The Woman Artist

Essays in memory of Dorota Filipczak

edited by Tomasz Dobrogoszcz, Agata Handley
Krzysztof Majer and Tomasz Fisiak

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Prof. Dorota Filipczak (1963–2021)

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Tomasz Dobrogoszcz, Agata Handley, Krzysztof Majer and Tomasz Fisiak

Preface

The purpose of the present volume is twofold. Firstly, we aim to honor Professor Dorota Filipczak, whose untimely passing after more than thirty years of an energetic and fruitful academic career at the University of Lodz has left us in shock and sorrow. Secondly, we aspire to produce a valuable contribution to literary criticism and culture studies, the areas on which her own scholarly endeavors centered. From among the many possible themes we have selected that of the *woman artist* because of its special importance for Filipczak's research, as well as the connection to her own work as a poet. Importantly, all of the contributors—representing various fields of academia—are Dorota's friends, colleagues and collaborators, and the essays eloquently testify to her intellectual influence.

Dorota Filipczak's output firmly demonstrates that she succeeded in combining two roles: that of a female scholar and that of the eponymous *woman artist*. Although she devoted a large part of her research to male writers—including Malcolm Lowry and Brian Moore—an academic focus on women appears more central to her career. A quick glance at the titles of her scholarly publications demonstrates her genuine interest in the cultural role of female figures. Filipczak analyzed the oeuvre of such writers as Alice Munro, Jane Urquhart, Michèle Roberts and Margaret Laurence; she also wrote extensively on female biblical figures, Eve and Mary Magdalene. In addition, her choice of theoretical tools emphasizes her investment in the female cause—Filipczak frequently referred to other female scholars, thinkers and philosophers, including Mieke Bal, Alison Jasper and Pamela Sue Anderson. Anderson's feminist philosophy of religion turned out to be particularly significant for Filipczak's academic input; she was friendly with all three scholars, and these relationships were based on mutual academic respect.

However, Dorota Filipczak's discussion of the female experience was not limited to scholarly texts, lectures or seminars on literature (it must be remembered that she was an active academic teacher and a guest scholar who delivered lectures at universities around the world—at Oxford, Durham, Glasgow, Sheffield, Winnipeg, Barcelona, to name just a few). It was also discernible in her translations of numerous short stories and novels by female writers (e.g., Nadine Gordimer's 1998 *The House Gun*). Most of all, though, it showed in her deeply personal poetry, where she would address issues around the female body and sexuality, as well as female empowerment and the desire for knowledge. It comes as no surprise that the first issue of *Text Matters: A Journal of Literature, Theory and Culture* (2011), the interdisciplinary journal which Filipczak founded and developed, sought to "primarily engage in the relationship between women and authority, vested in literary and philosophical texts" (6), as she expressed it in the first editorial. Undoubtedly, the relation between womanhood and notions of power and desire remained recurrent subjects in her pursuits, both academic and poetic.

Scholar, writer, teacher, poet, translator—the list unequivocally proves Dorota Filipczak's versatility. A volume comparable in length to the present one could easily have been devoted exclusively to her achievements in these various fields. The intention, however, is different: the following texts go beyond remembrance and the honoring of an established scholar's remarkable achievements. Despite their undeniable commemorative function, the chapters included here attempt to carry Filipczak's academic endeavors forward, into the future.

The first section ("Creativity and Memory") contains more personal reflections and ruminations inspired by Filipczak's life and work. True to form, Aritha van Herk's text ("Aesthetic Modes of Attack: The Woman Critic-Artist, *Caractère unique*") bubbles with provocation, both stylistic and ideological, refusing to settle in rigidly prescribed academic boundaries: in more ways than one, van Herk attests to the uniqueness and transgressive potential of women's critical-artistic practice. The cultural theorist and video artist Mieke Bal, who was interviewed by Filipczak on a number of occasions, argues in "Untimeliness, Inter-ship, Mutuality" that Filipczak's interest in the work of woman artists was "a mode of being, thinking, and doing her academic work" (p. 27) and that her approach was "dialogic" (pp. 27–28): an ongoing engagement with, and unlimited curiosity about, "otherness" (p. 28). In this spirit, Bal has sought to make her own contribution as "dialogic" as possible, responding to Filipczak's ideas, as if she were interviewing her, continuing the mutually enriching conversation that had been cut short. David Jasper recognizes that "professionalism" tends to confine academics within the narrow boundaries of their own discipline and fields of research. Jasper argues that Filipczak,

on the other hand, pursued a rigorous interdisciplinarity—summed up, perhaps, by the title of a conference organized by her in 1998: *Dissolving the Boundaries*. Jasper focuses on two journals (*Literature and Theology* and *Text Matters*), as well as Filipczak's early research on Canadian literature, to show how "disciplined interdisciplinarity"—addressed directly in his title—becomes for her an important method of investigation.

Articles collected in the following section ("Multivocality and Interaction") investigate the tensions between the public persona and the private self as reflected in the work of a range of women artists. Serving as a prologue of sorts, as well as an inspiration, is Filipczak's own text, "'Alternative Selves' and Authority in the Fiction of Jane Urquhart." Filipczak borrows the central concept from Pamela Sue Anderson's call to reinvent ourselves as "other" in the face of dominant beliefs and epistemological frameworks. She focuses on texts by Lucy Maud Montgomery, Margaret Laurence, Alice Munro and Jane Urquhart, which explore the clash between female characters' social roles and their "secret" selves. In "What Is In the Picture (and What Is Not): Canada, Women, and Autobiography in the Work of Geraldine Moodie, Eva Hoffman and Alice Munro," Norman Ravvin examines different approaches to autobiography in the work of the three artists. He highlights the importance of place and time in their work, as well as the ambiguities and tensions inherent in their choices regarding that which is revealed and that which remains hidden. Philip Hayward and Matt Hill consider the work of music/video artist Elizabeth Bernholz ("Elizabeth Bernholz's Gazelle Twin: Disguise, Persona and Jesterism"). Hayward and Hill demonstrate how Bernholz's adoption of a performative persona—*Gazelle Twin*—offers subversive and parodic reworkings of traditional/folkloric imagery of Britishness in a way acutely relevant at the time of Brexit. In the section's final text, Mark Tardi engages with the work of the American poet Elizabeth Willis ("Vernacular Architecture: Posthumanist Lyric Speakers in Elizabeth Willis's *Address*"). Drawing on posthumanist thinkers such as Donna Haraway and Rosi Braidotti, Tardi examines Willis's moving between different levels—the human and the nonhuman, the self and the world, the private and the political.

The final section ("Spirituality and Embodiment") is an exploration of the interface between the body and religion. Again, a text by Filipczak—"'Let me hear Thy voice': Michèle Roberts's Refiguring of Mary Magdalene in the Light of The Song of Songs"—serves as prologue and inspiration. Filipczak examines various scholarly attempts to redeem the figure of Mary Magdalene from her sexist portrayal as a "repentant whore" (p. 135). In Michèle Roberts's novel *The Secret Gospel of Mary Magdalene*—Filipczak claims—the relationship of Christ and Mary Magdalene is reframed through intertextual references to The Song of Songs, connecting with different levels of

female desire (sexual, maternal, spiritual). Jan Jędrzejewski examines two novels by George Moore ("the Irish Balzac"), *Evelyn Innes* and *Sister Teresa*, whose protagonist retreats from opera's worldly success to join a convent, where she sings the offices of the church rather than arias by Verdi or Wagner. Together, the novels constitute an extended meditation on the relationship between artistic and religious experience, sensuality and gender ("A Catholic New Woman Artist: A Contradiction in Terms? Sex, Music and Religion in George Moore's *Evelyn Innes* and *Sister Teresa*"). Another work by Roberts, *Playing Sardines* (2001), is explored by Marta Goszczyńska. Goszczyńska reads Roberts's collection through the work of theorists such as Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Carol Wolkowitz, Elizabeth Grosz and Celine Leboeuf, who affirm the embodied character of human experience. Women in the stories are frequently shown as victims who internalize "objectifying" attitudes towards the body. However, Goszczyńska also highlights moments of liberation, when the characters move beyond the frameworks of discipline and control, as well as scenes depicting positive experiences of intersubjectivity ("Cherishing the Body: Embodiment and the Intersubjective World in Michèle Roberts's *Playing Sardines*").

On the cover of her first collection of poetry, *W cieniu doskonałej pomarańczy* [*In the Shadow of a Perfect Orange*] (1994), Filipczak declared: "I'm passionate about the sacred in poetry and prose, and ways of its unconventional interpretation. Writing poetry and literary criticism is like looking at one and the same landscape through two separate windows."[1] In the final article in this collection, entitled "On Spaces Within and Between: Dorota Filipczak's (Embodied) Visions of the Sacred," Monika Kocot considers Filipczak's "unconventional" interpretations of the sacred both in her poetry and in her academic writing, as well as the importance of places and spaces in her geopoetry. The "two windows" of poetry and criticism might, again, be seen as "a mode of being, thinking, and doing," which marks the entirety of Dorota Filipczak's life and work.

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[1] Translation by Monika Kocot.

Section 1
Creativity and Memory

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Aritha van Herk

Aesthetic Modes of Attack: The Woman Critic-Artist, *Caractère unique*

Being an excursion into the disorderly and digressive tendencies within literary discord.

> No! I am not Prince Hamlet, nor was meant to be;
> Am an attendant lord, one that will do
> To swell a progress, start a scene or two,
> Advise the prince; no doubt, an easy tool,
> Deferential, glad to be of use,
> Politic, cautious, and meticulous;
> Full of high sentence, but a bit obtuse;
> At times, indeed, almost ridiculous—
> Almost, at times, the Fool. (Eliot)

In a world inclined to hierarchies of aesthetic value, with inevitable homage to the lofty and exalted, it is doubtless unwise to open this meditation on women artist-critics with a reference to Eliot, that grim and gray-faced titan so beloved of the twentieth century. However parodic his portrait of Prufrock, it measures what is generally expected of women in the field of intellectual thought; we are expected to "swell a progress," deferential and cautious; but step beyond that arena and we become inevitably subject to supercilious scrutiny. Samuel Johnson's pronouncement that "a woman's preaching is like a dog's walking on his hind legs. It is not done well; but you are surprised to find it done at all" may have been made in 1763, but the dismissive observation has lasted rather longer than time's duty. And incredulity is no excuse.

Women critic-artists, whom I choose in this exploration to identify as *Caractères uniques*, are themselves immersive exhibitions of aesthetic eccentricity, and so challenge the categories that would demarcate their

pliability. It is tempting to quote the ironic voice of Edith Hope, the romantic novelist depicted in Anita Brookner's *Hotel du Lac*:

> I am a householder, a ratepayer, a good plain cook, and a deliverer of typescripts well before the deadline; I sign anything that is put in front of me; I never telephone my publisher; and I make no claims for my particular sort of writing, although I understand that it is doing quite well. I have held this rather dim and trusting personality together for a considerable length of time, and although I have certainly bored others I was not to be allowed to bore myself. My profile was deemed to be low and it was agreed by those who thought they knew me that it should stay that way. (8–9)

How convenient a summary of an obedient woman-artist. And how very much it begs to be exploded.

The challenge becomes how to sift the quandary of the *caractère unique* writing through the splicings of poetry and fiction and non-fiction and fic-to-criticism without lapsing into turgid intellectualism. This requires finding the fissure that can glue the broken plate together, leaving a slightly less-than-visible hair-line fracture. It demands dexterity: ensuring that the research does not stink of research or swallow itself whole in the process and practice of the writing. And it compels playful investigation of those multiple aesthetics that surprise themselves, that refuse to costume archetypal critique.

Can an eccentric anatomy of criticism (that indubitable and Phrygian determination insisting on structure, system, coherence) intervene? Or do *hombre* taxonomies block the woman artist and her aesthetic, disable her mode of attack, and reduce her to a "womanly" niche, glacéed with the refusal to furnace muscular brawn and all its formidable formalisms? The *caractère unique* may be enjoined to hark to other anatomies and dissections: Nashe's *Anatomy of Absurdity*, Lyly's *Euphues: The Anatomy of Wit*, and not least, Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy*. Alongside anatomies of murder, deception, metaphysics, love, and not least, the much-consulted cadaver of Gray, the body compacted by the page. Forgive the missing references at the end of this reflection: they are ubiquitously easy to obtain. But—

> The artistic woman
> The womanly artist
> The woman artist
> Woman as artist
> Artist as woman

for whom no conclusion, no punctuation is possible, are far less readily apparent.

These designations stagger against one another, try to glimpse the shape of an aesthetic less easily consumed by what is "objective," and

more deliberately interested in what Canadian poet Nicole Brossard identifies as "productive uncertainty" ("Interview" 247). Nothing so readily summarized as in this domicile:

> Seeking out new poetic dimensions of sound and word as well as time, space, and speed, Brossard's aesthetic practice inhabits multiple dimensions: spirals of language, image and sound; frames within frames of dialogues in locations that warp from the Caribbean to Canada; spheres that flex histories of women and women's writing. (248)

The flexion of histories, spheres of influence and their dissuasions become a means by which the *caractère unique* may buckle and contort expectations.

Does the pivot of "academic" throw the engraved narrative akimbo? Is academic poet a tilted balance? Does it contaminate professorial gravitas, arouse suspicion? What does the poet/writer want in that corner office with her books and her paper shredder and her uncomfortable chair? Is that where she seeks "intoxicating death?" Or where she finds the refuge and re/fuse of self-referentiality, can erase the division between what is accorded "academic" pursuit and "creative" practice, drawn by some arbitrary lexicographer coding a creaky platform of difference? The woman critic-artist is always already haunted by the specter and question of dubious "autobiography," the fictionality and poesis of self-referentiality and its presumed narcissism. Although none are so self-absorbed as the porters and the beadles and the gatekeepers and their decreed categories, augmented by their "women write out of their viscera" dismissals and taunts.

> "A monograph," they intone.
> "A slim volume of verse," they concede.
> "A refereed disquisition," they decree.
> "A charming tale," they condescend.

Some determinator invests in the hierarchy of solemn over incongruous, umpired arbitration over generous disarray. There is a tinge of the donnish in league with the patronizing in this summary, but although the scholarly writer or the writerly scholar might read herself as "dim and trusting," there lurk, beneath the surface of our capsized solipsism, those old and, it seems, inescapable aspersions.

> The woman artist, maligned.
> The woman artist, discouraged.
> The woman artist, bespoke.
> The woman artist, recalcitrant.

Such anatomies expect poets to serve as stagehands, fill waterglasses, play aproned serving maids to the star actors, swell the progress of those critics who can toss off references to Baudrillard and Schlegel without mispronouncing their names even while they interrogate the narrative stance of the novel or the incessant conversions of Bunyan.

Je refuse: a woman artist, scorned or repudiated. This portmanteau search on the part of all those designated critic-artists is more than complacent self-consciousness, but an "indescriptable," a continuation of "the spaces of possibility" that resist confinement and staging. She has little choice but to become *caractère unique*.

The *caractère unique* then: roaming, an inhabitant of *loiterature* and all that waits to be discovered, between the lines or reading upside down. And not by any stretch witty and graceful, ornate as an over-powdered wig or high-laced shoes with their rhetoric and alliteration. Those anatomists would rusticate us all, women artists, barbarians expelled from the holy halls of canonicity. And yet, they were, those hallowed boys, Shelley and Milton, Dryden and Wilde, rusticated, for dueling or drooling, or other disturbances. In them it is heroic. In us? Unpardonable.

In "'This is for you': Emotions, Language and Postcolonialism," a dialogue between Rukmini Bhaya Nair and Dorota Filipczak (2013), I find an aperture through which to enter this aesthetic quandary of the *caractère unique*. Nair refers to the "multiform, multivalent uses of language" (271) and goes on to suggest that language

> has to adapt itself to current circumstances, to change subtly, from moment to moment. Use is an itinerant, a beggar, knocking at the door of language. It does not have a "room of one's own," so to speak. This affects our conceptions of the self as well. I think that the hierarchy of the self, predicated on the uses of language, is, in essence, rickety. Even if one intentionally constructs oneself, let's say, first as an academic, then a mother, and then a poet, language simply does not allow one to freeze these identities. So poetry too, like any other use of language, becomes a persistent questioning of identity. (271)

Nair and Filipczak in that conversation puncture how we have crutched on the theoretical, have lost the willed blaze of curiosity, irrefutable as the green flash between sunset and night, elusive as a tendril. Nair exposes the fluidity of usage and hybridity. "Writing, whether as a postcolonial critic or linguist or poet, is all about investigating this calibrated ambiguity. Exploring what you are not is exploring what you are. Ambiguity flowers at the heart of language" (271). *Exploring what you are not is exploring what you are* (emphasis mine). The conundrum here, a clear refusal of prolixity, a play with transposition, declares the enigma of the

anagram; this assertion gestures toward *pronunciamento*, a writer's tool and power, if also at times diminishment and prison.

With Nair and Filipczak, I embrace a poetics of digression as an effective way to evade those categories and practices that confine the woman artist, her *caractère unique*. In *Loiterature*, Ross Chambers says, "like other practices with which it has some common features—asyndeton (interruption), anacoluthon (inconsistency), parenthesis, description—it [digression] is less an error than a relaxation of what are regarded as the strictest standards, not of relevance or cogency, but of cohesion" (85). Here is the fluid bracket that enables a generatively disruptive perusal of the woman as critic-artist, Provocateur or *Cheiranthus cheiri*, whichever variety suits the genus. Surely side glance and evasion offer the way by which to enter a devil's door, this shuttling of categories to make room for the wayward expressions of a *caractère unique*, one who refuses ready classification. Unexpected swerves demonstrate but do not explain the extent to which drift illuminates. What is important then is not that questions are answered, but that questions are asked.

The writer/academic/artist/poet, that *caractère unique*, hesitates then on the threshold of the language that has left her in the dark if not the cold, the one alienating the other, the writer furious at the academic, the academic contemptuous of the strains of metaphor, the artist hovering just off the edge of nowhere and never at home on the page, even if that page is of her making and she might be component of its many parts. And that fleeting thought, so imperfect and impalpable but containing within it the nexus of the argument, the *mot juste* that shadows our tread on the stairway, that ghost of lush precision or juicy clarity, there and there and there but always elusive, slips past the footfalls that leave behind not even a trace of dust. And so, evading then the jocular mockery that we face in light of our fluctuations and loiterings.

Stubborn optimists, women artists/scholars must first resist the temptation to become stubborn pessimists. The *caractère unique* is required to marshal the energies of cheerful despair, measured against the aesthetics of the orthodox past which has modelled the academic/poetic or the scholar/writer. We can only wonder if we are trapped on a virtual Raft of the Medusa, starving, while we embody someone else's macabre realism and its stormy dehydration. The woman artist resists the very gaze that would freeze her into the immobility of a dilettante, while the scholar artist must resist a two-way mirror judging her capacity for crime and/or for protocol, decorum paused over well-met or exceeded standards. Can the scholar/artist measure up, discharge expectations? Is she doomed by her very bifurcation? Or can she occupy a category closer to rhetorical asyndeton, "one of the modes of digression (one interrupts oneself in

order to pursue another line of thought, so that there is both discontinuity and continuity)" (Chambers 63), while still surpassing conjunction or punctuation?

So many doubtful measures to negotiate in this, the intimate identity of the poet and the writer and the academic and the infernal "roles" that then edit and inhibit, hesitate on the threshold of one another's language and intention. And yes, that multivalent voice, her language, her dance over the hot coals of "what genre does this belong to?" prompts urgency: to escape, break loose, abscond. For the mad constraints of language itself insist on a carved path of usage and its traditional outcomes, when the woman as artist, the *caractère unique*, tries to get it to adapt, change disguises, and work from the margins of the margins, those vanishing sides that refuse all transposition.

Do the "layers of meaning" (Filipczak, "Emotions" 273) deployed by the *caractère unique* only serve to codify the only too-frequent accusations: that we are pastiche merchants consuming the sadness of conflicted characters, artists treading the boards of some pre-arranged drama centered around a hero of certain proportions, the ritual of strewing rushes to soften that champion's homage? Is it even possible to be an efficient purveyor of leisure? Can our cross-corruption be tempered by innocence? The questions posed to the woman critic-artist resonate in multiple spaces. How can we shock ourselves out of passive looking (Filipczak, "Munch" 12) into succulent interaction or "immersive exhibition" (12) as a means of occupying the space between designation or encapsulation? No synonyms for woman artist; no neat designations or encapsulations of that persona. The antonym of artist is scientist. As if the artist were incapable of science, determinedly enclosed by the constraint and construction of capability.

In Nicole Brossard's *Journal Intime*, or *Intimate Journal*, these echoes and hauntings continue to hear themselves, and to bevel framing.

> *25 March 1983*
> Everything's a question of framing in the landscape of the real, of montage and dissolve in memory, when a mental frame is transformed into a precise image of a woman in the process of writing. In contrast, you have to expect the real twice because there is no real(ity) except the science of being as an absolute necessity otherwise consciousness does not survive, invisible in the montage. (77)

As *caractères uniques* then, those "invisible in the montage" are compelled to seek frames and mountings. In Dorota Filipczak's 2017 interview with Mieke Bal, framing begins the conversation, the requirement of destination coupled with definition. Filipczak says to Bal,

> I would like to hear your comment on the concept of framing as you use it in the book [*Emma and Edvard Looking Sideways: Loneliness and the Cinematic*], and also as you use it here in the exhibition in order to shock us out of a passive look at Munch [so that] it's no longer a passive or static view. (12)

Bal's amplification of immersive exhibition collapses the division between observer and observed, writer and scholar, regard and regarded.

> For us the genre of immersive exhibition means that you get close enough into it that you feel emotions that are around you but at the same time you can be critical of it. The critical aspect of looking is incited by these works. (12)

The observational then, alongside "the critical aspect of looking," must arouse and enable saturation, evading the dubious context of casual attention. At the same time, the "flaneur in petticoats," not taken seriously but nevertheless serious in her mien, is immersed in *looking* as reprisal to the way she has been measured and evaluated by the gaze of others. Caught in the act, she performs scrutiny less heedful or guarded than when she dared to use but a prudent glance to conceal her observational strategies.

And the perspective, the position? Restricted by the requirement that she be sedulous and secretive, the *caractère unique* performs a lateral edging that evades the interactive and its importunity. Athwart, crabwise. Filipczak observes,

> The exhibition is actually defined by the phrase "looking sideways" or "the sideways look." Now, your art and your critical works have been consistently concerned with the act of looking and the act of seeing. Could you describe the role of "looking sideways"? (14)

To which Bal replies,

> What I try to convey with "the sideways look" is the refusal to engage with the world, with other people; avoiding the dialogic look. But at some point, it also becomes a form of seeing from the corner of the eye what's happening outside in the world. So, it's not only the avoidance of dialogic looking; it can also be an expression of shyness. (14)

And I would add, elliptical sagacity. *Regard oblique*. Shyness is a luxury *caractères uniques* can ill afford, and yet that intricate diffidence sharpens perspective; the slant enables the power of solitary discernment, and avoidance supports the unusual angle that enables accurate visioning. *Regard oblique* becomes "a form of witnessing. Seeing what you are not supposed to see" (14). And *regard oblique* serves synesthesia, the smell of texture, the touch of sound, the taste of weariness or energy, the theatre of invention.

One way to address cross-sectional aesthetic modes is through the *regard oblique* fastened on the *caractère unique*, the digressive accompaniment

of the askance thinker, that loiterage demanding the poetics of digression (Chambers 83). Nicole Brossard asks in *Journal Intime*, "What exactly do you want from me? Literature that won't look like literature? Writing that will not be writing? . . . Memoirs, autobiography, journal, fiction. O! of course, you need to differentiate them, but who is to do that?" (69). And are those categories of importance? Does differentiation differentiate? In their conversation, Filipczak comments to Bal that the "intermedial . . . connects various media, genres and conventions; . . . it dissolves many boundaries" (22). Intermedial seeing facilitates the regard of the *caractère unique*, falling between genres, traversing through and circling around, negotiating time, place, or character without the apologia of categorization. And further, the chance to mix the media, to see the smell of gentian violet, to touch the elusive passage of a shadow, to hear then, the sideways glance, indirect as a signal.

Which circuitously leads to Schlegel's *permanente Parekbase*, endless digression (Chambers 85) escaping categories and coercive systems. The *caractère unique* is herself an embodiment of swerve, refusing to collaborate with disciplinary molds, desiring to embrace alternative aesthetic molds. She specters the ghost in the stairway, the forgotten line that evades memory's trace until it returns too late, before introducing another possibility, the unspoken riposte, the buckled idea, never voiced but retorted nevertheless. The *caractère unique* arrives unannounced, tardy but cogent in speculative response, like Denis Diderot's *l'esprit d'escalier*, staircase wit, that predicament of thinking of the perfect reply too late. The circumstances (framing again) are amplified by the *hôtel particulier* to which Diderot had been invited for dinner, a dinner where some politician tossed at Diderot an utterance that left him speechless, confused into silence. Until, after leaving the *étage noble* where the dinner had been, one floor above the ground floor, at the bottom of the stairs after descending, he recovers his wit and percipience too late, alas too late. Mute descending a staircase, only to encounter the mischievous *l'esprit d'escalier*.

The *caractère unique* is less than baffled by the structure of an *hôtel particulier*, which others might find too culturally precise. She has indeed been a guest in such a place, in Toulouse, that ancient city of pilgrimages, manifestations, terracotta bricks, and the asymmetrical sixteenth-century Pont Neuf, which crosses the prone-to-flooding river Garonne. It was a smaller gathering, and she was not the guest of honor, but invited as an exhibit, someone possessing peculiar plumage, an odd North American accent, and a colonial pedigree. This *caractère unique* then, did attend a dinner in a shambling flat on one of the floors renovated inside a *hôtel particulier*. She practices being insensible to French sophistications, and so the remarks, the arguments, the airy inclusion of references to the continental philosophy of Lacan confuse her less than annoy her, until the mightily silencing surprise

that she is a guest in the home of someone who cannot cook and who does not drink wine. A French home. Her host regards the burnt *gratin de potiron* she pulls from the oven with an air of regret and says, "I fear it was not a success," but serves it anyway. To which there is no riposte, only later that *l'esprit d'escalier*, a line more than *l'étage* or harried afterthought, "No, it certainly was not." And no wine to kill the cinder-taste or the tincture of ashes.

Askance more than afterthought. Forgive the *caractère unique*, but she has spared this text a riot of footnotes, themselves detours, tempting as the memory of walking across the Pont Neuf in Toulouse day after day, stopping at the middle arch to survey the Garonne, thick with mud and the potential for destruction. That ghost riposte, always waiting to spring upon her when she expects it least, an impersonation too late for adequate revenge and so inevitably delayed, sidetracked by perplexity, confounded into silence. And only assuaged by the head-shaking moment when wit, that well-bred insolence, returns to her aid. To explore what she is not captures the moment on the staircase, the missed epiphany itself a digression, an indirect path to what she questions when she writes. "Digression, as the seepage of thought that disturbs its linear progression, enacting textual extenuation as a phenomenon that baffles the distinction between continuity and discontinuity" (Chambers 119), is then the essential pleasure of the writing practice, the place where the *caractère unique* curates herself in language.

Curation as intervention and tangent, framing and fluctuation, becomes crucial. As Bal points out, "the curation creates a situation in which we are invited to participate" (Filipczak, "Munch" 20). Filipczak asks Bal, "Do you think this intermedial way of seeing can actually feed into literary studies and cultural studies? It is a new method of engaging with the literary work, art and video installation, all combined, with curating as an additional tool" (22). Bal goes on to unpack intervention and interaction as the artist's tools, their bulwark against unreasonable cynicism, that alternate ghost in the staircase. For scholars are likely to insist that the *caractère unique* is not scholarly enough; her tangents and digressions are too wildly excursionist, deflections from exegetical thinking. While writers insist that she is not writerly enough, does not stick to a single close-lipped genre, or revise the same navel novel over and over, does not publish a book of no less than 300 and no more than 400 pages every three years, like a metronome of production. Instead, she veers between poetry and fiction and ficto-criticism, creative criticism and non-fiction, faux history and *filles du roi* and vivisection and picaras and place-concoction and *geografictione* and northern clippers and prairie gothic and Bruegelesque allegory and howlers and *Wendepunkt* and *Unanimisme* and *roman-fleuve*. Even worse, she abjures popular topics, current events, the dystopian fashion, *tremendismo*, espionage tales, or making memoir of misery and its plural.

Here then, is the conundrum of the curious, procrastinating, readerly *caractère unique* "exempt from destination" (Beckett 36) but willing to practice other *bavardage*. She returns to the conversation between Nair and Filipczak, echoes the questions asked there. What is her "language strategy" (273)? Is her "grammar of narrative" (274) folded between the manifold decoys of gossip? Filipczak says to Nair,

> I'm intrigued by the concept of literature as gossip. This would be one of the phenomena in Canadian literature by women as well, since women are stereotypically connected with gossip. So it is interesting that Rushdie could be read in a gossip mode. (274)

Is gossip the autobiography in which we do not appear? Is the intimacy of gossip one way to inter-textualize dissonance? The *caractère unique* met Rushdie over a table covered with Indian food in Scandinavia, the hostess a beautiful woman unafraid of cooking and unafraid of Rushdie and unafraid of wine. They leapt across their differences toward a shared reading addiction and an appreciation of Chana Masala. The *caractère unique* and Rushdie adapted to the gossip of global sophistication more quickly than any awkward courtesies, danced past writing that refused to fit, words that resisted placement and placating. Such *caractères uniques* cannot simply occupy "a mutinous silence" (276) but must squabble and argue, toss words in a salad spinner, presume to difficulty if not diffidence, and swallow doubts.

Filipczak asks Nair: how can "emotion . . . disrupt the authority of linguistic structure?" (276), to which end articulating the inexplicable (279) through rage and rambling, detour and sortilege, does take on the texture of an outcry (279). This elusive *l'esprit d'escalier* haunts the uneasy space of English, its muscled freedom in tandem with idiomatic rigidity, and within those two traces discourse that refuses nets and cuts through entanglements. Perhaps this is less the unruly genre of gossip than the inchoate language of rage, rage that has no way to express itself, embattled by language, by patriarchy, by class, and by an obstructive innocence. The *caractère unique*, beggared by the paucity of her materials, then can only "make do," despite these obstacles making it difficult to imagine her as *sui generis*, without classification, unfitting, unconforming, a unique who cannot be reduced to category? Including all that is solitary, hermitic, and peculiar, in the strongest and most powerful senses possible. Here, then, the quandary of the *caractère unique*. Where can she infiltrate the closed room of dissection and dissent, dissertation and disquisition? Is there an open door or a reluctant key to a rusty lock?

Better to undertake a detour where she imagines Górecki's teeth and Maria Jarema's elusive limbs. She relishes Szymborska's ashtray and the sprouting onion she keeps as a memento mori on her shelf, the Skamander

coffee served at the Picador Café. And having herself a decided preference for desk drawers, she begins to memorize Wisława Szymborska's poem.

> "There Are Those Who"
>
> There are those who conduct life more precisely.
> They keep order within and around them.
> A way for everything, and a right answer.
>
> They guess straight off who's with who, who's got who,
> to what end, in what direction.
> They set their stamp on single truths,
> toss unnecessary facts into the shredder
> and unfamiliar persons
> into previously designated files.
>
> They think as long as it takes,
> not a second more,
> since doubt lies lurking behind that second.
>
> And when they're dismissed from existence,
> they leave their place of work
> through the appropriately marked exit.
>
> Sometimes I envy them
> —it passes, luckily. (421)

It passes, luckily, envy of those who conduct life and the aesthetic process with such absoluteness. The *caractère unique* heeds only one admonishment: wear flat shoes and be prepared for long distances.

In the poem, "Shadow: Soft and Soif," in her collection entitled *Ardour*, Nicole Brossard tempers,

> i'm careful not to disappear
> on the other side of my dreams (75)

The *caractère unique* resorts instead to the French *suivez mon regard*, and the reticence it offers, its sheltering ambivalence discontinuous and beguiling.

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Mieke Bal

Untimeliness, Inter-ship, Mutuality

Prelude

The qualifier "untimely" indicates a temporal problem. It can refer to a temporal disturbance of "natural" chronology, a discrepancy, ill-timing, something unfortunate, and, before all else, premature. In order to make us all think of the unfortunate untimely passing of our friend and stimulating, creative, inspiring colleague and teacher Dorota Filipczak, I decided to devote this article to that aspect of time that is most poignantly expressed in untimeliness, the loss of a beloved person before her time. But in order to bring a little comfort to that sad event, I make the word expand and extend to different reflections on time and its unwillingness to be "natural," straight, like an arrow that indicates progress, and instead, discuss a few instances of time's disobedience to that alleged regularity. Instead of time, I will present tempo: differences in speed, in pace that temporally "color" lives and the world in which we live. For, such different "tempi" make our experiences lively, and open up our potential to creative freedom. This would be, I conjecture, something that would make professor Filipczak giggle with amusement.

It is no coincidence that I first encountered her in an interview. The preposition "inter-" that is part of that noun, has always been my special interest. The preposition implies a focus on relationality. The interest she always pursued in (the work of) women artists was not limited to a thematic interest, which could easily be on the verge of the pursuit of identity as gender-essentialism. Instead, it was a mode of being, thinking, and doing her academic work. As a mode—and I mean that word quite literally—rather than a topic, her special interest in the art of which the artist is a woman, demonstrates in her work a non-essentialist feminist

perspective, which I can best indicate as *dialogic*. Her preferences for gender as a knot of social-cultural issues to consider spoke to (logic) the relationships (dia-) among people, with their own characteristics and interests, not at all bound to fixed properties that we too easily call "identities." From our first encounter on, I felt that this was a very special woman capable of contributing to the fabric of culture in original and constructive ways: generous and sharp, keen and calming; exciting and reassuring in her interactions with colleagues and students.

This goes beyond the theme of "woman" in a big way. Far from the more usual self-centered, frequently even narcissistic tendency to select artworks and texts in which the critic has recognized herself and is interested for that reason (either unconsciously or self-aware), professor Filipczak's mind was "outgoing," inquiring about otherness. Armed with an unlimited curiosity, she did not shy away from travelling even to foreign countries when she set her mind on seeing and studying a specific object of interest. Her personalizing approach to others compels me to speak about her on a first-name basis. For, someone like Dorota must be what I have called an intellectual friend, with friendship taken as seriously as the intellectual side of the relationship: an "inter-ship."[1]

I can only speak from my own experience: the encounters based on "inter-ship" that I had the immense pleasure and privilege to have with her. Once she had seen and reflected on my video work, *Madame B* (made with Michelle Williams Gamaker), which was first displayed in the Muzeum Sztuki in Łódź in 2012–13, she requested an interview. This was the occasion of our first encounter, the result of which was published in the journal she created, *Text Matters* (volumes 4 and 5). Later, in 2016, she travelled to Kraków to see my video installation and film *Reasonable Doubt*, on René Descartes and Queen Kristina, where that work premiered. But even more impressively, she travelled to Oslo, in 2017, to see, reflect on, and interview me about the exhibition I had curated there in the Munch Museum, which included our own video installation *Madame B* and numerous works by Norway's greatest painter, Edvard Munch. The conversation we had there demonstrated her dialogic mode of thinking.[2]

This background of our "inter-ship" explains why, in this tribute to her, I don't write about literature but about visual art, of the digital kind.

[1] I proposed the neologism "inter-ship" in an article in which traces of the interview with Dorota are evident. See "Intership: Anachronism between Loyalty and the Case."

[2] See Filipczak "Mieke Bal: Writing with Images" and "Framing *Madame B*: Quotation and Indistinction in Mieke Bal and Michelle Williams Gamaker's Video Installation." I am very grateful to Jarosław Suchan for inviting the installation in the great museum he directed with such great insight into modern art.

True, Dorota was primarily a literary scholar. This made her vivid interest in my video work all the more striking. Her special interest in art made by women and the political consequences of that distinctive authorship are not bound to a specific medium, but emerged from her wide, open attitude to culture. My wish to relate to that openness has enticed me to select a work by each of three visual artists who are women, and who are based geographically on three different continents. All three are keen to critique the biases and exclusions that conservatism in art sites promotes—most prominently the repression of the shameful histories of slavery and the exploitation of women. This, as well as their investment in acknowledging diversity, they share with Dorota. The works I present here most centrally focus on time, temporality, and tempos. They play with time in their artistic and socio-cultural agency, frolic with it, but before all, they question its self-evident domination in chronology, regularity and the deceptive bias of progress (versus "developing"). If well engaged by spectators, or rather, active and engaged lookers, they probe what time does to people and their lives, and I must add that this suits the occasion for the present article, the sadness of Dorota's untimely passing.[3]

Slowing Down for the Mutuality of Looking: Ann Veronica Janssens's Clouds and Me

The time was a dog-day afternoon in 1998. The place was Lisbon, near the river Tagus. The door opened easily and closed quickly. Failing to read the small letters that identified the room, I found myself totally immersed in a piece that, in order to be experienced and understood, required precisely such thoughtless, total submersion. The space that surrounded me was blissful, bright, and totally opaque; in it, all sound was subdued.[4]

The word "space" may even be too worldly. The world, after all, was on the other side of the door. Where was I? In a strong, literal sense, I was nowhere. With my eyes wide open I saw nothing, despite the fact that the room was not dark in the least. The dense, impenetrable mist packed into the space whose limits I could not even guess was so bright it almost

[3] The conservatism, including a discriminatory conception of "otherness" inherent in a traditional concept of time is most sharply analyzed by Johannes Fabian in his seminal study 1983 *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes Its Object*.

[4] This analysis is based on some revised fragments from my book on Janssens's work, *Endless Andness: The Politics of Abstraction According to Ann Veronica Janssens*. The analysis presented here comes from the beginning of that book.

seemed a kitsch fantasy of heaven. Imagine the kind of clouds angels sit on: those little fat putti with egg-shell skin. Such clouds would resemble those of Renaissance and Baroque painting, except that those latter clouds have shapes while this mist did not. Whatever shape it might have had was invisible to me. Since shapes can only be seen from the outside and I found myself inside the cloud, I felt I was enclosed in nothingness.

Fig. 1. Ann Veronica Janssens, *Horror Vacui*, 1999. Artificial mist and natural light, dimensions variable. Belgian pavilion, 48th Venice Biennale. Courtesy of the artist

After a while, ever so slowly it seemed—but time was arrested as much as sound—vague lines came through. The event of their becoming visible was just that: an occurrence in time. The change in the space consisted of a gradual, partial receding of the absolute opacity of the white that had surrounded me completely, clinging to my skin and challenging my sense of my own boundaries—something that could induce fear. When this receding took place, I became aware of my own dissolution. Thus, the after-effect of the event retrospectively turned the initial experience into an unsettling one. Next, another event occurred, one that was deeply narrative in that it had the retroversive capacity to change the state of what, before, I would have called "my mind."

Now, I could not call it that any longer. The anxiety that was created by contrast and after the fact was an anxiety "of the heart," to allude to Baroque philosopher Blaise Pascal. He famously wrote: "The heart has its

reasons which reason itself does not know" (158). This was what I discovered: the heart as the seat of a domain of reason that reason either does not know or actively ignores. The mind-body, or the body-mind, acts on its own, which is what happened when I felt that the earlier possibility of fear was a retroversion.

Retroversion is a narrative device that requires a narrative agent, a narrator, to manipulate the linearity of time. Readers are given access to a universe of events that run through time in different directions, crisscrossing where time thickens. We know such devices from novels—not from visual art, be it figurative, abstract or conceptual. Yet, as this instance shows, retroversion empowers not only readers, but also viewers. It gives access to unknown worlds. It opens up our lives to manifold possibilities that console us in our grief of being bound, hand and foot, by time's tyranny. I was without sight and blissfully coming into sight at the same time.

The accession to the visibility of the still-vague lines was also constituted by the emergence of the ceiling, plinths, and corners of the room through the seemingly limitless cloud. Lines and things became as one. It was an emergence barely identifiable as well as fragile, in permanent danger of annihilation. Only now could I begin to see that I was indeed in something as ordinary as a room. I could see its square form and its proportions. The earlier sensation, however, of no other space being present for me than the absolute, was still lingering on my retina and my skin. What was happening with and within me was an experience of duration as a crucially important element of visual perception.

Not only were the boundaries of my body—my skin as protection and site of both vulnerability and access—less obvious than I had always assumed them to be. Not only was being inside the cloud incompatible with seeing its shape. Not only was vision a slowly granted and slowly developed privilege. In addition, the duration of perception was uneven in its rhythm, unstable in its linearity, dense and pervasive in its impact, and wavering in its location, siding alternately with the subject (me) and the object—the unstable sight that I was beginning to see. But then again, those notions—subject, object—and the distinction they proclaimed, had themselves lost their boundaries, their separate identities. They had become as vague and blurred as the mist I was immersed in.

All this time I could not walk. I was nailed to the floor, fearful even of shuffling forward, as the blind might feel when suddenly deprived of their aids. Walking, even when it is expected to be safe, is impossible without the help of perception. Pondering this, I heard a hissing sound. It seemed close by, but I could not gauge its distance from me. I could not see its source, nor interpret its meaning. Perhaps it was a part of the

installation. However, it might as well have been accidental; a noise made by the air-conditioning system of the building, perhaps. Who was to say where the work began and ended, where its seams stitched it to its environment, how it was framed? The sound was not loud, but in the total silence of the fog-cushioned space it constituted an unsettling interruption. Like the emergence of the lines, the hissing constructed the preceding silence at the very moment it broke that silence. Yet, it was only potentially frightening for a moment. As the mist was brightened up by its rigorous whiteness, so the sound's contrast to silence was its only affective burden. Just like the lines coming into visibility, it allowed nothing to distract from the purity of its retroversive effect.

How long had I been standing there? Duration was *there*; it was a presence, an embodied sensible "thing." It became sensual, slowly accumulating metaphors, associations, and personal memories of space, smell, and matter. Duration was made so intense, so bodily, that it was impossible to measure it with a clock. In a futile attempt to document this sensation of being in time, I tried to take a picture of the moment when the slowdown waged a victorious battle against the inexorability of time. Duration became an ally in my desperate resistance to the gliding slope of life at whose bottom "the end" is written. My camera refused: its automatic calculation of time versus distance and light could not deal with the situation, just as it cannot capture dreams.

One minute, ten minutes? I had now become used to the hissing sound that came on at intervals that may have been either regular or arbitrary. It ceased to interrupt my being-there. The mist had not disappeared, not even lessened; it had become more transparent, and in that respect at least it ceased to hinder. I could walk now; slowly, carefully, alert, one small step at a time. I could see the edges of a few steps and guess the rest of the stairs. The room became a part of a building. I could outline the end of the room and guess a hallway. I could make out the sound as coming from at least three different directions.

At this point in my narrative, a bifurcation is mapped out before me. In one direction, I continue the narrative discourse and introduce the next episode. From the mist emerges a creature barely identifiable; I do not know whether it is male or female, victim or threat. But there seems to be an air of murder about this figure. Here we go down the path of fiction, where I engage the mist room as a setting for a mystery plot. This mist becomes the marsh into which the villain flees at dawn; in which the child gets lost and might drown or suffer more unspeakable things; in which the heroine perseveres to find the lost victim of abduction. The unlimited worlds of fiction open up when time and visibility lose their self-evidence. I imagine myself sitting in this room of mist watching other visitors come

in, seeing their deceleration, interpreting their bewilderment, and writing stories that take their starting points in *their* body-minds.

The other direction, more appropriate for the occasion of an art experience, opens up the field of the philosophy of perception, of art practice and its role in the contemporary world. This path leads to a world that is just as unlimited, subject not to rigid structure but to the proliferation of human imagination. It is my good fortune that I was ready to "have seen" this space as a stage, a theater, a work of art, an experiment in the bond between perception and sensation which makes all aesthetic standards falter and dissolve. I experienced perception's irreducible bond with duration—the unity of perception and sensation that undermines the distinction between subject and object, which the visual arts have always considered to be the basis of their specificity, or "nature." This installation articulates a thought that has become thinkable only now—a thought that transforms what was there before. The world as we knew it, art as we knew it, the limits and concepts and distinctions by which we lived: they are all transformed through the brief sensation of losing clarity by being slowed down by an excessively decelerated tempo.

Stagnating Time, Scale and Grass: Doris Salcedo and the Forgotten Dead Creeping into Life

"Each unit is approximately the length and width of a standard coffin," Doris Salcedo wrote in the artist statement for her work *Plegaria Muda*.[5] The word "coffin" stuck in my throat. When I was asked to write about Salcedo's work for the catalogue, I had just had my own experience with coffins. For a feature film on madness that I was involved in making, I travelled to Seili Island, Finland, to a former psychiatric hospital, a pinkish building amidst green meadows. On Seili, a former leprosy colony had been converted into a "madhouse"—something that, as Michel Foucault has told us, had been done in many cases. The disappearance of leprosy marked the invention of the madhouse, or psychiatric hospital. On Seili, patients were admitted on one condition: they had to bring their own coffin. This chilling fact turned our filming on that location into a historically layered moment that I qualify as "political."[6]

[5] See Mieke Bal "Waiting for the Political Moment."

[6] See Foucault. Also, see www.crazymothermovie.com for more information about *Mère Folle*, the film I co-authored with Michelle Williams Gamaker.

Fig. 2. Doris Salcedo, *Plegaria Muda*, 2009. Wood, cement, soil grass. Courtesy of the artist

Salcedo not only uses the dimensions ("approximately") of coffins but also the material: wooden tables; and the color, or discoloration, of the grey that we recognize from her work *Unland* (1995–98), which was also made of treated and aged tabletops. Working with and for the victims of political violence has been Salcedo's artistic program and life project from the beginning of her career. Death caused by human hands; victims de-humanized when their bodies could not be retrieved, buried, mourned, because the violence was denied. Mass graves hidden in green pastures, where the hiding is like a second killing, parallel with but opposed to the traditional second burial. In *Plegaria Muda*, those killing grounds themselves become visible—barely, piercing through their attempts to stay hidden—for the first time. Green, growing grass, life: it is almost shocking to see those tiny bits surface from between the gray, dead slabs.

Like the coffins of the history of Seili that sentenced, without trial, the allegedly mad to life imprisonment, never to be seen again, the coffin-size sculptures do not explicitly reference any violence at all. They do not tell stories; they just "are," touching the visitor with hair-raising horror while remaining mute, immobile, silent as the grave. This is art, after all—not committed journalism, not politics, not propaganda. Yet there is a reality behind them, or inside them: the reality of mass murder. That is the reality of the history of the present, in the aftermath of which we live and enjoy great works of art. This reality is invoked in a manner that is both absolutely inevitable and yet indirect. The numerous units, working together to constitute a mass—as in "mass graves"—cannot avoid working *together* to convey or touch us with the horror that inspired them. But nowhere can any representation of violence be seen. Even the grass of the killing fields is modest, small, growing shyly from between two layers of wood that evoke but do not represent the coffin. It is as subtly present as the coffins on Seili, hidden in the past. From within that present in which Salcedo shows her work, the small bits of grass that pierce through the layers of attempts to keep life under a lid, green goes very well with gray; but the beauty of a color scheme matters here only ironically. Instead, it is the struggle of those small green elements that touches me, with the contradictory combination of two meanings. They conceal the place of violence, the invisible grave, by overgrowing it. This makes the grass guilty by omission, complicit with the cruelty that not only killed but also concealed the killing, thus preventing mourning. Yet, they also indicate the perseverance of life, thumbing their noses at those who think killing can erase life.[7]

Such sculptures subtly hint at the human figure that they refrain from representing. They deploy the human figure allusively. They cloud the human figure in concealment, as silent nuclei. These terms, which I borrow from an essay on the Latin-American Baroque in literature, are, in Salcedo's case, to be taken in two ways. They refer both to the strategies deployed in the art and to the violence of concealment and silencing that art addresses.[8]

"Every image of the past that is not recognized by the present as one of its own concerns threatens to disappear irretrievably," Walter Benjamin wrote (255). In this sentence, the key word "recognized" does not clarify the ambiguous preposition "of" in "image of the past." Does "of" indicate provenance or subject matter? In other words, is Benjamin talking about images that come from the past or images that represent the past? The

[7] Here I am revisiting some fragments of my book on Doris Salcedo's work. See Mieke Bal *Of What One Cannot Speak: Doris Salcedo's Political Art*.

[8] See Sarduy.

irresolvable ambiguity defines Salcedo's relationship to representation. It is through this ambiguity that the sculptures can do their political work.[9]

Benjamin insists on the need for images of the past to be in the present—to be "the case," to use Ludwig Wittgenstein's definition of "the world" in the opening sentence of the *Tractatus*. Salcedo's works are entirely visual: they use no words other than their titles, and the only sound they emit is that of an emphatic silence. Yet, the art's very visuality—its forms, colors, and matter—also carries out conceptual work, all the while making its viewers do the same. And with *Plegaria Muda*, we cannot avoid seeing the conceptual work in the dimensions as well. While never representing a human figure, Salcedo does not allow us to forget that figure, if only by the dimensions. Nor can we forget the trace of life, the grass tells us.[10]

But none of Salcedo's works is didactically political. Instead, they offer viewers tools to move beyond fixed concepts into the uncertain realm of mobile concepts, and challenges its viewers to endorse that mobility. I therefore would like to group these works under the heading of "practical philosophy" rather than that of "visual philosophy" because they reflect on how we can *deal with* the suffering of singular people caused by political violence. That "dealing with"—occurring only after the suspension of a sentimentalizing compassion—posits the intersection between the singular and the general, the punctual and the enduring as the site of the political. It also harbors the ambiguity of the preposition "of."

Unsettling Speed: Nalini Malani's Foreshortening of Time Shooting from her Head

The third artist who deploys tempi as a political weapon takes the opposite direction. Instead of slowing down or even stagnating, time, in her recent work, is upsettingly fast. As I write this, the artist is installing an exhibition in the National Gallery in London, where she was invited on a two-year fellowship, requested to respond to the museum's permanent collection. This entails the challenging undertaking to establish, or rather, to *figure*, an *inter*-relationship between historical still images such as paintings, and Malani's contemporary moving works. For this exhibition she is working in her newly invented medium: animations made by tracing her fingers over an iPad screen. The animating, activating force of these works gives the genre-medi-

[9] See Benjamin.

[10] See Wittgenstein.

um name "animations" a second meaning. Inter-historical, intermedial and intercultural: no one is more apt to establish such multi-tentacled inter-ships than Malani. Bridging differences without erasing them, the central mode she deploys is narrative. But then, how does she bring in stories so that they relate, steering clear of individualism and particularity?

Fig. 3. Detail from Caravaggio's *The Supper at Emmaus* overlayered by Malani's animation. Courtesy of the artist

This project clearly performs what I have called "pre-posterous history": an inter-temporal relationship in which the past and the present are in conversation, in mutuality, instead of a conventional chrono-logic with one-directional linearity. Merging old master paintings and the contemporary in each animation is a perfect example of this. Since the work is still in the making as I write this essay, I cannot imagine a more radically contemporary work. That contemporaneity matters, especially in art that so insistently experiments with temporality, and in a project where history meets today in an intensive form of dialogic relationality. Malani is constantly connecting, linking, integrating; her work is essentially performing *inter-ship*. The request to respond to the gallery's paintings matches Malani's ongoing experimental, creative spirit.[11]

[11] This section borrows some ideas from "Inter-ships with Nalini Malani: The Foreshortening of Time," my catalogue essay in *Nalini Malani: My Reality is Different* (2022). The image presented here is from page 90.

This artist does not simply make "works"; instead, she experiments not only with content and artistic form, but also with media and the space in which her works appear. Thereby, she invents new media or media combinations. She gives the currently much-discussed topic of intermediality an entirely new, mobile and changing meaning. She does not "adapt" one medium to another, as in cinematic versions of famous novels. Her intermediality is much more far-reaching than that. The result tends to be an interaction that moves both ways rather than a finished product. From the outset, she always gave her works a twist that enabled a transformation of the medium. Malani continued to experiment with transforming media to create new forms and narrative possibilities. Another example is the way that her multi-panel paintings play with the cinematic. The fragmentation of the invoked story over many (sometimes sixteen or thirty-two) panels, figures in a different mode or medium what in the cinematic is the temporal succession of frames. This unification-in-fragmentation is crucial both in her paintings and in film.[12]

She calls another medium she has invented "erasure performances." In these, at the end of exhibitions she wipes out wall paintings that she has made as part of an exhibition, to figure her solidarity with artists whose murals have been neglected. And so she goes on; her boundless creativity extends to exploring what a medium is, can be, and especially, what it can *do* in and with time's pace. And here, let's remember that the term "medium" is synonymous with the preposition "inter-." Until a few years ago, her most famous and complex media invention consisted of "video/shadow plays," begun in the 1990s and reaching worldwide renown in 2012 with *In Search of Vanished Blood*, commissioned by Carolyn Christov-Barkargiev for dOCUMENTA (13). Here, in the London project, she makes paintings and drawn animations interact, also bringing in sound and addressing the space. This carries the old master paintings into the present, back to life, and renovates their relevance. It also intimates a critique of the Western tradition, in which the exploitation of workers (slavery) and of women (nudity) was standard. Thanks to her intervention, the paintings are no longer still—not as flat surfaces, and neither as taking-for-granted those subjections of people. This shakes up the museum as an institution where conservation is primary—a necessary task, but also one that resonates with "conservatism."[13]

[12] On theories of intermediality, see Lars Elleström *Beyond Media Borders: Intermedial Relations among Multimodal Media* volumes 1 and 2 (2021) and his 2019 *Transmedial Narration: Narratives and Stories in Different Media*. A handbook on intermediality Elleström began to edit was finished by his colleagues, who took over after his untimely death in 2021, and published by Palgrave Macmillan in 2023 (see Bruhn, López-Varela and de Paiva Vieira).

[13] On the cinematic aspect of her multi-panel paintings, see Colah and Pijnappel. She has exhibited "animation chambers" on various occasions, including the exhibition at the

Consistently experimenting with ways to substantiate and diversify McLuhan's 1964 dictum "the medium is the message," the London exhibition proposes yet another inter-medium: incorporating cut-outs from old master paintings in ways that, in each instance, vary the dimensions and colours of the original works. After an in-depth study of the collection, the artist has selected paintings for a series of nine animations. In her dialogue with the historical paintings, the way Malani has cut out details of these, draws attention to the synecdochic issue of the relationship between the part and the now-new whole, in their embedding as detail or fragment.[14]

Interacting with art can be consoling or socially helpful in other ways. One way is to make viewers think; to animate their minds, while allowing them to inter-relate with the works. In view of the topic of time, in my reflections on Malani's work with time I have considered the possibility of foreshortening time. Foreshortening is a millennia-old painterly technique of transforming a flat image into an illusion of three-dimensional space. This accords well with Caravaggio (1571–1610), that quintessentially baroque painter who gained a reputation for not being good with space because he did not care for linear perspective. Instead, he deployed "color perspective": playing with light so that bright colors come forwards and dark ones recede. This transformation of spatiality is recognizable in Malani's animations, where the black background makes the brightly colored moving figures stand out starkly, giving them an almost 3D effect. Her creations burst into life out of a tomb-like blackness. This is profoundly different from linear perspective in which the one-eyed viewer's gaze falls into the abyss of the vanishing point. In some sections of the animations, a (Renaissance) painting made in linear perspective is thus made to quiver through the color perspective, as we can see in the image from Caravaggio's *Supper at Emmaus* from 1601—that most characteristic instance of foreshortening.

This is what makes Malani's baroque figuring contemporary in its inter-ship with the historical Baroque and what came before it, as well as with other elements or aspects of art, people, space and the world. Her

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Fundació Joan Miró, Barcelona for the Miró prize awarded to her in 2019 and at the Whitechapel Gallery, London (2020–21). In 2023 she was awarded the Kyoto Prize, the Asian equivalent of the Nobel Prize. I use the verb "to figure" to invoke Jean-François Lyotard's concept of the figural as an overcoming of the word-image separation, best explained by D. N. Rodowick in 2001 *Reading the Figural, or, Philosophy After the New Media*. I have published a book on Malani's "video/shadow plays" in 2016, *In Medias Res: Inside Nalini Malani's Shadow Plays*. In its introductory chapter I also discuss the erasure performances.

[14] For further information on McLuhan's theory on the methods of communication as the focus of study, see McLuhan *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*. On the issue of detail/fragment, see Naomi Schor *Reading in Detail: Aesthetics and the Feminine* (1987) and her 1980 "Le détail chez Freud."

narrative figurations adopt fragments or scraps of baroque aesthetic and thought in a multiple practice of quotation, which takes from the outside in and ramifies from the inside out. They are arguably fictional, yet are neither parallel to nor, consequently, independent from the actual world. In fact, they militate against such autonomy, precisely by quoting the contrasting way in which baroque art militated for an enfolded, entrapped relationship with the real world. This is how the still architecture of the galleries is adopted in the animation. This inter-ship that activates Malani's integrated figurations neither entails something that is simply relativism, nor does it allow universalism or absolutism to assert itself. The term, rather, is "entanglement." This entanglement moves along, whether we are looking at cut-outs from the historical paintings, at later manifestations of a baroque style or at ourselves in the tones that the Baroque has set for us so that we can have baroque (re-)visions. But in each case, the outcome—us, our view—is different, for it is differently entangled. Inter-ship is another word for this. The art gives us a hand in that delicate, wavering uncertainty. Just consider the foreshortened hand of Christ in the Caravaggio. It is no coincidence that the three artists whose work I am presenting here, all refuse the static, stable temporality of classical painting.[15]

When considered as an alternative to perspective, foreshortening, while also involved in the production of a three-dimensional illusion, is the opposite of linear perspective in three ways. First, it extends space forwards, not backwards; second, it involves the body, which perspective had so efficiently reduced to a single eye; third, it flaunts distortion. Foreshortening is the systemic opposite of linear perspective. Forward, bodily and distorted, it is akin to the color perspective that Malani and Caravaggio share. Through both, by means of distortion, space becomes more real, or at least more tangible. Shortened in length and extended in width, limbs become longer, not on the picture plane, but towards us, perpendicular to it. Far from catering to the one-eyed, disembodied viewer, however, foreshortening creates the illusion that the object extends into the viewer's space. The object thus leaps off the canvas and pierces the imaginary wall that separates the represented space and everything that occurs there from the space where the viewer stands (or sits). As a result, foreshortening critiques the viewer's illusionary disembodiment. It is a perfect tool for an activating artist who deploys storytelling to shake us out of our passivity and complacency. Malani's engagement with foreshortening is one of the ways she enacts her commitment to binding; her political force.[16]

[15] For an extensive study of baroque thinking and narrating today, see my book *Quoting Caravaggio: Contemporary Art, Preposterous History*.

[16] The breakthrough study of perspective's illusionism is Hubert Damisch's famous skeptical view of it; see *L'origine de la perspective*, 1987 (English: *The Origin of Perspective*).

The paradox of foreshortening, with its multiple realms of relevance, such as space and time, makes it possible to assess Malani's (politically) binding force, and reveals an affiliation between her work and that of Janssens and Salcedo. Although allegedly serving the illusion of realistic representation, giving body to the flat surfaces that constitute the figures in a scene, its political effect is very different. While linear perspective moves backwards, producing a space the viewer can possess, colonize, but not risk entering, foreshortening moves forwards, bringing the figures to life but, in the same move, challenging the viewer's imaginary safety and isolation from the presented (fictional) world. Animation as activation responds to this goal and multiplies its effects. As a result, foreshortening breaks the realistic illusion at the same time as it supports it. Or rather, foreshortening changes that illusion and its modalities of viewing—from a distanced and disembodied mode of looking to an engaged and embodied one. With foreshortening, the mode of the artwork shifts away from representation, with all its illusions, into a realm that binds the image to the viewer, visually and affectively. This compels the viewer to think. What happens in the ambiguous realm where I know I am overstepping a boundary, yet feel required and delighted to risk doing so, is perhaps more crucial to what art can accomplish. This is how Malani, Janssens and Salcedo, all three, inter-medially transform visual narrative, and the way we see it, from contemplation to interaction.

But then, Malani especially turns foreshortening into a temporal device. Temporally, she gives her animations a foreshortened duration. And that creates a *lasting actuality*. This is what Malani produces with the pace of her animations. And that temporality is politically animating: actuality is *now*, but if we don't act upon it, it endures. Time is foreshortened to the extent that it is distorted so as to reverse the black hole of linearity. In Malani's inter-ship move to make spatial foreshortening temporal, time is both asymmetrical and heterogeneous. The heterogeneity of time is conveyed in moments when its foreshortening makes the viewer feel something that connects to—but *is* not—the past. This is the primary affective effect of the animations' speed. It is this artist's unique mode of narrative action, making the medium of animation politically effective. Malani's take on temporality indicates an overfilled imagination and memory, as well as a constant warning: urgency! Her head and heart are full of voices, and those voices end up in the animations to bring some order to chaos, while also, conversely, being affected by the chaotic state of the world.

This urgency concerns the need to heed; to see the world and listen to the voices that would otherwise threaten to remain buried in routine. The title of exhibitions such as *Can You Hear Me?* at the Whitechapel Gallery and *You Don't Hear Me!* at the Miró Foundation in Barcelona (both 2020),

responded to a real event of the utmost horror: the week-long gang rape, then murder by assault with a rock, of an eight-year-old girl by eight adults in India. How to address this deeply disturbing narrative in an art of lines, movement and speed? If we read the quote by George Orwell in one of the animations, "Either we all live in a decent world or nobody does," the political thrust of their speed is driven home, along with the intercultural pervasiveness of violence and cruelty. This affects the viewer, in ways that also animate the old master paintings in their inter-ship between art and the political. As I mentioned, Malani draws figures directly on her iPad with her index finger, a process she describes as follows:

> There is sensitivity with the fingertip, which is erotic, raw, and there is something very direct about this process of drawing, rubbing, scratching and erasing, to do with the messing around in one's mind. I feel like a woman with thoughts and fantasies shooting from my head. (Butler, Costa and Pijnappel 57)

"Shooting from my head" connects this autobiographical comment to the turbulence she projects in the head of the right-hand man in the *Supper*. The phrase connotes both the violence she is concerned with (the ambiguity of "shooting" as both killing and filming), and the speed of her animations (they move like lightning). The colors of the fast-moving lines underline that effect. The current project adds to this, as the still, old master works from the museums are integrated into the fast-moving contemporary images, fragmented, overwritten and brought into the orbit of the brightly colored lines. And this bringing to actuality also entails the historical violence to which they were connected. Urgency is added to the need to look and listen. And given the dialogue between Malani's animations and the paintings, this intimates the need to look as a relevant, necessary act in the world of our time. This is how her acts of foreshortening time achieve their activating relevance.

Malani's description of "thoughts and fantasies shooting from my head" denotes the kind of subjectivity implied in these works. Her own visions shoot out to reach into the visions of others: what happens in the world, and what the old masters made of what happened then, merge in the lasting actuality. For this artist, movement is crucial, but the combination of her own flashes of emotion, her history and that of others, precludes any attempt to bring the choreography of the animations in sync. A form of political agency resides in the inter-ship between activism (for better looking and seeing) and activation (for better thinking). Time, whether unbearably slow, as in Janssens's mist rooms, unpredictably capricious, as in Salcedo's coffin-like tables, or hyper fast, is the primary tool to activate the act of seeing as a strategy of resistance. The fast pace of Malani's anima-

tions makes time itself sensuously strong; the experience of it, activating. The foreshortening of time and the effect it has on the visitors is a detail—one that guides us to see what the whole, the work as a whole, must be: the flashing images to the inter-ship between past and present, I and you, painting and drawing, each animation and its neighbor, and the different cultures that interact in this intensely activating exhibition.

Epilogue

The three artists whose works I have proposed here as artistic-intellectual friends to mourn Dorota Filipczak's untimely passing all deploy different tempi as a tool to activate their visual interlocutors—to shake up their complacencies, their certainties, in order to re-think, through feeling the sensations, how the tempo/pace of life and death activate their thoughts. The mutuality of looking à la Janssens *works*, in all three cases. And this activating agency is due to the refusal of time—to invoke the title of an animation work by South African artist William Kentridge. Mentioning this globally recognized artist is also a short recuperative allusion to the absence of African art in most overview writings on art. Salcedo's insistence of incipient life in the slow growing of stalks of grass within her coffin-sized table sculptures can also be considered a shadow of such refusal. And Malani's near-aggressive speed in those images shooting from her head contains another refusal: to let the cruelty of those rapists-murderers go by, as if it was "normal."

The three very different paces, or tempi, these works create as if by magic resonate with Dorota's active engagement, most clearly visible in her founding gesture of creating the journal *Text Matters*. Yes, text matters. In view of the present collection of essays: writing *about* art and literature—bringing up issues that would otherwise remain in the dark, vague, or "normal"—is the statement that the creation of a journal makes. For such a journal, with the intelligence of its contents, harbors the three aspects of time, or tempi, that my title foregrounds: the untimeliness of the loss of such an inspiring colleague must be deeply regretted and entice the readers of the journal to take up the inspiration; the inter-ship Dorota stimulated through her educational, dialogic attitude and her other active involvements; and the mutuality that remains possible between artworks, literary texts (that matter), and the study of such cultural artefacts in which the student or scholar responds to these. Time, tempo and (un) timeliness are fundamental aspects of such processes.

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David Jasper

Disciplined Interdisciplinarity

I first met Dorota Filipczak in St. Chad's College in the University of Durham in 1989. She was a young visiting scholar at the University and came to see me because she had been told that I had an interest in the field of literature and theology. I was frankly rather surprised that she had chosen to come and talk to me. Durham had a distinguished department of English Literature where she might have sought help more naturally, and I was struggling on the lower rungs of the academic ladder, suspended uncomfortably between two departments, English Literature and Theology, and deeply uncertain of my place in the scholarly community. I did not fit into any of the categories that would assure you a permanent post in the university. In the Theology Department there were systematic theologians, church historians (ancient, medieval, modern), biblical scholars (Hebrew Bible and New Testament), and so on. In English the division of professional labor was largely on historical lines—eighteenth century, nineteenth century, twentieth century, and that new phenomenon of "literary theory." Each had their professional specialists. Sometimes the word "interdisciplinary" was heard, but uttered without conviction and no-one really knew what it meant. I would be asked to give the occasional class on Milton or Blake and the Bible, and there was an idea that Melville's *Moby Dick* might somehow be "religious," but generally my two departments kept themselves well apart and it seemed unlikely that there was much of a career to be made in my "interdisciplinary" endeavors in literature and theology.

Still, this situation seemed odd to me as everyone knew that English literature was not only saturated in the Bible (usually the King James Version as an acknowledged "literary" masterpiece) but struggled with deeply "theological" problems—in writers from John Donne and George Herbert

to Samuel Taylor Coleridge and James Joyce. (Joyce, of course, is not "English" but the discipline of English literature has always had a habit of expanding its boundaries to extend its empire.) The Bible, and indeed the Anglican Book of Common Prayer (in its 1559 form), were everywhere in the plays of Shakespeare. But the professionalism of the academy in the study of English literature (in those days in England still overshadowed by rather old-fashioned English Marxist criticism from Raymond Williams and others) somehow suppressed this—as indeed, the literary glories of the biblical texts were to a large extent ignored by theologians.[1]

In 1989, exactly the same year as my first meeting with Dorota (and a deeply fruitful meeting it proved to be), the American scholar Stanley Fish, who was simultaneously a professor of English and professor of law at Duke University, North Carolina, wrote a startling essay entitled "Being Interdisciplinary Is So Very Hard to Do" (reprinted in Fish 231–42). The title is deliberately dislocated. For my part, I *was* being interdisciplinary, but I found it very hard to *do* it in a university setting. Fish's argument rests upon the nature of "professionalism" in today's higher education system. I was, of course, being dangerously "anti-professional," taking a stand that was, according to Fish, "an indictment of the narrowly special interests that stake out a field of enquiry and then colonize it with a view toward nothing more than serving their own selfish interests" (231). Fish's point is that the "profession" will repeatedly draw up new disciplinary lines to sustain its professionalism, and those who blur or attempt to merge those lines will ultimately find themselves excluded from research programs and eventually teaching in jobs they are offered according to a certain particular notion of expertise. Of course, as Fish goes on to say, such a system will eventually turn in on itself, speaking a technical language (or various languages with respect to philosophy, theology, literary studies and so on) that is understood only by those within the sacred circle of the narrow discipline. Such a system is thus prone to manipulation by whoever is funding it, from either public or private resources—and this is quite clearly what is happening to most of our universities, whether private or state financed. But as Shoshana Felman once observed, such a form of knowledge is "a knowledge which does not know what it knows, and thus is not in possession of itself" (qtd. in Fish 235). Stanley Fish ends his article with the gloomy conclusion that the professionalized academic mind is essentially closed, heedless of the claims of such larger things as liberation, freedom, openness in our world (242).

[1] I am well aware that I am simplifying a complex picture for both theology and English literature, but I stand by the general tenor of what I have said here, bearing in mind that this was of a time now more than thirty years ago.

As Fish was delivering this sad indictment to the Modern Language Association of America, whose annual congress attracts in excess of ten thousand "professional" delegates, let us now return to Dorota as she introduced herself to me in St. Chad's College, Durham in 1989. I was then principal of the college which had begun life as a training institution for priests in the Church of England. By the 1980s it was fully integrated into the university, with students from all faculties and departments, though its theological origins were still very apparent. I knew nothing about Poland or Polish universities, and Dorota, for her part, was entirely new to the University of Durham. What we had in common were three things: a love of literature, an interest in religion, and a passion for poetry, though as for the last, Dorota herself was a poet and I was most certainly not.

Perhaps our common interests, and our differences, are best illustrated in the characters of two journals, *Literature and Theology*, of which I was the founding editor in 1987 and with which Dorota had a long connection, and her own, more recent journal, *Text Matters*. Both are deeply "interdisciplinary": now let us take them in turn.

On the inside cover of the early issues of *Literature and Theology* that journal is described, more than somewhat pedantically, as being

> concerned with interdisciplinary study of serious interest to both theologians and to students of literature. It should exist within the creative tension between two disciplines and not become simply either a journal of theology, or a journal of literary studies. . . Of mutual interest, for example, are narrative, the historical context of literature, the nature of myth, the study of language and semiotics, the art of translation and hermeneutics. (*Literature and Theology*)

It speaks very much of its time, before the cultural tidal wave of postmodernism had fully broken upon us, and it was certainly lacking in much gender awareness. All of the early editors of *L&T* were men, and almost all of the contributors to the early issues were men also. But the disturbances under the surface and its beginning at a time of unease in the intellectual community may be illustrated by two of its early articles written by leading intellectual figures of the day, Nathan A. Scott Jr. and George Steiner.

Scott was then the formidable doyen of the study of literature and religion in the United States. In his article entitled "On the Teaching of Literature in an Age of Carnival," Scott wrote, with his ineradicable nostalgia for past cultural unities and his manifold cultural assumptions:

> So I say that, in Bakhtin's sense of the term, ours seems now to be an age of carnival, for the myriad disjunctions that fractionalize and disunite cultural discourse in our period make all our forums a scene of babel. What is clear beyond question is the extreme unlikelihood that the people of the West shall ever again be presented with any great, overarching *speculum mentis* that subdues all the entanglements of modern

> intellectual life and integrates the various fields of culture, assigning each to its proper place within the terms of some magnificently comprehensive map of the human universe. (126)

For Scott, the times are out of joint, and nothing, it seems, can recover the lost unity which, for him, seems to suggest only the ancient idea of Christendom binding all together in one vision.

Three years later, in 1990, in vol. 4 of the journal, George Steiner, with similar assertiveness, wrote "A Note on Absolute Tragedy." His vision is more complex but no less disparaging of contemporary culture:

> It is foolish to prophesy (the ontological freedom of art is always that of the unexpected). But one's intuition is that if representative tragic forms are to arise, they will do so from some unsparing humiliation inside theology itself, from some naked acquiescence in defeat. There are motions of spirit of precisely this tenor in Kierkegaard, in Karl Barth's 1919 commentary on *Romans*. The blandness, the indifference now prevalent may be broken . . . But even if this were to happen, the correlative fictions would not, one senses, be those of absolute tragedy or of high melodrama. They would be nearer to some exercise in nocturnal slap-stick, as befits an after-word and a time of epilogue. (156)

The end time then is just to be a joke? Both Scott and Steiner could be intimidating and both preached, in different ways, in a somewhat apocalyptic tone of the end of culture, in the spirit of W. B. Yeats in "The Second Coming": "Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold" (211). I have reached the age when I have a degree of sympathy with them, though for very different reasons: and I am not so entirely without hope.

But now let us turn to the first issue of Dorota's journal *Text Matters* in 2011. To start with, the majority of contributors here are women, beginning with the Oxford feminist philosopher of religion, Pamela Sue Anderson, and Dorota herself, both of whom have sadly been taken from us. Dorota begins her first editorial with these words: "Marked with dual identity, the first issue of *TM* seeks to primarily engage in the relationship between women and authority, vested in literary and philosophical texts. The collection brings together the voices of philosophers, theologians, writers and literary scholars" (6).

The tone of *Text Matters*' self-presentation is far less coldly academic and far more warmly conversational than that of *Literature and Theology*. According to its current self-description, "[*TM*] seeks to engage in contemporary debates in the humanities by inviting contributions from literary and cultural studies intersecting with literary theory, gender studies, history, philosophy and religion ("About the Journal"). This reflects the breadth and vitality of Dorota herself, for whom academic work was never simply a "professional" matter. It was far more than that, being an

acknowledgment that the life of the intellect does indeed "matter" in our world, and is mixed up with everything else.

I was honoured to be a contributor to that first issue of *Text Matters*, and towards the end of my essay entitled "The Artist and Religion in the Contemporary World," I wrote these words:

> Throughout the ages of Christianity in the West the Christian church has been one of the greatest of patrons of the arts. But it has also too often patronized the artist whose greatest works have frequently been too edgy, too difficult, too impossible for the church to tolerate. (225)

Over the centuries, interdisciplinarity has been problematic long before the modern university developed its own professional problems. Human life has been compartmentalized and fragmented, not least when it comes to the matter of religion. The Church and its doctrines have too often been wary of artists and poets who are "different," "critical"—and the loss for everyone has been inestimable.

Text Matters, then, represents a considerable interdisciplinary advance over our struggles in the early issues of *Literature and Theology*, although as initiatives, each of their own time, they have a great deal in common. I know, to my own cost, that Fish was essentially correct in his analysis of interdisciplinarity, but in the university the battle against the narrowly defined limits of "professionalism" must continue to be fought, and it is a battle that lies at the very heart of our humanity. I do not for one moment wish to imply that we abandon a thoroughly rigorous and professional approach to our training and practice as intellectuals. But our context must be far wider than the competitive definitions of working within academic disciplines, too often virtually isolated in separate departments in our universities and colleges. In her opening words of the Editorial to that first issue of *Text Matters*, to which I have already referred, Dorota firmly stamps her broad, humane and bold concerns upon the journal which was "to primarily engage in the relationship between women and authority, vested in literary and philosophical texts" (6). The texts we work with are the context and what matters is to explore and unpick the relationships between them.

Such a task is not easy. It took us many years of working on the journal *Literature and Theology* to move into the broader country that *Text Matters*, founded a quarter of a century later, inhabits. Even now the odds are weighted against us. We need to look back a little into the history of the European university. Almost ninety years after the founding of the new University of Berlin by Baron Wilhelm von Humboldt, at the behest of Frederick William III, Hermann Usener wrote, in 1888, of the "*gletscherwall*,"

the "glacial rampart" set up between biblical studies and the study of other literatures, both ancient and modern, in the modern university (qtd. in Prickett 1). And if biblical studies particularly suffers from isolation, then in the modern university it is not alone in this. Philosophers, literary critics, theologians, sociologists and others live behind their own fiercely defended ramparts, often employing arcane vocabularies that are meaningful only to those within the discipline.

But now I return to a later meeting with Dorota, though it was a meeting through words. I was teaching for a while in South Africa when I read her work on the Canadian writer Malcolm Lowry whose works happen to have long been favorites of mine. It struck me that Lowry was an odd novelist for a young Polish woman to be writing on, but over the years it has come to make sense to me and says a great deal about the genius of literature as it weaves together sometimes obscure patterns in our complex world.

Malcolm Lowry was a rebel. Born in 1909 and educated at an English public school, he spent a year at sea on a freighter before university at Oxford, and the result of his sea-faring was his first novel *Ultramarine* (1933). Lowry lived a wandering life, much of it spent in a squatter's hut near Vancouver in British Columbia during the years of the Second World War, where he wrote his one great masterpiece, *Under the Volcano* (1947). He died in England in 1957 at the age of forty-eight. *Under the Volcano*, like all his fictional work, is saturated in the Bible and is one of the very few great tragedies of twentieth-century literature. Lowry's biographer, Douglas Day, in the Preface to the unfinished novel *Dark as the Grave Wherein my Friend is Laid* (1968), sums up beautifully the contradictions of the man:

> A man sly and deceptive, yet shy and ingenuous; a drunk of gargantuan proportions, yet a man who seems never to have let go an almost preternatural degree of self-awareness . . . a great liar (or more charitably, inventor of autobiographical fictions), but—in his writing especially—one of the most painfully honest men who ever lived. A great trial to all his friends; but a man of such charm that someone once said of him: "Just one look at the old bastard makes me happy for a week." (v)

Lowry's greatest fictional character, Geoffrey Firmin, the ex-consul of *Under the Volcano*, is doomed to struggle with a world he can never understand. A running motif of the novel is re-tellings of the parable of the Good Samaritan—a story of an unexpectedly good man who rescues the poor man lying in the road. For Geoffrey, though, it never works. With all his good intentions, the man dies before he can be rescued, or he (this time the victim) leaps up and refuses the offered help. Why does the biblical narrative never work for Geoffrey? He is, of course, to a large degree a self-portrait of Lowry—"one of the most painfully honest men who ever lived." His corpus of work is slight, much being left in disorgan-

ized note form when he died, and his last posthumously published work was painstakingly reconstructed by his wife Margerie Bonner Lowry and published as *October Ferry to Gabriola* (1971). In Lowry's own words, "it deals with the theme of eviction" (n.pag.), the banishment from Eden experienced by the central character, Ethan Llewellyn, weighted down with the burden of guilt, yet etched with hope. The final chapter is entitled "*Uberimae Fides*":

> Ethan turned straight round, looking ahead. There was another point ahead, with yet another lighthouse on it and beyond that lay Gabriola still in sunlight. It was too far to distinguish any details, but there appeared to be two high hills, with a valley between in the center. And all the hope of his heart flowed out to it. (326)

Why have I given so much focus to the work of Malcolm Lowry? There are two reasons. The first is Dorota's remarkable perception in her reading of Lowry's writings, and her capacity to enter into the soul of this troubled man for whom the world was finally too much. The second reason follows on from the first. Lowry could never have flourished in the divided, categorized professionalism of modern academic life. Interdisciplinarity, understood even in its most joyous, carnivalesque sense, was for him impossible. For his genius was to see and feel all things *together*, and together they were too much for him. And yet his literature embraced a profound romanticism that celebrates the unity of all things, and an equally profound sadness that knows how almost impossible that unity is.

Still, the true intellectual pursues that unity. Dorota's career as a poet and an academic represents a dismissal of that very rigidity in the academic structural system that militates against the genuine, perhaps impossible interdisciplinarity that acknowledges the unity of all things. What she stood for are what Stanley Fish celebrates as the "claims of liberation, freedom, openness" (242) that must lie at the heart of all properly moral intellectual endeavor. To begin with, she was truly international in her concerns, and noted for her work, not only in literature and poetry but also in the feminist philosophy of religion. Academic rigor did not stifle her creativity, for she was the author of seven volumes of poetry. She was also a translator.

What I am arguing for here is essentially within the tradition of one of the great nineteenth-century Christian writers on the nature of the university. In 1852, John Henry Newman published a work entitled *Discourses on the Scope and Nature of University Education*, with a revised edition published in 1859. In the field of what he called "liberal knowledge," Newman proposed two fundamental principles. First that "all knowledge is a whole" and second that the pursuit of such knowledge is an end in itself (80).

Again, it is a vision of unity. Here is a glimpse of Newman's vision of "universal learning" contrasting with the current tendency in universities to reduce the range of subjects taught, not least in the field of the humanities (Newman's gendered language is retained):

> It is a great point then to enlarge the range of studies which a university professes, even for the sake of the students; and though they cannot pursue every subject that is open to them, they will be the gainers by living among those and under those who represent the whole circle. This I conceive to be the advantage of a seat of universal learning, considered as a place of education. . . A habit of mind is formed which lasts through life, of which the attributes are freedom, equitableness, calmness, moderation, and wisdom; or what in a former discourse I have ventured to call a philosophical habit. This then I would assign as the special fruit of the education furnished at a university, as contrasted with other places of teaching or modes of teaching. (82)

Newman then proceeds to ask the question of such learning and such knowledge, "What is the *use* of it?" Proper knowledge is indeed to be sought as an end in itself and for its own good, but this is not to deny that it also has "a very tangible, real, and sufficient end, though the end cannot be divided from that knowledge itself" (83). In short, it is concerned with that which lies at the very heart of our humanity—of our being human. Through such education we may draw closer to a "humane" society, one that is built upon a vision of the universal and the inclusive, rather than the limited and the exclusive. It therefore forms the engine room of our fight against all that belittles and divides our humanity—racism, sexism, petty nationalism and so on.

Many years ago my dear friend Mark Ledbetter and I edited a book of essays of our teacher and friend, the late Robert Detweiler of Emory University, Atlanta. It was entitled *In Good Company* (1994), words drawn from a poem by the English poet C. Day-Lewis: "Go mad in good company, find a good country, / Make a clean sweep or make a good end" (qtd. in Jasper and Ledbetter xv).

The book ended with an interview with Robert, reflecting on his lifetime spent teaching in universities in the United States and in Europe. He was very clear that we are concerned with a profoundly *moral* project:

> If we spent some of the energy we put into our research for publication on developing ways of moral teaching—and gave this kind of effort the prestige that we now give to research and publication—we might have the start of a responsible higher education system. (Greene 447)

Robert concluded the interview with the observation that what dissatisfied him most about his long career in universities was this: "I am least happy

about the fact that after my three decades in higher education our society appears to be in worse shape than ever. I take this personally" (448). Said with a smile, it was meant seriously. Now that my turn has come to reflect back on a long teaching career, I know exactly what Robert meant, and that is the reason why the fight should never be given up.

And so back to Dorota. Neither Robert Detweiler, nor I, nor Dorota, were trained in the arts of "interdisciplinarity." Each of us has had, in Robert's words, to develop our own expertise, and for each of us that is somewhat different. Part of the reason is that our academic and intellectual life must be led, in the first instance, by our cultural circumstances. For four years, between 1951 and 1955, Robert Detweiler worked with the rehabilitation of refugees in different parts of Germany. It is nearly impossible for me to appreciate Dorota's early years in Communist Poland, her relationship with the church, her engagement with Polish cinema, her work on feminist philosophy of religion. And yet somehow true interdisciplinarity draws people together. I do not mean the artificial phenomenon that Stanley Fish rightly dismisses. But by way of illustration, I draw to a conclusion in this essay with some reflections on a conference that Dorota organized under the auspices of the Department of British Literature and Culture of the University of Lodz in April 1998.

The title of the conference, and the book that followed it and which Dorota edited, was *Dissolving the Boundaries*, and it was indeed apt. It was not a large gathering but we traveled to Poland from the United Kingdom, Australia, Hong Kong and Japan. It was certainly a global gathering. Dorota wrote in the Introduction:

> It is particularly significant that the conference with such a meaningful title was organized in Poland almost a decade after the collapse of the oppressive communist régime in our country. At the same time the activities involved in the publication of this volume occurred literally at the turn of the millennium. Thus the articles that might be called the closing statements are also the opening ones, the end of one millennium being conflated with the beginning of another. (3)

For my paper at the conference I borrowed a term from an old essay by Jacques Derrida, published in *Diacritics* in 1983. Derrida wrote of a "professor at large" in Paris who used to be called "*un ubiquitiste*" and the term "ubiquity" was adopted by Dorota to describe the task of the conference as "a mediator witnessing and acknowledging the collapse of disciplinary boundaries" (Introduction 3).

There we were in one great discussion for two or three days—theologians, biblical critics, philosophers of religion, literary critics—crossing and dissolving boundaries and yet each bringing something particular, some proper sense of "discipline" to the conversation in an exercise of

disciplined interdisciplinarity. The resultant dialogue was described by Dorota as "a powerful message of encouragement for all the ubiquitists who dissolve the boundaries and 'venture to name' the liminal unnameable qualities" (Introduction 3). I suspect that this is something that has to be learned afresh in every generation, and to each the formal structures of the academy are invariably unsympathetic. The real work of interdisciplinarity will probably always begin, and end, in friendships that themselves dissolve boundaries and sustain us more than any formal honors or prizes. This essay has been partly of a personal nature, remembering, as so many do with me, my friend who is sadly no longer with us. But it has, I hope, made a serious point in the reminder that interdisciplinarity is so very hard to do—and must be done afresh in new and daring ways time and time again. In that task Dorota was a leader and a colleague nonpareil.

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Section 2
Multivocality and Interaction

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Dorota Filipczak

"Alternative Selves" and Authority in the Fiction of Jane Urquhart[1]

In *A Feminist Philosophy of Religion* Pamela Sue Anderson sets out to refigure biased beliefs and challenges "the dominant epistemology" by stressing the need for "reinventing ourselves as other" (18). The other is understood here in two ways, as "the repressed other of female desire" and "the outsider on the margins of patriarchy." The idea has long been present in literature in a different guise. As many novels of Canadian women writers demonstrate, "the repressed other of female desire" has always sought entry into literary discourse. For example, the trilogy about Emily Byrd Starr by Lucy Maud Montgomery made claim to the erotic and creative potential in a woman controlled by an unimaginative family and patriarchal construction of femininity. Though Emily finally succumbed to the glamour of an idyllic union, she came closest to Montgomery's own yearning to reinvent herself as other. Montgomery identified with her own heroine, whose greatest wish was to become a writer (Montgomery 88).

The importance of Emily books for Canadian women writers can be seen in Margaret Laurence and Alice Munro. Laurence's Vanessa from *A Bird in the House* also reinvents herself as a writer. One story in the cycle "The Half-Husky" shows Vanessa receiving an unusual gift from a Ukrainian outsider to the brick house of Grandfather Connor. Vanessa gets a dog of mixed blood, who grows into a fierce creature because he has been taunted by another outsider. The way that animals in this short story cycle exteriorize the nature of people echoes Amerindian stories, as Margaret Atwood observed in her letter to Laurence (2). The half-husky

[1] This chapter is a revised version of the article originally published in *Text Matters: A Journal of Literature, Theory and Culture* (vol. 1, pp. 27–43).

might also be seen as a counterpart of Hesse's *Steppenwolf*, because he illustrates the fierce, creative urge in Vanessa. This urge cannot be tamed by the smell of floors polished with beeswax, which is disdained by Steppenwolf, and eventually abandoned by Vanessa, when she makes an exit from the world of convention into the world of writing (Filipczak, *"Unheroic Heroines"* 291–92).

Laurence's term for the repressed other in a woman was "that other self of hers." The writer used the phrase with reference to her mother in *Dance on the Earth,* in a passage describing her mother's love for music, her artistic self, which was eventually abandoned because she could not reconcile it with wifely and maternal duties (38). "That other self of hers" connects with the underground self in the fiction of Alice Munro, especially *Lives of Girls and Women*, where the intertwined erotic and creative desires of Del Jordan constitute one of the secrets in "deep caves paved with kitchen linoleum" (210). Del lives a trivial life, but her mind wanders into fiction. And so does her body when she leaves town to make love to Garnet French, who later nearly drowns her in the Wawanash River because she refused to convert to his creed and marry him. Del gothicizes her experiences in the last chapter of her novel, where she reinvents herself as the author of a Gothic text, whose plot disturbingly transforms and completes whatever did not happen to her.

The phenomenon of "that other self of hers" appears in the fiction of Jane Urquhart, who, like Laurence and Munro, acknowledges the importance of the Emily trilogy on her own growth as a writer (Hammill 113). Starting with her first novel *Whirlpool*, through *Away* into the latest fiction, Urquhart's female protagonist is the one who challenges the dominant ideology by following her desire. *Away* is unique in projecting the safe structure of mental habits on an island and turbulent desire on the ocean. This brings to mind the opposition set up by Kant in an image of an island in *The Critique of Pure Reason*, which is so convincingly explored by Pamela Sue Anderson in *A Feminist Philosophy of Religion*: "Modern, philosophical texts have frequently used images of the sea as outside territory of rationality, in relation to the (rational) secure ground of an island" (xi). In this context, Jane Urquhart's *Away* can be seen as text that dissolves the opposition in the philosophical imaginary, for the island of Rathlin in the north of Ireland is suddenly deluged by a tidal wave carrying silver teapots, cabbages, barrels of whiskey, and finally a dying sailor from a shipwrecked vessel. The sailor is found by one of the female protagonists, Mary O'Malley, which changes her fate, and the fates of women from the next generations of her family.

An excerpt from Kant's philosophical masterpiece quoted by Pamela Sue Anderson states the following: "the territory of pure understanding . . . is an island, enclosed by nature itself within unalterable limits. It is the land of truth—enchanting name!—surrounded by a wide and stormy

ocean, the native home of illusion" (qtd. in *Feminist Philosophy* 11). In the words of the author,

> Kant uses the sea to represent the danger of false belief and illusion as contrasted with the true beliefs and secure reality of the island. The feminist objection to the latter is that desire and disorder associated with water and fluidity are feared, while reason and order linked with stability and solidity are highly valued. (xi)

Jane Urquhart's novel certainly ventures into the turbulent sea of desire through the character of Mary who is transformed into the other when the boundary between the island of reason and the ocean of desire collapses as a result of the tide. Urquhart's description of the tide transforming the island and at least one of its inhabitants is not unique in Canadian literature. *The Resurrection of Joseph Bourne* by Jack Hodgins is set in Port Annie on an island buffeted by the Pacific Ocean in British Columbia, and tells a similar story of a young woman's sexual awakening:

> Just when Angela Turner had decided to give up and leave Port Annie, where nothing ever happened to a girl except this never-ending rain that would drive her crazy, the giant wave had washed up into town and left a Peruvian sailor on the flowered sheets of her unmade bed. (57)

In contrast to the sailor who dies in the arms of Mary in *Away*, this one proves very much alive, elegant and ingenious in the sexual education he offers to the otherwise sexless Angela (a telling name indeed), who enjoys him for quite some time in her isolated house before he finally leaves her in order to join the crew of his ship. In the narrative by Hodgins the wave breaking into Port Annie is connected with many magical events, such as the arrival of an amazingly beautiful woman through whose agency the title character Joseph Bourne is miraculously resurrected. The collapsing of the boundary between the turbulent ocean and the clean, ordered city, now strewn with seaweed and pregnant with change, signals the incursion of magic realism, the mood that also pervades *Away*.[2] Both authors talk about the visitation by a tidal wave, the invasion of reason by desire, the transformation of a chosen character by the encounter with the other, who brings in the excluded element of physicality. Both connect nicely with the image from Kant, whose rigid distinction between land and sea they actually dissolve. A question arises about how perceptive an observer of nature Kant actually was. He is known to have spent his life in Königsberg, whose historical center includes two islands on the river Pregel. Kant

[2] For the analyses of *Away* in the context of magic realism, see Branach-Kallas, *In the Whirlpool of the Past: Memory, Intertextuality and History in the Fiction of Jane Urquhart* (141–52); Edelson (63–74); Rzepa (73–79, 97–99).

only travelled to the places in the vicinity of Königsberg (Reiss xvii). Tidal movement must have made scant impression on him, for the Baltic rises and falls very little in comparison with other seas. In fact, Kant's distinction between land and water may have been influenced by the river islands on the Pregel. Let us quote an excerpt from *Away* describing what happens on the island of Rathlin, a parodic echo of Kant's northern island, which lies off the most northern coast of Ireland:

> The night before a furious storm had reduced the circumference of the island by at least ten feet. It had snatched overturned curraghs from the shore and dispatched seven of Mary's favourite boulders to God knows where. The sandy beach nearest the girl's cabin had been made off with as well and had been replaced with a collection of stones resembling poor potatoes. No one—not even those who had spent some time on mainland beaches—had seen their like before and they were rumoured to have come from the land where no grass grew and nothing breathed. (4)

Commenting on Kant's image, Pamela Sue Anderson raises the question of the relation between a female philosopher and the sea from Kantian imaginary (*Feminist Philosophy* 12). I shall borrow this question in order to apply it to the female character in Urquhart's fiction and her relation to the Kantian ocean, whose mediator she becomes on the island of supposed truth.

Urquhart's Mary O'Malley is believed to have been taken "away" in a mysterious way, becoming forever an outcast from the community, despite its unremitting efforts to socialize her back into her conventional role. In Mary's case, "that other self of hers" (to use Laurence's phrase) is a gift from the dying sailor who kindles enough love in her to estrange her from the community. Mary is the mediator between stability and order on the island and turbulence of the ocean, which submerges the ship called Moira and its sailor who utters the name of the ship in front of Mary, thus changing her identity for ever. Mary swims naked in the ocean with her demon lover, and imagines sexual union. He introduces her to the world of submerged structures, sunken architecture, attributes of life on the land now buried in the sea of desire. Caterina Ricciardi draws readers' attention to the fact that Mary recognizes the sailor as a visitor from the "otherworld island." The critic asks if Canada, where Mary is taken away in the literal sense much later, becomes "Oisin's or Saint Brendan's isle to be searched for in the west, across the sea, far away from Ireland" (70). This interpretation would further destabilize the Kantian opposition between island and ocean. The island of Rathlin has its "otherworld" opposite, while Canada turns into a mythical Irish isle, as if each of them had its doppelgänger. Ricciardi's comment hints at the motif of descent, which is also noted by Anne Compton, who compares the condition of Mary to

that of Persephone, who "will live in this world and in the otherworld" (135). While Persephone connects death and desire, the descent "under water" also brings to mind "the waters of death" in biblical Sheol, a perilous experience that may but does not have to be a prelude to regeneration (Filipczak, *Valley* 48–49). This, in turn, connects with the descent into "that other self of hers" or "underground self," a necessary catalyst in the metamorphosis of other Urquhart heroines.

The name and Irish context of the protagonist of *Away* cannot but provoke associations with Mariolatry. Mary is a virgin, though she gains complete knowledge of a male body from her single act of watching over the dying sailor. Thus she is at the same time pure and possessed by the other, and, characteristically, she ends up handed over to a man who wants to marry her, though, like New Testament Joseph, he knows she has belonged to the other. Mary is an unusual echo of biblical Mary because she is endowed with the gift of eloquence. Rather than pray, she sings the rhymes that provoke the suspicion of a priest, who is willing to "thrash" the demon out of her if necessary. Mary's refusal to go back to her former self finds a most interesting expression in the scene that might be read as a reversal of Annunciation. In order to free her from her demon lover, Father Quinn tries to exorcize Mary repeatedly in the presence of her mother and her future husband. He resorts to all possible means at his disposal: prayer, holy water, psychological pressure. Mary comes up with one word that is relevant in the context:

> "No," she said quietly, and it was the first word she had spoken.
>
> "No," she said again into the distance of the room.
>
> "Cast off this shadow, Mary," the priest was saying "that stands between yourself and God." (Urquhart, *Away* 48)

Pressure of ecclesiastical authority, which is supposed to transform Mary into God's handmaid, fails to elicit her agreement, let alone her self-effacement. Mary stands her ground, and in her thoughts belongs to someone else. Brian marries her, and promises to protect her. Mary's visions disappear when she becomes a mother. In the face of devastating potato famine the couple moves to Canada with their son, much like Joseph and Mary fleeing to Egypt. Mary gives birth to a daughter in the new land, symbolically transforming it into the locus of new life. Yet she is later taken "away" again, after she comes into contact with a vast expanse of water. On that memorable day her son Liam sees her apron flapping on a clothesline in the wind. The apron is the costume connected with the role that Mary never fully identified with, so she was able to discard it.

In the words of Anna Branach-Kallas, quoting from Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Mary is "the doubly colonised other" (*Whirlpool* 138). As she notes, Mary's husband

> . . . who has always sought for a Celtic bard among his students and is filled with sorrow because he has never found one, which makes him fear that Gaelic culture will disappear, fails to notice that he has given his learning to a real poet—his wife. (138)

Branach-Kallas sees Mary as challenging the stereotypes of Irish peasant women and Canadian pioneer women. In the latter form Mary resembles the first of Urquhart's fictional heroines, Fleda McDougal, who writes herself out of the military, nationalistic and domestic scripts that her husband Major McDougal prepared for her. Fleda is trapped in the image of an angel in the house, and in a fantasy of femininity spawned by a poet who adores her, but she resists both. Her journal, whose final words reveal her voice, might be seen as a reconstruction of *écriture feminine* in nineteenth-century Canada. It ends with the words "[s]etting forth," which encapsulate the condition of Urquhart's heroines: setting forth from the islands of objective "truth," following their own subjective desire for potential that can be found only beyond the secure confines.

In her novel explicitly dealing with a female artist, *The Stone Carvers*, the author shows us a protagonist who also yearns to reinvent herself, but, like the previously mentioned female characters, she is confined in the homely structure of custom and propriety. A descendant of German immigrants to Ontario, Klara Becker lives an orderly life in the village of Shoneval until her peace of mind is disrupted by the intrusion of an Irishman, Eamon O'Sullivan, who falls in love with her.

One of the scenes describing his courtship of Klara claims particular attention:

> That night as she teetered on the edge of sleep, Klara heard music so achingly sad, so astonishingly pure and clear, that her entire body was alert to the sound. She walked furtively over to the window, as if she feared she might awaken a number of unfamiliar ghosts or alternative selves. (86)

The quotation leads us into "the territory of dreams and memory . . . a milieu in which Urquhart excels," to use the words of Timothy Findley from his review of *Storm Glass* (14). Klara guesses that the "music so achingly sad" is the sound of the fiddle played by Eamon in the orchard, and "her entire body" is "alert." At the same time she is caught in a Gothic situation. Her erotic desire manifests itself as a taboo, a Gothic secret whose presence she fears to acknowledge because it might destroy her conventional image. Her desire must appear fearsome to her because she has interiorized male disapproval

of female expressiveness. As stated by Anderson in her comment on Kristeva, female desire "has a negative meaning for patriarchy; in the patriarchal configuration of Adam and Eve, it is a conscious inclination to deviate from a good rational intention" (*Feminist Philosophy* 151). Klara cannot reach for her potential, because she has not yet accepted her "alternative selves." She can only experience her sexual drive "furtively" and "on the edge of sleep," but "the following morning she had almost convinced herself that the music and the figure in the orchard had been merely an unsettling dream" (Urquhart, *The Stone Carvers* 86). Interestingly, the night scene recalls Mary O'Malley's communion with the demon lover. His "song was like no other song," and it became a source of forbidden knowledge, somatic and spiritual.

Eamon challenges Klara's desire for "passion and imagination" (99), which has been subdued by the Sisters of the Immaculate Conception who attempted to transform their protégée into a docile handmaid. Klara is described as the one who would like to know the secret lives of saints, especially "moments of sin." Thus she is "alert" to "alternative selves" underneath the facade. This is exactly why the nuns try to divert her attention from martyrs and visionaries to abbesses, connected with hard work, as a way to ward off temptation. In a very ironic passage the text intimates to us how the nuns try to prevent "Klara's idle hands" from becoming "the Devil's playground" (100). Indeed, Klara is very conscientious in her role as seamstress, and as woodcarver working on the figure of an abbess for the local church. What the nuns do not foresee is that Klara will not be prevented from discovering her "alternative" self, which will inevitably emerge as a result of her passion for Eamon. Her "idle hands" explore Eamon's body only "furtively" at first, when she takes measurements for his red waistcoat. Later the same "idle hands" sculpt Eamon's face in Walter Allward's monument dedicated to soldiers killed in the First World War.

While she is taking measurements, which is an erotic overture to the relationship, Eamon declares his passion for her, and she finds herself responding in kind. Eamon voices his desire for a red waistcoat, and does not change his mind when Klara chastises him for a flashy color. His passion for her is voiced with equal intensive way. Her mind fraught with images of black, grey and white garments, a black book of measurements in her hand, Klara is both repelled and attracted by the explicitness of desire. "I'll die of this" (80), Eamon declares. His image of agony through love connects with Klara's grandfather's allusion to passionate Irish saints, which he made in response to her question: "Would my abbess ever have been in love?" (100). If the abbess is seen as Klara's self-portrait, it is essential for her to ask such a question.

Interestingly, Klara Becker and Eamon O'Sullivan can be juxtaposed with Gretta Conroy and Michael Furey in "The Dead," the last short story in James Joyce's *Dubliners*. Michael Furey, of whom Gretta says: "I think

he died for me" (252), is as passionate as Eamon. The couple go for walks in the country just like Eamon and Klara. Michael stands under Gretta's window to confess his love, much like Eamon, whose "nocturnal appearances" delight Klara. And Michael has a good voice; when Gretta hears Bartell D'Arcy sing after the party at Gabriel's aunts she seems mesmerized by "distant music" (Joyce 240), which makes both Michael Furey and her "alternative" self resurface from memory in the confession she makes later in front of her husband, Gabriel. An association that suggests itself at this stage is that the music Eamon made in the orchard on a memorable night lingered in Klara "on the edge of sleep," and Eamon's memory beckoned her from distance many years later. After a fruitless existence in Shoneval, her time filled with tending a bull and cow, Klara becomes aware again of her "alternative selves" of artist and lover.

Klara has travelled across the ocean in male disguise, apt for her artistic vocation, and thus has managed to become one of the carvers working on the war memorial. Her real identity is unmasked by Walter Allward, when she is altering one of his figures. It is then that her companion Giorgio falls in love with her. Klara eventually confesses Eamon's name in front of him, like Gretta, who voiced Michael Furey's name in front of Gabriel. Yet Gabriel could only feel humiliated by Gretta's passion for a man who had worked "in the gasworks," whereas Giorgio lets Klara mourn Eamon.

Klara's alteration of Allward's monument can be called female dialogue with a tradition[3] that Allward stands for. Allward's previous work is the sculpture of colonial founding fathers, hence a heavily paternalistic statement. The marble for the war memorial is cut by his engineers in the very quarry that served emperor Diocletian, which connects Allward with the Roman Empire while continuing the link with the British Empire inherent in his earlier project. The difference between him and Klara is like that between a male philosopher and his feminist interpreter. Allward wants the universal in the monument, but Klara makes the sculpture singular, drawing on her embodied experience of sexual love. Her vision is accommodated by the sculptor, and thus it becomes a personal inscription on an otherwise impersonal body of work. Alana Vincent says: "Urquhart chose the figure with the least visible face of any on the monument onto which to project her own narrative" (80). Urquhart's novel is a monument in itself, and a dialogue with the tradition of war heroism, whose revisionary interpreter she becomes.

In the act of chiseling Eamon's features on the monument designed by Allward, Klara reverses the myth of Pygmalion; she symbolically recreates Eamon, and also realizes herself as an artist. This echoes her previous work on the red waistcoat, which she recreated for herself after Eamon's

[3] Cf. Le Doeuff.

death. Like Ishtar braving the underworld to reach for Tammuz, like Isis restoring dismembered Osiris to life, Klara re-members Eamon. Other critics also connect her descent into the trenches with myth. Branach-Kallas sees Klara as Euridyce, who is led from the world of shadows into light by Giorgio, her Orpheus ("Gothic Palimpsests" 49). Ann Compton states that "like the figures of Greek myth [Klara] descend[s] into a lower world as Euripides' Alcestis does when she offers herself to Hades as a substitute for her husband . . . or as Ariadne does to guide Theseus out of the labyrinth" (139). While I do not find Compton's interpretation convincing, it is evidence that Jane Urquhart's fiction resonates with allusions to mythology and the classics, and this I shall return to later.

Female desire is certainly the focus of *Away* and *The Stone Carvers*. Interestingly, a passage from *The Stone Carvers* might be used to comment on the condition of the protagonist in *Away*. When Klara ponders the lives of saints and other stories that the Sisters of the Immaculate Conception tell her for moral guidance, she comes up with the following: "She believed (even more heretically and secretively) that the Virgin Mary had been in love with the Holy Spirit, and that she had spent the remainder of her days pining for this spirit and longing for another miraculous union" (99). The text contains a trace of *Away*, and confirms my interpretation of Mary's condition. Though she is Virgin Mary à rebours, Mary O'Malley pines for another miraculous union all her life and does not rest until the union is consummated in her own death. Klara's Virgin Mary turns out to be a passionate woman like all female characters in Jane Urquhart's fiction. Klara endows the Virgin Mary with the sexual desire that was stamped out or duly removed from her image under Christian patriarchy.

The imagery of the novel is reminiscent of *Away*. When Klara and Eamon fall on the ice together and their hands touch, she is still frozen into her conventional role. Yet when Eamon startles her into eroticism during a ritual of taking measurements, Klara seems "to be moving in a dream *through water*" (80, emphasis mine). Also, like Patrick in *The Whirlpool*, and the sailor in *Away*, Eamon is a beautiful young man, which Klara notices when they both, though separately, undress in order to swim chastely in the pool. The scene also anticipates their conjunction intertextually, because water is the element of Mary swimming out naked to merge with her demon lover. At the same time, the seascape conjured up in Urquhart's novels invites comparison with *Elemental Passions* and *Amante Marine* by Luce Irigaray. *Away* brings in the repressed element of water which transforms solid land. Water flows its surreptitious course in *The Stone Carvers*, where it surfaces to dissolve the solidity of the land on which the monument stands, in particular, the tenuous solidity of the underground corridors, into which Giorgio and Klara descend in order to make love in the face of death, thus enacting the

sentence in the last chapter of The Song of Songs: "love is strong as death." The military structure is suddenly invaded by desire: "[S]he believed her body, the candlelight, and the walls of the tunnels were all turning to water, and that she might drown in herself, in him" (355). Later, after the love scene, Giorgio and Klara are described as explorers travelling a "river system they had yet to name" (356). This time the Kantian opposition between land and watery expanse is undercut in a different way. The portion of land given to Canadians in return for their action in war becomes an island whose base dissolves in the "tributaries" of hidden passageways. The only solid structure seems to be Allward's monument, which reaches into the air and merges with it. There is a subtle allusion to A*way* here, and reversal of its imagery. Mary O'Malley is led by her demon lover to admire the underwater structure, a city in the ocean; Klara is led by Giorgio and "his light" to discover a network of tunnels built during the First World War like an underground river system, where walls turn to water. Both images collapse the opposition between fluid water and solid earth.

Water imagery keeps resurfacing in Urquhart's *A Map of Glass*, where the reader encounters an island whose geographical identity is contested. Some consider it a river island, while others see it as an island on the lake whose waters merge with those of the river. Known as Timber Island, it was inhabited by Andrew Woodman's ancestors. They had drained the bog in the area so successfully that the land began to lose water. Sand crept into the houses, slowly seeping into kitchen utensils and beds, to finally pile up in the windows, cutting off sunlight and air. Reversing the imagery connected with the monument and its surroundings in *The Stone Carvers*, the text shows how the island washed by waters becomes, paradoxically, a desert. Seen as a metaphorical comment on the Kantian island of truth, Timber Island reflects the condition of the mind that has excluded desire and chaos as represented by vanished water. The condition of the island is embodied in its sole occupant, a middle-aged spinster artist, Annabelle. Her exclusion of desire consigns her to a life of dryness, practicality and routine. In her essay on *A Map of Glass* Marta Goszczyńska interprets Annabelle and other characters through the prism of the novel's intertextual link to Tennyson's "The Lady of Shalott" (93–105). In fact, Tennyson's river island could easily be combined with the Kantian land of truth and enchantment washed by the waters of death.

This is what we find at the beginning of the novel, where Jerome seeks inspiration for his art in the total solitude of deserted Timber Island, now covered with snow. Yet Jerome's feeling of security is suddenly shattered by the sight of "a drowned man," "a floater," to use a word from *The Whirlpool*, where Niagara Falls and its vicinity become the scene of spectacular tragedies, suicides and exploits that end in death. Death encroaches upon the artist's isolation, while he tries to retain the purity of contemplative

experience, much like St Jerome, to whom he is compared. This Gothic visitation opens an alternative script to Jerome, the text of desire, which displaces his own narrative. After his return to Toronto he is visited by Sylvia, who claims to have been the drowned man's lover. She shares the story of her desire with Jerome. And, she shares the journals connected with Andrew's ancestors from Timber Island, thus making the "floater" regain his voice. Reverting to The Song of Songs, Sylvia speaks of her love in the face of death, much like Mary O'Malley.

When Sylvia's husband, a doctor, finds her and has a conversation with Jerome, he explains that his wife does not distinguish between hallucination and truth. The man she described as her lover was an Alzheimer's patient who had wandered off on his own in winter, and eventually died. Malcolm's testimony throws light on Sylvia's condition. Sylvia becomes a different person during flights from her ordinary life, and she creates genuine relationships for herself in lieu of the missing sexual connection with her own husband. Malcolm's clinical judgement is distorted by his trust in reason and distrust of imagination. His insistence that Sylvia cannot make friends contradicts the reality of her experience with Jerome and Myra.

The "alternative self" in *A Map of Glass* echoes and transforms a similar phenomenon in *Away*. Sylvia is also "taken away" from her ordinary self, but as she is a twentieth-century heroine, her condition is diagnosed medically, unlike the condition of Mary, who, for superstitious nineteenth-century Irish people, was simply possessed by an evil and recalcitrant spirit, much like the Gerasene demoniac from the Markan Gospel. Sylvia confesses to Jerome the story of her "secret" self, to use the adjective from the novel. Like Mary, she discards her "previous self," to use the expression from *Away*. The two phrases highlight Urquhart's preoccupation with "alternative selves" which allow female protagonists to venture into dream and desire of more substance than reality controlled by reason.

In conversation with Jerome Sylvia says that she was saved from being run over when Andrew Woodward got hold of her. She conjures up the image of Andrew holding her, which brings to mind Mary and the demon sailor whom she holds close to herself. While reminiscing about the later stages of her relationship, Sylvia says:

> The idea of him, you see, kept its arm around my shoulders, just as my peninsula kept its arm around the lake, protected me, and kept me safely distant from everyone else. The distance, of course, was not new, but the phantom encircling arm was a surprise until it became a habit like breathing, or like pulse. (Urquhart, *A Map of Glass* 134)

The language Sylvia uses combines the Gothic with the somatic. She describes her lover as a phantom, this making him close to Mary's demon

lover. The quotation brings to mind Mary swimming naked in the sea until the idea of her lover took shape in the water and she felt herself being entered by him.

Sylvia makes tactile maps, which are substituted for the body in her confession. Her lover is the peninsula against which she defines herself in her fluidity as a lake. The water connects the three analyzed books; Mary and her lover swim in the ocean; Klara and Eamon indulge in erotic overtures in the shadowed pool; Sylvia is the lake enacting conjunction with the peninsula identified as the lover. The water is a fitting matrix for the emergence of an "alternative self," which surfaces like a foetus from amniotic fluid. This refigures the Kantian binary opposition which leaves no room for either waters of birth or death, Kant keeping land and water apart, and himself safe from the female beyond.

The water imagery guides us into a particularly revealing intertext explored below. Sylvia's confession to Jerome throws light on the condition of other Urquhart heroines. This is what she says about her lover and herself:

> He often stood on burning decks of one kind or another when all but he had fled. And I . . . I seemed to be constantly lashed to the mast by those who had, for my own safety—or was it for theirs?—tied me there. (128)

At least three allusions may be embedded in this excerpt. The first is connected with a poem by Felicia Hemans, a Victorian poet who glorified domestic ideology (Carlyle 44–45). Jerome remembers the well-known line from the poem that Sylvia alludes to: "the boy stood on the burning deck, when all but he had fled." Another literary allusion concerns Longfellow's *The Wreck of the Hesperus* which tells the story of a skipper who takes his daughter out to sea and ties her to the mast when storm breaks out. He dies in the storm, and so does his daughter, whose body, still tied to the mast, is found on the shore. Her bondage recalls crucifixion, and since her purity symbolizes the American nation, she becomes a foundational sacrifice (Miskolcze 62). Sylvia sees herself and Andrew as victims of the ideology that foisted repressive stereotypes on men and women alike. Yet, hidden beneath the two allusions is the most important image, that of Odysseus, who is lashed to a mast so that he will not be seduced by the siren song.

According to Lillian Eileen Doherty, the author of "Sirens, Muses and Female Narrators in the *Odyssey*," the siren song is a subversive text within the *Odyssey*, and therefore its power must be contained so that Odysseus may achieve his homecoming (82). Sylvia may be said to personify the condition of Odysseus, bound to leave home and wander aimlessly. In her case the siren song might stand for the lure of "the alternative self," the subversive voice from the uncharted territory beyond the confines of

her domestic role. The siren song posits the danger not only to a female version of Odysseus but also to the social order that keeps her "lashed to the mast" for her own safety. This is where *A Map of Glass* meets *Away*, where the motif of seduction by a demon lover corresponds to possible seduction by sirens in the *Odyssey*. Doherty states that sirens belonged with the Greek folk world just like mermaids, underworld demons and other monstrous creatures ("Sirens" 82). Mary's demon lover from *Away* meets all these criteria. He is connected with the underworld, like a mermaid who supposedly stole a fisherman from the island of Rathlin in *Away*. The demon lover is thus a male counterpart of the sirens, who seduces Mary with his appearance and song. He offers her knowledge, but also subverts social order and ultimately leads Mary to her death in Canada.

Sirens in the *Odyssey* are connected with seduction that relies on speech (Doherty, "Sirens" 86). In *Away* Mary is metamorphosed by the first and last word of a dying sailor, and she embraces the word *Moira* as her new name, signifying the intrusion of an "alternative self" which displaces her "previous" identity. Klara Becker is also seduced by the power of Eamon's passionate speech, a volume of Irish poetry that he asks her to read, and the music he makes in the orchard. Sylvia appreciates Andrew for the intimate knowledge of the land.

In each of the above books the female protagonist reinvents herself as other, by following a desire which has been repressed. Mary, Klara and Sylvia become outsiders who refuse the attraction of safe domesticity, and venture into a liminal zone fraught with the danger of death and the promise of knowledge. In this they change the pattern connected with Odysseus, who has to ward off temptations that would prevent him from coming home. Mary, Klara and Sylvia are transformed by the experiences that might offer a parallel to the siren song. In T. F. Rigelhof's review of *The Stone Carvers*, predating *A Map of Glass*, Jane Urquhart is compared to Homer in her "uncanny ability to interweave historical events, legends, folk tales, visions, anecdotes, longings and journeys" (54). One could add that she also undercuts and subverts the monumental and heroic elements of Homeric tradition. Commenting on the experience of reading *The Stone Carvers*, Rigelhof thinks of a student recounting the experience of reading the *Odyssey* (55). The *Odyssey* predates the Kantian opposition between secure island and perilous, stormy sea. Reading Homer's passage on the siren song, one realizes that the use of a Kantian imaginary turns Ithaca into the island of truth, and the sea into the stormy beyond identified with desire, death and femaleness. The unexpected surfacing of this intertext in Urquhart's latest novel is connected with a thorough transformation of this episode. As Lillian Eileen Doherty reminds us, the *Odyssey* "can be seen to elide or circumscribe the voices of dangerous females" (Doherty,

Siren Songs 63). This is bound to happen since the siren song is viewed and judged from the perspective imbued with the author's patriarchal bias. Seen in the context of Jane Urquhart's writings, the siren song becomes an inspiration for the female protagonist, awakening her hidden potential like "distant music" in Joyce's "The Dead." The myth is thus refigured and metamorphosed, just like the myth of Adam and Eve rewritten by Pamela Sue Anderson with the use of Kristeva and Ricoeur. In such rewriting "desire comes to be recognized as a potentially positive energy" (Anderson, "Abjection" 221). And the Kantian warning against the perils of water, his preference for enchantment offered by the island of truth, are confronted and transgressed. Only through such refiguring and rewriting can the authority of "alternative selves" emerge and last.

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Norman Ravvin

What Is In the Picture (and What Is Not): Canada, Women, and Autobiography in the Work of Geraldine Moodie, Eva Hoffman and Alice Munro

"I am looking at two pictures."

So the American journalist Janet Malcolm begins an autobiographical piece that appeared in *The New Yorker*'s "Personal History" department, under the title "Six Glimpses of the Past: Photographs and Memory." Malcolm's mistrust of the autobiographical is acknowledged from the start: her "six glimpses" offer up an ambiguous or contradictory measure of the past. "Autobiography," she writes, "is a misnamed genre; memory speaks only some of its lines. Like biography, it enlists letters and the testimony of contemporaries in its novelistic enterprise" ("Six" 23). The novelistic in the autobiographer's "enterprise" may not be merely things made up (though we do not rule this out) but the introduction of outside voices and the use of cultural artifacts—letters and photographs—that might be interpreted in a variety of ways. Malcolm is overt about what is added to memory, and how this supplements it. Her essay also explores what is subtracted or hidden in an autobiographical portrayal. Similarly, in the work of the early Canadian photographer Geraldine Moodie, in the memoiristic writing of Eva Hoffman, and in Alice Munro's fiction, we meet varieties of self-portraiture that resist our efforts to read time and place. The self-portrait that each artist creates contributes to our heightened awareness of what is in the picture and what is not.

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The self-portrait is a photographer's most directly autobiographical work. In it, pose and comportment, the surrounding objects and the decorative touches, all compound to offer a narrative of the self. Geraldine Moodie, among the earliest Canadian women to own a photographic studio, appears to have taken few such portraits—at least this is the impression left by the work that has been preserved in a variety of Canadian and British museums and archives. Three notable self-portraits exist from the last five years of the nineteenth century, when she maintained studios in Battleford and Maple Creek, Saskatchewan. The most commonly reproduced of these, and the most telling for our purposes, is dated 1895–96, and so belongs to her Battleford output. In it, Moodie strikes a pose that is somehow familiar—she is turned to one side on an armless chair, resting an elbow on a side table, her hand lightly raised to her chin, which rests on thumb and fingers. Her dress is dark—in black and white one cannot confirm whether its sheen includes a shade of blue or green—and fully draped and voluminous so that her legs and feet are entirely covered. In the same way, her neck is wrapped to the chin. Moodie's face is turned away from the camera, with eyes and mouth set in what might be called a faraway look. A perusal of late Victorian poses in self-portraits reveals that male subjects, most famously Oscar Wilde, chose versions of this pose when they visited the photographic studio.

A few things, distinctively Moodie-esque, can be recognized. An animal skin underfoot—in some reproductions the leg of the animal is also pictured—suggests the prairie hunting and trading economy of the North-West Territory of Canada. On the side table there is a framed photograph on a stand. Although the Battleford self-portrait is not a direct advertisement of the subject's photographic skills, it may be subtly so. Also, one would have had to be in the know to appreciate how the self-portrait was taken. One of the purposes of the voluminous dress is to hide Moodie's left hand in its skirt, where she is most likely holding a hand release cable. The faraway look may, in part, be aided by the use of a mirror—entirely outside the frame—where Moodie could study her pose before operating the hand cable to release the shutter. In this, the self-portraitist is almost a magician, a prestidigitator, in a way that led critics to critique the "automatism" of photographic art, and to raise the importance of mechanical aspects on the "agent's conscious control" and the "responsibility for the salient features of the photograph" (Wilson 55). Yet, even with the rarity of Moodie's use of the self-portrait—possibly signaling her awareness of its limited economic utility for a photographer bent on copyrighting her work for sale—we have in the Battleford photograph a distinctive autobiographical work that makes use of features found in more conventional autobiographical texts. The place of the self-portrait in Moodie's surviv-

ing work points to a set of issues one might categorize as the *problems* or *contingencies* of the genre more broadly. These will provide a guide, in this essay, for a contrasting discussion of Eva Hoffman's memoir *Lost in Translation: A Life in a New Language*, and of the work of Alice Munro in her final collection, *Dear Life*.

Fig. 1. Self-portrait of Geraldine Moodie, Battleford, SK, 1895–96. Glenbow Museum NC-81-10. Public domain

In a discussion of photographic self-portraiture, Dawn M. Wilson highlights how "in this art form, an artist self-consciously and self-critically explores her relationship with the medium in which she portrays herself" (56). Exactly this possibility arises in Hoffman's *Lost in Translation*, though one might add that elements of her exploration remain, to a degree, unconscious and unselfcritical. In Munro, however, the author's "relationship with the medium in which she portrays herself" is hidden, its motivations obscure: the components of *Dear Life* move subtly, and almost imperceptibly, between fiction and autobiographical writing.

Moodie's Battleford self-portrait might be seen as an emblem or template for the challenges and complexities raised by autobiographical portraiture and its reception: what is *in* the picture is carefully arranged; what is *outside* is available only to the diligent searcher; clues to *what is not in* the picture are spread about like the bric-a-brac in a cabinet of curiosities; and then, more troublingly for the devotee of faithful telling, there are the elements which the portraitist introduces unconsciously, unknowingly. The variety of possible outcomes is great and richly surprising. One might add that certain readers or viewers of certain tellings of the self bring with them something especially useful—knowledge, experience, a certain refined biographical sensitivity—which helps them read a self-portrait with heightened care.

Geraldine Moodie's Wildean pose suggests to the viewer the subject's social and artistic importance, and additionally, the competitive and ambitious characteristics more commonly expected of men of her time. The mix of materials in the fore- and background intimate that this artist exists in a culture with potential for *métissage*—the backdrop of pressed leather or tin is the height of urban craftiness, while the fur at Moodie's feet reflects the trapping and trade wealth of the prairie, where her husband's North-West Mounted Police commission has brought her. Although no photographs of the interior of Moodie's studio are in circulation, newspaper reports from the time tell us that it was located near Battleford's Presbyterian Church, and was fully outfitted:

> Mrs. Moodie has just added a number of improvements to her photographic studio making it complete in every detail. She can now take pictures from the carte-de-visite to 11 by 14 inches; can do enlarging and copying, and take interiors by flash-light. Hand-painted backdrops and the best material procurable for the work are a guarantee that all sittings will be satisfactory . . . The studio will be open every Saturday afternoon and at other times by appointment. (qtd. in Close 144)

A bit of the life of the studio comes into view: starting on Saturdays, then by appointment, the subjects of Moodie's work arrived to have themselves inscribed on the large glass plate negatives used at the time. Her studio portraits from this period include those of Cree chiefs and their families,

singly or in groups. Difficult to categorize, they are at once intimate and personal, while exhibiting some of the ethnographic tendencies employed by other, generally male, photographers of the time. More unique are a set of much-reproduced photos Moodie took of a Cree Sun Dance—or Thirst Dance, as it is sometimes called—in the outlying area near Battleford in 1895. Here, her photographic oeuvre is overtly historical, as she is reported to have been one of the first white settlers allowed to photograph such an event (Hatfield 77). Moodie's photographs of the Sun Dance have an epic feel, with their broad landscapes and the crowded interiors of the pavilion dedicated to ritual dancing. The settler's camera captures the scene, sometimes with the turned backs and heads of unwilling subjects. In these photos Moodie's camera is intrusive; in the studio, in another professional mode, she could apply energy and commitment to developing some form of a relationship with those whom she photographed.

The oeuvre associated with Moodie's Battleford years—self-portraits, portraits of local Cree Chiefs, of the Sun Dance, and of customers from among the town's population—might be seen as a whole autobiographical life's work. The oeuvre reveals a great deal about the artist herself, though, as with the self-portrait, the viewer must apply a variety of tools to tease out a more fulsome self-portrait, beyond the image which she gives us: full-skirted, hand hidden in the dress's folds.

In 1895, settlement on what would soon be called the Saskatchewan prairie was a work-in-progress as far as the Canadian authorities were concerned. Moodie's access to both her studio clients and occasions like Prime Minister Mackenzie Bowell's visit to the area were secured by her reputation as well as by her husband's network of NWMP contacts (J. D. Moodie was himself an amateur photographer, whose work, judging from what has survived, was without the artistic merit of Geraldine's.). An inventory of Moodie's work could be viewed as an authoritative report on the progress of the settlement of the West. Included in this are a series of photographs she took of Battleford's "Native Industrial School," a large institution housed in what had been the territorial government's official building. Dated unreliably between 1891 and 1896, these show "the woodpile, windmill, and garden," "threshing activity," and a "Group of Native children posed with two non-Native adults on the verandah" of their home institution (White 16–17). The historical record of these early Residential School lives is a contribution shared between Moodie and other photographers, including a D. Cadzow, who competed with her in town (Close 143). Moodie's photographs of the Industrial School make use of a wide angle and present a range of subjects, all shown in miniature, from a distance. The outcome of these photos is rather like that of Cadzow's images; the subject matter rendered both photographers bureaucratic and unartful.

The unusualness of Moodie's studio—woman-run and placed in the further reaches of Canadian settlement—helps us keep our eye on the private narrative beneath or alongside the official one, assured by her husband's position as an NWMP Inspector. Her assertive use of copyright reveals her attention to a professional audience, whom she expected to purchase postcards and portraits bearing her images. The photograph on the stand by Moodie's elbow in her self-portrait might be, as we would call it today, product placement, a late-nineteenth-century form of subliminal advertising. A return to the self-portrait at this point reveals new details. The sitter's disposition, in many ways conventional, hyper-feminized in its choice of dress and carefully coiffed hair, is in fact a picture of a vanguard figure: a woman in independent control of powerful new technologies, which will contribute to the development of a modern economy and will supplant not only the British Victoriana of her photographic backdrops, but the ancient plains economy of hunting and trapping. In light of all this, the faraway look in Moodie's eyes is no romantic throwback, but a determined view forward, into the future and things yet unseen in the Canadian territories.

Part Two: Reading Canada Backwards

In her westward movement from the Ontario home—landing in Lethbridge, in Calgary, in Maple Creek and Battleford—Geraldine Moodie's accomplishments place her in what we might call the vanguard of settlement activity. Through her camera's lens she sees possibility: an independent career, a way of seeing the settler and Indigenous cultures of the plains, which provides momentum and economic gain. In Eva Hoffman's much-heralded memoir *Lost in Translation: A Life in a New Language*, Canada is the fallback place, a site of exile and loss, which stands between her youthful years in postwar Kraków, Poland (her book dubs them "Paradise") and her adult career as a writer in America (heroically positioned as "The New World"). Canada, specifically late-fifties Vancouver, is her family's place of emigration in 1959. The few years she spends there with her parents and younger sister are marked as an interregnum, even nullity, something to escape and forget. This part of Hoffman's self-portrait has been largely ignored by critics and reviewers (the bulk of them American) with the exception of an astute Canadian critic or two, as if the particularity, even oddity of Hoffman's Vancouver section was not worthy of comment, a kind of aside to take on face value. Yet the discoveries made via close reading reveal the aims and challenges of autobiographical writing.

I approach Eva Hoffman's *Lost in Translation* autobiographically, through the prism of coincidental experience, which includes my own personal knowledge of Vancouver, alongside that of my mother's youthful years in the city. Hoffman, born fifteen years after my mother, in 1945, spent her early years in postwar Kraków, whereas my mother's mother took her from central Poland to Western Canada in 1935. They share a Polish Jewish birth and emigration to the Canadian West. Because my mother left her Polish village as a four-year-old, she carried with her few memories: the taste of the local ice cream and her father's high leather boots as seen beneath their home's dining table. The true crossover takes place in Canada, in Vancouver, where Hoffman's parents chose to settle, lured to the city by a Polish Jewish resident willing to sponsor them. The year was 1959. My mother's life in the city followed her sojourn on the southern Saskatchewan prairie. Her father's work as a religious functionary and family connections brought them to Vancouver in 1945. Starting with these details, I am an idiosyncratic reader of Hoffman's autobiography, who brings to bear on the book a wealth of personal and ancestral experience, as well as expectant enthusiasm. For me, Vancouver is laced with intimacies, discoveries, and inheritances. It is, certainly, mine, though not in the way that it was my mother's city. In *Lost in Translation* I find pleasures of recognition, but also displeasure, caused by Hoffman's way with place and time. Here I enter what might be this essay's contribution to the broader concern of autobiography: a zone of autobiographical reading and writing centered on Hoffman's presentation of Jewish Vancouver in 1959 and the early 1960s.

I should admit at the outset that I find the first ninety pages of Hoffman's memoir wonderful; there we get the particularities of postwar life in Communist-era Kraków; the irony of living in a largely undestroyed Renaissance city, with its Catholic Polish national heritage under a Soviet-modeled regime. Add to this the experience of her parents' wartime survival, the loss that haunts them, but propels them into new versions of themselves in the late 1940s and 1950s. They are, in their way, heroic figures: Jews re-establishing their lives in a capital of destroyed Jewish civilization and culture. Hoffman has a remarkable sense memory, as she recalls rooms and talk and streetways, the color of Kraków at dusk, and the quality of candlelight in the city's remaining active Temple on a High Holiday visit. She is like a sensitive machine, detecting the ripples and rises of her childhood and adolescence, the quality of its Polishness, its vague but still guiding Jewishness, its immediacy characterized by the times.

I read Hoffman's heartfelt portraits of her native country with relish and trust; I want to know her Polish memories, to savor and learn from them. But *Lost in Translation* makes a distinctive writerly shift when the

narrator leaves Poland to embark on a shipbound move to Canada. Here, for the first time, I rebel as a reader and busy myself correcting her. These corrections are not uniquely about the city of my mother's early years. The passages set in Canada, mostly in Vancouver, are presented under the title "Exile," as they rightly should be. They begin in central Canada, in Montreal, where the Hoffmans board a train west. This is not the archetypal Jewish immigrant experience, since the bulk of arrivals from Eastern Europe stayed in the big central Canadian cities rather than choosing travel for days to the Prairies or the West Coast. Once the Hoffmans are on their way, it only takes a page and a half for Canada to become a mirage, an unknowable fact, and a thing to get wrong: "The train cuts through endless expanses of terrain, most of it flat and monotonous" (100). Compared to the detailed and careful telling in the book's early pages—the interiors of 1950s Krakow apartments, for instance—this is brush-off writing. True: once they arrive in Manitoba, the Hoffmans will experience flatness, and, if you like, the monotony of the Prairies, but first comes the otherwise varied landscape of Quebec and Ontario, for a good long time, and after that the mountain ranges of southern Alberta that provide a gateway to British Columbia's interior. Even these landmarks the young Hoffman rejects: these "peaks and ravines" "hurt" her eyes and "hurt her soul . . . I recede into sleep" (100). So, it's off to *that kind of start*, I think, one of *those* portrayals of the country. We need the Vancouver tableau to create a clearer sense of what, autobiographically, will be done with the Canadian West Coast.

Hoffman's Vancouver is even more warily read by me, the child of a mother whose home it was in the postwar period. For her family it was a step up, offering a larger and established Jewish community, a more cosmopolitan city. Her father was a *shoichet*, a ritual slaughterer at the abattoir on Prior Street in the east end, who also shouldered other ritual, educational and religious duties to make his way. This kind of position in a Canadian Jewish community, which was beginning to profit from postwar prosperity and options for assimilation, was no piece of cake, however kosher. By the time my mother arrived in her teenage city, she was thoroughly Canadianized: her language, her comportment and habits, including reading *The New Yorker* and cigarette smoking, were all comfortably modeled on North American norms. Her father's willingness to teach her religiously and Jewishly, just as he did with his two sons, had been successfully rejected. She was her own person, with all the female challenges that entailed.

Hoffman's teenage years are marked by her unreadiness for Vancouver, for Canadian teenagerhood, as well as for a particular kind of local Jew that she took to be representative of the community. A "Duddy Kravitz community of Polish Jews," (102) she calls them, employing Mordecai

Richler's archetypal, satiric, Montreal-focused novel to characterize an entire group in a different locale. Somewhat like the overdetermined flatland of the approach to the city, they have been Duddy Kravitzed, rendered versions of the one Canadian Jewish type with which the average North American reader might be familiar. The Jewish Vancouverites whom Hoffman remembers are, to a one, go-getters, acquisitive successes, the women intensely remade as Canadian conformists, seemingly living to put out food and teach their daughters proper comportment. The houses in which they live are all of one type, in an unnamed neighborhood, their suburban sleekness and newness suggesting the newly built Oakridge district. This settlement of third resort for Vancouver Jews was fully removed from earlier, quite different options, first in the ethnic Strathcona district (hard by the abattoir) and then on the solidly working-class streets south of the Vancouver General Hospital. The first dismally suburban house that Hoffman visits is a "one-story structure surrounded by a large garden" with such "pruned and trimmed neatness" that she is "half afraid to walk in it. Its lawn is improbably smooth and velvety . . . and the rows of marigolds, the circles of geraniums seem almost artificial in their perfect symmetries, in their subordination to orderliness" (101).

This kind of scenario repeats in the Vancouver section of *Lost in Translation*. If there is an ethnographic reading of mid-century Jewish Vancouver, this is its limit. A few other settings allow for difference, but without varying the portrait of Vancouver Jews. There is a passing mention of the "army and navy store," located in a shopping district on the edge of the city's east side, where Jews (including the Jewish owner of the Army & Navy stores) maintained a variety of businesses, trades, scrap yards and tailoring outfits, but Hoffman evades these details (135). Eva and her sister walk along Main Street, with its "sprawling parking lots, patches of narrow, wooden houses," where the window fronts of stores "mesmerize" with their "unfamiliar objects" (134). This is another missed opportunity, as this part of town is written off as "a ramshackle, low-built" area, "a no place, thrown up randomly, without particular order or purpose" (134). Yet one of its purposes was to provide a locale where Jewish businessmen and women, somewhat unwelcome in what might be called the *whiter* parts of the city, could set up shop, acquire property, and enter the Vancouver economy. The bulk of these Jewish businesses were owned by families who had come to the city decades before Hoffman, as part of an earlier immigration pattern, although they shared similar ancestry. Hoffman is unwilling to recognize this territory as ethnically Jewish, but the street's "ramshackle" character raises the specter of class. The Main Streeters are losers—their "no place" is not only an ethnic no-go zone for Hoffman's youthful self, but an economic lacuna, the "wrong-side-of-town" to end

up on (134). Any number of things remain unspoken, possibly unspeakable, in these accounts, which relate to Main Street and the unnamed, heavily Jewish West Cordova. The more carefully one reads this rendering of Vancouver, circa 1959–60, the stronger one's sense is of it being coded, strictly controlled: an autobiographical site of resistance and forgetting.

A contrasting portrait to those noted so far is found in the delicately rendered section where Hoffman is taken under the wing of a well-off Jewish family who own a mill and live in a Victorian mansion full of things that Hoffman's newcomer parents cannot imagine acquiring. The Steiners inhabit a house that "overlooks both the sea and the mountains of Vancouver's harbor" (111). There are no "mountains" in the city's harbor, though there are steep rises from the waterways that enter the city, and one might have been able to see water and the far-off coastal mountains from a home in the West End or West Vancouver, but Hoffman leaves the locale of the Steiner house unverifiable. There was a Rosa Steiner in Hoffman's late-fifties Vancouver, born in Vienna rather than the Polish birthplace offered the woman of that name in *Lost in Translation* (110).[1] It could be that Hoffman leaves out or alters key defining features consciously. Quite simply, the Steiners represent a singular kind of Vancouver Jewish success, having brought with them from Europe refinement and high culture, which they maintain through the efforts of Rosa Steiner, Hoffman's patron and almost god-mother. This is the one example of Jewish life in the city that is not resolutely, and grubbily, suburbanized, à la *Duddy Kravitz*, as the Steiners' home is an alternative to pink bungalows surrounded by neatly trimmed lawns and the ever-present "long-finned" cars (140).[2]

What is telling for me—as with the Moodie self-portrait—is what is not here, what is not in the picture. Certainly, in postwar Vancouver there were successful Jewish families, those whose fathers had made their way as businesspeople or professionals. The larger group that Hoffman met through her parents is a small subset of "Polish Jews, most of whom came to Canada shortly after the war, and most of whom have made good in junk peddling and real estate . . ." (102). This contingent has rather little to do with the earlier, more varied, largely working-class Jewish community who populated not the bungalowed, newly built streets of suburban Oakridge, but an older, stucco-housed area positioned above the rougher, working-class streets of the industrial False Creek flats. Some postwar arrivals in Vancouver, some of them orphans, were Holocaust survivors, but these are not mentioned in *Lost in Translation*. Notable in the postwar years was a compendium of

[1] See https://ancestors.familysearch.org/en/9ZZX-111/rosa-steiner-1923-1993.

[2] The Steiner profile parallels, uncannily, the much better known Koerner family, who had an important cultural, musical and philanthropic impact in postwar Vancouver.

old-worldish, not fully assimilated Polish-Jewish families, who did not necessarily own a car (most of their homes had no driveway). Among these, the men rode to work on a bus or streetcar, while the women shopped on foot or by public transport at the nearby kosher butcher and at the variety of Jewish-owned shops on Cordova and West Hastings, not far from the "army and navy store" (where they might also have found a thing or two). By the 1950s this community had modern synagogues of the kind that Hoffman finds alienating, as well as a Polish-style "*Beit Hamedrish*," the final holdout of Eastern European custom and Jewish learning and prayer, where the good, hopeless fight against assimilation—against driving big cars and going to restaurants on Saturdays, as Hoffman reports doing—was being mounted. Ironically, Hoffman's portrait of a ride to the White Spot with friends, which she detests for its slovenly offering of parking lot food, was exactly the kind of rebellion sought by the children of old-world parents. It was part of the mainstream Canadian experience they desired. Still, home they came afterward, to say goodnight in Yiddish to *tate* and *mame*.

The picture provided by Hoffman, purportedly a wide-angle view of the city's Jewish lives, is warped, with many ambiguities and false leads. While one would not call it fictional, it is certainly in no way representative of the time and place. What is it then, exactly, and why is Hoffman's Vancouver so singular, so Hoffmanized? She gives us a few possible answers to this question, to the issue of how autobiographical telling becomes what it does. One such answer surfaces not far into the Vancouver section. It is motivated by a reference to Vladimir Nabokov's *Speak, Memory*. "Of course," Hoffman writes,

> memory can perform retrospective maneuvers to compensate for fate. Loss is a magical preservative. Time stops at the point of severance, and no subsequent impressions muddy the picture you have in mind. The house, the garden, the country you have lost remain forever as you remember them. Nostalgia—the most lyrical of feelings—crystallizes around these images like amber. Arrested within it, the house, the past, is clear, vivid, made more beautiful by the medium in which it is held and by its stillness. (114–15)

It is fitting that Hoffman uses that Polish artifact, amber, to account for this process, and we might illustrate her point with the image of an amber ring or necklace, so commonly available in the great central market square of Hoffman's fiercely remembered Kraków. But the contrasting point made in these remarks about the breaks in one's life highlights the impact of such a fracture, as it creates a fully lived and remembered past, crystallized in memory so that nothing after it is sharply felt. Nothing, Hoffman seems to suggest, after the break, was worthy of being cast in something so lovely as amber. The one section in *Lost in Translation* that

offers Vancouver in anything resembling amber tones is the portrait of the Steiners, who have "semiadopted" the newcomer Eva (110). Almost all else is rank, funky, failed. Even the synagogue that Hoffman remembers—most likely the Beth Israel on Oak Street—is styled, inappropriately, as a "cheery amphitheater" rendered as a "secular space" (145). In Hoffman's telling, it's faux, fake, of no account.

I confess that until the opportunity arose in this essay to explore the autobiographical impulse in the work of women artists, I avoided Hoffman's book. I read her portrayal of Kraków when it appeared in *The New Yorker* and admired it. Yet the tone of the Vancouver section repelled me, and I rejected it. When my mother was alive, and a source of recollection of what it could mean to be a young Jewish woman in Vancouver in the late 1950s, it did not matter. Who needed to grapple with the skewed particularities of Hoffman's remembered coastal city? But motivated by a consideration of women's autobiographical work, I feel this misrepresentation of time and place differently. It calls for something to be said about the city's Jewish lives and streetscapes, which might convey two generations of Jewish Mount Pleasant families of the postwar era. Their own assimilation and challenges were other—maybe no less daunting, but other—than those presented in *Lost in Translation*. Their lives are an absent, perhaps even hidden part of the record of postwar Vancouver, the wonderful coastal city in the mist, which Hoffman, exiled, could not love.

The problematic form of telling which I have outlined in Hoffman's memoir is not limited to her rendering of Jewish Vancouver, but extends further, to an overall portrait of her Canadian years. A key to this portrait is offered near its end, with a consideration of a theme in the book's title—being "heard" in a newly adopted language. "Because I'm not heard," Hoffman writes,

> I feel I'm not seen. My words often seem to baffle others. They are inappropriate, or forced, or just plain incomprehensible. People look at me with puzzlement; they mumble something in response—something that doesn't hit home. Anyway, the back and forth of conversation is different here. People often don't answer each other. But the mat look in their eyes as they listen to me cancels my face, flattens my features. The mobility of my face comes from the mobility of the words coming to the surface and the feelings that drive them. Its vividness is sparked by the locking of an answering gaze, by the quickness of understanding. But now I can't feel how my face lights up from inside; I don't receive from others the reflected movement of its expressions, its living speech. People look past me as we speak. What do I look like, here? Imperceptible, I think; impalpable, neutral, faceless. (147)

This is a long, oddly worded paragraph. Its language is unnatural; and the use of the word "mat" seems to be a mistake or a typo. A pressing autobio-

graphical challenge related to what can be remembered comes into view—the elaborateness of Hoffman's portrayal of her characteristic interactions from thirty years before seems forced. Her face, her voice, and those of her interlocutors from back then, rear up grotesquely. They would have had to have been recorded, caught on film or noted down in a diary, for this kind of detail to be recoverable. Apart from this, the paragraph's final two sentences point in a revealing direction, toward the proverbial deconstructive thread which, when pulled, reveals a pattern of unspoken meaning.

Canadian critic Sarah Phillips Casteel offers a provocative and possibly singular reading of this aspect of Hoffman's memoir. She points to a likely key to the relationship between self-presentation and the author's response to her parents' wartime experience:

> A marked silence about the prewar past is maintained by her parents; the disconnect between her parents' pre- and post-war life is so great that Hoffman describes the war as her parents' "second birthplace." Hoffman herself perpetuates her parents' silence. The word "Holocaust" does not appear until 250 pages into the book, and the Holocaust is always confined to the margins of the narrative. (293)

From this, Phillips Casteel suggests, Vancouver cannot help but be a place obscured by willful silences. It is the place where Hoffman's parents,

> the keepers of memory, reside, and so no escape from memory is possible here. Thus it is Vancouver that becomes the locus of Holocaust memory, or to be more precise the place where the problem of this memory becomes most palpable. As the immediate scene of exile, and more profoundly, as a signifier of Holocaust memory and postmemory, Canada takes on a supremely negative valency. (293)

Phillips Casteel's insight echoes my own impression of what is not said about actual Jewish Vancouver in the late 1950s. Both what is seemingly trivial—shopping on Main Street—and what is obviously crucial in the author's relationship to her parents' wartime experience, steer the portrait of Vancouver in troubled directions. Hoffman belongs to what Marianne Hirsch has called the "generation of postmemory," who carry their parents' wartime recollections almost as if they were their own.

It is worth noting that Hoffman was in fact an over-achiever in her Vancouver high school years, and she was, ironically, eminently perceptible. Her voice appeared on local radio, and her success at a variety of musical and essay-writing competitions led her photograph to appear in local newspapers. Hidden away in digital archives one finds the pixyish face of 16-year-old Eva Wydra, being lauded by her community for her varied accomplishments. She received her own byline in a 1962 edition of Vancouver's *Jewish Western Bulletin* for an essay she delivered prior to joining

a "United Nations Youth Pilgrimage" in New York City (this alongside a Koerner Foundation grant to study music in Colorado, as well as a Vancouver School Board scholarship to study drama and music in Stratford, Ontario) (Wydra); while in the spring of 1963 she played "several piano selections" at a U.J.A. event honoring an Israeli independence fighter at the Hotel Vancouver ("Top program"). Eva Wydra, the *Jewish Western Bulletin*'s editor's note tells its readers, had been in Canada "only three years" after arriving from "her birthplace in Poland." The archive provides a contrasting portrait to that offered in *Lost in Translation*—of a youth whose compatriots would not hear her.

Another source that provides contrast with Hoffman's self-portrait is the record of Vancouver streets provided in the Kodachrome color photographs of Fred Herzog from the years 1959 and 1960. The colorful clash of signs, of urban architecture, of crowds and finned autos at street corners, tell a counternarrative to Hoffman's 1960-era "raw town," whose downtown is said to consist

> of a cluster of low buildings, with some neon displays flashing in the daytime, which hurt my head because I'm so unaccustomed to them. There are few people in the commercial area, and even fewer on the endless net of residential streets . . . (134–35)

This discovery of fault lines and contradictory versions in Hoffman's Vancouver portrait leads us back to Janet Malcolm's acknowledgement of the challenges found in autobiography. Malcolm is interested in the genre's overlap with fiction, its need for outside sources, other than memory, as well as the psychological barriers that interrupt faithful recovery: "Do we ever write about our parents," she asks, "without perpetuating a fraud?" (23) Every writer plays her own hand in response to the challenges that Malcolm raises. In Hoffman's case, the need to look backward at Kraków, and forward to something—anything else—led Vancouver to take on the look of something seen through a jiggled kaleidoscope, or a screen of wavering curtain lace: anything but a pair of unguarded youthful eyes.

Part Three: Alice Munro's "Finale"

In her early masterwork and only novel, *Lives of Girls and Women*, Alice Munro is overt, at book's end, about the ins and outs of writing autobiographical fiction. It is in the final pages of the novel, dubbed "Epilogue:

The Photographer," where her protagonist and alter ego, Del Jordan, famously takes stock of the novel that she has begun to write. "Nobody knew about this novel," she says. "I had no need to tell anybody" (228). What Del keeps to herself (but Munro reveals to her readers) is the process of transmogrification—the making up and making over that goes into the novel "in [her] mind," which she "carries . . . everywhere" (238). One family in Jubilee, Del's small hometown in southern Ontario, becomes her model, or template, "transformed for fictional purposes" (231). Uncannily, the place remains itself, and yet is altered: "For this novel I changed Jubilee, too, or picked out some features of it and ignored others. It became an older, darker, more decaying town . . ." (231). Once fictionalized, it lay "close behind the one [she] walked through every day" (231). These changes mirror those applied to Vancouver in *Lost in Translation*. This is early Munro, published in 1971, when the writer was forty years old. Yet it is ground that she would return to throughout her career, in some ways challenging readers and critics to engage with the lingering question of the autobiographical character of her fiction. From a readerly view, this question may be seen as pointless. However one encountered her stories—in her own collections, anthologies, *The New Yorker* or Canadian journals—the question of an autobiographical impetus seemed moot. What is the point, really, of knowing, while reading, if one encounters intense remembering, elemental creation, or some mixture of the two? Is not the true experience of reading removed from any discernment with regard to this dividing line?

Still, over the course of Munro's long career the critics did not leave these questions alone for long. Sometimes Munro was coaxed into this territory in interviews, and although she was not overly detailed in her account of how her fiction embraced autobiography, she was at times less resistant to admitting an entanglement of the two, as if this relationship might be taken for granted. In an early 1980s interview she characterized herself as a "writer who uses what is obviously *personal* material—and I always say as *opposed* to straight autobiographical material" (Struthers 17, emphasis in the original). However, this distinction is blurred in the same interview as she calls one story, "Privilege," a "most personal story" (it is "about a school I went to and things that happened there") while another, "The Office," is said to be "about my most autobiographical story" (21, 23). These allowances are tantalizing in what they reveal, but may also operate as red herrings, heading the reader off from a consideration of other work that might share the same "personal" or "autobiographical" motives. An unexpected contribution to this topic is the memoir published by Sheila Munro, the author's daughter, under the uncomfortable title *Lives of Mothers and Daughters: Growing Up with*

Alice Munro. One wonders how the mother felt about her work and life being twinned and set up like mirroring subjects, though Sheila Munro's acknowledgement page does include her appreciation of her mother's "willingness to talk . . . about her life and work with complete candor and honesty" (266).

One section of Sheila Munro's account stands as a complementary text to Eva Hoffman's; that is the section describing Alice Munro's years in Vancouver, in her twenties, as a young mother, trying to sell her first stories. This was in the 1950s, and, like Hoffman, Munro was not taken with the place. "I hated it so much," Munro is quoted as telling a reviewer, "I've never been able to do much with it fictionally" (S. Munro 33). Though Alice Munro's husband worked downtown for Eaton's, the family chose suburban enclaves, first in North and then West Vancouver, parts of the city that many long-time residents rarely visit. Munro's sense of her own displacement was in part rooted in the disconnect between domestic life and her heartfelt goal of writerly accomplishment and success. It is this personal—or, if you like, autobiographical—tension that is at the center of "The Office," a story from Munro's West Vancouver period, which her daughter Sheila presents as family history. Her father, in favor of his wife's creative goals, found the "office," or writer's enclave on Dundarave, the neighborhood's shopping and commercial strip. "Ironically," Sheila Munro adds, "The Office" was "the one story" her mother was able to complete there (89).

The Nobel Prize, which Munro won in 2013, brought the autobiographical underpinnings of her fiction to the fore. A detailed biographical portrait by Canadian academic Robert Thacker—author of *Alice Munro: Writing Her Lives*—appears on the Nobel organization's web site, which has the effect of magnifying details and directions in a writer's life that highlight the links between life and story. Parallels are most readily found between Munro's ancestral background and her renderings of a southern Ontario family, its home life and links with its community, bound to a place with its own distinctive customs and social hierarchies. This is an aspect of Munro's oeuvre that might be called a personal mythology—something rather difficult to differentiate from autobiographical patterns, itself perhaps a pointless task. Like other authors of literary masterworks with far-reaching personal mythologies—James Joyce, William Faulkner, Sherwood Anderson or Flannery O'Connor—Munro exhibits a fierce rootedness in place, in the everyday habits, the voice and the character of its people, linked with a heightened attention to the texture of everyday life, from the color of the sky at dusk to the morning dust along the roadside. Here is Munro, via her creation Del Jordan in *Lives of Girls and Women*, in an extended reverie drawn from the fact of her move, with her moth-

er, from the family's rural home to a house "in town." One finely tuned world, marked indelibly by time and place, is given up for another. One would happily quote the full page, but here is something concise and still a world in itself:

> The house we rented was down at the end or River Street not far from the CNR station. It was the sort of house that looks bigger than it is; it had a high but sloping roof—the second storey wood, the first storey brick . . .
>
> Yet it was a house that belonged to a town; things about it suggested leisure and formality, of a sort that were not possible out on the Flats Road . . . Going home from school, winter afternoons, I had a sense of the whole town around me, all the streets which were named River Street, Mason Street, John Street, Victoria Street, Huron Street, and strangely, Khartoum Street; the evening dresses gauzy and pale as crocuses in Krall's Ladies' Wear window; the Baptist Mission Band in the basement of their church, singing *There's a New Name Written Down in Glory, And it's Mine, Mine, Mine!* Canaries in their cages in the Selrite Store and books in the Library and mail in the Post Office and pictures of Olivia de Havilland and Errol Flynn in pirate and lady costumes outside the Lyceum Theatre—all these things, rituals and diversions, frail and bright, woven together—Town! (66–67)

This provides an opposing experience and rendering to Hoffman's impression of the imperceptibility, the "no place" character of 1950s Vancouver (134). Del's wartime town flares up, remarkably, as wholly felt and seen. Here we return to the (perhaps unanswerable) questions: what is it precisely that we are reading, and why should this matter? The tangled recognition of the differing possibilities is only tantalizing in biocritical contexts: a readerly relationship with Munro requires no answer to either question. So it was a surprise when Munro stepped into the fray in 2011 in her favored venue, *The New Yorker*. Under the ambiguous heading "Personal History" she published a part of what would appear in the concluding section of her last collection, *Dear Life*. The *New Yorker* piece begins this way:

> I lived when I was young at the end of a long road, or a road that seemed long to me. Behind me, as I walked home from primary school, and then from high school, was the real town with its activity and its sidewalks and its streetlights for after dark. (40)

In *The New Yorker*, "Dear Life" is illustrated by a 1930s-era studio photograph with the cutline "Alice Munro, at the age of two or three, in her hometown of Wingham, Ontario" (Sheila Munro has the same photo in her memoir, with the caption "My mother at around three years old" [149]). In the Canadian edition of the 2012 volume titled *Dear Life* there is no corresponding childhood photo. Somehow the magazine editors finagled it out of Munro (one can only imagine the interesting editorial correspondence

that this generated). The *New Yorker* piece is one of four collected at the back of the book that shares the title *Dear Life*. The grouping is headed by the title "Finale," followed by the author's note:

> *The final four works in this book are not quite stories. They form a separate unit, one that is autobiographical in feeling though not, sometimes, entirely so in fact. I believe they are the first and last—and the closest—things I have to say about my own life.* (255, italics in the original)

Each proposition in this note undercuts itself, or deals its own ambiguity, aspects of which are deepened by the pieces themselves. Munro calls the four pieces of writing under discussion "works," a non-generic term; they are "not quite stories," though in one of them, "Dear Life," the author tells the reader forcefully that what she is recording "is not a story, only life" (307). The autobiographical ballast, or potential, is lightened by the proposition of something called autobiographical "feeling," which can be said to be wholly undefinable—a literary feature yet to be caught in the wild to be studied. The status of fact and departure from it is similarly unverifiable. The biographically minded reader will find, via an Internet search, that the local family name employed in "Dear Life"—Netterfield—was common in Wingham. Yet the narrator's sister's name in "Night" is Catherine, not that of Munro's own sister, Sheila.

What is the reader offered in these uniquely positioned four works: "The Eye," "Night," "Voices," and "Dear Life"? They are oriented toward the teller's mother and are limited in time—from the narrator's birth till her early adolescence. The landscape, its built culture and character, is crucial to all four, though in this case Munro neither calls the place a made-up name, such as Jubilee, nor the name of her birthplace, Wingham. Autobiographical "feeling" somehow excludes place names as it does the names of relatives and the narrator's own name. Artifacts of the period are plentiful—Red River cereal ("The Eye" 258), the *Saturday Evening Post* (260), and the foundry-made stoves that her father comes to manufacture late in his working life. But a reader encountering these "works" in a language other than English would look hard to discern where, exactly, they take place; the word Ontario does not appear, and Canada (along with Toronto) does only once (259). Vancouver, the hated place, is there, late in "Dear Life." "After I was married," Munro writes, "and had moved to Vancouver, I still got the weekly paper that was published in the town where I grew up" ("Dear Life" 316). A number of Wingham papers failed prior to Munro's years in Vancouver during the 1950s, and any number of papers from Huron County might fit the bill for what was one of the writer's pre-Internet resources. There, on

her B.C. doorstep, via cross-county mail, came the local news, obituaries, births, weather, and all else that a writer would need to fill in the picture from far away.

What happens in these four "works" in Munro's "Finale" is narrative, but one hesitates to call it plotted, a word that carries with it the quality of being consciously ordered, composed of items drawn from various sources. Munro instructs us in how to understand what she is telling us in the work called "Voices," which recounts an outing made by young Alice and her mother to an evening dance "in one of the altogether decent but not prosperous-looking houses on our road" (288). It is a dual portrait—mother and daughter in action, meeting up with the peculiarities of their surroundings, each in her own way. In this piece the action centers on the appearance, at the party, of a pair of local prostitutes, the senior of which is decked out in an unusual "golden-orange taffeta" dress (292). The dress causes Munro to offer a rare allowance of what "Voices" is: "I think that if I was writing fiction instead of remembering something that happened, I would never have given her that dress" (292). This sentence, set off in its own short paragraph, seems to operate as a key, or code for how to read "Voices." It may be that it is a less tangled work, less prone to hedging its bets than the author's note that introduces it. Yet we cannot determine if this short passage fully accounts for what is offered in "Voices," with its wonderful depiction of wartime in what we take to be Wingham, the air force men who have come to the dance party along with a pair of local prostitutes—one young and out of sorts, the other sporting marcelled hair and a taffeta dress too brazen to be made up.

"Dear Life," the last piece in Munro's four-part "Finale," ends on a point of remorse, if not guilt:

> I did not go home for my mother's last illness or for her funeral. I had two small children and nobody in Vancouver to leave them with. We could barely have afforded the trip, and my husband had a contempt for formal behaviour, but why blame it on him? I felt the same. We say of some things that they can't be forgiven, or that we will never forgive ourselves. But we do—we do it all the time. (319)

Munro's mother died in 1959, in the later stage of her sojourn in West Vancouver (she and Eva Wydra were hating the city that same year). There is a further detail of the fact-is-stranger-than-fiction variety at the end of the *New Yorker* version of "Dear Life." There, Munro concludes:

> When my mother was dying, she got out of the hospital somehow, at night, and wandered around town until someone who didn't know her at all spotted her and took her in. If this were fiction, as I said, it would be too much, but it is true. (47)

Because the September 2011 *New Yorker* publication precedes the book edition of *Dear Life* by less than a year, Munro cut this quickly, but it still haunts the final pages of her last book—like a missing limb.[3] Did she decide that it was somehow *too personal* (though one would not in this case be able to say *too autobiographical*) to appear in the less ephemeral book publication? Maybe here we arrive at a clear definition of these contrasting terms that have reverberated in Munro's consideration of her own work: autobiography is what happened, while the personal brings with it all the attendant feeling—remorse, embarrassment, shame—that autobiographical writing can evade and refuse to declare. Her mother, loose at night and caught by a stranger, was too personal; her remorse over not attending her mother's funeral was not. One aspect of this story was in, then out, while the other was retained as a preferred ending.

Like Geraldine Moodie's photographic oeuvre, the autobiographical writing of Eva Hoffman and Alice Munro betrays the gaps, coded presences, and evasions common to such artistic renderings. Janet Malcolm provides us with a contrasting example in her examination of the autobiographical writing of Alice B. Toklas, the lifelong partner of Gertrude Stein. An undercurrent in Malcolm's examination of autobiographical writing by both women is their avoidance of recognizing themselves as Jews. A most revealing excision in the case of Toklas includes her ancestral connection to a line of rabbis in prewar Poland, and her own youthful visits to this cradle, one might say, of her family's past. Almost by mistake, not long before her death, Toklas tells a friend of "her trips to Poland, when she was a child, to visit her paternal grandfather. This grandfather was the rabbi of Ostrow, a small city near Kalisz, the cradle of the Tykociner . . ." (Malcolm, *Two Lives* 195). Here a whole other "past" enters the picture, otherwise repressed, dispensed with, not so much as a form of autobiographical forgetting, but full-scale resistance that one might recognize as part of Malcolm's notion of autobiography as a "novelistic enterprise." Her view of the genre proves true in Eva Hoffman's *Lost in Translation*, where so much of late-fifties Vancouver disappears and is replaced by something wholly personal, even novelistic. With Geraldine Moodie's work, the rarity of the self-portrait effects something similar—the artist, for the most part, remains outside the frame of reference, while controlling it, as seen in the instance of the rare self-portrait, with a hidden hand. Alice Munro's oeuvre is a greater puzzle, where issues of the personal, the actual, the non-factual and the fictional pull us in the direction of reading without knowing—or even caring—how to unravel these tangled threads.

[3] Elements of this excised passage appear in the much anthologized "Peace of Utrecht," from *Dance of the Happy Shades* (1968).

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Philip Hayward and Matt Hill

Elizabeth Bernholz's Gazelle Twin: Disguise, Persona and Jesterism

Introduction

The proliferation of low-cost, high quality digital and audiovisual production and distribution systems over the last two decades has allowed a range of solo performers and ensembles to develop repertoires, release recordings and perform in non-traditional contexts. While often difficult (see Farrugia and Olszanowski; Jóri), the ability to gain traction at the fringes of the (still) highly male-dominated music industry by using these technologies has provided opportunities for female artists such as Grimes (Claire Boucher) and FKA Twigs, whose work has been commercially successful and critically acknowledged. While not yet as well-known as the previous performers, Elizabeth Bernholz (née Walling), who uses the professional alias/persona Gazelle Twin, has carved out a distinct niche for herself over the last decade. Over a series of albums and videos produced since 2010 Bernholz has explored various aspects of identity, persona and disguise and, particularly in recent years, in the run-up to and aftermath of Brexit, concepts of English heritage and identity explored by adopting the role and appearance of a twenty-first-century jester.

Writing about an artist as strongly identified with and invested in her creative persona as Bernholz involves a complex negotiation and switching between the performer's own perception of herself, her perception and representation of her creative personae (which have undergone various transitions) and critical responses to her work, which often blur, combine and/or confound these. In this regard, the complex identity roles and switches are as much a part of the creative entity known as Gazelle Twin (henceforth GT) as they are explanatory factors behind it. As subsequent

sections will elaborate, our specification of these aspects is directly relevant to the identity gaming and deployment of a creative persona central to her oeuvre and career.[1]

In order to analyze the development of GT's personae it is necessary to consider the concept of persona in socio-cultural discourses. Broadly speaking, personae are performed entities. They manifest as aspects of pre-constituted personalities that are selectively presented in social, public and/or media contexts and/or as characters adopted to perform in such contexts. Credibility is an important issue in professional contexts. As Lee has asserted:

> [T]he legitimation of our labour depends a great deal on the persona perceived to perform it. It is not sufficient to simply do work and/or do it well, but its cultural, economic, and political value is shaped by the identity that performs it. (Lee 2)

To give one example, a wooden cabinet produced by a renowned craftsperson is likely to be acknowledged and valued more than an identical artefact produced by an unknown amateur. This is an important emphasis with regard to cultural production, as the cross-association of credibility and critical attention and expectation often influences perceptions of the quality and appeal of cultural material. For instance, in 1969 John Lennon and Yoko Ono recorded a group of experimental tracks that were released as *The Wedding Album*. Review copies were sent out on with the recordings on the A sides and a single continuous test tone on the B. Knowing the couple's serious interest in musical avant-gardism, Richard Williams, a senior journalist at the UK's esteemed British weekly music publication *Melody Maker*, erroneously reviewed the B sides and commented favorably on the tone's sustained minimalist appeal and the creative possibilities it suggested (Williams). Showing typical humor, Lennon responded by telegramming Williams to say that he and Yoko appreciated the review (Calkin).

Critical work on musical performers and their personae has developed significantly over the last decade (see, for instance, Auslander) and has identified performance styles, visual appearance, performance in media interviews and representation in audio-visual media texts as crucial elements. Musical persona is obviously a key element in creative identity and is determined by various aspects of compositional and/or performative competence and often (but not necessarily) originality. The introduction to a themed issue of the journal *Persona Studies* on music and persona (vol. 5, no. 1) reflected this by commenting that the "mutability" of the concept of persona "is no more prominently displayed that in its intersection and

[1] This chapter draws on both previously published interviews with Bernholz (which are individually referenced), an interview conducted with the authors in November 2021 and subsequent email correspondence.

integration into music and musical culture" (Fairchild and Marshall 1). Unsurprisingly, studies of personae in popular music have concentrated on prominent stars, Stefani Germanotta's invention and manipulation of her Lady Gaga persona being perhaps the most obvious example (Deflem). In this manner such research intersects with the parallel field of celebrity studies and, perhaps understandably, in this context, has largely bypassed the persona-building strategies of less prominent artists.[2] With regard to singers, vocal performance and the distinct "grain" of an individual's voice have long been seen as expressions of musicians' characters and accomplishments and, hence their personae (Frith 187–97). In these regards, technical manipulation of vocal style and performance, such as that pioneered by Annette Peacock in the 1970s (Doran), can be seen to have opened up a wide range of options for female performers working in the avant-garde. As discussed in subsequent sections, vocal manipulation is a signature element of GT's work, allowing her multiple expressive voices that are nestled within a richly technologized sound world in which conventional analogue instruments play a minimal role.

Born in Canterbury, in the south-eastern English county of Kent, in 1981, Elizabeth Bernholz studied music at the University of Sussex, in Brighton, graduating in 2006, and currently resides in rural Leicestershire, in the English Midlands, with her partner and two young children. Despite her professional career as a composer/performer working in the avant-garde fringe of electronic popular music, she has revealed that she was not deeply immersed in contemporary music styles during her studies and immediate post-graduate phase. She came to the genre after experiencing difficulties gaining remunerated employment and network connections as a young, female composer and a related sense of being thwarted in developing her creative skills. As a result, she shifted focus, moving both to more improvisatory forms of performance and composition and to incorporating her voice as a key element within these.

Bernholz has emphasized that a key aspect of her entry into the contemporary music scene was her discovery of the power of assuming a costumed performance personae. Identifying the "irksome" pressure of expectation to "look, dress, behave in a certain way" as a young female performer (Hayward), she has detailed how experimenting with costume options allowed her "to layer themes and symbols and meanings that were embedded in the music" (ibid.) and also energized her:

> [I]t felt as if suddenly I was able to come alive a little bit more . . . I felt like I just sucked the power in and it was something really transformative and amazing . . . the

[2] Many lesser-known artists (such as Chris Sievey, Natasha Khan and Dominic Harrison) have also engaged in complex creations of personae that merit detailed study.

> adrenaline pumps, and that eggs you on to push yourself. I remember when I first really got into doing the *Unflesh* show, I started to move in a completely different way and I developed these movements . . . none of them were choreographed. They just came, they just erupted . . . It was like allowing myself to be possessed but by an altered, concentrated version of myself. (Stasis)

These are striking reflections on the enablement and activation of creative energies through a constructed entity that extends and animates the abilities of an individual in ways that did not seem possible prior to their exploration. The GT name is a significant element of this. It initially arose through trying various anagrams of her actual (then) name (i.e. Elizabeth Walling). These suggested a further name, Gazelle Twin, that gained resonance through her fondness for the traditional Jewish/Old Testament canticle known variously as the The Song of Solomon or The Song of Songs, which comprises love lyrics alternated between male and female characters. The canticle includes a passage in which a male compares his beloved's breasts to "two fawns, twins of a gazelle" before entreating her to accompany him to the countryside and spend a night of bucolic bliss with him. Bernholz has described this section as having a particular "resonant meaning" for her, providing a "delicate and cryptic image" that she adopted in an attempt to "always to have a name under which the identity and direction of the project could be free to change and hopefully surpass fashion and trends" (Metamatic). Discussing similar issues of personal and professional naming with regard to Stefani Germanotta, known professionally as Lady Gaga, Deflem has characterized her adoption of the stage name as an early career attempt at "impression management" (43) by creating a highly flexible "parafictional persona" (Warren). While at very different ends of the celebrity spectrum, GT and Lady Gaga illustrate the flexibility that invented personae can deliver, particularly for female performers wishing to go beyond the role of conventionally attractive and fashionably attired (hetero)sexualized front women.

The Entire City

The first creative work credited to GT was the album *The Entire City*, released on the artist's Anti-Ghost Moon Ray label in 2011.[3] The album and its accompanying videos represent GT as an enigmatic and somewhat

[3] An album of remixes of the tracks (entitled *The Entire City Remixed*) followed in June 2012, available as a digital download through the Anti-Moon Ghost Ray website.

esoteric presence. The album cover, for instance, eschews representing the artist and, instead, works in association with the album's title to suggest a simultaneously futuristic and decaying metropolis. The album was named after a group of eponymous Max Ernst paintings from 1934–37 and the album cover featured Susan Moxhay's painting *Athne*, showing a partially submerged city with encroaching vegetation. The album's musical textures encompass a wide array of synthesized percussive sounds, thick synth bass and airy and affected vocal passages that provide a rich close-listening experience. In terms of the overall mix, the vocal parts are somewhat submerged within the arrangements, giving a "horizontal" aural perspective. Establishing her trademark musical sophistication, most tracks are in minor keys and harmonic complexity is evident; notably, the Phrygian mode used for "Men Like Gods," the chromatic chord movement in "Bell Tower" and the use of a Lydian scale in "Nest." Complexity is also evident in the use of a variety of time signatures, such as on the title track "The Entire City" (in 5/4) and "When I Was Otherwise" (in 6/4).

The videos made for tracks on *The Entire City* (all directed by Bernholz) provide filaments that suggest an artistic persona in the process of emergence. The "I Am Shell I Am Bone" video, for instance, provides a visual accompaniment to a song featuring a delay and reverb laden vocal melody over a repeated synth bass pattern underpinned by a mid-tempo (100bpm) bass drum rhythm that develops into a constant 1/16th note rhythmic pattern in the chorus. The video comprises blurred, indistinct, ghostly, humanish shapes and trailing strands of matter, geometrically processed and crossed with images of fish, jellyfish and rays and blurry sequences exploring a seafloor wreck. GT's face emerges in the final third of the track. The overall impression is of a murky, displaced, metaphoric realm in which the vocal protagonist has "no tongue" and "no choice," as specified in the lyrics. The video for "Changelings" reveals one of the first versions of GT's costumed personae one third of the way in, when ambiguous black and white textural images of smoke give way to, first, brief shots of the performer's face, with dark tears streaking down, and then a close-up showing a long fabric fringe covering her eyes and nose and emphasizing her mouth as she intones lyrics about seeing the "end of the world." The image flickers through various distortions of her face and alternates between these and smoky textures for the remainder of the video. The lead vocal has a thin, whispered quality that suggests intimacy; the video's imagery reflects this, and vulnerability is evident in lyrics such as "I'm waiting lonely like a shadow in the night sky" (a dark-on-dark image) with a bleak reference to watching "you"—"all you cheaters and liars."'

The third track to have a video made for it, "Men Like Gods," is distinct by virtue of its lilting feel and its incorporation of a Phrygian harmonic

palette with an elongated chord pattern. The song's lyrics and the video's imagery are also notable for presaging Bernholz's later subversive pastoralism and role-playing with lyrics that characterize her as "a demon running wild" and for evoking pagan/horror fiction imagery in the verse:

> Now I'm collecting your souls tonight
> A million fires before your harvest comes
> To burn out, wear the mask of a heathen
> For the moon's lonely eyes, they see, they see

Bernholz has described the lyrics and musical feel of the song as inspired by the annual Mamothones ritual conducted in the village of Mamoiada in Sardinia.[4] This event involves ordinary villagers transforming themselves into extraordinary masked figures with bells clustered like barnacles on their backs and parading through the streets before burning a large effigy. Intrigued by reports of the event, she travelled to witness it and subsequently described it as "the most bizarre and unsettling thing [she has] ever experienced" (Camarretta). The "Men Like Gods" video includes processed footage of the ritual combined with images of GT in costume, imitating aspects of the pose and movements of the participants together with close-ups of her eyes and lip-synched mouth miming the vocals. The video also debuts a costume used extensively in her later work, with the artist fully masked and wearing a large, jester-like neck ruff in one sequence.

Unflesh

Following the release of a seven track EP in 2013 entitled *Mammal*, in *Unflesh* (2014)[5] Bernholz's GT persona developed in a more confident, unsettling and confrontational manner. Unlike the decaying cityscape featured on the cover of her debut release, *Unflesh* featured an image that evoked the menacing nature of young (usually) men in hoodies, associated with bleak housing estates and gang violence in the UK[6] and took it into the sphere of visceral body horror by showing a literally un-fleshed face

[4] See Iorio and Wall for discussion.

[5] An album of remixes of the tracks (entitled *Fleshed Out*) followed in July 2016, available as a digital download through the Anti-Moon Ghost Ray website.

[6] See Stephenson for discussion of the so-called "hoodie horror" cycle of films initiated with James Watkins's 2008 feature *Eden Lake*.

within a hood, with cartilage visible like a carcass in an abattoir (Fig. 1). The film's horror-movie-esque cover image was complemented by music tracks that recall John Carpenter's stark and spare synthesizer scores for films such as *Assault on Precinct 13* (1976) and the darker, rockier *Ghosts of Mars* (2001).

Fig. 1. Image of the GT persona used in promotion of the *Unflesh* album and its related tour, 2014. Courtesy of Gazelle Twin

The album and its music videos explore aspects of bodily anxiety and trauma but avoid using a personal, intimate voice—as other performers have done when exploring similarly intense material, such as Tori Amos on her *Boys for Pele* album (1996), or Lingua Ignota on *Caligula* (2019). Instead GT's persona is musically developed through various sonic manipulations that led one reviewer to characterize her as a "cyborg singer"

> taking on her inner demons in a claustrophobic digital world of skittering beats and synths, her own voice on top more often than not twisted unrecognisably into that of a demonic robot. From the stomach churning cry that opens the album to its final stammering squeal, it's a genderless creature we hear contorting itself throughout the album's convoluted, maze-like songs—hacking its own DNA in search of a very personal corporeal truth. (Bath)

The punningly titled "Anti Body" exemplifies these aspects, comprising an extended recollection of youthful anxiety and suicidal impulses occasioned by body dysmorphia. Bernholz has described this song as

"particularly autobiographical" and reflects that while she emerged from her adolescent trauma, it still resonates; "I'm still a female in a world that's fucking hard to deal with when you're trying to be honest and natural" (Monroe). The track is assertive, beginning with a distorted metallic percussion hit that gives way to a repetitive kick drum pattern that is then doubled by the monotone chant-like delivery of the verse. The chorus contains an upbeat hi-hat and sparser vocal rhythm that gives a mild funk flavor—elements that are contrasted by ghostly vocal wails and the distorted power chords that feature at the conclusion. The accompanying video (directed by Chris Turner) opens with a swaying overhead lamp, and is dark and claustrophobic, shot in a drab corridor and washroom and centering on various versions of GT's face as she lip-synchs and moves to the track's rhythms. GT's face and upper body, clad in a blue hoodie, is exposed in shifting patterns of shadow and light and undergoes various transitions, from a child's face to the performer's (covered in fabric with only her mouth exposed) to that of an older woman, with occasional inserts such as scattering cockroaches and handfuls of pills. The use of dramatic light and shadow, back-lighting and occasional images, such as her apparently levitating in a changing room, create a strong horror feel for the clip, which further emphasizes the song's lyrical themes and their sparse accompaniment.

"Exorcise" develops a different type of intensity with its 140bpm 4/4 time rhythm driven by a constant 1/16th note cycling arpeggiated synthesizer figure. Percussive elements build while breaths and gasps are used as devices that either punctuate the lyrical phrases or as part of dense and distorted repeating patterns. The song's video (also directed by Chris Turner) recalls scenes and images from David Lynch's 1990 TV series *Twin Peaks* and features three similar, blue-hooded figures working through exercise routines (punning on the track's title) in increasingly animated ways until an elegant but menacing young male arrives. He tries to strangle one (or more) of the "GTs," apparently successfully, until a final image shows a besuited female figure emerging from the conflict. The music video for "Guts" is similarly disconcerting. The track features a multilayered vocal part alternating between high register, childlike/anxious nonsensical utterances and semi-spoken lyrics with prominent low register parts underpinned by a repeating two bar kick drum pattern. The form of the track involves stark changes of texture and juxtaposition of disparate musical elements. The accompanying video (directed by Esther Springett) is similarly tense, set in the cramped, claustrophobic space of a car that's going through an automated car wash, with images of the blue-hooded GT ambiguously trapped or playing in the confined space.

GT's exploration of female feelings and fears on the album prompted a woman posting on the Bandcamp website to make the notable characterization that the album presented a "disturbed and disturbing set of songs about being a woman in the most squamous, gibbering, throbbing way possible" (Levikron). The intensity of the album's personal, psychological/body horror-themed songs and videos was also complemented by "Belly of the Beast," a track addressing the topic of animal exploitation. The song offers a fantasy of revenge, with an ambiguity as to whether the lyrics, featuring lines such as "I'll beat them at their own game," are enunciated by GT as a human or as an animal. It opens with sampled supermarket till bleeps followed by a repeating one bar synthesizer bass and kick drum part that plays a familiar 3+3+2 rhythmic pattern at a fast tempo (165bpm). The synth bass part continues for most of the track with filtering and distortion added to build peaks and troughs in the arrangement. The video represents the theme by contrasting images of a blue-hooded individual roaming supermarket aisles and a cattle barn with a footage of supermarket shelves swaying and spilling goods as the metaphorical foundation of animal farming is shaken to the core.

Enter the Jester: Undermining English Mythology

Having debuted GT as a subtle, allusive agent on *The Entire City* and transformed her into an icon of visceral, alienated femininity on *Unflesh*, Bernholz switched from a personal-political to a national-political focus. Her first foray into this arena occurred in 2017, when she wrote a musical adaptation of J. G. Ballard's 2006 novel *Kingdom Come*—a dystopic vision of a future London dominated by consumerism—for two vocalists and digital accompaniment. The work was released as a seven track EP and was performed at several UK arts festivals.[7] The project addressed the social upheaval, decay and partisan ugliness that typified early twenty-first-century British culture. This focus also informed her next two projects, GT's

[7] The EP explores longer forms with four of the seven tracks lasting almost 6 minutes or more. "See How They Run," "I Consume Only" and "Hallowed" feature dense, metallic and reverberant drone-like synthesizer beds underneath mostly spoken word vocals. Repeating refrains, as used in GT's other works, are common, with lines such as "I took mine, I took mine, I took mine, I feel fine" (from "Metro") and "You can't reach me, you can't hurt me, I can suck you dry" (from "I Consume Only"). Industrial and mechanical rhythmic parts feature in "The Suburbs" and "Death Drive," while more syncopated rhythmic patterns underpin "Metro" and the first part of the relatively bouncy closing track "Cling Film."

following album, *Pastoral*, and her subsequent collaboration with the NYX Choir on the related *Deep England* project. These two albums engaged with myths and visions of quintessential (old) Englishness that had been activated in the 1990s in reaction to a rising tide of Scottish and, to a lesser extent, Welsh nationalism. Increasing separatist impulses produced a counter perception that Englishness had been submerged by Britishness and merited reassertion (see Featherstone). These sensibilities were evident in cultural forms such as neo-traditional folk music, in which Englishness became a resurgent identity (Keegan-Phipps and Winter). These developments were both related to and interactive with a marked increase in anti-European Union sentiment in England that led to the formation of the UKIP party in 1993[8] and the eventual success of the Leave campaign in the 2016 referendum on EU membership. This cultural patriotism was closely entwined with conservatism and xenophobia, most manifest towards immigrants and to the EU administration in Brussels. These impulses were identified by various creative practitioners who critiqued aspects of the jingoism and separatism rife in the period (see, for instance, Ghoshal; Guenot). Bernholz responded by reconfiguring her GT persona as a jester and by exploring jesterism as a critical strategy.

The jester is a well-known figure in English culture that originated in the Tudor period (Southworth). Jesters were (usually male) satirical commentators who acted as buffoons in order to make variously insightful, critical and/or generally provocative comments to the monarch.[9] The figure of the jester (at least as s/he is known today[10]) is commonly represented as having a cap (with single or multiple peaks, often adorned with bells), a bright, often asymmetrical, costume and carrying a scepter (known as a bauble or marotte). One of the most significant modern representations of the jester has been Punch, who appears in the enduring popular tradition of Punch and Judy puppetry. This emerged in the Restoration period as an anglicized version of the French *commedia dell'arte* tradition, with Punch's attire resembling that of the traditional court jester. In Punch and Judy puppetry Punch interacts with his long-suffering wife Judy, their baby and other characters and frequently enacts violence upon them. Until the late Victorian era, when the shows became more consciously targeted at audiences of children and families, the commentary and scenarios provided by puppeteers voicing Punch were often provocative and acerbic and the character's frequently extreme actions

[8] As a rebranding of the earlier Anti-Federalist League founded in 1991.

[9] See Carlyon for a cautionary note on the extent of jesters' ability to be critical/satirical of their royal patrons and members of their court.

[10] There is little information on what Tudor jesters may have worn.

were emphasized through his ironic catchphrase of "That's the way to do it." Punch is also known for having a distinct sonic character, his voice being produced by his puppeteer by using a metal-bound reed, known as a swazzle, that gives his vocal lines a rasping, kazoo-like quality. This voice serves to signal the parodic, inhuman otherness of the character in a manner that distances the spectator from the frequent violence and misogyny of his on-stage behavior.

Individuals dressed in cap-and-bell jester-style hats and/or related colorful clothing became a feature at rave (electronic dance music) events in the United Kingdom in the 1990s and 2000s and, while they did not strictly follow the orthodox jester dress code, figures such as The Prodigy front man Keith Flint were recognized as tapping into the tradition, with his obituary in the *New Statesman* stating:

> Known for his incendiary, grandparent-horrifying turn in the "Firestarter" video in 1996 and subsequently for a festival presence somewhere between a court jester and a mob orator, Keith was rave on legs. A capering monster of the id . . . he incarnated the most absurd and electrifying aspects of the dance music experience which overturned our social order and our ideas of ourselves in the 1980s and 1990s. (Harrison)

Bernholz has described her interpretation of these traditions in terms of creating a "non-gendered being that was like this strange mascot of English history and its strange symbolism and past and present sort of squished together, a freakish thing" (Hayward). Her jester persona first appeared in two tracks and accompanying videos released ahead of her 2018 *Pastoral* album: "Hobby Horse" and "Glory." The first song plays with the triple meanings of the term "hobby horse"—as a personal preoccupation; a costumed, folkloric figure with a horse-like head;[11] and a children's toy comprising a horse's head on a stick that can be held between the thighs while the child pretends to gallop. The song's refrain of "get on your hobby horse" is thereby ambiguous. The track is propelled by a one bar rhythmic pattern at a fast tempo (138bpm) in a 4/4 time signature played by a saturated electronic kick drum that is also the basis for the song's angrily chanted vocal hook. The sonic texture is very dense in the peak sections of the track with synthesized bass, high pitched bleeps, distorted guitar-like sounds and multiple vocal parts doubling the vocal call and drum rhythm.

[11] The song's lyrical reference to the hobby horse evokes comparison to the dual 'obby 'osses that feature in May Day parades in Padstow, in Cornwall, where they lead processioners and dancers through the town in a manner that grows increasingly anarchic as darkness falls. A similar figure is also glimpsed towards the climax of the British horror film *The Wicker Man* (1973, directed by Robin Hardy), referred to below with regard to the *Deep England* album. The song's use of recorder melodies and the video's combination of folkloric and horror imagery further suggests a connection between the song and the film.

A tremolo recorder sample and high-pitched synthesizer pad melody add the main melodic elements of the track. At 2:12, a breakdown section features sampled football crowd chanting. The busy rhythmical noise-based texture is reminiscent of hip hop composition techniques used by Public Enemy to convey a sense of urgency and political commentary. In the video for the track, and in later promotional imagery for the album, Bernholz appears in a distinctly modern twist on the pseudo-medieval jester, dressed in a white, jockey-style cap, red fabric face mask, white frilled collar, red Adidas sports outfit and red and white trainers (Fig. 2). In the first half of the video, she alternates "riding" a (mass-produced) red and white toy hobby horse, playing a recorder and lip-synching the song's lyrics in a forest (intercut with similar images against a white background). Around the halfway mark she enters a field and finds a miniature red and white tent. Going inside, she encounters what she describes as the "clichéd media figure" of the "toxic" angry white male prominent in the Brexit era (Hayward), lashing out at and attempting to tame him.

Fig. 2. GT as a modern jester. Publicity photo, 2018. Courtesy of Gazelle Twin

Expanding the social commentary of "Hobby Horse," the lyrics of the ironically titled "Glory" concern the unattainability of idealized visions of England (exemplified by William Blake's "Jerusalem," discussed further

below) and identify those who promote such visions as "spreading your disease," leading to the repetition of the fundamental question of modern English identity: "Who are you?" The track begins with a short, modified recorder melody over a shifting synthesizer pad and percussive footstep-like sounds. A sparse repeating mid-tempo (120bpm) four bar bass and drum pattern is then introduced that continues throughout the track, underpinning the strident melodic vocal delivery of the lyric:

> You won't see your old home again
> You won't see the old ancient
> You will tell yourself it will be ok
> You will take the liberty
> You will serve the holy sentence
> 'Til it transpires in your vision

The emphatic vocal style, the rising fifth motif in parts of the vocal melody and recorder sounds and the steady rhythmic pulse and swirling accompaniment give a sense of a "call to arms" amidst a chaotic situation.

The music video to "Glory" continues similar themes to "Hobby Horse," albeit in a more complex manner, and involves Bernholz in shifting roles. Opening in black and white in a woodland locale, the video introduces a knight in armor and cape adorned with the red Saint George's cross (in the manner of a crusader). The knight trudges along until he stops under a tree where, unbeknownst to him, GT's jester (clad in dark clothes and a three-pointed hat, with face exposed) waits above with a maliciously gleeful expression. The central section of the video shows the knight's weary collapse accompanied by the jester and by Bernholz dressed as a nun and as a maiden clad in white. This section ends with the knight apparently expiring and with the nun laying flowers by him before the maiden herself expires. After the closure of this cryptic narrative sequence (at around 3:50 into a 5:10 video), the screen switches to color (suggesting a shift from a period setting to a present-day one), showing a knight in closed visor armor in a dark studio space, before he incongruously reappears in a field adjacent to a modern town. He is then shown walking through night-time city streets before the image transitions to a young man walking into a supermarket. This switch to modernity contrasts the mythic medieval and the modern in a way that recalls the opening syntagmatic match-cut sequence of Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger's film *A Canterbury Tale* (1944), which similarly plays off the historical against the contemporary, albeit at an earlier historical moment when Englishness appeared threatened in other ways. The video's complex, cryptic imagery undercuts the historical potency of the crusader/knight imagery, with female stereotypes—the nun and the maiden—and GT's jester diffusing his power, appearing in short narrative scenarios.

The *Pastoral* album included both of the tracks discussed above and continued their imagery on a cover that parodied Deutsche Grammophon designs for albums of classical western art music[12] by featuring GT in red and white jester garb against a painted English pastoral landscape. The image is explained and expanded by the album track "Tea Room," a gentle yet dissonant and rhythmically stilted composition in which GT, implicitly representing an everyday Englander, expresses puzzlement and alienation from pastoral Englishness. This theme runs through the album and is expressed through two allied but distinct musical and lyrical strands: critical reflections on pastoralist mythology and the ideology underlying it and darker and more abrasive tracks that focus on decay, delusion and oppression.

The album's opening track, "Folly," sets the tone by asking wide questions regarding what species, century, atmosphere and government the GT persona is encountering in the present, with the vocal delivery alternating between a heavily processed robotic vocal sound and a reverberant solo operatic voice. The two vocal sounds could be understood to represent past and present, as does the unsettled accompaniment, which combines a warbling, recorder-like sample with subtle timpani. The next batch of tracks on the album—#2–8—explore dystopic elements of Englishness. Questions concerning time and politics asked in the album's opening track are answered in the following "Better in My Day," an uptempo (142bpm), 3/4 track driven by a repeating one-bar drum pattern. The multiple intonation of the track's title summarizes the view of an embittered individual lamenting the social decline perceived by the Brexit/UKIP movement and the constituency they represented and mobilized. The texture is thickened throughout, with the addition of drum fills, percussive hits, repeating short flute melodies, metallic synthesizer pads and percussive vocal exhortations signaling a relentless single-mindedness that builds into a frenzy, symbolizing embittered "Little Englander" perspectives and their underlying sensibilities.

Subsequent tracks contrast the bitter nostalgia of the vocal protagonist in "Better in My Day" with the actual state of English politics and society. In "Little Lambs," a combative and driving accompaniment underlies GT's vocal line which paints the inhabitants of the vocal protagonist's "little island" as "distracted" lambs in a manipulated "herd" being lured by the "fantastic lies" of Brexit and of conservatism more generally. "Dieu et mon droit"—a track named after the monarchical motto of the United Kingdom (meaning "God and my right") similarly contrasts the official discourse of the country to provincial decay, disillusion and poverty. The majority

[12] See Boruchowitch for an overview of these.

of the music sits in a shrill and metallic high register with a repeating six beat chord sequence providing a metronomic accompaniment. The vocal sound is heavily processed, with multiple layers providing a dense cluster that intensifies the lyrical message. "Throne" provides a further dark take on the monarchy's association with capitalism. Over a simple backing track, a short loop of a gritty harmonic sound fragment, GT assumes the persona of a malevolent entity that sits in a position of power and imposes debt and insolvency that are analogized as "wounds" and "pus" on the populace. "Mongrel" conveys similar sentiments through multiple looping sound fragments overlaid with a bouncy up-tempo (140bpm) electronic kick drum, hi hat and stick pattern.

The previously discussed "Glory," released as a "taster" for GT's new persona, is followed on the album by "Jerusalem," a collage inspired by (and incorporating elements of) Hubert Parry's musical setting of William Blake's four verse poem "And did those feet in ancient time" (1804). The first two verses of Blake's original poem reference aspects of the so-called (and entirely folkloric) "Glastonbury tradition" that postulated that Christ visited England before his crucifixion. The second verse ends by contrasting the bucolic paradise imagined around Glastonbury with the "dark Satanic mills" of the industrial revolution while verses three and four are essentially a call to arms to fight to (re-)establish a Christian paradise in England.

Blake's poem gained fresh currency in England in 1916, when conflict with Germany was intense; the composer Hubert Parry set the text to music so that it could be performed at rallies to raise funds for the patriotic Fight for Right Movement. Since then, it has frequently featured as a patriotic song, even being adopted as the anthem of the English cricket team in 2004, being played before home test matches and chanted by the team's supporters. Commenting on the discrepancy between Blake's particular utopian visions and the highly ideological nature of its co-option by nationalist political groups in the early twenty-first century, Whittaker has contended that the hymn now represents "a fallen Albion at war with itself, engaged in the bitterest of mental fights" (391). In accord with this contention, GT's track begins with a fragment of the hymn and then juxtaposes a thick, delayed synthesizer chord sequence with a recording of a phone conversation of someone reporting an abandoned car in their neighborhood. The incongruous juxtaposition of the two is underlined by intermittent distorted cackling sounds that invite comparison to the swazzle tones used by Punch and Judy puppeteers before the allusion becomes evident as the voice intones Punch's catch phrase "That's the way to do it." In this manner, the squeaky-voiced protagonist appears as a figure that parodies authority figures and their complacent manipulation of truth to secure power (as symbolized by the deployment of "Jerusalem" to signify power and patriotism).

Emphasizing the Blakean association, the following track, "Dance of the Peddlers," incorporates lines from Blake's poem "The Tyger" (1794) to undercut the popularist/jingoistic adoptions of Blake and Parry's "Jerusalem" and more general mythic pastoralism with questions about the unholy and profane nature of modern politics and capitalism. "Sunny Stories" continues the theme with a thin musical texture, with just vocal and multiple looping recorder samples played at different speeds, providing a relatively sonorous minor key accompaniment to the mostly pentatonic vocal melody. The song's lyric provides a simple scenario, declaring that GT could simply deliver comforting "sunny stories" but has chosen not to.[13]

Overall, the *Pastoral* album furthers GT's stylistic development by placing a new version of her persona amidst turbulent ideological issues. The wide range of musical textures, incorporating acoustic instrument samples, field recordings, looped sound fragments and electronic/synthesized sources, harks back to the richer textural elements of *The Entire City*. However, like *Unflesh*, *Pastoral* incorporates more pointed lyrical themes, and the starker minimalist accompaniments of the former are developed on *Pastoral* into a more cohesive intensity. While gender issues are not overtly signaled in the lyrics of *Pastoral*, the live tour promoting the album finished on an emphatic note with a performance of Ivor Cutler's short song "Women of the World Take Over," advocating that option as a means of averting social calamity.

Women in Collaboration: GT & the NYX Choir

The female "take over" referred to above was articulated in creative form in GT's subsequent collaboration with the female NYX Choir for a re-interpretation of the themes (and some compositions) from *Pastoral* in an album and associated performances entitled *Deep England*. NYX are a six-piece choir[14]

[13] The album concludes with a brief sampled sequence of a male singer singing two choruses and a verse from a version of the traditional ballad "Over the Hills and Far Away." The refrain, sung to a jaunty melody, features as what appears to be a gentle coda to the often intense lyrical and musical compositions on the album but the sting in its tale is that the "far away" in question is not an unfolding vista of pastoral Englishness but the battlefields of Europe during the Napoleonic Wars which Englishmen were dispatched to. The song, which exists in multiple versions, was popularized, in version written by English folk singer John Tams, in the TV series *Sharpe* (1993–97), relating the experiences of a British soldier in the Napoleonic Wars, which is the version sampled.

[14] A six-piece choir consisting of director Sian O'Gorman, Anna Clock, Ruth Corey, Cecilia Forssberg, Adelaide Pratoussy and Shireen Qureshi.

that performs and records with electronic music accompaniments that set vocals amidst different sonic textures and digital rhythms. *Deep England*'s title refers to the deep, ideologically conservative and xenophobic attachment to a "lost" supposedly idyllic England that was explored by historian Patrick Wright (1995, 1996) in discussions that presaged the development of the Brexit campaign. The album comprised re-workings of material from *Pastoral* ("Better in My Day," "Folly," "Glory" and "Throne"), the related title track "Deep England";[15] versions of Blake and Parry's "Jerusalem" and the song fragment "Fire Leap" (from the soundtrack to *The Wicker Man*, 1973); together with a new composition, "Golden Dawn" (written by NYX director Sian O'Gorman). In her collaboration with NYX, Bernholz features as a singer within the choir rather than by being backed by them, and the GT persona established in her earlier output similarly features as an element within the choir's ensemble identity.

Musically, the reinterpretations of the *Pastoral* tracks maintain the main vocal parts and some of the prominent instrumental and percussive elements of previous recordings, albeit without the distinctive, harder electronic and obvious looped and sampled qualities of the originals. Vocal effects are achieved both acoustically (e.g., multiple vocal harmonies in "Folly" replicating the vocal harmonizer effects on the *Pastoral* version) and with electronic processing. GT's initial version of the album's title track featured a shifting low pitched synthesizer drone supporting two vocal verses, one spoken word, the second a strident rising melodic phrase enriched by swirling synthesizer textures, whereas NYX's version offers an elongated interpretation of the original, with the choir and additional processing providing a timbral richness not evident on GT's version.[16] The choral version of Blake and Parry's "Jerusalem" on the album[17] also

[15] Originally released as the B-side to the single release of "Hobby Horse."

[16] The threads running through the earlier *Pastoral* album that were picked up by NYX were also made manifest in the eponymous concert film of NYX and GT performing material from *Deep England* (directed by Iain Forsyth and Jane Pollard), particularly in the collage of musical elements from "Fire Leap" and lyrics and melody lines from "Better in My Day," which gave the nostalgic sentiments of the latter an almost absurd resonance with the sinister underpinnings of the idyllic space of Summer Isle featured in *The Wicker Man* film.

[17] The version by a female choir is also notable for reinvesting the song with a submerged meaning that sidesteps its current associations with fervent patriotism. While Parry wrote his initial musical arrangement so that the song could be performed at patriotic rallies during World War I, he wrote the now commonly performed orchestral setting at the invitation of women's rights campaigner Dame Millicent Garrett Fawcett in 1918, and subsequently agreed to Fawcett's request that it could become the Women Voters' Hymn and assigned copyright to the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies to support their activities. When the NUWSS disbanded in 1928 copyright was transferred to the Women's Institutes, who retained it until 1968 when the composition became public domain.

complements the critical tone of GT's *Pastoral* by re-arranging the stirring melodic qualities of Parry's hymn. A solo female voice with a very heavy reverb sound sings the first 8 lines with the usual melody, then the choir repeats this section in a chant-like monotone. The "dark satanic mills" lyric then becomes the take-off point for darker and heavily dissonant melodic and timbral elements to be foregrounded, emphasizing the latter rather than the fanciful mythology of the opening lines that has inspired patriotic renditions. Nestled within the NYX Choir, Bernholz and her GT persona achieve a rare moment of harmonious solidarity, a sense of belonging not evident anywhere else in their (coterminous) oeuvre.

Conclusion

Bernholz's work as GT is distinct and distinguished on a number of levels. Aside from her basic achievement in gaining traction in the electronic music scene as a female artist, her development of the GT persona over a number of recordings, videos and performances has provided a compelling example of the manner in which an emergent audio-visual artist can be creatively enabled and enhanced through the adoption of (costumed) personae that—at least in Bernholz's perception of her own work—enhance her confidence and, thereby, imbue her with a sense of power. Her accounts of this process and the analyses of her work provided in this chapter suggest that she has accessed the enveloping focus intrinsic to the creative "flow" identified by Csíkszentmihályi as key to high-quality artistic achievement and innovation. Her development from somewhat abstruse concerns, to personal emotional-visceral expression, to a more wide-ranging critique of national nostalgia and ideologies is also notably ambitious. The choice to pursue the latter in styles and genres other than the bombastic anthems habitually mobilized to address such concepts by mainstream rock artists (such as The Clash's "This is England" [1985], or Bruce Springsteen's "We Take Care of Our Own" [2012]) has produced a corpus of musically and thematically complex work. While her output has been innately female in its vision and sensibility, it crosses gender divides by addressing both specifically British and more universal themes. The jesterism of her most recent recordings and videos exemplify the latter aspects, turning thematic tropes against themselves to illustrate the ideologies essential to their formation. The inspiration she has derived from folkloric elements, such as the Sardinian Mamothones tradition and Punch and Judy puppetry represents a modern *media-loric* development that is

distinct in the electronic music scene and that points to the capacity of this broad genre to engage with tradition as well as modernity and futurism.

Discography

All Gazelle Twin recordings are released digitally on her Anti-Moon Ghost Ray label: http://www.antighostmoonray.com/

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Mark Tardi

Vernacular Architecture: Posthumanist Lyric Speakers in Elizabeth Willis's *Address*

As Rosi Braidotti has observed, "[f]rom the politics to the poetics of the feminist voices—new spaces of enunciation are opened to us—new, different, and differing ways of speaking" (208). Elizabeth Willis's award-winning fifth book of poetry *Address* is just such space: a collection teeming with plurality, inhabited by poisonous plants and witches, tornados and forecasts, bees and blacklists—which enacts Braidotti's remarks and adds hearing and seeing into the mix. The economical one-word title, *address*, is a term Willis leverages to activate multiple meanings throughout the book, to animate poetic dark matter. The concept of address invites the reader to consider various questions: from where does the lyric poem speak? To whom? How do we locate or navigate such a profound "molecularization of the self" amidst the instability of our current times (Braidotti 16)? When asked about the plethora of references and forms that appear in her book, Willis herself responded in an interview, "I'm not interested in being merely citational or allusive; I want to build a new architecture out of the ones I inherit" (Hill). This impulse to "build a new architecture" is evident even in the book's design, which literally enumerates plurality as each page number is framed by ripples or echoes in a trio of half-parentheses, like so:)))

The primary concern of this essay is Willis's authorial strategy in presenting the lyric subjects of her poems, which toggle between the micro- and macro-scales of self and world, human and nonhuman, invisible and imaginary, biological and alchemical, private and political. To apply Braidotti's terms, Willis's work stands as an example of a feminist nomadic poetics, "blurring boundaries without burning bridges" (15) and within her alternative cartographies, her poetry offers "points of exit from the debris of the posthumanist universe" (279). Willis's concern with hazy borders,

a multitude of off-ramps, and forms of address is consonant with Braidotti's view of feminist nomadic poetics: "A related feature of this style is the mixture of speaking voices or modes" (37). As we will see, Willis deploys disruptions of voice and syntax for various effects, one of which is to (re)create a poetics of socio-historical becoming, braided with undoing; or, as Willis succinctly writes, "[w]hen the ghost is on you, / you don't even see it happen" (23).

From the beginning, the titular opening poem functions akin to an epigraph for the entire book, as it foregrounds a dynamic poetic landscape:

> I is to they
> as river is to barge
> as convert to picket line
> sinker to steamer
> The sun belongs to I
> once, for an instant
> The window belongs to you
> leaning on the afternoon (1)

Thus, Willis introduces her readers to a lyric subject that is nomadic and diffuse—"I is to they / as river is to barge"—where everything glides upon fluid but unsatisfiable syllogistic relations, simultaneously singular and plural, subject and object, consciousness and materiality, exemplifying what Trinh T. Minh-ha has termed writing "to become, intransitively" (19). Words such as "convert" or "sinker" carry multiple meanings or causal possibilities: is *convert* a religious or ideological position/person? A verb noting a kind of transaction? Is *sinker* nautical cartography in opposition to steamer, a boat? Or a specific pitch in baseball, a pitch that relies on gripping two particular seams of the ball to produce a downward spin? "The sun belongs to I" could be seen as ending in a purposeful ungrammaticality; or "I" could be a pun on "eye" and the sun—part of a duo or analogy; "I" could even be a conversion of Roman numerals, with "once, for an instant" offering synonyms or a definition. As Abigail Licad argues in her piece on *Address*,

> [f]urther combinations of liquid syntax between antecedents and object pronouns, and the prolific use of the possessive prepositions "of," and "to," as well as the word "belong," collapse any hierarchy syllogistic structures purport by undermining subject-object dichotomies. Finally, the metaphorical barrier represented by a transparent "window" can be read as a liminal point between public and private spheres, public and private speech, between social and personal concerns. (Licad)

As the book progresses and poems accrue, the slippery pronouns and pressurized verbs in Willis's poems not only construct a complicated feminist

critique of (historical) representations of women, but may also be giving voice to ghosts, hills, months or shoes. As early as the second piece, "Take This Poem," the imperative form of *take* is put in considerable tension, as a directive in domestic, social, and political contexts as well as an act of aggression, defense, or frustration (perhaps recalling Johnny Paycheck's famous 1977 country song, "Take This Job And Shove It"). Beginning with the title, the reader is implored to take a vertiginous and compounding catalogue of objects, which range from common household items to geological masses or events.

> Take this bowl
> this kettle, this
> continental plate
> Take, if you will,
> this shallow topsoil
> above my bedrock
> This swingset
> above the topsoil
> this raven
> from my hair (2)

Willis's poem flows from common images (a bowl or kettle) to striking ones (e.g., the pun of a "continental plate"), and at times the poem arrests the mantra-like momentum by surprising the reader with the implications of certain expressions or lines, such as "this raven / from my hair." Perched atop the speaker's head, the well known Poe-inflected image of the raven violates personal space and the reader becomes implicated in a potential act of aid, challenging passivity. Lines like "Take this patience / and burn it to the ground" or "Take the low road / out into the sunset" (4)—while reminiscent of the humor used in poetic conceits from earlier eras, e.g., Shakespeare's sonnet 130, "My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun"—similarly exhort the reader to act. Moreover, an obvious (and potentially violent) political dimension is visible in the demand to "[t]ake it out back / And take it / to the people / Take Florida / . . .Ohio / . . .Wisconsin / . . . Missouri" (3), with "it" in this case referring to fight, and the "taking" of various states to the winner-take-all format of the American Electoral College system for presidential elections.

Put another way, Willis's lyrical subject could be understood as "a collection of diversified, non-linear developments and potentially conflicting experiences, an aggregate of variables" (Adamiak 133). These subjects maneuver within the myriad complexities of our contemporary moment: for instance, jolts to the body politic (as discussed in poems such as "Blacklist" or "This Is Not a Poem about Katherine Harris") or (re)considerations

of institutional memory via notions of witchcraft (particularly in the poem "The Witch" and, again, in "Blacklist"). Thus, "[t]he sun belongs to I" could be read as a distillation of Braidotti's version of the nomadic subject, where our planet and solar system is a posthumanist Heliopolis, albeit one which Willis is careful not to romanticize, as poems such as "Poisonous Plants of America," "Still Life with Tornado," or "A Species is an Idea (2)" demonstrate. Anthony Caleshu sees such rhetorically elusive lyric subjects as an important feature in the work of a cohort of contemporary North American poets of the same generation, including, besides Willis,

> Julianna Spahr, Lisa Robertson, Mark McMorris, [and Peter Gizzi]. It's the [poetic] air of abstracted subjects and personality—an anecdotal and yet impersonal (and plural) "I" that makes for a montage of selves and experiences, for poems that are aurally enhanced and tangibly descriptive, poems that transcend context by multiplying meaning within a tradition that appropriates and subverts its (re)written language. (xiv)

Caleshu's "plural 'I'" shares similarities to Willis's use of the third-person singular in a pairing of longer poems which establish contours of intimacy and familiarity rather than detachment. The poetic diptych presents a feminist critique of how the figure of the witch has been represented throughout the centuries—"The Witch" appears early in the volume; "Blacklist" is the penultimate poem—and the two are linked by more than their approximate page-length or positioning in the collection. Together, they function more like quantum entanglements, with one continually and nomadically affecting the other. The shared thematic and formal concerns are evident: they both operate as poetic litanies, with "The Witch" offering a catalogue of pseudo-definitions, historic "causes" or supposed characteristics, and "Blacklist" locating and enumerating an extensive cast of historical figures with whom witchcraft or bewitchment could be associated. Admittedly, however, some of the associations are quite tongue in cheek. For instance, when Willis writes in "The Blacklist" that "Charles Olson worked for FDR," "Robert Creeley voted for McGovern," or "Frank O'Hara conceived 'Personism' as a defense of witchcraft" (58), the implication is that political progressivism and (support of) poetic activities are a form of dark arts, exactly the sort of dangerous behavior that could be added to the alleged attributes of witches.

With "The Witch," Willis echoes the discourse of Robert Burton's famous *Anatomy of Melancholy*. Lines such as "A witch will gaze wistfully at the glitter of a clear night" (19), "A witch makes her world of air, then fire, then the planets. Of cardboard, then ink, then a compass" (20), or "I have personally known a nervous young woman who often walked in her sleep. // Isn't there something witchlike about a sleepwalker who wanders through the house with matches?" (22) bear more than a striking stylistic resemblance to any number of entries in Burton's compendium. Consider, for example:

"Primary causes are the heavens, planets, stars, &c., by their influence (as our astrologers hold) producing this and such like effects" (178) or

> This is likewise evident in such as walk in the night in their sleep, and do strange feats . . . The like effects almost are to be seen in such as are awake: how many chimeras, antics, golden mountains and castles in the air do [witches] build unto themselves? (216)

But Willis's duet poetically also builds on the pioneering work of feminist scholars Carolyn Merchant and Silvia Federici. In her influential study *The Death of Nature: Women, Ecology, and the Scientific Revolution*, Merchant explores the horrific violence, injustice, and oppression visited upon women once the spurious accusation (*witch!*) was hurtled and blame assigned, and where both nature and women prompt subjugation (127). Yet the absurdist characteristics delineated to help us locate or "address" a potential witch—both in Willis's poem and in history—are disrupted by the interjection of lines that flatly describe some of the precise forms of violence that Merchant and Federici's work has highlighted, such as: "An executioner may find the body of a witch insensitive to an iron spike" (21) or: "The skin of a real witch makes a delicate binding for a book of common prayer" (22). In both of these examples, the humanity of the victim is erased and they themselves reduced to an object, mere body or skin, and tenderness reserved for iron spikes or book bindings.

In "Blacklist," Willis deploys a flattened aphoristic style reminiscent of David Markson's work, where the number of historical figures aggregates across centuries. The characteristics and definitions activated in "The Witch" migrate to "Blacklist," where they are given the names and faces of actual people, many of whom are poets and writers—such as Lorine Niedecker, Samuel Beckett, James Baldwin, Simone Weil, Orson Welles, Tallulah Bankhead, Gloria Steinem, Sappho, Billie Holiday, Hilma af Klint, and many others—as well as victims of the infamous Salem witch trials, such as Martha and Giles Corey, or Rebecca Nurse. "Blacklist" takes the dehumanized skin or bodies in "The Witch" and locates them in a plurality of historical figures; as a result, the importance and influence of the witch itself becomes nomadic, moving across history and into (or around) any number of very real people, and also enveloping the reader. Moreover, some of the Burtonian language from "The Witch" migrates to "Blacklist," with Caleshu's "plural 'I'" in the mix: "I have personally known witches whose voices seemed to rise out of a hole in the earth as if it were a mouth" (60). Braidotti is again helpful in understanding Willis's poetic diptych, when the philosopher argues that

> [j]ust as new language is born of patient frequentations, caring and frequent encounters with the old, so equally history is not a four-lane high way but a discontinuous

> line, where progress is often achieved by twisting and turning, repeating and going back. History as repetition is a genealogical cycle, the careful sifting through of old notions, to improve them, to make them less regulative, more beautiful. (278)

In the context of the two witch poems, we can indeed see history as "a discontinuous line" prone to repetitions and reconfigurations, although the "old notions" may be less "beautiful" and more sharply criticized—*illuminated*, in multiple senses of the term. Moreover, the nomadic drift of the lyric subjects operates to differing degrees across the entire collection: "The Witch" and "Blacklist" have a clearly delineated theme; other poems are more disjointed, a lyric of smooth shards. The short poem "Flow Chart" can certainly be read as alluding to (and hyper-condensing) the more-than-200-page book-length poem of the same name by John Ashbery, with the Ashberian hallmarks of absent punctuation, ironic enjambments, and hairpin shifts in register. Willis's poem opens with: "You take the sun personally / like a coin in a purse" (16). As in her earlier "Take This Poem," Willis leverages minute fluctuations in how the reader might understand the verb *take*, with the opening line suggesting an internationalization of emotion, but the subsequent line rendering the meaning more literal—and an absurd form of theft. While Willis has noted that she is "not interested in being merely citational or allusive" (Hill), there are no shortages of either in *Address*. Poems such as "Valet of the Shadow of Death," "Ruskin," or "This Is Not a Poem about Katherine Harris" pull the reader off the page—at least in part—by bringing to mind, respectively, a biblical psalm, a nineteenth-century polymath, and a Florida Republican; in addition, these resonances and people nomadically wander into Willis's poetry.

With "Poisonous Plants of America" (17–18), the reader is offered an alphabetical list poem which enumerates exactly what the title suggests. Alphabetizing, it begins with "April fool," already signaling irony, which is apt. The names of the plants carry additional connotations or sound like euphemisms for genitalia, body parts, and sexual acts. "Bog-onion," "Flying saucers," "Lady's-thumb," "Moonseed," "Naked lady" (perhaps the most obvious), "Puncture-vine," "Snakegrass," "Stinking Willie," "Swallow-wort," and "Wonder berry" all have sexual connotations, often the sort of terminology employed by teens. Thus, the poem could be (partially) read as a sophisticated exploration of *la petite mort* for the post-humanist age, linguistically conflating or converging plant-life with human sexuality, like Walt Whitman's "Urge and urge and urge / Always the procreant urge of the world" ("Song of Myself"). But it also echoes what Willis writes in the previous poem, "Flow Chart": "Even the warmth of a poem / suggests a proximate danger / Wild mushrooms" (16). This sense is amplified by the inclusion of "Witches' thimbles" as the second-to-last

plant in Willis's list. Intimacy and the attendant collapsing of boundaries between the human and nonhuman, the exterior and interior, history and the present are inextricable from risk. The mushroom, after all, can nourish us, offer us a psychedelic journey, or kill us; depending upon who is looking at it, the witches' thimble can be seen as a poison, as well as to an imagined target of witchcraft or the witch herself, vulnerable to life-threatening public paranoia. In *When Species Meet*, Donna Haraway takes the notion of the "plural 'I'" a step further:

> I love the fact that human genomes can be found in only about 10 percent of all the cells that occupy the mundane space I call my body; the other 90 percent of the cells are filled with the genomes of bacteria, fungi, protists, and such, some of which play in a symphony necessary to my being alive at all, and some of which are hitching a ride and doing the rest of me, of us, no harm. I am vastly outnumbered by my tiny companions; better put, I become an adult human being in company with these tiny messmates. To be one is always to *become with* many . . . I love that when "I" die, all these benign and dangerous symbionts will take over and use whatever is left of "my" body, if only for a while, since "we" are necessary to one another in real time. (3–4)

In light of Haraway's writing, the "plural 'I'" is not just a matter of grammatical exertion in a poem or a particular authorial presentation of the lyric subject (in other words, a language game): instead, it is the plurality of the body, reflected in the multiplicity of language(s), and the rampant cellular interconnectedness of any given self—human or nonhuman—is the "symphony necessary to . . . being alive at all," Whitman's "procreant urge" made visible and celebrated. In a very real sense, this symbiotic relationship is a socio-historical becoming, braided with undoing.

Socio-historical critique is also embedded in the sparsely economical list poem, another aspect of the formal strategy deployed by poets such as Willis to activate rhetorically elusive lyric subjects. This is also visible, for example, in "Dumb Duke Death (for Dick Cheney)" by Willis's contemporary, Lisa Jarnot, from her 2003 collection *Black Dog Songs*. In her poem, Jarnot limits herself to words beginning with the letters *C* or *D*, and between two and five letters long:

> down dire
> death day
> dim dale
> ding dong
> dip down
> dame chase
> cheap date
> dance dodge
> do dive
> dull duck (19)

Like Willis's "Poisonous Plants of America," Jarnot's "Dumb Duke Death" is deeply ironic. Consisting entirely of simple two-word lines, the poem is dedicated to the person who, at the time, was the sitting Vice President of the United States. As with Willis's poems, the phrasing at times veers into juvenile invective, with pairs such as "dim dale," "ding dong," and "dull duck" presumably accentuating a perceived lack of intelligence in Cheney. Lastly, both poems refuse to offer the reader the access point of personal pronouns, and make no attempt at creating a traditional lyric speaker. Instead, the poems traffic in a peculiar kind of aggregating staccato, phrasing that darts out, but stumbles because of its economy.

In Jarnot's *Black Dog Songs*, an entire sequence of poems is ironically dedicated to different key figures in the George W. Bush administration, including Bush himself. Similar rhetorical acrobatics used for political critique can be found in Willis's "This Is Not a Poem about Katherine Harris," the longest piece in *Address*, placed squarely at the center of the book. Although the lyric "I" in the poem is not plural, the political positions and modes of address that Katherine Harris proffers (albeit as Willis's construct-*cum*-speaker) unmask a wide array of logical fallacies and ideological "flip-flopping"—to borrow the term George W. Bush so effectively popularized within American political discourse:

> Homelessness has been so well
> fixed that everyone I know
> has at least one somewhere else,
> a home in the sand
> and one in the bush. (36)

As the poem progresses, Harris-as-speaker's buffoonish attempts to clarify her various political stances result in nomadic fallacies: non sequiturs, post hoc ergo propter hoc, or arguing off the point. For instance, she feels the need to state that her support of "Stop Sex Trafficking" Act was not intended to stop all human sexual activity, and also notes particulars such as: "When I came out against terrorism / I was not 'coming out'" (34); she also aims to "Protect Our Children" from the perils of affordable health care and "the protracted / violence of a liberal education" (36). Willis enjambs lines for comedic effect as well, pointing out that Harris was "uncompromising [in her] syndicated / cleavage" (33). The rhetorical posture within the poem recalls comedian Stephen Colbert's satirical rightwing talk show, *The Colbert Report*, where the host's blowhard character would parody provocative conservative talking points in the service of upending stereotypes: "Tonight, *shocking* news from Spain! Someone was caught on camera . . . working!" (Colbert).

For Braidotti there is no "separat[ing] the question of style from political choices" (16), and Willis is in complete agreement: "I don't think there's an 'outside of politics' . . . There are political implications to every choice you make, and that's part of what constitutes a poetics" (Turner). Thus, the formal and stylistic strategy to nomadically transmute the lyric subject throughout Willis's collection is a continuously feminist one:

> Women can see the light where men just stare into empty space, watching the downfall of the phallic monuments and documents they had erected by and for themselves. Women have something to say—failing to say it would amount to an historical abortion of the female subject. (Braidotti 130)

Whether it is to reflect on the centuries-long oppression of women as "witches," to find sexual humor and to critique America's puritanical patriarchal history via poisonous plants, to reveal a Florida politician's words and deeds as absurd or empty, or to offer a Whitmanian pluralistic "I," Willis's lyric subject is corporeally, formally, geographically, historically, politically, and temporally nomadic. Poetry, Willis claims, is "an ancient technology," which has "a kinship with both legal language and scripture," the effect of which is to shape reality (Turner). In other words, it is "like a thought becoming / its own money" (Willis 23), a conscious negotiation of liminal spaces where the abstract can become concrete and then abstract again. In aggregate, the continual reconfigurations of the lyric subject act as a rejection of rigidity. To quote from Braidotti again, "feminists and other nomadic intellectuals are the strange angels of a failed system, stumbling to a new age" (279–80). The *address* in Willis's book is simultaneously a forwarding one and a return-to-sender stamp; a reality-making speech act and a distrust of imbuing any one subject—human or nonhuman—with too much authority.

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Section 3
Spirituality and Embodiment

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Dorota Filipczak

"Let me hear Thy voice": Michèle Roberts's Refiguring of Mary Magdalene in the Light of The Song of Songs[1]

In her "Author's Note" to *The Secret Gospel of Mary Magdalene* (first published in 1984 as *The Wild Girl*) Michèle Roberts writes that she has chosen "to follow the tradition of centuries" and create "a composite character" despite the fact that "many modern scholars distinguish separate figures in the Gospel accounts" (ix). As a result, her "scriptural metafiction" (Mączyńska 4) is based on the conflation of three different women from the Gospel tradition. Ingrid Maisch identifies actual Mary Magdalene as Mary of Magdala, her name Magdalene being an identification clue. Magdala (Migdal) was a prosperous city in the Land of Israel in the times of the Roman Empire (Lofenfeld Winkler and Frenkel 103). Mary of Magdala was its inhabitant who may have abandoned her home/family in order to follow Christ (8:2–3). Her portrait as an independent and self-reliant woman has emerged only recently. Mary Magdalene's arbitrary connection with prostitution rests on the testimony of Luke who mentions a woman from whom Christ cast out seven demons (8:2–3). Maisch conjectures that the seven demons signified a serious psychosomatic condition, which gave rise to different interpretations throughout centuries, among them the association with the seven deadly sins or the reduction of seven demons to seven devils. The biased readings were countered by what Maisch calls the New Age interpretation in light of which Mary Magdalene was possessed by "the feminine Holy Spirit" (177). In her insightful *Mary Magdalene: Myth and Metaphor*, whose first edition preceded the book by Maisch, Susan Haskins discusses the role of Gnostic texts in which Mary Magdalene is "an aspect of Sophia or wisdom of God" and "Christ's chief interlocutrix," which makes her role completely different from that in "mainstream Christianity" (38).

[1] This chapter is a revised version of the article originally published in *Text Matters: A Journal of Literature, Theory and Culture* (vol. 9, pp. 199–212).

Roberts's Mary Magdalene is literally Mary of Bethany, the sister of Lazarus and Martha, and the devoted listener to Christ's words who gains praise for her attention in the Gospels, while her sister Martha is rebuked for her preoccupation with mundane, domestic tasks. In the analyzed novel it is Mary of Bethany (rather than an anonymous sinner from Luke 7:36–50) who anoints Christ's feet and wipes them with her hair. Also, Roberts's fictional portrayal revolves around the apocryphal texts about Christ's favorite female disciple. In the note preceding the novel the author admits that the recreation of this protagonist dovetailed with her search for "the alternative version of Christianity" (ix). The Nag Hammadi Code and other writings, especially The Gospel of Thomas and The Gospel of Mary, which have remained the narrative periphery to the canonical center offered an important inspiration in this respect.[2] This century has seen a resurgence of interest in Mary Magdalene, which is often regarded as a result of Dan Brown's thriller *The Da Vinci Code* (2003) rather than that of Roberts's novel *The Wild Girl*, which has not claimed comparable attention, just like its protagonist. Whatever the reasons for the return of the repressed, the process of unearthing knowledge about Christ's "first apostle" (Haskins 10) has resulted in new texts, among them *The Resurrection of Mary Magdalene: Legends, Apocrypha, and the Christian Testament* (2002) by Jane Schaberg, which remains a milestone on the excavation site of Mary Magdalene research, to use an archeological metaphor from Schaberg's final pages.[3]

Schaberg discusses a brilliant analysis of John 20 by Alison Jasper, according to which Mary Magdalene is a woman sinned against rather than sinning, because John's text exposes her loneliness, ignorance and rejection (Schaberg 330). If the Johannine narrative had been meant to foreground Mary's discipleship, it would not have shown her in this light; this seems to be the implication of the analysis. On the other hand, "the amount of energy which a culture expends in order to suppress or marginalize a voice 'forms a reliable index to the effectiveness of that voice as posing threat to the hegemonic practices of that culture'" (Schaberg and Boyarin qtd. in Schaberg 349).

During the discussion concerning two alternative titles of the novel at the conference dedicated to her fiction,[4] Michèle Roberts admitted that

[2] Jane Schaberg does not see The Gospel of Mary as a part of the Nag Hammadi Code (357).

[3] Schaberg's contribution, which went unacknowledged in her lifetime, is emphasized in a chapter concerning Roberts's Mary Magdalene by Anna Fisk ("Stood Weeping Outside the Tomb" 166–67).

[4] The conference was organized by Tomasz Dobrogoszcz and Marta Goszczyńska from the Department of British Literature and Culture, Institute of English Studies, University of Lodz, 7–8 September 2017.

she had changed the title from *The Wild Girl* into *The Secret Gospel of Mary Magdalene* after the publication of *The Da Vinci Code*. Dan Brown referred to a text by Margaret Starbird entitled *The Woman with the Alabaster Jar: Mary Magdalen and the Holy Grail* (1993). In this text, which was published later than Roberts's *The Wild Girl*, and in her next work entitled *Mary Magdalene: Bride in Exile* (2005), Starbird deconstructed the image of a penitent whore, transforming her into Christ's bride in the New Testament hierogamy. Hers was also the contention that Da Vinci placed Magdalene in the painting of the Last Supper as Christ's bride.

Brown's fiction obliterated Roberts's earlier contribution even if her "breakthrough commercial success" had come with that novel (Fisk, *Sex, Sin, and Our Selves* 161). Yet it is Roberts's novel that needs to be recognized for its pioneering use of the Gnostic sources, but above all, for conflating the bridegroom and the bride from The Song of Songs with Christ and Mary Magdalene respectively. This identification heals the old-time rift between the body and spirit, which resulted in the denigration of physicality in the writings by church fathers. Refiguring Christ and Mary Magdalene's union in light of The Song of Songs makes it possible to overcome the mutilated representations of women, which have dominated the official discourse of Christianity ever since the Gospel canon was formed.

The fictitious construction of a penitent whore, or else "the mad woman . . . in Christianity's attic" as Jane Schaberg puts it (8), Mary Magdalene has inspired generations of painters who dwelled on the mystery of her sexuality which remained attractive despite being contained under the patriarchal lock and key. Due to such paintings her allurements could be condemned and ogled at the same time. Ingrid Maisch contends that Mary Magdalene "became a symbol of all women whose fate she shared throughout history: honored, buried in silence, pushed to the margins, elevated to unreality, degraded to an object of lust" (ix). Mary R. Thompson states that the identification of Mary Magdalene as a harlot resulted from a sexist bias (1). It rests on a popular misconception which has remained pervasive despite the lack of evidence in the Gospels. Jane Schaberg calls this process "the harlotization" of Mary Magdalene, which resulted from reading traces of her presence in the Gospels through the black legend (9). Roberts chose to navigate the gap between the black legend and discipleship. In order to deal with the binary opposition implied by it, she turned to The Song of Songs, which was the favorite book of early Church Fathers (like Origen), but they refused to interpret it as a text about erotic love.

Whereas the Gnostic and Jungian undertones of *The Secret Gospel* by Roberts were explored in criticism (Rowland 35–42, Falcus 56–57), The Song of Songs has not been duly acknowledged as a potential framing for the novel. Falcus argues that one can "see in Mary's descriptions of her

experiences with and feelings for Jesus the explicitly sexual and sensual tone of The Song of Solomon" (58). This begs for further interpretation. Through this intertext Roberts foregrounds the old association between Mary Magdalene and the Bride that has always existed in Christian tradition, which is reflected in European art (Howell Jolly 38). Significantly, on the feast day devoted to Mary Magdalene on the 22nd of July, the Catholic liturgy makes use of the crucial passage from The Song of Songs:

> Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm: for love *is* strong as death; jealousy *is* cruel as the grave; the coals thereof *are* coals of fire, *which hath a* most vehement flame. Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it: if *a* man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would utterly be condemned. (8:6–7)

The quoted passage is followed by an excerpt from The Gospel of John (20:1,11–18) which tells the story of Mary Magdalene's encounter with Jesus after his resurrection culminating with the words: "Mary Magdalene came and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord, and *that* he had spoken these things unto her" (*King James Version*).[5] The choice of texts proves the long-lasting connection between Mary Magdalene and the bride from The Song of Songs: "as the bride goes about seeking the beloved in the nighttime (Song 3:1–2), so Mary remained by the tomb at night not as an individual but the embodiment of the holy Church" (qtd. in Maisch 31). Schaberg stresses the influence of The Song of Songs in her discussion of John 20, stating that the implications of the woman's presence in the garden should not be overlooked (335). At the same time Schaberg agrees with Rhinehartz that the inclusion of a quotation from The Song of Songs in the liturgy of Mary Magdalene's feast day Mass is entirely "nonthreatening," because in light of the Johannine text she cannot possibly represent the leader of a Christian community (335).

The Song of Songs is connected with more than one paradox in the history of its interpretation. It is an explicitly erotic text about secular and sexual love which has been elevated to an exceptional status. Arguing for its inclusion in the Hebrew Bible Rabbi Aquiba states that "all the ages are not worth the day on which the Song of Songs was given to Israel; for all the Writings are holy, but the Song of Songs is the Holy of Holies" (qtd. in Stievermann 364). The rabbi perceived the Song as an expression of God's love for Israel (364). For Christians the Song became the text praising Christ's love for his church, but interestingly enough, the New Testament does not contain a single quotation from this book even though many other biblical books are referred to there. Despite this singular omission the imaginary

[5] All quotations from the Bible come from *King James Version*.

that associates Christ with the bridegroom and his follower with the bride persists throughout the New Testament, and it is this element that is singled out and translated back into an erotic and mystical union in Roberts's novel prior to its being used by Starbird, who also conflates Mary Magdalene with Mary of Bethany and the Bride from The Song of Songs.

The affinities need to be unpacked in a detailed way in order to show that the message of Roberts's novel is continually informed by echoes of The Song of Songs and thus provides a commentary which makes it possible for the reader to see traces of the Holy of Holies in the editorial palimpsest of the canonized Gospels. The Song of Songs is characterized by the powerful voice of the Beloved who speaks her female desire in an unabashed way, and it is her voice that is particularly appreciated by her lover: "let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice; for sweet *is* thy voice, and thy countenance *is* comely" (2:14). Mary Magdalene is first heard and then seen by Jesus in Roberts's novel: "I liked your singing, he said: it was beautiful. It was you, wasn't it, out in the garden earlier. . . That was an old song . . . but you gave it a new meaning, so full of power" (29). In his comment Jesus recognizes the archaic message of the song and its explosive potential which cannot be contained by censorship or discontent. Also, his comment intimates to the reader that the song in question might just as well be one of the many versions of The Song of Songs which bears affinity to the Mesopotamian "hymn to Ishtar" (Exum 227), because the complex text was generously informed by the pagan elements that Judaism and Christianity aimed to suppress. The pagan quality of Mary's song surfaces as early as in her childhood:

> I found I was singing a song whose words and music I did not know. . . What are you singing?—her mother asks angrily—they are forbidden, those words and that music. They belong to the rites of pagans, may the Most Powerful forgive you. (Roberts 4)

When Mary is preparing for the arrival of the guests who include Jesus himself she finds that "a song" suddenly starts "to grow inside" her (27). There is an explicitly somatic meaning to the song which can be juxtaposed to the moment when Mary Magdalene's daughter by Jesus is born: "I named her Deborah, since she had issued forth like a strong song" (162). The choice of name is far from accidental. Esther J. Hamori argues that the status of Deborah, who is remembered in the Bible as the prophet and the judge, is similar to that of Moses rather than that of Miriam, while her characterization shows freedom from stereotyping (90). In Roberts's novel the baby becomes a celebratory song made flesh. The mother hopes that Deborah will become one of the disciples, and the song will go on in body and in spirit. Deborah's name promises that she will not be pushed to the margins the way her mother was as a result of her confrontation with Jesus' male disciples.

When Mary Magdalene is visited by her song prior to Jesus' arrival she describes it as a miracle because the gift of songs returned to her after years of absence in the darkness of the fragrant garden. As she returns to the house she notices that "the little oil lamps were lit" (Roberts 28). Her sister, like the wise maidens from Christ's parable, keeps the lamps aflame for the one who will turn out to be Mary Magdalene's mystical and physical bridegroom. Ironically, Mary had become the provider of oil and other necessities to the family; she exchanged her sexual favors for the things Martha needed in the household.

Unlike her mother, Jesus praises Mary for the meaning and power of her song. This makes her a woman of authority who speaks in an autonomous way through the song, which places her on a par with the Beloved, whom Exum calls "the most autonomous of biblical women" (15). Interestingly, Mary bristles at the suggestion of Lazarus and refuses to entertain the male guests with her song at her brother's bidding. Her song is too private and too profound to be contained by the convention that aims at making a woman either a plaything or a tool in male hands. Referring to a scene of intimacies between Jesus and herself in the novel Mary Magdalene says:

> He asked me to sing for him, and I complied, and this set the seal on my love for him, that he said he was in awe of the power of my songs, and saw in them the same mystery that he followed and tried to understand himself. (Roberts 41)

The excerpt goes with the attempt of the Beloved to be recognized as "the subject and not an object of love's work," to use the words of Pamela Sue Anderson about the interpretation of the Beloved in the writings of Luce Irigaray (64).

The scenes that show Mary singing or thinking about the song are invariably connected with the garden setting and pastoral imagery. Francis Landy argues in his interpretation of The Song of Songs that the text conjures up a scene of the return to Eden in which "the Beloved replaces the garden" (218). The critic dwells on the series of sensuous images that pervade the song, and that are connected not only with visual and auditory sensations, but also with the sense of smell and touch. In Cheryl Exum's commentary on The Song of Songs the lover enters "the garden of eroticism" at the invitation of the Beloved whose desire for lovemaking matches his own (40–41).

All of this throws light on the scene of Mary's encounter with Jesus after the crucifixion. The well-known passage from The Gospel of John states that in her despair she mistook Jesus for a gardener, which is precisely one of the roles that the lover from The Song of Songs adopts. Like Jesus in

Bethany, Mary first hears his voice and only then does she pay attention to his face. In his hands there is a basket full of figs, another allusion to The Song of Solomon: "The fig tree ripens its figs, and the vines are in blossom; they give forth fragrance. Arise, my love, my beautiful one, and come away" (2:13). The Song of Songs that later became an element of Jewish Passover rituals overlaps with the time of Christ's crucifixion and the time of spring in the pagan rejuvenation of nature. According to Haskins, the famous words uttered by Jesus in the scene of his last encounter with Mary, i.e. "Touch me not" (John 20:17) are far less brusque in the Greek original: "do not seek to hold onto, cling to or embrace me" (10). They also gain new significance in the novel since Mary needs to sublimate her desire for the sexual reunion with Jesus into mystical communion. When he imparts his message to her and disappears to leave her only with "a trace of fragrance of spices and aromatic oil . . . in the air under the trees" (Roberts 109–10), a sensuous signature of The Song of Songs in the novel is sealed. Mary begins her frantic search for Jesus, and thus acts out the words: "I sought him, but I could not find him; I called him, but he gave me no answer. The watchmen that went about the city found me, they smote me, they wounded me; the keepers of the walls took away my veil from me" (5:6–7). In Roberts's novel Mary Magdalene states: "I was that bride—and accosts men in the street asking each—Are you my husband?" (120), which leads first to propositions and then to insults. Also, the condition of the distraught Beloved throws light on Mary's earlier pursuit of freedom and autonomy which took her on to the road and rendered her defenseless against itinerant merchants who raped her because an unescorted woman was denied personhood and became an object of sexual invasions. The Song does not state what really happened to the Beloved when the watchmen wounded her. However, the very gesture of taking away her veil meant reducing her to a prostitute because mostly prostitutes went around unveiled in order to attract attention (Wight 84). The euphemism may have covered up sexual violence experienced by the Beloved. When young Mary Magdalene hits the road in Roberts's novel, her rapists-cum-protectors immediately notice her vulnerability and unspecified status, and use her brutally until she manages to escape their clutches in Alexandria and survives on the strength of her male disguise before she is rescued from homelessness and imminent hunger by an empathetic woman.

Mary's distress after Christ leaves her upon Resurrection can be compared to what the biblical authors of Psalms call "the waters of death" (e.g., Psalm 90:5–6). In the Psalms the phrase was commonly used to signify liminal situations fraught with the danger of death (McGovern 350–58). Mary identifies the waters as maternal and thus resexes what was unsexed in the Hebrew Bible. Also, Mary's experience connects with Christ's confession

before death: "I am going back to my Mother" (Roberts 100). Roberts's Mary Magdalene goes back to the mother, just like Jesus before her. She enters the waters of death, which are the image of Sheol underneath the earth:

> Her waters took me. I was carried in a black torrent, icy and fast, that foamed between high rocky banks and that turned me numb and cramped me until I thought I should sink like a stone and drown and die. (121)

Like Ishtar, Mary Magdalene goes to the underworld and tries to pit her love against death.

In her book *The Gnostic Gospels*, Elaine Pagels attempts to reconstruct the process which resulted in the total rejection of female imaginary in the Christian descriptions of God. She points out that the Hebrew word *ruah*, which came to be identified with the Holy Spirit is feminine (102), while God is both male and female not only in the imaginary from the Gnostic Gospels (e.g., The Gospel of Philip), but also in the writings of greatest Christian mystics like St Clement of Alexandria (Pagels 102–03, 121). The description of creation in Genesis was influenced by the Phoenician, Egyptian and Mesopotamian myths which revolved around goddesses (Synowiec 136, 176). The anthropomorphic tendency is continued in the Yahwist source in Genesis, but God is shown as a male potter, and the female element in creation is entirely suppressed.

The emphasis on God who is the mother and the father means bringing back the elements that Judaism and Christianity suppressed, that is, the connection between Godhead and femaleness which was ousted from religious discourse as a result of reprisals against paganism. The Song of Songs offers an adequate framing for the recovery of this conjunction. Strikingly enough, it is the sole text in the Bible in which only the mother and not the father is mentioned (Exum 25). The bridegroom describes the Beloved as "the *only* one of her mother." She, in turn, says: "I would lead thee, *and* bring thee into my mother's house, *who* would instruct me: I would cause thee to drink of spiced wine of the juice of my pomegranate" (8:2). The mother's house is the womb, and "sexual awakening is a reminiscence of birth" in the Song, as Francis Landy argues (119). Both Lazarus and Jesus respectively are brought back into "the mother's house" in the literal sense of death. When Jesus raises Lazarus from the dead, the man emerges from the grave as if from the womb. After all, Mary's previous pagan incantations above his body equated his death with a sojourn in the mother's womb. The same takes place in the scene of resurrection. Jesus, who looks like a gardener, points to the meaning of the seed that died in order to release new life. He was buried but he rose like the seed that needs to die in order to bring forth the fruit, which is alluded to through

the image of Christ's basketful of figs. Following Landy's interpretation, Mary Magdalene is the metaphorical embodiment of the garden that is now rife with Christ's message, and literally pregnant with it.

After Christ's resurrection Mary experiences a mystical vision in which Salome prepares her for the encounter with the bridegroom. Her psychosomatic condition is thus summed up by Martha when Mary wakes up: "you suddenly ran out into the garden. We found you stretched full-length, senseless, on the Lord's empty bed in the tomb" (Roberts 134). Discussing the encounter of Mary Magdalene and Jesus dressed as the gardener in the Johannine Gospel, Cynthia Bourgeault calls it "the nuptial meeting"; thus the tomb becomes "the bridal chamber" (230–31). Interestingly, the imagery of John 20 and of the relevant passages in Roberts's novel bring to mind the connection between funerary rites and eroticism demonstrated by Pope in his analysis of The Song of Songs, which is "expressive of the deepest and most constant human concern for Life and Love in the ever present face of Death" (Pope 229).

This is exactly the case in Roberts's book. Yet before Mary can experience mystical and sexual closeness with her bridegroom, she has to go through the ordeal of fire, which connects with the apogee of The Song of Songs, where love is "the flame of God," and it cannot be quenched by "many waters" (Landy 129–30). The opposition between anarchic "waters of death" and the divine flame is illustrated in Roberts's novel by Mary nearly drowning in waters, which is followed by her experience of purifying fire. After these ordeals she is washed and arrayed in fine clothes by Salome. Then she is led to "the bridal pavilion," where she awaits the bridegroom who soon joins her and they both discard their wedding clothes. The fragrance that surrounded Mary in the garden, "sweet and heavy as incense in the air" (Roberts 128), is now replaced by the taste of "almonds and figs, persimmon and pomegranate, all washed down with a strange wine" (130). The sensuous tone of The Song of Songs that is conflated with the garden scene from John is additionally enriched by the allusion to the messianic banquet in the Bible, that is, an image of the feast for those who enjoy divine closeness (Psalm 23:5). Mary is fed by her bridegroom and she drinks from the "sacred vessel" (Roberts 130). Thus the messianic banquet is conflated with the Eucharist. At the same time the rift between the body and the spirit is healed. "Love fused us" (131), Mary confesses, and became the source of knowledge. In contrast to the story of the fall this was not the knowledge that would result in "sin and sorrow," to use a famous expression from Mieke Bal's analysis of Genesis 1–3.

To say that the imagery in Roberts's book is simply Jungian is to fall short of its potential. Jung played a worn out patriarchal card when he identified man with logos and woman with eros. The book not only records the

exchange of stereotypical attributes as a result of which Jesus opens himself to eros, and Mary to logos. The novel makes Mary the one who gives a new meaning to an old song. She becomes an active and restless interpreter whose word resides in both corporeal and mystical experience. She gives birth to it the way she gives birth to her daughter. "The first other which I encounter is the body of the mother," states Luce Irigaray pointing out that all other encounters are modelled on this one (qtd. in Deutscher 161). This is intuitively grasped in The Song of Songs where conception and birth of the bride take place in the space that provides the setting for her later lovemaking. Mary Magdalene also becomes the beloved in her mother's place; and this is where she makes love to Jesus for the last time before he is seized by his oppressors. The experience of the other also means communion with God, which is translated into corporeal reality and voiced in terms marked by sexual difference: "All of us, men and women alike, are the ovens and wine-skins of God, I tell my daughter, and we are God's wells in which God kicks and swims like a fish" (Roberts 171). Mary translates the mystical experience into the image of being pregnant with God, whose word is like a foetus swimming and kicking, as the logos grows inside transforming the inner world of an individual. Roberts's imagery continually reminds the reader of the need to reclaim the possibility of voicing religious experience in female terms that reintegrate corporeality with spirituality. Her image translates the ancient concept of *logos spermaticos* into inclusive terms combining the male and female aspects. The concept of *logos spermaticos* used by Justin Martyr (Karkkainen 56–57) to refer to seeds of divine reason planted in every human being, reflected the ancient and medieval misconception about men's sole role in transmitting life which was planted in female wombs, regarded as passive vessels until modern times when the discovery of ovaries completely changed the understanding of the reproductive process. Roberts's Mary combines the image of foetus with her translation of human bodies into ovens and wineskins of God, i.e. both men and women become vessels carrying the Eucharist bread and wine, and the potential for subsequent transformation.

But Mary Magdalene remains a liminal figure on the outskirts of the Christian community. Her representations (e.g., by Georges de la Tour) show a woman meditating and shorn of female desire, which renders her a safe model for imitation. By way of example, the woman in de la Tour's painting entitled *Magdalene with the Smoking Flame* is still young and beautiful but frozen into contemplation. Her belly is girdled with a rope that is meant to cut her off from her female desire. The snake symbolizing the sin of Eve, or else, the snake symbolizing wisdom, and therefore worshipped among the followers of Gnosticism (Haskins 35), is now a lifeless tool of control. Christ's sexual banter to Mary about allowing him to be a snake in her tree makes it possible to read de la Tour's representation in

a different way: not as a *memento mori* but as a meditation on loss that is not only spiritual. Only the candle flame is a distant echo of God's flame in The Song of Songs, a symbol of love that can defy death illustrated in the Golgotha skull that Mary is cradling in her lap as if she cradled a baby.

Her passivity in such constructions defies her earlier restlessness and insight that was potentially dangerous, and which she shared with the Beloved from The Song of Songs and Sophia, i.e. the divine wisdom described in The Book of Proverbs (8:1–36). Schaberg compares Mary Magdalene to Shakespeare's sister Judith, imagined by Virginia Woolf as the one who lies buried at the crossroads. The choice of this particular image from *A Room of One's Own* completes Schaberg's archeological imaginary in the book, which refuses an unambiguous conclusion. Re-visioned by Roberts, Mary lives on in her own enclave and enjoys both motherhood and discipleship. Yet her message goes underground just like she did after Christ's death in her tormented vision. But whatever is buried can be retrieved because the seed germinates as a result of the gardener's efforts. "The daughter of the daughter" will eventually dig up the text of "an old song" and give it "a new meaning." The final sentences of the novel are a paradoxical flashback from the future that has already started. While theologians are at a loss in the excavation site, Roberts lets the reader hear "a voice." Is this a utopian hope for a Christianity in which the sexes are equal? If so, it fits with Schaberg's inconclusive ending to her book. In the last lines Schaberg recounts a meeting with Harvey Klein, who praises the manuscript and states the following:

> "Well, Magdalene Christianity: we—you—have to invent it. Maybe it wouldn't have been called Christianity; something new, outside. I might even. . ."
>
> "Yeah, I might even too." (356)

That is precisely how the reader may feel after navigating the gap between John 20 and The Song of Songs on the strength of Roberts's refiguring, which ends with the hope of "Magdalene" Christianity.

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Jan Jędrzejewski

A Catholic New Woman Artist: A Contradiction in Terms? Sex, Music and Religion in George Moore's *Evelyn Innes* and *Sister Teresa*

Throughout the Victorian era, the exploration of the motif of the woman artist provided writers with an important mechanism for challenging the received perceptions of gender roles, of the intellectual and creative potential of women, and of their position in modern society. The most significant examples of Victorian portrayals of women artists are those of writers—novelists and poets—who narrate the stories of their own lives as they acquire social and artistic confidence manifesting itself through the very act of writing. The eponymous heroines/narrators of Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847) and Elizabeth Barrett Browning's *Aurora Leigh* (1856) can be seen as fictional alter egos of their authors, whose recognition as key literary figures of their day testified to the acceptance of the notion of a professional woman writer by Victorian public opinion. At the time, however, literature was different in that respect from other art forms: while music or painting were certainly seen as desirable accomplishments for upper- and middle-class Victorian women, they tended to be perceived as leisure activities rather than as potential pathways to social and economic independence. The talented painter Helen Graham in Anne Brontë's *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* (1848) and the much less gifted singer and actress Gwendolen Harleth in George Eliot's *Daniel Deronda* (1876) both only resort to trying to make a career out of their art in consequence of financial necessity, and view it as something to be given up as soon as a socially and financially acceptable alternative of a marriage presents itself. Victorian acceptance of the concept of a woman artist clearly had its limits.

This early- and mid-Victorian focus on writing as the one area of artistic activity suitable for women appears to have persisted into the late-Victorian period, even as the emergence of New Woman fiction opened up

the discussion of previously controversial topics, such as, in particular, the broad area of women's sexuality. Writing becomes the source of income, at least for a time, for strong women such as Diana Warwick in George Meredith's *Diana of the Crossways* (1885) and Herminia Barton in Grant Allen's *The Woman Who Did* (1895), while women trying to pursue careers in other forms of art tend to fail in their attempts to find independence: Kate Ede, in George Moore's *A Mummer's Wife* (1885), may turn out to be a talented actress, but she also becomes, and dies, an alcoholic, while, in Thomas Hardy's *Jude the Obscure* (1895), Sue Bridehead's interest in the visual arts and music is an early manifestation of her desperate desire to escape the neurosis which increasingly takes control of, and ultimately destroys, her life. The radicalism of New Woman fiction did not, for most of the 1880s and 1890s, extend to the consideration of women's artistic potential and their powers of creativity.

It is perhaps unsurprising, then, that one of the first, and most powerful, analyses of the psychological as well as social situation of the woman artist in the late Victorian era came from the pen of a writer who had earned himself the reputation of an *enfant terrible* of late-Victorian letters, partly on account of his championing, in Britain, of the naturalist works of Émile Zola, and partly as the author of a range of highly controversial novels addressing, sometimes in quite explicit ways, some of the most taboo subjects ever touched upon in mainstream Victorian fiction. The above-mentioned George Moore (1852–1933)—a Catholic-born heir to a substantial landed estate in Co. Mayo; a modestly educated man who had spent much of his youth studying art in Paris in a vain attempt to emulate the achievements of his Impressionist friends, whose work he would subsequently popularize in Britain; an admirer of Wagner and a frequent visitor to the Bayreuth festival; a familiar if rather notorious figure on the literary and artistic scene of *fin-de-siècle* London; and a lifelong bachelor, whose numerous but sometimes half-hearted liaisons with society ladies may or may not have been an attempt to deal with his ambivalent feelings about his sexuality—was certainly well-placed to attempt to write a novel which explores the psychological, sexual, moral, and creative dilemmas of a woman artist who challenges the expectations of her society, her family, and her religion in an attempt to fulfil her dream of becoming an opera singer. Moore's early literary works had tackled the themes of the sexual mores of the London artistic scene (*A Modern Lover*, 1883) and marital infidelity (*A Mummer's Wife*, 1885), as well as adultery, out-of-wedlock pregnancies, and female homosexuality among the Irish gentry (*A Drama in Muslin*, 1886), but his reputation as a controversialist as well as an insightful analyst of the female psyche was finally confirmed by *Esther Waters* (1894), a daring portrayal of a working-class woman who, as

a single mother, defiantly struggles to secure the best possible future for herself and her son. Moore's presentation of Esther's ability to successfully challenge the stereotype of a "fallen woman," which takes a radical step beyond Thomas Hardy's compassionate but ultimately still pessimistic portrayal, just a few years earlier, of the victimized protagonist in *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* (1891), marks his readiness to challenge Victorian public opinion, with its received notions of morality and its vision of femininity—thus preparing the ground for his presentation of the eponymous heroine of his next novel, *Evelyn Innes* (1898).

Moore's inspiration for the creation of the character of Evelyn Innes came from a range of sources: the bohemian circles of the mid-1890s London in which he moved provided him with ample opportunities to meet and befriend a number of highly sophisticated women, some of them talented artists, who are likely to have contributed to the development of the portrayal of his new protagonist. One of them was a leading singer of the late Victorian London stage, the Australian soprano Dame Nellie Melba (1861–1931); another, Pearl Craigie (1867–1906), an American-born but England-based novelist publishing under the pen-name of John Oliver Hobbes, and a devout Catholic convert, with whom Moore collaborated in the writing of a play, and to whom he tried, unsuccessfully, to make advances; yet another, Maud Burke (later to be Lady Cunard, 1872–1948), an American-born society hostess with whom Moore would develop a long on-and-off friendship/relationship, and whose daughter Nancy he might have fathered. The relationship between Evelyn Innes and her musician father was likely to have been inspired by the memories of a concert of early Renaissance English music that Moore attended in January 1894, with Pearl Craigie, in the home of the French-born, London-based musician Arnold Dolmetsch (1858–1940), whose fifteen-year-old daughter Hélène (1878–1924) played the viola. Finally, the research that Moore undertook into the life of Victorian convents brought him into contact with Virginia Crawford (1862–1948), another Catholic convert and a future journalist, political activist, and supporter of the suffrage movement; the two were to become lifelong friends. While *Evelyn Innes* is not, essentially, a *roman à clef*, the combined characteristics of the women who inspired the character of its main protagonist add to the intensity of the portrayal of her moral, religious, and artistic dilemmas as she struggles to make choices between her dream to fulfil her vocation as an artist, her search for personal happiness, her love for and obligation to her father, and her complex, if uneasy, sense of duty to her Catholic faith (cf. Gray 187 and Frazier 248–50).

The story of the novel is simple enough. Born to a family of musicians, Evelyn Innes inherits her mother's operatic voice; however, after her mother's early death, her opportunities to develop her talent are restricted

by her father's limited means: he is a church organist and a private music tutor in the south London suburb of Dulwich. When Evelyn meets Sir Owen Asher—a rich society gentleman with a broad range of artistic interests and a seemingly limitless fortune—they develop a mutual attraction, which results in Owen's offer to fund her musical education in Paris, with a view to her becoming a professional opera singer, on the condition that she decides to join him there as his companion. This offer sets up the central dramatic conflict of the novel: Evelyn is passionate about music—particularly Wagner—and she is not entirely indifferent either to Owen's attentions or to the lifestyle he can give her, but her decision to live with him violates both the moral standards of late-Victorian respectability and, more importantly, the absolute and non-negotiable moral principles of her religion (the Innes family are devout Roman Catholics, and Evelyn's decision to live with Owen is obviously a blow to her father). Ultimately, her choice of music over the conventional understanding of moral duty acquires a near-religious dimension, with her expression of her individualistic belief in the duty she owes to herself paradoxically echoing the moral guidance arising from Matthew's Parable of the Talents:

> At that moment it seemed to her that she could renounce everything but love. Could she renounce her art? But her art was not a merely personal sacrifice. In the renunciation of her art she was denying a great gift that was given to her by Nature, that had come she knew not whence nor how, but clearly for exercise and for the admiration of the world. It therefore could not have been given to her to hide or to waste; she would be held responsible for it. Her voice was one of her responsibilities; not to cultivate her voice would be a sort of suicide. This seemed quite clear to her, and she reflected, and with some personal satisfaction, that she had incurred duties toward herself. Right and wrong, as Owen said, was a question of time and place. What was right here was wrong there, but oneself was the one certain thing, and to remain with her father meant the abandonment of herself. (91)

This combination of passionate individualism, whole-hearted commitment to her art, and a persistent sense of religious obligation characterizes Evelyn Innes throughout her life, and manifests itself in a variety of ways as her story unfolds. Thus, for example, early on in the novel, as Evelyn's central moral dilemma finds its way to her subconscious, it is articulated, in a dream, through two contrasting types of music representing the fundamental moral choice she has to make:

> When she fell asleep she dreamed of the stage when the world was won, and when it seemed she had only to stretch her hands to the sky to take the stars. But in the midst of her triumph she perceived that she could no longer sing the music the world required; a new music was drumming in her ears, drowning the old music, a music written in a melancholy mode, and played on invisible harps. (83)

Even more importantly, the development of Evelyn's personal progress, as a woman as well as an artist, is marked by her changing perception of, and attitude towards, the parts she sings. In the early stages of her career, her repertoire includes parts associated with the traditions of Italian *bel canto*, and of early- and mid-nineteenth-century lyric opera, such as the eponymous heroine of Vincenzo Bellini's *Norma* (1831) and Marguerite in Charles Gounod's *Faust* (1859), but as her career progresses, she identifies more and more clearly with the dramatic roles in the operas of Richard Wagner—at first, with the pure and loving Elisabeth in *Tannhäuser* (1845), and subsequently with his increasingly complex and passionate characters, such as Isolde in *Tristan und Isolde* (1865), Brünnhilde in *Der Ring des Nibelungen* (1876), and—at least up to a point—Kundry in *Parsifal* (1882):

> As she lay between sleeping and waking, she strove to grasp the haunting, fugitive idea, but shadows of sleep fell, and in her dream there appeared two Tristans, a fair and a dark. When the shadows were lifted and she thought with an awakening brain, she smiled at the absurdity, and, striving to get close to her idea, to grip it about its very loins, she asked herself how much of her own life she could express in the part, for she always acted one side of her character. Her pious girlhood found expression in the Elizabeth, and what she termed the other side of her character she was going to put on the stage in the character Isolde. (149)

Evelyn's operatic career does not, of course, develop exclusively as a function of her growth as an artist: her progress as a singer is also a reflection of the development of her relationships with the three men in her life: her father, Owen, and a young and idealistic Irish composer Ulick Dean, with whom she engages in a passionate liaison. For Owen, Evelyn's growth as an artist is a project he wants to plan and control: in taking on the responsibility for the funding of her professional training while at the same time making her his mistress, he literally takes ownership of her career to the extent of making her a tool for the development of his own ambitions as a Wagner aficionado:

> And what an interest it would be to watch the development of that voice, surely the most beautiful soprano he had ever heard! She might begin with Margaret and Norma, if she liked, for in singing these popular operas she would acquire the whole of her voice, and also the great reputation which should precede and herald the final stage of her career. Isolde, Brunnhilde, Kundry, Wagner's finest works, had remained unsung—they had been merely howled. Evelyn should be the first to sing them. His eyes glowed with subdued passion as he thought of an afternoon, some three years hence, in the great theatre planned by the master himself, when he should see her rush in as the Witch Kundry. (68–69)

The nature of Evelyn's relationship with Ulick is more complex—it is far more spontaneous, and it has none of the transactional quality that

characterizes her arrangement with Owen; in addition to the evident sexual chemistry between them (she is clearly an Isolde to his Tristan), Ulick is himself a musician, and a friend of Evelyn's father, which makes him, at least initially, a much more likely candidate for her affections. Nonetheless, it is the differences in their approach to music that signal the incompatibility of their characters: thus, when he writes a newspaper article about her, he chooses to concentrate on her performance as Marguerite, a part which she has now outgrown as an artist ("with Margaret she was back in the schoolroom" [161]). Even more importantly, Ulick's vision of the world turns increasingly alien to Evelyn: his initial enthusiasm for Wagner wanes as his reflections on art become embroiled in a rather vague combination of Celticism and post-Christian spirituality,[1] which gradually becomes meaningless to Evelyn's less esoteric mind, firmly grounded in the palpable emotional intensity of both Wagner's music and her Catholic faith:

> Her thoughts paused a moment, and then she remembered something he had said. It had struck her at the time, but it appeared to her more than ever interesting. Catholicism, he had said, had not fallen from him—he had merely learnt that it was only part of the truth; he had gone further, he had raised himself to a higher spirituality. It was not that he wanted less, but more than Catholicism could give him. In religion, as in art, there were higher and lower states. We began by admiring *Faust*, and went on to Wagner, hence to Beethoven and Palestrina. Catholicism was the spiritual fare of the multitude; there was a closer communion with the divine essence. She had forgotten what came next . . . (299)

Paradoxically, the one man in Evelyn's life whom she can fully trust, and with whom she shares her understanding of music, is her father: while she knows that, as a committed Catholic, he cannot approve of the moral decisions she has taken, he does not reject her when she returns to London, and he recognizes and acknowledges her artistic achievements. Their connection, as father and daughter and as fellow artists, is, again, represented through their increasingly convergent tastes in music: while Mr Innes's main focus, as a musician, is the rediscovery of mediaeval and Renaissance church music, he has clear views on modern composers: he intensely dislikes "the jovialities of Rossini, whose *Stabat Mater*, he said, still desecrated Good Friday, and . . . the erotics of M. Gounod and his suite" (4), and he thinks that "the Margaret of Gounod and his librettist is not a real person, but a sort of keepsake beauty who sings keepsake music" (216), while at the same time he shares his daughter's main operatic fascination: "I hope you've not forgotten my teaching; as I've always said, music ended with Beethoven and began again with Wagner" (217). It is,

[1] Those dimensions of Ulick's character are clearly based on the mysticism of W. B. Yeats, whom Moore first met in 1894, around the time he was beginning to plan *Evelyn Innes*.

therefore, hardly surprising that one of the climactic scenes of the novel, in which Evelyn asks her father for forgiveness, is presented in direct parallel to the scene from the final act of *Die Walküre* in which Brünnhilde, one of Evelyn's favorite characters, asks her father Wotan's forgiveness for disobeying his orders:

> She knelt at her father's or at Wotan's feet—she could not distinguish; all limitations had been razed. She was *the* daughter at *the* father's feet. She knelt like the Magdalen. The position had always been natural to her, and habit had made it inveterate; there she bemoaned the difficulties of life, the passion which had cast her down and which seemed to forbid her an ideal. She caught her father's hand and pressed it against her cheek. She knew she was doing these things, yet she could not do otherwise; tears fell upon his hand, and the grief she expressed was so intense that she could not restrain her tears. But if she raised her face and saw his tears, his position as a stern father was compromised! She could only think of her own grief; the grief and regret of many years absorbed her; she was so lost in it that she expected him to answer her in Wotan's own music; she even smiled in her grief at her expectation, and continued the music of her intercession. (210–11)

Thus, it might appear that half-way through the novel, Evelyn Innes has reached a moment of personal, artistic, and indeed social equilibrium: as a successful singer, she seems to have found fulfilment as an artist, and she enjoys a financial status and a level of respectability and social acceptance that reduce the impact of the irregularity of her personal situation. In this way, she appears to have become, effectively, a New Woman, economically independent, sexually liberated, and free to pursue her personal ambitions and desires—and yet she finds herself increasingly disturbed and frustrated by the fact that, in the eyes of the Catholic Church, she remains a sinner. Owen's attempts to persuade her to ignore her religious impulses prove only partly successful: both during her Continental travels and back home in England, she finds herself drawn to various manifestations of Catholicism: she visits churches and experiences moments of remorse even if on the surface she adopts Owen's agnosticism. And it is again the influence of music that brings Evelyn to a decisive point in her life: on a visit to her father's church of St Joseph's to hear Palestrina's *Missa Brevis*, she meets Monsignor Mostyn, an influential prelate from Rome, who becomes a crucial presence in her life as she moves towards the decision not only to seek reconciliation with the Church, but also to leave the stage. The Monsignor may be fully appreciative of Evelyn's musical achievements—despite knowing about her past, he asks her to organize and sing at a charity concert in support of a Passionist convent at Wimbledon, where Evelyn had, coincidentally, gone on a retreat in the past—but he refuses to hear her sing at the opera because he has reservations about the moral implications of theater: in his opinion, "as at present constituted,

the stage is a dangerous influence" (330). This view chimes in with Evelyn's own thoughts as she reflects on her memories of the convent:

> Thinking of the poor sisters who lived in prayer and poverty on the edge of the common, she remembered that her life was given up to the portrayal of sensual emotion on the stage—an egotism which pursued her into every corner of her life. Compared with the lives of the poor sisters who had renounced all that was base in them, her life was very base indeed. In her stage life she was an agent of the sensual passion, not only with her voice, but with her arms, her neck and hair, and every expression of her face, and it was the craving of the music that had thrown her into Ulick's arms. If it had subjugated her, how much more would it subjugate and hold within its sensual persuasion the ignorant listener—the listener who would perceive in the music nothing but its sensuality. Why had the Church not placed stage life under the ban of mortal sin? (328–29)

There are multiple ironies around Evelyn's situation here. On the one hand, the potential culmination of her career as a Wagnerian dramatic soprano would be singing, in *Parsifal*, the part of Kundry—a sensuous sorceress and temptress, who is a personification of the very kind of emotion Evelyn finds increasingly objectionable. On the other hand, her vague and ambiguous personal arrangement with Owen, involving, when she leaves the stage, the possibility of a marriage—which would consolidate her social position as well as help her escape from her complex relationship with Ulick—becomes dependent on her playing the role ("when you have sung Kundry, we can be married" [286]). Ultimately, Evelyn faces an impossible choice between the demands of her faith, those of her passionate nature, and those of her art:

> She could never do all her religion asked. Her whole life would have to come to pieces; nothing of it would remain, and she entirely lost heart when she considered in detail the sacrifices she would have to make. She saw herself at Dulwich with her father, giving singing lessons, attending the services, and living about St Joseph's. She saw herself singing operas in every capital, and always a new lover at her heels. Both lives were equally impossible to her. (333–34)

The dilemma Evelyn experiences is a natural consequence of the moral absolutism characteristic of the Ultramontane spirit dominant in English Catholicism in the last quarter of the nineteenth century (cf. Norman 244–86), and represented in the novel by the Monsignor ("He was all-powerful in Rome. He spent his winters and springs in Rome, and no one thought of going to Rome without calling on him. It was through him that the Pope kept in touch with the English Catholics" [224]). For Evelyn, brought up in the faith and unable to leave her Catholic guilt behind, the Monsignor—described ironically by Ulick as "no more than an Oxford don with a taste for dogma and for a cardinal's hat" (235)—becomes

a personification of the moral certainty she seeks, but, interestingly, not a figure of authority: her social and economic independence means that she is free to talk to him as an equal, to engage him in moral and theological debate, and eventually to adopt him as her spiritual mentor and confessor, which she actively chooses to do precisely because he never wavers in upholding the rigorous Catholic values which she may have, for a long time, chosen to ignore, but which she has never been prepared to reject. Paradoxically, then, the Monsignor assumes, in Evelyn's life, a role that is analogous to Owen's—they may represent two fundamentally different moral principles between which she needs to make a life-defining choice, but their relationships with her are ultimately determined by the way they engage with the two most essential dimensions of her identity—as an artist and as a woman:

> Evelyn sat watching him, fascinated by the clear, peremptory, ecclesiastical dignity which he represented. If he had a singing voice, she said to herself, it would be a tenor. He had allowed the conversation to wander from the convent to the concert; and they were soon talking of their musical preferences. There was an impersonal tenderness, a spiritual solicitude in his voice which enchained her; no single idea held her, but wave after wave of sensation passed, transforming and dissolving, changeable as a cloud. (323)

The resolution to Evelyn's dilemma comes as a consequence of her return visit to the Wimbledon convent following the charity concert: the invitation she receives to join the nuns for another retreat intensifies her internal struggle. In a climactic scene, on a sleepless night she reaches the point of contemplating suicide, but the accidental discovery of her old broken scapular, which she interprets as a sign from the Virgin Mary, becomes for her a moment of psychological and emotional breakthrough. In due course, she reforms her life: she makes her confession and takes communion, she breaks off with both Owen and Ulick, and she decides to return to the convent to try to find some form of composure and reflect on her future. While there, she comes to what is, for her, perhaps the most difficult discovery: when asked to sing at a Benediction service, she realizes that her voice still resonates with the sensuous tones of her passionate past, and will therefore never again achieve the virginal purity of the voices of the nuns:

> She had never known how much of her life of passion and desire had entered into her voice, and she was shocked at its impurity. Her singing sounded like silken raiment among sackcloth, and she lowered her voice, feeling it to be indecorous and out of place in the antique hymn. Her voice, she felt, must have revealed her past life to the nuns, her voice must have shocked them a little; her voice must have brought the world before them too vividly. For all her life was in her voice, she would never be

> able to sing this hymn with the sexless grace as they did. Her voice would be always Evelyn Innes—Owen Asher's mistress. (451)

While the ending of the novel is disappointingly inconclusive—Evelyn leaves the convent after her retreat, though the reading of St Teresa of Ávila's *The Way of Perfection* has by then opened her mind to the possibility of becoming a nun herself—the reasons for this lack of proper closure have less to do with Moore's overall design of his story than with the pragmatics of the publication of the novel: as he explains in the Preface to *Sister Teresa* (1901)—technically a sequel to, but practically the second volume of, *Evelyn Innes*—the original novel was growing beyond the length deemed suitable for publication in one-volume format, which led the author and the publisher to decide to break the story and continue it in another volume, under a new title. In this context, it is clear why *Sister Teresa* does not really develop as an independent story, with its own narrative trajectory: rather, it is an extended account of the process of Evelyn's gradual transformation into her new self as a nun. Following her final rejection of both Owen and Ulick, as well as the emigration to Rome and the eventual death of her father, Evelyn confirms her decision to take her vows and spend the rest of her life in the Wimbledon Passionist convent.

A key aspect of Evelyn's rejection of her previous worldly life is, of course, her decision to subject her artistic ambitions and tastes to the requirements and expectations of her new life. The radical nature of her choice in that respect goes beyond mere loyalty to the church: independent-minded as ever, she rejects Monsignor Mostyn's suggestion that she could still sing Handel and Bach: "Well, Monsignor, perhaps you won't understand me at all, and will think me very wilful; but if I am not to sing the music I made a success in, I don't want to sing at all. I can't do things by halves" (14–15). Initially, her enthusiasm for her new vocation allows her to identify with the religious music she sings regardless of her own tastes: her interpretation of Schubert's "Ave Maria" brings out in her voice the spiritual purity which she feared she had lost:

> Evelyn's voice filled with the beauty of the melody, and she sang the phrase which closes the stanza, a phrase which dances like a puff of wind in an evening bough, so tenderly, so lovingly, that acute tears trembled under the eyelids. And all her soul was in her voice when she sang the phrase of passionate faith which the lonely, disheartened woman sings, looking up from the desert rock. Then her voice sank into the calm beauty of the Ave Maria, now given with confidence of the Virgin's intercession, and the broken chords passed down the keyboard, uniting with the last notes of the solemn octaves, which had sounded through the song like bells heard across an evening landscape. (91–92)

This sense of inner peace, however, does not last: obliged to perform, in order to please the other nuns as well as the convent's patrons, music which

both her father and herself always considered aesthetically mediocre ("she was so weary of singing Gounod's 'Ave Maria' that she had intentionally accentuated the vulgarity of the melody, and wondered if the caricature had been noticed" [188]), she finds herself increasingly frustrated by the discipline of the convent and increasingly unwilling to obey its rules, which she manifests by playing, to her sister nuns, dramatic tunes from her favorite Wagner operas :

> The prelude to "Tristan" and the "Forest Murmurs," and the Rhine journey could not but trouble the quiet souls of Sister Elizabeth and Sister Veronica, and Evelyn knew that in playing this music to them she was doing a wicked thing. But a strange will had taken possession of her and she had to obey it. (194)

As her psychological crisis deepens, Evelyn—now Sister Teresa—begins to suffer from hallucinations in which she sees a variety of scenes and hears music from *Der Ring des Nibelungen*; at a moment of increasing anxiety and confusion she eventually decides to leave the convent, but as she is about to do so, she falls seriously ill, and in her delirium continues to sing fragments from *Lohengrin* and *Tristan und Isolde*. However, such subconscious attempts to return to her earlier life of passion and creative expression mark the end of Evelyn Innes the singer. When she eventually recovers from her illness, during which she came close to death, made her final confession, and received communion, she discovers that she has lost her voice, which dramatically restricts her chances of making a living as a concert singer. As a result, she ultimately decides to remain a nun, her artistic ambitions reduced to offering basic music teaching to pupils in the school now run by her convent.

Ultimately, then, Moore's vision of the woman artist in *Evelyn Innes* and *Sister Teresa* proves to be much less radical than the opening sections of the original novel suggest that it might become: despite achieving undoubted artistic success, securing a stable financial and social position, and rebuilding her relationship with her father, Evelyn is unable, in the long term, to resist the feelings of remorse resulting from her traditional Catholic upbringing, and ultimately chooses to reject her personal and artistic ambitions in order to conform to the norms of her religion. However, the story does not see Evelyn either as a Christian heroine or as a victim of the Church: the narrative, in its focus on the diversity of factors affecting the development of her personality and the multiplicity of motivations influencing the decisions she makes in her life, offers no easy judgements that would make it possible to see the novel either as a moralistic story of a Victorian fallen woman repenting for her sins and rebuilding her life, or as a critique of the psychological pressure exerted on a talented young woman

by the power of the patriarchal structures of her society and her religion. The paradox of *Evelyn Innes* and *Sister Teresa* lies in the fact that the heroine remains, throughout the two novels, her own woman, ready to take ownership of her decisions and to accept the consequences of her choices; she may end up sacrificing her independence in social and economic terms, but she does not do so because she has been defeated. On the contrary, her laughter as she repeatedly calls herself, in a conversation with her friend Louise Heilbron in the last chapter of *Sister Teresa*, "a broken spirit" (235, 236)—a claim which her interlocutor is entirely right not to take at face value—demonstrates that she maintains her sense of individuality by distancing herself, as best she can, from the circumstances of the situation in which she finds herself in the convent, and by negotiating the parameters within which she will be operating, and which she eventually comes to accept. As a result, while the message that the story of Evelyn Innes conveys may be ambivalent, the reader nonetheless retains both respect and sympathy for her throughout, even if the decisions she takes may sometimes be very difficult to understand and accept, particularly for the modern reader.

An interesting if artistically less satisfactory coda to the story of Evelyn Innes is added in the second edition of *Sister Teresa* (1909)—rewritten to the extent that, in comparison to the original 1901 text, it essentially constitutes a different novel. The focus of the first part of this version of the story moves away from Evelyn's experience of convent life—a significant part of the narrative shifts its attention to Owen, his travels in the Mediterranean and in the Sahara, and his eventual return to England, where he subsequently attempts to re-establish a form of platonic friendship with Evelyn. When the narrative eventually returns to Evelyn, it loses much of the precision and intensity of its discussion of her emotional and spiritual struggles, concentrating instead on the internal mechanisms of convent life and on Evelyn's increasing inability to conform to the requirements that the rules of her order impose on her everyday life: ultimately, at the end of the novel Evelyn decides to leave the convent and open an orphanage for disabled children. This change in the development and the resolution of the plot is no doubt a reflection of the author's increasingly skeptical view of Catholicism[2] (a long-lapsed Catholic, Moore converted to Anglicanism in 1903)—but it does not seem to be convincingly justified either by the narrative logic of the story or in terms of the consistency of its overall tone,

[2] Cf. Cave: "For Evelyn to have left the convent would have amounted to a rejection of the Roman Catholic position. To accept the conscience as the gauge of one's responsibility and the visible world as exemplary of God's beneficence and not as a vanity to be spurned in preference for eternal treasures hereafter is to challenge the power of the confessional to act as mediator between God and man" (160).

as it marks a clear departure from the complex and nuanced analysis of Evelyn's religious experience and motivation which was attempted both in *Evelyn Innes* and in the 1901 version of *Sister Teresa*.

The discussion of the impact of Evelyn's artistic inspiration on her response to convent life is also significantly reduced in the rewritten text. While the 1909 text retains the scenes in which she sacrifices her artistic principles by singing the popular music by Schubert and Gounod in order to maximize the convent's income, the analysis of the impact of Wagner is dramatically reduced: the sequence of events, towards the end of the 1901 version of the novel, describing Evelyn's illness, her hallucinations, and the eventual loss of her voice is deleted, and the only trace of her old fascination with Wagner is that she teaches her bullfinches to sing some of the key motifs from *Der Ring*. This change might appear justified in the context of a reading that suggests that the main focus of the novel's discussion of art is the difference between aestheticism and utilitarianism[3]—the 1909 ending emphasizes Evelyn's ultimate defeat as an artist more directly than the more nuanced conclusion of the 1901 version—but it is inconsistent with the intensity of the presentation of Evelyn's character in *Evelyn Innes*, as well as with the bibliographical and critical status of the 1909 revision as a whole: Moore himself abandoned the 1909 text when authorizing a collected American edition of his work a decade later, and subsequent reprints of the novels have tended to choose the 1901 text as well (cf. Frazier 416).

Although *Evelyn Innes* and *Sister Teresa* have not generated as much critical debate as some of Moore's other novels—possibly because of his own dissatisfaction with them in later years—some of the recent criticism has seen them as important contributions to *fin-de-siècle* British fiction; they have been described, for example, as novels of faith and doubt, as Wagnerian *Künstlerromane*, and as Freudian narratives (cf. Heilmann and Llewellyn). At the same time, it seems that the consistency and intensity of their focus on the central protagonist, who is prepared to struggle, against the odds and against external pressures, to try to reconcile her essentially irreconcilable ambitions, obligations, and beliefs, make her story an important contribution to late Victorian New Woman fiction. At the peak of her operatic career, Evelyn is not only a woman artist, but also a defiant New Woman—an independent, liberated professional—and although her subsequent choices may not always be ones that she might be expected

[3] Cf. Huguet: "In the text's compelling exploration of proselytism, the dilemma which the prima donna fails to recognize is not between selfish sensualism and unworldly abnegation, but between essential aestheticism and motivated art, spelt out by Moore as art for religion's sake" (19).

to make given her background and circumstances, they are nonetheless hers, and hers alone. Ultimately, it is the personal autonomy that Evelyn Innes always maintains—as a woman, an artist, a Catholic, and even as a nun—that makes her the most unlikely of late Victorian literary characters: a convincing Catholic New Woman artist.

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Cherishing the Body: Embodiment and the Intersubjective World in Michèle Roberts's *Playing Sardines*

The aim of this essay is to read short stories in Michèle Roberts's *Playing Sardines* (2001) through the prism of theories of embodiment. Situating themselves in opposition to the Cartesian body/mind dualism, with its accompanying conception of disembodied intellect as constitutive of the self, these theories refuse to denigrate the body as "the slimy site of dangerous desires" (Wolkowitz 22), "a mute container of subjectivity" (Oksala 224), or "the 'prison' that the mind must escape to achieve knowledge" (Hekman 62). Instead, they insist on recognizing the embodied character of human experience and conceptualize the body as intricately engaged with the surrounding world. As I intend to show, these views find their reflection in Roberts's stories, the purpose of which has always been, as she declared in an interview given at the time when she had "just finished" working on the collection, "to rescue the body and cherish it and love it and touch it and smell it and make it into language" ("*January*"). This self-appointed project seems to me to be consistent with the approach of embodiment theorists, who also "rescue" the reputation of the body by identifying it as an ethically productive locus of intersubjectivity.

Some aspects of Roberts's prose to be considered in this essay have already been discussed by other critics. These include, for instance, the sensuousness of the author's descriptions, her complex relationship with her Catholic upbringing, and her celebration of the minutiae of everyday life, all of which have been defined as staples of Roberts's fiction. What I wish to suggest, however, is that these apparently disparate elements not only come together but also acquire deeper significance when they are recognized as stemming from her idea of the human body as opening the way to ethically meaningful social encounters. To explain the implications inherent in this conception, I will rely on a range of philosophical ideas

gathered under the umbrella term of "theories of embodiment." Central to this will be Maurice Merleau-Ponty's notion of subjectivity as an essentially embodied mode of being-in-the-world. In the course of the discussion, however, I will also refer to Simone de Beauvoir, Merleau-Ponty's commentators (such as Sonia Kruks and Jorella Andrews) as well as scholars who have drawn, sometimes loosely and only indirectly, on his ideas (including Elizabeth Grosz and Sandra Lee Bartky).

The argument will consist of three parts. It will begin by discussing Roberts's stories as sharing with the philosophies of embodiment their skepticism towards the Cartesian body/mind dualism. In particular, it will concentrate on stories depicting the negative consequences of privileging the mind over the body, a stance that Sonia Kruks identifies as leading to what she refers to as "antagonistic intersubjectivity" (39–42). The second part will center on scenes dramatizing the moment of liberation, which Roberts's characters experience as they move towards more positive models of being-in-the-world. Finally, in the third part of the essay, the focus will shift to these positive, mutually affirmative experiences of intersubjectivity.

Antagonistic Intersubjectivity

What lies at the core of Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology is the concept of *le corps propre*,[1] which the philosopher introduces to emphasize the "exceptional relation between the subject, its body, and its world" ("Unpublished Text" 284). Merleau-Ponty refuses to see the body as "*one of the objects in the world*, under the gaze of a separated mind" (284, emphasis in the original). On the contrary, he sees consciousness and embodiment as inextricably interconnected, claiming that the body "is our *point of view on the world*, the place where the mind invests itself in a certain physical and historical situation" (284, emphasis in the original). Thus, as Donald A. Landes explains, for Merleau-Ponty, the body cannot be reduced to "something that I can stand outside of and simply describe, putting on a metaphysician's hat and spectacles in order to assume the privilege of a *pensée de survol*" ("Weight" 162). Rather, in the phenomenological framework, *le corps propre* should be conceived of "as a totality of external and internal perceptions,

[1] In a 1962 translation of *Phenomenology of Perception* by Colin Smith, the concept was rendered as "the lived body." In a more recent translation, Donald A. Landes uses the phrase "one's own body," justifying his choice in the introduction (xlviii–xlix). To avoid confusion, I will use Merleau-Ponty's original expression.

intelligence, affectivity, motility, and sexuality" (Oksala 213), giving rise to the idea of situated, embodied subjectivity.

What Roberts's stories clearly share with the philosophical position outlined above is their recognition of the body as the horizon of experience and their skepticism towards attempts at privileging the mind over the body. *Playing Sardines* repeatedly depicts the negative consequences of such prioritizing, outlining how *pensée de survol*, usually translated as high-altitude thinking, where the "I" assumes an interpretative distance from the world,[2] gives rise to what Sonia Kruks refers to as "antagonistic intersubjectivity" (39–42). Adopting such a position, as Kruks explains, "I cast myself as a pure, desituated subject and the other as an object that I desire to dominate" (39). The ethical consequences of such distancing can be damaging, as Roberts's stories aptly illustrate, trapping the rationally-minded individuals in solipsism, precluding meaningful communication, and resulting in "situations of inequality, oppression, or exploitation" (Kruks 39).

A perfect representation of such "antagonistic intersubjectivity" can be found in the title story of the collection where *pensée de survol* characterizes the husband of the protagonist-narrator. An architectural historian and "a renowned expert on the theory and practice of Renaissance building" (Roberts, *Playing Sardines* 4), the man is principally defined in terms of his "intimidating sharp-eyed expertise" (5). Although he spends long hours in Venetian Renaissance churches, his approach is cold and rational. He does not draw any aesthetic pleasure from their architecture; he studies the buildings in order to formulate purely scientific hypotheses about them: "that a particular tomb might have been designed by Sansovino; that the style of a particular capital matched the details of one in a drawing by Palladio" (5). Afterwards, he dives into the archives to find documents that would corroborate his theories (5). With his single-minded obsession with the forms of Renaissance art (and blatant disregard for its humanist values), he can be associated with "a very specific form of masculinity" that, in the words of Carol Wolkowitz, "privileges rational, abstract thought, [and] seeks to transcend the here-and-now of everyday life" (95).

The "order, harmony and proportion" that the architectural historian appreciates in Renaissance buildings (Roberts, *Playing Sardines* 5) also marks his approach to human bodies, which he sees as in need of discipline and control (with the exception, perhaps, of his sexual appetite which he shows no inclination to restrain). This is reflected in the scene when the couple are invited to dine with the aristocratic owner of a neo-Palladian villa and he arrives there "faultlessly dressed in an immaculately cut suit" (8). His approach is clearly shared by their "manicured host" wearing

[2] Cf. Landes (Translator's Introduction xxxi).

a very similar suit, and the elegant director of a local museum, with painted nails, hair "swept up in a chignon," an "expertly made up" face and feet "expensively shod in crocodile" (9). The narrator herself, wearing a denim skirt and a striped T-shift, provokes in her husband a sense of disdain. It is not only her lack of decorum in clothing, however, that makes the man regard her as "unsatisfactory" (6). The list of what he perceives as her inadequacies is much longer, marking the extent of her refusal to submit her body to the patriarchal norms of feminine behavior:

> I walked around the flat barefoot; I didn't bother wearing makeup because it melted off in the heat; I drank more wine than a decorous *signora* should; my clothes were not elegant; and I had been caught mopping up the sauce on my plate with a piece of bread stuck on the end of my fork. (6)

As he attempts to correct her alleged faults, he treats her as if she were an inert object "capable of being acted on, coerced, or constrained by external forces" (Grosz 9).

Further examples of this antagonistic attitude towards the female body are portrayed in other stories in the collection. One of these is "A Bodice Rips," a narrative that reworks and satirizes the erotic excesses of classic gothic "bodice-rippers." The story centers on Maria, the only child of a stern, god-fearing industrialist who has made his fame and fortune as the inventor of "the Revolutionary Bust and Stomach Stiffener" (Roberts, *Playing Sardines* 133), a corset where "thin ribs of steel" replace the traditional whalebone (131) and which Susanne Gruss aptly identifies as an "easily decipherable . . . metaphor of the patriarchal control over women's bodies" (231). The idea of the corset originates when Maria comes to give her father "his customary Sunday kiss" and he is perturbed by her soft body, which fills him with "unease" and "distaste" (Roberts, *Playing Sardines* 133). Here, again, the female body is seen "as a passive object" that "requires careful discipline and training" (Grosz 9). The girl's unruly body, all "wriggl[ing]" and "squirm[ing]" (Roberts, *Playing Sardines* 133), is seen as wild and threatening and, therefore, needs to be placed in "a lattice of total control" (131). A similar account of how patriarchy turns women into objects of disciplinary control is given, this time without any humorous undertones, in "A Story for Hallowe'en," which offers an account of how "disobedient nuns would have been locked on a diet of bread and water" in a dilapidated tower at the back of their convent (174). Be it by means of a corset, a restrictive diet or physical isolation, the female body in *Playing Sardines* is recurrently disciplined to comply with socially accepted definitions of femininity. Commenting on *Impossible Saints*, Tomasz Dobrogoszcz presents Roberts as an author who demonstrates how

"girls' innate natural potential of corporal enjoyment is throttled by the dogmatic system which advocates the deprecation of the body for religious reasons" (48). Much the same is true for the 2001 collection, in which patriarchy, whether represented by authorities of the Catholic Church or male authoritarians in the family, attempts to supervise, control and contain the female body.

As elsewhere in Roberts's writing, the focus is often on women who fall prey to such machinations by internalizing such objectifying attitudes—be they Christian conceptions of the body as sinful and corrupt, or disparaging comments on their style of clothing, table manners or personal interests. As a consequence, they start to distance themselves from their bodies and to discipline them, a practice frequently recorded in Roberts's stories. The narrator of the eponymous story clearly proves to be the "strong woman" (Roberts, *Playing Sardines* 6) her husband claims her to be (although in a rather different sense from the one he would have wished) and finds a way to resist the objectifying script while also refusing "to feel crushed by [her imputed] inadequacies" (4). She starts collecting discarded but beautiful packaging, orange-wrappers, patterned brown-paper bags, "fragments of old tile or scraps of carved and gilded wood" (5) in what she herself regards as an act of "self-defence" (4), responding to her husband's expert knowledge of Renaissance architecture with her own "connoisseurship as a collector of rubbish" (5). Unlike him, she perceives the world around her, with its sensuous cornucopia of patterns, colors and textures, as a source of aesthetic delight, as something that she can marvel at and admire rather than study and appraise. She also refuses to submit to any coercive social practices, turning her body into a site of contestation. Both of these gestures are her ways of exercising agency, countering objectification, and engaging in what Grosz sees as "modes of guerrilla subversion of patriarchal codes" (144). Other characters in the stories, however, are not as resilient. Maria, the protagonist of "A Bodice Rips," is too young and too immature to resist the restraining patriarchal script. As her body is packed in a corset so tight that when she drops her glove she cannot bend over to pick it up, her growing-up mirrors the process outlined in Simone de Beauvoir's 1949 masterpiece, *The Second Sex*, which shows how young girls are trained into becoming inert, passive objects (283). According to de Beauvoir, in patriarchal societies, "virile beauty lies in the fitness of the body for action, in strength, agility, flexibility"; on the other hand, the female body "must present the inert and passive qualities of an object" (174). The little girl is thus encouraged to think of herself "as a marvellous doll" (283). Wearing uncomfortable clothes that deprive her of "liberty of movement" (299), the girl quickly sees herself as inferior to boys. De Beauvoir writes:

> In girls, the exuberance of life is restrained, their idle vigour turns into nervousness; their too sedate occupations do not use up their superabundant energy; they become bored, and, through boredom and to compensate for their position of inferiority, they give themselves up to gloomy and romantic daydreams . . . Neglected, "misunderstood," they seek consolation in narcissistic fancies: they view themselves as romantic heroines of fiction . . . (299)

Maria turns into such a doll-like creature, whom the gaze of "old soldiers" at her father's funeral reduces to an erotic object, "so young and so beautiful" (Roberts, *Playing Sardines* 133). As in de Beauvoir's account, she also escapes into a world of fantasy where dreams of restored agency are entangled with sexual reveries in which she becomes a heroine in a bodice ripper.

In the remaining stories, the reader also comes across mature women who share Maria's sense of frustration with her body. Many of them are preoccupied with their physical appearance, struggle to lose weight, and devote much of their time and energy to what they eat. Bella in "The Miracle" keeps to a diet that mostly consists of "rice cakes ad camomile tea" (158). The anonymous protagonist of "Lists" shops exclusively for low-fat products (100, 103) and, in the three months that mark the span of the story, starts a "new slimming diet" (100), attends "aerobics class[es]" (101), searches for a "diet recipe book" (102), and buys an "exercise bicycle" together with a "new leotard, sweatbands, [and a] workout video" (104). Torn between her obvious appetite and her desire to be slim, she ends up making preposterous choices, such as when she buys "large tubs of low-fat cottage cheese" (101) or considers substituting goose fat with cottage cheese when cooking goose *rillettes* (104). "Body issues" are also experienced by the protagonist of "A Feast for Catherine." Living her life according to "strict rules" (77), she needs to prove to herself that she is "worthy" of love and affection. She buys elegant outfits, which she only ever wears for her lover, and otherwise keeps deep in her wardrobe to make sure they remain "pristine" and never "come into contact with mud and dust, with cat hairs, with smelly dogs" (77). Similarly, she is also "always on a diet," determined that "she must remain slim" just as she "must not grow fat and middle-aged" (77). Dieting becomes for her one of the many "framework[s] of confinement, designed . . . by others but embraced . . . with eagerness" (82).

For Sandra Lee Bartky, all such internalized rules and routines should be seen in women as forms of "self-surveillance" and interpreted as a sign of "obedience to patriarchy" (81). As Bartky explains,

> The woman who checks her makeup half a dozen times a day to see if her foundation has caked or her mascara has run, who worries that the wind or the rain may spoil

> her hairdo, who looks frequently to see if her stockings have bagged at the ankle or who, feeling fat, monitors everything she eats, has become, just as surely as the inmate of the Panopticon, a self-policing subject, a self committed to a relentless self-surveillance. (81)

According to Naomi Wolf, women who are obsessively preoccupied with their appearance allow "beauty" to be constructed as the foundation of their identity, which leaves them particularly "vulnerable to outside approval" (14). Such vulnerability, as Roberts's stories show, becomes increasingly pronounced as women begin to age and the gap widens between their appearance and the social expectations thereof. As a result, the older female body becomes, to quote Kathleen Woodward, "both invisible and hypervisible" (xvi). This paradoxical condition is perfectly captured by the sixty-year-old narrator of ''Fluency'':

> . . . as I knew very well from what the culture shouted at me from every angle, every advertising hoarding, every TV programme, every cinema screen, old women were invisible and should stay that way. Worse, they were obscene and disgusting if they entertained thoughts of love and sex. Women past the menopause should cut their hair and retire from the field. They should not want physical pleasures, they should not have desires. Their ageing, sagging, unspeakably ugly flesh should remain hidden. They should not be occasions of shame and embarrassment to the young. And so on and so on. (Roberts, *Playing Sardines* 69)

The narrator of "Fluency" (just like the heroine of "Playing Sardines") refuses to be confined by prevailing social norms and paradigms. Moreover, in her own work as a photographer, she counters ageist prejudices by creating portraits of mature people, which she describes as "dignified, beautiful, angry, [and] tender" (69). On the whole, however, Roberts's collection portrays patriarchal culture as an arena where "antagonistic intersubjectivity" remains "a fundamental possibility of all human relations" (Kruks 39), and practices of objectification and self-objectification are everyday experiences for many girls and women.

Moments of Liberation

As argued by David Malcolm, however, "the balance of dark and light" in *Playing Sardines* is tipped in favor of the latter (24). Unsurprisingly, then, many of the stories contain scenes that dramatize the moment of liberation, which Roberts's characters experience as they move away from viewpoints based on "antagonistic intersubjectivity" towards more positive,

affirmative stances. Such scenes often accentuate what Elizabeth Grosz describes as the "ability of bodies to always extend the frameworks which attempt to contain them, to seep beyond their domains of control" (xi). In *Playing Sardines*, this happens as Roberts's characters abandon Foucauldian disciplinary practices and walk away from damaging relationships or escape self-imposed regimes.

For Maria, the eighteen-year-old heroine of "A Bodice Rips," the sense of liberation comes when she finally removes her corset. Although she is provoked into taking this step by practical reasons rather than willfulness or rebellion, the very experience proves liberating. The scene is rendered in sensual terms: "Rather than steel cutting into her through canvas, she now had a delicious sensation of thick, rich satin next to her skin, flowing over her soft flesh as smooth and cool as milk" (Roberts, *Playing Sardines* 137). However, what she truly appreciates is her restored sense of agency and liberty. As she runs downstairs, her movements are uninhibited, and she experiences "such a marvellous feeling" (137) that she starts running up and down the stairs again and again (137). The physical exertion makes her pulse accelerate and her eyes "sparkle" (138), producing in her a deep sense of satisfaction and release. Interestingly, the description also emphasizes a sense of mind-body connectedness as the "unwonted exercise" (138) also makes her mind "race" (138). Thus, as the story approaches its end (where the authorship of the "bodice ripper" we have been reading is ascribed to a "shameless" teenager), it is with ironic satisfaction rather than regret that Maria announces: "Life was certainly dangerous when you did not wear a corset . . . You were not in control" (148).

Similar ecstatic moments of liberation are experienced by other women depicted in the collection. In the case of grownup characters, these are often framed as epiphanies and exemplify Merleau-Ponty's concept of *le corps propre* by highlighting the embodied character of experience. In "A Feast for Catherine," for instance, such a moment arrives when the protagonist travels to Siena to meet her lover, Paul. As elsewhere in the collection, Italy is associated here with "a certain sensuality of living" (Gruss 300) and thus provides a perfect location for a romantic liaison. Its Mediterranean charm and excellent cuisine, however, also prove to offer consolation enough when the man fails to show up. As Catherine finds herself sipping a glass of cold white wine in a sun-drenched piazza, she comes to realize that her love was simply "an excuse for occasionally leaving home . . . so that she could be sure she was choosing freely to return" (Roberts, *Playing Sardines* 83). Her transformation as she takes off her black jacket to reveal "a sleeveless yellow lace blouse" (80) mirrors the transition, outlined at the beginning of the story, which Catholic churches undergo between "the penitential weeks of Lent," when they are "masked and veiled . . .

[and] shrouded in darkness," and Easter, when they "burst forth in candlelight and organ music, in gold copes, in streams of incense, in baskets of perfumed lilies on the altars decorated with embroideries and lace" (75), revealing that Catholicism can also function in positive ways in Roberts's fiction as a treasure trove of stories, images and symbols. Though deprived of its liturgical resonance, the Catholic reference also emphasizes the quasi-religious, epiphanic character of Catherine's experience, a quality that is further underscored when the narrator describes her moment of insight as "thoughts [that] arrived like angles tumbling from the sky" (83). With her brief, personal Lent being over, the heroine wipes off her tears and decides to abandon her diet, ordering two dishes of *carciofi*, because she cannot decide which to choose. Her *joie de vivre* is restored thanks to Italy and its sensual pleasures: the wine, the good food, the sun that caresses her bare skin, and the sights and sounds of Siena.

A similar epiphanic moment is experienced by the narrator of "Playing Sardines." Fed up with her husband's infidelities and his snobbishness, she realizes it is Italy, not him, she has fallen in love with (16). She goes back to London and although she is "penniless and homeless" (18), she has no regrets as both her intellect and her senses have been nourished during her short-lived Italian marriage. This connection between the two realms of experience which are often seen as separate in Western philosophy and culture is emphasized at the closing of the story, where the woman finds herself in Portobello Road Market and discovers that her aesthetic appreciation for the neo-classical architecture of Notting Hill has been enhanced by her familiarity with "the names of all the different parts of the houses," which she can now "recite . . . like poetry" (18). In the scene, the intellectual and the sensual come together, complementing rather than competing with each other.

A particularly interesting study of yet another similar moment of liberation is offered in "Monsieur Mallarmé Changes Names," which gives a fictional account of how the French symbolist poet solved his writer's block and composed what is usually regarded as his most significant achievement, "A Throw of the Dice" (1897). The story is typically read as suggesting that it was the creation of a female *alter ego* and the practice of cross-dressing that allowed Mallarmé to overcome the creative crisis (Gruss 192; Falcus 155). However, while the ending of the story does announce that "Stephanie could write things that Stephane could not" (Roberts, *Playing Sardines* 27), Mallarmé's imagined journey towards poetic inspiration is far more complex, consisting of a series of steps that put the poet in touch with his body. The real Mallarmé is typically seen by scholars as a poet of remarkable "intellectual seriousness" (cf. Williams 14). In Roberts's version, this exaggerated intellectualism is precisely what

causes the writer's block and needs to be left behind. Significantly, Mallarmé's journey towards creativity begins with the poet leaving his Parisian flat to stay at his summer house at Valvins. The apartment, defined in the story as the place where the poet gathers notable artists, writers and intellectuals for his regular Tuesday evening salons, is strongly associated with erudite discussions, cerebral conversations and the concomitant social pressures. The meetings are depicted as "formal affair[s] . . . famous for the high seriousness of the discourse on offer" (Roberts, *Playing Sardines* 21), and both Mallarmé and his guests find them constraining: the poet has to "live up" to "a reputation of genius" while his visitors likewise feel "obliged to be really intelligent and well-informed on the latest cultural issues of the day" (21). Valvins, on the other hand, allows for "a kind of mental unbuttoning of shirt collars" (20). Released from intellectual pressures and no longer confined by their official, social roles, the host and his visitors are now faced with possibilities (signaled in the passage through the frequent use of the verb "could"): "they could be childish if they wanted; they could lie on their backs on the grass; they could doze off and say nothing at all; or they could crack risqué jokes and tell bawdy stories; they could feel peacefully and comfortably themselves" (21). The countryside, whose creative potential is suggested by its close proximity to the Seine and a forest, allows for a more relaxed atmosphere where it is not just the mind but also the body that gets refreshed, nourished and stimulated. The visitors eat and drink, they lounge on the grass, they play bowls and croquet, they go sailing and fishing. The painters work not because they have to but because they consider it "a form of pleasure" (22), and the poet is free to disappear into his study to compose when and how he chooses. As the story emphasizes, it is during the "two or three months" which the Mallarmé family yearly spend at Valvins that the poet creates his masterpiece. Restoring an equilibrium between the mind and the body proves as crucial in the process as his new-found identity as Stephanie Mallarmé does.

Affirmative Intersubjectivity

What "Monsieur Mallarmé Changes Names" also illustrates is that the movement away from constricting intellectualism and towards recognizing the value of embodied experience opens the way to more positive, mutually beneficial relationships while also awakening in Mallarmé an appreciation for physical work. The first of these outcomes can be observed in the poet's attitude towards his mistress, Madame Méry Laurent.

During his brief visit back in Paris, Mallarmé realizes that he has not paid enough attention to her bodily needs and now decides to focus "on giving her pleasure" (26). Then, on returning to Valvins, he astonishes his family by volunteering, "for the first time ever in his life" (26), to do the dishes. In its playful way, the story links Mallarmé's creative outburst with his new-found appreciation for experiences that have nothing to do with intellectual pursuits or highbrow debates but are down-to-earth, sensory and corporeal, rooted in Merleau-Ponty's conception of the body as "the vehicle of being in the world" (*Phenomenology* 84).

For Merleau-Ponty, "having a body means being united with a definite milieu, merging with certain projects, and being perpetually engaged therein" (84). Such an understanding of embodiment (as the experience of being engaged and united with the surrounding world) explains why it is possible to see it as offering a chance of affirmative intersubjectivity. *Playing Sardines* offers numerous examples of harmonious relations and encounters with others, frequently emphasizing the role of the senses in establishing and maintaining these positive bonds. Roberts's critics often underline the significance of food in her writing. Sarah Falcus, for instance, points to the writer's "sensual and exact descriptions of culinary preparation and consumption" (239) while Ralf Hertel talks about "her obsession with the gustatory—and particularly with French cooking" (132). Roberts's fiction, however, abounds in descriptions of all kinds of sensory experiences. While it is true that she often provides elaborate descriptions of food, her characters also talk about the pleasures of observing the world, describe their fondness for painting or photography, extol the virtues of gardening or manual work, or find satisfaction in walking barefoot through urban landscapes. What is even more important, for Roberts, all the senses seem to be invested with an ethical potential. Even vision, which often features in feminist discourse as "objectifying, denigrating, and alienating" (Andrews 168), is depicted as allowing to foster satisfying relations between people. This happens, for instance, in the case of the photographer in "Fluency," who uses her art to restore the dignity and acknowledge the beauty of ageing bodies, or of her friend, Pierre, who studies her portraits, "taking the time and trouble . . . to try to see things through my eyes" (Roberts, *Playing Sardines* 69). As elsewhere in the collection, the sensing body is represented here as open to the world, facilitating and deepening meaningful engagements with others.

Quite often in the stories, such sensual bonds link partners and lovers. In "Hypsipyle to Jason," a narrative that reimagines the affair between the mythical queen of Lemnos and the leader of the Argonauts in a contemporary setting, Hypsipyle addresses her absent lover in a story-length monologue that makes frequent references to sensory experience. His

absence, in particular, is associated with silence. Though filled with the sounds made by insects, birds, cattle, airplanes, tractors and other people, the experience is still referred to as "silence" as it is deprived of his voice—his singing, his whistling, his laughter, his jokes, his anecdotes, even his cursing, and the loud music he listens to (195). In her monologue, Hypsipyle also speaks of her capacity to hear her lover on his way back home even when he is "still miles away" (195). In a passage that brings to mind Merleau-Ponty's conception of intertwining, she describes her ears as "attuned" to her lover and insists that she is able to sense "a light alteration in the silence" as the man is shifting gear along his way (195). Their nights together are also depicted through auditory references, with Jason "whispering . . . words of love" as he holds the woman in his arms (196). This closing sentence—shifting attention from sound to touch—to describe the physical proximity of the lovers and the accompanying sense of comfort and safety, echoes a homecoming scene at the end of "Just One More Saturday Night," which pictures its female protagonist returning home, early in the morning, after a rather dissatisfying poetry reading in the fictional, provincial town of Skillet. Again, the sense of connectedness between the lovers is expressed through sensual references. Standing at the threshold of their silent house, the woman imagines "creep[ing] in" and "tiptoe[ing]" upstairs, and then pictures herself "slid[ing] into bed" where the lover's "arms would close round her and hold her tight" (171).

Another story that focuses on tactile experience and its capacity to forge deep relations within the intersubjective social world is "The Easter Egg Hunt." The narrator here is a teenage girl, who has been sent to stay with her grandparents after the birth of her baby brother. The girl deeply resents her parents' decision: she feels unloved, rejected and angry. Her grandparents, who she refers to as Mémé and Pépé, are simple people, not given to erudite discussions or profuse displays of emotion. Yet, communicating in a language of sensory gestures and bodily contact, they manage to restore the girl's confidence and appease her negative emotions. This is illustrated in a scene where the girl wakes up in the middle of the night and Mémé soothes her back to sleep. She holds the child in her arms, allowing the girl to "burrow into" her soft body, which is described as "a bulk of warmth" (124). The tactile contact has a comforting, reassuring effect even though, to an outsider, some of the woman's gestures might not seem affectionate as when, in response to the granddaughter's admitting that she wants everyone to love her the most, Mémé pinches her ear, gives her a light slap on the face and calls her a "bad girl" (124–25). However, since the child knows how to decode this bodily language, she quickly grows calm and happy:

> She hugged me tight, and stroked my hair, and waited for me to grow sleepy. After a bit she pulled my thumb out of my mouth, hoisted me down, gave me a push, and shooed me into bed. She was just the same with animals, so I felt content. (125)

Despite Mémé's brisk, no-nonsense manner, the physical proximity and tactile contact bespeak commitment and affection, offering the reader a powerful example of an affirmative, intersubjective relationship.

According to Sonia Kruks, the condition of human embodiment does not automatically warrant relations based on "universal, harmonious intersubjectivity" (27) but should rather be seen as offering people a chance to connect and communicate across difference. Since the body, in Merleau-Ponty's words, is "a third genre of being between the pure subject and the object" (*Phenomenology* 366), people can choose how they want to engage with others, with both antagonistic and affirmative intersubjectivity remaining "a fundamental possibility of all human relations" (Kruks 39). Those who withdraw from their ordinary, pre-reflective involvement in the world and retreat too much into the intellectual realm find themselves at risk of approaching "a familiar face" as if it were "hostile and foreign . . . no longer our interlocutor, but rather a resolutely silent Other" (Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology* 336). To avoid this danger, it is thus vital to immerse ourselves and participate in the intersubjective world. Offering examples of both antagonistic and affirmative intersubjectivity, Michèle Roberts's *Playing Sardines* captures the whole spectrum of human engagements and interactions with those around us. In doing so, however, the stories repeatedly warn their readers against the dangers of judging others from the position of a *pensée de survol* while also emphasizing the centrality of embodied experience in fostering affective bonds with others. Questioning the validity of the body/mind dichotomy and depicting *le corps propre* as an ethically productive locus of intersubjectivity, the stories constitute an important step in the author's self-proclaimed mission of rescuing and cherishing the body.

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Monika Kocot

On Spaces Within and Between: Dorota Filipczak's (Embodied) Visions of the Sacred[1]

The thing to be known grows with the knowing
Nan Shepherd, *The Living Mountain*

No se puede vivir sin amar
Malcolm Lowry, *Under the Volcano*

Cisza jest głosów zbieraniem
Cyprian Kamil Norwid, "Laur dojrzały"

Introduction

On the cover of her debut book of poems entitled *W cieniu doskonałej pomarańczy*, Dorota Filipczak shares an insight which might be treated not only as an important gateway to the realm of her poetry but also to her academic writing—"I'm passionate about the sacred in poetry and prose, and ways of its unconventional interpretation. Writing poetry and literary criticism is like looking at one and the same landscape through two separate windows" (translation mine). This essay will explore a number of unconventional interpretations of the sacred in Filipczak's poems, but it will also point to similar practices in her academic writing. The image of two windows and one landscape will serve as a metaphor describing the two modes of Filipczak's writing.

In order to show how the metaphor of two windows works in her poetry, I will look at selected poems from her book *W cieniu doskonałej pomarańczy*

[1] This chapter is a revised and expanded version of the article entitled "Ryty przejścia i przestrzenie pomiędzy w twórczości Doroty Filipczak," which was published in *Fraza* (vol. 114, no. 4, 2021, pp. 204–27).

[*In the Shadow of a Perfect Orange*], and then will move chronologically to *Trzecie skrzydło anioła* [*The Angel's Third Wing*] (1995), *Orfeusz na ginekologii* [*Orpheus in the Gynecological Ward*] (1997), *Ostrzyciel noży na jawie* [*The Knife Sharpener*] (2003), *K+M+B* (2009), and to her last book entitled *Wieloświat* [*Multiverse*] (2016). I will also make references to *Rozproszone gniazda czułości* [*Scattered Nests of Tenderness*], an anthology of Filipczak's poems published in 2017, accompanied by an insightful essay entitled "Mity ucieleśnione" ["The Embodied Myths"] by Wojciech Ligęza. Marek Czuku's review and his 2018 interview with Filipczak will provide additional points of reference. Both Czuku and Ligęza focus on the link between body, mind, landscape, and myth in Filipczak's poetry. My intention is to develop their insights and show how various metaphors of the body/body-mind are interconnected with the theme of spirituality, female empowerment, trauma and Polish history. I will accomplish this by foregrounding the importance of places and spaces in Filipczak's geopoetic writing.

"Spaces within and between" in the title of my essay might be called "emergent spaces," as they are usually not evident on a first reading. They emerge once readers activate the links skilfully hidden in (and sometimes between) the poems. The power of suggestion, with its game of hints, is coupled here with the technique of withdrawal, with its understatement and ellipsis. Once readers activate the latent links, they might enjoy palimpsestuous (and often rhizomatic) poetic imagery (or constellations of meaning) which open spaces of interbeing, interdependence, spaces of rites (of passage) and rituals. As Tomasz Cieślak aptly notices, quite often the sphere of the sacred is re-activated in the here-and-now; in other words the realm of the sacred is made visible in the world of everyday activities (38). Filipczak uses bodily metaphors to point to those moments in time where mythical spaces processually (re-) enter the here-and-now. This is how she writes about illness and suffering (especially in *Orfeusz na ginekologii*), about the joy of motherhood (in *K+M+B*), and about trauma and history (in *Wieloświat*). The wisdom of the body is one of the major themes in Filipczak's poetry and academic writing, which is why I will highlight some of her academic books and essays in which the focus is on the relationship between the body and the sacred.

In one of the poems from the book entitled *K+M+B*, Filipczak provides a list of different kinds of love "translated" into her poetry:[2]

[2] All the poems translated by Cathal McCabe.

Połączyła nas
miłość do mapy
magicznych
zawirowań
przeciwnych prądów
przepaści rozwartych
mimo uwagi
miejsc pozornie
zjednanych
i tak bardzo
obcych
(*K+M+B* 33)

It was love
for a map
of magical
turmoil
that brought us together
contrary currents
a gaping abyss
in spite of the warnings
of places
ostensibly united
and so very foreign

The poem foregrounds the importance of (loving) dialogue, a sort of communion between two partners who are eager to explore the mystery of being, who affirm the complexity of planes of existence, who willingly accept the limitations of knowledge, but who are constantly searching for meaning beyond the known. At the same time, Filipczak's imagery suggests that the map and the landscape are inextricably linked. As Marek Czuku notes, in *K+M+B* Filipczak's poems become less abstract and much more sensual and embodied (139). I agree with Czuku, and part of my essay explores the link between "embodied" spiritual epiphanies (especially in *K+M+B*) and embodied trauma healing (in *Wieloświat*). As I have already mentioned, these epiphanies usually emerge in the form of "blended" spaces: spaces in-between. That is why so much emphasis is given to the issue of the body and the landscape. In my opinion, by taking into account only one of these elements, we might miss a very important clue, usually given in subtle gestures.

Poetry, Body, Spirituality

In an interview with Marek Czuku in 2018, Filipczak answers a seemingly simple question which, as it turns out, opens a space of exploration. Czuku is interested in the relationship between major themes in Filipczak's poetry—love, family life, ancestral connections, journeying into the past, femininity and masculine culture(s)—and her conscious choice to dwell on these issues in poetic form. The question is tricky in the sense that in 2013 Filipczak published a play, *Ludzie z przeciwka*, and at the time of the interview she was working on her debut novel. It could be argued that the answer to Czuku's question is also tricky. Filipczak simultaneously reveals and conceals the reasons behind her choice

of form; to some extent, she discloses the mystery behind her artistic practices. She says that poetic form makes it possible for her to express her vision "in a succinct fashion" ("Duchowa transfuzja" 46, translation mine). Interestingly, Filipczak affirms the inextricable connection between two of her favorite themes—impermanence and interpersonal understanding—and the practice of using a whole variety of figures of speech in a condensed form, but she immediately adds that the way this connection operates still remains a mystery to her. What is certain is that the poetic form appeared of its own accord ("Duchowa transfuzja" 46; Kocot 217).

It should be noted here that the concepts of impermanence and interpersonal connection/understanding can, and often should, be seen as parts of the same dynamics, especially when viewed from the perspective of inter-being—for in Filipczak's vision of the world the meeting/union/encounter of two seemingly separate forms of being (be it human beings, animals, plants) is usually presented within the framework of a part-whole relationship and continuous transition/metamorphosis. By emphasizing the momentary, fleeting nature of such (often mysterious) encounters, by refusing to name what she witnesses, and by relying heavily on ellipsis, Filipczak embraces and affirms the natural law of interdependence. This is not to say, however, that the inability to find (stable) reference points and clear-cut distinctions is not a source of suffering and anxiety. On the contrary, Filipczak accepts the transitory nature of phenomena and the shifting contexts through which we interpret their meaning; she is able to stop and "gaze at" the liminal and fluid nature of our mental states in order to point to hidden individual/cultural/historical "narratives" behind our mental scripts. Her way of unraveling/deconstructing the "latent narrative" is often tinged with irony or sarcasm. In a trickster-like fashion, she uses riddles to play mind games with her readers. In some poems, the power of gentle (and often misleading) suggestion is so accentuated that readers might easily get lost without reference points given in latent form. Some of her poems never fully reveal their mysteries; some become clearer when compared with those published in her last book.

Rozproszone gniazda czułości, a 2017 anthology of Filipczak's poems, foregrounds the idea of close emotional bonds. The title comes from one of Filipczak's early poems; in it, she tells the story of a hidden, mysterious land, and she clearly celebrates the joy of its discovery—she places emphasis on the importance of going beyond words and finding intimacy in those places where one can experience an embodied sense of peace and unity with the partner and the land. It is not surprising that, in the afterword to the anthology, tellingly entitled "Mity ucieleśnione" ("The

Embodied Myths"), Wojciech Ligęza speaks at length about the sensual aspect of knowing—and even more importantly—about getting to know oneself and the world. In his view, Filipczak's poetry emphasizes and celebrates the importance of "mind-body" and embodied wisdom, which can most clearly be seen in her sensuous metaphors, but the inextricable link between mind and body can be also traced in numerous poems in which Filipczak writes through cultural narratives and reinterprets their "messages" in relation to her biography, her relationships, her journeys through time and space (in particular, the Polish historical past and Christian and ancient Greek mythology) (157). It should be noted here that Filipczak makes (covert and overt) references to authors who embrace a similar view on the mind-body relationship and the interdependent nature of our being-in-the-world (Kocot 207).

One of the poems that speaks openly about (artistic) self-realization through the body appears in *K+M+B* and is entitled "Sezam" ("Sesame"). Quite surprisingly, even for the speaker, the magic formula from *One Thousand and One Arabian Nights* is given a new meaning:

Otworzyłeś mnie	With your body
ciałem	you opened me
wydobyłeś	releasing
przestrzenie	space
owoce i wiersze	fruit and poems
wszystko co chciałeś	whatever you wished
Nie wiedziałam	How much within me
że tyle tego	I had not known
we mnie	
(*K+M+B* 67)	

The poem is a peculiar testimony—"With your body / you opened me," the speaker declares—and offers an insight which brings us to the mystery of interdependence in a relationship. The speaker slowly reveals how surprised she is to discover that her inside contained so many things—new spaces, fruits, and poems—she had been unconscious/unaware of, and that all of these things have been brought to light by means of the body of her partner. The mystery, but also a peculiar openness to welcome whatever it might bring, seems crucial here.

The theme of mystery, secrecy, and the hidden agenda behind silencing the female body(-mind) appears in many forms in Filipczak's poetry (and academic writing) (Kocot 207–09), but I would like to mention one that introduces the importance of giving testimony, of voicing the uncomfortable truth of gender inequality. The title "Mysterium tremendum" immediately brings to mind Rudolf Otto's concept of the *numinous*.

In Filipczak's poem, negation and paradox, two aspects leading to mystical experience, are re-read/re-written through the prism of the role of women's suffering throughout the ages:

Na koniec	At the end
pozostała jeszcze kwestia ciała	there remained
kobiecego	the issue of a woman's body
zbyt dużo w nim	so many centres sources of pleasure
ośrodków przyjemności	lightness posing as heaviness
lotność nazwano ciężkością	each weight a lightness of being
ciężar lekkością bytu	but still it grew towards the light
ale i tak pięło się do góry	crucified
krzyżowane	by the wild whims
wyobraźnią katów	the imaginations
nie	of executioners
me	struck
mówiło	dumb
dawało świadectwo	it spoke
(*K+M+B* 27)	to bear witness

At the center of the poem's attention is "the issue of a woman's body," full of sources of pleasure, "crucified / by the wild whims / the imaginations of executioners," but still able to speak the truth. Even mute (or mutilated), silenced, and deprived of a voice, or languageless, the female body prevailed ("struck / dumb / it spoke / to bear witness"). Giving testimony to truth after so many centuries of the practice of silencing women in patriarchal cultures is difficult, and it is often interrelated with women's empowerment, which finds expression through the body. Filipczak's imagery connects the issue of the crucified body of Christ with the spiritual dimension of the female body in all sorts of trauma narratives (Kocot 210). As a scholar writing on post-colonial literatures, Filipczak was well aware that the memory of suffering dwells in the body; in her monograph *"Unheroic Heroines": The Portrayal of Women in the Writings of Margaret Laurence*, she writes at length on the links between history, trauma, and the role of artistic expression in the process of giving testimony, and thus subverting the established oppressive cultural patterns. Interestingly enough, Filipczak's interest in textual and bodily ways of overcoming trauma is evident not only in her academic texts, but also in her poems, particularly in the last two books, *K+M+B* and *Wieloświat*. When she writes about reclaiming the spiritual dimension of the female body, what immediately comes into focus is the repressed, traumatized part of the body that "keeps the score," to use Bessel van der Kolk's phrase.[3]

[3] In my opinion, van der Kolk's seminal book *The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, Mind, and Body in the Healing* and Resmaa Menakem's *My Grandmother's Hands: Racialized Trauma and the Pathway to Mending Our Hearts and Bodies* could be successfully applied in the

Woman Artist and the Holy Scripture

Before we get to the interconnected themes of the female body, memory, and trauma, let us look at how Filipczak approaches the image and role of women in the Holy Scripture (especially the first woman in the Old Testament, and women in relation to Jesus in the New Testament). I will focus mainly on her debut book *W cieniu doskonałej pomarańczy*, as it brilliantly captures the idea of questioning established cultural and religious hierarchies from a feminist perspective. Filipczak decides to foreground the notion of female emancipation, focusing primarily on female agency; the need for female self-realization is often connected with the need for reaching out for the territory (landscape) of the unknown. At the same time, she touches upon the controversial issue of the spirituality of the female body.

Female revisioning of traditional, patriarchal Christian (and patriarchal Polish) culture is often realized by tracing and filling in the gaps left in the Scripture, especially in the book of Genesis/Bereshit. I mention the Hebrew tradition because references to the Jewish philosophical tradition are found throughout Filipczak's work, especially in her monograph *"The Valley of the Shadow of Death": Biblical Intertext in Malcolm Lowry's Fiction*. In my opinion, in the first three poetry collections Filipczak is more focused on openly questioning the established cultural paradigm, and, to use a phrase from one of the poems in *Wieloświat*, on finding "her own landscape." But the technique of filling in the gaps in the Word is often complemented by the technique of textual latency—leaving empty spaces, white text—in the poems which on the face of it do not necessarily open the space of the mythical narrative. These games with readers will become much more pronounced and sophisticated in *K+M+B* and *Wieloświat*.

Przemysław Dakowicz aptly notes that Filipczak practices "mythical thinking," which, in his opinion, is as natural for her as breathing (144). I have decided to discuss a few poems that best exemplify Dakowicz's insight, but before doing so, I would like to add that we can speak of a number of modes of "mythical thinking," because with each book of poems Filipczak changes her perspective of looking at reality (Kocot 211–12). And even within one book, one can find poems belonging to different groups of "mythical thinking," as it were. In many of the poems included in *W cieniu doskonałej pomarańczy*, for instance, the (Christian) myth functions as a sort of mirror; in a playful, ironic manner, Filipczak refers to carefully selected passages from the Bible (both the Old and the New Testament) in order

analysis of Filipczak "trauma" poems, but the scope of this essay does not allow me to develop this issue in detail.

to confront and (possibly) deconstruct the mainstream reading(s) of these passages, and/or the role assigned to women. However, there are also poems which explore the issue of physical and mental suffering where references to the Old Testament metaphorically open up a space of safety and comfort, which in turn brings consolation and freedom from suffering. By looking at these poems from today's perspective, one should be able to recognize the subtly introduced, and equally subtly executed, dynamic of female independence vs. interdependence, with *Wieloświat*, Filipczak's last book, as its most elaborate and nuanced manifestation.

Let us return to the first book to see how the woman artist introduces the interlinking themes of female independence, unquenchable thirst for knowledge, and freedom from cultural oppression. The first two poems I have chosen—"Grzech" ("Two Sins") and "Para" ("The Couple")—take us to the Garden of Eden, and show how Filipczak inverts traditional myth, challenges cultural preconceptions and female stereotypes regarding knowledge (seeking) and self-realization (Kocot 212–13).

In "Grzech," it is Eve who "has the soul of the discoverer" and "reaches for another world":

Z nich dwojga Ewa	Of the two Eve
ma duszę odkrywcy	has the soul of the discoverer
znudzona mową węża	bored with the snake's tongue
wyciąga rękę po inny świat	she reaches for another world
kiedy Adam śpi	when Adam sleeps
leżąc brzuchem na trawie	face-down in the grass
i śni mu się wielka pustka	dreaming the desert
nieba	of the sky
(*W cieniu* 27)	

Eve's husband, the one who, theoretically at least, embodies agency, action, and discovery, sleeps face-down from the great emptiness of the sky. In Cathal McCabe's translation, "wielka pustka / nieba" (literally "great emptiness / of the sky," or "great empty / sky") is rendered as "the desert / of the sky"; whether we call it a desert or emptiness, it still evokes nothingness/no-thing-ness, withdrawal from action, passivity. Eve, on the other hand, is active and receptive, inquisitive, ready to transcend the world she is given. Perhaps this is why McCabe decides to change the title from "Sin" to "Two Sins." Eve's conversation with the snake, and following of its advice, can be interpreted as the first sin. Filipczak does not mention eating or sharing any fruit of wisdom, so Eve's gesture of reaching out for another world—a metaphor for eating the fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil—without

Adam on her side might count as the second, much more serious sin; Eve does not act as a subjugated wife, she is presented as an independent agent exercising her own will.

Many critics have noticed that feminist interrogations and critiques of Christian culture characterize much of Filipczak's poetry.[4] Issues of forbidden knowledge, sin and its consequences for the entire human race, and, more importantly, textual latency concerning the role of women in the Holy Scripture, are also explored in her academic writing, particularly in two monographs (*"The Valley of the Shadow of Death": Biblical Intertext in Malcolm Lowry's Fiction* and *"Unheroic Heroines": The Portrayal of Women in the Writings of Margaret Laurence*), and a number of essays. In the context of the poem in question, we might recall her essay "Paradise Revisited: Images of the First Woman in the Poetry of Joy Kogawa and the Fiction of Thomas King," which explores playful and revolutionary de-constructions of femininity in selected texts by King and Kogawa. *Green Grass, Running Water* (published in 1993) works as an ideal reference here, especially the scenes where King subversively writes through the Old Testament narrative from the point of view of oral indigenous traditions (Kocot 212). His depiction of First Woman bears striking resemblance to Filipczak's image of Eve; if King's Old-Testament Ahdamn (pun intended) is presented as hilariously passive, lazy, incompetent and lacking in charisma—as opposed to First Woman's independence and graceful bravado—Filipczak expands on Adam's disappointing lack of vision and disinterestedness in "heavenly" matters.

In the poem "Para" ("The Couple"), Filipczak emphasizes one more time the link between the roles assigned to Adam and Eve in the process of creation. The scene of naming animals might also call to mind King's *Green Grass, Running Water*:

W twórczości Adama
Ewa nie jest nawet muzą
przychodzi na końcu
długiej kolejki lisów
kaczek i jeżozwierzy
kiedy zaschło mu w gardle
od używania nowych słów
i dar poezji jest wyczerpany
(*W cieniu* 26)

In Adam's Creation
Eve is not even a Muse
she walks at the end
of a long line of foxes
ducks and porcupines
when his throat went dry
from the use of new words
and the gift of poetry is exhausted

[4] See Pustkowski,"Kobieta, którą jestem (Dorota Filipczak)" (233–34) and "Kobiety z szuflady [z tego cyklu:] Dorota Filipczak—'Orfeusz na ginekologii'" (195); Dakowicz (143–45); Ligęza (157–67); Jakubowska-Ożóg (71–75).

In King's hybridized version of the creation narrative, First Woman falls down from the Sky World into the Water World, and together with Grandmother Turtle creates what comes to be Turtle Island (an indigenous name for North America). When First Woman enters the scene of Ahdamn naming animals, she notices that he is totally unable to perform his task due to problems with identifying animals ("You are a microwave oven, Ahdamn tells the Elk. Nope, says that Elk. Try again. You are a garage sale, Ahdamn tells the Bear. We got to get you some glasses, says the Bear" 26). King's trickster narration foregrounds First Woman's wisdom, enthusiasm, creativity and readiness to respond to constantly changing (narrative) circumstances. When we compare his witty mythical "blend" to Filipczak's poem, we will notice Eve's drama—her wisdom, enthusiasm, creativity is not wanted/desired; she has nothing to do, she is not even Adam's muse (Kocot 213). As Filipczak puts it, Eve comes as the last in line, after many foxes, ducks and porcupines, when Adam—and the gift of poetry—is exhausted. The underlying mood of the poem is a peculiar mixture of disillusionment and sadness, with a tinge of irony and sarcasm.

But why does Filipczak repeatedly evoke the Holy Scripture in a revolutionist-revisionist tone, one might ask? In an interview with Czuku, she admits that she is interested in constructions of femininity in literature created by women, and that she likes to juxtapose these constructions with the images of women created by men; she is particularly interested in how male perceptions of women are limited by patriarchal—and often openly sexist—clichés (Filipczak, "Duchowa transfuzja" 46; Kocot 213). She sees the root cause of the problem in the Biblical creation story in the Book of Genesis. When asked whether she reinterprets the Bible or reads it totally anew, she says: "both" (Filipczak, "Duchowa transfuzja" 47), and she adds that one thing does not exclude the other, because in Polish culture there is a very strong inclination to sustain the established interpretations. In Filipczak's view, the mindset of traditional readings cannot be described as belonging to the twentieth century; it comes from the time when women's exclusion (and unfavorable inclusion) was part of the cultural landscape (47). She emphasizes that her revisionist readings have been inspired by the research conducted in many theological institutions, where other female scholars have investigated the constructions of femininity in various books of the Holy Scripture (47).

It is not surprising, then, that Filipczak's first three poetry collections contain so many texts in which irony, self-irony, and sarcasm dominate; these literary devices are used in order to ridicule and mock the culturally oppressive circumstances of being a woman and/or a female artist (Kocot 213). In the poem "Pigmalion" from *Trzecie skrzydło anioła*, we witness the scene of creation of the first couple, but the narrative perspective is once again slightly different from the one in the Book of Genesis. In Filipczak's

poem, when God creates the first woman out of earth, rose petals and swan's-down, he is so delighted with her that he whistles in awe ("When God created woman / petals rose from the earth / the down of a swan / he stood up wiped his hands / and whistled well-pleased / regarding his work / Something perfect[5] at last he said" [Filipczak, *Rozproszone* 41]). And God focuses his attention on Adam, his first "less successful / creation" (41); in order to make up for Adam's evident inferiority, God endows him with a hawk's strength and a mule's endurance (41). This is where Filipczak's version of the myth completely departs from the one in the Bible. We learn that God falls in love with Eve, but his plans to make her his lover fall short. He leaves Eve for a moment and when he comes back, he finds Adam and Eve exploring each other's bodies ("When he returned / the couple were getting acquainted / touching each other / in the places / where they differed" [41]). God the Creator is devastated and decides to come up with a wicked plan of revenge: in the middle of the garden he plants the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, because, as Filipczak puts it, "he knew that Eve / would one day be drawn to its perfect beauty" (42); he also puts a curse upon Eve, as a result of which Eve will "give birth in pain / suffer because of Adam / and lose her beauty / in loneliness" (42).

One might argue that Eve's perfect body and God's desire to possess her create a surprising dynamic, not explored in the Book of Genesis. We could treat this poem as yet one instance of entering the gap in the Scripture in order to cast light on the hidden/invisible potentialities of the text. The suffering of the human race which comes as a result of God's failure to win Eve's love—unfulfilled lust leads to anger (and the need for revenge)—is directly linked here with the motif of male jealousy, more elaborately explored in other books, particularly in *Wieloświat*. It should be noted that the theme of male jealousy appears in a number of Filipczak's poems, in the context of women artists—independent, self-realized agents of their destiny in the field of poetry and/or science (Kocot 214). In the poem "List św. Pawła z Aten" ("St. Paul's Epistle from Athens"), she tellingly writes "Do not disregard the word / that becomes a beautiful body" (Filipczak, *Rozproszone* 70). In "Męski strip-tease" ("Male strip-tease"), a poem on the difference between male and female artistic sensibilities (including sensitivity to criticism), Filipczak bitterly concludes that captivity and nothingness must be wonderful if their bodiless womb makes a male poet experience true orgasm ("how beautiful captivity / and loneliness must be / since it is in their bodiless wombs / that the poet's one true orgasm occurs" [Filipczak, *Rozproszone* 74]).

[5] Sylvia Plath's "Edge" ("The woman is perfected") and W. B. Yeats's "What Then?" ("Something to perfection brought") come to mind.

It seems that the connection between the female body, spirituality, and the freedom to choose one's own path, one's own (cultural) "landscape," is one of the major motifs in Filipczak's poetry. In some poems, she openly expresses her freedom, but in others, including the untitled poem below, she decides to dwell on the difficulties of questioning the established cultural patterns; it seems that even if the behavior of the speaking persona is innocent and pure, it might be interpreted as having serious, negative consequences. The poem in question subtly evokes the garden of Eden, and the speaker makes us think of Eve before "the Fall" (given Filipczak's own mythical narrative, I am not sure if using such a derogatory term is justified, hence the quotation marks), but the reference to Jesus and the rosary immediately opens up the context of the veneration of Mary in the Catholic Church. In a truly trickster-like fashion, Filipczak juxtaposes the importance of the naturally felt/experienced freedom from cultural and religious oppression in the spirit of Rousseau, with the culturally-imposed obligation of submission/subjugation/obedience (one could think of a long list of nouns here), metaphorically embodied in the image of Granny shaking the rosary:

Swego czasu	There was a time
kiedy chodziłam nago po ogrodzie	when I'd run naked round the garden
a był czerwiec	it was June
babcia wróciła z sumy	Granny would come back from the mass
w czarno żółtej bluzce	in her yellow and black
pachnącej naftaliną	blouse smelling of mothballs
Co ty robisz, zawołała	What are you doing, she'd call
wygrażając różańcem	shaking the rosary
lato takie zimne	a summer so cold
laryngolog wyjechał	the doctor left
a Pan Jezus już nigdy	and the Lord will never now
na ciebie nie spojrzy	look at you again
(*W cieniu* 29)	

"What are you doing, she'd call / shaking the rosary"—these two lines sound like a warning before what she sees as "the Fall." We might also interpret her vision as "the fall," written with a lower-case initial letter, signifying the fall from grace—"the Lord will never now / look at you again." Whatever term we use, the message remains the same: female nakedness is seen as a major sin, and this is something Filipczak decides to mock.

The best example of the defense of nakedness in the context of spirituality, and the affirmation of religious ecstasy can be found in "Erotic Psalm" which could count as Psalm 151. What I find astonishing about this poem is that it makes use of anaphora with variation:

Idę w Ciebie Boże jak ryba w wodę
jak kochanek w kochankę
jak kret w nieskończony korytarz
(*W cieniu* 17)

Now I enter you God like a fish water
lover lover
a mole his endless corridor

The imagery of these three opening lines, overflowing with bodily metaphors and similes, could easily shock any traditional Christian; even the title does not leave room for metaphorical readings. The poem clearly and unabashedly affirms the union with God, and even those who might associate that with the sacrament of Eucharist will be puzzled by how the imagery develops. The context of having sexual intercourse with the Divine is so explicitly foregrounded—the speaker states that she enters God just as a man enters a woman—that we might lose track of an equally important theme, that of an unquenchable thirst or insatiable appetite for knowledge (Kocot 211):

Zjadam Cię i wypijam całego
bez wstydu i zaspokojenia
jeszcze Cię nie poznałam

I eat You and drink you whole
without shame and unsatiated
I had yet to know you

Krążysz po mnie płynem i oddechem
. . .
Spotykam Cię na dnie duszy i brzucha
w orgazmie otwierasz drzwi do raju
nie straszy już obłaskawiony wąż
(*W cieniu* 17).

Through me you move a liquid a breath
. . .
I meet You at the bottom of my soul and belly
in an orgasm You open the gates of heaven
no fear now of the tamed serpent

The knower and the known seem to be one inseparable body, or better still, God's presence fills the speaker so intensely from within that she feels him in her breath and her fluids ("Through me you move a liquid a breath"). She states that she meets him "at the bottom of her soul and belly"; and, in orgasm, it is God who opens the door of paradise. There is no need for an intermediary figure here. This mystical ecstasy operating in the body-mind is an act of "forgetting oneself" in God, and, at the same time, it is the only way to know God, Filipczak suggests. In *K+M+B* and *Wieloświat*, her visions of union with the divine will become more painterly (in "The Sistine Chapel") and scientific (the context of the multiverse and transpersonal psychology in "Wieloświat").

In Filipczak's poetry, the sacred and the profane are often presented as interdependent, interlinking levels of existence. This is why her focus on a seemingly insignificant detail may actually be a gateway to an alternative reading, not hinted at explicitly, but communicated with the subtlest of gestures. Przemysław Dakowicz is one of the first critics to notice

how this dynamic operates, and in his review of *Ostrzyciel noży na jawie*, he writes about "Odpowiedź klasykom" ("A Response to the Authors of Antiquity"), which he sees as Filipczak's poetic *credo*:

Wbrew pozorom wielkości	Contrary to appearances
tematem sztuki jest rozbity dzbanek	the theme of art is a broken jug
lub dzbanek cały	or just a jug
z kwiatem tamaryszku	with a tamarisk flower
ból zęba	a toothache
kropla potu	a drop of sweat
w studni oceanu	in the ocean's well
bruk	a pavement
nie ideał	not an ideal
(*Rozproszone* 80)	

In Dakowicz's view, Filipczak is not very fond of the grand themes in literature, as she often finds poetry in the mundane, in the seemingly commonplace, in things that are easily disregarded or overlooked (143). In the poem in question, she mentions a jug, toothache, "a drop of sweat / in the ocean's well" (*Rozproszone* 80). Dakowicz notes that it is not a coincidence that in the last two lines Filipczak subtly refers to one of the most cherished and evocative poems of the Polish Romantic period, Norwid's "Fortepian Szopena" ("Chopin's Grand Piano"). This gesture might be interpreted as a way of sharing her poetic affinity. Norwid was incredibly sensitive to detail—seemingly insignificant features that become major carriers of poetic meaning, but also operating at the intersection of ethics and aesthetics—which refers to that which is beyond them (Dakowicz 143; Kocot 216). Attention to detail is only one of the elements that Filipczak and Norwid share. One could add that in their emotionally charged poems they both relied on understatement and ellipsis, on finding refuge in silence(s).

By acknowledging and affirming the beauty of the seemingly commonplace, or, to use Dakowicz's phrase, by focusing on "seemingly insignificant detail," Filipczak creates whole poetic narratives, with subtle references to Polish history, and to the history of her family. In *K+M+B* and *Wieloświat*, the weave of the net of interlinking references is so dense that some poems remain obscure to those uninitiated in the field of Polish history of the 1940s. But, as Alicja Jakubowska-Ożóg notes in her afterword to *K+M+B*, in Filipczak's poetry there are no insignificant moments—every experience is important, and its importance may become further amplified by her childlike sensitivity (71). Jakubowska-Ożóg connects Filipczak's tireless effort not to lose her childlike openness and curiosity with the theme of rituals and rites. In my opinion, such

openness to welcoming the so-called "aha!-moments" in the here and now might be seen as one more gift of a Woman Artist (Kocot 216). The ability to see these wonderful moments is as important as being able to shape them into poetic form for us to read. Jakubowska-Ożóg's insight concerning Filipczak's sensitivity and ritual practices does not seem far-fetched, especially when we look at the poem "Obrzędy" ("Rites"), in which Filipczak celebrates the practice of reading texts, writing her own texts, "giving herself to" perverse words, "copulating" with concepts. The symbolic meaning behind sexual acts—already explored in the essay—is evoked here in the second conditional mode by a reference to the cult of Astarte: "If I were a priestess / of Astarte / I would give myself / to chosen / men / for tablets with scripture / parchment scrolls / and instruments / to watch / the sky" (*K+M+B* 16). Quite surprisingly, the speaker continues: "I am the priestess" (16). The pleasure of artistic creation and the joy of gaining knowledge is likened here to religious prostitution. By means of synchronization and intentional asynchronization of patterns of perception as well as axiological and ethical patterns, Filipczak creates a religious-sexual-literary blend. The "positions" she takes as a priestess, as a woman artist, are clearly pleasure-oriented, and the sense of fulfillment they offer transcends any sinful act (Kocot 217):

Gdybym była kapłanką
Asztarte
oddawałabym się
wybranym
mężczyznom
za tabliczki
z pismem
zwoje pergaminów
i przyrządy
do oglądania
nieba
Jestem kapłanką
oddaję się pokątnie
wyuzdanym słowom
spółkuję z pojęciami
i przebieram
w pozycjach
wobec tego spełnienia
nudny jest każdy
grzech
(*K+M+B* 16)

If I were a priestess
of Astarte
I would give myself
to chosen
men
for tablets
with scripture
parchment scrolls
and instruments
to watch
the sky
I am the priestess
illicitly uttering
lascivious words
I copulate with concepts
and assume
positions
next to which
each sin
is a bore

Place, Space, and History, or Landscapes-Mindscapes-Bodyscapes

In an interview with Czuku in 2018, Filipczak admits that in *Wieloświat* she felt ready to write about the history of her family and the impact of that history on her way of looking at the world, and how that in turn influenced her poetic imagery and her subversive vision of the sacred. But we can find many poems in *K+M+B* which explore the space of painful memories and trauma. It seems that in 2009 Filipczak places emphasis on the link between body, landscape and "feeling" history through bodily sensations.

In his review of *K+M+B*, Tomasz Cieślak offers an insightful comment on Filipczak's imagery: the here and the now is always steeped in the past, he writes (39). Indeed, in a number of poems, the reader might easily notice that the present is "activated," as it were, by the past, or that the past still permeates the present (Kocot 220). Alicja Jakubowska-Ożóg goes one step further and in her afterword to *K+M+B*, tellingly entitled "Historie uwiły gniazda we mnie"("Histories Have Built Nests within Me"), she writes that the past continues to live in the present as a point of reference, a sort of matrix, and a form of testimony of our existence (Filipczak *K+M+B* 73; Kocot 220).

In a poem entitled "Monaster w Jabłecznej" ("Monastery of St. Onuphrius"), Filipczak narrates the events that took place in one of the most important Orthodox sanctuaries in Poland (with a male monastery founded in the fifteenth century). Legend has it that the location for the foundation of the monastery was shown by the icon of St. Onuphrius which had been floating in the Bug River. In Filipczak's poem, the river and its active role in the process of founding the sanctuary is juxtaposed with the destruction of the valuable monastery library and archives (Pawluczuk 177–78) which were burnt down by the German border patrol units in 1942 (Kocot 220). The last stanza states that the waves of the river "rock" the cry of the Deacon who was trying to save the books. It is important to note that the poem is written in the present continuous tense, to remember the past in the here and now, as it were. When the speaker says that she is grieving, she immediately adds that it is not because of broken porcelain, or richly decorated vestments, but because of the books that turned into ash:

Nie żal mi porcelany
złoceń ani szat tylko ksiąg
rozpłakanych w popiół

It's not the porcelain
gilt or robes but the books
weeping in the ashes
that I miss

Nie mam dachu nad głową
ale wierzę że tworzą go
alfa i omega

I have no roof over my head
but still I believe
they'll make one
alpha and omega

Rzeka kolebie płacz
diakona który próbował
ocalić pisma
(*K+M+B* 45)

The river rocks the crying
of the deacon
trying
to save each tome

In Filipczak's poetry, (the memory of) somebody else's suffering is often depicted through deep contemplation of the landscape, or even embodying the landscape. In "Posterunek" ("Checkpoint") from *Trzecie skrzydło anioła* she confesses that she finds territories and poems living inside her ("There are territories that live in me / like poems and you" [*Rozproszone* 28]). For Wojciech Ligęza, these embodied landscapes of Filipczak's highly sensuous poetry speak volumes about human affairs, about delving into the past, about the hidden dimension of being, about forgotten destinies (157). One could only add that with each subsequent book Filipczak is increasingly drawn to the interlinking themes of border crossing, transgressing limits and alternative timespaces; she notices and embraces their transformative and healing power (Kocot 217). In *K+M+B* and particularly in *Wieloświat*, she consciously returns to her family trauma in order to let go of the past; she is aware of the therapeutic effect of poetry "written down the bones" (Natalie Goldberg's term).

One of the poems in which the themes of temporal liminality, frontier, place, memory, and body most clearly overlap is "Limes" (in Latin, frontier of a province). In it, Filipczak recalls a scene of crossing the border in eastern Poland:

Wyjmowałam stanik
spod koszulki
gdy zatrzymała nas
straż graniczna
myślałam
że odpowiem
za naruszenie
wartości
Zrobiło się
gorąco . . .
(*K+M+B* 38)

I took off my bra
under my blouse
when the border guards
stopped us
I thought
I would be charged
with breaking their rules
It started
to get heated . . .

The opening lines introduce a carefree mood—it is hot, and the speaker takes off her bra and pulls it out of her shirt, thinking she must be "breaking rules." When asked to show his ID, the speaker's partner leaves

the car and walks away with the border guards. And this is where the mood of the narrative changes within seconds:

Widziałam	I saw
jak odchodzisz	you walking
między nimi	away between them
jak zabierają mi	saw them taking
dziecko	my child
jak leżę	saw myself
na ziemi	on the ground
Pamięć przodków	Ancestral memory
obudziła się	awoke in me
we mnie	They vanished
Zniknęli	
(*K+M+B* 38–39).	

The speaker looks at the scene in the here-and-now but she actually sees/feels/experiences something that had happened in her family in the past. "Ancestral memory / awoke in me"—ellipsis and understatement are clearly in operation. She sees her partner walking away, being carried away, she sees her child being taken away from her; she sees herself lying on the ground. The last word in the poem offers an insight into how the mechanism of traumatic memories works: the narrative of the past vanishes as quickly as it entered the here-and-now. "They vanished," Filipczak writes. Did they?—one might ask. The answer is not obvious, as working with trauma is a complex process. In *Wieloświat*, Filipczak dwells on ways of dealing with the past, and the potential difficulties one might find on the path to emotional freedom.

The poem "Terytoria" ("Territories") speaks of painful and disturbing history permeating the space underground—rotten banners, decaying bodies layered one upon the other ("banners rot in the earth / layers of bodies / decompose / comfortably" [*K+M+B* 43])—and above the ground. History and dates are likened to annoying flies: "One cannot shoo away / history / dates sit down / on one's naked body" (43). There is a tinge of irony in the phrase "decompose / comfortably" as it might suggest that the decaying bodies are "resting comfortably" under the ground. The third stanza points to an important place of reference for Filipczak, the Bug River: "The Bug River / once a centre / like a taut bowstring / ready to shoot an arrow" (43).

In "Starorzecze Bugu" ("The Bug's Old River Bed"), Filipczak not only comes back to the river, but, more importantly, she discovers herself in the landscape. In my opinion, the poem might be treated as Filipczak's second poetic credo: "I discover myself / in the landscape / where the current / knows no borders":

Odkrywam się	I discover myself
w krajobrazie	in a landscape
gdzie nurt	where the current
nie przestrzega granic	knows no borders
płynie dokąd prowadzi	flows where the moon
księżyc deszcz instynkt	rain and instinct say
trawa śni cudze sny	the grass dreams
gliniane naczynia	strange dreams
z których spożywam	clay vessels
Boga przemiany	from which I eat
odkąd wody	the god of metamorphoses
zmieniły bieg	since when the waters
i pojawiłeś się	have changed their course
rzeką	and you have appeared
(*K+M+B* 44)	a river

The river current knows no boundaries, it metaphorically stands for liquid borders, thresholds and limina, transition and transmutation (Kocot 219). I go as a river, Filipczak seems to be saying, I explore the feminine side of the world. The river flows "driven" by the moon, rain and instinct; it flows out of the past and into the future; it does not stop, as the nature of the river is to keep on flowing. It is interesting to see that the lyrical "you" appears as the river as well. One might risk saying that the process of self-realization happens in the communion of two souls (the Holy communion is also hinted at in the image of "God of transmutation" ["Bóg przemiany"]).

Becoming one with the landscape is one of the central motifs in Filipczak's *Wieloświat*. In an interview with Czuku, Filipczak admits that her last collection of poems is special in the sense that she was finally able to express and confront her Łódź identity. Hence some poems explore the issue of cultural landscape, and some focus on cityscapes and their relationship with mindscapes. "Łódź is a strange and difficult city," says Filipczak ("Duchowa transfuzja" 46). When asked about her relationship with the city and its history, she says that she sees Łódź as a postcolonial space. This is obviously connected with the fact that in the past the city was inhabited by people of four different nationalities: Polish, German, Russian, and Jewish; it is also linked with what she recalls as "the gray period" of the 1970s and 1980s, and, last but not least, she discerns postcolonial elements in the city's post-communist legacy. Even though Łódź is her home city, she has always felt that she does not belong t/here (Kocot 224). In the interview, she speaks at length about not sensing certain places as her own and about a disturbing feeling of alienation. Filipczak admits that once she was able to identify with her city by acknowledging its positive legacy, she could

write poems about the liminal spaces within and without ("Duchowa transfuzja" 46).

Czuku is interested in Łódź's colonial past, which is why he asks whether it would be possible to apply postcolonial theory to this part of Europe, and to Łódź in particular. Filipczak responds by saying that one can easily apply postcolonial theories and methods, and she points to the fact that they provide great tools for exploring the issue of alienation, of sensing/feeling one's own space as foreign/strange/alien (Filipczak, "Duchowa transfuzja" 46). Strangely enough, the process of "coming to terms" with the city's places and non-places would never have been completed if it had not been for visiting academics from the West. Filipczak recalls that when walking around Łódź they would feel mentally at home—they would identify certain architectural elements they knew from Vienna or Paris—while she would "feel out of place" (Filipczak, "Duchowa transfuzja" 46; Kocot 224). She links these memories and the feelings of disturbing, intense, contradictory "otherness" with the category of "here" and "there": at some point she realized that for her the term "here" stood for the Borderlands, the land of her ancestors (Filipczak, "Duchowa transfuzja" 46)—the eastern part of the Second Polish Republic during the interwar period (1918–39).

In *Wieloświat*, Filipczak decides to touch upon the complex issue of facing the shadow and reconstructing one's sense of place. In the poems "Zwiedzanie" ("Sightseeing") and "Drogi" ("Ways"), she writes extensively about the difficulties of letting go of the past, and the challenge of dwelling in the present moment, without making projections based on traumatic experiences. One of the most moving poems is entitled "Ucieczka przed cieniem" ("Running Away from the Shadow"); the oppressive sound of loud music behind the wall in the here-and-now brings up the memory of the slaughter committed against her ancestors, of neighbors killing neighbors:

Muzyka promieniuje z mieszkania sąsiadów
mogę krzyczeć, usłyszą tylko rottweilery
. . . Czarne psy za ścianą, bezszelestne jak noc
w czterdziestym piątym roku w województwie lwowskim
Nie zdradziły sąsiada ani jego noża
Przystawionego do gardła nieznanych mi bliskich
(*Wieloświat* 24)

Music seeps from neighbours' flats
I could scream, only rottweilers would hear
. . . Black dogs on the other side of the wall,
noiseless as the night
in 1945 in the province of Lviv

They hid a neighbour and his knife
Pressed to the throats of my unknown relations

This memory is also evoked in "W rodzinnym albumie" ("In a Family Album"):

Czemu ma służyć poezja jeśli nie przywracaniu życia	What use is poetry if it brings no-one back
Po tym poznają Orfeusza, że ożywiać będzie	Then they see Orpheus doing just that
przyzywam więc ciotkę Karolę	And thus I invoke Aunt Karola
z przepastnej szafy rodzinnych szkieletów	from the bottomless wardrobe of family skeletons
wysypują się zakrwawione ubrania (*Wieloświat* 19)	bloodstained garments spill

The act of storytelling as such is healing (poetry is life-bringing, reviving), and the poetic confrontation with the repressed can be seen as a symbolic gesture of letting go of the past in order to focus on the present and, possibly, the future (Kocot 225). By recalling Orpheus, Filipczak introduces two themes: the land of the dead and going through a painful process of mourning. "I invoke Aunt Karola," she adds, and by means of a simple enjambment, she links the story of Orpheus with the "bloody" memory of the slaughter committed against her ancestors. She uses the idiom of the skeleton in the closet in order to show that her family closet is full of skeletons and blood-stained clothes. Filipczak also touches upon the workings of the unconscious, and quite naturally for her, she does so in minimalist gestures. Even though there is no single family photograph left, the speaker admits that she is filled with dread that she looks just like her aunt ("Not a single photo survives / and yet I am sure / that I look like her" [*Wieloświat* 19]).

In "Świat alternatywny" ("The Alternative World") Filipczak confesses that throughout the years she had "rented" other people's poems because she did not have a place of her own, that she had not "entered her landscape" because landscapes were very expensive ("For years I rented others' poems / not having my own address . . . I had no landscape of my own / for landscapes like flats / are all but unaffordable" [*Wieloświat* 14]). Having read *Wieloświat* in the context of Filipczak's statement about the act of writing as looking at the landscape from *W cieniu doskonałej pomarańczy*, one may come to the conclusion that her need to find and be part of the landscape is to some extent fulfilled (Kocot 225). Like Woolf's room of her own, Filipczak's search for a landscape of her own is inextricably linked with writing, but also with discovering self beyond self, simultaneously independent and interdependent, singular and multiple, separate and connected.

No se puede vivir sin amar—We Are All Continuations

The title of this part of the essay comes from Filipczak's favorite novel, Malcolm Lowry's *Under the Volcano*. It could be argued that the main message of the novel and Filipczak's writing is a peculiar interplay of the unfathomable mystery of being, the healing power of love, and the affirmation of impermanence (Kocot 220). All of these three issues form a triangle of themes in *K+M+B* and *Wieloświat*. Another triangle is formed by the interlinking themes of self-realization, independence and interdependence. By constant reconfigurations of these motifs, Filipczak weaves her palimpsestuous stories on the links between the past and the present, and on the mythical/sacred space re-activated in the here-and-now.

K+M+B opens with a poem which features an old doorway with a mysterious inscription, its letters/characters are worn away and vague, and perhaps this is what makes the writing so fascinating: "illegible letters / worn away / is it the inscription / or its erasure / that so fascinates? (Filipczak, *K+M+B* 7). It seems that the motifs of (time) gateways, liminality, transformation, (un)written stories permeate this book from beginning to end.

The second poem, entitled tellingly "Kaplica Sykstyńska" ("The Sistine Chapel"), presents an alternative creation story, and affirms the presence of the sacred in the here and now. Quite surprisingly, the key role is played not by God, the creator, but by a little boy, Filipczak's son, the most important person in the whole book (Czuku 139). His importance in the narrative of what it means to create is partly introduced in the book's dedication "Radzikowi, który raduje" ("To Radzik, the one who gladdens"), and partly in the poem "Zwiastowanie" ("Annunciation"):

Nie siedzieliśmy	We were not sitting
pod dębami Mamre	under the oak trees of Mamre
Gdy spomiędzy ksiąg	When from between the books
w otchłani torby	in the void of my bag
wydobyłeś anioła	you produced an angel
i położyłeś	and placed it
przede mną	before me
To był chłopiec	It was a boy
Ukryłam go głęboko	I hid him deep
i odrodził się	and he was born
To jest chłopiec	It's a boy
(*K+M+B* 35)	

The first two lines refer us to the Old Testament story of Abraham's and Sara's generous hospitality to three strangers who came to them by the oaks of Mamre. Even though Filipczak writes "we did not sit / under the Oaks of Mamre," the imagery of the poem clearly suggests that the boy is a transfigured angel from the scripture. He is transfigured in a double sense: he is taken "from between the books" and "out of the void of the bag" by the speaker's partner, and hidden by the speaker. We are not given the full picture of the scene, we can only guess that the angel in question was a small angel made of wood or clay, but the fact that he was "in the bag" may suggest that he had been promised (Kocot 221). One might risk saying that the mystery of forms and shapes, their transmutation, is all we can be certain of. The story of the strange boy-angel, and the joy he brings—interestingly, the name Isaac means "one who laughs" or "one who rejoices"—continues, as it were, in "Kaplica Sykstyńska":

Najważniejsze miejsce	The most important place
w moim domu	in my house
istnieje tylko nocą	only exists at night
zawiera się	contained
w zespoleniu	in the fusion
twojej i mojej	of your hand and mine
dłoni	when I feel for the cot
gdy dosięgam łóżeczka	after a day among clothes
po dniu wśród ubranek	toys
zabaweczek	other small things
innych zdrobnień	Your hand
stwarza mnie	creates me
i podnosi ku niebu	and lifts me heavenward
Twoja rączka	
(*K+M+B* 8)	

"The most important place / in my house / only exists at night," this is how the nocturnal scene of creation begins. Let us recall the fresco paintings evoked in the title of the poem. The complex iconography on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel by Michelangelo has been explained by some scholars as a Neoplatonic interpretation of the Bible, representing the essential phases of the spiritual development of humankind. The poem refers to one particular fresco painting, "The Creation of Adam," in which God's arm is outstretched to impart the spark of life from his own finger into that of Adam. As I have mentioned, Filipczak's poem does not feature the biblical scene. At the center of the image, we see the union of hands, but instead of God and Adam we find the mother and the child: "Your hand / creates me and lifts me heavenward." It is the hand of the little boy which creates the mother and raises her to heaven. Marek Czuku interprets the scene as a "sacralization of mother-

hood" (139). Given the setting of the scene and the reversed perspective of viewing the one who (symbolically?) creates, I would argue that what is being sacralized here is rather the connection/communication/exchange of energy in this embodied dialogue between the mother and the son (Kocot 222).

In the poem "Kosmologia" ("Cosmology"), a sense of awe and wonder at the little boy's world permeates the whole scene: "You open up worlds / the moon eats / a pancake / with meteorites" (*K+M+B* 9). Both parents enter "his planet" as "two moons," and each day they learn a new lesson:

Przyciągasz nas	You pull me towards
na swoją planetę	your planet
i jak księżyce	and like the moons
w szkole	in school
uczymy się	we learn
obracać	to turn
raz szybciej	now faster
raz wolniej	now slower
(*K+M+B* 9)	

Wieloświat, published in 2016, seven years after *K+M+B*, opens with another family scene poem in which the past inter-is with the here-and-now; this time the space of the child's room is metaphorically occupied by three generations. It should be noted here that the speaker's father, one of the major figures in *Wieloświat*, also appears in *Ostrzyciel noży na jawie* (2003) in a poem entitled "Tato" ("Daddy"), but his manifestation in a dream is ambivalent, to say the least. "The dead live within us / feed on our dreams / come at night / for alms of time" (*Rozproszone* 89), Filipczak writes, and she adds that according to her grandmother, it is a bad omen when the dead come to you in a dream. However, she is happy to see her father and she creates a healing vision of meeting him again in the future:

Blisko jest uzdrowienie	Recovery is near
zmartwychwstanie	Resurrection
usłyszę twoje kroki	I hear
zgrzyt klucza w zamku	your steps
rozrośnie się na mnie	the key in the door
falbaniasta sukienka	on me there blooms
zmaleję i stanę się jak dziecko	a dress of frills
przytulę się do ciebie	I'll grow small
i uwierzę	become a child
(*Rozproszone* 89)	hug you
	and believe

In "Wieloświat," the memory of Filipczak's father is, quite surprisingly, a sign of his presence in the here and now:

Tata ważył się na wiele	Daddy
za przywiązanie do prawdy	for his preference for the truth
nie otrzymał nic	was rewarded
oprócz śmierci	with nothing but death
Nocami zawieszał planety	At night he'd hang planets
na suficie dziecinnego pokoju	on the ceiling of a child's bedroom
stwarzał świat bez pomocy	create a world without the help
internetu	of the internet
Jego wnuk zna właściwości ciał niebieskich	His grandson knows
urządza szkołę księżyców i mówi	the physical properties of heavenly bodies
że w czarnych dziurach są przejścia	sets out a school of moons and says
do światów alternatywnych	that in black holes are pathways
Tata, który nie widział zdjęć Neptuna	to alternative worlds
jego wnuk, który poznaje planety po kolorze	Daddy, who never saw photos of Neptune
spotykają się we mnie	his grandson, who knows each planet by its colour
(*Wieloświat* 5)	meet together in me

Even though the speaker's father no longer dwells in the world of the living, his passion for astronomy and cosmology lives on in his grandson, who "knows the physical properties of heavenly bodies." In the two stanzas—one on the past, and one on the past in the present—Filipczak "moves through" time and space, making subtle references to the science of alternative universes, and finally arriving at an embodied form of the multiverse: her father, who had never seen the pictures of Neptune, and his grandson, who recognizes planets by their color, meet within her (Kocot 223).

The interdependence of causes and conditions is so vivid here that one could venture the hypothesis that both "Wieloświat" and *Wieloświat* "embody," as it were, the teaching of "this is because that is." In quite rational terms Filipczak speaks about the mystery of being, about a subtle, net-like energy of inter-being; from one poem to another she weaves her story on the nature of true encounter with the other in a fully connected multiverse. The issue of separate worlds is linked with the notion of place, seen and felt as one's own.

Conclusion

When Marek Czuku asks Filipczak about the importance of language and what it means to communicate, she replies that as far as the artistic dimension is concerned, language is a perfect and mysterious material, but it is

also an amazing means of communication; she adds that it amazes her how much we can express in language on a purely human or artistic level, and how they interpenetrate one another (Filipczak, "Duchowa transfuzja" 47). Perfection, mystery, and amazement—three features of good poetry which transforms the here and now into visions that stay with us forever.

Filipczak chooses to search for answers to her metaphysical questions in and through literature as well as other texts of culture. Her visions of the sacred undergo deep transformations over time: purely conceptual visions become more embodied, mindscapes are more and more inextricably linked with landscapes, the activity of viewing the landscape transforms into "feeling" the landscape, and, most importantly, becoming one with the landscape. In *K+M+B* and especially in *Wieloświat*, these landscapes turn into "interpenetrating dimensions" or "dimensional planes"; in a trickster-like fashion, they resist one-dimensional reading, and remain open to interpretation.

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The volume, honoring Professor Dorota Filipczak, whose energetic and fruitful academic career was cut short in 2021, offers a contribution to literary criticism and culture studies, the areas on which her own scholarly endeavors centered. The theme of "the woman artist" was of particular significance both for Filipczak's inquiry into the work of writers such as Alice Munro, Jane Urquhart, Michèle Roberts or Margaret Laurence, and for her own poetic practice.

Rather than focus on her achievements in various fields (as scholar, writer, teacher, poet, and translator), the texts collected in this volume go beyond remembrance and the honoring of an established scholar's remarkable feats. Despite their undeniable commemorative role, the chapters are an attempt to carry Dorota Filipczak's academic endeavors forward, into the future, with her own texts serving as prologue and inspiration. The contributors to the volume — representing various fields of the academia — are her friends, colleagues and collaborators, and the essays eloquently testify to her intellectual influence.

From more personal reflections and ruminations inspired by Filipczak's life and work to articles exploring the work of a range of women artists, the volume offers an investigation of various approaches to autobiography, tensions between public personas and private selves, subversive performative personas, transcending religious frameworks of bodily discipline, as well as "toggling" between the human and the nonhuman.

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