicole Camastra (2005) at the University of Georgia; Celeste Capaldi (2006) at Duquesne University; D. A. Carpenter (2005) at Texas A&M University; Kevin Cavanaugh (2002), at the University of Albany (Curriculum and Instruction Program); Steven Florczyk (2002) at the University of Georgia; Timothy Gilmore (2004) at the University of California, Santa Barbara; Tina Iraca (2001) at the University of Connecticut; John Langan (1998) at the City University of New York; Jennifer Lee (2007) at the University of Rhode Island; Brad McDuffie (2005) at Indiana University of Pennsylvania; Nicole Myers (2007) at the University of Rhode Island; Matthew Nickel (2006) at the University of Louisiana, Lafayette; Sharon Peelor (1997) at the University of Oklahoma (Education Studies); Donna Bonsignore Scully (2001) at St. John's University; James Stamant (2005) at Texas A&M University; Amy Washburn (2005) at the University of Maryland (Women's Studies).

2. In the listing of professional activities and achievements below the following conferences frequently appear and are cited by abbreviation:

EMR: 10<sup>th</sup> Annual Elizabeth Madox Roberts Conference at Saint Catharine College, Springfield, KY, April 19-21, 2008

IHC: 13<sup>th</sup> International Hemingway Conference, Kansas City, MO, June 9-15

NAS: Hemingway in the North Country Conference at SUNY Plattsburgh and Lake Placid, NY, October 8-11

SAMLA: 80<sup>th</sup> Annual South Atlantic Modern Language Association

Convention, Louisville, KY, November 7-9, 2008

IRAS: 5<sup>th</sup> International Richard Aldington Society Conference, Les  
Saintes-Maries-de la-Mer, France, July 8-10

ALA: 19<sup>th</sup> Annual American Literature Association Conference Savan-  
nah, GA, October 17-19

**Professional activities and achievements of current Master's students  
and 2008 graduates:**

Kevin Angioli (MA and TA) presented a paper at NAS.

Amanda Boyle (MA and TA) presented papers at EMR and NAS, and  
two papers at SAMLA.

Eric Hess (MA, December 2008) presented a paper at SAMLA and at  
the 60<sup>th</sup> Conference on College Composition and Communication  
Annual Convention (San Francisco, CA, March 11-14).

Janice M. Holzman (MA, May 2008), an Adjunct Instructor of English  
at SUNY New Paltz, presented papers at IRAS and SAMLA.

Mary Ellen Iatropoulos (MA/MAT) chaired a panel and presented a pa-  
per at the Southwest/Texas Popular/American Culture Association  
Conference (Albuquerque, NM, February 13-16).

Lucas Kane (MA, December 2008) presented a paper at SAMLA.

Erin Rodino (MA) presented a paper at NAS.

Cristin Rogowski (MA and TA) presented a paper at the Spring 2008  
New York College English Association Conference (Borough of  
Manhattan Community College).

Mert Sanivar (MA and GA) was elected Graduate Representative of  
the National Association for Ethnic Studies and attended the annual  
Board Meeting (Bellingham, WA, November 1-3). He co-founded  
the SUNY New Paltz Graduate Student Association. He presented  
papers at NAS and at the 37<sup>th</sup> Annual NAES Conference (San Diego,  
CA, April 2-4, 2009).

Lea Weiss (MA, December 2008) presented a paper at SAMLA.

Alexandria Wojcik (MA and TA) presented a paper at NAS.

Nicholas Wright (MA, May 2008), an Adjunct instructor at SUNY New  
Paltz and Marist College, presented a paper at SAMLA and pub-

lished two encyclopedia entries in *LGBTQ America*.

**Professional activities achievements of former Master's students:**

Cristy Woehling Beemer (2002) received her PhD in Rhetoric and Composition from Miami University of Ohio in May 2008 and in the fall took a position as Assistant Professor of English the University of New Hampshire. Last year she co-authored an article, "Making the Rhetorical Sell: WAC Entrepreneurs in the School of Business," which was published in *Pedagogy: Critical Approaches to Teaching Literature, Language, Composition, and Culture* 9 (2008), and she has an article forthcoming in the collection *Performing Feminism and Administration in Rhetoric and Composition Studies*. She also presented a paper at the 60<sup>th</sup> Conference on College Composition and Communication Annual Convention (San Francisco, CA, March 11-14).

Michael Beilfuss (2005), a doctoral student at Texas A&M University, presented papers at IHC and SAMLA.

William Boyle (2006), a doctoral student at the University of Mississippi, presented papers at EMR and IHC. He published an entry on George Pelecanos in *Critical Survey of Mystery and Detective Fiction* (Salem Press) and entries on Haruki Murakami and Charles Bukowski in *Critical Survey of Long Fiction* (Salem Press). He also published an essay, "Some Questions about Imagism (and Vorticism)," in *Florida English* 6 (2008).

Nicole Camastra (2005), a doctoral student at the University of Georgia, presented papers at EMR and IHC. She published two articles: "Hemingway's Modern Hymn: Music and the Church as Background Sources for 'God Rest You Merry, Gentlemen'" in *Hemingway Review* 28 (2008) and "Venerable Sonority in Kate Chopin's *The Awakening*" in *American Literary Realism* 40 (2008).

D. A. Carpenter (2005), a doctoral student at Texas A&M University, presented papers at EMR, IHC, and ALA. He published "Love, Death, and the Tolling: The Hemingway Influence in Bob Dylan's *Love and Theft*" in *Isis* 140 (2008) and a poem in *Illuminations & Praise: Poems for Elizabeth Madox Roberts and Kentucky* (Des Hymnagistes Press).

Deborah DiPiero (2001), an Assistant Professor of English and Director of Writing at St. Andrews Presbyterian College conducted a work-

shop at the International Writing Centers Association Conference (Las Vegas, November 1).

Laurence Erussard (1992) was granted tenure and promoted to Associate Professor of English at Hobart and William Smith Colleges. She presented papers at the 43<sup>rd</sup> International Congress on Medieval Studies (Kalamazoo, MI, May 8-11, 2008), the 28<sup>th</sup> Annual International Lilly Conference on College Teaching (Traverse City, MI, September 18-21), and the 55<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of the Renaissance Society of America (Los Angeles, CA, March 19-21). She published three articles: "Language, Power and Holiness in Cynewulf's *Elene*" in *Medievalia et Humanistica* 34 (2008), "Late Medieval Old French Farce: A Mirror of Society" in *Medievalia* 28 (2007), and "At the Intersection of Religion, Folklore and Science: Women and Snakes in Old French Arthurian Romance" in *Medievalia* 29 (2008).

Steven Florczyk (2002), a doctoral student at the University of Georgia, presented papers at EMR, IHC, NAS, SAMLA, and ALA. He published a poem in *Illuminations & Praise: Poems for Elizabeth Madox Roberts and Kentucky* (Des Hymnagistes Press).

Tina Iraca (2001), an Adjunct Instructor of English at SUNY, New Paltz, presented a paper at EMR.

John Langan (1998), a Lecturer at SUNY New Paltz, published his first collection of stories, *Mr. Gaunt and Other Uneasy Encounters*, with Prime Books.

Jennifer Lee (2004), a doctoral student at the University of Rhode Island, was hired as an Adjunct Instructor at Johnson and Wales University.

Brad McDuffie (2005), an Instructor of English at Nyack College, presented papers at EMR, IHC, NAS, SAMLA, and ALA. He published poems in *Aethlon* 25 (2008), *North Dakota Quarterly* 74 (2007), and *Florida English* 6 (2008).

Michele Morano (1991), an Assistant Professor of English at DePaul University, directed the Study Abroad Program in Madrid during the fall 2008 semester. She presented a paper at the 2009 Conference of the Association of Writers and Writing Programs (Chicago, IL, February 11-14). Her essay "The FunMachine," which appeared in the *Sonora Review*, was given special mention in *Best American Essays 2008*.

Nicole Myers (2007), a doctoral student at the University of Rhode Island, presented papers at the Northeast Modern Language As-

sociation Conference (Boston, MA, February 26-March 1) and the University of Rhode Island Third Annual Interdisciplinary Graduate Conference (Kingston, RI, March 28).

Matthew Nickel (2006), a doctoral student at the University of Louisiana, Lafayette, presented papers at EMR, IHC, NAS, SAMLA, IRAS, John Burroughs Conference (Vassar College, June 15-19), and the 15<sup>th</sup> International Lawrence Durrell Conference (University of Paris X, July 1-5). He edited the volume of poems *Illuminations & Praise: Poems for Elizabeth Madox Roberts and Kentucky* (Des Hymnagistes Press), and published poems in this volume as well as in *Florida English* 6 (2008) and *Hudson River Valley Review* 25 (2008).

Sharon Peelor (1997), a doctoral student at the University of Oklahoma in Education Studies, presented papers at EMR and SAMLA.

Arnold A. Schmidt (1990), a Professor at California State University, Stanislaus, presented a paper at the California Interdisciplinary Conference on Italian Studies (Stanford University, March 2009). He published an article entitled "The 1848-1849 Revolutions & the Italian Body Politic: Barrett Browning & Clough, Garibaldi & Mazzini" in the *Journal of Anglo-Italian Studies* 9 (2008) and a book review in *Italian Quarterly*.

Nicole Boucher Spottke (1996), an Assistant Professor at Valencia Community College, presented a paper at the Southeastern American Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies Conference (Charlotte, NC, March 6).

James Stamant (2005), a doctoral student at Texas A&M University, presented papers at EMR, IHC, NAS, and SAMLA. He was the Assistant Editor on two Texas A&M library catalogues: *The Temple of Taste: Celebrating the Robert L. Dawson Collection* and *Fruits of a Gentle Madness: The Al Lowman Printing Arts Collection and Research Archive*.

Kimberley Vanderlaan (1995), an Assistant Professor at Louisiana Tech University, presented papers at NAS and the 2008 International Henry James Conference (Newport, RI, July 9-13). She published two articles: "The Painter Henry James Might Have Been" in *American Literary Realism* 40 (2008) and "Eden's Blissful Bowre: Spenserian Echoes in 'Coming, Aphrodite!'" in *The Willa Cather Newsletter & Review* 53 (2009).

Goretti Vianney-Benca (2007), an Adjunct Instructor at SUNY New Paltz and the Culinary Institute of America, presented papers at EMR, IHC, NAS, and SAMLA.

Amy Leigh Washburn (2005), a doctoral candidate (now ABD) in Women's Studies at the University of Maryland, presented papers at the DC Graduate English Organization, (College Park, MD, February 27-28), DC Queer Studies Symposium (College Park, MD April 17-18, 2009), and Stony Brook Women's Studies Conference (New York, NY, April 18, 2009). She is an adjunct instructor in Women's Studies at the University of Maryland and an adjunct instructor in English and Composition at Prince George's Community College

Meri Weiss (2006), an Assistant Professor at the College of new Rochelle, John Cardinal O'Connor Campus, published her first novel, *Closer to Fine*, with Kensington Books, and the novel was nominated in the category of Debut Fiction for the 21<sup>st</sup> Annual Lambda Literary Awards.

3. In 2010 H. R. Stoneback will direct the II International Imagism Conference at Brunnenburg Castle (home of Mary de Rachewiltz, poet, Pound scholar, translator, and daughter of Ezra Pound) in Dorf Tirol, Italy, June 20-22. The conference is under the joint sponsorship of the International Richard Aldington Society, the Elizabeth Madox Roberts Society, and the Nick Adams Hemingway Society—three international organizations whose American home-base is New Paltz. In the past decade, some fifty New Paltz graduate students have presented papers and read poems at conferences sponsored by these literary societies. The Call for Papers invites proposals related to the conference theme, "Imagism and Ezra Pound: Richard Aldington, H. D., Ernest Hemingway, Elizabeth Madox Roberts and Others." Topics should address the connections of one or more writers—not limited to those writers named in this conference rubric—to the matter of Imagism and Pound. The deadline for proposals is January 15, 2010.
4. The Editors would remind students of the Russell S. Cleverley Memorial Fellowship, established by Luella and Donald Cleverley in memory of their son Russell S. Cleverley, who earned his MA in English from SUNY New Paltz in December 1995. The Cleverley Fellowship is open to students matriculated in the MA English program with a 3.5 GPA who register for ENG 590, Thesis in English, in the award semester. The amount of the fellowship is \$500. Please submit a letter of application with transcript, the thesis proposal signed by the thesis director, and

two letters of recommendation (one from the thesis director) to Daniel Kempton, English Graduate Director. Applications for the next award (fall 2009) are due May 15, 2009.



## VII Guidelines for Submissions

As the journal of the English Graduate Program, the *Shawangunk Review* publishes the proceedings of the annual English Graduate Symposium. In addition, the Editors welcome submissions from English graduate students in any area of literary studies: essays (criticism; theory; historical, cultural, biographical studies), book reviews, scholarly notes, and poetry. English faculty are invited to submit poetry, translations of poetry, and book reviews.

Manuscripts should be prepared in accordance with MLA style and should be submitted as an electronic file accompanied by a hard copy. Essays should not exceed 3500 words (10-12 pages), book reviews 1250 words, poems five pages, and MA thesis abstracts 250 words. With your submission please include a brief biographical statement.

Please submit material to the Department of English, SUNY New Paltz and/or [kempton@newpaltz.edu](mailto:kempton@newpaltz.edu); the deadline for Volume XXI of the *Review* is December 15, 2009.



## VIII Contributors

**David Appelbaum** is a Professor of Philosophy at SUNY New Paltz. He is a biker and inveterate hiker of the Gunks, former editor of *Parabola Magazine*, and publisher of Codhill Press. Author of *Nieuw Pfalz* (Books 1 and 2), his most recent book of poems is *Window with 4 Panes* (2009).

**Lynn Behrendt** is the author of three chapbooks: *The Moon as Chance*, *Characters*, and *Tinder*. She edits the online *Annandale Dream Gazette*, a chronicle of poets' dreams. Her work has appeared in numerous online and print publications, most recently including *No Tell Motel* and *Satellite Telephone*. She was recently nominated for a Pushcart Prize.

**Laurence Carr** currently teaches creative and dramatic writing at SUNY New Paltz. He has had numerous dramatic works produced in New York City, regionally, and in Europe. His prose and poetry have been performed and published throughout the country. He is the author of *The Wytheport Tales* and editor of *Riverrine: An Anthology of Hudson Valley Writers*, both published by Codhill Press.

**Marissa Caston** earned her MA in English from SUNY New Paltz (2007) and served as a Teaching Assistant. She currently works as a curriculum developer and English teacher for Paramount International Education, in Seoul, South Korea. She enjoys rice cakes and long walks on the beach.

**Temperance K. David** is an English MA student and former TA at SUNY New Paltz. She is currently collaborating with her nephew on a comic strip diary about prison life. Upon completion of her MA, she intends to devote most of her time to art, friends, and travel.

**Joann K. Deiudicibus** is an instructor of and Staff Assistant for the Composition Program at SUNY New Paltz, where she earned her MA in English (2003). She has read her poetry locally since 1995 and has been published in *The North Street Journal*, *Orange Review*, *Literary Passions*, *Fortunate Fall*, and *Chronogram*. Her work was selected for the Woodstock Poetry Festival, 2003. In 2007 she presented a paper at the Spring NYCEA Conference. She is the Associate Editor (poetry) for the forthcoming *Hudson River Reader*, an anthology celebrating the Hudson River.

**Dennis Doherty** is an Instructor in English and the Director of Creative Writing at SUNY New Paltz, as well as Chair of the Poetry Board. He has published essays, stories, and poems. His first book of poems, *The Bad Man*, was

published in 2004, his second collection, *Fugitive*, appeared in 2007, and his third collection is due out late in 2009.

**Stacy Dore** earned her MA in English at SUNY New Paltz and was honored as the Outstanding Graduate in May 2008. She is currently enrolled in MAT program at New Paltz (graduating December 2009) and working as a GA in the Student Teaching Office.

**Jonathan Gates** is a Professor of English at Nyack College. He is a Tennessee Williams scholar who has presented numerous papers and published essays on modern dramatists including Tennessee Williams and Ama Ata Aidoo.

**Eric Hess** earned his MA in English from SUNY New Paltz (December 2008) and served as a Teaching Assistant. He is a co-recipient of the award for the Outstanding Graduate in the English MA program. He presented papers at the 80<sup>th</sup> Annual SAML A Convention in Louisville, KY (November 2008) and the 60<sup>th</sup> Annual CCCC Convention in San Francisco, CA (March 2009). He is currently exploring post-graduate options while preparing applications for PhD programs in Rhetoric and Composition.

**Andrew C. Higgins** is an Assistant Professor of English at SUNY New Paltz. His focus is on poetry, especially the work of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. He has published on Walt Whitman, Longfellow, Sarah Piatt, and Civil War soldiers' memoirs. His poetry has appeared in the *New York Quarterly*, *Footwork: The Paterson Literary Review*, *Limestone*, *Chronogram*, and the *Portland Review*.

**Marianne Hirsch** is Professor of English and Comparative Literature at Columbia University and Director of the Institute for Research on Women and Gender. She was born in Romania, and educated at Brown University where she received her BA/MA and PhD degrees. Her recent publications include *Family Frames: Photography, Narrative, and Postmemory* (1997), *The Familial Gaze* (ed. 1999), *Time and the Literary* (co-ed. 2002), a special issue of *Signs* on "Gender and Cultural Memory" (co-ed. 2002), and *Teaching the Representation of the Holocaust* (co-ed. 2004). Her co-authored book with Leo Spitzer, *Ghosts of Home: The Afterlife of Czernowitz in Jewish Memory and History*, is forthcoming from the University of California Press. She is the former editor of *PMLA* and has served on the MLA Executive Council. She has been the recipient of fellowships from the Guggenheim Foundation, the ACLS, the Mary Ingraham Bunting Institute, the National Humanities Center, and the Bellagio and Bogliasco Foundations.

**Donald Junkins** is Professor Emeritus at the University of Massachusetts (Amherst), where he served for many years as the director of the writing program. A widely published and award-winning poet, he is the author of numerous volumes of poetry, including *Journey to the Corrida* and *Late at Night in the Rowboat*.

**Lucas Kane** graduated with his MA in English from SUNY New Paltz in

December 2008. His interests include mythology, Old and Middle English, Shakespeare, and the development of fantastic literature. Last fall he presented a paper on Chaucer at SAMLA's annual convention in Louisville, KY, and, when not occupied with his academic pursuits, he enjoys hiking, sleeping in, and writing poetry and fiction.

**Brad McDuffie** is an Instructor of English at Nyack College. He has presented papers at many conferences, including the American Literature Association Conference, the Ezra Pound International Conference, the South Atlantic Modern Language Association Conference, the New York College English Association Conference, and the Robert Penn Warren Conference. He has published essays and poetry in various books and journals, and most recently his poems have appeared in the *North Dakota Quarterly* and *Aethlon*.

**Shonet L. Newton** received her BA in English with a concentration in Creative Writing from SUNY New Paltz. She is now an English MA student and Teaching Assistant at SUNY New Paltz. She plans on traveling and exploring Europe once she finishes her MA.

**Jan Zlotnik Schmidt** is a SUNY Distinguished Teaching Professor in the Department of English at SUNY New Paltz. An expert in the field of composition studies and writing across the curriculum, she has given presentations and workshops at the local, regional, and national level. Her poetry has been published in many journals, including *Kansas Quarterly*, *Cream City Review*, *Syracuse Scholar*, *Alaska Quarterly Review*, *Home Planet News*, and *Phoebe*. She has published two volumes of poetry, *We Speak in Tongues* (1991) and *She had this memory* (2000); two collections of autobiographical essays, *Women/Writing/Teaching* (1998) and *Wise Women: Reflections of Teachers at Midlife*, co-authored with Dr. Phyllis R. Freeman (2000); and a multicultural, global literature anthology, *Legacies: Fiction Poetry, Drama, Nonfiction*, co-authored with Lynne Crockett and the late Carley Bogard, now in its fourth edition. Her current field of scholarship is Holocaust Studies, particularly first- and second-generation women's memoirs. She teaches both undergraduate and graduate Holocaust literature and film courses.

**Alex Andriess Shakespeare** earned his BA in English from SUNY New Paltz and is currently a doctoral student in the English program at Boston College. He has worked on Ernest Hemingway, Richard Aldington, and Geoffrey Hill; and last year he presented papers at the Tenth Annual Elizabeth Madox Roberts Conference (Springfield, KY, April 2008), the Thirteenth International Hemingway Conference (Kansas City, MO, June 2008), the Fifth Annual Richard Aldington Conference (Les Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer, France, July 2008), the NAS Hemingway Conference (Lake Placid, NY, October 2008), the American Literature Association Conference (Savannah, GA, October 2008), and SAMLA (Louisville, KY, November 2008).

**James Sherwood** is an MA student (graduating May 2009) and Teaching Assistant at SUNY New Paltz. He presented a paper on the graphic novel at the 2007 NYCEA Conference, and has published both fiction and poetry. His scholarly interests include poetry, metafiction, and ergodic texts, as well as Rhetoric and Composition.

**Leo Spitzer** is the Kathe Tappe Vernon Professor of History at Dartmouth College. He is the author or editor of four books, the most recent of which is *Hotel Bolivia: The Culture of Memory in a Refuge from Nazism* (1998). His co-authored book with Marianne Hirsch, *Ghosts of Home: The Afterlife of Czernowitz in Jewish Memory and History*, is forthcoming from the University of California Press. He has been the recipient of John Simon Guggenheim, Ford, Social Science Research Council, Whiting, NEH, and Rockefeller Foundation awards and fellowships.

**H. R. Stoneback** is Distinguished Professor of English at SUNY New Paltz. He is a Hemingway scholar of international reputation, author/editor of nineteen books and more than 175 articles on Durrell, Faulkner, Hemingway, Roberts et al. He is a widely published poet, author of eight volumes of poetry including, most recently, *Amazing-Grace-Wheelchair-Jumpshot-Jesus-Love-Poems* (Des Hymnagistes Press 2009) and *Hurricane Hymn & Other Poems* (Codhill Press 2009). His recent critical study *Reading Hemingway's The Sun Also Rises* (2007) has been nominated for the prestigious SAMLA Studies Award in Literary Criticism; his most recent critical volumes (2008) include three co-edited collections of essays, one on Richard Aldington and two on Elizabeth Madox Roberts.

**William Trowbridge's** poetry collections are *Enter Dark Stranger, O Paradise, Flickers*, and *The Complete Book of Kong*. His poems have also appeared in such periodicals as *The Gettysburg Review*, *Poetry*, *The Georgia Review*, *The Iowa Review*, and *New Letters*. He lives in the Kansas City area and teaches in the University of Nebraska low-residency MFA in Writing program.

**Robert H. Waugh** is a Professor of English at SUNY New Paltz and Director of the annual Lovecraft Forum. He is the author of *The Monster in the Mirror: Looking for H. P. Lovecraft* and many articles on science fiction, horror, and fantasy literature, which have been published in such journals as *Extrapolation* and *Lovecraft Studies*. He is also a widely published poet, and his chapbook, *Shorewards, Tideways* appeared in summer 2007. In the summer of 2009 a second chapbook of selected poems is scheduled to appear.

**Lea Weiss** graduated with her MA in English from SUNY New Paltz in December 2008 and was co-recipient of the award for Outstanding Graduate in the English MA program. She is currently teaching English full time, in addition to continuing her studies in the Spanish Graduate Department. Her interests are in English and Spanish literature, particularly of the medieval and renaissance periods. Last fall she presented a paper on the Pearl Poet's *Patience* at SAMLA's annual convention in Louisville, KY. Next summer she will be attending graduate

classes at the University of Salamanca and in the fall collaborating on an article with a member of the Spanish faculty.

**Alexandria Wojcik** is an MA student and Teaching Assistant at SUNY New Paltz. An activist and aspiring writer, she unites her interests in social justice and letters in the section of Freshman Composition she is teaching. She studied abroad in Prague, Czech Republic as an undergraduate, and this experience inspired her Symposium paper.

**Nicholas Wright** earned his MA from SUNY New Paltz in 2008 and his BA from SUNY Potsdam in 2006, where he majored in English Literature/Writing, History, and French. He currently teaches literature and composition courses at SUNY New Paltz and Marist College. In 2008, his research on queer artists appeared in the form of two encyclopedia entries for *LGBTQ America*, and his research on pedagogy and queer sensibility will appear in an anthology entitled *Queering Grads*. He hopes to pursue a PhD with a focus on postmodern fiction.

