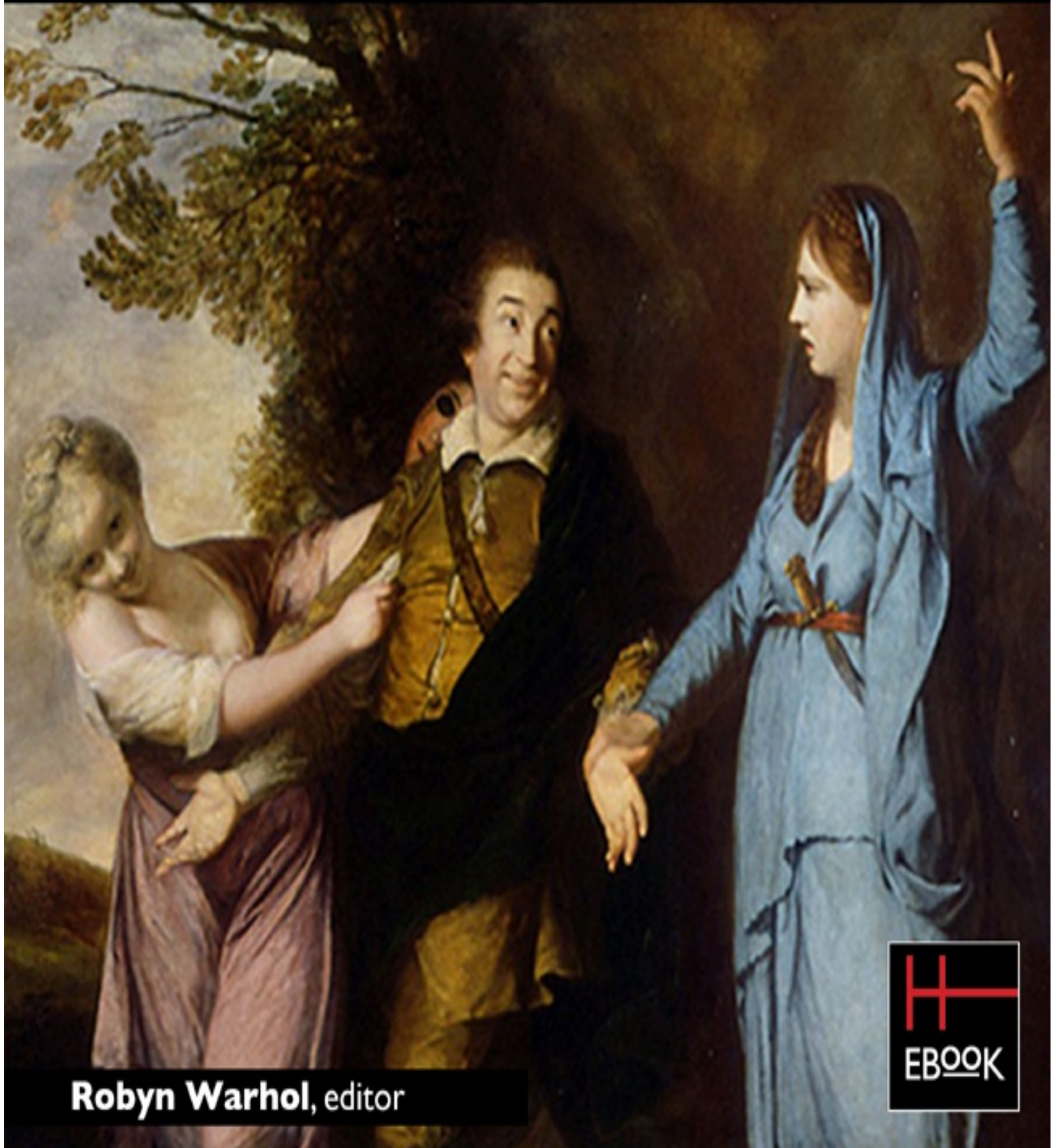# The Work of Genre

Selected Essays from the English Institute

Robyn Warhol, editor

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EBOOK

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Robyn Warhol

The English Institute Cambridge, MA

Title Page

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New Series in Digital Format

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For seven decades the English Institute has been a major resource for developments in criticism, theory, and scholarship, while honoring traditional fields of interest and modes of literary

analysis. This volume presents selected papers from the 2009 annual English Institute conference held at Harvard University.

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Introduction: Genre Regenerated

ROBYN WARHOL

What Killed Genre?

About the Author

"GENRE IS DEAD GENRE IS DEAD GENRE IS DEAD": so proclaims a T-shirt available from an Internet site devoted to the sport called extreme rollerblading. The phrase serves as title to a video posted at the same address, but what "Genre Is Dead" might mean in the rollerblading context is obscure: Google sheds no light, and my teenaged son, a walking Wikipedia of youth culture, has no idea. In the context of literary and cultural approaches, though, I find the idea of genre's demise intriguing. To be sure, the word "genre" is playing a lively role in nonacademic contexts just now, as readers consume their favorite kinds of genre fiction (sci fi, romance, detective); Netflix sorts movies and television programs by genre ("Critically Acclaimed Sentimental Dramas," "Witty TV Workplace Shows," "Quirky Romantic Comedies Featuring a Strong Female Lead," etc.); iTunes suggests generic categories for MP-3 playlists (classic rock, punk, alternative, metal, reggae); and video gamers specialize in genres of play as literarily conceptualized as "first-person shooter" and "third-person shooter." And, too, plenty of scholars are working on identifying the characteristics of specific *genres*: a recent issue of the journal *Genre* includes studies of "Early Modern Domestic Tragedy," "Reformation Polemic," "The

Modernist American Short-Story Cycle," the nineteenth-century sensation novel, contemporary satirical children's literature, and even "The Curse-Psalms in Their Patristic, Renaissance, and Modern Reception."[1] Sorting individual works according to thematic and structural details empirically observed through close reading, such projects give names to previously unrecognized kinds of literary and cultural texts, or else they expand the boundaries of traditionally formulated literary types. While the study of genres is alive and well, what seems to have nearly died out is the broader discussion of what genre is and what it does. This volume represents seven theorists' approaches to revivifying that overarching conversation about genre.

What killed genre? The likeliest suspects would be the historically oriented theory and criticism that have shaped the field of English studies since the 1980s. While formalism, structuralism, neo-Aristotelianism, and early iterations of poststructuralism could unselfconsciously propose universal theories about the properties of literature, formalism lost its footing under the influence of New Historicism, Frankfurt School and Birmingham School cultural studies, and such politically grounded approaches as feminism, neo-Marxism, critical race theory, queer studies, disability studies, and postcolonial theory. Whereas it had once been possible to generalize about genre, late twentieth-century developments made that project suspect, if not downright wrong. To detach form, structure, and theme from a text's specific historical moment, or to sketch out taxonomies of literary types in the

abstract, began to be regarded as perpetuating received wisdoms that are intrinsically Eurocentric, androcentric, heterocentric, and economically privileged in their origins. As the discipline of English studies has more conscientiously devoted itself to the local, the referential, and the material aspects of literary production and reception, most critics have put aside generalizations about genre so as not to set up norms that would inevitably exclude examples of texts on the periphery—or indeed, beyond the boundaries—of the individual critic's own knowledge. Studies of genre have become studies of genres delimited by time and place, as are the topics of most of the essays in that issue of *Genre:* modern America, early modern England, the Reformation, the Renaissance, and so on. In its twenty-first-century version the journal might better be titled *Genres*.

Complicating the matter are the variations among ways that critics use the term "genre" when we do address it. Understood as a term for sorting types of texts, genre can refer to sets of conventions for organizing literary language (lyric, novel), or to subsets that mobilize particular types of those conventions (the realist novel, the historical romance, the science-fiction novel), or to components characterizing those subsets (the marriage plot, the roman à clef, the parallel universe story), or to protocols that shape the conventions (narrative, performance), or to themes that animate the conventions (the war novel, the domestic novel, the vampire novel), or even to the stylistic materials of which the conventions are made (prose, verse). As the second in the English

Institute's series of conferences on the basic terms and concepts of English studies, the 2009 conference, "On Genre," set out to map some of the many functions genre now performs in literary criticism and theory and found elements of each of these separate usages. The seven speakers—Jonathan Culler, Wai Chee Dimock, Craig Dworkin, Deidre Lynch, Martin Puchner, Joseph Slaughter, and Alex Woloch—have throughout their careers contributed substantively to the ongoing conversation about genres, genre, or both. Each was invited to speak about his or her current thoughts on the concept. For the round table on the last morning of the conference, the speakers and audience all came prepared to discuss Gérard Genette's *The Architext* (1979), that classic structuralist manifesto for privileging the general over the particular in the study of literature; as a result, several of the speakers made Genette a reference point in their talks and in the essays that constitute this volume. Although the seven essays could be sorted along many axes—some address poetry, some drama, some prose; some discuss canonical texts, some obscure texts, and some pop culture; some adhere to traditional categories of genre, some propose new ones, and some extend the question of genre beyond the boundaries of the discipline of English studies altogether—they are organized in this volume by their basic stances on genre. The essays in part 1 hypothesize what genre *is*, and those in part 2 speculate about what genre *does*—or might do, were the critical community to pursue the directions these theorists outline.

Taxonomic and Dynamic Models of Genre

The four theorists whose work comprises part 1 think about genre in terms of taxonomy, following the definition of "genre" as a rubric for naming categorical differences among kinds of texts. Each of them puts aside any notion of genre as being fixed or stable, however, proposing instead to treat genres as constantly crossing, combining, and recombining as they play out in individual texts. For Jonathan Culler, genre is not a set of rules that authors ought to follow but rather a background of convention against which the singularity of a text can emerge. His treatment of lyric poems demonstrates the double benefit of this foreground/background approach to genre, in that each text's unique properties *both* invite special interpretive attention by diverging from the generic norms *and* make the critic more aware not just of what those norms are but also of how they came to be laid out in the first place. As Culler conceives it, genre must be posited both theoretically and empirically, and it develops within history rather than exists as an eternal or universal form. Craig Dworkin, too, uses genre to refer to various different types of text, such as lyric poem, descriptive narrative fiction, novel, and essay, but his concentration on the media of literary texts—verse and prose, which he also calls genres—draws awareness to what Dworkin names the "format" (not to be confused with the form) of texts. Looking at the placement of ink on the page, Dworkin shows that the attributes of any given genre can be transferred across

literary forms (from expository essay to lyric poem, for instance) through the configuration of prose. Like Culler and Dworkin, Wai Chee Dimock proceeds from the idea of genre as a classifying system, emphasizing that genre is "always in progress, never complete." Understanding genre very much the same way Culler does, as "at once empirical and suppositional," Dimock also shares Dworkin's interest in how a text that presents itself within the conventions of one genre might be translated to another, transforming the idea of genre in the process. Dimock sees genre as fluid, pervasive across the literatures of all languages and in all registers of high and low culture. She emphasizes the importance of recognizing how one genre may present itself within another through direct or more broadly intertextual allusions. Martin Puchner, like Culler, uses genre as a tool of analysis to distinguish an individual text from its kind. Skeptical about the implications of the term's derivation from the language of genealogy, however, Puchner moves away from Aristotelian generic categories, substituting for "drama" the concept proposed by Kenneth Burke as "dramatism." Puchner, nevertheless, maintains the usefulness of taxonomies for the further development of cultural history.

Less interested in taxonomy are the theorists in part 2, whose subject is how genre works within the dynamics of textual reception, consumption, circulation, and representation. Deidre Lynch addresses this distinction directly, calling for critics to shift attention from genre as a classifying system for identifying the structure and production of texts and to think instead about the

implications of genre for how texts are used by those who read them. Lynch calls for a new concept of genre that might begin with description of formal conventions but would then redirect its investigation to practices of textual consumption, including the physical act of reading (and especially rereading) favorite books. Joseph Slaughter takes a polemical stand against the taxonomic dimension of genre studies, pointing out that in practice, if not in principle, classifications of genre have served to exclude texts in world literary traditions that do not fit Eurocentric norms. Comparing literary genre to international intellectual property law, Slaughter uncovers surprising links between English studies and legal discourse, showing that both use "genre" to regulate the "norms and forms" of novels. Slaughter sees the novel as a technology for cultural appropriation and genre as a potential mechanism for transferring cultural materials from the centers of world literature to the peripheries. In this sense, while genre can be an active force for suppressing non-Western literatures, it can also be the occasion for parody and pastiche, producing new cultural combinations within the novel form. For Alex Woloch, too, genre begins as a matter of form. Like Lynch and Slaughter, however, Woloch is less concerned with the impact of genre on a text's inception and more interested in its effects upon reception. Woloch sees genre as a way of describing a form's relationship to referentiality and representation, and of thinking about how form can disrupt its materials and even itself in those moments when a text's explicit "genreness" draws a reader's awareness to the text's own transgressions of its genre's norms. While Woloch's inquiry,

like Lynch's, centers on the effects textual practices can have on an individual reader's experience of reading, and Slaughter's looks more broadly to the role those practices play in constructing cultures, these theorists' speculations about genre's agency share with those of the writers in part 1 a view of genre as flexible, open-ended, and active.

What Genre Can Be

Opening part 1 of this volume, Jonathan Culler's "Genre: Lyric" sets out to defend the usefulness of conceiving lyric as a genre, in opposition to Aristotle's leaving lyric out of his original taxonomy. Culler also positions himself against Virginia Jackson's concept of what she has called "lyricization." Culler contends that Jackson is trying to "escape from the category of the lyric" with her interest in such nineteenth-century modes of circulation for poetry as "scrolls, manuscript books, song cycles, miscellanies, broadsides, hornbooks, libretti, quartos, chapbooks, recitation manuals, annuals, gift books, newspapers, anthologies" and her objection to the attempts of eager twentieth-century editors to transform Emily Dickinson's letters into lyric poems. Jackson's work traces the way various verse genres with specific cultural functions—such as the ode, the elegy, or the epitaph—got collapsed over the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries into a lyricized notion of what poetry is supposed to be. Though Culler allies himself with Jackson on the need for developing a more satisfactory history of the lyric, he sees contemporary notions of the poetic as being even more narrow, claiming that under the dominance of narrative in contemporary literary studies current concepts of the lyric poem are becoming limited to the dramatic monologue, the most mimetic of lyric forms. Culler argues for reviving the idea of the lyric as the utterance of decontextualized expression of the self. The restoration of attention to nonmimetic, nonnarrative short

poetry will, he asserts, serve to broaden current discussions of lyric by redirecting them from the narrative turn he sees them as having taken. He illustrates his concept of the genre with close readings of two poems by Horace—who, Culler reminds us, was composing classic Greek lyrics in Latin four centuries after the form was current—one by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, and one by John Ashbery. Each of Culler's examples deploys temporalities and situations of enunciation that defy the logic of narrative, marking them as definitively lyrical.

Making a move that would look hubristic coming from a critic less renowned for his ability to synthesize and summarize theoretical principles,[2] Culler outlines six fundamental properties shared by all lyrics that define them as lyric, as opposed to narrative. First, a lyric poem is itself an event, never a representation of an event. Second, lyric poems use deictics to establish an indeterminate present, the "here, this, now" that happens again every time the poem is re-created by being read. Third, lyric poetry deploys complex structures of enunciation, especially in the triangulated address of apostrophe that simultaneously seems to hail a reader while directing its utterance to an absent entity. Fourth, lyric poetry is given to hyperbole, especially to discourses of excess and singularization. Fifth, lyric poetry functions as an optative articulation of desire, constituting a reciprocal relationship with a resistant other, such as Nature or the inaccessible beloved. And finally, lyric poetry is musical, using such devices as repetition,

meter, refrain, and rhyme to allude to poetry's ritual, incantatory character. Indicating a direction for the future study of the form, Culler offers this list as a new poetics of what "genre: lyric" means.

Ostensibly moving from lyric poetry to prose, the second essay, Craig Dworkin's "The Prosaic Imagination," actually demonstrates that poetry and prose can occupy the same literary territory simultaneously. Punning on the "kindness of prose," Dworkin asks what kind of thing prose actually is, concluding that it is not so much a genre or form as it is a way of arranging words on a page. Pointing out that pages of prose have been visually identical to one another for centuries, Dworkin brings new meaning to aberrations like the black page in Laurence Sterne's *Tristram Shandy*, those self-conscious repudiations of the conventions of prose that keep surfacing in modernist and postmodernist novels. When Dworkin refers to a "text" he means something more material than that term typically denotes in contemporary usage. Dworkin is talking about ink and paper, the referent of his "text" resembling the book an angry graduate student is reputed to have hurled at a classmate's head in a heated discussion of Stanley Fish's *Is There a Text in This Class?* during a seminar at Stanford in the early 1980s.[3] For Dworkin, the prose/poetry distinction dissolves in the face of the materiality of text, as the two genres shade over into each other through the alternation of marks and blank spaces on a page. Taking a cue from the kind of shaped poetry that links

typography to content, Dworkin considers passages of prose in which the visual layout of the page reflects both the literal and the figurative content of the writing.

In playing out his new approach to prose, Dworkin first examines poets such as Walter Pater and William Butler Yeats who self-consciously rearranged prose into verse, then turns to Language poet Lyn Hejinian, who selects and reproduces words from pages of prose to produce postmodern lyrics.[4] Turning from poetry made out of prose to prose that works just like (shaped) poetry, Dworkin identifies descriptions of public squares in prose narrative, observing that the prose pages in which these descriptions are typeset mirror the diegetic spaces they describe. "Public squares and prose blocks, typography and cartography"—all come together as Dworkin unfolds the ways in which the represented story world and the physical existence of the book inform each other's significance. Dworkin identifies such texts as a kind of poetry, while acknowledging they are not verse. This poetry resists "the ideology of the transparent page" by bringing the text's configuration to the foreground of the poem's meaning. The properties of prose, Dworkin suggests, have the alchemical power to transmute one genre into another, serving as a kind of two-way philosopher's stone for literary forms. Dworkin does not mention the turn texts have taken in the past decade toward a new kind of materiality, accessed through laptops and smartphones rather than through books. As more readers consume written texts online or on Kindles (indeed, as more volumes are produced, like the present

one, only in electronic form), the shape of the prose page is changing, its material existence shifting from physical marks on a page to virtual emanations shimmering on a screen. Dworkin's point about the persistence of the prose layout is only underscored, though, by the fact that the vast majority of electronic texts maintain the convention of being organized into blocks or "pages" of prose, even though computer technology could enable radical departures from the text block dictated by the exigencies of the printing press.

Though Dworkin does not enter the world generated by computers, Wai Chee Dimock begins there with an evocation of the virtual space represented on any early twenty-first-century computer's desktop screen. Dimock invokes stackability (the property of computer files allowing them to be opened simultaneously on a virtual desktop, layered as if they were pages stacked on a desk), switchability (the ease with which one can "click" on a page to bring it into the foreground or move it to any part of the desktop), and scalability (the way one can change perspective on texts and images by zooming in or out on the screen).[5] These properties of virtual pieces of text combine to constitute a counterrealism, a realism of the "not-yet-actual" resembling genre in its continual negotiation of foreground, background, size, and scope. She proposes "percolation" as a figure for the way texts invite us to explore embedded features that move up, down, and across generic categories. Dimock layers onto this desktop imagery a metaphor of migration, picturing

language and literature as a landscape that is not at all flat, through which the materials of genre are continually moving. She sees this migration as operating along three different axes: the dimension introduced by multilingual literatures; the free movement of genre categories from poetry to prose, high to low and back again; and what Dimock calls the "citational presence" of one generic form in another, something more pointed than intertextuality in that it can govern one's reading of a particular text. As an example of the way stacking, switching, and scaling work, her essay looks at the presence of the epic and the lyric in contemporary science fiction, a presence she argues will sometimes miniaturize poetry that is embedded in prose and sometimes enlarge it.

Dimock's primary case study is *Inferno*, a 1976 science-fiction novel by Larry Niven and Jerry Pournelle, which upends the history of World War II. The novel's protagonist is guided through hell not by the *duca* of Dante's text, Virgil, but by the *Duce*, Benito Mussolini. At the lowest pit of hell they encounter Winston Churchill, suffering the consequences of having ordered the bombing of Dresden. Working with a biography of Mussolini and a history of World War II that imagines a possible world where the pacifists had prevailed in preventing the United States from entering the war, Dimock demonstrates a critical method that employs switching: from sci-fi to history, from history to biography, from biography to poetry (Ezra Pound), from English sources to Italian ones, and from the received "Anglo-American" view of World War II to an alternate

allegiance. By stacking, scaling, and restacking these and other sources, including visual images of Dresden after the bombing, Dimock demonstrates science-fiction's potential as a force for enabling the percolation of materials among genres. She concludes with a reading of Philip K. Dick's *The Grasshopper Lies Heavy*, a science-fiction novel into which she says the figure of Nathaniel Hawthorne has "migrated" to serve as protagonist, mingling high and low literary cultures within Dick's text. In such work, she argues, the mingling of genres becomes a theme as well as a practice. She calls for a concept of genre that recognizes the commingling of literary forms and that "digital-like, invites us to explore its embedded features, defined not by preexisting entities but by user interface, by movement up and down, front and back, close and at a distance," as these science-fiction novels do.

Martin Puchner's essay, "Dramatism," is allied with Dimock's in his contention that genre-based approaches can provide perspective on the "values, fantasies, [and] practices" of the culture that produces and receives a literary work. Proceeding from the assumption that a given text can belong to many genres, Puchner advocates reclassifying works into new generic categories in order to gain a fresh view of familiar texts. New generic categories can also draw critical awareness to unfamiliar texts. As illustrations Puchner cites three kinds of texts not often mentioned in the study of genres: the closet drama, the manifesto, and the Socrates play.[6] Puchner discovers the Socrates play—a dramatic adaptation of Plato's dialogues—as a subgenre uniquely combining philosophy

and theater. Located at "the outer edge of genre," the Socrates play exists, Puchner reports, in at least one hundred examples ranging from Aristophanes to the twentieth century. As a subgenre the Socrates play challenges the idea that genres must develop in an evolutionary way; because every example is so obscure, each author knew few predecessors or none at all. Hence the Socrates play is unusual among genres, in that it has been invented and reinvented some one hundred times, almost every time from scratch.

Puchner places the closet drama, the manifesto, and the Socrates play under the "archi-genre of drama." While that generic classification makes obvious sense for the closet drama and Socrates play, the manifesto's dramatic claims are counterintuitive, but Puchner argues that manifestos always involve at least a fantasy of being declaimed before a live audience. Puchner points out that to make such a classificatory move he must expand the notion of drama beyond the taxonomic category traditionally based on formal properties. He advocates adopting Kenneth Burke's notion of "dramatism" as a new generic indicator that can accommodate this broadened notion of what drama might be. For Puchner's purposes, drama should be conceived as a category even more expansive than Mikhail Bakhtin's idea of the novel, which takes properties traditionally attributed to prose fiction, then crosses and combines them with concepts derived from dramatic form and performance such as dialogism and heteroglossia. Ultimately Puchner advocates adopting "dramatism"

as a generic category that can remove the contradiction he sees as a crux for scholars in drama studies and performance studies, the opposition between the linguistic sense of "performative" (the speech act that brings a thing into being by uttering it) and the theatrical sense. In that Puchner approaches genre as a malleable, intertwining, and negotiable set of categories, he shares with Culler, Dworkin, and Dimock a dynamic notion of what genre is. Indeed, as these four theorists have conceived it, genre never sits still and can never be pinned down.

What Genre Can Do

Genre is an equally dynamic category for the theorists in part 2, "What Genre Does," but they take that dynamism a step further by thinking about genre's agency in the extratextual world. Deidre Lynch's essay, "The Shandean Lifetime Reading Plan," begins this section with a look at genre study in the context of the history of reading and the historical culture of timekeeping. Lynch points out that studies of temporality in fiction tend to focus on the representation of time (what Genette called "order" and "frequency" in narrative), rather than on the number of pages devoted to a narrative incident or the length of time it takes for a reader to process it (what Genette called "duration").[7] Viewing Laurence Sterne's *Tristram Shandy* in the light of eighteenth-century preoccupations with timepieces, repetitions, and interruptions, Lynch reveals *Tristram Shandy* as resembling a perpetual motion machine, giving the illusion of never needing to stop. She sees Tristram's metaleptic narratorial habits as continually drawing a reader's attention to the very features of fiction whose transparency is supposed to ensure immersion in a diegetic world, making it impossible for the reader ever really to enter the story world of this novel. Positing Sterne's novel as "interested in the way that representations become reiterable, rereadable, and so, routinizable," Lynch considers *Tristram Shandy's* circular story line and serial format as a technology for

enabling infinite rereadings of the text, invitations to the reader to emulate Tristram's own claim that he will keep rereading his book until the end of his life.

Lynch points out how novelistic conventions such as chapter breaks facilitate reading as a daily routine. While Tristram continually bemoans the fact that his narrative must end, the actual reader can literally feel the end coming, as it lies on the last page of the text inside the book cover resting on the reader's right hand. (This striking observation, as insightful as it is original, is another fact of reading that will change as books shade over into electronic files costing a fraction of their paper equivalents.) And yet, as Lynch observes, habitual readings and rereadings release a novel "from the internal chronology of its plot," converting the narrative's linearity into time loops that structure the experience of reading. *Tristram Shandy* underlines this property of narrative because its story line has no beginning and no end: it is all middle. Lynch calls for redirecting critical attention away from the production and construction of texts to reframe genre in terms of readerly consumption.[8] As an eighteenth-century example she offers the genre of the "parlour-window book," a type of volume one might leave lying around to invite casual reading, rather than storing it with the serious books on the shelves. A twentieth-century equivalent would be the coffee-table book, meant not to be read cover to cover but to be dipped into, its oversized pages turned and its images scanned during a conversation or while someone is killing time on a sofa. We are accustomed to thinking

about many kinds of books in terms of their uses, but Lynch shows that thinking about genre that way can open up a new awareness of the scene of reading, the sitting room or the bedroom where habitual reading does its work on the body of the person who holds the book and reads.

Joseph Slaughter leaves the parlor and the bedroom behind as he moves into the public space of legal discourse in "Form and Informality: An Unliterary Look at World Literature." His examination of one genre's migrations and conversions into intellectual property demonstrates how a genre like the novel mobilizes intercultural influence among the literatures of the globe. Genre, in this context, is as much a legal category as a literary one, since novels' circulation is regulated by international laws of intellectual property and copyright.[9] Slaughter describes how under the law "intellectual enclosure proceeds by converting intangibles into commodities," thus regulating the materials of novels in a way that parallels the historical enclosure of common lands in Britain. Indeed, Slaughter asserts an identity between intellectual property and material property in his analysis of "the systems of intellectual property and trade law that are engineered to organize property relations and to orchestrate the distribution (or accumulation) of intellectual wealth." He explains that this legal system has followed a literary model of generic thinking for generations.

Pointing out that parody, pastiche, and critique are exempt from regulation under the intellectual property system, Slaughter presents a reading of a Nigerian novel by Chris Albani, *GraceLand*, an example of what Slaughter calls "Under-World Literature." The protagonist, Elvis Oke, panhandles money from American tourists in Nigeria by whitening his face with flour and doing a practically unrecognizable Elvis impersonation. Slaughter reads this allegorically, seeing Elvis Oke's song and dance as an impersonation of other Elvis impersonators, a copy of a copy, an appropriation of material that has already been appropriated. Elvis Oke reads voraciously, working his way through Charles Dickens, Chinua Achebe, and any number of nonliterary African texts. A point this novel makes, Slaughter says, is that there is no "African literature," only literatures. As Slaughter sees it, there is no world literature, either. Observing that models of world literature like those proposed by Franco Moretti and Pascale Casanova assume literature looks the same, no matter where in the world you stand while you are looking at it, Slaughter contends that those models reproduce the center/periphery perspective of global economic development. As an alternative to center/margin or high/low models for sorting genre, Slaughter suggests thinking instead in terms of formal and informal literatures, or rather in terms of the formal and informal audiences around the globe who might consume any given text. Borrowing these terms from economists who are trying to avoid the moral implications of the more value-laden binaries like first-world/third world or center/periphery, Slaughter describes the formal and the informal as synchronic, not

diachronic, in their relation to each other, emphasizing that the pairing does not imply a narrative of development from one category to the other. Understanding genre in this way, as Slaughter says, can lead to appreciating "the disruptive effects that tiny textual details have on the texture of world literary systems."

In "Partial Representation," Alex Woloch redirects this volume's focus to the interplay between genre and text, concentrating on the realist novel. Woloch embarks from a paradox at the heart of realist representation that has bedeviled theorists since realism's inception. If realism is supposed to imitate life, then the shape it ought to take would be some kind of free mimesis undisturbed by signs of discursive form. As Woloch puts it, "The generic dimension of literary form is always *resisted* by the realist text, insofar as it aspires toward unmediated representation, seeking to motivate and justify its own techniques and devices" by naturalizing them within the form. One of the hallmarks of the realist novel, however, is the genre's penchant for drawing attention to its discursive apparatus in metaleptic moments Woloch calls eruptions of "genreness." In this, Woloch is describing the same process of defamiliarization Lynch identifies in the generic workings of *Tristram Shandy*, but his attention turns from the text's reception to an internal textual process that genre sets in motion. Looking at Genette's rhetoric in *The Architext*, Woloch sees tendencies of "exclusion, containment, compression, absorption" that he attributes to the taxonomic nature of Genette's project. As an alternative he promotes "those readings that take genre as a

fundamentally disturbing, deforming, and disruptive *tendency* within the aesthetic construct." His preferred model of genre would foreground the contradictions in every realist text between "signs of formlessness" (or mimesis) and the "laws or patterns of form" (diegesis).

Woloch shows how the earliest iterations of realist fiction deploy these contradictions, as when in *Don Quixote* the narrator crosses diegetic levels to produce an antireferential estrangement effect even (or especially) in moments that are crucial to the "referential core of the story." In this way a realist novel's eruptions of "genreness" can "operate as static, confusion, interference; as distorting constraint," a function of genre he wants to keep in mind. The introductory section of his essay includes a reading of John Sayles's 1999 film *Limbo*, a serendipitous intersection with the thematics of Wai Chee Dimock's essay in this volume. Sayles's film becomes the occasion for Woloch to invoke Erich Auerbach, who—Woloch avers—was always already aware of the contradictions that arise between mimesis and diegesis in realist representation. The second section of Woloch's essay is devoted to close readings of selected sixteenth-century Dutch paintings by Pieter Bruegel the Elder, drawing analogies between realist novels and Bruegel's paintings that are evident in their handling of perspective and their treatment of peripheral characters. In dialogue with Edward Snow's analyses of Bruegel's works, Woloch sets up a contrast between the ways Dickens and Bruegel handle the relationship of the crowd to the individual person. In Dickens, as Woloch explains,

the laws of realist form determine an asymmetry among characters, with exceptional individuals always foregrounded against a background crowd of oddly distorted minor figures. Those figures—Dickens's famous eccentric minor characters—become, as it were, the ground against which the protagonist can figure.[10] Bruegel's handling of focalization leads to a different kind of realist perspective, decentering the gaze and presenting multiple narratives being played out in his crowds while refusing to privilege any one narrative over the others. Woloch's readings emphasize the ongoing oscillation between reference and form, realism and allegory, experience and parable in Bruegel's paintings, serving as reminders of what genre can do to destabilize visual texts as well as written ones.

As this account of the volume's contents suggests, contemporary theorists do not approach genre as if it had to be *either* an exercise in taxonomy *or* a framework for thinking about the production and reception of texts. Genre today is most notable for its fluidity. In theory as well as in critical practice, genre is not a neat classification system for settling questions about what texts mean or how they work. Instead, the concept of genre opens up vistas on the ways a text can function in literary history, in a reader's hands and mind, or in material developments within the extratextual world. Alive and well, genre remains an unsettled question.

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Part I

What Genre Is

1

Genre: Lyric

JONATHAN CULLER

Notions of Genre

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<u>About the Author</u>

As a proponent of poetics, I have long taken generic categories to be fundamental to the institution of literature—and, indeed, to the production and reception, the creation and the deployment of discourses of all sorts. It is certainly true, though, that the notion of genre has not fared well in literary studies of the past decades: in *The Political Unconscious* Fredric Jameson maintains that genre criticism has been "thoroughly discredited by modern literary theory and practice,"[1] which suggests that it is indeed time to take up the question of genre anew. But before I argue for the value of a particular contested generic category, the lyric, I should say a few words about the pertinence of genre—what sort of notion of genre is most useful and appropriate in literary studies.

Discussions of genre often cite a passage from Maurice Blanchot's *Le livre à venir*, which articulates an extreme version of what has

become a common view:

> Seul importe le livre, tel qu'il est, loin des genres, en dehors des rubriques prose, poésie, roman, témoignage, sous lesquelles il refuse de se ranger, et auxquelles il dénie le pouvoir de lui fixer sa place et de déterminer sa forme. Un livre n'appartient plus à un genre, tout livre relève de la seule littérature, comme si celle-ci détenait par avance, dans leur généralité, les secrets et les formules qui permettent seuls de donner à ce qui s'écrit réalité de livre. Tout se passerait donc comme si, les genres s'étant dissipés, la littérature s'affirmait seule, brillait seule, dans la clarté mystérieuse qu'elle propage, et que chaque création littéraire lui renvoie en la multipliant,—comme s'il y avait donc une "essence" de la littérature.

> [The book is all that matters, just as it is, far from genres, outside of the rubrics, prose, poetry, novel, testimony, under which it refuses to place itself and to which it denies the power to fix its place and to determine its form. A book no longer belongs to a genre; every book stems from literature alone, as if literature possessed in advance, in all their generality, the secrets and the formulas that alone make it possible to give to what is written the reality of the book. It would thus be as though genres having faded away, literature alone were affirming itself, shining alone in the mysterious clarity that it propagates and that each literary creation sends back to it, multiplied—as if there were therefore an "essence" of literature.][2]

This passage is frequently quoted in discussions of genre, because it does represent a certain modern attitude. What we value in literature is the singularity of a literary work, and to expect it to conform to the conventions of a genre or to approach it through the lens of genre is to aim at something other than its distinctive literariness. But I would like to point out something to which the two *comme si* clauses and the conditional in the last sentence ought to alert those who read or cite this passage: "Tout se passerait donc comme si, les genres s'étant dissipés, la littérature s'affirmait seule" Far from affirming a notion of literature based on

the book and separate from genres, Blanchot entitles this section of his essay "la non-littérature" and affirms that what has been at stake since Mallarmé is an impossible quest: "C'est la non-littérature que chaque livre poursuit." (It is non-literature that each book pursues). Though Blanchot writes of a conception of literature since Mallarmé in which only the work counts—the work, which is seen as beyond what Blanchot in this essay calls "la réalité des genres" (the reality of genres)[3]—he is not affirming a positive concept of literature that could replace the reality of genres but sketching a negative one; he is describing a modern attitude, in which generic categories may have disappeared, more than he is challenging the reality of genres. In this, his thought is considerably more complex than that of Benedetto Croce, for example, who affirmed the singularity of the work and maintained that everything relating to genres and to the classification of the arts could be burned without loss.[4]

Croce's opposition to the notion of genre was based on the concept of genre as rule—where obeying the rules of genres, as in neoclassicism, violates the creative spirit of literature. Genres are forms of oppression. If it is true, as Jameson claims, that genre criticism has been thoroughly discredited, what has been discredited are the notion of a genre as a set of rules that a literary work ought to follow and the idea that the purpose of generic categories is to classify works—to tell us whether this piece of literature is a novel or an antinovel, for example. If today what we are inclined to value in a literary work is its singularity, that

singularity nonetheless emerges against the background of conventions of genres. The conventions, in fact, emerge most clearly in their violation or disruption. As readers of Foucault, we know that norms are productive as well as constraining, and there is now a long and varied tradition, running from Ernst Gombrich's *Art and Illusion* through such works as Erving Goffman's *Frame Analysis* to recent cognitive science, demonstrating how essential various sorts of schema or frames are to perception and creation.

Traditionally theorists say there are two sorts of theories of genres, empirical and theoretical, the latter based on some claim about elementary possibilities of thought, representation, or discourse: Aristotle distinguishes literary types according to the possible modes and objects of representation. Northrop Frye bases genre categories on "radicals [root forms] of presentation": "Words may be acted in front of a spectator, they may be spoken in front of a listener, they may be sung or chanted, and they may be written for a reader"—fundamental possibilities, which for him yield drama, epic, lyric, and narrative fiction.[5] Goethe spoke of the "drei echte Naturformen der Dichtung" (three pure natural forms of poetry): epic, dramatic, and lyric, which he distinguished from the variety of *Dichtarten*, which one might translate as "empirical genres": ballads, drama, epistles, fables, ode, novel, parody, romance, and so forth.[6] The alternative to theories of genres based on logical divisions of a sphere of possibilities would be such empirical genres, groupings that are observed or practiced, based on principles other than theoretical. Empirical genres would be lists of

whatever genres people believe exist, some based on form, others on content—classifications that do not seem very logical—like the categories we find in bookstores.

Now these do seem to be two different conceptions of genre, which we could call theoretical and historical, but I believe that in separating the two conceptions one obscures fundamental aspects of genre and creates the sort of confusion that contributes to the tendency to dismiss genres. In fact, theories of genre have usually attempted to find a logical basis for taxonomies that situate historically attested genres. The attempt to posit genres based on fundamental features of language or communication always draws on historically existing genres, as Gérard Genette argues in his fine little book, *Introduction à l'architexte*, even if—as in the case of the romantic division into lyric, epic, and drama as subjective, objective, and mixed mimesis—theorists disagree about whether it is epic that is objective and drama mixed or vice versa. Insofar as genres are literary categories, the projection of naturalness onto them is fallacious, Genette argues: "In the classification of genres no position is essentially more natural or more ideal than any other."[7] They are all historical categories.

This is important because our historicist age has tended to be suspicious of generic categories that previous theorists have claimed to base on some fundamental aspect of language, communication, or representation, as if these were eternal, atemporal categories, which, of course, they are not. If, on the

other hand, genres are seen as merely contingent empirical groupings, categories that people have for various reasons found it convenient to use in dealing with literature, then it is easy to dismiss them as mere conveniences of classification—as in a bookstore or catalogue—with no critical purchase or function. But the notion of genres as merely empirical categories is very dubious: classification schemes—even the most heterogeneous— are never without a theoretical or ideological basis of some sort, which might be based on marketing schemes and ideas about distinct target audiences. And a great many supposedly empirical generic categories do play a constitutive role in reading and writing, whether independently, when writers compose a detective story or readers consume a romance novel, or in combination, as when a writer deploys the conventions of one genre while ostensibly working in another. If one avoids the temptation to separate generic categories into the theoretical and the empirical but insists that genres are both historical and based on some sort of theoretical rationale, they are more defensible as critical categories, essential to the understanding both of literature as a social institution and of the individual works that take on meaning through their relations to generic categories.

Given the historicizing inclinations of criticism these days, it is important to stress that while genres are not natural kinds but historical formations and thus interpretive constructions, genres are not just what people of a particular period think them to be—it is crucial to the notion of genre as model that people might have

been wrong about them, unaware of affinities or recognizing only an attenuated version of a larger tradition. Genre study cannot be just a matter, for instance, of looking at what Renaissance critics say about genres and using only those categories for thinking about Renaissance literature, though, of course, one should try them out, while keeping in mind that more capacious and historically informed categories may be essential to grasping the full import and the deepest resources of literary productions.

In my own work on the Western lyric tradition, I have found myself needing to say that poets and critics have had erroneous conceptions of the lyric, which are undermined by the functioning of poems themselves when they are viewed in the context of a longer or broader lyric tradition. This desire to correct, which drives much academic research, presumes that lyric is more than a construction of the moment, that the weight of tradition helps make there be something to be right or wrong about, and, in particular, that a given historical construction of or notion of the lyric can neglect or obscure crucial aspects of the nature and function even of the poems to which the construction is supposed most directly to apply. The theory of a genre is an abstract model, an account of a set of norms or structural possibilities that underlie and enable the production and reception of literature: reading something as an epic or as a novel involves sets of conventions and expectations even when the text is contesting or undermining them. A claim about a generic model is not an assertion about some property that all examples of the genre

possess. It is a claim about fundamental structures that may be at work even when not manifest, a claim that directs attention to certain aspects of a work, which mark a tradition and an evolution, dimensions of transformation. The test of generic categories is how far they help relate one work to others and activate aspects of works that make them rich, dynamic, and revealing, though it is crucial to stress that interpretation of individual works is not the goal of poetics, which seeks to understand how the systems of literary discourse work.

The Lyric Genre

But what about lyric? Aristotle has little to say about it. Lyric was an important literary mode of his day, but perhaps because it is fundamentally nonmimetic it is not taken up in the *Poetics*. Lyric was finally made one of three fundamental genres during the Romantic period, when a more vigorous conception of the subject made it possible to conceive of lyric as mimetic: mimetic of the experience of the subject. Distinguished by its mode of enunciation, where the poet speaks in propria persona, lyric becomes the subjective form, with drama and epic as alternately the objective and the mixed, depending on the theorist. Hegel gives the fullest expression to the romantic theory of the lyric, whose distinguishing feature is the centrality of subjectivity coming to consciousness of itself through experience and reflection.[8] The lyric poet absorbs into himself the external world and stamps it with inner consciousness, and the unity of the poem is provided by this subjectivity.

This conception of the lyric no longer has great currency in the academic world. In a notorious article, "Genre Theory, the Lyric and Erlebnis," René Wellek concludes that the idea of lyric, at least in the conception inherited from the poetic theory of German Romanticism as expression of intense subjective experience, does not work. "These terms cannot take care of the enormous variety, in history and different literatures, of lyrical forms and constantly

lead into an insoluble psychological *cul de sac*: the supposed intensity, inwardness and immediacy of an experience that can never be demonstrated as certain and can never be shown to be relevant to the quality of art …. The way out is obvious," he continues, "One must abandon attempts to define the general nature of the lyric or the lyrical. Nothing beyond generalities of the tritest kind can result from it."[9] Wellek proposes that we focus instead on describing particular genres—such as the ode, elegy, and song—their conventions, and their traditions, a not very promising strategy for nineteenth- and twentieth-century poetry, certainly, where many of the most interesting lyrics do not seem to belong to those particular genres or subgenres.

More recent critique ends up in a surprisingly similar conclusion. What some have called "new lyric studies" is best observed in Virginia Jackson's book *Dickinson's Misery* and in a set of short papers in *PMLA* of January 2008 (especially Virginia Jackson's and Rei Terada's contributions). In *Dickinson's Misery*, Jackson takes up Paul de Man's conception of "lyrical reading" and describes the process of "lyricization," whereby the various kinds of writing in which Dickinson engaged were made by editors and critics into lyric poems. She argues that it is criticism that has made Dickinson into a lyric poet, according to a particular model of lyric, whereas for Dickinson producing this verse was continuous with other mundane activities such as writing letters to friends, working in the garden, and so forth. The second poem in Thomas Johnson's edition of Dickinson is a striking, egregious example of this process: doubtless noting the rhymes in a letter to her brother, the

editor extracted this passage from the end of a letter and made it into a poem.

> There is another sky,
>
> Ever serene and fair,
>
> And there is another sunshine,
>
> Though it be darkness there;
>
> Never mind faded forests, Austin,
>
> Never mind silent fields—
>
> *Here* is a little forest,
>
> Whose leaf is ever green;
>
> Here is a brighter garden,
>
> Where not a frost has been;
>
> In its unfading flowers
>
> I hear the bright bee hum;
>
> Prithee my brother,
>
> Into *my* garden come.[10]

Jackson writes that once established "as a lyric in 1955, these lines attracted a number of close readings …. By 1980 the lines had circulated for a quarter of a century as 'a love poem with a female speaker,' which is to say that they were read according to a theory of their genre that included the idea of a lyric persona."[11] She takes this as emblematic of the process whereby the lyric takes form during the nineteenth century "through the development of various reading practices which eventually become the practice of literary criticism." In the process, as

> poetic subgenres collapsed into the expressive romantic lyrics of the 19th century,

the various modes of poetic circulation—scrolls, manuscript books, song cycles, miscellanies, broadsides, hornbooks, libretti, quartos, chapbooks, recitation manuals, annuals, gift books, newspapers, anthologies—tended to disappear behind an idealized scene of reading progressively identified with an idealized mode of expression.[12]

Jackson argues for a critical history of this process of lyricization, a project I am happy to endorse. Where we disagree, I think, is that she seems to want to dissolve the category of lyric to return us to a variety of particular historical practices—though this is not entirely clear, since she occasionally appears to suggest that we cannot now avoid reading Dickinson's verse as lyrics. I think that a critical history of lyricization should lead not to an attempt to escape from the category of lyric but to a more capacious understanding of the lyric tradition that is not restricted either to the idea of the decontextualized expression of subjectivity or to what I take to be its successor, the model of the dramatic monologue with a speaker whose situation, attitude, and goals we should novelistically reconstruct.[13]

I would add that the historical construction of lyric is carried out by poets as well as by critics, so we can study the struggle between Wordsworth's move to constructing lyrical ballads, attaching lyric to the modest anecdote rather than taking the ode as paradigmatic for lyric, while Keats and Shelley exploited that latter strain in new and powerful ways. The question is whether a broad conception of lyric as genre is helpful for thinking about short, non-narrative poetry and, particularly, how its relation to the

historical tradition and to a broad range of possibilities for lyric in many periods and languages can help prevent a certain narrowing of conception of lyric and a tendency, understandable given the realities of literary education today, to treat lyric on the model of narrative, so that the dramatic monologue becomes the model of lyric. Thinking of lyric as transnational and broadly historical opens up critical possibilities.

Exemplary Lyrics

To think more concretely about this problem, I turn to poetic examples. The classicist Ralph Johnson in *The Idea of Lyric* writes of Horace, "No other lyricist has possessed the idea of his genre so completely;" so let us begin with Horace, to illustrate the potentiality of the notion of a genre.[14] Horace models himself on the Greeks and, extraordinarily, aims to join the canonical nine Greek lyric poets, to be placed among the *lyrici vates*—as he says in the first of his odes. Since the major Greek lyricist closest to Horace in time, Pindar, had died four hundred years earlier, Horace was as far removed from Sappho as we are from Petrarch and as far from Pindar as we are from Shakespeare, but he adopted Greek lyric meters and reinvented the genre as his successors would continue to do.

Although his poems are composed to circulate in written form, he presents himself as a singer to the lyre, affirming a relation to the tradition. We might consider two famous poems that have the virtue of great brevity.

> O fons Bandusiae, splendidior vitro,
>
> Dulci digne mero non sine floribus,
>
> Cras donaberis haedo,
>
> Cui frons turgida cornibus
>
> Primis et venerem et proelia destinat;

Frustra: nam gelidos inficiet tibi

  Rubro sanguine rivos,

    Lascivi suboles gregis.

Te flagrantis atrox hora Caniculae

Nescit tangere, tu frigus amabile

  Fessis vomere tauris

    Praebes et pecori vago.

Fies nobilium tu quoque fontium,

Me dicente cavis impositam ilicem

  Saxis unde loquaces

    Lymphae desiliunt tuae.

[O fountain of Bandusia, brighter than glass,

well do you deserve an offering of sweet wine

  and flowers, and tomorrow you will receive a kid

    with new horns bulging on his brow,

marking him out for love and war—

to no avail, since he will stain your cold stream

  with his red blood, this offspring

    of the amorous flock.

The cruel hour of the blazing Dog-star

cannot touch you. You give delicious

  coldness to oxen weary of the plough

    and the straggling flock.

You too will become a famous fountain

as I sing of the holm-oak

> above your cave in the rock
>
>   where your waters leap down chattering.][15]

The classical models of lyric have the virtue of encouraging us not to imagine lyric as the fictional imitation of real world speech acts, as today's pedagogy of the lyric urges us to do. They provide a panoply of poetic speech acts of praise, invocation, celebration, and complaint. This poem emphasizes its link with other rituals of ceremonious praise by announcing, in its encomium to the spring or fountain, that tomorrow—presumably the 13th of October, Fontanilia or the Festival of Springs, when offerings of wine and flowers were thrown into the waters of springs—this spring will receive a special sacrifice of a young goat. But this hymn of praise is explicitly not part of the ritual that would be performed on that day—as "tomorrow" emphasizes. It is not the fictional representation of some other sort of speech act but performatively sets out to accomplish what it declares, that this spring will become a famous spring, like the springs of the Muses—Arethusa, Hippocrene, Dirce, and or the Pierian spring—and, of course, it has succeeded.[16] Although no one knows where this spring is or even whether there is any such spring, it is famous.

For modern readers attention flows to the kid to be sacrificed and the apparently gratuitous celebration of his budding horns —"marking him out for love and war"—which confers value for the reader that is swiftly sacrificed, as we are compelled to imagine him killed off: marked for love and war, "to no avail, since he will

stain your cold stream/with his red blood."[17] The reader is enlisted in a sacrificial operation. Lyric, in its investment in particular images, is a mode of excess, and the energy of the kid's potential life, which stains the spring, is an excess that is answered by the excess of fame promised in the final lines. The poem also raises the question of the relation of poetic pleasure to the pleasure offered by the cool spring in summer, whose waters speak (they are "loquaces"), as does the poet, "Me dicente."[18] The spring addressed becomes something more than an object, something raised to a different plane with a life of its own, in a process analogous to the singularizing operation of the fame that the poem promises, and "the reciprocity between the speaking of the poet and the prattling of the spring" enhances the sense of lyric as a ritualistic performance: conjuring, endowing, acting.[19]

Horace's odes are addressed to someone or something, and the fifth ode of book 1 has a more conventional addressee, Pyrrha:

Quis multa gracilis te puer in rosa
perfusus liquidis urget odoribus
  grato, Pyrrha, sub antro?
    cui flavam religas comam,

simplex munditiis? heu, quotiens fidem
mutatosque deos flebit, et aspera
  nigris aequora ventis
    emirabitur insolens,

qui nunc te fruitur credulus aurea;

qui semper vacuam, semper amabilem

  sperat, nescius aurae

    fallacis! miseri, quibus

intemptata nites! me tabula sacer

votiva paries indicat uvida

  suspendisse potenti

    vestimenta maris deo.

[What slim youngster drenched in perfumes

is hugging you now, Pyrrha, on a bed of roses

  deep in your lovely cave? For whom

    are you tying up your blonde hair?

You're so elegant and simple. Many's the time

he'll weep at your faithlessness and the changing gods,

  and be amazed at seas

    roughened by black winds,

but now in all innocence he enjoys your golden beauty

and imagines you always available, always loveable,

  not knowing about treacherous breezes—

    I pity poor devils who have no experience of you

and are dazzled by your radiance. As for me,

the tablet on the temple wall announces

  that I have dedicated my dripping clothes

    to the god who rules the sea.][20]

These final lines allude to the custom that survivors of shipwrecks dedicate their clothes to Poseidon, as does this survivor of the storms of love.

This poem accords more with modern notions of the lyric in that we can read it according to two modern models: as the expression of affect of a subject or as a dramatic monologue, the fictional representation of a real-world speech act of address, where we need to reconstruct the situation of utterance, the relation of speaker and hearer to one another, and the aim or purpose of the speaker's utterance. Critics can and do read the poem according to one of these models, but, on the one hand, the expression of personal affect does not seem central and, on the other, the real-world speech event that the poem might fictionally represent is hard to reconstruct.[21] Where does this speech act take place, for example? And why would the speaker say this to Pyrrha? Is the speaker supposed to have stumbled upon Pyrrha in a cave, being amorously pressed by a gracile youth unknown to him? Presumably not, but if we posit that he encounters Pyrrha elsewhere, in the street, for instance, it is hard to imagine the motivation for the question, "What slim youngster is pressing you now?" Or if we take this as a wittily hyperbolic version of "so who are you seeing these days?" then it is hard to imagine the circumstances or rationale for the comments that follow, which would be better addressed to a young man. This is especially true, given the order of the comments about this young lover: one might imagine someone saying, "I'm sure he is dazzled by your

radiance now, not realizing that the future will bring storms," but the converse—"Many's the time that he will weep at your faithlessness ... though he is dazzled now"—seems much more like musing about the vicissitudes of love than like an utterance to the woman on a specific occasion. The poem makes much more sense if we take it as an act of *poetic address*: writing that imagines the addressee as it imagines the gracile youth, with his present excitement and his future disappointments, an act of poetic address which produces in the lyric present a vivid reflection on the vicissitudes of love.[22]

The classical model might lead us to ask, not what is the situation of the speaker/character, but whom is the poem seeking to persuade and of what? In ancient Greece poetry was a form of epideictic discourse, a rhetorical transaction and instrument of ethical *paideia*. The audience was expected to make observations (*theôros*) about what is praiseworthy, worthy of belief. In Plato's *Protagoras*, where the protagonists discuss the arguments of a poem by Simonides in order to reach conclusions about the world, everyone takes it for granted that, as Protagoras says, the most important part of a man's *paideia* is to be capable concerning verses—capable of judging which sayings of poets have been just and worthy and of giving reasons when questioned. (Socrates argues, against the received view, that people ought to discuss dialectic rather than poetry.)[23]

So, whom does this poem seek to persuade and of what? Not Pyrrha—she is not addressed so as to be persuaded to act differently—her behavior is compared to the natural changeableness of the sea. More plausibly, the gracile youth, or rather, since he is not addressed at all, but pitied, as one of many "Miseri," perhaps all those "poor devils" who don't anticipate the storms that will come. They can be conceived as part of the audience of the poem that is to be persuaded to adopt the attitude that the speaking voice projects of knowledgeable wariness, accepting what comes. Pyrrha is elegant and not to be shunned; the youth should enjoy himself now but not get too involved, for reversals will occur, suffering will follow, as we should wisely know.

Now there are a few of Horace's odes that *should* be read as dramatic monologues (such as *Natis in usum*, 1.27)—where to make sense of the poem we really do have to imagine a context of utterance and work out why in these circumstances someone would say just this. But they are rare, whereas this sort of structure —address to a *you* in a situation better left indeterminate—is extremely common. The second-person address functions above all to place the act of lyric speech in the lyric present and to accentuate the paradox of lyric, which evokes immediacy while adopting a temporality of deferral, as it repeats itself for readers in a future not even imagined and articulates an attitude whose appropriateness future audiences of readers are to judge.

Taken together, these two lyrics illustrate a number of fundamental possibilities of the genre:

(1) the avoidance or interruption of narrative so that the poem becomes an event rather than a representation of an event;

(2) the use of various devices, including a special present tense that will become a major characteristic of lyric, and deictics of all sorts—*this, here, now*—to attach the poem to an indeterminate present of enunciation, a moment not chronological but very much *of* time, that mortal time that Derrida calls "living on";

(3) the complexity of the enunciative apparatus, which emerges particularly in the triangulated address of apostrophic discourse;

(4) the hyperbolic character of lyric, less evident in Horace than in many others, marked here above all by figures of excess and singularization. (Baudelaire wrote of lyric, "Tout d'abord, constatons que l'hyperbole et l'apostrophe sont des formes de langage qui lui sont non seulement des plus agréables, mais aussi plus necessaries"[24] [Let us note, first of all, that hyperbole and apostrophe are the forms of language not only most agreeable but also most necessary to lyric]);

(5) again perhaps not so prominent in Horace, the optative dimension of lyric, which, articulating desire, works to constitute an active, reciprocal relationship to what might be resistant and other, especially the natural world, as in the address to the spring;

(6) and, finally, poems' allusions to a context of ritual, which foregrounds the question of the poem's own ritualistic character as spell or chant, confirmed by various forms of repetition, including metrical patterns and, later, refrain and rhyme.

Lyric without First Person

These two poems both have a first-person speaker, as is characteristic of many lyrics, but since many accounts of the genre, including Jackson's account of lyricization, have focused on the first person, as if this were necessary to the genre, let us consider another a poem unquestionably lyric without a first-person speaker, one of Goethe's most famous lieder, today known above all in Schubert's beautiful setting.[25]

Heidenröslein

Sah ein Knab' ein Röslein stehn,

Röslein auf der Heiden,

War so jung und morgenschön,

Lief er schnell es nah zu sehn,

Sah's mit vielen Freuden.

Röslein, Röslein, Röslein rot,

Röslein auf der Heiden.

Knabe sprach: "Ich breche dich,

Röslein auf der Heiden."

Röslein sprach: "Ich steche dich,

Daß du ewig denkst an mich,

Und ich will's nicht leiden."

Röslein, Röslein, Röslein rot,

Röslein auf der Heiden.

Und der wilde Knabe brach

's Röslein auf der Heiden;

Röslein wehrte sich und stach,

Half ihm doch kein Weh und Ach,

Mußt' es eben leiden.

Röslein, Röslein, Röslein rot,

Röslein auf der Heiden.

[A youth saw a little rose standing;

Little rose on the heath,

Was so young and morning-lovely.

He ran quickly to see it close up,

Saw it with much joy.

Little rose, little rose, little rose red,

Little rose on the heath.

The youth said, "I'll break you,

Little rose on the heath."

Little rose spoke: "I'll prick you,

So that you'll forever think of me,

And I don't want to suffer it."

Little rose, little rose, little rose red,

Little rose on the heath.

And the wild youth broke

The little rose on the heath;

Little rose resisted and pricked,

But no "woe" and "oh" helped her,

> She just had to suffer it.
>
> Little rose, little rose, little rose red,
>
> Little rose on the heath.]²⁶

Here, there is no first person or character whose attitudes could be reconstructed. If we take the evocation of the rose in the refrain as addressing it, that implies an enunciation, *une instance d'énonciation*, but not a subject or a character. The poem is a brief anecdote recounted in the past, a very common lyric structure, though the rose's response to the boy's address lifts us out of an anecdotal space to a distinctively poetic one. And the repetition of the refrain attaches this story to the present time of lyric discourse in which the rose is repeatedly invoked.

The temporal structure is quite complicated: the anecdote in the past recounts a threat and a prediction that projects a future—you will always think of me—which will be a repetition of the past. And the poem, which returns chantingly in each stanza to the rose, performatively shows what this would involve.

Refrain is an important constituent of lyric: first, an instance of the repetition that Roman Jakobson famously took to define the poetic function of language: "the projection of the principle of equivalence from the axis of selection onto the axis of combination" so that equivalence becomes the constitutive device of the sequence.²⁷ But above all, refrain disrupts narrative and

brings it back to an atemporal present of discourse. It is through refrain, for instance, that ballad tries to remain lyric while relying on narrative structures.

This poem presents a complexity of structures of address, a ritual aspect, effects of presence, and a certain performativity, as the reader, invited to repeat the refrain, finds him- or herself in the position of the *Knabe* who addresses the rose, and the poem produces the predicted result, that you always think of me. And finally, the poem posits, through its rhetorical structures, an interpersonal relation between man and nature, which interpretation renders sexual, and where nature is invested with agency, affect, and signification in extravagant fashion, though one scarcely realizes this, since the poem is delicate and modest in appearance.

These three historic examples work against the more modern model of lyric adduced in Jackson's account of lyricization and help to suggest that it is, indeed, modern criticism and pedagogy that, drawing on nineteenth-century theories of lyric as first-person meditation or expression, transform lyrics into decontextualized expression of the interiority of the poet or, in the more modern and sophisticated version, the drama of a lyric persona or character. A virtue of the generic notion of lyric, therefore, is to highlight possibilities that may have been obscured by later reading processes but that may still be powerfully at work in modern instances of the genre.

Modern Lyrics

The penultimate poem I will consider, Baudelaire's famous "A une passante," has been singled out, first by Albert Thibaudet and then by Walter Benjamin, as a distinctively modern poem—possible only in the alienated world of modern cities—but, of course, it also evokes a lyric tradition of the *innamoramento*, the transfiguring initial sight of the beloved, as in Dante or Petrarch, love at first sight, which, as Walter Benjamin says, Baudelaire transforms to "love at last sight."[28]

A une passante

La rue assourdissante autour de moi hurlait.

Longue, mince, en grand deuil, douleur majestueuse,

Une femme passa, d'une main fastueuse

Soulevant, balançant le feston et l'ourlet;

Agile et noble, avec sa jambe de statue.

Moi, je buvais, crispé comme un extravagant,

Dans son oeil, ciel livide où germe l'ouragan,

La douceur qui fascine et le plaisir qui tue.

Un éclair … puis la nuit! – Fugitive beauté

Dont le regard m'a fait soudainement renaître,

Ne te verrai-je plus que dans l'éternité?

Ailleurs, bien loin d'ici! trop tard! *jamais* peut-être!

Car j'ignore où tu fuis, tu ne sais où je vais,

Ô toi que j'eusse aimée, ô toi qui le savais!

[Amid the deafening traffic of the town,

Tall, slender, in deep mourning, with majesty,

A woman passed, raising, with dignity

In her poised hand, the flounces of her gown;

Graceful, noble, with a statue's form.

And I drank, trembling as a madman thrills,

From her eyes, ashen sky where brooded storm,

The softness that fascinates, the pleasure that kills.

A flash ... then night!—O lovely fugitive,

I am suddenly reborn from your swift glance;

Shall I never see you till eternity?

Elsewhere, far off! Too late! *never*, perchance!

Neither knows where the other goes or lives;

O you whom I would have loved! O you who knew it!][29]

Hyperbolic, like so many lyrics, with the eye as "ciel livide ou germe l'ouragan," from which the speaker drinks "la douceur qui fascine et le plaisir qui tue," this poem—like a lot of modern poetry—takes the form of an anecdote in the past rendered poetic by being taken as emblematic. The poem pulls itself out of this narrative temporality and into the distinctive space of lyric present with the address to the "Fugitive beauté" and the question that she manifestly cannot answer, "Will I see you no more until eternity?" a question that therefore insists on the optative dimension of the

final alexandrine, "Ô toi que j'eusse aimée, ô toi qui le savait!" Thibaudait, in his celebration of the poem, claims that this final line has become one that Parisians recite to themselves as they stroll through the city and has become part of the urban social imaginary, "consubstantiel à la poussière dorée du boulevard."[30] The sonnet begins as a representation of a singular event in urban surroundings, "une femme passa," but the transformation produced by the logic of the genre pulls us into the lyric present —"j'ignore où tu fuis"—and a ritualistic celebration, as the poem becomes itself an event, helping to structure the fantasies that give urban existence its excitement.[31]

As we move into the poetry of the present, I should say that I don't have strong views about how much contemporary poetry ought to be considered lyric or read within the frame of the Western lyric tradition: there are plenty of contemporary poets who have explicitly denounced the lyric model, with its foregrounding of effects of voice and presence, even as the dependency of these effects on rhetorical strategies has been highlighted, and they may have succeeded in producing text that requires it be read by other models (I do not want to claim that LANGUAGE poetry is still lyric), but I do think that a good deal of even contemporary poetry achieves its effects by engaging the lyric tradition, and I offer the, to me, intriguing example of "This Room," the opening poem of John Ashbery's 2000 collection, *Your Name Here*. The title of the collection, which foregrounds the problem of singularization and iterability central to lyric, alludes to bureaucratic language practices—forms, form letters, publicity, where each of us can

become the *you* interpellated by publicity or bureaucracy, the *you* who has just won a million dollars in a lottery, or the *you* to whom an iterable bureaucratic process applies as we fill in the form—and thus foregrounds the problem of singularization and iterability, central to lyric.

> This Room
>
> The room I entered was a dream of this room.
> Surely all those feet on the sofa were mine.
> The oval portrait
> of a dog was me at an early age.
> Something shimmers, something is hushed up.
>
> We had macaroni for lunch every day
> except Sunday, when a small quail was induced
> to be served to us. Why do I tell you these things?
> You are not even here.[32]

The poem connects the problem of singularization and iterability with the characteristic deictic effects of lyric—this room, this stanza—where the *you*, as in this poem, remains unlocated. I offer it as emblematic of the way in which the structure of lyric recuperates the recital of past events, but it is unusual both in the explicitness with which it foregrounds the relation of lyric address—"Why do I tell you these things? You are not even here"—and in its hyperbolization of the strangeness of lyric recuperation, as in "the oval portrait of a dog was me at an early age." As so often with

Ashbery, we are induced to cast around for points of reference among literary or nonliterary discourses. So this portrait recalls Dylan Thomas's "Portrait of the Artist as a Young Dog," Poe's short story "The Oval Portrait," or the portraits by William Wegman of dogs as people, the cliché of identity tied up with the childhood pet or the commonplace that after a certain time master and dog come to resemble one another.

For me the *punctum* of this poem, to use Roland Barthes's term for what grabs me, holds me, is the involution of the formulation "a small quail was induced/to be served to us," whose function is difficult to imagine. Posing questions of language and agency (how is the quail induced?), this line foregrounds above all the strangeness of lyric language, even as evocation of the ordinary. However it functions, this enigmatic example is hyperbolic in the strangeness that is related to dream and in its joking but deeply serious foregrounding of the structure of song and ode, as well as in the tradition of the love sonnet, with the question, "Why do I tell you these things? You are not even here," which could be taken to sum up the tradition of the lover's complaint. Preserving lyric as a category to be studied, studying lyric, can be thought of as working to answer this question.

To sum up, why lyric? Because only a broad concept of lyric, with its sweep across eras and languages, provides the scope to activate possibilities occluded by narrower conceptions, such as that of the ode or elegy, useful though they may be. In particular, it

reminds us that the model of the dramatic monologue, a speaker/character whose situation and aims need to be reconstructed novelistically, forecloses important traditional aspects and potentials of lyric, especially those features, from rhythm and sound patterning to performative address, by which it differentiates itself from narrative fiction and mimetic modes generally.

Also, this historical and linguistic breadth helps alert us to the fact that lyric does not presuppose the subject, is not based on a first person. Susan Stewart writes that "it is almost unbearable to imagine lyric outside of the terms of subjectivity,"[33] but I think this is only a modern restriction of the idea of lyric, which is immediately put into perspective if we think, for example, of song lyrics, which float free of any particular subjectivity and work to constitute something broader, a social imaginary. Finally, it is perhaps only because the greatest systematic philosopher of the West, Aristotle, wrote a treatise on mimetic literature and did not include lyric, that lyric had not been seen as a foundational genre in Western culture until the Romantic era, whereas it is foundational in other cultures, whose literature did not originate in epic or tragedy.

Foregrounding the lyric helps promote the possibility of comparisons with other traditions. In the afterword to the 2007 *PMLA* issue, "Remapping Genre," Bruce Robbins compares notions of genre to the norms in the socioeconomic realm that allow, for

instance, transnational comparison of living standards and argues that the case of genre in a nutshell is that of historical comparison. Genre, he argues, is a crucial instrument combating the professional inclination to focus on a literary period—which he calls "a sort of pseudo-anthropocentric norm that has been adopted for a long time out of laziness. It is one level of magnification among others, no less valid than any other but also no less arbitrary." Genre, he insists, offers us "versions of history that take us beyond the period-by-period agenda of our ordinary studies." "Why," he concludes, "would criticism voluntarily deprive itself of the additional scale of transperiodic vision and the aggregations it brings into view?"[34] Why indeed? Genre remains an essential notion for translinguistically broadening critical horizons, connecting various narrower modes of reading and interpretation and enlarging discursive possibilities.

The Prosaic Imagination

CRAIG DWORKIN

The Unrecognizability of Prose

About the Author

We have to regard an act we perform for another, not as an act of kindness and generosity, but as a small return of what we have taken from him in virtue of the general arrangement.

—Immanuel Kant

The time when there are four choices and there are four choices in a difference, the time when there are four choices there is a kind and there is a kind.

—Gertrude Stein

Prosaic: "commonplace, mundane." Prosaic: "written in prose."[1] The denotations reinforce one another because for the modern reader prose itself is now a commonplace. Unmarked and seemingly unremarkable, the typographic rectangle has become so predictable, ubiquitous, and neutral that it now appears, if we even happen to notice it at all, as the natural look of language in books.[2] But what if we restored some of the strangeness to the visual prosody of that layout and took the measures of prose—its staggered spatial distributions and spread—with the same attention traditionally paid to the syllabic meters of certain verse?

One would have to first recognize prose, but identifying prose with certainty, surprisingly, is harder than one might expect. "The word prose carries little meaning, and taxonomic approaches to it will bring only ridicule," warn Jeffrey Kittay and Wlad Godzich.[3] Alternately indicating subject matter, style, and form, "prose"—like the word "genre"—proves too various and indiscrete to helpfully serve any simple taxonomy. Prose is sometimes taken to indicate a generic category, as in the idiomatic distinction between poetry and prose. At other times the word is used to indicate a form or a format, as in the so-called prose poem ("poetic content expressed in prose form," as Richard Aldington defined it) or in the literary-critical distinctions between prose and meter or prose and verse.[4] The connotations are not only varied, but any given referent stumbles over attempts at a fixed definition; pursued at any length, even the most seemingly obvious descriptions become muddled. As William Wordsworth wrote in a note to his Preface to the second edition of the *Lyrical Ballads*: "Much confusion has been introduced into criticism by this contradistinction of Poetry and Prose, instead of the more philosophical one of Poetry and Matter of Fact, or Science."[5] Wordsworth tries to clarify matters by shifting the category from genre to form, but he immediately has to qualify even that seemingly straightforward foil: "The only strict antithesis to Prose is Metre; nor is this, in truth, a *strict* antithesis, because lines and passages of metre so naturally occur in writing prose, that it would be scarcely possible to avoid them, even were it desirable."[6]

As Wordsworth and Aldington understood, prose texts can of course contain poetic language (however that might be defined). Although it may run counter to expectations, there is no reason why a work in the *genre* of poetry cannot be printed in the *format* of prose. The traditions of the *poème en prose* (prose poem), for instance, suggest as much—as do works as varied as Gertrude Stein's *Tender Buttons*, Haroldo de Campos's *Galáxias*, or Pierre Guyotat's later books, which are composed in segments he refers to as *versets* (verses, in the sense of Biblical prosody). Guyotat, that is, writes according to strict metrical patterns and precise internal rhyme schemes, so that his texts are metered in units other than the line. Although printed as prose, Guyotat's books, accordingly, are "poetic" in the sense of their artifice and measure.[7] An even better-known instance of identifying a poetic quality inherent in a prose work can be found in William Butler Yeats's infamous proem to the first *Oxford Book of Modern Verse*, where he nominated—as the inaugural work of modern poetry—a passage from Walter Pater's nonfiction prose study *The Renaissance*. Translating between typographic conventions, Yeats deforms the layout of Pater's text, rearticulating one of his signature long, accumulative sentences into Poundian free-verse units and titling the result "Mona Lisa":

> She is older than the rocks among which she sits;
>
> Like the Vampire,
>
> She has been dead many times,
>
> And learned the secrets of the grave;
>
> And has been a diver in deep seas,

And keeps their fallen day about her;

And trafficked for strange webs with Eastern merchants;

And, as Leda,

Was the mother of Helen of Troy,

And, as St Anne,

Was the mother of Mary;

And all this has been to her but as the sound of lyres and flutes,

And lives

Only in the delicacy

With which it has moulded the changing lineaments,

And tinged the eyelids and the hands.[8]

Pater's paragraph, a fantasia on the theme of Leonardo da Vinci's *La Gioconda*, continues, in the original:

The fancy of a perpetual life, sweeping together ten thousand experiences, is an old one; and modern thought has conceived the idea of humanity as wrought upon by, and summing up in itself, all modes of thought and life. Certainly Lady Lisa might stand as the embodiment of the old fancy, the symbol of the modern idea.[9]

Although Yeats does not include those sentences in his free-verse version of Pater's text, the telos of this section in "the embodiment of the old fancy" and "the symbol of the modern idea" is all to the point for a project setting out to canonize a *soi-disant* "Modern Verse": an embodied idea in which the concept of a genre is recognized through its material form. At both the general level of the anthology's conception and the specific level of typesetting the proem, Yeats is thus exploiting visual format as a kind of literary form. The organizing principle is not just "verse" in general—a

typographic format for visually isolating compositional units—but the distinct subcategory of "modern verse." The significance of his version of Pater's sentence is not merely that there are lines, which would always be the case, but that those lines assume the particular kinds of variable mensuration that typify a certain period style of free verse: unequal lines articulated in dynamic tension with the sentence's grammar and in support of the rhetorical structure of syntactic anaphora that Yeats's layout further emphasizes.[10]

The Ubiquity of Lineation

The fact of lineation, however, is also where the obvious and intuitive discriminations between verse and prose become more complicated—and imbricated and interesting. Pace T. S. Eliot's assertion that "the distinction between 'verse' and 'prose' is clear," the precise differences are, in the final analysis, "very obscure."[11] To put it bluntly, the typical descriptions of Yeats's practice as dividing, breaking, or chopping Pater's passage "into lines" are spurious.[12] Yeats's publication certainly changes the lineaments of the strange web of Pater's sentence by stretching the warp and shortening the weft of its textual weave, but Pater's prose—to insist on the obvious—was printed in lines to begin with.[13] However evident, this fact is apparently easily forgotten, even when critics are thinking carefully about form. The *Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*, for instance, differentiates prose from verse because prose, it speciously states, "has no line breaks."[14] "What poetry has that prose does not have," Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick concurs, "is line breaks."[15] M. H. Abrams, to take another instance, defines prose as "a continuous sequence of sentences without line breaks."[16] Taken at face value, these definitions would result in very long books indeed; they would prove impossible to print in any kind of practical format.[17] I quote the definitions "not for the pedantic pleasure of finding fault with some very bright minds" but to illustrate, by their examples, the

pervasiveness of this aporia.[18] To be more generous and refine such formulations, the implied distinction presumably would be between the judgment or whim of the author and that of the printer—between *composition* in the sense of "writing prose or verse" ("literary production," as the dictionary has it), on the one hand, and, on the other hand, of *composition* denoting "the setting up of type; the composing of pages of matter for printing."[19] Or, if the model of letterpress now seems too nostalgic, we can contrast the intention of the poet with the algorithm of a digital design program. One might, indeed, understand prose as simply the projection, if not the expression, of the material substrate of writing: a simple ratio of format to font, of page trim to line length. A sheer material geometry has, surprisingly, generated a recognizable, ubiquitous cultural form.

Even that distinction between writing and printing, however, turns out to be far from foolproof. One would probably not, for instance, want to say that a literary composition employing chance operations in order to determine line breaks at random, or a poet's conscious and explicit delegation of choices about lineation to a printer, would thus constitute prose. Or, less speculatively, one would presumably not want to designate *as prose* the many editions of Walt Whitman's poetry that find an anonymous printer breaking Whitman's signature long verse lines to fit the format of the page. More complicated still would be the first edition of *Leaves of Grass*, parts of which were set by Whitman himself. To designate some passages in the 1855 edition as prose and others as verse on

that account would be manifestly absurd. Indeed, since Whitman "considered himself a book*maker* more than an author" and composed his poetry from the perspective of a professional printer, his literary decisions were fundamentally influenced by his typographic knowledge in a way that would complicate any distinction between prose and verse based on authorial election.[20] "Having been a printer myself," Whitman explained to Horace Traubel, "I have what may be called an anticipatory eye—know pretty well as I write how a thing will turn up in the type—appear—take form."[21] As Ed Folsom argues, accordingly, "Whitman probably never composed a line of poetry without, in his mind's eye, putting it on a composing stick."[22] While Whitman's anticipatory eye may be a special case, his lesson applies more generally: the opposition of poet and printer does not offer a very solid criterion for discriminating between the categories of prose and verse.

Conversely, we do not imagine Jorge Luis Borges's Pierre Menard, author of the *Quixote*, to be composing poetic *verse* when he produces his text of "los capítulos IX y XXXVIII de la primera parte del *Don Quijote* y de un fragmento del capítulo XXII (the ninth and thirty-eighth chapters of the first part of *Don Quixote* and a fragment of chapter twenty-two)."[23] Borges's narrator explains:

> No quería componer otro Quijote—lo cual es fácil—sino *el Quijote*. Inútil agregar que no encaró nunca una transcripción mecánica del original; no se proponía copiarlo. Su admirable ambición era producir unas páginas que coincidieran—palabra por palabra y línea por línea—con las de Miguel de Cervantes.

[He did not want to compose another *Quixote*—which is easy—but *the Quixote itself*. Needless to say, he never contemplated a mechanical transcription of the original; he did not propose to copy it. His admirable intention was to produce a few pages which would coincide—word for word and line for line—with those of Miguel de Cervantes.][24]

The result, the narrator opines after a careful stylistic comparison of seemingly identical passages, "es más sutil que el de Cervantes (is more subtle than Cervantes')."[25] But a more subtle reading of Borges's own passage discovers the crux that Menard, though not copying, may be composing by the unit of the printed prose page, so that his text coincides with a specific edition of *Don Quixote* and not merely an abstract sense of the work or the novel. Menard's pages correspond "palabra por palabra y línea por línea" (word for word and *line for line*). The colloquial sense of the phrase is the same in Spanish as in English, indicating a seriatim activity: all the way through in *linear* order, with an implication of exactitude. But the phrase is also the technical term for the unit of composition in certain printing methods, from hand-set letterpress to monotype to early digital impact printers, all of which order their matrices *línea por línea*. That reading is corroborated by Menard's habit of working at the level of the line; one of his earlier works transposes Paul Valéry's masterpiece "Le cimitière marin" from its heteroclite decasyllabics—a verse meter that accounted in large part for the poem's notoriety to begin with—into the more familiar alexandrines of traditional French verse. I admit that this may be leaning a little too hard on one phrase, however careful a writer we imagine Borges to be, but in the end, whether or not one

understands "línea por línea" in its literal or figurative sense, Borges's turn of phrase is a good reminder of the point I want to try and keep in mind: that we both readily know and easily forget that almost all writing, even nonpoetical prose writing, is typically printed in lines.

The Insistence of Prose

To insist on prose, and resist the amnesia of repetition and habituation that blinds us to its lineation (to make the prose prosy, as Viktor Shklovsky might put it) would be to recognize those lines of prose *as a form* and not merely a format. That insistence would mobilize and motivate the properties of prose: above all, a uniform geometric extension and spatial distribution of language in lines that both disperse and consolidate. Prose, that is, both severs and solidifies. Prose fractures sentences, displacing and isolating certain syntactically neighboring words at the margins, on opposite borders of the prose block; at the same time, prose compresses its texts perpendicularly, establishing new proximities and vertical formations from what would otherwise be discontinuous and semantically unrelated words. The strata of the prose lines short-circuit the sequential ordering of grammatical and rhetorical constructions. Lines of prose, in short, disrupt the linearity of language in the Sausurrian sense.[26] Furthermore, an insistence on the form of prose might also resist ignoring the telling fact of hyphenation required (all the more urgently with justification) for the compilation of uniform geometric textual strata. Prose, that is, operates at times with a linguistic logic operating below the level of the word and independent of the morpheme. Prose's use of language subordinates local semantic structures to larger rhetorical ones, and hyphenation is one indication that language is put in the service *of prose*, and not the other way around.

Verse from Prose: Clark Coolidge

In practical terms, moreover, an insistence on prose explains some of the most radical and refractory postwar American poetry. Consider, for example, Clark Coolidge's long poem "Cabinet Voltaire," from his 1968 book *ING*.[27] One passage reads:

> tradict
>
> theless
>
> it gether
>
> tastic
>
> for
>
> gin tion
>
> and sarily
>
> and
>
> > sests

In an interview with Ed Foster, Clark Coolidge recalls:

I remember some of the earliest writing I did was an attempt to do automatic writing under the influence of the surrealist concept of automatism. I had read that Motherwell collection of Dada painters and poets [Robert Motherwell, *The Dada Poets and Painters: An Anthology*, 1951]. But I couldn't figure out how to proceed. I just kind of started writing and it got awful right away, real gooey and either sort of (what would you call it?) substitute-sexual or sentimental or too easy in associative pattern. Nowhere near even something like *Soluble Fish*, which at least has its points of interest here and there.[28]

The point of interest here is not so much what Coolidge says. Motherwell's book, published in 1951, was enormously influential for Coolidge's New York School peers, including John Ashbery, Ted Berrigan, and Frank O'Hara—any of whom might have said much the same thing. The point of interest is instead what he does *not* say. Coolidge refrains from mentioning that he did indeed "figure out how to proceed" directly from Motherwell's book. As he explains in a later statement, the poem "came from a scanning of Motherwell's *Dada Painters and Poets*."[29] Motherwell's book—*as a book*, as a specific, printed object—provides the structured source material for "Cabinet Voltaire." Even the oversized pages of *Dada Painters and Poets*, with their print closely set in an exceptionally small font, required occasional hyphenation to accommodate the uniform strata of prose. The typesetter for the Belknap Press fragmented, for instance, Hugo Ball's "Dada Fragments," where the words "contradict" and "nonetheless" supply the first two lines in the excerpt above. Moreover, Coolidge often reads straight down the margin, taking the first word or word-fragment in a series of consecutive lines. The compositional rules—with only one or two exceptions in Coolidge's entire thirty-page poem—seem to be that he may only take words from the margin and must take them in the order they appear. The contingent format of Motherwell's printed prose thus discloses the logical sequential order behind Coolidge's seemingly disjunctive, inexplicably nonsensical verse. The words in "Cabinet Voltaire" evince a linear order, in the sequential sense, even as they "nonetheless ... contradict" the

linear sequencing of Ball's original syntax; their linearity simply proceeds along a vertical rather than a horizontal axis.

Seen from this perspective, the odd title "Cabinet Voltaire"—in place of the expected "Cabaret Volatire," the name of the Dadaists' Zürich hangout—in fact makes a certain descriptive sense. Coolidge has replaced the indiscrete and promiscuous flow of the vaudeville cabaret with the small constrained geometric container of the prose block: the *cabinet* of found linguistic curiosities. So where the 1921 manifesto *Dada soulève tout!* announced, "The cabinet has been overthrown," Coolidge reinstates it by leveraging the very spirit of the Dadaists' revolutionary textual experiments.[30] Recognizing that the interplay of rule and chance was not only a key Dada principle discussed by the essays and manifestos included in Motherwell's collection, but that they were also demonstrably enacted through the format of the book, Coolidge takes the defining dynamic of the prose-block format—the simultaneous pull of chance and necessity—as a form that reveals poetic vocabulary. The seemingly static format of prose, in Coolidge's procedure, is recognized as an active structure that can be put in the service of a genre: the avant-garde lyric.

Verse from Prose: Lyn Hejinian

Nor was Coolidge alone in mortising this kind of avant-garde cabinetry. A decade later, in 1978, Lyn Hejinian's long poem *Writing Is an Aid to Memory* engaged in similar tactics. Like "Cabinet Voltaire," Hejinian's decidedly restive text is so disjunctive that it at first appears to be all but nonsensical. Restlessly built from fragmented phrases, often incomplete or ungrammatical, the poem offers only sporadic glimpses of isolated images and tantalizingly remote hints at referents. Snippets flicker swiftly, fleeting without context, refusing to assimilate and failing to cohere. The poem opens: apple is shot nod/ness seen know it around saying."[31] Clarifications, over the book's forty-eight pages, are not forthcoming. A typical passage, from the fifth section, reads:

>   guage means general
>
>   will push straction one day to the left
>
>   carried out on the pebbles
>
>   drops of water of light off of abstraction in the other
>
>   way
>
>   but the order

The section continues in this vein, "but the order" is merely occult, not entirely absent. Like "Cabinet Voltaire," much of the seemingly alogical syntax of *Writing Is an Aid to Memory* evinces the crystalline, rectilinear logic of prose. Like Coolidge, Hejinian bases her poem on the contingent, idiosyncratic disposition of print in specific

editions of other books, from Melville's *Piazza Tales* to the 1898 compilation of *Curiosities of Popular Customs and of Rites, Ceremonies, Observances, and Miscellaneous Antiquities* by William Shepherd Walsh. The section just quoted, for instance, draws heavily from one particular edition of Jean Piaget's *Genetic Epistemology*, in which the format and design—a relatively large 12-point Garamond type set across a four-inch block and heavily hyphenated—accounts for some of the most mysterious and memorable passages in Hejinian's poem. The line "guage means general," for example, derives from the layout of the following sentences in Piaget's treatise, where the three words follow directly, one above the other, down the left-hand margin of the source text (Fig. 1).[32] For another illustration, the final line of the preceding section of Hejinian's poem—"(genre find two of gence object screen object ble)"—has its origins on the margins of another page from Piaget's book, where again Hejinian's line transcribes the left-hand margin of this edition of Piaget's text (Fig. 2).[33] In other words, we find here a certain logic of inclusion, a certain logic of ordering, and a certain logic of correspondence, which I maintain are the foundations for the logical poetic structures of Hejinian's seemingly illogical and disordered verse. As Hejinian explains the origins of *Writing Is an Aid*:

are many different forms of representation. Actions can be represented in a number of different ways, of which language is only one. Language is certainly not the exclusive means of representation. It is only one aspect of the very general function that Head has called the symbolic function. I prefer to use the linguists' term: the semiotic func-

Figure 1:

Excerpt from Jean Piaget, *Genetic Epistemology*, trans. Eleanor Duckworth (New York: Columbia University Press, 1979), 45.

> In other words, we find here, in sensory-motor intelligence, a certain logic of inclusion, a certain logic of ordering, and a certain logic of correspondence, which I maintain are the foundations for the logical mathematical structures. They are certainly not operations, but they are the beginnings of what will later become operations. We can also find in this sensory-motor intelligence the beginnings of two essential characteristics of operations, namely, a form of conservation and a form of reversibility.
>
> The conservation characteristic of sensory-motor intelligence takes the form of the notion of the permanence of an object. This notion does not exist until near the end of the infant's first year. If a 7- or 8-month-old is reaching for an object that is interesting to him and we suddenly put a screen between the object and him, he will act as if the object not only has disappeared but also is no longer accessible. He will withdraw his hand and make no attempt to push aside the screen, even if it is as delicate a screen as a

Figure 2:

Excerpt from Piaget, *Genetic Epistemology*, 43.
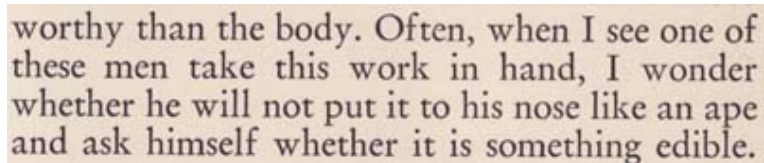
I opened books at random, scanning the left margin for suggestive words or phrases and writing them down on sheets of paper or index cards, along with phrases of my own that came to mind. There was no conceptual motive for restricting myself to the phrases along the left margin of the pages, but it had the practical benefit of keeping my attention on phrase units rather than on larger semantic units (the ideas being articulated in the books). It's because I was scanning only along the left margin of the pages that *Writing Is an Aid to Memory* includes a number of part words, many of the suffixes: "ness," "civious," "glish," "cerns," "duce," "mena," etc., and morphemes like "deed," "chant," and "poses," that are words as well as possible word-ends.[34]

With its carefully inflected verse form, in which each line is indented according to its first letter's position in the alphabet, *Writing Is an Aid to Memory* attends to its own left margin with a symptomatic meticulousness that recalls its mode of composition. Pushed "to the left" by the prose form of its previous contexts, much of the language in *Writing* is abstracted in a procedure that at the same time, paradoxically, refuses abstraction. Drawn off and withdrawn, separated and removed from its original source, the unattributed and largely untraceable phrases are disengaged from their original contexts in a way that connotes even the euphemistic use of "abstract": "to take away secretly, slyly …; to purloin."[35] At the same time, with Hejinian's attention to her source-texts clearly abstracted ("diverted") to their margins, she was apparently not consulting them primarily for "the ideas being articulated." She did not, that is, *abstract* her sources by considering a "mental conception … apart from the material embodiment" and the "particular instances" of their original typographic setting in prose. [36] As a communicative system, language means in a general way, permitting allusion and reference and conceptual use, but the physical fixity of printed texts can never be truly abstract, however pervasive the ideology of a transparent language might be. The particularity of printed texts requires citation and encourages collage. Or, in short, proving both propositions at once: "guage means general."

Now, to be precise, one should note that although Hejinian describes her compositional procedure as "restricting" her "to the

phrases along the left margin of the page" so that she read "only along the left margin," in practice she is not as consistent as Coolidge, and phrases are frequently drawn from the interior of her source texts' pages. In the passage quoted above, for instance, while "straction" and "one day" do indeed occur on the left margin of a verso page, with "drops of water" on the left margin of the facing recto, all of the other phrases—"carried out on the pebbles," "of light off," "of abstraction," "in the other/way," and "but the order"—occur haphazardly in the middle of the page.[37] Nor is Hejinian always strictly linear in her transcriptions; she sometimes interpolates phrases rather than following their occurrences in sequence either up or down the page. That said, the poetics of *Writing Is an Aid to Memory* nonetheless reveals an acutely prosaic imagination.[38] Hejinian's collage of phrases is always more visual and material than allusive, and even when not restricting herself to the left margin, she frequently allows the typography of the source pages to suggest her poetic line, producing a verse that relies on the formal arrangement of language under the regime of prose. With a minor variant on her stated procedure, for example, she reads up the right margin of a prose page to assemble the line "something edible to his nose like an ape," which reveals its source in Leonardo da Vinci's notebooks (Fig. 3).[39] With an echo of the etymology of "poetry" (the appropriative "work in hand" of the Greek ποίησις) and the question of mimesis ("like an ape": in imitation of an imitator), the passage is suggestive of Hejinian's explicitly nonreferential poetics, with its undigested fragments of others' language. Indeed, the immediate context of this passage is pertinent; da Vinci is arguing about the relation of textual authority

to creative invention and critical interpretation, including a parable of collecting and redistributing the works of others. Ironically, given Hejinian's practice, Leonardo begins this section by inveighing against the abridgement and abbreviation of source texts. He defends his own practice with the following apologia:

worthy than the body. Often, when I see one of these men take this work in hand, I wonder whether he will not put it to his nose like an ape and ask himself whether it is something edible.

Figure 3:

Excerpt from Leonardo da Vinci, *The Genius of Leonardo da Vinci*, ed. André Chastel and trans. Ellen Callmann (New York: Orion, 1961), 30.

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> If I do not quote from authors as they do, it is surely more worthy of the reader for me to quote from experience, the instructress of their masters. They strut about puffed up and pompous, adorned and clothed not in their own labors but in those of others, and will not allow me my own. But if they scorn me for being an inventor, how much harsher a judgment do not they deserve who are not inventors but trumpeters who can only recite the works of others?[40]

If Hejinian seems able to "only recite the work of others" in *Writing*, she does not, by the same token, "quote from authors" in the conventional manner; instead, she negotiates a way out of da Vinci's diametric opposition between the Scylla of originality and the Charybdis of citation. With a creative plagiarism, *Writing* relentlessly copies without citation, innovating signature verses that "require the words of others for their expression."[41]

Even when those "words of others" are not drawn from the margin, Hejinian's lines typically rely on other properties of prose, such as its division into columns and paragraphs or its arrangement of stratified lines. The couplet "rarity cination in nervous scenes by condemning/straight colors," for instance, traces a ruler-straight forty-five-degree path across the three column layout of the Orion edition of da Vinci's writings, taking its words from the corners of paragraphs.[42] Starting at the left margin of the third column she selects "rarity" and, immediately below it, "cination" (the result of an hyphenated "fascination"); "in" marks the top right corner of a paragraph in the middle column with "nervous scenes" opposite at the bottom left corner, constituting the paragraph's last line; "by" then appears on the right margin of the bottom of the first column, just above the final line: "[roundly] condemning straight colors."[43] Again, the context of the passage bisected by Hejinian's protracting sample is apposite: notes on da Vinci's optical theories and the path of the eye in perspectival geometry, ray tracing, foreshortening, and plotted angles.

The path of the eye, in fact, is one of the themes of the poem, where "motion is debate to the eye" and one line reads, with a punning aside on the first-person pronoun: "I glance toward what the eye can pronounce aside."[44] In *Writing Is an Aid to Memory* eyes fix, hang, and return, so that "the action of looking" remarked in the poem also describes a fundamental aspect of its composition.[45] The words, fragments, and phrases in *Writing* record the physical

itineraries of the reading eye as it scans the field of prose: skimming, saccadic, erratic in its restless skip and wander over the page, with unfocused sweeps and momentary stays of attention, refreshing and rest. Rather than a disembodied assimilation of content conceived "without reason of the eyes," Hejinian attends to both the visual drift—whether from distraction or a momentarily relaxed conscious control—that can compass words in a vertical arrangement down the page rather than along the horizontal line, as well as to the ciliary and extraocular muscular work of the return sweep required by the line breaks and wide margins of prose.[46] The verse line "in a single day what is called whole is brick," for example, follows the oscillating pitch of the reading eye as it negotiates the margins of the prose page.[47] The words are drawn from the two sides of a prose-block wall that frames the following paragraph in *The Book of English Trades and Library of the Useful Arts* (Fig. 4).[48] With "the wall part a legible space," as Hejinian writes elsewhere, the "frame around" that space requires extra effort from the muscles involved in reading, so that initially "only spots seem to frame a plan" to the reading eye.[49] Individual words and couplets—discrete spots at the margin of the plane of prose— silhouette the fixed, flat level "block of material" typeset with an even spread and spatial distribution.[50] Demonstrating a similar reliance on the aleatory but necessary disposition of prose to generate a poetic line, the same section of the poem finds Hejinian taking words in a perpendicular formation, as they happen to fall one on top of one another in the prose layout from the chapter on

carpentry. "When beauty is vertical," as one reads elsewhere in *Writing*, "a coincidence touches/a random more."[51] Reading down the page like Tom Phillips in *A Humument*, so that "intensity in its little place is vertical," Hejinian cuts across the grain of the original text to generate the verse line "commonly this pitch its second name" (Fig. 6).[52] Rather than follow the conceptual logic of the essays' arguments, Hejinian's lines thus follow the visual paths of eyes as they observe the material logic of prose. At the same time, the subjects of those essays are not entirely irrelevant. While Peter Nicholls has argued that "it is not a matter of being able to clarify Hejinian's text by adducing contexts for particular references and allusions," the themes of those sources, as we have seen, are far from coincidental. Indeed, the sections scanned in *The Book of English Trades* speak not only to Hejinian's poetics but also to the very nature of prose itself: the accumulative horizontal strata of bricklaying, the squaring and plumb framing of carpentry, the cutting and joining of craft construction.[53]

> A Bricklayer and his labourer will lay in a single day about a thousand bricks, in what is called whole and solid work, when the wall is either a brick and a half or two bricks thick ; and since a cubic yard contains 460 bricks, he will lay above two cubic yards in a day.

Figure 4:

Excerpt from *The Book of English Trades and Library of the Useful Arts*, new enl. ed. (London: J. Souter for Richard Phillips, 1818), 56.

View Asset

> to England. The Norway fir produces the *white* deal, commonly used by Carpenters; from this, pitch is also drawn; whence it takes its second name of the *pitch* fir. There

Figure 6:

Excerpt from *The Book of English Trades*, 85.

View Asset

In page after page, Hejinian recognizes the potential for the material aspects of prose to generate traditionally poetic effects of language oriented away from the communicative function (as Jan Mukařovský would define it): artificed arrangement, estrangement, alogical associations, et cetera.[54] Format, once again, is construed as a significant form in the service of the genre of the avant-garde lyric. The genre informed by prose, however, would not necessarily need to be poetry. Another instance of putting prose in the service of a genre can be found in John Baldessari's 1967 canvas of uninflected primer and carefully written sign-painter block lettering, which reads, "A TWO DIMENSIONAL SURFACE WITHOUT ANY ARTICULATION IS A DEAD EXPERIENCE." That sentence's ironic and deæstheticized linguistic interrogation of the viewer functions as part of the genre of conceptual art, but it derives from the prose format of Baldessari's unattributed source text, György Kepes's art theory textbook *Language of Vision*. The play of Baldessari's work, and what surely suggested the quotation to him in the first place, is that in its original printed form the sentence, by chance, appears typeset intact, at the very top of a page, perfectly composed across one full line of the block of prose. That sentence, it happens, is the typographic measure of the oversize format of Kepes's book.[55] On

the canvas, however, Baldessari has wittily allowed the sentence to be articulated and enlivened through linebreaks:

A TWO DIMENSIONAL

SURFACE WITHOUT ANY

ARTICULATION IS A

DEAD EXPERIENCE.

The Image of Prose in Prose: Joseph Roth

The format of prose can also be put in the service of a genre without regard to its articulation or even any specific sense of the line. So where Yeats mobilized the form of modernist free verse to underscore the poetic nature of Pater's prose, and Hejinian— inversely—used the fragmenting arrangements of the prose form to construct a postmodern verse lyric, I want to continue to think through the dynamic of form and genre by considering passages where the narrative genre of descriptive fiction figures the format of its own printed prose. The ultimate twist for such works comes from the recognition that such self-reflexive, auto-referential, concretely visual writing would—by many definitions—transform the genre of these prose fiction passages into poetry, even though they do not transmogrify into verse. Such scenes are instances of what Aaron Fogel calls "the image of prose in prose."[56] That image is the shadow cast by the quadrilateral planar geometric units of the paragraph and the two-dimensional surface of the page, with their paradoxical combinations of fixity and flow: the constraint of the page space's typographic area against the discrepant extension of grammar and the rigid orthogonal forms of the prose block imposed by an invisible perimeter. As Robert Hodge puts it: "The conventions of prose in print format present a rectangle of print surrounded by a blank margin …. The uniformity of the black of print on page after page is a transparent signifier of mechanical uniformity imposed on the flow of sense."[57] The dynamic between

the fluent and the orthogonal, diversity and uniformity, is amplified by the widespread use of the prose format; for centuries, every non-verse story or argument printed—occasional experiments and gimmicks only proving the rule—has taken the same physical form regardless of style or content.

For one example of the image of prose in prose—of a text figuring its own form—consider the fifth chapter of Joseph Roth's 1932 novel, *The Radetzky March*, which opens with a scene in which the central character, Carl Joseph, returns to his regiment's station on the Moravian marches of the Hapsburg Empire (Figs. 7–8):

Figure 7:

Joseph Roth, *The Radetzky March*, trans. Joachim Neugroschel (Woodstock, NY: Overlook Press, 1995), 60–61.

View Asset

Figure 8:

Joseph Roth, *The Radetzky March*, 62.

View Asset

Whenever he returned home to the barracks in the afternoon, and the huge double gate closed behind him, he felt trapped; never again would the gates open before him. His spurs jingled frostily on the bare stone staircase, and the tread of his boots echoed on the brown caulked wooden floor of the corridor. The whitewashed walls clung to a bit of vanishing daylight, radiating it now, as if making sure in their bleak thrift that the government kerosene lamps in the corners were not lit until evening had thickened completely, as if they had collected the day at the right time in order to dole it out in the destitution of darkness.

Carl Joseph did not turn on the light. Pressing his forehead against the window, which seemed to separate him from the darkness but was actually the cool, familiar outer wall of the darkness itself, he peered into the bright yellow coziness of the troop rooms ….

They kept playing their harmonicas there nonstop. He could clearly see sporadic glints of the metal and the movements of the coarse brown hands pushing the metal instruments back and forth in front of red mouths. The vast melancholy of these instruments poured through the closed windows into the black rectangle of the parade ground, filling the darkness with vague inklings of home and wife and child and farm.

"Switch on the light!" Carl Joseph ordered without looking around. Across the square

the men were still playing harmonicas.

Onufrij switched on the light. Carl Joseph heard the click of the switch on the door molding. Behind him the room lit up. But outside the window the rectangular darkness was still gaping, and across the square the cozy yellow light of the troop rooms was flickering ....[58]

In this scene set behind "the huge double gate," an enclosure doubled like the boards of a book, the reader encounters a series of rectangular surfaces—whitewashed like bleached stock or yellowed like the acid paper pages of a popular novel—containing further rectangles in reversible plays of opacity and transparency, visual blackness and expressive narrative sound: "The vast melancholy of these instruments *poured* through the closed windows *into the black rectangle* of the parade ground." The sense of print in that dark rectangle is corroborated by both the ranked *lines* of soldiers who repeatedly fill and empty the parade ground in other scenes and the fortuitous *ink* in "inkling" in the English translation. Moreover, the activity of pouring figures the liquidity of fungible content filling the container of the page: the sense that text assumes a form that defines it but is not its own; that fluid content adapts itself to inflexible form; that text runs up against an invisible container—the flow into the "blank margin," as Hodge puts it. Or, in Roth's terms, that typographic blank margin matches a description of the solid but invisible glass pane "which seemed to separate him from the darkness but was actually the cool, familiar outer wall of the darkness itself." Print, in prose, gives the

impression of a strictly defined rectilinear form that nonetheless does not have a hard outline. Prose one might say, seeks its own level.

My point is not just that Roth gives us images of dark and light rectangles, but that their paradoxical play of opacity and transparency corresponds to the ideology of referential narrative being momentarily undone here. As the summoned images of the imagined scene come too close to describing the printed page—when descriptive passages approach the figuration of their own material forms—they risk unveiling the ideology of the transparent page by drawing the reader's attention back to that surface, to a focus on the page itself rather than allowing the reader to look imaginatively through the page with the mind's eye to the scenes its words describe. The literal image of the dark ink in the prose block gives us the words that summon a mental image, but the framed block of prose is meant to be a transparent window onto the world of its *histoire*, in the way that Alberti figured the panel painting of the Renaissance as an *aperta finestra* [open window] onto the depicted perspectival scene (recall that Roth, in this scene, specifies a "closed window," one which only "seemed" to separate Carl Joseph from the speculative scene but which is itself, in fact, a dark wall). When the reader looks at the patterned and pigmented surface of the page—at "the wall of the darkness itself"—the narrative illusion of fancied scenes collapses beneath the physical imposition of immediately present, proximate ink. Carl Joseph enacts this moment when he has the light in his room

switched on at night, obviating the transparency of the window and transforming it into a mirror reflecting back on the room itself: a moment when he both knows the cold rectangular darkness is still there *and* that the comforting scenes from which he is separated can still be imagined. The illuminating moment nicely captures the mutually dependant dialectic of story and text with a dizzying recursion; initially, the text-like blackness of the window in the darkened room is transparent, an ambivalence paralleled by the reader who must simultaneously remember the look of the page and comprehend its content in order recognize the self-reflexivity of this passage; then—with a figure of mimesis figuring a mimesis—the mirroring reflection of the window in the illumined room turns back on the fictional character whose resemblance can only be fully imagined by the reader who has also rendered the block of material type invisible.

The Image of Prose in Prose: Stephen Crane

Another instance of a description that risks disrupting its diegetic projection occurs in a chapter of Stephen Crane's 1893 novel *Maggie, A Girl of the Streets* set "In Darkest New York." Crane describes a scene in which Maggie heads outside to Tomkins Square, "that dreary, house hemmed, overcrowded, electric lighted square," to lounge and hear "da band."[59] But the passage, which again figures the play of light and dark on a flat surface, also simultaneously describes the typographic shape of that description itself as it appears on the prose-formatted page. "Streams" of humanity "poured into the square ... meandered aimlessly along the paths and overflowed the benches;" they then "danced shadow dances on the grass plats where the hissing electric lights cast fantastic figures for them."[60] As in the audible black rectangle of Roth's dark harmonic square, Crane summons not just the closely bordered square, a flat rectilinear receptacle form being filled with overflowing patterns and figures, but he also hints at the prose page's visual organization of phonetic signs in the simultaneously audible and visible "hissing ... lights." Crane's scene also suggests the dynamic tension in prose between the rigid container of its geometric forms and the fluidity of its grammatical content, the varied and variable words and subjects that are always poured into the same mold: from page to page, the same set of blocks, regardless of narrative development. Or—pitched at another level—the sublime realization that from book to

book, novel to novel, an endless variety of stories are always told in the same visual format. Accordingly, one again finds the sense of contained fluid forms that fill and empty a space: the figures in Maggie "*poured* into the square" just as the sound in Roth's scene "*poured* ... into the black rectangle."

The Image of Prose in Prose: Eugène Ionesco and William Faulkner

Precisely the same language recurs in Eugène Ionesco's *Le solitaire* (*The Hermit*), his only novel, and so a work in which he may well have been thinking about the format of prose in contradistinction to the dialogue lines of drama. As the narrator describes the dreamlike town of his surroundings, a mass of figures continually come "*streaming into the square* from all four streets" (Ils continuaient de déboucher des quatre rues), where "from all four streets that emptied into it, vans packed with police *poured into the square*. They too were encased in invisible glass coffins" (Des cars chargés de policiers arrivaient des quatre rues qui débouchaient sur la place. Eux aussi étaient entourés du cercueil de verre invisible).[61] Indeed, everyone, the narrator discloses, seems "locked in a glass coffin …. Locked up and at the same time too free. The crystal is invisible" (enfermés dans des cercueils transparents …. A la fois enfermé et trop ouvert. Le cristal est invisible).[62] Contained within invisible forms that lack a hard-edged outline, the characters of the novel are figured like the printed characters of its prose-set type. Moreover, one might recall that "coffin" is a printing term: "that part of a printing machine on which the forme of type is laid."[63] Not directly visible on the printed page, yet defining its contours, that coffin is the punch line to Laurence Sterne's bibliographic jest in *Tristram Shandy*: a funereal "black page" which both announces the death of Yorick and also, in the original

edition, fills out precisely the area of the prose block. In essence an image of every prose-set page, the black page in *Tristram Shandy* lays bare the coffin buried beneath each impressed sheet in the books whose printing Sterne so actively oversaw. The very parameter of prose, Sterne's coffined page appears like an illustration to David Antin's claim that under the right circumstances "prose is a kind of concrete poetry with justified margins."[64]

With this denotation of "coffin" in mind, consider the similar role of the casket in William Faulkner's *As I Lay Dying*, where the box's geometric form—presented in one chapter as a line-drawing interrupting the lines of the text—insists on the mute, visual physicality of print in contrast to the sounds of speech.[65] As Michael Kaufmann has argued, Faulkner had both a "fascination with print" and an "apprehension about the effect that the intricate print box he prepared for his largely oral tale might have on it."[66] One of those effects, as we have seen, is the risk that imagined speech will disappear in the face of the visual immediacy of the page. Accordingly, one of Faulkner's characters stands motionless before a building as if he were a surrogate for the printer looking at the press bed or the reader looking *at*, rather than through, the page; he sees "the square orifice of doorway broken only by the square squat shape of the coffin" as it "comes into relief."[67] Elsewhere in the novel, the coffin moves through space "like a sled upon invisible snow, smoothly evacuating atmosphere in which the sense of it is still shaped."[68] Shaping sense—constructing meaning —without the benefit of sound, the printer's coffin set with type

produces a geometric arrangement of phonetic characters, each a "grave, composed face" as Faulkner puns, and each, as the novel's final page names it, a literal "graphophone."[69] In a corroborating scene, the diegetic square of the town and the physical square of the prose page are both filled with a fluid seriality and a disorienting play of deletion and manifestation. As in the passages from Roth and Crane, summoning the silent image of prose with an overflowed square seems to require a compensating insistence on narrative sound:

> I hear the cow a long time, clopping   on the street. Then she comes into the square. She goes across the square, her head down,   clopping   . She lows. There was nothing in the square before she lowed, but it wasn't empty. Now it is empty after she lowed. She goes on, clopping   . she lows ....[70]

Given the congruence between the animal's motion across the square and the procession of type across the text block, Faulkner's cow flirts etymologically with the boustrophedonic imagination that still haunts the ideology of prose, which requires the illusion that the format is a continuous and uninterrupted precession of text rather than an assemblage of discrete and discontinuous lines.[71] The paradox of Faulkner's square, simultaneously emptied and replete, resolves when one separates the two homonyms and distinguishes the rectangle of the novel's prose page from the civic space its text describes; the passage both depicts and enacts the logic of conservation between the two. The materiality of print disrupts descriptive illusion, which in turn works to suppress the intervention of print; the page, its inked surface always present before any scene can be read, recedes and nearly vanishes when

one vividly imagines the cow and its lowing. In this case, the play of tangibility and disappearance is refracted by the fact that the page itself—highlighted by Faulkner's calculated spacing—is so palpably present. While any printing is legible only because of the dependent balance between ink and substrate, Faulkner's paragraph reminds one that the justification of prose depends especially on the adjustment of uninked spaces as well as on type; the page, too, plays a requisite role in establishing the uniformity of the text block that it also frames.

"Too material and yet immaterial, too. This world made out of *papier-mâché*, this particular theatrical setting could be substituted for any other at any time" (Trop matérielle et immatérielle à la fois. Ce monde, en carton-pâte, ce décor de théâtre pouvait se substituer n'importe quand à un autre), says Ionesco's narrator, moving his description closer to that space of the page, a paper terrain that might record any sort of narrative world in the same format.[72] He continues, with a vocabulary that should by now be familiar: "I gazed out the window and for some time watched the fleeting silhouettes which seemed to emerge from the thick fog only to plunge back into it again and disappear" ([Je] regardai par la fenêtre et contemplai quelque temps les silhouettes fuyantes qui semblaient sortir de la brume pour s'y enfoncer à nouveau et disparaître).[73] Then, further courting the collapse of the *histoire* into the text by gesturing to transparent and opaque quadrilaterals, he adds, "'You know, there may be nothing beyond all that,' I said, pointing to the windows, the walls, the street" (Il n'y

a peut-être rien derrière tout ça, dis-je en montrant de la main les fenêtres, les murs, la rue). His companion replies: "What do you want beyond them? They're there, that's all" (Que voudriez-vous qu'il y ait derrière? C'est ça, c'est tout).[74]

The Image of Prose in Prose: Andrei Bely

That blunt presence of the form of the page is both less heavy-handed and even more pervasive in Andrei Bely's 1916 novel, *Petersburg*. As with Faulkner's "square," Bely's title charts an unquiet congruence of diegetic and literal space at a one-to-one scale, conflating the geometric layout of the city and the pages of the book itself, public squares and prose blocks, cartography and typography. Ultimately, the clear distinction between the name of the city and the eponymous title collapses completely; "Beyond Petersburg, there is nothing," Bely writes with the hyperbole of fiction and the literalism of text.[75] "And what was there," in Petersburg, he complements, "were lines."[76] In that simultaneous textual urbanism of *Petersburg* the reader once again finds not only the same images of fluid containment ("everyone *poured* into the streets, gathered in crowds, and then dispersed") but also a thematized recurrence of rectilinear forms in scenes explicitly contrasting an attention to black rectangles with an incompatible state of narrative reverie.[77] As with the windows of Roth and Ionesco, in Bely's *Petersburg* one cannot look both transparently through a figurative structure and simultaneously at its material surface. "I cannot," as Hejinian writes, "imagine a glass prose."[78]

Two parallel scenes present each possibility in turn, positing a dialectic of materiality and mimeticism, of the tain and the glass. In the first, near the beginning of Bely's novel, Senator Apollon

Apollonovich rides within the "four perpendicular walls" of his carriage, a "black cube" of perfect, confining quadrangular planes that moves among the "blackish gray cubes of houses" in rank after rank of parallel, lineal, rectilineal prospects. Like the assimilation of lines to paragraphs, paragraphs to chapters, and chapters to books, he sees the "network of parallel prospects … expand into the abysses of the universe in planes of squares and cubes": an "infinity of rushing prospects with an infinity of rushing, intersecting shadows. All of Petersburg is an infinity of the prospect raised to the Nth degree."[79] The senator, enamored of that "plane geometry," loves the lines of stratified architectural rows because they differ from "the line of life" and its narrative entanglements.[80] "Cut off" from others' lives by the square black walls of the carriage and fixating on the shaped components of prose—the line and the square—he is lulled into a momentary reprieve from the need to identify or interact with anyone else.[81] Bely presents the senator as if he were a reader unable to look beyond the visual geometry of the surface of the page: "At times, for hours on end, he would lapse into an unthinking contemplation" of geometric forms.[82]

The second scene, nearly identical to the first, opens with all the hallmarks of the logic of prose, including a compensatory emphasis on sound (the sidewalks of the square "conversed in whispers") and a suggestion of the fluidity of type and print ("gray human streams of people passed by there …. Faces ran by there").

83 As in *Le solitaire*, where one of Ionesco's recurrent themes is the absorption of difference in the same "big square" (la grand-place) —"a mixture of void and fullness" (un mélange de plein et de vide) in which "everything comes out the same in the end" (tout finit pareil)—Bely underscores the assimilation of diverse content within duplicate forms. Although radically different lives play out within their walls, Petersburg is composed of line after line of "exactly the same kind of houses": "blackish gray cubes" arrayed along "the network of parallel prospects."[84] Unlike the first scene, however, the senator here is involved in a romance that dissolves the stark material forms of his earlier focus, replacing them with the daydreams of narrative absorption and psychological identification: "Apollon Apollonovich was not looking at his favorite figure: the square. He did not lapse into an unthinking contemplation of the stone parallelepipeds and cubes. Gently rocking on the soft seat cushions of the hired carriage, he stole an occasional agitated glance at Ann Petrovna."[85] As Viktor Shklovsky writes in *Theory of Prose*, Bely does not semanticize or symbolize, but rather he "transfers the attributes from one metaphor leitmotiv to another."[86] In these two framing scenes, Bely transfers the attributes of prose itself.

One of those attributes, indeed, is prose's transferability. Both a format and a device, prose, in the case of *Petersburg*, is thus recursively embedded. But even standard prose is *mise-en-abîme*. The rectangle of the prose block—a sable billet charged as a

bearing and borne at the fess upon the field of the page—forms an inescutcheoned ordinaire doing duty as the banner of many modern genres. But prose, as we have seen, is far from parsimonious in its allegiances. Prose heralds its format from afar, but its true allegiance to any given genre requires a closer inspection. The structural dynamics that define prose—fluidity and containment, strict rectilinear geometry without hard outlines, uniform stratification, chance distribution and determinate placement—permit prose to be enlisted in the service not only of those genres with which it is popularly associated, such as the novel and the essay, but also of those its very presence would seem to forefend. As in the case of Coolidge and Hejinian, the particulars of prose can generate lyric verse; as in the case of Bely or Roth, it can transform passages of narrative fiction into poetry. That ability to transfer the attributes of a genre between forms, to function as a sort of literary *lapis philosophorum*, marks the incredible generosity of the kindness of prose.

<center>3</center>

Migration across Genres

<center>WAI CHEE DIMOCK</center>

The Digital Analogy

<u>About the Author</u>

To do justice to the phenomenon of genre, what kind of archives would be necessary? How many languages should we consult and hold ourselves accountable for? And what is the scale of this undertaking—across what length of time and what width of space should we gather our material, requiring what account of their kinship, their filiations and dispersals?

At the risk of being schematic, I would like to propose three words to map out the landscape that I would like to explore: multilingual, multigeneric, and multidirectional. And I would like to add three more words—stackability, switchability, and scalability—to highlight a set of properties that come to the foreground under this rubric, akin to the properties of the digital medium. Before the advent of the computer, these terms would have been close to meaningless, conjuring up unthinkable scenarios. Now these scenarios greet us every time we look at what appears, disappears, and reappears on our screen. The very word "Windows" in Microsoft's operating system (which accounts for 90 percent of the

market share) refers to the fact that several platforms—several applications—can be simultaneously present, one resting upon another. This stackability comes about primarily because of user interface: we are the ones who open all those windows and switch back and forth among them. And, while switching, we are also at liberty to maximize some windows and minimize others, scaling up or down either to achieve a bird's-eye view or to zoom in for the close-up.

Computer literacy has given us a new language to think about virtual spaces, a virtuality that defies common sense, on the one hand, while remaining thoroughly empirical, on the other. What we are being sensitized to here is something like a counterrealism, a realism of the not-yet-actual, an interesting paradox at all times, and especially interesting when the subject in question happens to be genre. For genre, I would argue, is also paradoxical in this way, at once empirical and suppositional, with countless examples, yet no solidity to speak of. As a classifying system always in progress, never complete, genre is less nouns than verbs, less an ontology than a field of incipience. It bears an interesting resemblance to the digital medium for that reason, for it, too, is many windows superimposed, constituted not by entities but by applications. Each window is shadowed by alternates, and by contrary usages. Foreground and background are held in reciprocal suspense here; size and scope are continually being negotiated. Stackability, switchability, and scalability highlight these dynamics. And they yield especially interesting results when they are mapped onto a

multilingual field, zooming in and out of at least two registers, going back and forth between a boundless linguistic pool and a particular user interface, between the global environment and its local articulations.

In what follows, I would like to tease out some of the implications of what teaching and writing might look like if we were to think about genre in this way, as a digital-like medium, requiring the largest possible scale in its intimated aggregate and the smallest possible scale in its heightened moment. Given such alternations, even though many of us would still be thinking about genre only through one language, there could be no automatic assumption that this one window would suffice, that it would be the only one on our hands. Genres are, after all, historically (and perhaps by their very nature) multilingual, with ample representation across all human tongues, across all the world's populations. It is impossible to count the number of languages that inhabit the genre of epic or lyric or, most obviously, the novel. To invoke any one of these would be to open up many linguistic windows, many layers of connections, coexisting with English, hovering behind it, and complicating what is legible in this foregrounded medium.

We might think of these linguistic windows as a ghostly ensemble, waiting to be summoned, waiting to be actualized. And the English language does summon and actualize them more often than we think. Its experiment with other tongues—quoting, translating, and playing with various accented foreign words—suggests that what

we are dealing with is not a flat landscape but a nested formation, with two or more languages embedded, cradling each other. Multilingualism flourishes even on a monolingual platform. Stackability, I would argue, is one of the most interesting properties of literature, especially in a cross-lingual context. And genre, as a phenomenon always pulled in two directions, alternating between monolingualism and multilingualism, gives us a template on which stackability has maximum play. To my mind, this is one of the most interesting, and perhaps undertheorized, side effects of genre as an organizing principle.

Brownian Motion in the Generic Pool

Even as we think about the way languages might be stacked, which suggests that there is a vertical axis even when we are dealing with the seemingly horizontal movement of one language into another, we might want to consider another kind of movement that accompanies it, making this vertical axis even more complexly activated. I am thinking of a percolating action, an up-and-down movement, with particles or bundles of words circulating across the length, width, and depth of the entire pool. Such percolations turn genre into an ionized field, energized by a continual exchange, a continual streaming, between different levels of cultural elevation, between canonical works and popular genres. It suggests that Brownian motion is crucial to the field, that it would be unduly limiting to look at works only on one tier or assume that what originates in one genre will always stay there. In fact, what seems especially interesting here is an almost endless switchability, allowing the high to morph into the low, even as one genre morphs into another.

Finally, given this combination of up-and-down movement with cross-lingual movement, a third kind of migration comes to the foreground as well. This is what I would like to focus on the most, namely, the movement from poetry to prose, or, more specifically, the citational presence of epic and lyric in contemporary fiction. This embedded poetry is of course rescaled, sometimes enlarged

and sometimes miniaturized, giving us different reference frames, different lines of filiation, and functioning in a very different way from what it did in its original context. Such migrations suggest that the standard division of the curriculum into poetry and prose might be too rigid, blinding us to the continual *breakdown* of that dividing line, generating new and perhaps unclassifiable works. What I would like to propose, then, is a more fluid continuum, variously mobilized and self-updating, as the bare minimum to think about the phenomenon of genre, one that allows poetry and prose to commingle, and that, digital-like, invites us to explore its embedded features, defined not by preexisting entities but by user interface, by movements up and down, front and back, sideways and edgeways.

Science Fiction as Alternative History

Without further ado, then, let me offer a practical demonstration of the continuum I have in mind. I would like to begin on the low end of the spectrum, with a genre that doesn't often come up when we think about mixing poetry and prose, namely, science fiction. Science fiction, of course, has always been multigeneric and, indeed, multimedia: not just text-based, it is also a strong presence in film and TV. It reminds us that literature has interesting lives beyond the linguistic medium. And it has other advantages as well. Because this genre is not bound by a strict realism, not bound by the standard account of historical outcomes, of winners and losers, it is free to imagine alternative pathways, a free-wheeling conjectural history. Science fiction only has one leg in the "real" world, the world empirically reported by our senses. Its other leg is quite literally somewhere else, off to a space-time that is in no way a mirror-image of the world as we know it. This parallel universe is sometimes utopian, more often it is dystopian; in either case it violates in some way the condition we call normality. Darko Suvin says that science fiction is a literature of "cognitive estrangement." The estrangement can begin with futuristic technologies and then extend to the entire semantic field, bending and shifting our customary moorings. Science fiction is antinaturalistic in this sense: it does not allow *any* version of the "natural" to naturalize itself. It has a switch mechanism that subjects the world to a kind of negative reckoning, taking its

matter-of-factness as less than what it is and restoring it to a prior "what if"-ness. This antinaturalistic impulse suggests that, of all prose genres, science fiction might be the one that is closest to poetry. In fact, it might be seen as a long-distance cousin of epic, a genre that also has an important antinaturalistic dimension, routinely sending its protagonists into virtual spaces populated by gods, demons, monsters, and other creatures not exactly normal.

What theory of genre would emerge anchored by these two cousins? I would like to take a short cut, looking at one particular instance of science fiction wearing its epic kinship on its sleeve: the novel *Inferno* (1976), by the Hugo Award-winning team Larry Niven and Jerry Pournelle. The book is dedicated to Dante, so we know right away that this is science fiction with a pedigree. And the pedigree isn't just ornamental; it is structural, reproducing the same, dual-protagonist structure of Dante's *Inferno*. Dante does not go through hell by himself. He is accompanied by someone else, a companion, a guide—Virgil—referred to sometimes as the *maestro*, "master,"[1] and sometimes as the *duca*, "leader."[2]

> I remembered then. "Dante's *Inferno*?"
>
> Benito nodded, his big square jaw heaving like a broaching whale. "You have read the *Inferno*, then. Good. That was the first clue I had to the way out of here. We must go down—."[3]

Who is this Benito? That turns out to be the central mystery in Niven and Pournelle. And bits of information are given to us along the way. We found out, just now, that Benito has a big square jaw jutting out. We are told that he speaks "with an accent:

Mediterranean; Spanish perhaps, or Italian."[4] He seems to know Dante's *Inferno* very well; and it also seems that, when alive, he was used to giving commands.

The secret is revealed at the end of the book, when the two companions get to the very bottom of hell, the Bolgia of the Evil Counselors. The sinners here are those public figures who use their power of persuasion to push through evil policies, and, as punishment, they have been turned into tongues of flame that burn even as they speak:

> "Come down!" One of the flames called to Benito.
>
> It was eerily compelling. That thrumming voice. The tip of the flame wavered, turned to me. "Throw him down, you, if you're an American! That's Mussolini! Benito Mussolini!"
>
> Jolted, I turned to Benito. He shrugged.
>
> Mussolini?
>
> Another voice thrummed from the pit. "You *are* American. I know your accent. Do you understand?
>
> That's Mussolini! Throw the bastard down here where he belongs!"
>
> "Who are you?"
>
> "Does it matter? I approved the firebombing of Dresden."[5]

The genealogy linking Niven's and Pournelle's *Inferno* back to Dante's *Inferno* is indeed a world genealogy, because World War II turns out to be the subtext. But it is not the naturalized version of World War II. Instead, it is a version turned on its head, its coordinates completely switched around. In this version, Winston

Churchill is not the staunch opponent of evil, the hero who saved the world. He is himself guilty of a heinous war crime, the architect behind the firebombing of Dresden. And Niven and Pournelle have put him into the very bottom of hell. It is Benito, Benito Mussolini, who is a second Virgil—not one of the blessed in paradise, to be sure, but still a dependable guide through the nether regions, someone who, in this rewriting of Dante's *Inferno*, will have a second chance, a chance to vindicate himself and redeem himself for posterity.

Shades of Dresden

To understand this switch, we need a multigeneric history of the world. This would include not only epic and science fiction but also works still more recent, newly published and genre-bending, such as those of Nicholson Baker. Baker, always a challenge to classification, has recently written another book that is even so: a big book, 566 pages, entitled *Human Smoke*, on World War II. What is even more surprising is that, even though the book is about World War II, it actually ends well before the war ends. It ends on December 31, 1941. And it ends with these words: "I dedicate this book to the memory of Clarence Pickett and other American and British pacifists …. They failed, but they were right."[6] Clearly, this is not a straightforward chronicle. Instead, it is something like low-tech time travel, a speculative return to a much earlier point, before the outcome had become fully scripted, and imagining it being written some other way. Such time travel gives voice to those who wanted the war not to have happened and casts aspersion on those who made that impossible. Churchill was foremost among that group. And, to see how this impossibility crystalized into a hard fact, Baker goes back to World War I, to Churchill's policy, as the First Lord of the Admiralty, to run a blockade of Germany. He had justified that action with these words: "The British blockade treated the whole of Germany as if it

were a beleaguered fortress, and avowedly sought to starve the whole population—men, women, and children, old and young, wounded and sound—into submission."[7]

Churchill's philosophy was a philosophy of victory at all costs, a philosophy of total war. It saw the whole of the Germany as one killing field, making no distinction, as he said, between civilian populations and military personnel, between those who were sick and wounded and those who did the actual fighting. This was a winning strategy for him. So it is not surprising that, going into World War II, he would want to have a replay of this, another exercise in this macro rule of engagement. Just as he had once championed the naval blockade, he would now champion aerial bombardment. Aerial bombardment is the literal enactment of the bird's-eye view. From that distance and on that scale, of course, it was impossible to tell apart civilians from the military, and indeed the point was not to.

In the case of Dresden, the bombs used were specifically incendiaries and high explosives, designed to create firestorms, whose gale-force winds would then spread the fire to the rest of the city, achieving total destruction in this way.[8] This firebombing was repeated three times, on February 13, 14, and 15, 1945. The civilian casualties were estimated to be between 68,000 and 135,000.[9] (Figs. 9 and 10). Such mass destruction—near the end of the war, when there was no longer any military necessity—raised a public outcry even in Britain itself. The *Daily Mirror* wrote in its

editorial: "Not only does it make nonsense of all our protestations about our war aims and about our bombing policy; it gives official proof for everything that Goebbels ever said on the subject. It is wicked as well as being typically un-British."[10] On March 6, 1945, Richard Stokes, Labour MP, officially protested in the House of Commons. Firebombing, he said, was a "blot on our escutcheon."[11] Being on the "right side" of history does not make one right in every instance. When it came to war crimes, Hitler certainly didn't have a monopoly; Churchill had a liberal share as well.

Figure 9:

View from City Hall Tower, Dresden ("Blick von Rathausturm"); Deutsche Fotothek, Saxon State Library (Wikimedia Commons).

View Asset

Figure 10:

Destroyed City Center, Dresden ("Zerstörtes Stadtzentrum"); German Federal Archive (Wikimedia Commons).

It is fitting that the burned-out city, palely skeletal, should be captured here as bird's-eye views as well, starkly beautiful as a geometric grid, repeating the logic of firebombing that had reduced it to this state. In some sense, this was Churchill's dream come true. It was the aerial view of the completely gutted city that he would later display, in the stereoscopic apparatus in his Cabinet War Rooms.[12]

Mussolini Redux

None of these images appear in Nicholson Baker's *Human Smoke* or in Niven and Pournelle's *Inferno*. Still, sticking to words alone, these two would point to a salient genre, something like "alternative history of World War II," a genre long in practice among historians, and recently energized by some vigorous new entries. Niven and Pournelle's *Inferno* would not be out of place in that company. It is science fiction, to be sure, but it can also be taxonomized in other ways. Switchability, in other words, would seem to be a capability built into every text, activated whenever we put it in a new kinship network. And there is no reason to limit that kinship network to English. Indeed, given the crucial Dante genealogy for Niven and Pournelle, it seems especially important to go outside the English-speaking world, to consult archives in Italian. One such archive is the eight-part biography of Mussolini, by the distinguished Italian historian Renzo De Felice, over six thousand pages long, published between 1965 and 1998. The first volume, *Mussolini il rivoluzionario*, sets forth the central argument, one that De Felice would make over and over again: "The most important influence upon Mussolini's development, all the relationships and influences of the successive years notwithstanding, was that exercised by revolutionary syndicalism. Even after Mussolini concluded his socialist phase, the influence of revolutionary syndicalism revealed itself in the characteristic manner he conceived social relations and political struggle."[13]

Fascism, as analyzed by De Felice, was born on the left, a radical movement rooted in the Italian socialist tradition, inspired by the syndicalism of Georges Sorel. This was Mussolini's political genealogy. His parents had named him Benito Amilcare Andrea Mussolini in honor of three socialists: Benito Juarez, Amilcare Cipriani, and Andrea Costa.[14] True to his namesakes, he would go on to become, in 1912, the editor of the largest socialist daily in Italy, *Avanti!*, while founding at the same time his own theoretical journal, *Utopia*, in 1913.[15] His subsequent agricultural policy—reclaiming 150,000 acres of the Pontine Marshes in 1931 and distributing them to 75,000 peasants[16]—reflected these early commitments. Even his eventual turn to fascism—organizing mass rallies and dismantling the parliamentary form—was in line with the syndicalist mistrust of parliamentary politics and its reliance on trade unions as seats of direct action.[17] For De Felice, Mussolini was by no means a fool, a knave, a lackey of Hilter's. His fall was the fall of someone who had once been a beacon of utopian hope.

Ezra Pound, living in Italy during the war and subsequently charged with treason because of his profascist radio broadcasts, shared just this sense of Mussolini, as a man whose sordid end was all the more heartbreaking because the beginning had not been sordid. From the *Pisan Cantos*:

> The enormous tragedy of the dream in the peasant's
>   bent shoulders
> Manes! Manes was tanned and stuffed,

Thus Ben and la Clara a Milano

by the heels at Milano.[18]

Mussolini and his companion, Clara Petacci, were killed by the Italian partisans on April 27, 1945, a few months before the end of the war. Their bodies were publicly displayed in Milan, hanged by the heels. A buffoonish end, but for Pound, as for De Felice, it was a tragic day for the world, marking the death of any hope that the peasants' bent shoulders might one day be unbent.

Niven and Pournelle might or might not have consulted Renzo De Felice, and they might or might not have read Ezra Pound. But for them, there is a poetic genealogy more readily available, an easier way to give Mussolini a second chance, a chance to insert himself into a new narrative. The kernel of that narrative is planted in a direct link between him and Virgil. It is a direct link, but, to recognize it, we do need to make another switch: we need to bracket English and, for a second, think in another language, using whatever primitive Italian we have at our disposal. In Italian, the *duca* that was Virgil has simply morphed into the *Duce—il Duce—* that is, Mussolini. And the switch is more than just a switch to another language; it is, even more fundamentally, a switch in allegiance. This is World War II told from the other side. For most Anglo-American readers, this is alternative history with a vengeance, inverting the naturalized version, even as it inverts the outcome of Dante's *Inferno*.

Double Counterfactuals

This kind of switch suggests that literature is indeed a percolating field, full of upheavals and reversals. The movement of the heart is part of that dynamics. This switch in loyalties is probably not something we would feel very comfortable about: it is literally an alienation of affection, turning the familiar refuge of national pride into a refuge of dubious comfort. Science fiction, traditionally the home of aliens, is a logical place for this alienation to happen, a place for us to see our own world through a glass that clarifies even as it distorts. Often, it can achieve this effect even without the help of visitors from out of space. And here the *Inferno* is not even the most thoroughgoing. Philip K. Dick's *The Man in the High Castle*, a novel that rewrites not only the moral valuation of World War II but also its military outcome, turns Niven and Pournelle's relatively local inversions into a full-dressed counterfactual exercise, giving us a world history thoroughly switched around, yet eerily recognizable—not actualized, yet all too real.

The Man in the High Castle features a United States carved up by Germany and Japan, the victors of World War II, with California coming under Japanese rule as the PSA. It features a peculiar kind of English, grammatically correct but odd sounding (too formal, too many nouns, too few articles), an English spoken by everyone: the Caucasian "Native Americans" as well as the Japanese administrators from the "Home Islands." Above all, it features a

counterfactual novel of its own, *The Grasshopper Lies Heavy*, an alternative history that tries to imagine what the world would have been like if Germany and Japan had not won the war. This book is banned in Germany, and even in the PSA it has gone underground, but everyone reads it obsessively with guilty pleasure. Its author happens to be called Hawthorne Abendsen. This Hawthorne, though—unlike the canonical author—is not a man in the high castle; his house is low-lying, a one-story stucco house surrounded by rose bushes, with "a child's tricycle parked in the long cement driveway."[19]

Nathaniel Hawthorne is, in fact, much less important to Philip K. Dick than Dante is to Niven and Pournelle. Still, this parallel gesture toward an elevated figure suggests that science fiction, the most genre-conscious of narratives, is perhaps also metafictional by necessity. Mindful of its less than consecrated place within the literary pantheon, it helps itself to whatever would strengthen its case, borrowing liberally either from within the same genre or from more prestigious cousins. The high and the low are not only mixed by Brownian motion; that mixing is itself thematized, commented upon, adding yet another intervening layer to the multiply reflexive surfaces of the medium. In these repeated flip-overs, with one nonactual world replacing another, the novel indexes our world by virtualizing it. These double counterfactuals do not cancel out each other; they do not put us back in any kind of undisturbed and unchastened normality. Not only has Nathaniel Hawthorne been downgraded to Hawthorne Abendsen, but this

downward drift also triggers an upsurging of possible worlds, chimerical bubbles streaming forth, so much so that when Mr. Tagomi, a high Japanese official, finds himself momentarily in one such bubble—a world where the superiority of the Japanese is not taken for granted, not reflexively bowed to—we are almost as shocked as he is, experiencing it as if it were a violation of the world *we* would call normal.

The Man in the High Castle has no nonhuman creatures from out of space; it has no geopolitics *not* derivable from the world as we know it. The cognitive estrangement that it achieves comes instead from a world so turned around and yet so eerily symmetrical to our own that it is only with a shock of recognition that we register it as alien. If what unfolds here is science fiction, it is a science fiction that, by making a point of *not* representing the actualized world, in fact represents it as the realist novel cannot. The switchability of the genre, alternating between two states— between the not-actual and the not-implausible—points to the counterfactual as a deeper and broader description of "reality" than we might think. In the symmetry of the make-believe and the made-real, what we witness is "a virtual 'art of the fugue' of storytelling," Frederic Jameson suggests, "narrative pyrotechnics that unravel themselves in delirium and can stand as a critique of representation itself."

Taking this as a good account of the dialectic of virtuality, not only energizing science fiction as a genre but perhaps haunting the very concept of *genre* itself—I would like to look at one other test case, one that also serves the dual function of both representing and not representing: Kurt Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse-Five*.

Epic Miniaturized

Slaughterhouse-Five is most famous, of course, as an antiwar novel. Vonnegut, after all, minces no words about where he stands: in the title page, he identifies himself as a "fourth-generation German-American," and, ten pages into the book, he tells us that this is a "book about Dresden. It wasn't a famous air raid back then in America. Not many Americans know how much worse it had been than Hiroshima, for instance. I didn't know that, either. There hadn't been much publicity."[20]

What most of us tend to forget, though, is that *Slaughterhouse-Five* isn't just an antiwar novel. It also happens to be a sci-fi novel, complete with time travel and trips to an alien planet, with its protagonist, Billy Pilgrim, sometimes being transported by a flying saucer to a planet named Tralfamadore, 446,120,000,000,000,000 miles from earth, and sometimes being hurtled back twenty years and finding himself once again a POW, in Dresden, just when that city was firebombed by the Royal Air Force. Why is it that the story of Dresden is once again the stuff for science fiction? Is there something about this genre that makes it especially hospitable, not only to mass catastrophe, but also to an alternative history growing out of that catastrophe? And, if this alternative history calls for a backward journey to Dante's *Inferno* for Niven and Pournelle, is there another epic that is being revisited by Vonnegut?

As it happens, Billy Pilgrim's hometown, the place where he grew up and where he goes back to live, is called Ilium. So there's no way to look away from this particular epic lineage. And the *Iliad* would seem to be the logical template for the destruction of Dresden. After all, isn't Homer's epic about the destruction of a city, a city that it identifies not by its Greek name, Troy, but by its Trojan name, Ilium?

Well, the answer is actually *no*. The destruction of Troy is certainly on everyone's mind, and there is plenty of blood and gore in the *Iliad*, but, like Nicholson Baker's *Human Smoke*, Homer's epic also stops short, cutting off the narrative well before what most people would call the "real" ending. It ends not with the massacre of the Trojan population but with a much smaller event, on an entirely different scale: the burial of Hector. Robert Fagles's translation:

> Then they collected the white bones of Hector—
>
> all his brothers, his friends-in-arms, mourning.
>
> They placed the bones they found in a golden chest,
>
> shrouding them round and round in soft purple cloths.
>
> They quickly lowered the chest in a deep, hollow grave
>
> and over it piled a cope of huge stones closely set,
>
> then hastily heaped a barrow, posted lookouts all around
>
> for fear the Achaean combat troops would launch their attack
>
> before the time agreed. And once they'd heaped the mound
>
> they turned back home to Troy, and gathering once again
>
> they shared a splendid funeral feast in Hector's honor,
>
> held in the house of Priam, king by the will of Zeus.

<blockquote>And so the Trojans buried Hector breaker of horses.[21]</blockquote>

The burial of Hector can take place only because Achilles has granted the Trojans a truce. But the truce will end soon, perhaps sooner than Achilles had said, which is why the burial has to be done hastily, with sentries posted all around. Still, it is a proper burial for Hector; his bones are wrapped in purple cloths and put in a golden chest, and there is a funeral feast afterward in Priam's house. These small details are important, and, at least for now, they seem to keep the large-scale catastrophe at bay. The telling of that catastrophe will be left to another genre. It is a task Euripides will take up in his three Trojan tragedies, *Hecuba*, *Andromache*, and *The Women of Troy*. Epic, unlike tragedy, is haunted by the knowledge of catastrophe but, nonetheless, insists on being something of a counterstructure. It stays shy of its fully scripted but also never-arrived-at "real" ending, offering us instead an alternative moment, a miniaturized moment, an almost counterfactual stopping of time, allowing the human need to mourn to come to the foreground, and to do so on the smallest possible scale.

And this is what Kurt Vonnegut chooses to do as well in *Slaughterhouse-Five*. For a book that bills itself as being about Dresden, there is actually very little about the city during its destruction. And for good reason. Because the American POWs are held in a meat locker at the slaughterhouse, they are safe, and when the bombs fall, all they can hear is the footsteps of giants walking and walking. When the firestorm finally subsides, all the

POWs can see is that Dresden is like the face of the moon, with melted rocks and minerals, nothing organic. All of this, in just a couple of paragraphs. Then the novel leaves the year 1945 abruptly behind, jumping ahead twenty years as Billy Pilgrim is transported by his involuntary time travel, transported back to his hometown, Ilium.

And Ilium is Vonnegut's hometown as well, not least in the antistructure of time that his novel inherits from the epic. Rather than proceeding "normally," which is to say, as a sensible chronological sequence, time is acting here as if it were out of its mind, as if it had been driven crazy by the terrible event that it could not bear to look upon. This is what Vonnegut says: this novel "is so short and jumbled and jangled ... because there is nothing intelligent to say about a massacre. Everybody is supposed to be dead, to never say or want anything ever again."[22] Because those who are killed by the firebombing are forever silent, what they go through would also have to remain a void, a space emptied of language. It is almost as if the catastrophe were some kind of black hole, sucking everything in but releasing nothing, letting nothing out. And science fiction is the appropriate genre to represent this black hole—but representing it in two ways: as a void, and also as a tiny space outside of that void, a brief arrested moment outside of that destructive orbit. True to its epic template, *Slaughterhouse-Five* is marked both by an unstoppable calamity and by some small details that allow it to rescale that calamity, and to perform its mourning on that basis. One such rescaling happens shortly after the destruction of the city, when Billy Pilgrim is left alone in a

horse-drawn wagon, sunning himself while the other POWs go in search of souvenirs among the charred bodies. This is actually a happy moment for Billy, he is snoozing away. But then something else happens:

> Now his snooze became shallower as he heard a man and a woman speaking German in pitying tones. The speakers were commiserating with somebody lyrically …. Billy opened his eyes. A middle-aged man and wife were crooning to the horses. They were noticing what the Americans had not noticed—that the horses' mouths were bleeding, gashed by the bits, that the horses' hooves were broken, so that every step meant agony, that the horses were insane with thirst. The Americans had treated their form of transportation as though it were no more sensitive than a six-cylinder Chevrolet.[23]

The bleeding mouths of the horses and their broken hooves are registered on the same scale as the purple cloths and golden chest that attend Hector's burial. It is the same scale on which Billy hears the "lyrically" pitying tones of the German couple. This lyrical couple "made Billy get out of the wagon and come look at the horses. When Billy saw the condition of his means of transportation, he burst into tears. He hadn't cried about anything else in the war."[24] The emotional release here suggests that the black hole is not all, that the void is not all, that there is an anti-structure running counter to its structure of mass extermination. And Vonnegut even has a name for it: lyric. *This* genre has never been absent, not in the *Iliad* and not in *Slaughterhouse-Five*. The epic can switch into this alternative genre, just as it can switch into another language and into another scale. This is what genre as a field of knowledge has to tell us.

4

Dramatism

MARTIN PUCHNER

[Intro]

About the Author

When I started teaching, one of my first student evaluations made fun of me for talking too much about genre. Well, the student didn't write "genre" but used a phonetic spelling that captured the French-English-German version of the word I was delivering. The comment took me completely by surprise. Of course I didn't want students to make fun of me for any reason, but in particular I didn't want them to make fun of me for using an old-fashioned category such as genre. Genre was one of those things we had moved "beyond" in the nineties: and when we spoke of genres at all it was only to point out how limiting they were, celebrating moments when writers rebelled against or mixed or otherwise disregarded genres and the strictures they imposed.

Somehow this comment stayed in my mind, and over the years I gradually came to the realization that the student was right, that I had been speaking genre all along. I would like to take the occasion of this publication to look back at three case studies that I have undertaken over the years in order to tease out various ways

in which genre can be used as a tool of analysis. In particular, I will highlight the relation between the individual work and its genre and the challenges of handling and representing large quantities of text, and, finally, I will test the limits of our conception of genre, derived as it is from the biological language of inheritance and genealogy. At the same time, I will relate the three case studies— the modernist closet drama; the manifesto; the Socrates play—to the general theory of genre developed by Kenneth Burke under the name of dramatism.

The Modernist Closet Drama

My first case study, the modernist closet drama, exemplifies a shift from a focus on individual works and their heroic rupture with genre conventions to an approach interested in how individual texts are embedded in genre histories. Genre bending was particularly rampant in modernist studies, and this influenced my dissertation, which focused on the relation between drama and the novel in the early twentieth century.[1] The hero of this story was, of course, James Joyce's *Ulysses*, and in particular the "Circe" chapter, when Joyce interrupts the novel with a 150-page chapter written in the form of drama. At some point, however, it began to dawn on me that the story of heroic rupture was incomplete, even misleading. *Ulysses* was not the first novel to use dramatic interludes, but only an example of a tradition that included the "Midnight Forecastle" chapter of *Moby Dick* and Fitzgerald's *This Side of Paradise*, among many other examples. Rather than treating the "Circe" chapter in isolation, I needed to see it as part of a history of similar generic entanglements.

But this was only the first step in my evolving use of genre. Increasingly I began to realize that the primary driver of the "Circe" chapter in *Ulysses* is not the history of similar dramatic interludes but yet another genre history, one coming from an entirely different quarter: the modernist closet drama. "Circe" belongs to a group of modernist texts that use the full generic resources of

drama, including dramatis personae, stage directions, and setting, but not for the purpose of stage representation. (At least not immediately. Like most modernist closet dramas, "Circe" found its way to the stage in various "dramatic" adaptations that overcame the original text's resistance to the stage.) The closet drama's critical relation to the stage, finally, offered a new perspective on modern drama more generally. Many modern plays were written, in one way or another, *against* theater, against the theater's reliance on human actors and other material forms of mimesis, and this attitude was epitomized in its most radical form in the hitherto neglected genre of the modernist closet drama. The taxonomic reclassification thus was not an end in itself but allowed for a new view of modern drama, one that was attuned to the antitheatrical dynamic within modern drama. Genre taxonomies have often been dismissed as empty exercises that do not go to the heart of literature. But the case study of the closet drama convinced me that reclassification can, in fact, offer a fresh perspective on an otherwise well-known text.

Manifestos

The desire to place individual works in the context of large samples, one of the strengths of genre-based analyses, also drove my second case study, a history of the manifesto in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.[2] One of the things that is notable about this case study is that one text turns out to have had an inordinate influence on an entire genre history: no text calling itself "manifesto" or otherwise inscribing itself into this genre can escape the *Communist Manifesto*, which casts a shadow over all subsequent manifestos. Indeed, many of these texts actually call attention to their relation to the *Communist Manifesto*, seeking to extend its generic reach quite explicitly. While in the case of *Ulysses*, I needed to move away from the individual work to a genealogical chain in which "Circe" was but one link, here, in the case of the manifesto, I was dealing with a genre that, in fact, originated, for all intents and purposes, in a single text, which then engendered two lineages: first, a line of political manifestos, from which split off a second line, the art manifestos. My study then followed the two histories of political and artistic manifestos with their various crossings and divergences.

The fact that both types of manifesto originated in a single text, the *Communist Manifesto*, meant that by tracking this text's reception through its publication history, its editions and translations, I could create something like the matrix on which all other manifestos

were located. For advice as to handle the large amount of data emerging from this publication history, I turned to Franco Moretti, a strong advocate of studying large samples of data, and he uses both genealogical trees and maps to organize this data.[3] In trying to represent the publication history of the *Communist Manifesto*, I created a graph that shows all attempted and completed editions and translations of the *Communist Manifesto* until 1918.[4] The graph captures the delayed beginning, when the *Communist Manifesto* was threatening to go under after the failure of the 1848 revolutions, and its gradual but increasingly rapid expansion in the 1880s and 1890s, with the constitution of the Second International, and then its meteoric rise in the early twentieth century, especially after the October Revolution.

The second dimension according to which I wanted to organize these data was space. The geography of the *Communist Manifesto* was of particular interest to me: where it was written and published, translated, and distributed. My first impulse was to follow Moretti's other great passion: maps. In the course of trying to figure out what kinds of maps I wanted, however, Princeton University Press suggested I consult an expert, who quickly diagnosed that what I really wanted to show did not require maps at all. People know where London or Geneva is located on a map of Europe, more or less. And if they don't, it doesn't really matter, he said. What you really want to convey is something else, namely, the incongruity of the place and the language of publication, the fact that so many editions of the *Communist Manifesto* were

produced in exile. For that I needed, not a map, but a chart showing the time and language of publication. I was disappointed at first and felt I was betraying the spirit of literary geography. But the expert was right. In the end, I needed a combination of a graph and a chart to capture what was noteworthy about this individual text and the two subgenres it engendered. The particular generic configuration I was confronted with required a kind of analysis that zeroed in on a single text, which was then shown to act on a large set of subsequent works.

The heart of this case study was not so much a generic reclassification, as had been the case with the closet drama. Manifestos, after all, openly and aggressively announce their participation in their genre all the time. And the type of genre history, with a double genealogy deriving from a single text, was different from the earlier history of the closet drama as well. Here the focus was the formation and then rivalry between two subgenres: the political manifesto and the art manifesto. More generally, the manifesto also opened a line of inquiry into the political fantasies of avant-garde art. In addition, one could use the manifesto to measure the changing attitudes toward revolution, a concept with which the manifesto continued to be intimately aligned, within the sphere of both politics and art. Just as the closet drama had lent itself to an analysis of modernist antitheatricalism, so the manifesto lent itself to an analysis of revolutionary

fantasies. In both cases, genre-based analysis could be used for what Kenneth Burke would call a philosophy of literary form, an attention to the attitudes and values encoded in specific genres.

The Socrates Play

My third case study also focuses on a single, genre-producing text, or corpus of texts, but it also serves to cast a critical eye on the very concept of genre, in particular its biological valence. As has often been observed, the root *gen* in Greek, and *janas* in Sanskrit, is originally at home in the world of biological species, in terms of kinship, gender, reproduction, and inherited traits. The applicability of this language to literature, however, is an open question. To some extent, it is true, we can organize genres into evolutionary trees, showing how they evolve over time, adapting to new historical circumstances and, more important, to new locales, entering new territories and habitats. This is where Moretti's approach is especially strong. He also uses a particularly sophisticated form of evolutionary theory, one mindful of Stephen J. Gould's warning against the implied teleology of many forms of evolutionary thinking.[5] But are there limits to this notion of genre?

I will use my last example as such a limit case of biological evolution in the domain of literary genre. This third case study focuses on the relation between philosophy and theater.[6] It takes its point of departure from a reading of Plato's dialogues as drama, and it extracts from them a specifically Platonic dramaturgy, by which I mean a set of strategies for integrating philosophy with drama by relating arguments to actions, ideas to characters, and

plots to insights. In developing this dramaturgy, Plato drew on many available genres, but, in particular, on tragedy and comedy, combining the two into a hitherto unknown third.

What I want to single out for our purposes here is the subsequent history of this original Platonic impulse to combine drama and philosophy: the little known and quite minor history of dramatic adaptations of Plato's dialogues, what I call the Socrates play. In Plato's wake, philosophically minded dramatists and dramatically minded philosophers kept writing plays with the philosopher Socrates as their main character. One can trace the genre back to the Renaissance, even to Aristophanes's *The Clouds*, but the Socrates play, of which I have found over one hundred examples, doesn't fully emerge until the seventeenth century and reaches a first peak in the late eighteenth century, only to experience a second peak in the twentieth century. Most of these plays were written by minor authors, although some notable writers and philosophers also tried their hand at it. Diderot, Voltaire, and Strindberg wrote Socrates plays, and the expressionist Georg Kaiser even declared Plato to be the greatest dramatist. A number of those plays were written as closet dramas, meant for reading only, but others appeared on the prime stages of their time, including the Théâtre Français and, believe it or not, Broadway, where Lotte Lenya, wife of Kurt Weill, appeared as Xantippe in Maxwell Anderson's midcentury Socrates play, *Barefoot in Athens*.

Authors of Socrates plays invariably took Plato's strangely mixed genre and adapted it to more successful contemporary genres. A majority of those adaptations synthesize the four Socrates plays Plato had written surrounding the immediate sentencing and death of Socrates—*Euthyphro*, *Apology*, *Crito*, and *Phaedo*, thus casting the death of Socrates in various forms of tragedy, including Elizabethan revenge tragedy, Miltonian tragedy, classicist tragedy, bourgeois tragedy, or modern tragedy. At the same time, a second group of playwrights found in Plato's plays ample material to furnish various styles of comedy, from opera buffa to twentieth-century Broadway comedy. Often, the relation between Socrates and his wife, or several wives (based on Diogenes Lateritus's biography), is a source of domestic comedy, even as many modern authors of Socratic comedies wrest Xantippe from the role of shrew traditionally accorded to her. Tragedy and comedy are only the most common genres, however. There are also philosophical or educational dialogues, closet dramas, various forms of opera and melodrama, and many other different subforms and subgenres.

In terms of genre, this case study is an example of discovering a subgenre. A reading of Plato's philosophical dialogues in terms of drama led me to expect that dramatists should have picked up on this admittedly unusual dramatic form and followed suit. Once I started to look around, I indeed found that this was the case, and the discovery of scores of such Socrates plays in turn confirmed my dramatic reading of Plato. Furthermore, when seen from the

perspective of the philosophy of literary form encoded in the Socrates play, these Socrates plays strongly argue for a combination of philosophy and theater, for the use of drama in thought, that became the ultimate goal of my study.

This was all well and good, but the more I contemplate this genre of the Socrates play, the more doubts I have about the adequacy of using the category of genre in this case. At first glance, the Socrates play can be described quite easily in terms of evolution and its operative term, adaptation: the adaptation of the Socrates play to the tastes of seventeenth-century London, eighteenth-century Paris, nineteenth-century Berlin, or twentieth-century New York. But the closer one looks at this history, the more it becomes doubtful as to whether evolutionary trees and branches will work here. The main reason lies precisely in how minor and obscure the genre is; for this obscurity means that many of the authors did not know about their predecessors, whose works had often received little or no public attention and subsequently languished in archives. This has important consequences for the genre's development because it means that most of these authors had to reinvent this genre continually from scratch. Quite frequently they will claim to be the first to have attempted a dramatization of Plato. Each individual instance of the genre, each Socrates play, that was not directly linked to its predecessor was therefore not begot by it; there is no continuous evolutionary line, as there had been for the manifesto. The Socrates play thus constantly starts over again, disappears and reappears whenever playwrights are

touched, against all odds, by the dramatic impulse they sense in Plato's dialogues, or when philosophers, against all odds, feel compelled to write drama in Plato's vein. Plato acts across time, in a way that is perhaps reminiscent of Wai Chee Dimock's notion of deep time. These plays pop up announced, as if through spontaneous generation, and disappear again only to reappear somewhere else. The Socrates play is a phenomenon located at the outer edge of genre.[7]

The three case studies show a developing notion of genre. First, a move away from a focus on individual works and toward an account of different types of genealogies and their internal mechanisms. Such genealogies are generated through reference to a source text—the *Communist Manifesto*; Plato's philosophical dialogues—and result in one or several genre traditions. Furthermore, these case studies offer different philosophies of literary form, showing how genre-based perspectives can become finely tuned tools for analyzing cultural values, fantasies, and practices. They are genre taxonomies, to be sure, but taxonomies placed in the service of cultural history. Indeed, I have come to the conviction that genre-based analysis is one of the most useful things literary studies can contribute to cultural history.

Genre Theory

In the second part of this essay, I will relate my three genres—the closet drama, the manifesto, the Socrates play—to what Gérard Genette calls "archi-genres," more specifically to the archi-genre of drama;[8] for the three case studies—closet drama, manifesto, Socrates play—participate to some extent in drama. In the case of the closet drama, for example, we can use a notion of drama that includes plays not written for performance. Expanding the notion of drama in this direction is possible even though it requires abandoning the direct relation between dramatic text and theatrical performance that organizes at least some notions of what drama is or should be. The case of the Socrates play is no less complicated. By harkening back to Plato's philosophical dialogues, it too is located at the very margin of drama and theater; indeed a good number of Socrates plays seem to belong to philosophy rather than to theater. Of the three, the manifesto is more distantly related to drama. It is usually not written in dialogue form, although the *Communist Manifesto* was supposed to contain dialogue and the published version still shows traces of this original plan. And yet, it has something to do with drama as well. Many avant-garde manifestos were performed, and all manifestos participate in the fantasy of spoken—or shouted—address to a live audience.

If we want to relate the three case studies to the archi-genre of drama, what is required is an expanded notion of drama, one that goes beyond a purely taxonomic approach. In order to arrive at such a notion, I now turn to Kenneth Burke and his notion of dramatism.

Before delving into Burke's dramatism, one more prefatory remark that speaks to the stakes of arguing for an expanded, even expansive, notion of drama. The simplest way of putting this is by mentioning the name of Mikhail Bakhtin. Bakhtin is responsible for a distortion in the relation between the novel and the drama. Bakhtin took many of his terms from drama, including "dialogism" and "heteroglossia": drama, after all, is the genre most fully built on dialogue, and only performed drama gives us literally different tongues on the stage.[9] But then, Bakhtin ascribed these dramatic terms, not to drama, but to the novel.[10] To be sure, there are some good reasons for ascribing these dramatic terms to the novel rather than to drama. Many traditions of drama have tended to restrict the multiplicity of discourses in a given play, and misapplied conceptions of Aristotle have further decreased, rather than increased, heteroglossia in a number of dramatic traditions. But these are not good enough reasons for playing a dramatic theory of the novel off against actual drama. I, thus, want to argue against this theory that describes the novel as endlessly expansive and the drama as restricted by proposing a notion of drama that is even more expansive than Bakhtin's conception of the novel. It is

only by resisting Bakhtin that we can arrive at an expanded notion of drama that will capture such far-flung dramatic phenomena as closet dramas, manifestos, and Socrates plays.

Kenneth Burke's Dramatism

Burke, for one, would not have hesitated to extend drama in this direction; he was a great believer in drama in all of its forms. With considerable frequency he discussed the three great periods of Western drama: fifth-century Athenian drama, Renaissance drama, and modern drama. Scott Newstock has just gathered Burke's writings on Shakespeare in a single volume; similar projects could be undertaken with Burke's writings on Greek and on modern drama.[11] Aeschylus, Shakespeare, Ibsen—there is nothing surprising about Burke's frame of reference; Burke here is in the good company of drama critics of the thirties and forties, the period of his life I will focus on.

But Burke was not content with celebrating these three great periods of drama. Encouraged by a very different type of intellectual project, he started to think about drama in an ever-expanding sense. One expansion might well be compared to Genette's notion of archi-genre, for Burke initially traced different forms of drama back to a single origin, what he called ritual drama. In this undertaking, Burke was inspired by anthropologists such as James Frazer, who were seeking to understand drama in ritualistic terms as an organizing category for all types of performance. Having started with the high-water marks of Western drama, Burke

thus followed the anthropological turn, analyzing all types of drama in terms of the ritual drama from which they were said to have emerged in the first place.

So far, Burke follows the spirit of the times. But then he starts to do something unusual: ritual drama becomes a generalized term that is used to analyze increasingly far-flung phenomena. He writes, We propose to take *ritual drama* as the Ur-form, the 'hub,' with all other aspects of *human* action treated as spokes radiating from this hub."[12] Several things are remarkable in this statement. First, Burke here considers ritual drama, not as one of several archi-genres, but as *the* archi genre, a single ur-form. Second, this ur-form is meant to explain not only all other forms of drama, as one might expect, but also "all other aspects of human action." We are beginning to see here that Burke is interested less in theories of origin than in using origin to legitimize an expanded, formal notion of drama.

I want to leave aside the staggeringly bold claim about ur-drama explaining all forms of human action and consider its consequences for one particular domain: literature. Indeed, the statement above comes not from a work of anthropology or sociology, as one might expect, but from Burke's book *The Philosophy of Literary Form* (1941), and it is literary form that Burke wants to consider through the ur-form of ritual drama. Drama, for Burke, means primarily action, and consequently he considers literature as a form of action, namely symbolic action. But symbolic

action is still too static a term. Burke's approach is closer to what I would call a gestural reading of literature. Inspired by R. P. Blackmur and others, he speaks of a given work of literature as the "dancing of an attitude," just as he wants to capture the "attitudinizing of the poem" in which "the whole body" may finally become involved.[13] Burke thus analyzes poetry through a vocabulary of different types of acts, attitudes, and dances, but he always relates this vocabulary back to drama, the genre that is most explicitly and fully concerned with the human body in purposive motion. This dramatic reading can be applied to a number of other genres as well; for example, declarations of independence and constitutions are genres strong on attitude. Very compellingly, Burke captures their foundational gesture, their declarative or what we would now call their performative force. Indeed, Burke relates declarations to one of its heirs: political manifestos. We can see here that, via Burke's notion of drama, we can in fact read the manifesto, which at first glance seems to have little to do with drama, back to a dramatic analysis. Having taken his point of departure from ritual drama, Burke has arrived at a dramatic reading of the manifesto.

We have seemingly traveled far from drama, even from ritual drama. There is clearly a danger here of finding some form of action, and hence some form of drama, everywhere, and if everything is drama, then what do we gain from such an analysis? Some of these worries may be alleviated by looking at Burke's emerging notion of dramatism, the term that increasingly

organizes his analysis. Dramatism revolves around a set of five terms: act, agent, agency, purpose, and scene. Burke then uses these terms to analyze an array of phenomena, starting, in his first book based on this method, with the history of ideas. *Grammar of Motives* translates different systems of thought into dramatistic terms.[14] Materialism, as a philosophy based on the shaping power of material conditions, is identified as a philosophy based on the "scene," whereas pragmatism privileges "agency." In addition, the dramatistic pentad can be used to measure the relation between the five terms; for example, Burke measures the "agent-scene" ratio in various philosophies. In this way the dramatistic lens is directed toward the entire history of thought from Plato to Santanyana.

Once again, we seem to have traveled far from drama, but once again we have not abandoned it entirely, for in the course of this abstract dramatistic analysis, Burke discovers a kind of dramatic substrate within philosophy, moments when philosophy itself veers toward drama. It does so, for example, in the case of Plato, of whom Burke states, "Plato's dialectic was appropriately written in the mode of ritual drama."[15] Where Bakhtin appropriates the Socratic dialogues as a precursor of the novel, once more incorporating dramatic genres into his history of the novel at the expense of drama, Burke recognizes Plato's dialogues as part of drama's history. Once again Burke has arrived at one of my three genres, the Socrates play, via an expanded notion of drama.

With his dramatism Burke has taken an archi-genre, or what he himself called an ur-form, and turned it into a formal tool. Formalism always implies a process of abstraction, that is, identifying in everything from poetry to philosophy a shared dramatic substrate. But at the same time, it is important that even an extreme formalism such as Burke's does not abandon the archi-genre of drama entirely. So it is not the case that Burke simply calls everything "drama;" rather he relates admittedly far-flung phenomena back to actual drama. About philosophy, for example, he says this: "Every philosophy is in some respect or other *a step away* from drama. But to understand its structure, we must remember always that it is, by the same token, a step away from *drama*."[16] Burke's dramatism is a peculiar type of formalism, one invested in concrete action, gestures, dances, and attitudes, a formalism that actually counteracts abstraction by relating it back to drama, thus demonstrating that even the most abstract of human endeavors, philosophy, is, in fact, nothing but one small step away from drama.[17]

I want to conclude with some remarks on the advantages of dramatism. First, when I use Burke's dramatism as a lens through which to look at my three case studies, what I notice is that they are all interested in the situation of address: the relation between a speaker and an addressee. The withdrawal of the closet drama from the theater also implies a withdrawal from an assembled audience, for example. The direct relation between speaker and audience is thus interrupted, mediated, or displaced. In the case of

the manifesto, the relation between speaker and audience is modeled on a rallying cry, the agitating speech that is immediately translated into the actions of listeners. This, of course, is nothing but a fantasy, which reveals the genre's palpable anxiety about the effects it wants to have on its addressees. In the case of the Socrates play, and the philosophical drama more generally, the relation between speaker and audience is a matter of inducting the audience into a philosophical frame of mind. The prototype here is the Platonic dialogue, in which we see Socrates coax bystanders into philosophical discussions. This, too, is a fantasy, or at least a project that is prone to failure. Many Socratic dialogues exhibit heightened anxiety when members of the target audience get angry or threaten to leave, thus threatening to undermine the dialogue's pedagogical mission. Dramatism, which is attuned to this dimension of what one might call the dramatic speech situation, allows us to perceive this situation as a common dimension in all three genres.

Theater Studies Today

But dramatism is not just a fruitful way of looking at marginally dramatic genres such as these three and teasing out their dramatic substrate. It also offers an alternative to theater and performance studies as it is practiced today. Burke's interest in ritual theater, in anthropology as well as in the project of a dramatic sociology of human action, resonates with the current fascination with ritual, the body and the anthropological aspirations of performance studies as well as its ambition to study human behavior more generally. At the same time, Burke avoided several of the methodological blind spots that mar current methods. Most important, his interest in ritual drama and human action did not come at the expense of the literary text, which is too easily rejected by theater and performance studies today, in part because they have been embroiled in a struggle of emancipation from English departments. No doubt, Burke's position as a public intellectual, which meant that he was relatively unencumbered by disciplinary politics, was at least partially responsible for his ability to avoid this particular blind spot.

Another set of advantages concerns the expanded scope of dramatism itself. Burke's dramatism demonstrates the ways in which a genre can become a lens though which to analyze a wide range of phenomena, from literature to philosophy. Among them I would include the category of language itself. Burke's analysis of

literary language in terms of gestures, dances, and attitudes anticipates the work of figures such as J. L. Austin, whose notion of performativity occupies an important place in literary method.[18] At the same time, Austin's theory of performativity has caused no end of problems due to its rejection of theatricality. In the 1970s and 1980s, Austin's distinction between an efficacious use of speech acts and their mere "theatrical" mention became an object of critique, especially from approaches inspired by deconstruction, beginning with those of Jacques Derrida himself.[19] The 1993 English Institute conference devoted to this topic belongs to this history as well. These types of deconstructive critique, however, did not put the distinction itself to rest. Indeed, Judith Butler distanced herself explicitly from "theatrical" readings of her theory of performativity, and theater studies scholars continued to find their domain tacitly or explicitly marginalized in discussions of literary speech acts.[20] At the same time, the dichotomy between efficacy and theatricality was adapted by performance studies, which tried to distinguish itself from the study of "mere" theater.[21] One might say that the marker "theatrical" just kept moving: first, it was excluded from Austin's speech acts; then, it was excluded from Butler's notion of performativity, only to be excised from performance (as theorized by performance studies) as well.

While not unproductive, the debate between performativity and theatricality could not, and cannot, be resolved. Rather than dismantling Austin's distinction, the debate merely led to

proliferating versions of it. Here Burke's dramatism can open an alternative by offering a specifically dramatic theory of language. Such a theory can recuperate a whole genealogy of thinking about language in the expanded terms of dramatism, namely, as symbolic action derived from drama, the art form that captures language as spoken by specific characters in concrete situations. One important episode in such a dramatic theory of language is Ludwig Wittgenstein, whose notion of "language game" (*Sprachspiel*) can also be translated as "language play," and who included the act of playing theater as one of the principal examples of such language games (or language plays). Wittgenstein's own texts, of course, revolve around carefully constructed scenes, which some playwrights, including Tom Stoppard, have translated into actual drama. A dramatic or, to speak with Burke, dramatistic theory of language can escape the distinction between performativity and theatricality that has given us so much grief.

But I am getting ahead of myself as one is wont to do when in the thrall of a formalism such as Burke's notion of dramatism. We are all familiar with the arguments against formalism: that it abstracts from context and tends toward a Platonic universalism; that it becomes schematic and its results, predictable. All this is true. It seems to me, though, that these dangers are also part of the strength of formalism. In any case, these dangers are under control in Burke's dramatism, whose main point is to connect relatively abstract phenomena such as literature and philosophy

back to dramatic embodiments. This, finally, is the real strength of dramatism, a dialectic between abstraction and embodiment that never lets us forget that even rarified endeavors such as philosophy are part of some kind of human drama.

Part II

What Genre Does

5

The Shandean Lifetime Reading Plan

DEIDRE LYNCH

"The most typical novel in world literature"

About the Author

For many readers, it has appeared that *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy*, in beginning with interruption, begins precisely as it means to go on. As, in 1759, Tristram himself tells it, his misfortunes commenced at his conception (information about prenatal particulars relayed him by his uncle Toby enables our hero-narrator to flout Horace's classic advice and begin ab ovo). No sooner had he embarked on the journey of life, he explains self-pityingly, than he hit a detour. "*Pray, my dear*, quoth my mother, *have you not forgot to wind up the clock*?"——*Good G*—! cried my father ....——*Did ever woman, since the creation of the world, interrupt a man with such a silly question*?"[1] This famously ill-timed question from Mrs. Shandy about the household time-piece, posed to her husband just as he was applying himself to his conjugal duties, had—as interruption—far-reaching consequences.

Jolted by that unseasonable query concerning Mr. Shandy's possible departure from his regular domestic timetable, the animal spirits that should have escorted our hero while he was in his tender homunculus state instead careened off course at the very outset of his entrance into the world. And over the following nine volumes, the journey that the reader embarks on with Tristram as narrator and guide follows suit. Famously, by the end of volume 9, far from having got anywhere, we find that, thanks to Tristram's self-interruptions, compounded by a family habit of "backslidings" (I, xxi, 51) (1.76), we have been tugged back to a yet earlier passage in the Shandy family history—the courtship between the Widow Wadman and Toby that fizzled in 1713, five years before Tristram "was begot in the night, betwixt the first *Sunday* and the first *Monday* in the month of *March*, in the year of our Lord one thousand seven hundred and eighteen" (I, iv, 4) (1.6). At the point at which you will leave off, in other words, the homunculus will not yet even have been a gleam in its mother's eye.

For Viktor Shklovsky, in 1921, interruption's prominence in Laurence Sterne's novel was of a piece with the qualities that made *Tristram Shandy*, in his estimation, the most "typical novel in world literature."[2] This famous claim, tacked onto the end of an essay that represented Sterne as the foe of what is customarily taken to be novelistic business as usual, was certainly tendered in a spirit of paradox and playfulness, but only in part. In "Sterne's *Tristram Shandy* and the Theory of the Novel," Shklovsky was also seriously intent on promoting the novel, the literary form still liable in the

1920s to be found wanting whenever its aesthetic claims, its claims to have form, were assessed. His essay thus proposes that the fundamental nature of the novel is to suspend and estrange narrative conventions, much as Sterne's wayward way with sequence—the digressions that impede stories' advance, the displacements that see consequences preceding their causes—disrupts readerly expectations. With that disruption, Sterne lays bare the techniques, normally concealed, that make a reader accept literary time as real; he impedes the reader from reading for contents and so from reading *through* form. Revealed, over the course of Shklovsky's homage to *Tristram Shandy*, as a form that restlessly interrupts itself so as to make form new again, the novel is also revealed as standing in a privileged relation to the defamiliarization that Shklovsky identifies as the essence of the aesthetic encounter in a companion essay, "Art as Technique" (1917). That essay pivots on an 1897 passage in Leo Tolstoy's diary describing the novelist's unnerving encounter with mundane housekeeping routines. With that preamble, Shklovsky in "Art as Technique" declares habit to be the soul-destroying force that "devours work, clothes, furniture, one's wife, and the fear of war" and declares art to be the antidote to the automatized absent-mindedness of the everyday. For Shklovsky, the value of art—assessed as a particular sort of cognitive instrument—lies with its restoration of perception: "art exists that one may recover the sensation of life; it exists to make the stone stony; ... it imparts the sensation of things as they are perceived and not as they are

known."[3] By arranging for the reader to stumble over their literary devices, by emphasizing through such arrangements that, for example, plots are more than the sum of their events comprising their stories, novels do defamiliarization very well.

Now, what Shklovsky does not consider, in either "Art as Technique" or his account of *Tristram Shandy*, is what becomes of the distinctive temporality of defamiliarization—the suddenness, for instance, with which the participant in aesthetic encounter is jolted into a new reflexive awareness of the device's arbitrariness —when that interruptive practice gets sustained and reiterated across a lengthy work. *Tristram*, however, gives us the wherewithal to explore just this issue. In this essay, while tacking between genre study and the cultural histories of reading and of time-keeping, I shall be engaging with how Sterne's novelistic practice activates the now firmly severed etymological connections that once linked *interruption* to *routine* (the latter derives, by way of the term "route," in the sense of path or road, from the Latin *rupta*, meaning "detachment" or "broken," while the former derives more directly from that same Latin past participle's infinitive form, *rumpere*, "to break;" eighteenth-century writers and readers, I am proposing, were better able than we are to keep these connections in mind).[4] While deconstructing Shklovsky's antinomies between the interruptive and the routinized, I also aim to turn his premise about the representativeness of *Tristram* to alternate ends. Sterne's novel, I shall suggest, is interested in the way that representations become reiterable, rereadable, and, so,

routinizable. The manner in which it takes that interest illuminates novels' defining ways of going on (and on and then, again, on), and, by extension, it illuminates the habit-*forming* functions that novels have been able to perform, in part because of those same protractions. By mobilizing an account of genre as something defined as much in the scene of literary reception as in the scene of literary creation, this essay aims to put those functions at center stage.

Novels' Clockwork

Sterne, who was highly aware, like most eighteenth-century authors, of the strange capacity that print had to foster fellowship across multitudes while also keeping authors and readers strangers to one another, was very conscious that the audience of 1759 was not in the habit of reading him. He was very determined that it should be.[5] In his book, so to speak, familiarization counted as an achievement, too. In the same way that we gradually come to feel "in" on a joke, Carol Kay once commented, readers of *Tristram Shandy* do catch on to the various modes of being disruptive that the Shandy family members have at their disposal and discover thereby that they, too, in sync now rather than stumbling, can "do the Shandy."[6] Since one facet of the challenge to narrative linearity that *Tristram* mounts is to make it seem that time flows in a loop, make it seem that the book's clock does not simply run forward but also runs round, the novel manages to gesture, as well, toward a scheme in which they would never have not been doing the Shandy, in which they would always have been going steady. That this scheme might therefore depend on a form of humor that more modern times might want to decry as mechanical is an implication I shall explore later.

In fact, after the first edition of 1759, *Tristram Shandy*, strictly speaking, ceased to commence with an interruption of the household routines of Shandy Hall. Instead, it began in a manner

that gestured toward the holding patterns of habit-time that I have just been evoking in underscoring how the text's goings-on can eventually come to feel foreseeably unpredictable, how Sterne's readers regularly get in the habit of expecting the unexpected. In the spring of 1760, exploiting his newfound celebrity, Sterne commissioned a frontispiece for his book from the artist and engraver William Hogarth (Fig. 11). Thereafter the refurbished first volume commenced with an image that was drawn up with reference to an episode in the second volume, and which pictured Corporal Trim reading aloud to the two brothers Shandy and a dozy Doctor Slop; Trim's text, we are to infer, is the sermon of Parson Yorick's that had somehow come to be lodged inside Toby's copy of the writings on fortification of Stevinus, a favorite author of his. The way that the frontispiece participates in a long-running cultural conversation about the contrasting ways in which images and texts relate to time lends this beginning its importance for my argument. To *picture* the reading act, to annex Trim's reading to the fixity and stopped time of the static image and of the stopped clock to his left is, for *Tristram Shandy*, a way to offset the other things this book knows about reading. It also knows that reading does not stop time but takes it. And it knows that, taking time, reading takes us—much as a properly linear plot might well take an author—ever nearer to a closure most fatal, that dreaded funereal page that Tristram spots in his future: that *end*, which, if we read the book in a single-volume modern edition, lies already there by our right hand, awaiting us, a type of that death that ultimately will interrupt every reader's reading or rereading of

Tristram's life, just as it will interrupt his writing of it. The frontispiece knows something different about reading, though. The Grecian urn of *Tristram Shandy*, the frontispiece renders reading as a process without beginning or end.[7]

Figure 11:

Frontispiece, Laurence Sterne, *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman: A New Edition*. Vol. 1. (London: W. Strahan, et. al, 1782).

View Asset

The opening to the novel that the frontispiece provides thus brings to view *Tristram Shandy's* investment in a fantasy, claiming many adherents over the history of novels, of a book that would never leave off—a book that would be *read for life* (in each of the two senses of that phrase, both for ever, and as a hedge against the end). "For my own part, I am resolved never to read any book but my own as long as I live," Tristram remarks, harrying his audience into viewing his reading habits as an object of their emulation (VIII,

v, 439) (2.661). Tristram hopes, he declares, for readers who will hold up till "the very end of the world," should the present work in fact "hold out" that long (I, xxi, 50) (1.74).

What might enable or necessitate such literary constancy? Only a chapter after he has betrayed some anxiety about his power to "hold out," Tristram boastfully casts himself as a mechanical genius who has unlocked the secret of a perpetual motion machine. "The machinery of my work is of a species by itself," he claims cockily: "Two contrary motions are introduced into it, and reconciled, which were thought to be at variance with each other .... I have constructed the main work and the adventitious parts of it with such intersections, and have so complicated and involved the digressive and progressive movements, one wheel within another, that the whole machine, in general, has been kept a-going;—and, what's more, it shall be kept a-going these forty years" (I, xxii, 54) (1.80–82). Alert to the mechanization of print culture during his lifetime, Tristram here aligns his publishing enterprise with the engineering projects of those contemporaries of Sterne's who sought to perfect mechanisms (self-moving wheels, water mills, rolling ball clocks, etc.) from which they might "obtain" "a motion ... that [would] continue for ever," and which would carry on without any other force than their own motion.[8] Only a mode of clockwork that would always mark the time but never fall prey to it could do justice to the "infinite jest" that Sterne hopes to obtain from his alter-ego Parson Yorick—enable this reincarnated Yorick to live up

to his original Shakespearean billing and provide that endless supply of the merriment that was "wont to set the table on a roar." [9]

The lifetime reading plan that *Tristram Shandy* evokes in these promotional passages is underwritten by two overlapping ways of envisioning what print manufacture and consumption might be. The first imagines that there might exist reading matter that would be endlessly reiterable, stories that, like clocks, a reader might rewind and set "a-going" again. The second imagines that there might also be reading matter impossible to contain between two covers, exempted from the requirement that texts should have a final page and in which the "continuing adventures" would never leave off being continued. (In the latter connection, we should remember that *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy* was received by its original audience as five separate installments published over eighty-five months; Sterne himself almost always represented it, Tom Keymer notes, "as an open-ended ongoing sequence and not as some marmoreal text of fixed extent.")[10] Earlier in the eighteenth century, these two accounts that I have laid out of what reading might or ought to be had been sutured together and promoted, most pronouncedly among Sterne's fellow novelists, by Samuel Richardson—who appended to the final, seventh volume of *The History of Sir Charles Grandison* an open "Letter to a Lady who was solicitous for an additional volume," in which he clarified how many plot lines he had left unresolved and thus how much longer he could have gone on; who was

disinclined, that is, to draw firm boundaries between concluding and resuming; and who, in brief, as his first biographer noted delicately, had "a most ready pen, ... one indeed seldom out of his hand."[11] The signal contribution that Richardson made to the generic identity of the novel involved, of course, his works' ways of resolving the categorical antinomies between realism and romance. Criticism since Ian Watt has taught us as much. But that contribution also involved this Richardsonian prolixity, which helped determine the form's defining temporal signature. (Making this assessment, I am making a first stab at outlining an understanding of generic affiliation like the one we formerly assumed—prior to the dawn of the era of TIVO and the digital download—when identifying a television show's particular "time slot" was a way to identify its genre.)

Reading Routines and Habits of Habitation

In fact, some eighteenth-century readers seem to have cherished the idea that they could always (perhaps would always) be reading Richardson (recurrently, repeatedly), deriving from the demands tendered by his dilated page counts a security, or sense of steadiness, like that which one obtains from the knowledge that the sun will continue to rise and set over the course of each twenty-four-hour period and that winter will again be followed by spring, summer, and autumn. Richardson tried to arrange for the preface of the Dutch translation of *Clarissa* to shine a spotlight on one such reader: an unnamed bishop of the Church of England, who by 1752, four years after *Clarissa's* final volume appeared in English, had already perused and reperused the million words of that *History of a Young Lady* eleven times, thereby putting tragic pity and fear on a schedule, and identifying feeling with its repetitive practice. Unsated, converting novelistic protraction into an approximation of eternity, this "grave Prelate" was resolved, as well, the author reported, to read *Clarissa* over again every two years thereafter for "as long as he lived."[12] Many successors to Richardson's bishop adhered, following the eighteenth century, to the Janeite version of this regimen of repeats. Walter Scott's three readings ("at least") of *Pride and Prejudice*, which Scott tallied up in his diary in 1826, became part of public consciousness through much of the later nineteenth century, thanks to their approving mention in the article on Miss Austen included in Chambers's

Cyclopaedia of English Literature.[13] The twentieth-century annals of Austen devotion include a possibly apocryphal tale about the four-word answer that Gilbert Ryle gave to the questioner who wondered whether the famous philosopher ever read novels. In his reply, Ryle, it is said, disclosed his calendrical arrangements: "all six, every year."[14] The serial perusal, one by one, of the Barsetshire chronicles of Anthony Trollope has sustained many a bedtime routine, as well—likewise the chronicles' serial reperusal. And the reading habits of William Bankes and Mr. Ramsay in Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse* register the comparable frequency with which past rereaders frequented Walter Scott's Waverley series. To read one's way through the Waverley Novels, the whole set back-to-back, does something significant to Scott's strenuously linear sagas of social modernization and of the inevitable loss of the past, because it transforms those time lines into time loops; it absorbs them into the recursive patterns of the reader's everyday, ongoing life.

This, in fact, is one of my main points in suggesting that these stories of readerly steadiness might be a context in which to rethink the question of the typicality of *Tristram Shandy*. These practices of reading in circles amplify the periodicity, the routinized rhythm of putting down and picking up, that is necessarily built into our experience of the lengthy work, a pulse that becomes apprehensible in part because of that very length. Novel reading, unlike playgoing, leaves the pacing and scheduling of text-intake up to the private discretion of the audience (at the playhouse you

generally proceed in lockstep with the timings meted out to you, Stuart Sherman notes).[15] But the paragons of readerly steadiness whom I have just portrayed often contrive matters so as to minimize that discretion and so as to regularize the haphazard rhythm of taking up and putting down demanded of the lengthy form, make it more like a heartbeat. Such habitués arrange it so that their book's hour will come back round, again and again, with reassuring regularity. One consequence of putting a novel on such a timetable, making it an object one rereads, is that this novel ends up partially released from the internal chronology of its plot: the practice scales down the stakes of revelation. What comes to the fore is a temporal continuum of seemingly indefinite extension, rather than a delimited span in which the middle gains definition by being bookended by a beginning and an end.[16] If a book really could be a perpetual motion machine, as Tristram wants the book that he is authoring to be, such arrangements would be a matter of course.

In recent work Peter Stallybrass has identified as a misleading myth of modern reading the premise that "the book as a technological form is organized so as to be read from page 1 to page 2, from page 2 to page 3," and so on, until the end brings readers to a halt. Books are not scrolls, he explains. They permit flipping back and forth. For the reader of a book, the continuous sequence is optional. But Stallybrass evidently feels he must make one exception in his myth busting, for he also allows that in one particular cultural site a linear mode of reading, though only

contingently linked to the modern codex form, did get naturalized. Reading as continuous, forward motion was "encouraged," he declares, "by the development of narrative fiction in the eighteenth century."[17] For me, Stallybrass's concession bespeaks the excessively narrow mandate ascribed to novel reading in much current criticism. Unlike Tristram, our criticism hesitates to imagine anyone coming to a novel *without* what he calls a "vicious taste" of "reading straight forwards in quest of the adventures" (I, xx, 44) (1.65). The issue is not only that novel studies has taken for granted the activity of the reader who realizes the dynamic narrativity of her reading matter by dutifully going through it in sequence and succession; it is not only that the field plays up narrative drive while downplaying the discontinuous reading that Stallybrass highlights as a salient feature of modern textual cultures. (It is worth pointing out, however, that the chapter, "that extraordinary mechanism of self-segmentation" that novelistic texts have at their disposal, actually facilitates our ways of routinizing novel reading.)[18] The issue is instead that, over-invested in accounts of the congruency of novel time and modern time (time as an arrow hurtling forward toward the next new thing), we in novel studies imagine novel readers as reading for revelation and resolution of suspense much more often than we imagine them as reading so as to repeat themselves, to get more of the same, to adhere to a routine.[19] That emphasis, however, puts us in ironic relation to the reading habits that define our professional selves, which do, after all, tend to take us in circles, so that,

semester in, semester out, our calendar is structured by recurrent reunions with texts. If it is now September, some among us are positioned to say, then I must be teaching Jane Austen. We ourselves, in other words, are not consistently examples of that vicious taste for which Tristram berates a recalcitrant Madam Reader.

One consequence of this overinvestment in the notion that the novel has a privileged relation to modern, linear time is that we consistently forget that the self-enclosed, unsequelled novel that simply stops rather than stopping and picking itself back up again is the aberration rather than the norm in the history of Anglo-American fiction. In the discursive context that is defined at one end by *Farther Adventures of Robinson Crusoe*—or for that matter, *A Sentimental Journey*, *Tristram Shandy's* spin-off—and at the other end by the last installment in the Harry Potter franchise, fictions' endings have tended to be as generative of beginnings as they are of closure. To read novels as members of series is to be as solicitous about how fictions resume as one is about how they end, and to be motivated by a desire for continuation—for the accumulation of parts—that has a quite tenuous relation to a desire for progression.[20]

There is a bias toward brevity in formalist approaches to novelistic form, Catherine Gallagher has suggested. Novel studies is preoccupied with *time*, certainly, but in practice this has meant time as it is represented rather than as it is lived (with book in

hand): that preoccupation has mainly led us to zero in on the difference between how clocks count off time and how narratives recount it. Emphasis falls on the relations between the time frame that conditions the act of narrating and the time frame that conditions the action that this narrating is about; and commentators on Sterne often investigate, accordingly, the dissonance separating Tristram the narrated subject and Tristram the narrating author, the Tristram who is not yet born and the Tristram who is composing, while also, as he repeatedly reminds us, decomposing, growing older and sicker, edging nearer his own black page. But Gallagher's complaint is that in the context defined by narratological analysis, as she puts it, "the internal pattern of *The Last Chronicle of Barsetshire* [may] be set down as concisely as that of *The Turn of the Screw*."[21] Such analyses, which tend to convert duration into simultaneity, and which "still time to detect structure," do not help us develop a concept of length, she argues. [22] This is a failing that the prose stylistics of Victor Shklovsky shares. The awareness of form through its violation that *Tristram Shandy's* interruptive aesthetics produces in its readers is, as Shklovsky describes it, the work of an instant. As he conceives it, defamiliarization is time dependent, a phenomenon in which we become conscious of the difference between the conventional expectation we had then and the sharpened awareness we have now. But this time dependency is, in turn, independent of duration. How time-consuming novels such as *Tristram* accomplish their protractions, how that accomplishment fosters a reader's

"habit of habitation"[23]—these things tend to have been understood by scholars of form as merely incidental to the ways in which novels attain their novelhood.

Rethinking Genre: The Novel and The "Parlour-Window Book"

What might remedy that inattention is an account of that novelhood that would extend beyond questions about the shapes that authors give to plots, questions about the representational contracts that govern authors' relations to the project of truth telling and mimesis, or questions about the ways that novels are consolidated as a genre through their relations with other, adjacent forms. In pursuing the social meanings with which genre is freighted, this mode of enquiry into the relations of form and function would go further and would number among its analytic categories an engagement with the shifting consumption practices that novels have been thought of as soliciting and eliciting (practices that in a feedback loop also shape and are shaped by the fables of response that novels take pains to incorporate).[24] It would attend to novels' characteristic plottings of the coordinates of response, to the placings and timings of readings, to prescriptions of pace. Maybe in all the senses of the word *prescription*—another of Tristram's authorial boasts is that Shandyism will promote the circulation of the blood and "make the wheel of life run long and chearfully round" (IV, xxxii, 267) (1.401); the Shandean reader's body, exempted from the ills to which mortal flesh is liable, is here evoked as another of the book's perpetual motion machines. By pursuing such issues, this mode of enquiry would make itself accountable to what the anthropologist Arjun Appadurai calls "consumption periodicities": it would give

analytic weight to the experiences of iteration and duration that novels were once thought to furnish *as* novels—perhaps still are thought to furnish, though not by novel critics.[25]

Early in his first volume Tristram Shandy predicts that his oeuvre shall win him fame and prove "a book for a parlour-window" (I, iv, 4) (1.5). For twenty-first-century readers, this likely is an occasion when Tristram's characteristic boasting falls flat. This boast puzzles, in fact. Few modern readers are equipped to recognize how Tristram in this passage taps a once-recognizable set of conventions for governing the relations between an implied author and an implied reader and, more particularly, for laying claim to that reader's time. In fact, from the eighteenth century to the early Victorian period, periodical essayists, anthologists, and the writers of miscellanies echoed Tristram in likewise claiming for their works the status of "parlour-window book"—"a good name," said one of them, "for a volume of agreeable reading selected from the bookcase and left lying about."[26] A designation like "parlour-window book" tells us something about the importance that the culture that pressed it into service placed on differentiating between reading for all comers and all seasons and reading for a special occasion, reading that offered itself as everyday fare and reading matter that was to be closed up and returned to the shelf. The way that this moniker muddies boundaries between what is intrinsic to the literary work and what is extrinsic, between a text and the circumstances of its reception, also suggests an interesting deviation from our own twenty-first-century expectation that

genre is an instrument with which to investigate the *production* or *presentation* of texts. How would a culture that felt compelled to single out a category of reading matter called "parlour-window books" answer the question "What is a novel?" What would it make salient when specifying that form's generic identity? Perhaps the reviewer in the *Monthly Review* who, in a 1791 retrospective on *Tristram Shandy*, commented on how the ascent of the novel had been no "less rapid than the extension of the use of tea, to which a novel is almost as general an attendant, as the bread and butter, especially in a morning" supplies answers to those questions simply in the way that he arrays novels alongside other habit-forming commodities.[27] The comment suggests how the novel's special ability to infiltrate everyday life, to solicit a reception that was enmeshed with the recursive patterns defining ordinary, uneventful, ongoing existence, could seem fundamental rather than incidental to its generic identity.[28] In the 1787 letter to his nephew in which Thomas Jefferson promoted the writings of Sterne as "the best course of morality that ever was written," we might hear Jefferson as using that word "course" in a way that pivots between two senses, so that the word connects the kind of prescribed sequence of actions that constitutes study with the kind of prescribed sequence that we follow when, say, on a "course" of antibiotics.[29] The promotion of Sterne is a promotion of what takes time and what must, in turn, be taken steadily.

Certainly, to say that Sterne would hold truck with a definition of the novelist as purveyor of everyday fare seems incompatible with

the grandiose ambitions Tristram ventriloquizes on his creator's behalf, likewise with the claim by Viktor Shklovsky, with which I opened, that Sterne's novelistic typicality consists in his parodying of novelistic commonplaces and the ways that those jolt a reader out of a reading that is business as usual. And yet, often in *Tristram Shandy*, Sterne seems intent on distancing his novel from events precisely in order to better investigate those everyday goings-on that have always been going on and that underwrite an apprehension of time as a continuum. As one reader has noted, even Sterne's favorite punctuation mark, the dash, may be seen to signal Sterne's penchant for conceiving of time as sheer middle, absent beginnings or ends. The punctuation mark that concludes, inconclusively, volume 7 of *Tristram Shandy* and that opens *A Sentimental Journey*, the dash points in two directions at once, "with no suggestion of closure on either end."[30] The same penchant seems to be at work, as well, in the way the characters of *Tristram* are selected as a small circle who are wholly used to one another, inveterate creatures of habit who have never not been familiars: Sterne is interested less in how people meet up initially, than he is in the terms of their cohabiting thereafter. The parlor at Shandy Hall is thus rendered as a site for habitual conversation and habitual whistling—the latter being, of course, Toby Shandy's reflex reaction whenever his brother Walter's discoursing begins to disrupt the conviviality to which the place is dedicated. The kitchen downstairs mirrors the parlor upstairs in likewise furnishing parables of reading as reencounter. "I like to hear *Trim's* stories

about the captain," Susannah says in the kitchen (V, x, 291) (1.437), signaling that it is time once again for her fellow servants to form a "circle about the fire" so as to give Trim another hearing (292) (1.438), and perhaps giving this signal once more just at the moment when Uncle Toby by his fireside upstairs says, for the umpteenth time, that he wishes that Dr. Slop had seen "what prodigious armies we had in *Flanders*" (II, xviii, 111) (1.169). The erratic shenanigans that define Tristram's authorship, the pride that he takes in bewildering a reader and leaving her unable to guess what will happen next (I, xxv, 59) (1.89), have a counterbalance: the even tenor of the ways of Tristram's dramatis personae.

Notwithstanding Tristram's announcement that his ambition as a historian is to get at "the first springs of the events" he "tell[s]" (I, xxi, 49) (1.74), Sterne thus weights many pages of his book toward everyday, habitual actions that appear to have always been repeated and so appear never to have begun. (Maurice Blanchot's definition of the everyday is helpful here: "what we never see for a first time, but only see again, having always already seen it by an illusion that is, as it happens, constitutive of the everyday.")[31] Sterne is interested in origins (hence the anti-Horatian ab ovo beginning to his book), but he is equally interested in the habitualization that makes moments of inception and conception recede behind our impressions of the usual and the always-done. Odd notions, about names or women, gain so secure a footing in Walter Shandy's brain that he can no longer remember a time

when they did not number among the elements of his personal credo; admirers of Uncle Toby find that a *first* whistling of Lillibulero becomes wholly unimaginable, in something of the way that a first squeaking of the hinge of the parlor door at Shandy Hall is inconceivable as well. Such phenomena suggest the inadequacy of accounts of *Tristram Shandy's* wayward way with time that do not acknowledge that the motives for this waywardness extend beyond Sterne's desire to parody earlier eighteenth-century novels' plots of linear development.[32] Attending to how often *Tristram Shandy* rotates around storytelling in circles, we might in fact be inclined to see Sterne as continuing rather than interrupting predecessors such as Richardson (adopt the right angle, and the evening gatherings in the "cedar parlour" that the friends of the heroine of *Sir Charles Grandison*, "the venerable circle," incorporate into their schedules—so as to ruminate over her letters and ritually mark off the steady passage of their days—come to look like anticipations of the fireside chitchat sessions at Shandy Hall). We might also be inclined to see *Tristram Shandy* as a prelude to the nineteenth century's novels of everyday life, of Elizabeth Gaskell's *Cranford* or of *Emma* and *Pride and Prejudice*—the novels of Austen in which the time lines that lead the paired protagonists to the altar are combined most intricately with, and are most pressured by, the time loops traced by the minor characters, whom we think of as consuming gruel, consulting Mr. Perry, or making moral extracts, day in, day out, perennially.[33]

Modern Times

I half anticipate the complaint that one domesticates Sterne's book, neuters its satire, and bypasses its anxieties by repositioning it in the midst of that cozy, feminine company. But, in fact, a benefit of this redescription of *Tristram Shandy's* place might be how it facilitates, conversely, an account of everyday life in which the everyday sponsors a more artful, complicated, and even Shandean management of temporality than we generally acknowledge. I think here of a recent article by Rita Felski that spotlights the disdain for the feminine world of domestic chores that informs both Viktor Shklovsky's account of the horrors of habituation and his linkage of aesthetic experience with the defamiliarization that transfigures that mundane domain. Felski remarks insightfully on the rhetorics of temporality that have been threaded through twentieth-century commentary on the everyday. In the gendered logic organizing that tradition of commentary, "masculine rupture and revolt" are pitted against "feminine" repetition." The everyday is made to stand for a quaint archaism, an antihistorical inertia, that is redeemable, in compliance with the "make-it-new" protocols of modernism, only when its deadening familiarity is rendered newly strange.[34] But scrutinize everyday life more carefully, as Felski invites us to do, and its temporality is soon revealed as in itself "internally complex, combining repetition and linearity, recurrence and forward movements."[35] In this manner, Felski's essay makes a case for why some distance from

our tenets about defamiliarization as aesthetic achievement might be a good idea for us, why we might want to be warier of identifying its interruptions with a radical politics, and why we might wish to acknowledge more readily that there are circumstances under which the upkeep of the familiar ranks as aesthetic and ethical achievement also. Felski's argument can likewise help us get some needed distance from that familiar, mistrustful account of genre that understands it only as prescription and constraint on textual energy and that, conversely, casts the essence of literariness as a singularity that is either betrayed by convention or itself annuls it.[36]

Maybe because we tend to conceptualize repetition in terms inflected by the legacy of Freud, so that for us repetition implies self-defeating patterns of being and thinking, repression, or neurosis, and maybe because we have internalized the Romantic poets' announced preferences for the spontaneous over the habituated and automated, we often gravitate in our discussions of the culture of the novel toward derisive eighteenth-century accounts of novel reading as addiction, in which readers move back and forth on autopilot from sofa to circulating library, "impelled [it was said] by the demand for the same adventures, the same language, and the same sentiments."[37] It comes fairly naturally to us, too, for similar reasons, to discern in Walter and Toby Shandy symptoms of an inherited obsessive compulsive order. It comes rather less naturally to us, by contrast, to acknowledge that, as an Anglican minister, Sterne would be

predisposed to think about the staying power of Tristram's "book for a parlour-indow" in conjunction with the ritual reiterations that compose the liturgical calendar. And yet *Tristram Shandy* alludes throughout to the steady reappearances over time of the church's "familiar collects and canticles, Sunday by Sunday, and year by year," and through those allusions it develops yet another way to project the contours of its own scene of reception.[38] We are told of Walter Shandy's favorite book, his endlessly rereadable Slawkenbergius, that "twas for ever in his hands … at *matin*, noon, and vespers was *Hafen Slawkenbergius* his recreation and delight" (III, xlii, 188) (1.285). Throughout Tristram describes his father as a creature of habit and as a sort of reading machine, but the terms he deploys in this passage are especially interesting for how they underscore a point recently made by historians of automata—that "the birth of the machine" occurred "in the Age of Faith."[39]

Our ingrained tendency is to link the novel with the progressive time frame of modernity, while linking repetition and literary genres in which repetition is a conspicuous feature with conservative premodernity.[40] Samuel Johnson's 1755 definition of "novelist" in his *Dictionary*—"an Innovator, asserter of novelty"—predisposes scholars of eighteenth-century fiction especially to emphasize novelty over familiarity and perenniality. This orientation to the endlessly new—the news of the day—is an aspect of the novel we often play up when we make our arguments for the defining modernity of the form. But novel studie's preoccupation with *novelty* might slight the form's special

relation to duration and temporal flow. It might slight the particular affective ecology that the novel sponsors as a form that is defined in some measure by its length and by the fact that this length obliges its readers to make a habit of it. By the same token, our tendency to predicate our understanding of this form on linear reading might slight the pleasures of repetition—especially powerful for an age that had not yet learned to think of not repeating oneself as a sign of mastery, and abler than later generations would be to countenance, instead, the position holding that some patterns are worth repeating.

We like, as I have said, to start the clock for modern times with the novel and to believe that the novel keeps modern time. But it may be bracing to mull over the possibility that, paraphrasing Bruno Latour, where novel reading at least is concerned, we may never have been modern. At least not entirely. Perhaps, with more precision, I should say that in supplying us, through their elongations, with the stuff of secularized liturgies, bedtime routines, and healthy habits ("a course"), novels have supplied us with the wherewithal to be archaically modern, as well as with the wherewithal to experience time, as moderns are meant to, as future-oriented and goal-directed.

Reader as Repeater

To explicate this account of novel time very briefly, I return to the clock on whose behalf Mrs. Shandy speaks in the opening pages of Tristram's book and which, as J. Paul Hunter notes, momentarily threatens to oust poor proto-Tristram as his parents', and his book's, center of attention.[41] Following that, I shall turn, in concluding, to some other sorts of eighteenth-century machines. That clocks run down is something that, thanks to Mrs. Shandy's inaugural interruption of Walter's usual household routines, Sterne's audience is disinclined to forget. But it bears spelling out explicitly that Sterne's original readers were primed, as we are not, to call those timepieces *repeaters*. As Frank Kermode proposed in *The Sense of an Ending*, the clock that says, "*Tick-tock*," might, as it swings from the sound for a beginning to the sound for an end, be seen as articulating the minimum conditions for a narrative. But, as Stuart Sherman demonstrated when he carefully revisited Kermode's story of clocks and culture, what English people up to the mid-nineteenth century heard their clocks saying was "*Tick Tick Tick*."[42] Novels also belong to a moment inclined to hear its clocks as propounding sameness rather than difference, and eternal resumings rather than endings, and inclined, accordingly, to apprehend time as a uniform field rather than as chronological sequence.

As for the healthiness of the novel habit and how it might keep human machines "a-going" apace with their book machines: in an article on Sterne's strategic digressions and resistance to closure, Carol Houlihan Flynn reminds us that the century that witnessed the rise of the novel also suggested that, to promote what was called the "oscillation of the organs," sedentary invalids should betake themselves to exercise machines called "chamber horses." That century imagined that repetitive swinging on swings might be (as one James Carmichael Smyth put it in 1787) "a remedy in the pulmonary consumption and hectic fever":[43] it was an era, then, especially well positioned to value how engagements with fiction give readers a way to be in motion, a way to be moved ad infinitum, and yet also especially predisposed to dissociate such motion from any particular destination or narrative telos. Chamber horses, unlike real ones, do not arrive anywhere. In similar fashion, recurrent cycles of rereading, Shandean lifetime reading plans, might be things that we readers implement so as wishfully to render our novels nothing but ongoing middle.

THE END

Form and Informality: An Unliterary Look at World Literature

JOSEPH R. SLAUGHTER

[Intro]

About the Author

The General Conference of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, meeting in Paris from October 12 to November 14, 1970, at its sixteenth session, ...

Considering *that the interchange of cultural property among nations for scientific, cultural and educational purposes increases the knowledge of the civilization of Man, enriches the cultural life of all peoples and inspires mutual respect and appreciation among nations, ...*

Considering *that it is incumbent upon every State to protect the cultural property existing within its territory against the dangers of theft, clandestine excavation, and illicit export, ...*

Adopts *this Convention ...*

—Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property

If Elvis Presley (1935–77) were alive today, he would just be in the way. He might, for instance, object to the crass commercial use of his name or his likeness on holiday greeting cards, children's activity books, or checkbook covers; on the other hand, he might want part of the action in Elvis-themed recipe books, temporary tattoos, or commemorative stamp sheets (those not issued by the

US Postal Service). In any case, the contradictions and appetites of a living Elvis Presley would surely jeopardize the simplified image of Elvis that has come to sustain an entertainment empire: the "sanitized, drug-free, fat-free, all-white Elvis" that is owned and operated by Elvis Presley Enterprises, Inc.[1] This is a relatively uncomplicated Elvis, one whose plainness is reflected in the formal simplicity of the trademark as described in the multiple applications that cover certain uses of the name Elvis Presley and its shortest form, just plain "Elvis": "The mark consists of standard characters without claim to any particular font, style, size, or color" (Fig. 12). In other words, trademark Elvis (unlike the performer himself) is a generic Elvis—an "Elvis" of whatever species, style, size, or color. At this point, it is in the company's interest that Elvis the individual be dead; perhaps this is why the "Elvis sightings" section of the corporation's official website (Elvis.com) consists not of fan stories about seeing the spectre of Elvis but of contributions recounting mundane encounters with *things* Elvis—banal stories of fans having seen someone wearing a Graceland T-shirt at an international airport, or having heard, of all uncanny things, a Muzak™ version of "Heartbreak Hotel" playing in a hotel elevator.[2] Elvis Presley Enterprises needs Elvis Aaron Presley out of the way, which may be one reason why the company's numerous trademark registrations since the 1980s repeatedly insist that "the name in the mark does not identify a particular living individual" (Fig. 13). This is not a mere legal formality; here, the trademark registration itself serves as a kind of death certificate for the

particular man, even as it secures his (generic) afterlife in the lucrative realm of intellectual property: the king is dead, the mark mutters *sotto voce*; long live "The King"!

Figure 12:

Trademark application for use of "Elvis Presley" on printed materials.

View Asset

Figure 13:

Trademark application for use of "Elvis" on various consumer goods.

View Asset

Elvis lives (on) in multiple forms of intellectual property that coordinate the institutional memory of the man; he is the designated author and performer of record for numerous songs and films; elements of his official personality—including his image, "singing style, vocal characteristics, ... performance style, and

mannerisms"[3]—are reserved for exclusive commercial exploitation by Elvis Enterprises under the Personal Rights Protection Act of 1984, which was passed with the intellectual property of Elvis especially in mind—or, rather, with the especial intent to protect the eponymous corporation's economic interests in the potential intellectual assets of posthumous Elvis;[4] his name, associated epithets, and titles are the subjects of numerous service- and trade-marks. The commodification and consolidation of an official Elvis (Elvis™) involved other sorts of intellectual land grabs. After Elvis left the buildings at Graceland for the last time, Elvis Enterprises enclosed an intellectual estate *called* "Graceland," cleaning up some of the tacky residue left on the property from the man's playfully vulgar tastes. (Fig. 14) Elvis, Inc. is famous for its vigilant and vigorous legal (and extralegal) defenses of its intellectual properties, which is probably why the title on the cover of Nigerian writer Chris Abani's 2004 novel, *GraceLand*, in no way resembles any of the drawings registered with the US Patent and Trademark Office. (Fig. 15) (The Intellectual Property (IP) story of Elvis is here prologue to Abani's *GraceLand*—the story of a young Igbo man trying to make his way in the cruel world as an Elvis impersonator—which is the primary literary subject of this essay and to which I turn in a moment; however, it is worth noting now that the Graceland imagined by the Nigerian characters in Abani's novel is actually the campy Graceland Wedding Chapel in Las Vegas, as pictured on a cheap tourist postcard.)

Figure 14:

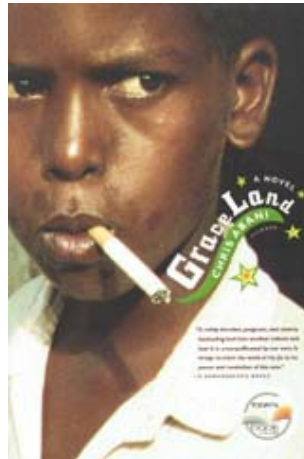Trademark application for use of "Graceland" on printed matter.

View Asset

Figure 15:

Cover of Chris Abani, *GraceLand* (New York: Picador, 2004).

View Asset

Trademarks are one of the apparent trademarks of postmodern and postcolonial novels; they may be all that's left to us of the mystical aura of authenticity in the age of information and digital reproduction. They are institutional guarantors of purity, authority, fidelity, and integrity. As indicators of commercial coherence, they assume some of the classical author functions identified by Michel

Foucault, attempting to arrest the mad proliferation of meaning and cheap knockoffs by promising to the consumer (again and again) "a constant level of value ... a field of conceptual or theoretical coherence, ... a stylistic unity."[5] Indeed, trademarks (certainly more than copyrights, which have limited shelf lives) have the potential to fulfill the romantic fantasy of immortality through authorship. The life of a trademark is perpetual; as long as it remains in active use, it never dies—it is the potentially eternal property of legal persons who may themselves never die. The death of the author, on the other hand, generally starts the clock on the expiration of his or her copyrights. (The personification of intellectual property and its corporate owners extends to the patent and trademark archives;[6] "live" and "dead," for example, are the terms of art used by the trademark registry to characterize the active or abandoned status of commercial marks.) Trademarks, copyrights, franchise licenses, image monopolies—these are the official intellectual property forms in which Elvis still lives.

Properties of World Literature

There is, of course, an entire world outside the (legal) purview of the official Elvis industry, where "Elvis impersonators and fans create an ever-evolving Elvis folklore," as Rosemary Coombe notes; where "others author Elvis and forge their own norms of propriety about the use of his image."[7] This popular realm of "Elvis folklore"—where unlicensed images and unfranchised memories of Elvis are created, re-created, and circulated—exists alongside the regulated realm of official "Elvis Culture," with which, of course, it interacts and intersects at various interfaces. The informal realm in which Elvis still rocks and rolls as part of the "collective cultural heritage" (in Coombe's terms)[8] is not entirely lawless, despite the fact that alarmist analysts of international affairs have recently taken to lumping together intellectual property piracy, illicit economic activities, "organized crime, and terrorist networks" as similar fundamental threats to the private property foundations of our economic, social, and intellectual security.[9] Like all informal sectors of an economy (or society), the realm of "Elvis folklore" has its own codes of good behavior, although the flexible nature of its existence, expanse, and operation is largely pegged to the range and reach of the formal sector of the Elvis monopoly, with which illicit Elvis folk culture has both antagonistic and symbiotic engagements—both sectors profit from and are limited by the other. Despite their best efforts to police an Elvis monoculture,

Elvis Enterprises cannot disrupt all derivative uses of Elvis. In fact, their ability to control the forms of Elvis folklore is expressly limited by (among other things) the parody, pastiche, and caricature exception to intellectual property protection; this is a species of the fair-use exemptions that makes space for free speech by maintaining that parody—although derivative of another work—does not infringe on the original artist's rights. In the case of Elvis Presley, this space of free speech has been prolifically populated by impersonators and other minor Elvises, creating what we might view as a kind of informal global Elvis-scape (to deploy Arjun Appadurai's famous suffix for describing cultural flows).

I have many reasons for opening my essay with this strange (and perhaps seemingly banal) synopsis of the creation and protection of official Elvis, most of which will become apparent over the course of the argument, as the themes and issues raised by the transubstantiation of Elvis into intellectual property recur in the context of *GraceLand*. The story of the legal consolidation of IP Elvis is an exemplum of what has been called the second enclosure movement—a process that accelerated at the international level in the 1980s, when the erosion of the industrial manufacturing base in the advanced Western economies sent governments (particularly the United States during the Reagan administration) "casting about for a politically painless way to address the growing trade deficit" between East and West.[10] The weight of this massive shift from "physical capital" to "cultural capital" as a basis of

national wealth (a shift that inaugurated the information age and the global economy of the new world order) is reflected in the institutional transfer of international intellectual property issues from the backwaters of the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) onto the frenetic frontlines in the Uruguay Round of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) negotiations (1986–94) at the World Trade Organization, where literary (and other traditionally "cultural") matters were integrated with questions of commerce and security in the Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (commonly known by the acronym TRIPS).[11] From a certain slant, the TRIPS agreement was part of an effort of the intellectual property-rich countries of the North to reorganize the global economy and consolidate their own trade-related advantage by inventing and securing new streams of revenue. As many commentators have recognized, the effect of this dramatic shift in the basis and form of economic power and prosperity has, not surprisingly, "concentrated intellectual property-based wealth in the first world and maintained a neocolonial imbalance in the international flow of intellectual property."[12] Indeed, in terms of patents (for which there seems to be the best accounting), the United Nations Development Programme reported in 1999 that 97 percent of the world's intellectual property is held by the industrialized countries in the North; 80 percent of the patents registered in the Global South are held by alien residents of industrialized countries, which leaves a total of just .6 percent in the hands of developing nations.

[13] Copyright riches are less calculable and the assessment metrics are less reliable, but similar imbalances in copyright holding seem to follow the patent pattern.[14] It seems clear to me that this kind of lopsidedness is a problem for world literature; what is less clear to me is how to talk about this problem, since the common terms and metaphors used to describe and theorize what Pascale Casanova calls (quite problematically) "the unequal distribution of literary resources" are themselves part of the problem.[15] To sketch and organize the world (or the World Republic of Letters) in terms of IP ownership is already to marginalize those who, by the very definition of the terms, are without intellectual property, just as genre-based mapping of "world literary space" overlooks the literary presence of those who, again by definition of the terms, do not produce a recognizable species of a particular genre; or, even more damningly, it banishes them to another world altogether—a sad world (almost) without literature and, for that matter, without republics.

"Take a form, follow it from space to space, and study the reasons for its transformations"—"This is what comparative literature could be," writes Franco Moretti, "if it took itself seriously as *world literature*, on the one hand, and as *comparative morphology*, on the other."[16] Follow the forms, Moretti argues, and we will discover what he calls "a law of literary evolution": namely, "in cultures that belong to the periphery of the literary system … the modern novel first arises … as a compromise between a western formal influence

(usually French or English) and local materials"—between, that is, "foreign form" and "local reality," or what trademark applications might characterize as local "font, style, size, or color."[17] Original (literary) forms, it seems, at least when it comes to the novel, are born in the West, from where they migrate and mutate as they enter what Casanova remarkably refers to variously as "literarily deprived territories," "literarily least endowed countries," "literarily disinherited countr[ies]," "literarily impoverished spaces," and "literary province[s]."[18] The analytical models of both Moretti and Casanova divide world literary space between those who bring newness into the world and those who recycle old ideas, between "those who, in a strict sense, make literature" and those who don't—between, that is, those who innovate and those who imitate. Both critics acknowledge, at least rhetorically, the "huge power of being able to say what is literary and what is not" that is monopolized by a cosmopolitan "aristocracy" in the literary "centers" of the world of letters;[19] however, that cosmopolitan aristocracy begins to look more like an old colonial-style metropolitan plutocracy when we recognize that the power to say what is literary is also the power to say what is intellectual property and what is not.[20] Indeed, if my earlier account of the global imbalance in intellectual property sounded like a description of the condition (or welfare) of the novel in the World Republic of Letters, that's because there is not only a relationship between literary forms and genres of intellectual property but also an overlap in world-literary and world-intellectual-property space.[21] IP

restrictions, relaxations, and considerations are part of the (normative) framework within which cultural production, exchange, and consumption take place; they form, as Paul Saint-Amour has convincingly demonstrated, "part of the context" within which modern writers create modern literature. Although the logic and regulation of intellectual property crosscut and conjoin the political, economic, and literary realms, we in world literary studies have largely ignored (at least compared to the natural sciences, where the stakes apparently seem higher) the implications of this latest transformation in the national and international contexts of creative activity and accumulation.

Intellectual enclosure proceeds by converting intangibles into commodities, organizing abstractions into what legal scholars refer to as genres of property.[22] Our contemporary IP regimes reward paperwork—I mean that in both the figurative and bureaucratic senses: ideas become property when they are fixed in some kind of semipermanent form and when they are registered with a state agency. The contemporary project of capturing knowledge and classifying cultural production in an organized system of property almost rivals in scope Linnaeus's taxonomical efforts to classify all known forms of life in the eighteenth century. Modern literature isn't produced solely in the context of copyright regimes; it interfaces in all sorts of ways with the seemingly nonliterary intellectual property regimes (patents, trademarks, cultural heritage rights, and traditional knowledge protections). It is worth thinking about the constraints and catalyzing effects that these

particular forms of intellectual property regulation have (and have had) on the historical development and dissemination of (particular) literary genres and traditions. I am especially interested in how these regimes have inflected the development of the African novel and its (marginalized) place in World Literature across the span of the last two and a half centuries. What happens to the dominant (property) models of literary creation and the dominant models of world literary systems when we pay attention to illicit trafficking in textual goods outside the more official (that is, formally regulated) routes of economic and cultural globalization? What wrinkles and ruptures are revealed in world literary space when we consider the nonmetaphorical "international literary law"[23] that is already on the books in the form of trade-related international intellectual property agreements? What happens to our diffusionist and evolutionary schemes of cultural influence (and imposition) when we recognize the work of informal sectors in the formation and circulation (in, that is, the worlding) of the modern novel as the predominant form of literary expression in the world today? What modifications might we need to make to our ideas about the development and conventionalization of the norms and forms of the novel genre when we consider the many ways it is regulated under IP law? Unraveling some of the deep intertextual entanglements of Chris Abani's *GraceLand* will suggest some possible answers to these questions.

Under-World Literature: An Elvis of Another Style, Size, and Color

GraceLand's protagonist is a young Nigerian Elvis impersonator, whose given name, Elvis Oke (a tribute by his mother to the King of Rock and Roll), already anticipates the many inversions and improvisations of identity that mimicry entails. Like so many African novels, *GraceLand* is a cross between what most readers within the jurisdictions of the "intellectual and cultural capital[s]" of world literature would recognize as the picaresque and bildungsroman genres.[24] A bourgeois fascination with illicit behaviors has meant that the novel has historically shown a general thematic interest in the informal sectors of the underworld and demimonde, and Abani's novel takes its readers where such genres like to go: into the under-markets of Nigerian society, the dark sides of international trade, and the back alleys of global networks.[25] Set in the eras of the Oil Boom and bust of the 1970s and the IMF-sponsored Structural Adjustment Programs of the 1980s, the novel moves back and forth in time and space between the middle-class neighborhoods of small-town Nigeria (1970s) and the big-city slums (1980s), between the clean classrooms of formal schooling and the dirty lessons of the streets. Impoverished by the corrupt economics and politics of military rule, and after the death of his mother, Elvis's family moves to the "informal settlements" outside Lagos, where he is forced to practice "the tactics of informal survivalism" among the area boys who take part in the illicit transnational trade in human body parts, cocaine trafficking,

smuggling of porn films, and prostitution rings.[26] The plot involves multiple forms of informal economic activity, including the more apparently benign networks of circulation and duplication of Hollywood and Bollywood films, minor mail fraud, unlicensed touring musicians, and transient secondhand book stalls. The themes of formal and informal commerce are repeated in the form of Abani's novel itself, in its intertextual engagements and the ways that other people's literary goods circulate through the text.

Abani introduces his young Nigerian mimic as he prepares to perform for an audience of uninterested tourists—an African Elvis under Western eyes:

[Elvis] ducked into a stall and shed his street clothes. He slipped into the white shirt and trousers, pulled on the socks and canvas shoes, and jammed the wig down on his head …. He hoped he looked fine. He rummaged in his bag for his can of sparkle spray …. He shook the can angrily …. There was a tired hiss of air, but no sparkle. With a defeated sigh, he turned to the small tin of talcum powder stuck in one of the pockets of his bag. He shook out a handful and applied a thick layer …. He was dissatisfied; this was not how white people looked. If only he could use makeup, … but makeup was a dangerous option, as he could be mistaken for one of the cross-dressing prostitutes that hung around the beach.

… he walked over to the foreigners, unable to tell the tourists from the expatriates and embassy staff …. "Welcome to Lagos, Nigeria," Elvis said.

… He cleared his throat, counted off "One, two, three," then began to sing "Hound Dog" off-key. At the same time, he launched into his dance routine.

It built up slowly, one leg sort of snapping at the knee, then the pelvic thrust, the arm dangling at his side becoming animated, forefinger and thumb snapping out the time …. he launched into the rest of his routine ….

"What d'ya think he's doing?" the gargantuan-bellied man asked, turning to the father prone in the sand.

"I don't know."

"Does he work for the hotel?"

"I don't know."

"So what d'ya think he wants?"

"I think he's doing an Elvis impersonation," the harried woman said.

"He doesn't look like any Elvis I know. Besides, ain't that wig on back to front? Do you think he speaks English?"

"Don't they all?"

"Hey, son, what do you want?"

Elvis stopped.

"Money," he replied.[27]

Here is an Elvis probably not anticipated even by the breadth of the trademark claims. Clearly the beachgoers (Americans, we are led to believe) are unimpressed by Elvis's sad impersonation and his shabby aspect; their distaste for his performance seems to have less to do with some still-menacing Conradian fear of a "remote kinship" with this uncanny copy of an almost-Elvis and more to do with getting on with the good business of third-world tourism. The setting is rather generic; it could be almost any beach, on any old colonial coast, where "they all" speak English, without the burden of imperial history. The tourists bask on the secured beaches outside the Hilton Hotel by day, likely returning by

evening to sample the local style and color: enjoying traditional Nigerian dancers, in traditional dress, while eating traditional dishes from the buffet, amid the traditional decor in the hotel lounge. A pathetic copy of an American original has little appeal when there is so much of this "real" Nigeria to take in.

Over the course of the novel, Elvis attempts to improve his imitation and to perfect the King's trademark pelvic thrust by studying a curious combination of Hollywood musicals, Bollywood Bhangra, and a Nigerian troupe he once saw dancing to "Hound Dog." To appreciate the qualities of Elvis's imitation on the beach, one would want to be familiar not only with Elvis Presley routines but also with the transnational traditions of Elvis impersonation across the global Elvis-scape as well as with various local (Nigerian, Igbo, or Lagosian) modes of performance. The scenario might put one in mind of the foreign form/local content dialectic that Moretti borrowed from Fredric Jameson and amplified to make it the primary mechanism of generic diffusion and evolution in his conjectures on world literature, or we might read the scene as a national allegory of the subordinated place of the Nigerian intellectual (or cultural worker) in the World Republic of Letters, where African writing has often been dismissed as secondhand, fourth-rate, third-world copies of firsthand, first-rate, first-world "originals." However, such readings would oversimplify the context and contingencies of the event, even if this sort of literary dependency model seems to be supported by the material and social constraints of Elvis's impersonation and his own sense of

inadequacy as an Elvis impersonator. By himself, in a room he calls his own, he expertly applies the white stage makeup that he cannot wear in public, for fear of being assaulted by the police and other louts: "Elvis has entered the building, he thought, as he admired himself. This was the closest he had come so far to looking like the real Elvis, and he wished he had a camera …. What if he had been born white, or even just American? Would his life be any different? Stupid, he thought. If Redemption [his running buddy] knew about this, he would say Elvis was suffering from colonial mentality. He smiled …. I look like a hairless panda, he thought."[28]

Elvis Presley or a hairless panda, or both—mimicry here is not a frustrated "desire for acculturation" or an always imperfect effort at identitarian imitation; rather, it is, as Ashley Dawson has argued, a strategic mode of "informal labour" spurred by "the hope of economic self-sufficiency."[29] Elvis Oke's song and dance is not simply a parody of Elvis Presley; whatever his intent in that direction, it is, in the impersonator's own deflated estimation, a travesty of Elvis impersonation. Elvis Oke's lament is that he doesn't look like a legitimate, income-earning Elvis impersonator. His is an impersonation of an impersonation (or of Elvis impersonations generically); the form being copied (if copying is the right word) is a form of copying—the appropriation of a particular form of appropriation, or mode of reproduction. (I return to this formulation below to discuss the genre of the novel more generally.)

Like Elvis's Elvis impersonation, Lagos is a chaotic jumble of contrasts and contradictions—in other words, a thoroughly contemporary cosmopolitan city that incorporates street children, slums, and dilapidated buses (only Nigerian "magic" keeps the things "from falling apart," Abani's narrator quips, echoing his fellow-Nigerian and fellow-Igbo writer Chinua Achebe's recycling of W. B. Yeats's premonition in "The Second Coming" of a "centre [that] cannot hold," which itself echoes John Donne's "'Tis all in peeces, all cohaerence gone").[30] These sit alongside "sprawling Spanish-style haciendas," "elegant Frank Lloyd Wright-styled buildings," and brand-name foreign luxury cars; "Name it," the narrator says, "and Lagos had a copy of it, earning it the nickname 'One Copy.'"[31] This appellation might seem to confirm the common colonialist charge that the culture of the imperial center repeats itself in the colonial province as farce, or, as Casanova characterizes James Joyce's assessment of the condition of Irish literature, that it produced nothing "other than a deformed copy of originals."[32] The novel seems to parody the colonial mentality (of both the colonized and colonizer) that cannot see postcolonial societies as anything other than "the imperfect imitators of imported forms,"[33] because "One Copy" is not a bad epithet for the stylized, postcard Las Vegas that inspires Elvis's American dream—a four-paneled memento that features, in its third and fourth squares, photos of an Elvis impersonator and the Graceland chapel.[34] Elvis and the Americans on the Lagos beach each have a tourist's slanted view of the other. The America that Elvis Oke

imagines (and one that he refracts back to the American tourists) is not a land of opportunity that rewards ingenuity and originality (the self-made man who invents the better mousetrap); rather, it is a land of glamorous frauds and sparkling reproductions, where improvisation and parody might be the rule, not the exception. Elvis Oke's America welcomes Elvis impersonators from everywhere and equally, "without any considerations for the individual's economic status, family pedigree, or social connections"[35]—without, that is, prejudice against the individual's style, size, or color. At the end of the novel, Elvis flies off to the United States in disguise, not, however, as an Elvis impersonator but with the borrowed passport of his friend and coconspirator, Redemption.

The Inferior Narrative Position in World Literature

I've mentioned the parody exception in IP law and the liberal free-speech logic that relaxes the standard of originality ordinarily required of intellectual property to permit parodic play and critique. There is a less idealistic explanation of the parody exemption that has to do with the mysterious fourth square in the grid that presents the "four [classical] classes of imitation" in the "Aristotelian genre system" as Gérard Genette has diagrammed it in *The Architext*: "The superior-dramatic defines tragedy; the superior-narrative defines epic; the inferior-dramatic corresponds to comedy, the inferior-narrative corresponds to a genre that is less clear-cut—one that Aristotle leaves unnamed and illustrates sometimes by the 'parodies.' … This slot, therefore, is obviously the one for comic narration."[36] (Fig. 16) If none of the texts cited by Aristotle as examples of parody survive, and, therefore, "we are reduced to conjectures as to what seems to constitute" the genre, we nonetheless recognize that, "in principle or in structure," parody is dependent on the genres around it—that it is functionally and structurally determined (and determinable) by its relative position within a conveniently symmetrical system.[37] The legal exception for parody is similarly ambiguous about what constitutes the genre, but the law also recognizes that parody is dependent upon its relation to the object it imitates. Parody is derivative, but derivative in such a deeply essential (or politically important) way that, abiding by "the laws of genre" (that's statutory

language, not Derrida's), an exception is made to the usual requirements of novelty and autonomy that ordinarily qualify intellectual property for protection. In other words, parody may effect an "ironic inversion" of another text, but such "transgression" is sanctioned by law and literature, "authorized," as Linda Hutcheon writes, "by the very norms it seeks to subvert," by its constitutional subordination to its enabling literary or cultural object.[38]

MODE / OBJECT	Dramatic	Narrative *narratif*
Superior	tragedy	epic
Inferior	comedy	parody

Figure 16:

Genette's diagram of the Aristotelian genre system in *The Architext: An Introduction*

(Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 14.

View Asset

The logic of dependency and subordination that characterizes the genre of parody has an interesting analogue at the level of international intellectual property relations in what is referred to as the "developing nations exception" in TRIPS. That limited exception permits the temporary suspension of the usual derivative rights that an intellectual property owner has to control translation and reproduction while a developing (or "least-

developed") country builds a local IP economy and modernizes its national IP infrastructure and jurisprudence to comply with international norms. What this means, in theory, is that especially for the purposes of "teaching, scholarship, and research" (as TRIPS says) relaxed standards for copying, translation, and technology transfers should encourage the proliferation of knowledge and reduce the intellectual and cultural barriers to the "mutual respect and appreciation among nations" (in the idealistic words of UNESCO's Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property).[39] In principle, the developing nations exception (a kind of third-world fair-use exemption) works to the short-term advantage of a developing nation by encouraging the free circulation of otherwise scarce intellectual resources, but it also tends to work to the long-term advantage of developed nations by introducing subsidized copies of "foreign" knowledge that can stem local competition and establish the seeds of a monoculture.[40] We quickly recognize this operation for what it is in other areas of intellectual property globalization—for example, the granting of patents on indigenous knowledge to large agrochemical corporations effectively reduces biodiversity in many parts of the world, and monopolies of industrial knowledge can bring IP compliance pressure to bear in such a way that standardization of technology (parity) becomes an effective instrument of enforced parody.[41]

Under our current abstract models of world literature, or literary

globalization, or comparative morphology (at least under the most visible and influential ones), we have no real way to talk about (the force of) such things, and we have not begun to consider the real implications or impact of things like the developing nations exception on the shape of "world literary space," the survival of the "fittest" genres, cosmopolitan canon formation, or the establishment and expansion of commercial literary monocultures with the encroachment on and procurement of once-remote literary markets. In any case, the parody and developing nations exceptions to IP rights seem to me to be two manifestations of the same deterministic assumption that underpins most of our theoretical models of literary diffusion and domination: that because two things share features, one must necessarily be derivative of the other; in other words, that resemblance implies dependence. The (bare) existence of one thing is understood to depend so completely upon the better existence of another that the relationship of formal dependence itself merits not only documentation in literary history but also formalization in the law. This is parodic logic—the logic of parody. However, I'm not suggesting that parody is actually the mode or mechanism of intellectual globalization, cultural dissemination, and development (there is some truth there, although it gets overstated in the world-systems models of literary space); rather, I'm arguing that the systems of intellectual property and trade law that are engineered to organize property relations and to orchestrate the distribution (or accumulation) of intellectual wealth abide by a generic logic that has been literary for a very long time.

Let me be a bit more explicit and specific. The logic of dependence and derivation found in the law and in Moretti's and Casanova's models of world literary systems is familiar to any student of postcolonialism. Moretti and Casanova seem to have rediscovered mimesis as the primary device of cultural development and diffusion that has been so often identified as an engine of world cultural mechanics, whether we go back to the late nineteenth-century *Kulturkreis* school of anthropogeography that challenged the strict stagist models of cultural evolution or back to the late twentieth-century theories of hybridity and mimicry that sought to undercut simplistic ideas about ethnic authenticity and assimilation.[42] In a sense, these models take us back to the early days of postcolonial studies, in their systematization of an "empire-writes-back" paradigm of literary production that once read (post)colonial literature as largely responsive to (if also subversive of) metropolitan literature; that model probably illuminates the work of cosmopolitan writers like Salman Rushdie (who coined the term), J. M. Coetzee, V. S. Naipaul, and others granted entry into the cosmo-canon of world literature. However, the authors of the postcolonial studies classic *The Empire Writes Back* (1989) essentially imagined a parodic relationship between the (cultural production of the) outposts of "Empire" and its center, rather than between a generalized "periphery" and an aesthetic "capital."[43] A trio of young Nigerian literary scholars calling themselves *Bolekaja* critics—or "Come down let's fight"—already challenged this approach to postcolonial cultural studies in their polemic *Toward*

the Decolonization of African Literature (1980), where they condemned "the preoccupation of eurocentric critics with meticulously documenting the European pedigree of African novels …. [and] spending an inordinate amount of time and effort insisting that a work by an African is patterned on some novel or other by Conrad, Dostoevsky, or Kafka."[44] Postcolonial studies largely dispensed with this sort of dependency theory and analysis some time ago. Nonetheless, afflicted by some kind of obsessive-compulsive disorder, our discipline ressurects these hierarchical (and ethnocentric) models of cultural formation and transformation to plat again world literary space in terms of powerful, ostensibly "autonomous" centers and weak, reportedly dependent (and parodic) peripheries—which suggests to me that there is a kind of (post)imperial anxiety of a lack of influence at work in much literary criticism. A conceptual map of this space might look something like the Aristotelian box of mimetic genres, with the third world in the fourth square—the "inferior narrative" position. (Fig. 17)

MODE / OBJECT	Dramatic	Narrative *narratif*
Superior	tragedy	epic
Inferior	comedy	Third World Literature

Figure 17:

Overlay of the World Republic of Letters on Genette's quadrant.

Moretti and Casanova have both been criticized for their ambitious models, and I don't mean to repeat those here, but I do want to reconsider their frameworks from an intellectual property perspective, where literary goods are most fungible and ideas are most liquid. In Immanuel Wallerstein's world-systems theory, the core/periphery model of economic relations and resource extraction explain a certain mode of wealth production and accumulation that defined the era of high industrial imperialism, in which the (so-called) fringes of formal empire supplied raw materials to an industrial center where they were converted into consumer goods and, in many cases, sold back to the periphery in order to capture the surplus value; in other words, everything was arranged to the greedy advantage of the center, which acted as a sort of middleman in the system and was itself, in very real ways, dependent upon its peripheries. The center-periphery models revived by both Casanova and Moretti are less precise and more unstable than Wallerstein's analytic, even in their own terms: at times, they seem economical, ecological, or political; at others, purely metaphorical. The explanatory power of these models for world literature is limited because they assume (excuse the term) a center-centric position that imagines itself as a survey of the global literary landscape from the heights of the land(s) of original forms. Indeed, most models of world literature seem to assume that world literature anywhere looks like world literature everywhere; that world literature as seen from Paris or London or New York (or

even Lower Slaughter) is the same as that seen from Lagos or Lima or Lhasa or Lamu. What both Casanova and Moretti know (but then seem to forget as they elaborate their schemes) is that the core defines the norms and forms that make it the core; it defines itself as center, defines its periphery as that which necessarily but incorrectly copies it, and then denigrates it for doing so.[45] We should remember, here at the center, that the core is the core not because it is the *source* of things, but because it is a *collection* of things. Like the novel genre itself (which, not incidentally, sits at the generic center of most of these models), the center absorbs everything; it (again like the novel) treats everywhere else and everything else as raw materials to be extracted, exploited, accumulated, and privatized. Through its powers of attraction and compulsion, the center centers itself, and we should never lose sight of the verb form of "center" that hides behind the noun, in the same way that the action of the verb "to world" is obscured by the apparent nounness of "the world."[46] Like the world (in world literature and elsewhere), the center is never simply a given or merely an object; it is the effect of a certain way of seeing and speaking, of gathering and analyzing data. "World Literature" in one time and place never fully overlaps with world literature in other times and places; indeed, the category is plural, not singular: world literatures. One of the problems with appropriating the economic core/periphery description of international relations and globalization as a *metaphoric* model for contemporary world literature is that the abstraction too quickly obscures the real

property relations that support it—forgetting that intellectual capital is never merely cultural or symbolic and that distance from power is never simply "aesthetic."[47]

Between Owning and Knowing

Like tourists on a Nigerian beach, these models tend not to take the "provinces" or impersonators seriously. At their most reductive, they reinscribe an old anthropological division of the globe (found already, and parodically perhaps, in Montaigne's "On Cannibals"): the separation of peoples (or cultures) who own and produce property from peoples who don't, a separation that the *Human Development Report* I cited earlier refers to bluntly as "the global gap between haves and have-nots, between know[s] and know-nots."[48] The slippage here between owning and knowing is telling; it inverts the force and implication of the equation between property and knowledge formulated in the preamble to the TRIPS agreement, even as it reasserts that logic: "intellectual property rights are private rights." In IP terms, this world is split between those who produce and those who reproduce: the intellectually propertied peoples of the Global North and the intellectually propertyless peoples of the Global South. Such mapping of the intellectual property terrain might seem simply to reflect the facts on the ground (the property imbalances I've cited), but when we follow the circulation of language and ideas to the points where they get fixed in recognizable (or, more accurately, recognized) property forms (or genres)—when original ownership claims are made for them—we get a somewhat different view of a world

literary system, one in which the gristly roots of ideas and forms of expression seem to ignore or violate most conventional property lines.

The law distinguishes among many genres of intellectual property, but I want to take a closer look at the broadest categorical distinction that international law recognizes: the division between intellectual and cultural property. Regulation of these two genres of created property are institutionally divided between the Berne Convention for the Protection of Literary and Artistic Works and UNESCO's Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property (1970). The Berne Convention deals with our kinds of IP, defining "literary and artistic works" expansively in article 2.1 as "every production in the literary, scientific and artistic domain, whatever may be the mode or form of its expression, such as books, pamphlets and other writings ..." (the list goes on). By contrast, "cultural property" in the UNESCO Convention is characterized as the collective "heritage" of a people—"the basic elements of civilization and national culture" (culture is resolutely national in this document)—and it urges states to protect this property, which includes, among its more nebulous categories of heritage, literary artifacts in article 1(h): "rare manuscripts and incunabula, old books, documents and publications of special interest (historical, artistic, scientific, literary, etc.) ...." In the Western tradition, cultural property may be what becomes of some literary texts and their creators after copyrights run out (for

example, when Proust becomes French, Goethe German, Joyce Irish, Dickens British, Melville American); but historically the distinction between cultural and intellectual property has generally (once again) been mapped onto the divide between the developing and developed world, trailing behind it a long series of old familiar orientalist oppositions: individual versus collective, personal property versus group commons, formal versus informal knowledge, and so forth.[49] Accordingly, we in the West produce spontaneous original intellectual property; they in the rest of the world have a rich (though probably burdensome) collective legacy of cultural heritage and traditional knowledge that is, so the logic goes, part of what keeps their societies underdeveloped. Interestingly, literature falls within the purview of the property rubrics in both conventions (although it sort of slips in through a side door in the UNESCO convention); I want to use that opening to leverage the genre of the novel against the categorical distinctions of the IP regimes and to disrupt the radial flow of intellectual goods from the center to the peripheries that is largely taken for granted in both the dominant theoretical models of world literature and the international conventions of intellectual property law. The novel is particularly useful here because it is an exceptionally hungry genre that has a taste especially for cultural property; it is, as I've suggested, a literary technology of appropriation, especially good at converting common cultural property into private intellectual property.

Novel Worlds: An Informal Interlude

In the 1970s, the then-dominant center-periphery models of (global) economic development were challenged by a number of anthropologists and the International Labour Office (ILO), who proposed an analytical vocabulary for better describing and examining the inequities and imbalances in the modern, postcolonial world order. The idea of the informal sector was created to "avoid the bias against the low-incomes sector inherent in the traditional/modern dichotomy" and the center/periphery dualism;[50] indeed, the formal/informal distinction was developed specifically to describe urban modernity in Africa and to break an old moral hierarchy by recognizing that the informal sector, rather than being a sign of failed modernization, is itself a modern condition—is itself modern. Perhaps it is worth remembering this discursive transformation in economics and anthropology if we want to refine our own methods and instruments in world literary studies to better account for the complexities of international literary relations and the unevenness of world literary space. I am not suggesting that there are no such things as centers and peripheries or that the language of formality and informality should represent some kind of final vocabulary for discussing relations of literary interdependence and disparities in power and prestige. The formal/informal dyad brings its own blindnesses and limitations, among which, it should be noted, is the fact that in practice the distinction is shot through with class, race, and gender

implications and overtones. However, given the tenacity of the center/periphery models of literary relations, it may be worth exploring what happens (and what happened in the field of economics) to the image of a world system when we bring forward some of the denigrated worlds and world literatures under "World Literature." In that vein, I am trying out here the explanatory value of formality and informality in an effort to lighten the moral freight carried with the notions of original and imitation, intellectual and cultural property, and center and periphery as well as to more carefully describe what Genette refers to generically as relations of textual "co-presence" between two literary objects or intellectual creations—between, say, Elvis Presley and Elvis Oke.

In sociology and anthropology, formal and informal generally characterize the quality of the social relations between people: formal relations are those governed by impersonal systems of rules and regulations; informal relations are more intimate and flexible, unmediated (or relatively less mediated) by abstract codes of behavior that are determined outside of discrete social interactions.[51] Some of these features carry over into economic distinctions between formal and informal sectors, although many of those definitions ultimately reduce informality to illegality; the informal sector is illegitimate in those accounts, the seamy underside of the formal, "monopolistic sector."[52] The informal sector usually includes black markets, trafficking rings, and sweatshops; however, "informal practices may be illegal or extra-legal but are not necessarily perceived as illegitimate by the actors

concerned."[53] Indeed, the informal sector also generally includes unlicensed street vendors, payments-in-kind cooperatives, and untaxed cottage industries, which reflects the less normative sense of "informal" coined by Keith Hart in the early 1970s to describe the place of "small-scale entrepreneurs[,] operating in the services sector" in Ghana, whose "activities remain unroutinized and thus outside the control of the revenue inspection methods which obtain in [the country]."[54] The ILO characterized the informal sector in Nairobi and Mombassa by its "ease of entry," "reliance on indigenous resources," "family ownership of enterprises," "small scale of operation," "labour-intensive and adapted technology," "skill acquired outside the formal school system," and "unregulated and competitive markets."[55]

In general, the distinctions between formal and informal might be best suggested in the differences in what we associate with the state and the street. Along those lines, Saskia Sassen offers a helpful definition of informal that doesn't make it simply a synonym for illicit or illegal: "the 'informal economy' refers to those income-generating activities occurring outside the state's regulatory framework that have analogs within that framework."[56] Accordingly, the formal and informal sectors are roughly parallel; they are synchronic (or polychronic), not diachronic (as the implied teleological temporalities of the literary core/periphery models suggest). They are also geographically co-extensive, found in both developed and developing nations (not dispersed and measured

by the physical or metaphysical or aesthetic distance from a putative center). In other words, the formal/informal distinction is less a binary opposition than a combination of relative positions within a network of interrelations. The formal and informal sectors are interdependent and coeval, occupying the same time and space—intersecting, interacting, collaborating, and disrupting each other at multiple interfaces; and they are not always easy to disentangle. Moisés Naím, editor in chief of *Foreign Policy* magazine, knows this, at least intuitively, when he asks, in his book *Illicit: How Smugglers, Traffickers, and Copycats Are Hijacking the Global Economy*, "Where does [counterfeit] cargo originate?" "Typically in Asia," he responds: "China, Taiwan, and Vietnam are likely sources, though far from the only ones. There the goods or their components often come off the same production lines that produce the brand-name items they copy."[57] The ironies here are quite unintended: that improper copies come off the same mass production lines, worked by the same ill-paid labor, as proper copies—this seems like a distinction without a difference. Of course, the difference between the fake and the genuine, the generic and the brand name, is not about the quality of the product—it's precisely about the aura conferred by the "legitimate" reproduction of the "brand name;" about the author function of the trademark and the regulation of property; it is, we might conclude from Naím's ironic lapse, not so much about "the nature of the economic activity but [about] an official limitation of access to legitimate activity" (as the ILO described the regulatory

protectionism of the formal sector).[58] The informal sector has operating norms, but it functions largely outside the state's regulatory framework, which (despite globalization's triumphant claims) is still the primary entity through which intellectual property is registered and regulated and, as Casanova's analysis makes clear, the primary entity through which World Literature is joined.

Moretti and Casanova have undertaken to describe the formal rules of formal "World Literature," but the roles of the informal sector and of informality itself are, as Adrian Johns has argued about the role of piracy in the creation of the book, part of the mechanisms that world literature.[59] As I see it, the formal/informal distinction has two possible inflections that are both relevant to the study of literature. Formal and informal can refer to the sectors in which texts circulate (small, unregulated markets or sprawling multinational publishing monopolies—for which there are also sprawling informal networks of pirated intellectual property distribution). But the analytic might also apply to the ways in which text circulates within texts—that is, to various modes of intertextuality that receive differential treatment according to whether such intertextual liaisons are commonly regarded as "legitimate" or "illegitimate." The norms and modes of such intertextual transactions are often different in formal and informal literary sectors, but formal textual practices are not isolated to formal literary sectors or vice versa. There are, for example, informal textual goods in the formal sector—bits of text

smuggled into what is otherwise regarded as legitimate literature or a legitimate literary institution: e.g., photocopied versions of *Things Fall Apart* in Nigerian classrooms, or the ideas of Moacyr Scliar in Yann Martel's Booker Prize-winning *The Life of Pi*, or the phenomenon that I call patent plagiarism, in which one patent application lifts the language of another without specific citation. And one finds formal textual goods in informal literary sectors— Heinemann editions of Yambo Ouologuem's 1968 novel *Bound to Violence* dumped in the East African book market after being pulled from British shelves for plagiarism or the South American phenomenon (spawned by Eloisa Cartonera in a barrio of Buenos Aires) of publishing offset-printed pages from the works of famous authors between covers of scavenged cardboard, or a chapbook of technical literary terms produced exclusively for an independent bookseller's stall in Makola Market in Accra. "Novel," by the way, is therein defined as "a true story written about people and events," whereas "fiction" is a separate genre characterized as "imaginative stories"—which goes to show just how relative, contingent, and academic might be the very definitions of the genres upon which the whole conceptual systems of monopoly World Literature depend.[60] "Western ethnocentrism," wrote Keith Hart in the 1970s about the kinds of economic activities one finds in Makola Market, "leads many observers to become preoccupied with the problems of 'firms' and 'businessmen,' while tending to ignore the activities of those who currently perform the entrepreneurial function."[61]

The formality/informality distinction might help us to better grasp the complexity of the entrepreneurial literary function in its multiple manifestations.

Centers That Cannot Hold

In her anthropological study of global outlaws and informal sectors, Carolyn Nordstrom begins her analysis of the new world system with the story of "a young war orphan street child in a remote area of Africa" selling single cigarettes from a smuggled pack of Marlboroughs because, she says, his minor economic activities "are not merely linked to global flows of unregulated goods; they are essential."[62] I would add that they are also essential to the global flows of regulated goods, and with similar disproportions in mind I want to consider how the smallest units of literary creation can disrupt such big ideas as world literary systems by looking at some tiny samples of smuggled text from the cultural set pieces in *GraceLand*. Abani launches each chapter with two epigraphic fragments that explain the significance of the kola nut ceremony in traditional Igbo society—a ceremony, it's important to note, that shows up nowhere in the novel's storyline. These opening statements are a combination of bland anthropological accounts of Igbo customs and manners and of spiritualist (almost new-ageist) revelations about the esoteric cosmology behind the ceremony: "*The Igbo believe that if one does not follow the life pattern determined by their energy grouping, they are living outside the dictates of their chi, or personal god.*"[63]

In an acknowledgments section at the end of the novel (which, as a generic feature of modern world literature, speaks volumes about the weight of the formal international property regimes under which writers write), Abani cites sources for some of the historical information he relies on in the text; but he doesn't cite anything that contains this formulation of traditional knowledge. The epigraphs appear to provide cultural background and local texture for the more universal tale of the trials of coming of age; they function, then, as exposition—as narrative past, or the residue of past narrative, that seems rather incidental to the narrative present. All narrative literature has to deal with the problem of "introduc[ing] the reader into an unfamiliar world," and it is ordinarily the function of exposition to establish the backstory to current narrative events and "the canons of probability" that hold sway over them.[64] In this regard, the last four words in Abani's sentence especially stand out: they not only supply a quick gloss (or translation) of the word "*chi*;" they also gesture to the extratextual situation of their appearance, marking some distance and difference between the narrator and the implied reader— between the cultural knowledge of the narrative voice and the projected cultural ignorance of the reader in a sector where the novel anticipates circulating. We usually think of this distance as the location of culture or as the textual mark of cultural difference, but exposition is not the peculiar burden of writers from unprivileged "cultures" (or positions) in the formal arena of World Literature, although that burden is often felt acutely in such

situations to be a cultural or, more precisely, an ethnic one.[65]

To the best of my knowledge, the phrase "*chi*, or personal god" first appears in African literature in Chinua Achebe's 1958 classic, *Things Fall Apart*; variants of it can be found in earlier British anthropological studies of the Igbo and in many later novels written by Igbos.[66] Here are the first two appearances in Achebe:

> Unoka was an ill-fated man. He had a bad *chi* or personal god, and evil fortune followed him to the grave, or rather to his death, for he had no grave.

> If ever a man deserved his success, that man was Okonkwo. At an early age he had achieved fame as the greatest wrestler in all the land. That was not luck. At the most one could say that his *chi* or personal god was good. But the Ibo people have a proverb that when a man says yes his *chi* says yes also. Okonkwo said yes very strongly; so his *chi* agreed.[67]

After these early pairings, the term *chi* and its gloss appear independently in the novel. This necessarily reductive translation, "personal god," of a complex concept has been the subject of some controversy in African literary studies, representing, in the opinion of some critics, a "blasphemous" lack of respect or esteem for traditional Igbo religion.[68] The narrative tone of Abani's passage echoes the ethnographic attitude of the narrator in *Things Fall Apart*, in whose voice these expositional devices always appear; but where the cultural information is presented as separate expository prologue to the chapters in Abani, it is assimilated into the narrator's ordinary commentary in Achebe, providing a kind of soft cultural landing for readers new to the strange world of this African novel. Compared to Achebe's almost seamless synthesis of

Igbo idea and English gloss, Abani's method creates a sharp (formal) contrast between the serene cultural background materials and the rough modern story of Elvis's misadventures.

These sorts of moments of cultural translation—what the *Bolekaja* critics deridedas "introducing 'anthropological' or 'sociological' material into fiction"—have typically been taken as indications of the contingent condition of the novel genre in Africa and of the dependent position of African literature in the World Republic of Letters.[69] Indeed, the extensive catalogue of such textual features has been routinely cited as evidence of the apparent double bind of the African author writing in a colonial language in the early postcolonial period—the "frequent problem," as Charles Larson described it in the 1970s, of the "Third World" writer's "double audience": "one often willing to accept him for what he is trying to say from within his own culture, the other willing to accept him if he can be placed into a Western framework" or, we might say after Casanova, absorbed into the world literary system.[70] The presence of two audiences at the birth of the Anglophone African novel implied, of course, a double and differential circulation of the literary texts—one in the formal sector of British (or Commonwealth or World) literature; the other in a still-underdeveloped reading circle of Africans on the continent.[71] The existence of this double audience was, for the most part, accepted as a historical fact of colonialism and its literary and literacy legacies. Lately, however, that sociological fact has been challenged and the idea of a double audience deconstructed in a

number of ways. Simon Gikandi and Apollo Amoko, for instance, suggest that the double audience is something of a fable that depends upon suspect essentialist ethnological distinctions between African and non-African novel readers and that ignores the great overlap in their historical formations.[72] Indeed, as African-novel readers, the European tourist might be difficult to distinguish from the African expatriot (in Elvis Oke's terms); of common international class and education, these two parts of the international novel-reading stratum may both require a gloss of the word *chi*. In "The Extroverted African Novel," Eileen Julien also suggests that the double audience is something of a mirage, and (if I can push her argument further than she herself does) that it is a kind of wishful projection on the part of well-meaning, multiculturally minded readers who want to imagine themselves as cultural interlopers in an African text—armchair anthropologists who gain privileged access to radical difference in the comforting form of the familiar novel.[73] The bystander position is obviously an ideological one, not only because it falsifies an ahistorical image of what Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o described as a phantom "European-language-speaking-peasantry and working class" in Africa, but also because it involves the self-deception of non-African readers who imagine themselves as incidental to the content, quality, and form of the African novel when they are, in fact, instrumental (though not singularly so) and implicated in the construction and consecration of official African literature.[74] Indeed, the

construction of any national or ethnic or regional literature is always an effect of innumerable international, interethnic, and interregional literary transactions.

If the so-called double audience is something of a (marketing) myth, this is not because globalization has done away with cultural difference but because most of what carries the label "African novel" (inside and outside Africa) is, as Julien (and Ngũgĩ before her) has argued, "a particular type of narrative characterized above all by its intertextuality with hegemonic or global discourses"[75]—the invocation of Yeats in Achebe's title is usually cited as an example of this intertextual engagement. However suspect the idea of a double audience may now be (sociologically speaking), the address of the double audience, with the doubling of the narrative voice, has become a relatively stable feature of the generic conventions of the African novel. Indeed, as Brian Larkin has shown in the case of the development of aesthetic features and "formal qualities" of modern Nigerian video, the early modes of circulation—systems of reproduction and networks of distribution—have left their traces in the formal generic conventions of *the* African novel—what we also might call the "World African novel."[76] *Chi*, or personal god: where once these moments of expository translation (the narrator acting as native informant) suggested to attentive readers the dislocated condition of the novel form in Africa, they may now be (or so it seems for many readers) precisely the marks of authenticity for the official African novel, hallmarks of its ethnic cultural difference at a

moment when the formal sector of world literature has reduced textual cultural difference and the number of commercially viable world literary forms. They seem to point to a possible alternative cultural framework or canon of probability. However, I am suggesting that they no longer mark the gap of cultural difference; instead, they mark the mark of the gap.[77] In other words, the conceit of trying to bridge a cultural divide in the African novel signifies not cultural difference as such, but *the category* of cultural difference (to modify Roland Barthes's observation on the reality effect).[78]

I recognize that the phrase "*chi*, or personal god" must work differently today in Abani's novel from how it did fifty years ago in Achebe's and that it works differently in the multiple reading circles where it travels. However, the concept of *chi* does not matter to the plot and themes of Abani's novel, as it does to Achebe's; in fact, it seems as historical a literary artifact as the idea of the double audience it invokes—part of the cultural heritage of the novel's emergence in Nigeria, which carries some of the literary genetic information about its production and reproduction. My point is that units like "*chi*, or personal god" become common poetic devices (or tropes) in brand-name African literature or Nigerian literature or Igbo literature, where (according to the double-audience theory) such things should go without saying. Maybe the formula has even become part of what Emily Apter calls "CNN Creole," along with the more obviously parodic and hybridized phrases that pepper *GraceLand*: "Elvis done leave de

country;" "You get suspicious mind O!"[79] Indeed, more than one cultural analyst has fused the gloss with the concept, assimilating the translation into the proverb, and producing a transnational and translinguistic variant of traditional Igbo cosmology and wisdom: "The Ibo people have a proverb: 'When a man says yes his *chi* or personal god also says yes." Incorporated within the quoted speech, the gloss no longer functions as a gloss at all; in fact, when the cultural translation becomes a permanent part of the proverb, it alters Igbo cosmology and doubles the traditional number of gods attending an Igbo individual. In segregating the kind of required cultural knowledge from the main body of Abani's text (putting it in the place of expected exposition), *GraceLand* stages its ethnic authenticity and draws attention to the conventionality of the form, nodding to Achebe while (in Graham Huggan's phrase) "commenting ironically on the material conditions" of contemporary African literary production, circulation, and consumption.[80] Perhaps most interestingly for my argument, the intertextual transaction between Abani's *GraceLand* and Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (ordinarily taken to be a sign of a vibrant and vital national literary tradition) is largely routed through the formal sector of "World Literature," where a space (albeit a small one) has been reserved for African literature (or Nigerian national literature) that dutifully honors *Things Fall Apart* as its urtext.[81]

Admittedly, I have made much of a little exposition, but that, in fact, is the point: to appreciate the disruptive effects that tiny textual details have on the texture of world literary systems. It is

only at the level of abstraction of "distant reading" (Moretti, "Conjectures") or a World Republic of Letters that literary space and time look so smooth, so regular, so manageable—in a word, so predictable. Indeed, the irregularities in world literary systems, like illicit activities in globalization, are probably more common than not; so, I want to look at a place in *GraceLand* where the interfaces between formal and informal literary sectors are a bit more obvious, and where the intertextual trail tells a story of deep entanglements.

Secondhand and After-: Markets of World Literature

At the opposite end of the literary legitimacy and respectability spectrum from *Things Fall Apart* sits the informal sector of popular pulp literature from Onitsha, Nigeria—a city now most famous in the major literary circles of World Literature not for its once-vibrant "market literature" but as the title and setting of one of the novels by French Nobel Prize laureate J. M. G. Le Clézio. Onitsha market literature is part of what Moretti, after Margaret Cohen, calls "the great unread," that 99+ percent of published literature falling outside the scope of academic literary interest, whose mass makes the "canonical fraction" of formal World Literature look more humbly, properly, and poignantly like *the little read* that it is.[82] We enter the world of informal literature through the gates of Abani's *GraceLand*:

> Pausing by a cart selling secondhand books, he rifled though [*sic*], looking for something to buy. There was a set of dog-eared Penguin Classics. Elvis pulled a Dickens out, *A Tale of Two Cities*, his favorite, and read the first line: "It was the best of times, it was the worst of times." Smiling, he closed the book. That was the perfect description of life in Lagos, he thought. There were also novels by West African authors: Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*; Mongo Beti's *The Poor Christ of Bomba*; Elechi Amadi's *The Concubine*; Camara Laye's *The Radiance of Kings*; Miriama Ba's *So Long a Letter*; and thrillers like Kalu Okpi's *The Road* and Valentine Alily's *The Cobra*. He'd read them all and ran his fingers along their spines nostalgically. He settled for a torn copy of Dostoyevsky's *Crime and Punishment* and a near-pristine copy of James Baldwin's *Another Country*. He paid the asked price without haggling. Books, he felt, were sacred and should therefore not be bartered over.[83]

Elvis imagines an ideal literary universe in which products of the mind are not subjected to the terms of the market, but that

fantasy is interrupted by more mundane attractions: "Elvis's attention was captured by a bookseller in a stall to the left of the cart …. calling out to passersby: 'Come and buy de original Onitsha Market pamphlet! Leave all dat imported nonsense and buy de books written by our people for our people.'" From here the fluid narrative "comes to a screeching, expository halt,"[84] and the rousing cultural nationalism of the bookseller is quickly dampened by the editorial imperative to explain, presumably to people who are not "our people." The kind of cultural brokering we find in the gloss of *chi* is more elaborate here, and the change in tone is more dramatic:

> Elvis drew closer …. These pamphlets, written between 1910 and 1970, were produced on small presses in the eastern market town of Onitsha, hence their name. They were the Nigerian equivalent of dime drugstore pulp fiction crossed with pulp pop self-help books. They were morality tales with their subject matter and tone translated straight out of the oral culture. There were titles like *Rosemary and the Taxi Driver*; *Money—Hard to Get but Easy to Spend*; *Drunkards Believe Bar As Heaven*; *Saturday Night Disappointment*; *The Life Story and Death of John Kennedy* and *How to Write Famous Love Letters, Love Stories and Make Friends with Girls*. (Fig. 18) The covers mirrored American pulp fiction with luscious, full-breasted Sophia Loren look-alike white women. Elvis had read a lot of them, though he wouldn't admit it publicly. The books were considered to be low-class trash, but they sold in the thousands.
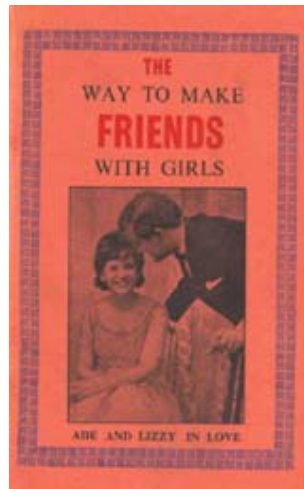
Figure 18:

Onitsha pamphlet cover. For other Onitsha pamphlets, see the digital collection at the University of Kansas Library: http://onitsha.diglib.ku.edu/tds/pamphlets.htm.

View Asset

"For does of you whom are romantic, dere is *Mabel De Sweet Honey Dat Poured Away* and *How to Avoid Corner Corner Love* and [*sic*] *Win Good Love from Girls*," Bookseller Tuck [so called because he reminds Elvis of Friar Tuck from *Robin Hood*] called .... "You, sir, look like educated man. Here, try dis one," he said, passing Elvis a book.

Turning it over, Elvis looked at the title: *Beware of Harlots and Many Friends* ...

Elvis shuddered and closed the book and handed it back, opting instead for *Mabel the Sweet Honey That Poured Away*. Paying for the book, he hid it between the Dostoyevsky and the Baldwin and headed deeper into the market.[85] (Fig. 19)
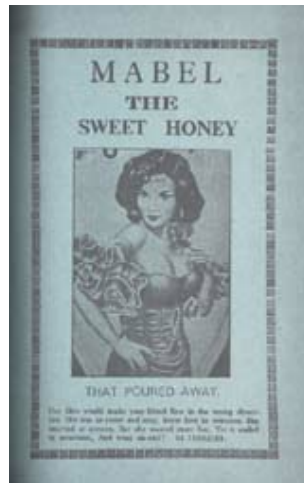
Figure 19:

Cover of *Mabel, The Sweet Honey that Poured Away*.

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At some discrete moment, *Mabel the Sweet Honey* emerges from between the European classics, because we read lurid selections from it ten pages later in Abani's novel.

Despite the authoritative, extranarratorial tone of the expository passage, there are a number of inaccuracies in the contextual information (the phenomenon began after World War II, for example, on discarded British presses). However, what interests me here is the contrast established between the norms and forms of brand-name African literature and the off-brand indulgences of street pamphlets. Abani exploits the disparity in respectability between recognized world literature (which apparently speaks English—don't they all?) and low-class popular literature—which is contrasted in this scene not only with the Penguin Classics but also with Macmillan's Pacesetters Series for young readers that, in many ways, took advantage of the successful trade in market

literature in Anglophone Africa to start a formal business in similar, but legitimate paperbacks. A recent reprint anthology of some of the Onitsha booklets glorifies the antiestablishment romance of the informal sector in suitably purple prose that shares Bookseller Tuck's FUBU sympathies: these pamphlets are "the peripheral popular linear literacy of the semiliterate proletarian and not to be confused with well-schooled African literature, the kind they publish in Europe and export to Nigeria."[86] The distinctions between literature of the formal and informal sectors are elaborated by scholars of Onitsha in terms of time (official African literature is enduring; Onitsha pamphlets are ephemeral), in terms of space (official literature travels well; market literature is inescapably local), in terms of quality (official Nigerian literature is written in impeccable English; Onitsha stories are poorly composited in broken English and bad pidgin), in terms of orientation (official African literature looks backwards; Onitsha novelettes indulge in the urgency of the present), in terms of politics (official African literature is resolutely anticolonial; Onitsha literature ambivalently embraces modern postcolonial urbanity), and in terms of use value (official African literature is destined to repose on library shelves; Onitsha texts are likely to become cigarette or toilet paper).[87] These categories, however, begin to fall apart when we unravel the intertextual engagements.

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, the Onitsha pamphlets were introduced to metropolitan reading audiences through articles by Ulli Beier and Emmanuel Obiechina, who (in an effort to defend

their value as literature in the formal literary sector) compared the incunabula to the journalistic, didactic, and prenovelistic writings of Defoe and Richardson—unintentionally, it seems, inviting other scholars to make genetic claims about dependent relationships of influence and inheritance between the early British novel and the Onitsha texts (or to make teleological claims about the natural evolution of the novel genre).[88] Defoe and Richardson might have been within the orbit of Onitsha authors (as similar texts are available to Elvis in the informal markets of Lagos), but their range of reference is far broader and less discriminating than Shakespeare, Bunyan, the King James Bible, and Jane Austen (to name the most commonly cited); and these texts are not the product of a simple assimilation of British literature to the tone and lessons of traditional Igbo folktales.[89] If an intertextual relationship with global discourses were all that it took for literature to join the world republic of letters, some Onitsha texts might have beaten Achebe to the honorary African position. The barrier, it seems, is their informality and impropriety, their apparent lack of proper respect for the norms and forms of literature proper (to put it in Eurocentric terms); Wole Soyinka was getting at something like this when he rather derisively described the pamphlets as a kind of world literature sideshow: "a bizarre mixture of Marie Corelli, John Wayne, Cisco Kid, Watchtower instructional brochures, beauty cream literature, Candid Revelations, News of the World, Superman, Indian films, ... True romances, James Bond, etc., etc."[90]

Onitsha texts, like later Nigerian video, also took early inspiration from popular imported Indian literature and film, although that fact often escapes the official histories of the phenomenon, which tend to subordinate it to official British and American literatures. (Fig. 20) The official history of literature in English, in which African market literatures figure as colonial curiosities, comes back to Nigeria with what Bookseller Tuck calls "all dat imported nonsense," which includes in its sweep not only Dickens, Dostoevsky, and Baldwin but also luminary Francophone and Anglophone "West African authors" of World Literature: Chinua Achebe, Mongo Beti, Elechi Amadi, Camara Laye, and Mariama Bâ.

[91] In fact, in *GraceLand*, Onitsha Market literature arrives through the formal intertextual economy in African literature, not through the pamphlets themselves or through the unwieldy and smudgy five-volume facsimile collection of *Igbo Market Literature* compiled by Sebastian Okechukwu Mezu and published by the Black Academy Press in 1972. Instead, this formal history of informal Nigerian literature is itself imported back to Nigeria by Farrar, Straus & Giroux (in hardback form) and by Picador (in paperback), two parts of the Macmillan US conglomerate, which is itself held by the German company Verlagsgruppe Georg von Holtzbrinck. Indeed, the roots of this official exposition (and narrative disruption) are even more tangled in the web of international literature; as Jennifer Wenzel has observed, Abani's immediate source for the expository passage is the slickly produced *Life Turns Man Up and Down* (Fig. 21), a collection of mostly abridged

versions of the original texts beautifully reproduced and compiled by the Harlem-based bibliophile Kurt Thometz and published by the US trade press Pantheon in 2001.[92] Of the three hundred or more Onitsha titles listed in contemporary bibliographies, those printed in *GraceLand* repeat, as Wenzel points out, part of the table of contents in Thometz's anthology. (Fig. 22)

Figure 20:

Cover of How to Play Love. See the digital collection at the University of Kansas Library:

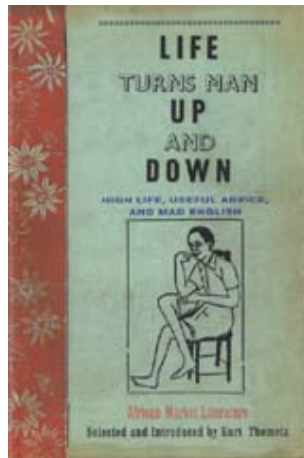http://onitsha.diglib.ku.edu/pdf/ksrl.c3275.pdf.

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Figure 21:

Cover of Kurt Thometz, ed., *Life Turns Man Up and Down: High Life, Useful Advice, and Mad English: African Market Literature* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2001).

View Asset

Figure 22:

Table of Contents, Thometz, *Life Turns Man Up and Down*.

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Active Principles and Dulcificant Properties: The Isolation of Cultural Property

I want to use these examples of transsector, intertextual trafficking from Abani's novel to make a few final speculative comments about the genre of the novel more generally, particularly how it is cross-cut by international intellectual property law and how the novel in turn cross-cuts the formal and informal sectors of world literary space. Under modern copyright regimes almost three centuries old, the novel is an object of intellectual property, but it also contains in its pages other intellectual properties. We tend to talk about the novel as the product of an individual mind—at work on common cultural, social, and historical materials (to be sure), but, in the final literary product, that collective material has supposedly been transformed "into the private property of the speaker's intentions" (in Bakhtin's formulation) or impressed with the distinct personality of its author (in the French *droits d'auteur* tradition).[93] This is the logic behind modern copyright law, and it is the root of the individualist principle of intellectual property creation enshrined in the contemporary international treaties (Berne, GATT, TRIPS, etc.). The center-periphery models of world literary systems also seem to reify the author as the individual creator of intellectual (as opposed to cultural) property and, thereby, to reinforce the power imbalances of the current international intellectual property regimes. The intertextual entanglements of Abani's novel, and the forms in which they

appear on the page, suggest to me that we might need to remind ourselves (against the prevailing pressures of intellectual property regimes to privatize and personalize the ownership of ideas and their fixed forms of expression) that novels are also carriers of cultural knowledge.

My work on plagiarism and the novel in world literatures consistently presents me with surprising new evidence of just how hungry a genre the novel is; it may be the greediest of literary genres, picking up everything in its way (including other genres) and calling it all novelistic. (This is one good reason why a map of world literary space surveyed through the novel may not, in the end, tell us all that much about the world.) *GraceLand* offers a number of good examples of this; the chapters are punctuated by recipes for traditional dishes and records of native medicinal uses for plants, two genres of (traditional) knowledge that are ostensibly being passed down to Elvis as entries in his dead mother's journal. ([Fig. 23]()) These sorts of textual objects are not at all uncommon in postcolonial and ethnic-minority literatures, spicing the text with a dash of local color and the flavor of a rapidly disappearing traditional world order and view. In Abani's novel, they signify the category of cultural difference, but in an especially ironic (or parodic) mode: not only can Elvis not remember anybody in his family ever cooking, but the forms of presentation for the traditional knowledge are highly mediated—old ideas in modern genres. To modify one of Moretti's observations about the modern novel slightly, "When a culture starts moving towards the modern

[recipe book], it's *always* as a compromise between foreign form and local materials";[94] true enough, perhaps, but the terms are loaded to the advantage of the genre (*modern* novel; *modern* recipe book), just as the ingredients are distorted to conform to the formal units of measure required for routinization—that is, for quantification, documentation, transportation, and duplication. If we pay attention to the ingredients combined in the recipe, we get a different image of the completed (description of the) dish. In any case, the novel genre eats up such things, appropriating cultural property (or common, informal knowledge) and converting it into intellectual property that is then protected by a legal fence of private property rights. In a sense, many novels are registers of cultural property, repositories (or "anthologies," as the Ugandan cultural critic Peter Nazareth described Elvis Presley) of collective heritage.[95] This may be most clear in contemporary novels from cultures that are recognizably under threat from the forces of globalization, but *Robinson Crusoe* is not simply a story of the emergence of economic and protestant individualism (the kind of man who can own ideas); it is also a catalogue of common preindustrial British methods for the production of basic human necessities and the survival of mankind.

Figure 23:

Recipe for Fried Yam, Plantain and Beef Stew from Elvis's mother's journal, Abani,

GraceLand, 182.

View Asset

Perhaps all of this only tells us things we already know about the novel form—that it is a vehicle of both intellectual and cultural property—even if our ordinary vocabulary tends to speak about the novel in individualist creative terms and to obscure that knowledge. However, I want to give what might otherwise seem a rather banal insight about the novel some urgency within the current world IP systems because it suggests a different set of uses for (or services of) the genre than we ordinarily contemplate. At the end of Abani's novel, after suffering all sorts of dreadful abuse at the hands of too many people with too many financial interests at stake in his small economic activities, Elvis is spirited off to "America," under the assumed name and passport of his friend Redemption. Elvis's exit is bittersweet because it appears to confirm the judgment of his colleague that "your type no fit survive

here long."[96] However, Elvis's redemption is sweetened somewhat not only by thoughts of his aunt Felicia already in America but also by what is commonly known in English as "miracle fruit" (*Synsepalum dulcificum* Daniell): "an oval, purplish fruit," the pulp of which "is sweet and has the lingering after-effect of making acid substances consumed within three hours of it taste sweet."[97] (Fig. 24) Abani's description of the miraculous berry appears on a page by itself, in the generic position established for cultural exposition, simple background to the chapter that follows it; but, in this case, the "lingering after-effect" may help to render more palatable what is essentially an acrimonious exile from Nigeria.

Figure 24:

Traditional uses for *Synsepalum Dulcificum* Daniell from Elvis's mother's journal, Abani, *GraceLand*, 298.

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The formulaic language that describes *Synsepalum dulcificum* has a relatively complex genealogy. The text printed in *GraceLand* follows very closely the description of the "miraculous berry plant" found in R. C. Agoha's *Medicinal Plants of Nigeria* (1973), which Abani cites in his acknowledgments; Agoha even gives us the name of the plant in "Ibo," the spelling of which Abani decolonizes: "Igbo."[98] (Fig.

25) Agoha's "booklet" seems to exist largely in the informal sector of botany publications, showing up in relatively few scientific bibliographies and, according to the Online Computer Library Center (OCLC), in only three libraries in the world (about the same number as many Onitsha pamphlets), all of those in Holland. Agoha's text follows quite closely its own sources, indicated in a footnote that directs the reader to J. M. Dalziel's *Useful Plants of West Tropical Africa* (1928) and F. N. Hepper's revised edition of volume 2 of J. Hutchinson and J. M. Dalziel's *Flora of West Tropical Africa* (1963), which themselves cite prior sources, which themselves cite prior sources, and so on—all of which track back to an article published in the *Pharmaceutical Journal and Transactions* in 1852, authored by William Daniell, where the "peculiar properties" and "dulcificant virtues" of the miraculous berry are elaborated in full detail and fully documented.[99] (Fig. 26) Daniell himself sits at the end of a chain of less formal sources that cross multiple languages and go back to colonial travelogues, botanical surveys, taxonomical indices, and slave-trade reports from the early eighteenth to the early nineteenth centuries—including *Beskrivelse af guineiske planter, som ere fundne af danske Botanikere, især af Etatsraad Thonning* (1828–29), Archibald Dalzel's *The History of Dahomey, an Inland Kingdom of Africa* (1793), and *Voyage du Chevalier des Marchais en Guinée, isles voisines, et à Cayénne* (1730)—some of whose words Daniell quotes directly, others of which show up verbatim without quotation marks. The language describing the miracle berry changes (sometimes more,

sometimes less) at each link in the chain of citations—the color of the fruit even turns from *rouge*, to dusky red, to reddish purple, to purplish—as the language settles; but, for the most part, the phrases in Abani's novel are already present in Daniell's colonial sources, and they are stabilized in the form we read in *GraceLand* with Dalziel's description written in 1936.

Figure 25:

Entry in R.C. Agoha's *Medicinal Plants of Nigeria* (Nijmegen: Faculteit der Wiskunde en Natuurwetenschappen, 1973), 113.

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Figure 26:

Drawing of "The Miraculous Berry of Western Africa" from William P. Daniell, "On the *Synsepalum dulcificum*, De Cand.; or, Miraculous Berry of Western Africa," *Pharmaceutical Journal and Transactions* 11 (1852): 445.

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Quotation marks are rather rare in this chain of intertextual transactions and the bibliographies of sources consulted and cribbed are often incomplete, which demonstrates at least two things: different norms of citation and forms of property obtain in different literary sectors and the "facts of nature" cannot be personally owned, at least in the Western intellectual tradition of the last few centuries. Nonetheless, we could have gone straight to Daniell's 1852 journal article as the originary source of Abani's description since, by the conventions of binomial nomenclature, the formal Latin name of the plant within the world-botanical system carries its own bibliography—that is, it carries the name(s) of those who named it and, sometimes, of those who misnamed it:

Synsepalum dulcificum (Schumach & Thonn.) Daniell. In other words, the formal botanical name of the plant identifies the first person to have put into print (or authored) its current Linnaean classification, which means, generally, the first European to have identified the genus (genre) to which the plant belongs and thereby earned the right to name the species. This is the literary heritage of the traditional knowledge that prepares the closing scene of Abani's novel for Elvis's international flight. If we were to make a drawing of the intertextual links between the sources, we would have the image of a tree with a massive root system, grounded at the trunk with Daniell's essay; the "miracle berry" tree looks like one of Moretti's trees only if we cut it off at the ground (or property line, where original proprietary claims are successfully made) and ignore what lies buried underground. This deracination —a process that goes by the names universalization and Parisianization in Casanova's world republic of letters—is largely what happens in that other realm where descriptions of *Synsepalum dulcificum* circulate: patent applications.

In the multiple patent applications (some successful) filed over the last forty years that seek to capitalize on traditional West African knowledge of the "miracle fruit," the same formulaic descriptions of the plant and its uses reappear. (Fig. 27) The trajectory is slightly different in this chain of intertextual transactions than it is in the literary legacy I've just outlined, finding its way back to Daniell's article through the formal scientific literature. The emphasis in these descriptions is also slightly different because

(ironically perhaps) they show more interest than does Abani in the very specific (and apparently limited) uses that "the natives" or "the locals" made of the plant; the phrase most often repeated—with very little variation—in the scientific documents is sometimes attributed (and sometimes not attributed at all) to Daniell, who expanded on an observation found in the memoir of the ex-governor of the Cape-Coast Castle, Archibald Dalzel: "The purposes for which the natives of the Gold Coast usually reserve them, are but few, the principal consisting in rendering their stale and acidulated kankies more palatable, and in bestowing a sweetness on sour palm wine and pitto …. In other respects they would seem to be eaten more for the novelty of the sensations they induce than for any particular object."[100] It is not surprising that this particular formulation would find favor in the scientific literature and patent applications, since to receive protection patentees are supposed to be able to demonstrate the novelty and nonobviousness of their ideas (although no such standard apparently holds for the language in which a patent claim is made, which may be copied with apparent impunity).[101] From the scientific literature, it seems that not only do the natives have no real sense of property (and therefore no possible proprietary claim to the "miracle berry" as a product of culture or cultivation); they also have no good sense of what to make of the natural fortune that surrounds them—for the natives, "novelty" is the "sensation" rediscovered each time a berry is chewed. Indeed, the trifling local uses of the "miracle berry" appear quite parochial and

unimaginative compared to the great claims the international patentees make for the salutary benefits of its dulcificant properties for world health. Over the course of the scientific literature, *Synsepalum dulcificum* becomes completely deracinated: the plant is separated from its native and imperial histories; the berry is separated from the bush; the "active factor" is identified (miraculin) and is isolated from the berry. Thus, the knowledge for which the patents are sought is not "traditional knowledge" per se; it is the "active principle" in traditional knowledge or its application —that which can be isolated, documented, transported, and duplicated. (Fig. 28) Intellectual property protection cannot be granted to the facts of nature (which is what the natives supposedly know), only to the recognizable work of man on nature —that is, to the products of "formal (but not informal) innovation." 102

Figure 27:

U.S. Patent 3,849,555 (1974); Method for Modifying Sour and Bitter Taste.

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Figure 28:

U.S. Patent 3,925,547 (1975); Isolation and Purification of Active Principle of Fruit of Synsepalum Dulcificum.

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The scientific track of traditional knowledge about the "miracle berry" intersects with the literary one that leads to *GraceLand*; they cross paths in Daniell's 1852 article. What might matter most about this intertextual and intergeneric entanglement is that the novelty and nonobviousness requirements for patent applicants cannot be met if there is evidence of what the law calls "prior art," and "prior art" is demonstrated by a published description of the knowledge under patent consideration.[103] The traditional knowledge reprinted as cultural exposition in the recipes and plant descriptions in Abani's novel shows just such evidence of prior art —and of well-handled prior art at that: cultural knowledge mediated multiple times and worked into the generic forms of entries in a modern recipe book and pages from an encyclopedia of comparative botanical morphology. Novels, I expect, circulate in the informal sector of botanical and pharmaceutical research, but the genre incorporates all of those forms without blinking. And in this very specific IP sense, we can say that the novel is the genre of

prior art—of other individuals' prior art to be sure, but also in the technical sense of a record of cultural property, a vehicle of cultural knowledge. We might think of the novel not only as a generic hedge against the disappearance of (once) common knowledge but also as a bulwark against the progressive privatization of knowledge.

Partial Representation

ALEX WOLOCH

Representation and Genre

About the Author

This essay aims to meditate on the relationship between reference and genre. It grows out of my interest in a constellation of texts, across different periods and forms, that are flashpoints in the always contested articulation of a realist aesthetic. The texts that I've been considering range from the polycentric paintings of Pieter Bruegel the elder through Dickens's *The Pickwick Papers* (in its complicated interweaving of social comprehension and eccentricity) to, most extensively, the engaged journalism and critical essays of George Orwell (who famously writes that "good prose is like a windowpane");[1] and from the contemporary, "late realist" films of Mike Leigh and John Sayles to the criticism of André Bazin and Erich Auerbach, two canonical but often underread mid-twentieth-century theorists, working on different media and in different contexts, but each focused on a revived and aesthetically charged category of realism. At first glance, this group might seem like an unrewarding site for investigating the question of this volume. In one immediate sense, the generic dimension of literary form is always *resisted* by the realist text, insofar as it aspires

toward unmediated representation, seeking to motivate and justify its own techniques and devices, the texture of its expression, and its patterns and scope in relation to a referential ground. But this same impulse can also sharpen the contours and raise the stakes of genre: arguably, it is in the tense, unfinished, and even rebarbative relation to the referential currents and desires of a text that the dynamics of genre take on their most crystallized, consequential form.

In the first part of this essay, I want to sketch this potential intersection of representation and genre in broad strokes, and so I will be shuttling between a number of examples. I'll then turn my focus to a more discrete—if still wide-ranging—constellation of paintings by Pieter Bruegel. I wanted to start with our own shared text for this volume, Gérard Genette's 1979 *The Architext*, because of the way that representation plays a key, and somewhat villainous role, in his theory of genre.[2] In the first parts of *The Architext*, Genette traces how nonrepresentational forms of literature have been excluded from the construction of genre categories, and the distorting effect this has had on literary analysis. As Genette writes, "Plato deliberately leaves out all nonrepresentational poetry—and thus, above all, what we call lyric poetry."[3] It is, he goes on, "an exclusion not only in fact but indeed in principle, for again, the representation of events is here the very definition of poetry: there is no poem except a representational one."[4] What interests me most about Genette's analysis is the rhetorical charge that he takes advantage of in tracing this

"exclusion." The nonrepresentational is coded as both a victim and a potential hero, and, at key points, Genette turns this *concept* or *category* into an anthropomorphized entity—and the critic into an implicit advocate or champion. Victims of "this segregative assessment," nonrepresentational texts face a hard, two-edged choice between co-optation and expulsion: "In short, the nonrepresentational genres may choose only between an annexation that enhances their value (satire annexed to comedy and thus to dramatic poetry, ode and eclogue to epic) or a dismissal to outer darkness, or, if one prefers, to the limbo of 'imperfection' [le rejet dans les ténèbres extérieures ou si l'on préfère dans les limbes d'imperfection]."[5]

This supplementary description is striking. After the rhetorical flourish of "outer darkness," we might expect Genette to offer a *more* analytically grounded version of his categorical point, but instead he replaces one social and existential metaphor ("outer darkness") with another, not dissimilar figure ("limbo"). Genette's overtly humanistic terms—segregation, the dark shadows of exclusion, the compromise of annexation—continue as he analogizes two models, again, for registering the poetic "dignity" of nonrepresentational form as equivalent to "reform" and "revolution."[6] Genette's charged metaphors seem to place us in a different genre altogether, less akin to a detached, structural analysis than, say, to Charles Dickens's description of radical placelessness in his first novel, *The Pickwick Papers* (written in the wake of the 1832 Reform Act), when Sam Weller, Pickwick's Sancho

Panza-like servant, distinguishes between the "reg'lar wagrants" who know where to find temporary shelters and the homeless persons sleeping under the Waterloo Bridge, "'worn-out, starving, houseless creeturs as rolls themselves up in the dark corners o' them lonesome places—poor creeturs as an't up to the twopenny rope.'"[7] In other words, Genette's polemic in favor of nonrepresentational form has strange recourse to the rhetoric and terms of realism.

The ease with which Genette's rhetoric pivots between a classically structural analysis and this referentially charged paradigm (of exclusion, banishment, co-optation, functional absorption and revolution) is telling. The metaphors that cluster around this juncture of his analysis do not just, as any metaphors would, draw on a referential ground but bear upon core dynamics of representation itself. In this essay, more specifically, I want to hold on to Genette's odd figure of "limbo," exploring it, too, as a potential *referential* category, in which the object of representation unfolds, "divided," as Dickens writes of London at the center of *Our Mutual Friend*, "in purpose between being visible and invisible, and so being wholly neither."[8] I don't raise this simply to bring out an internal tension in Genette's work. Rather, I want to use this crux—where structure and reference are intertwined—as a way of supplementing Genette's own account of how, in the long critical tradition that he both traces and critiques, genre and representation typically interact. Genette describes this tradition quite cogently. It centers on a heavily functionalist model, in which

the "laws" of different genres are formulated in relation to, or derived out of, prior distinctions of topicality or content. Genette charts the way that this idea of genre begins with Plato and survives, tenaciously, in different guises. Over and again theorists attempt to understand different literary forms by grounding their development and logic in relation to different kinds of social worlds, or experiences, which they seek to accommodate. I don't think Genette intends us to dismiss this model as simply erroneous, with nothing to say about literary form. But it is a clearly limited aesthetic category for him: parochial in both its neat segmentation of topical boundaries (an elevated world and a common world, tragic and comic content, etc.) and its judgment of form in terms of sheer appropriateness to topical content (an appropriateness that could lead, too easily, to a hardened, classicist overemphasis on proportionality, temporal and spatial unities, detachment, etc.).

Form and Formlessness in the Novel

This functionalist paradigm is only one, polemically charged, way to comprehend the potential place of representation within genre. Against such a model, I want to put forward those readings that take genre as a fundamentally disturbing, deforming, and disruptive *tendency* within the aesthetic construct, serving potentially to catalyze and shape the very processes—exclusion, containment, compression, absorption—that Genette's own rhetoric deploys. Genre here points to formal dynamics that can never be fully motivated by or made functionally equivalent to the referential horizons of the text, but that might be pointedly and variously intertwined with these horizons. This is a perspective on genre that is less taxonomic, and more concerned with an internal textual process—it seeks to understand when and how a text confronts or broaches its own *genreness*, we might say. Understood in this way, genre often does mark a breach in the text; it can operate as static, confusion, interference—as distorting constraint. The eruption of genre—or genreness—within a text, in this way, might perturb the unfolding surface of the story, puncture the reader's perspectival frame, and come to echo particular movements of consciousness.

In one of the paradigmatic instants of such formal shifting, certainly in the history of the novel, Cervantes interrupts *Don Quixote* at the end of chapter 8, at the moment of Quixote's violent clash with another character, to radically reframe the narrative,

introducing a "second author," the translated manuscript of Cide Hamate, and the intricate system of textual mediation and embedded narratives that will help drive the rest of the novel. The textual slippage at once negates and reinforces the "suspense" of the impending clash, and Cervantes goes out of his way, on both sides of the chapter divide, to locate the text's own interruption at this exact point of "mid-air" "uncertainty":

> But the trouble with all this is that, at this exact point, at these exact words, the original author of this history left the battle suspended in mid-air, excusing himself on the grounds that he himself could not find anything more written on the subject of these exploits of Don Quijote than what has already been set down. Now it's true that I, your second author, found it hard to believe that such a fascinating tale could have been simply consigned to the dust ....

Part Two, Chapter 9

> We left off the first part of this history with the courageous Basque and the celebrated Don Quijote, their swords bared and uplifted, each ready to smash a furious stroke at the other .... And at exactly that moment of dire uncertainty the pleasant tale was broken off, and left mutilated, nor did the original author give us the slightest idea where we might find the missing part.[9]

The early scenes of violence in *Don Quixote* are so important, in part, as they encode an epistemological process—in which the individual subject's projected frame of comprehension is suddenly altered by the encounter with external, social objects—in starkly physical terms, as a literal overwhelming or overturning. It's not a coincidence that Cervantes chooses to "break off" or suspend his own narrative, puncturing the referential continuity of the text, at this "exact point" of suspended experience. But it is worth

highlighting the strangeness of this fundamental aesthetic choice: the way that such an antireferential gesture, here ramified in such explicitly formal terms (framed narration, embedded texts within the text) is keyed precisely to an experience that rests at the referential core of the story. And in the broadest sense, Cervantes's form-defining exploration of disillusionment underlies my reading of genre's potential referential force—as discursive shifts, constraints, and pressures serve to amplify the points, *within* the referenced story itself, when comprehension and incomprehension, belief and uncertainty, knowledge and confusion are intertwined, producing a profound and specific kind of vulnerability.

I understand the novel as a form particularly open to this kind of generic pressure, with its ostensible commitment to a mimetic credibility and an always potential form *less*ness (often powerfully connected with various technologies of individuality and individualism) that lapses, so frequently, into mediation (calling attention to the text as text) and comes to strain, so often, against larger, inhibiting patterns of plot, theme, narrative, chronotope, or character-type. It is only in the clash between various marks of immediateness (temporal contemporaneity, psychological individuation, empirical detail, "reality effects," verisimilitude, etc.) *and* textual mediation, or, again, in the clash between signs of formlessness (wandering, freedom, digression, picaresque adventure, etc.) *and* the laws or patterns of form, that the complicated generic and referential logic of the novel emerges.[10]

This, in any case, would be the theory of genre that I would be most at home with—one that seeks to understand how individual texts negotiate with, but cannot be simply collapsed into, the irreducible horizon of structure and one attendant to the mimetic implications of that a-referential field of form through which genre articulates itself. In short, a view of representation that takes account of the distorting and disruptive measures of form: from the simplest kinds of containment and delimitation intrinsic to (and so often accentuated by) achieved acts of aesthetic representation, to those moments when the discursivity of the text (*as* text) intrudes upon the refraction or unfolding of an implied story, to a more properly "generic" level, in which heavily coded modes of language, plot, theme, or character come to interrupt, distort, or complicate an ostensibly more realistic poetics.

In Limbo: Between Reference and Form

Often a hardened, crystallized notion of genre is key to this formal complexity—creating a representational field that hinges as much on "exclusion" as "inclusion" and as much on disruption as the stable flow of communication. Genette mentions the "limbo" of nonrepresentational form, and we can find one overt example of the distorting force of genre in John Sayles's 1999 film of the same name. Both epitomizing and straining against the reticent stylistics and social omniscience of Sayles's normative, realist film practice, *Limbo* abruptly modulates, midnarrative, from what seems to be a securely grounded, polycentric exploration of social and economic conflict in a mid-size Alaskan town into a tightly focused and dysphoric *adventure* film.[11] This occurs when the two central characters of the film, Donna De Angelo (Mary Elizabeth Mastrantonio) and Joe Gastineau (David Strathairn), borrow a boat and become entangled in a suddenly violent drug-trafficking attempt, which leaves them stranded on a desolate part of the Alaska coastline. The film never returns from this "state of nature," abandoning the quotidian rhythms of its opening and focusing tightly on the increasingly desperate circumstances of Donna, Joe, and Donna's young daughter. The genre shift is jarring and explicit, echoing but not simply contained (or justified) by the dramatic turn in the plot. On the contrary, the shift in genre is partially *non*functional, estranging the viewer and leaving her self-consciously positioned between, and in uneasy relation to, two

delimited and clashing forms of narrative syntax. Never simply negating or transcending its connection to a realist aesthetics, *Limbo's* generic in-betweeness works to produce a taut, and complicated, structure of partial representation. Such partial representation is pointedly reiterated, on a different register, with the other formal innovation of the film, a conspicuously abrupt ending (or nonending) that abjures the climactic moment—in which a small, noisy plane arrives to either hunt down or rescue the stranded protagonists—in favor of a slow dissolve to white (as the sound of the plane's engine increases) and then a definitive cut to black.

Certainly Sayles means by the title of his film to suggest a state of suspension that can apply to the viewers, as we are torn between different generic modes; to the characters, as they are imperiled within the story itself; and to this starkly delimited ending, which leaves both characters and audience on the threshold of a withheld revelation. Running through and intersecting with all these registers, the phrase "limbo" works to characterize an intermediate zone between form and reference. A similar intermediateness rests, I would argue, at the methodological core of Erich Auerbach's *Mimesis*, as it puts forth a dialectical model of genre in which formal *constraints*—deformations, intensifications, eccentricity, and any number of linguistic, aesthetic, or cultural conventions, patterns, and limits—don't simply dilute but also catalyze and enable intricate modes of representation. In one of Auerbach's most charged and salient examples, he considers how

the transient and historically contingent characteristics of the damned in Dante's *Inferno* are paradoxically crystallized through the atemporal structure in which they are imprisoned. Auerbach is drawn to the complicated, almost unsustainable play between impermanency and permanency here, focusing on the *press* of the characters against their constraint, which "brings into the changelessness of their eternal fate a moment of dramatic historicity."[12] In my reading of Auerbach's model, the fundamental tension between the existential particularity of the dead souls in the *Inferno* and the timeless, unchanging structure in which they are encased substantializes—and places within the story world itself—a much more pervasive dynamic of literary representation. Not all characters, of course, are locked (uneasily, bitterly, with ironic resignation) into an eternally fixed or final space within the referenced world of a plot or narrative, but often narratives can and do take advantage of an equivalent tension between the particularity of the character, as implied person, and his or her emplacement within the fixed, substantialized—and potentially distorted, fragmented, or ossified—form of the narrative itself. Once again, in Auerbach's path-breaking formulation of a realist aesthetics, mimetic power is generated through the conflicted, contingent intersection, rather than the functional coordination, of experiential content and literary form.

Bruegel's Formal Realism

The "limbo" of representation, then, as it is informed by and also can give animating shape to generic currents of the text. This is a model that understands representation, itself, as a fundamentally precarious or vulnerable process—and thus a model which can highlight that dimension of realism (in any number of its complicated, often fraught manifestations) that gravitates toward the representation *of* precariousness, conceptual imbalance, social vulnerability. "Genre" is one name for the always potential amplification or ossification of form—for its self-propelling currents and impulses. I want to consider this play of form and social representation in a group of paintings by Pieter Bruegel, which, in quite varied and provocative ways, attempt to coordinate multiple individuals within a single artistic structure. Bruegel's realism hinges on a complicated, perhaps unparalleled dialectic between the self-sufficiency of the form and its referential bases: the viewer's sense of the achieved composition ultimately relies *on* the referential dimensions of Bruegel's human figures, while our comprehension of the viewed scene in Bruegel is mediated through a formal framework that, in its own dynamic integrity, radically disjoins painting from world. In many of Bruegel's key images, the interplay between form and reference is held in taut relationship—and, once more, this "limbo-like" state pervades the world of the paintings themselves, which are full of precarious movement, imbalance, and contingency.

My interest in Bruegel grew out of my work on nineteenth-century fiction in *The One vs. the Many: Minor Characters and the Space of the Protagonist in the Novel*.[13] This book—arguably part of a larger critical effort, in recent years, to revive "character" as a productive category in literary and narrative theory—seeks to reframe the long-standing opposition between referential and structural or formal theories of character by conceptualizing representation in terms of a distributional matrix: how any narrative apportions a fixed amount of attention to a field of discrete characters who jostle for limited space within the same fictive universe. I argue for a dialectical account of character in which the referential purchase of the implied person unfolds in relationship with his or her dynamic emplacement within a narrative structure. Like Dickens's novels, Bruegel's paintings are famously concerned with crowds, on both a referential and formal dimension: with the social interaction of crowds of persons *and* the problem of crowding persons into the compositional structure. I want to offer a "Dickensian" reading of Bruegel by suggesting, as I have argued with reference to Dickens's novels, that Bruegel seizes hold of and accentuates inherent formal tensions within social representation, rather than abjuring or trying to quickly resolve or transcend them. While many nineteenth-century novelists work to soften the asymmetrical structure of the realist novel—in which numerous persons are integrated into a story but attention flows to a singular protagonist—Dickens, I argue, *intensifies* asymmetry, crystallizing its latent instability. Minor characters, flattened and squeezed into

subordinated roles, become distorted, but in this distortion—the famous tics and gestures of the Dickensian eccentric—they begin to claim more interest. Minorness thus paradoxically garners attention, while the affective pull of secondary characters is, quite troublingly, grounded in their subordination. Dickens presses this conflict to (but not over) its breaking point: time and again in his novels, obscured characters burst into the foreground, but the underlying structure of asymmetry never collapses.[14]

In the preface to his first novel, Dickens writes, "And if it be objected to *The Pickwick Papers*, that they are a mere series of adventures, in which the scenes are ever changing, and the characters come and go like the men and women we encounter in the real world … the same objection could be made to … some of the greatest novelists in the English language."[15] This redefinition of realism—not as a reflection in which everything can be shown, but as an "encounter" in which characters "come and go"—takes us far into the logic of Dickensian representation. Thrust into the spotlight through a distortion that is intertwined with their subordination, minor characters seem to "come" and "go" simultaneously, uncannily obscured *in* the emphatic (but always constrained) display of their intensified personalities. A brief description of a servant in *The Pickwick Papers* gives us one of many points in which Dickens inscribes this dynamic, and often unstable, process of representation into the story itself.

"Stop," said Mr. Weller, ringing the bell. "A double glass o' the inwariable, my dear."

"Very well, sir," replied the girl, who with great quickness appeared, vanished, returned and disappeared.[16]

This "great quickness" suggests more than a sequential alternation between states. The girl's alacrity blurs together her contrary movements, as though she were "appearing" and "disappearing," "vanishing" and "returning" all at once. And much of *The Pickwick Papers* hinges on exploring how characters *might* "come" and "go," or "appear" and "disappear," at the same time—the way in which the expulsion or elision of a person, for instance, can actually work to call attention *to* him or, conversely, how the exterior features through which a person is made legible can serve to obscure his or her interior perspective.

Form and Representation: A Reading of Edward Snow's Inside Bruegel

I want to bring out a similar play of "appearance" and "disappearance" in a series of Bruegel paintings, hinging on the complicated way that human figures are both represented through and absorbed into compositional form. My sense of the play between person and form in Bruegel's work owes much to Edward Snow's provocative 1997 *Inside Bruegel: The Play of Images in "Children's Games*."[17] In this intensive analysis of a single painting, *Children's Games* (1558) (Fig. 29), Snow persuasively demonstrates the priority of formal mechanics (or the "inside" of Bruegel's paintings) over any stable meaning or thematic significance that is grasped in – or, perhaps more precisely, *from* –the painting. These meanings—and, most particularly, the allegorical readings that Bruegel's paintings have consistently generated—are always a fall from the painterly world, which coheres vis-à-vis a complicated structural logic, often hinging on contrasts and juxtapositions, that compels us to continue looking at the painting. Snow's reading of *Children's Game* is a daring example of such continued looking, a study of the painting's structural dynamics sustained enough that by the end much of the referenced world itself—the games and persons who populate, and overpopulate, the canvas—seems like a manifestation of the very compositional dynamics that sustain it. [18]

Figure 29:

Pieter Bruegel the Elder. *Children's Games*, 1560, oil on panel, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna. From Philippe and Françoise Roberts-Jones, *Pieter Bruegel* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 2002), 221.

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In one concise demonstration of his method (Figs. 30–31), Snow seizes on two figures at the threshold of a door in *Peasant Dance* (1568) and catalogues the stable "stories" that Bruegel criticism has extracted from this compositional event: a woman is leading the man into a tavern (or a brothel), or a wife is keeping her husband from the dance, or a man is pulling a reluctant partner out toward the dance (and the center of the painting).[19] Snow uses the "tug-of-war" between these contradictory conclusions to reaffirm the priority of the vehicle over the tenor: the resistance and pull of the two figures across this threshold, as a dynamic and contested process, is absorbed into the larger play of compositional elements that anchor our very effort to extract referenced meaning. This example demonstrates the critical act that Snow performs repeatedly in *Children's Games*, transforming storied events (often read allegorically, or ideologically) into elaborations of the compositional ground from which they derive.

Figure 30:

Peasant's Dance, c. 1567, oil on panel, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna. From Roberts-

Jones, 271.

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Figure 31:

Detail, *Peasant's Dance*, c. 1567, oil on panel, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna. From

Wilfried Seipel, *Pieter Bruegel the Elder at the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna*

(Milan: Skira editore, 1999), 142.

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Snow's argument proceeds inductively, and one of the first and central images he highlights is, appropriately enough, the game of tug-of-war in the middle foreground of *Children's Games*. (Fig. 32) Snow writes: "Bruegel can transport us across four centuries into the immediate *kinesis* of the game. The boy being stretched toward the right offers a heightened experience of the body per se."[20] But

the "kinesis" of the boy is crucially two-edged. On the one hand, as is so often the case with Bruegel, the discreteness and integrity of the person organizes the viewer's attention, "transport[ing]" us not merely into his action but also, implicitly, into his perspective on or experience of this action. The specificity of the action reorients our view of the larger painting, temporarily becoming the center through which we look at the whole. At the same time, however, this "kinesis" is rigorously formal: the allegorical implications or referential stability of the game cannot be satisfactorily delinked from the compelling motion that underlies it, as the boy's bodily movement is absorbed into the compositional dynamics of the painting as a whole. In this sense the dynamic, tensile movement that Snow focuses on both actualizes *and* threatens to obviate the implied individual.

Figure 32:

Detail, *Children's Games*, 1560, oil on panel, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna. From Roberts-Jones, 222.

View Asset

Another opening image for Snow's analysis depicts the three boys straddling the fence that juts out, from the left, in the middle ground of the painting. (Fig. 33) Like many individuals in Bruegel, we comprehend these figures in relation to each other, as though

the discreteness *of* each individual emerges only through his "kinetic" contrast, even while this formally charged contrast is constituted by, and thus depends on, the human figures who underlie it. Snow writes: "Though all three boys are playing the same game together, Bruegel directs us to their differences. He pairs the first two riders (a red cap helps us tell them apart) and then portrays the third almost as if he is a member of some alien species." Snow continues, tracking the logic of comparison: "It is a difference of more than dress and physique: the twinned pair fling themselves outward, while the third boy remains hunched in and only half-disclosed."[21] There's a subtle but important relationship here between the kinetics of differentiation and this revealed difference in kinetic states. The distinction between what Snow later calls the "outflungness" of the two front boys and the "indrawnness" of the third one reflects back on the process of Bruegelian contrast itself; it draws in our attention to one person while obscuring (or flinging out) others.[22] If these three figures present a stark contrast between recession and exhibition, they also demonstrate how neglect and manifestation are produced, in part, *through* the process of contrasting.

Figure 33:

Detail, *Children's Games*, 1560, oil on panel, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna. From Roberts-Jones, 222.

The very emergence of "personality" in Bruegel's work is intertwined with this charged threshold, where the image—emplaced in this oversaturated visual and social field—is torn between its referential and compositional dimensions. "Outflungness" and "indrawness" are, as Snow's study demonstrates, quite crucial states of being in Bruegel's compositional worlds—and they are both states that work to fracture an ideally actualized interiority. The "indrawn" figure suggests a consciousness that is not just reflective but potentially disjoined from, even cowed by, the social world—and unable to manifest itself adequately in this world. The "outflung" figure is, on the contrary, caught up in forms of social action that can unsettle its coherence, throw it off balance, overdramatize it. The self tilts away from, or risks disorientation in, the world. We can find such introspective and motile figures threaded through the compositional weave in *Children's Games* and many other Bruegel paintings. These same states are also crucial to the play between obscurity and emphasis in Dickens's elaborated version of narrative minorness.[23] And for both artists, these are states of being that belong to the crowd—not just as the pressures of a stratified and "asymmetrical" social world can leave individuals in cramped, discordant, or distended positions (turned overly inward, perhaps, or thrust awkwardly out) but also as the process of

representing such multiplicity generates, through its own internal dynamics, a complicated network of contrast and combination, compression and extension, exaggeration and obscuring. Both kinds of crowding—images and persons—inform Snow's reading and underlie the charged states of absorption and exuberance, pensiveness and agitated movement, precariousness and "assurance" that run through this and other Bruegel works.[24]

Snow's readings work to privilege the compositional process over the themes that it might generate; his endpoint is an explicitly "ludic" interpretation of Bruegel's great study of games, where images of play are, as his subtitle suggests, resolved into the "play of images." As my discussion of Snow suggests, I'm most interested in the way that such play, under his analysis, almost necessarily involves a tension between reference and form—a tension centered on the specific bearing of the implied human person within the (crowded) compositional field. Let me linger on one further image discussed by Snow, the leapfrog game near the compositional center of the painting, which features six boys (like the tug-of-war) in a rotating circle of being "frogs" and "jacks." (Fig. 34) As Snow notes, "The 'frogs' encounter the 'jacks' as obstacles and turn them into objects, means to their own end. The immediate impression is of two distinct classes, one of which rises and enjoys mobility at the expense of another, which remains passive and stationary, its horizons limited to the ground beneath its feet."[25] This utilization of the person, now turned into an object, is represented in the image, but this "play" of domination and

subordination is also something that can inhere in the dynamics of representation itself. In the represented game, furthermore, we are compelled to envision the *reversal* of roles: "Eventually each frog will take his place at the end of the line after he has vaulted over the last back offered to him, and each jack will become a leaper in his turn, as the game makes its way through the central region much like the two rolling hoops."[26] We can see, as we notice this dimension of the game, the way that the foremost boy, until recently a "frog," is now bending to be leaped over in turn, while the boy in the rear, poised to ascend next, has just gotten up from his own crouched position. In these transitional states Bruegel captures a full range of ascension and diminution—turning this game into an elaborate social allegory for his own compositional process. Snow goes on to note that "there is ... a discrepancy between the inner dynamism of the game [as it leads to these continual reversals] and the tableau into which Bruegel has frozen it," and he argues that this discrepancy signals core tensions not only within the topical subject of the painting (as it "poses succinctly the ambiguities of childhood and play that are scattered through the painting")[27] but also within the viewing process itself, torn between "on the one hand, a detached, purely optical perception of frozen images that lend themselves to emblematic meaning or at least lack the means to resist it; [and] on the other, a kinetic, memory-charged participation in images that are embodied and in motion, and whose momentum keeps undoing simple moral tableaus."[28]

Figure 34:

Detail, *Children's Games*, 1560, oil on panel, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna. From

Roberts-Jones, 221.

View Asset

Formal and Social Multiplicity

The dramatic instrumentalization of the jacks points to a concern with functionality (both social and formal) that we can find throughout Bruegel's polycentric compositions: from the heavy labor in *The Tower of Babel* (1563), which places individual figures in varied relationship to the stones and slabs that they are carrying, chiseling, and, transforming (into the tower itself)—to the subtle work, of allegorical production itself, that Joseph Koerner identifies in a brilliant reading of *The Battle of Carnival and Lent* (1559).[29] As Snow's analysis (and Koerner's) suggests, the stratification and potential reversals latent in the leapfrog game are built into Bruegel's aesthetics more generally. "You look at him, and there he is. You look at him again, and there he—isn't," writes Dickens in a concise encapsulation of the "appearance" and "disappearance" of a minor character in *Barnaby Rudge*.[30] Human figures in Bruegel are not directly reflected but dynamically inflected into the formed composition: they crowd on the viewer for attention even as, in one crucial section of his *Census at Bethlehem* (1566), they crowd in to be registered and counted within the storied world itself. We can see a structurally elaborate version of such a process in Bruegel's exploration, and confusion, of center and periphery in many of his works. Most inescapably, *Christ Carrying the Cross* (1564) renders the central figure of Christ startlingly inconspicuous (Figs. 35–36), while *The Fall of Icarus* (date uncertain) famously makes a peripheral figure central. (Fig. 37) These two paintings

chart out, in tandem, a radical sense of distributional restlessness: even at the absolute center someone might be overlooked (as Koerner puts it, the painting "performs the world's nonrecognition of Christ"),[31] and even at the periphery a figure can compel belated attention.[32] Together, by dramatizing (and destabilizing) the unseen center and significant periphery, these two paintings suggest that a version of "leapfrog," or a shifting play of attention and neglect, structures the coordinating horizons of Bruegelian compositional space.

Figure 35:

Christ Carrying the Cross, 1564, oil on panel, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna. From Siepel, 71.

View Asset

Figure 36:

Detail, *Christ Carrying the Cross*, 1564, oil on panel, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna. From Siepel, 73.

View Asset

Figure 37:

The Fall of Icarus, date uncertain, oil on canvas, Musées Royaux des Beaux-Arts de Belgique, Brussels, inv. 4030. From Roberts-Jones, 288–89.

View Asset

Many of Bruegel's works call attention to multiplicity as an aesthetic problem both for the viewer, who, in confronting so many of Bruegel's paintings, is left more than usual to his or her own devices, and for the artistic frame itself, which—precisely as it brings so *much* life, so many individual human beings, into the picture—points toward an excess or plentitude of humanity that it is impossible to fully represent, encompass, or comprehend. As much as any artist of the social, Bruegel depicts human beings in a mass—there's a persistent turning away from the dynamics of individual portraiture—and yet, the paintings frequently insist on the radical specificity and particularity of the persons who make up part of the canvas or part of the crowd. Bruegel's paintings thus compositionally enact the blurring that so often seems intrinsic to any image of social multiplicity, while also continually emphasizing human particularity in a way that undercuts such de-individuation. In this sense a social problematic is often coterminous with a formal or aesthetic one: the relationship of the individual to the social is translated, in many of Bruegel's paintings, into the

dynamic relationship of part to whole within the aesthetic construct. This aesthetic context is essential to Bruegel's realism: the rich "life" of the painting only comes into being through, *and* against, the complicated promise of compositional unity that the paintings ingeniously suggest.

This multiplicity, of course, has key variants. We can contrast, for instance, the fundamentally asocial flood of figures and persons in *Children's Games* or *Netherlandish Proverbs* with the much more limited and socially grounded—but still radically heterogeneous—crowd of persons in *Peasant Dance* and *Peasant Wedding*. The obvious compositional differences here—panoramic against low-angle perspective; bodies that are situated within the established lines and vectors of the painting and bodies that form this architecture more directly—are evident. But in both cases the sheer multiplicity of implied persons has great consequence. In *Peasant Dance* Bruegel situates numerous persons whom we cannot see at first glance—persons who emerge at the side (for instance, the "indrawn" man flushed against the grey fence); in gaps that are framed by more radically foregrounded figures (as with the kissing couple, one embracing and one turned away, who are cunningly recessed between the detailed white headwear of the dancer in the right foreground and the red hat of the dancer behind her); or as socially and compositionally residual (like the two children at the bottom left foreground, displaced below the primary visual plane but actually most proximate to the viewer). And we can see a crucial relationship between this form of

instability and the *temporal* instability of the painting, as it imbues us with a sense that the scene we are viewing—one of whirling motion—will be fundamentally altered in the next instant, as though the terms of background and foreground, the underlying compositional premises of the image, were moving and changing as swiftly as the dance itself. Bruegel's painting paradigmatically draws these two processes together, intertwining our perception of social multiplicity and our sense of temporal precariousness. And this subtle, intricate conjoining is as important to the painting's contested realist aesthetics as its choice of nonelevated subject matter, its attention to detail, or its commitment to cultural verisimilitude.

The interaction between formal and social multiplicity can be fruitfully considered in relation to another key dimension of Bruegel's painting, which brings us closer to genre in an explicit sense—its vacillation between realistic and allegorical frameworks. Again, many of Bruegel's paintings are neither stably realistic nor allegorical, but they dramatize the encounter between representation and allegory. Thus, the series of seasonal paintings that suggest themselves as abstractions of a recurrent temporality also inscribes the specificity, contingency, and sheer weightiness of human labor. The human figures in a painting like *The Harvesters* (1565) (Fig. 38) are posited against an allegorical order that must necessarily eliminate their specificity, even while the stabilizing compositional premises of the painting rely on these same particularized (and thus always potentially discordant) figures.

Where do we first look? And how does this open-ended, partial looking interact, for example, with the attention we can confer on such an "indrawn" figure as the peasant with the water pitchers walking through (and imposingly framed within) the shadowed grove of the wheat field? ([Fig. 39](#)) Here our referential comprehension of an isolation, and dignity, embedded within the act of labor also takes form through the "kinetics" of compositional structure—isolation flows from our selective observation of this figure to his own indrawn bearing and confined location, and back again. To choose is to isolate: in the typical Bruegel painting, the viewer is confronted with a mass of human reality—and a crowd of compositional elements—and doesn't know exactly where to turn. The eye wanders. The discovery of the painting, as a whole, occurs in a halting manner. Often the viewer will see something new after a while—a recessed scene or inconspicuous section of the painting —and simultaneously recognize, as he notices it, that he *hadn't* seen it before. This belated recognition is, of course, crucial to Bruegelian representation. Here was a part of the painting that was palpably, evidently *there* and yet effectively invisible. And now, as the viewer focuses on this compelling element of the painting, he might become aware that he is not viewing the rest of the visual field. Thus Dickens's description of the "dark lantern" in *The Pickwick Papers*, which "threw a very brilliant little tunnel of light before them, about a foot in diameter. It was very pretty to look at, but seemed to have the effect of rendering the surrounding objects rather darker than before."[33] To see one detail—to focus

on one scene—can be to darken the scenes surrounding. The harvesting scenes thus balance populatedness and isolation—individual figures who might be lost in labor but *also* lost in the compositional dynamics of the painting itself.

Figure 38:

The Harvesters, 1565, oil on panel, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. From Roberts-Jones, 154–55.

View Asset

Figure 39:

Detail, *The Harvesters*, 1565, oil on panel, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. From Roberts-Jones, 155.

View Asset

This sense of obscurity in Bruegel's work often depends on an inscription of a fullness that is not registered, an implied potentiality, within even the more occluded figures, to manifest themselves—a threat to take up more space, or to compel further attention. This is made starkly evident in the center of another one of the seasonal paintings, *Haymaking* (1565), where three figures in the left foreground—in full-face, three-quarters profile and full profile—make us "see" more precisely what is being hidden by the teeming baskets that cover the heads of the three figures behind them. (Fig. 40) These conjoined icons of personality and depersonalization are incorporated into both the storied and formal economy: the contrast between the three displayed persons and these three almost violently obscured heads stands as a powerful representation of labor's temporality (going to and from the harvest) but also is embedded in the larger play between representation and composition, which animates the painting as a whole. The contrast between obscuring and display, which anchors the juxtaposition of these two groups of figures, also informs the depiction of the privileged group that *is* directly presented. (Fig. 41) As with the three boys on the fence in *Children's Games*, we can't help but see these women first *as* a group and then disaggregate them, pulled by each individual, and each contingent detail within the already highlighted scene. The profiled face of the old woman; the rakes resting on the shoulders of two of the women but clenched and unraised by the third, front figure—even in the manifestation of these three figures (heightened in relief against the concealed heads behind them), we find dramas of

partial neglect, latent intentionality, and the potential for (and thus not yet the adequate realization *of*) action.

Figure 40:

Detail, *Haymaking*, 1565, oil on panel, Roudnice Lobkowicz Collection, Nelahozeves (Czech Republic). From Manfred Sellink, *Bruegel: The Complete Paintings, Drawing and Prints* (New York: Harry N Abrams, 2007), 205.

View Asset

Figure 41:

Detail, *Haymaking*, 1565, oil on panel, Roudnice Lobkowicz Collection, Nelahozeves (Czech Republic). From Roberts-Jones, 157.

View Asset

Allegory and Vulnerability

Implied persons in Bruegel's paintings—often socially, or temporally, vulnerable to begin with (Fig. 42, *The Parable of the Blind* [1568])—are also compositionally vulnerable, open to both spatial neglect and semantic or structural abstraction. The overlooking that is compositionally produced in *Christ Carrying the Cross* (in large part, of course, through the overpopulated field) is allegorized in *The Fall of Icarus*, which has far fewer figures. And crucially, Icarus, who becomes a minor figure par excellence in Bruegel's modern reception, is doubly missed: when the viewer alights upon him, his compositional obscuring has been enacted mimetically.[34] Icarus's feet—all that remain of the person—make us see *that* we have missed (the person who is already plunged underwater) rather than merely allowing us to see *what* we have missed. (Fig. 43) Falling and inverted figures recur throughout Bruegel's work and emblematize the relationship between reference, form, multiplicity, and vulnerability that I've been discussing.[35] Typically, Bruegel puts us in the middle of the fall—another kind of limbo—and, as we can see in both *Christ Carrying the Cross* and *Icarus*, paintings can link the precariousness of such an intermediate state to the formal dynamics of the composition. The falling figure in Bruegel almost always has an allegorical potential, so we can read these images as the visual rendering of a physical state that (in turn) has been motivated by an abstract moral or theological claim. The upside-down boy at the epicenter

of *Children's Games* (<u>Fig. 44</u>) thus allegorizes or parabolically suggests the "upside-down," morally inverted world that has cued many iconological readings of the image. What if we were to "invert" this sequential logic, however? So that, rather than envisioning a composition that responds to the allegorical complexity of the depicted event, we understood the event of falling as produced *by* the referentially charged pressures of the composition? (Put most paradigmatically: people get squeezed out —or overshadowed, hidden, constrained, peripheralized—by the composition, and then fall, residually, *in* the composition). If the falling figure often emerges at the complicated threshold between realism and allegory—as in *The Parable of the Blind*—this threshold itself is part of what underlies the stark vulnerability that accretes in the represented image. Thus, Bruegel provokes a deep tension in this painting between the searing realism of the work (the painting is suggestively precise, for example, about the different kinds of eye disease that afflict the individual blind men) and the abstraction in the title.[36] By framing the picture *as* a parable, the title points away from the painting's material vividness, toward a single, theologically grounded meaning that is both independent of and at odds with the physical specificity and social urgency of the image. The title enjoins us to be "blind" to the very details about blindness that it visualizes, "leav[ing] the viewer suspended," in Snow's words about this painting, "between realistic and emblematic modes of perception" (73).

Figure 42:

The Parable of the Blind, 1568, tempera on canvas, Museo Nazionale di Capodimonte,

Naples, inv. 84.490. From Sellink, 252.

View Asset

Figure 43:

Detail, *The Fall of Icarus*, date uncertain, oil on canvas, Musées Royaux des Beaux-Arts de

Belgique, Brussels, inv. 4030. From Roberts-Jones, 287.

View Asset

Figure 44:

Detail, *Children's Games*, 1560, oil on panel, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna. From

Seipel, 42.

Such suspension between places is obviously a condition shared by the figures in the painting as well. *The Parable of the Blind* is a crucial site in Bruegel's oeuvre because—by conjoining the event of falling, in all its temporal complexity, with the social deprivation of the blind beggars—it substantializes and materializes a precariousness that, as we've seen, is also compositionally grounded. In other words, after we've looked at the catastrophe of these tumbling men, how do we look at other falling or distended figures (or even merely "indrawn" or "outflung" figures) in Bruegel's work without an increased sense of urgency? Thus, *The Parable of the Blind* (like many of the painter's works) both reads and disrupts other Bruegel images. Bruegel's persistent gravitation toward allegory can be understood in dialectical relation to the process of social representation, precisely because, in its pressure *against* the realist image, allegory, once again, intensifies the precariousness of representation itself. Allegory is enfolded within the dynamics of the composition, rather than merely providing a framework through which the image—in both its referential and formal complexity—can be stabilized or understood. As Joseph Koerner writes in his dialectically charged account of Bruegel's *The Battle of Carnival and Lent*: "A painting of everyday life is born from the materialization of allegory."[37]

Thus in *Big Fish Eat Little Fish* (1556)—another almost *too*-starkly vivid parable—Bruegel includes in the foreground a pointing figure who overtly allegorizes the grotesquely detailed central image, modeling a didactic, moralizing, and abstracting relationship to what we view. (Fig. 45) And yet, certainly, in this case, we see the mediated object ironically before the mediating frame: coming to notice the person who points us to (the now-figuralized) image only after we have been viscerally immersed in the gigantic image itself. The ironic way in which this represented image precedes, and thus exceeds, the abstracting frame that means to contain it resonates with the socially charged dynamics of this visual parable itself, as it works to both confute and multiply "inside" and "outside." The "big fish" spills out with the smaller fish that it has violently swallowed and that, in turn, have constituted its own monstrous largeness; the "multitude" escape (many still alive) from the belly and mouth of the dead fish in the center, but many of these little fish, in turn, are prominently swallowing still smaller ones. This image constitutes a graphic representation of social multiplicity, exploitation, and competitive struggle. Intertwined with this critical vision of power and struggle, the scene also destabilizes (or, ironically, draws into itself) the very act of framing by suggesting how an object that we contain within a frame—like one of the small fish inside the larger one—can become a container itself (of those still smaller fish), while any container, that would structure an act of representation, can also be framed within a (larger) represented field.

Figure 45:

Big Fish Eat Little Fish, 1556, pen and brush, brown and grey-brown ink, Graphische

Sammlung Albertina, Vienna, inv. 7875. From Sellink, 88.

View Asset

There is something thus uncanny in Bruegel's inscription of a pointing figure within the image, as it seems to both highlight and negate the painting's allegorical drive. A parable is meant to *make* the referenced image point (away from itself, toward an abstraction), not to represent the act of pointing. The palpable radicalization of such a principle is clearly the ambitious canvas *Netherlandish Proverbs* (1559) (Fig. 46), which visualizes a copious range of vernacular and classical proverbs. This painting at once monumentalizes the moralizing, abstracting, or symbolic valence that runs through Bruegel's work and—in its detail and complexity —brings allegory down to earth, and into the frame, so that the fundamental logic and telos of the proverbial aesthetic is disrupted. Most obviously, the sheer multiplication of proverbs makes the conversion of image into fixed stable meaning impossible. Putting a (super-abundant) collection of pointing images together yields a resonantly directionless or multidirected

compositional space—a space as competitive and chaotic as those big and little fish (which are also inscribed as a tiny element within this picture).[38] ([Fig. 47]())

Figure 46:

Netherlandish Proverbs, 1559, oil on panel, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Gemäldegalerie, inv. 1720. From Roberts-Jones, 203.

View Asset

Figure 47:

Detail, *Netherlandish Proverbs*, 1559, oil on panel, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Gemäldegalerie, inv. 1720. From Roberts-Jones, 206.

View Asset

And it is important here that Bruegel—in contrast to previous paintings of this kind—makes the number of proverbs encased in the composition not merely large but uncountable and, thus, the

act of reading the painting not merely expansive or encyclopedic but vertiginous. Because of *both* the density and the ambiguity of so many figures, critics have identified anywhere from 80 to 120 proverbs, and much of the scholarship on this image consists of adding to, or trying to add up the sum of, this count. But as Mark Meadow writes, "The sheer number of proverbs depicted; the frequent conflation of two or more adages into a single figure; the spatial complexity of the world of the image; the literal obscurity of many of the proverbs, hidden in the dark recesses of the buildings or fading away in the diminished scale and haze of the distance; [and] the lack of any identifying or even enumerating inscriptions"—all work to undercut any assumption that "the proverbs cumulatively combine to put forward a single statement." [39] We lose our places in this strangely detailed, cross-cutting visualization of proverbs, like many of the figures in the characterological world. Bruegel oversaturates the visual field in different ways: proverbs and proverbial agents both interrupt and echo one another; figures can be read through competing frameworks; strangely vivid details work (as in *Parable of the Blind*) to defamiliarize abstractions, tearing the image in two different directions, even as "stories" of doubleness and splitting—two dogs fighting for one bone; talking with two mouths; two asses shitting through one hole; two heads in one cap; killing two flies with one swatter—recur. Thus, the different forms of "tug-of-war" that

Bruegel here visualizes are intertwined once more with the tension and pull between reference and allegory at the center of Bruegelian visualization itself.[40]

The pointing finger that *Big Fish Eat Little Fish* associates with the allegorical drive is foregrounded in the last image I want to consider, *Peasant and Birdnester* (1568), another deictic painting that stages a confusion between frame and referent and also—like *The Fall of Icarus* and *Christ Carrying the Cross*—another paradigmatic exploration of center and periphery. (Fig. 48) At the same time, this Bruegel painting is connected to the sequence of compositions that inscribe or revolve around a falling figure. Like the *Parable of the Blind*, then, *Peasant and Birdnester* suggests a relationship between the proverbial or allegorical drive of the compositions and the represented event of falling. Ostensibly this painting visualizes a proverbial saying of explicit interest to Bruegel —"he who knows where the nest is has the knowledge; he who takes it has the nest"—and critics can derive various moral statements out of this visualization.[41] But the visualization itself is quite haunting, as though Bruegel, in this late and diminutive painting, has crystallized the compositional principles that we've been examining to their starkest, and narrowest, dimensions. Only two persons occupy the scene, almost as if Bruegel—whose extant paintings include no individual portraits—was coming as close as he would, with this radically foregrounded peasant, to painting a single person. By this proximity, of course, the painting undermines the premises of individual portraiture: the two figures

are locked into a symbiotic (compositional) relationship that takes place across the axis of center and periphery, while the large peasant, because of his pointing finger, hovers at another threshold, functioning, quite oddly, as both a represented object of the parable (or, more strictly, of *visualization*) and a substantialized agent for parable (or visualization) itself. In other words, the pointing peasant catches the viewer halfway between looking through him (as though he were directing us toward the scene that should coordinate our attention) and looking at him (as though he were a composite part *of*, rather than our entryway into, the scene we want to view). In this way Bruegel seems to capture, in the organization of this painting, that unstable threshold between abstraction and contingency that so much of his work concerns. But at the same time, *Peasant and Birdnester* also brings the play between center and periphery to a maximal point of aesthetic tension, in the suspended, asymmetrical tug-of-war between the two figures in the painting. Why suspended? On the one hand, we can't look at the central figure without soon looking away *from* him, toward the scene at which he so emphatically points. On the other hand, the secondary figure toward whom our attention is called—with his contorted limbs and obscured face—is not comprehended directly, but only through the intervention of the very person who subordinates him. Each figure, across the threshold of background and foreground, works to displace the other. It is a remarkably precarious compositional, and referential, moment: it can't hold for one second longer (as center and periphery, under the momentum of this pointing hand, would

begin to trade places), and yet it is impossible to see, in this confusion, exactly *what* we would see next. Crucially, Bruegel draws such precariousness into the represented world itself: we belatedly discover the thief in the tree only to see, at once, the hat that suggests his own impending tumble, just as the central figure, as though through the very act of pointing us into the background that displaces him, stumbles unwittingly on the water's edge. Both figures are about to fall. In this way a deeply felt precariousness about representation—grounded in Bruegel's inclusive, centrifugal aesthetics—seems to have broken into the depicted scene, motivating both the gravity and the imbalance that endangers this viewed world. Ultimately, of course, it is not the hat that is vulnerable to a fall but the hat's owner, still clinging to the tree. If we don't see this person plunging directly, this is perhaps because, as in the case of the submerged Icarus, the peripheral character's incomplete representation largely constitutes the event of his fall.

Figure 48:

Peasant and Birdnester, 1568, oil on panel, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna, inv. 1020.

Roberts-Jones, 189.

View Asset

Notes

Introduction: Genre Regenerated

1. The topics come from *Genre: Forms of Discourse and Culture* 41 (2008). The essay on the curse psalm does not appear on the website's list of contents for that issue, but it is indexed in the *MLA Bibliography* and does appear on pp. 129–42 of the journal itself.

2. Culler has been making literary theory comprehensible to US academics for some thirty years. See, for example, his *Structuralist Poetics: Structuralism, Linguistics, and the Study of Literature* (New York: Routledge), 1975; his *The Pursuit of Signs: Semiotics, Literature, Deconstruction* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press), 1981; and *On Deconstruction* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press), 1982, not to mention the ingeniously conceived and brilliantly executed *Literary Theory: A Very Short Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000).

3. Stanley Fish, *Is There a Text in This Class? The Authority of Interpretive Communities* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press), 1982. I was not present at the seminar but heard the story repeatedly on the Stanford campus.

4. Dworkin's treatment of Hejinian's poetry resembles his approach in *Reading the Illegible* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press), 2003.

5. Dimock similarly (and usefully) imports a term from geometry in her discussion of fractals and genre in "Genre as World System: Epic, Novel, Henry James," in *Through Other Continents: American Literature across Deep Time* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press), 2006.

6. Puchner has commented at length on the genre of the closet drama in his *Stage Fright: Modernism, Anti-Theatricality, and Drama* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press), 2002; and on the manifesto in *Poetry of the Revolution: Marx, Manifestos, and the Avant-Gardes* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press), 2005. He elaborates his arguments about dramatism and the Socrates play in his new book, *The Drama of Ideas: Platonic Provocations in Theater and Philosophy* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press), 2010.

7. Gérard Genette, *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method*, trans. Jane E. Lewin (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press), 1983.

8. Lynch departs here from the characterization-based approach of her influential book *The Economy of Character: Novels, Market Culture, and the Business of Inner Meaning* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press), although her take on genre maintains the emphasis on the extradiegetic, material world developed in the book.

9. For applications of this approach in the context of global human rights, see Joseph Slaughter, *Human Rights, Inc.: The World Novel, Narrative Form, and International Law* (New York: Fordham University Press), 2007.

10. Woloch has elaborated this part of his argument with reference to realist fiction in *The One vs. the Many: Minor Characters and the Space of the Protagonist in the Novel* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press), 2003.

1. Genre: Lyric

1. Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1981), 105.

2. Maurice Blanchot, *Le livre à venir* (Paris: Gallimard, 1959), 243–44. All translations are my own unless otherwise noted.

3. Ibid., 243.

4. Benedetto Croce, *Aesthetic as Science of Expression and General Linguistic* (New York: Noonday, 1953), 144.

5. Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1957), 247.

6. The *Dichtarten* are listed alphabetically: "Allegorie, Ballade, Cantate, Drama, Elegie, Epigramm, Epistel, Epopöe, Erzählung, Fabel, Heroide, Idylle, Lehrgedicht, Ode, Parodie, Roman, Romanze, Satire." Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, "Noten und Abhandlungen zu besserem Verständnis des *West-östlichen Diwans*," in *Goethes Werke*, ed. Erich Trunz (Munich: Hamburger Ausgabe, 1981), 2:187–89.

7. Gérard Genette, *The Architext, An Introduction*, trans. Jane Lewin (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 65–66.

8. G. W. F. Hegel, *Aesthetics*, vol. 2 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975), 1113.

9. René Wellek, "Genre Theory, the Lyric and Erlebnis," in *Discriminatons: Further Concepts of Criticism* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1970), 251–52.

10. Emily Dickinson, *The Poems of Emily Dickinson*, ed. Thomas H. Johnson (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1955), quoted in Virginia Jackson, *Dickinson's Misery: A Theory of Lyric Reading* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 3–4.

11. Ibid., 4.

12. Ibid., 7.

13. I have discussed this problem in "Why Lyric?," *PMLA* 123 (2008): 201–6.

14. W. R. Johnson, *The Idea of Lyric: Lyric Modes in Ancient and Modern Poetry* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), 139.

15. Horace, *Odes 3.13, in Horace, The Complete Odes and Epodes*, trans. David West (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 13.

16. Gregson Davis writes, "The explicit performative *dicente* has the self-fulfilling effect of ennobling the addressee," with the result that "the scene of the utterance becomes certified as an authentic (albeit Roman) locus of lyric creativity." *Polyhymnia, The Rhetoric of Horatian Lyric Discourse* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 127–28.

17. William Fitzgerald offers a brilliant reading of the sacrifice of

the kid in relation to poetic pleasure, which is radically other than the ordinary pleasure offered by a cool spring in summer. The sacrifice is an unbalancing of the relation between speaker and spring, an excess that links the energy of the spring's waters to the energy of the kid's potential life, answered by the excess of the final section where the speaker promises fame above ordinary springs. See "Horace, Pleasure and the Text," *Arethusa* 22 (1989): 98–102.

18. The fact that the spring is addressed constitutes it as potentially responsive. "By addressing the spring as *splendidior vitro*, 'more brilliant (not 'translucent') than glass,'" writes Fitzgerald, "the speaker constitutes the spring as an object that throws back his own voice just as it does the light, so that the final syllable of *vitro* echoes the 'O' of the apostrophe and the two polysyllabic choriambs in the middle of the line fill out the mirroring ABBA structure .... The 'O' that is the pure voice of encounter is thrown back at the speaker." He insists, correctly, that "in order to approach the poem as a rhetorical action we will have to take seriously the fact that it is cast as an address. I will therefore avoid the strategy by which the poem is treated as a dramatic monologue that merely *conforms* to the ancient habit of addressing a poem to a person or thing." Ibid., 98.

19. Ibid., 99.

20. Horace, *Odes* 1.5.

21. William Anderson claims, "We meet a speaker who watches with imprecise emotion an obvious courtesan named Pyrrha and an inexperienced young man whose name is unknown to the speaker." William S. Anderson, ed., *Why Horace?: A Collection of Interpretations* (Wauconda, IL: Bolchazy-Carducci, 1999), ix. He does not, however, explain how the discourse of the lyric fits into this scene of voyeurism.

22. The rhetorical intent of the poem, writes Gregson Davis, is "disapprobation, not of the beautiful *hetaira*, but rather of the immature lover." He is naïve and a slow learner, who will be disappointed many times (Polyhymnia, 225). Whether or not this is the best way to read the poem—as mockery of the type of the amorous beginner—Davis's solution underscores the implausibility of taking this as a dramatic monologue addressed to Pyrrha.

23. See Jeffrey Walker, *Rhetoric and Poetics in Antiquity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 9, 149. Epideictic rhetoric, which Walker argues derives from archaic lyric, includes panegyric and—unlike pragmatic rhetoric, which is directed toward decision—is directed to an audience that does not make decisions, *kritês*, but forms opinions in response to the discourse, which thus "shapes and cultivates the basic codes of value and belief by which a society or culture lives" (149). This holds, he argues, for the audience of Thucydides, Plato, and Sappho. And, of course, Horace aspires to revive the Greek lyric tradition of Sappho and Alcaeus.

24. Charles Baudelaire, *Oeuvres complètes* (Paris: Gallimard, 1976), 2:164.

25. For a performance of this song by Elizabeth Schwarzkopf, see http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ifuwo9iNf7E&feature=related.

26. Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, "Heidenröslein," in *Sämmtliche Werke*, ed. Karl Eibl (Frankfurt: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1987), 1:278; trans. David Wellbery, in *The Specular Moment: Goethe's Early Lyric and the Beginnings of Romanticism* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1996), 225.

27. Roman Jakobson, "Closing Statement: Linguistics and Poetics," *Style in Language*, ed. Thomas Sebeok (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1960), 352.

28. Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations*, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken, 1968), 169.

29. Charles Baudelaire, *Les Fleurs du Mal*, in *Oeuvres complètes*, 1:92–93, trans. C. F. MacIntyre, in *Les Fleurs du Mal*, ed Marthiel Mathews (New York: New Directions, 1955), 118. Translation modified.

[STET: For some reason it won't let me insert a comment here but I always insist on keeping the capitals in *Les Fleurs du Mal*: they are historically accurate and thematically important, whatever general usage guides may say about French titles. I have also inserted or reinserted the accent grace in *complètes*.

30. Albert Thibaudet, *Intérieurs* (Paris: Gallimard, 1924), 38.

31. For an extraordinarily stimulating discussion of this poem (and a translation of it into a villanelle!), see Clive Scott, *Translating Baudelaire* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2000), 97–100.

32. John Ashbery, *Your Name Here* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux: 2000), 3.

33. Susan Stewart, "Preface to Lyric History," in *Uses of Literary History*, ed. Marshall Brown (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1995), 212.

34. Bruce Robbins, afterword to *Remapping Genre*, special issue, *PMLA* 122 (2007): 1648.

2. The Prosaic Imagination

1. *The Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd ed., s.v. "prosaic." ed. John Simpson and Edmund Weiner (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989). Noted hereafter as *OED*.

2. The nearly invisible naturalness of prose suggest the machinations of ideology hard at work (or what Jeffrey Kittay and Wlad Godzich describe as "powerful semiotic mechanisms" [xi]). For one account of the cultural work necessary to secure the prevalence of prose, see their study *The Emergence of Prose* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987).

3. Ibid., x.

4. Richard Aldington, "A Note on Poetry in Prose," *Chapbook* 22 (April 1921), 18.

5. William Wordsworth, *Lyrical Ballads, with Pastoral, and other Poems*, 3rd ed. (London: Longman and Rees, 1802), 1:xxiv, note.

6. Ibid.

7. See, for instances, Pierre Guyotat, *Prostitution* (Paris: Gallimard, 1975); or *Progénitures* (Paris: Gallimard, 2000).

8. W. B. Yeats, ed., *The Oxford Book of Modern Verse: 1892–1935*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1936), 1.

9. Walter H. Pater, *Studies in the History of the Renaissance* (London: Macmillan, 1873), 119.

10. Yeats's recognition of Pater's prose-formatted text as already inherently poetic distinguishes his intervention from something like José Garcia Villa's "Adaptations," a set of "experiments in the conversion of prose, through technical manipulation, into poems." "Constructing in verse what originally exists as prose," Garcia Villa took texts from prose genres as sources for found vocabulary. The Adaptations implicitly argue that those sources can be transformed into poetry, not that they are already poetic. Additionally, they do not utilize the inherent qualities of prose; they might have made the same point by ameliorating unpoetic verse. See José Garcia Villa, *Doveglion: Collected Poems* (New York: Penguin, 2008), 147ff.

11. T. S. Eliot, "Prose and Verse," *The Annotated Waste Land with Eliot's Contemporary Prose*, ed. Lawrence Rainey (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2006), 159.

12. See, for a random instance, "Yeats knew Leonardo from Pater, whose famous description of *La Gioconda* Yeats divided into lines" (Elizabeth Bergmann Loizeaux, Yeats and the Visual Arts [Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2003], 129). Other scholars describe the text as "chopped up into lines" (Kenneth Clark, "introduction to *The Renaissance* [New York: World Publishing, 1961], 16) or "broke into lines" (C. D. Wright, *Cooling Time: An American Poetry Vigil* [Port Townsend, WA: Copper Canyon, 2005), 92], and they characterize Yeats as "casting [Pater's] prose into lines" (James Longenbach, *Art of the Poetic Line* [Minneapolis: Graywolf Press, 2008], 103).

13. As Elizabeth Barrett Browning puns, early in *The Book of the Poets*, quoting Chaucer's line from the *Knight's Tale*: "Up rose the sunne, and uprose Emilie," continuing: "and uprose her poet, the first of a line" (Elizabeth Barrett Browning, *Poetical Works* [New York: Dodd, Mead, 1885], 4:310). The intended referent is the genealogical line of kings, but the ghost of "a prose" in the word "uprose" makes Browning's phrase a good reminder that both poetry and prose are printed "of a line."

14. *Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*, ed. Alex Preminger, enl. ed. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1974), 664.

15. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, "Teaching Experimental Critical Writing," in *The Ends of Performance*, ed. Peggy Phelan and Jill Lane (New York: New York University Press, 1998), 111.

16. Meyer Howard Abrams and Geoffrey Galt Harpham, *A Glossary of Literary Terms*, 9th ed. (Boston: Wadsworth Cengage Learning, 2009), 288.

17. However impractical, such books would, of course, not be impossible to print; in 1999 Michael Maranda produced an edition of Thomas Carlyle's *History of the French Revolution* as one continuous line printed on a thin strip of paper only one centimeter high but nearly 6.5 kilometers long.

18. Gérard Genette, *The Architext: An Introduction* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 3.

19. *OED*, s.v. "composition."

20. Ed Folsom, *Whitman Making Books/Books Making Whitman: A Catalog and Commentary* (Iowa City: Obermann Center for Advanced Studies, University of Iowa, 2005), 5.

21. Horace Traubel, *With Walt Whitman in Camden, April 8–September 14, 1889* (Boston: Small and Maynard, 1906), 5:390.

22. Folsom, *Whitman Making Books*, 4.

23. Jorge Luis Borges, "Pierre Menard, autor del Quijote," *Obras completas*, new rev. ed. (Buenos Aires: Emecé Editores, 2005), 1:477; *Labyrinths*, trans. James E. Irby (New York: New Directions, 1964), 39.

24. Ibid., 478, 39.

25. Ibid., 480, 42.

26. See Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, trans. Roy Harris (Peru, IL: Open Court, 1986), 69ff.

27. Clark Coolidge, *ING* (New York: Angel Hair, 1968), unpaginated.

28. Edward Foster, "An Interview with Clark Coolidge," *Talisman: A Journal of Contemporary Poetry and Poetics* 3 (Fall 1989), 26.

29. Clark Coolidge, untitled statement, *Angel Hair Sleeps with a Boy in My Head: The Angel Hair Anthology*, ed. Anne Waldman and Lewis Warsh (New York: Granary Books, 2001), 581. For a discussion of Coolidge's relation to the visual arts, including a reading of "Cabinet Voltaire," see Tom Orange, "Clark Coolidge's Visual Arts Intertexts, 1968–1976," *Fascicle 2* (Winter 2005–6), http://www.fascicle.com/issue03/main/issue03_frameset.htm.

30. "The Cabinet is overthrown" is Robert Motherwell's translation of "Le Ministère est renversé" in *The Dada Painters and Poets: An Anthology*, second edition (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981): 183.

31. Lyn Hejinian, *Writing Is an Aid to Memory* (Berkeley: The Figures, 1978). The book is unpaginated; subsequent citations will be to the section number in which a passage appears. A facsimile and searchable electronic version are available at http://english.utah.edu/eclipse/projects/WRITING.

32. Jean Piaget, *Genetic Epistemology*, trans. Eleanor Duckworth (New York: Columbia University Press, 1979), 45.

33. Ibid., 43.

34. *The Grand Piano: San Francisco 1975–80: An Experiment in Collective Autobiography*, pt. 3 (Detroit: Mode A, 2007), 61. In a previous essay on Hejinian's book, I speculated, "A writerly reading … may be the original source of this elliptical vocabulary [i.e., the partial words], which could have been generated from a source text in which Hejinian scanned down the left-hand edge of a page of justified and hyphenated prose" (Craig Dworkin, "Parting with Description," *American Women Poets in the 21st Century: Where Lyric Meets Language*, ed. Claudia Rankine and Juliana Spahr [Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2002], 244–45). However, unable to discover any conclusive proof, I mistakenly concluded: "*Writing Is an Aid to Memory* gives the uncanny impression of some compositional pattern or system or procedure …. Writing, in other words, is the type of work that the Oulipo would call a 'Canada Dry': a text that 'has the taste and colour of a restriction but does not follow a restriction'" (258).

35. *OED*, s.v. "abstract" (v).

36. Ibid.

37. Piaget, *Genetic Epistemology*, 16–17.

38. Perhaps Jerome McGann was not mistaken after all when he referred to *Writing Is an Aid to Memory* as "Lyn Hejinian's excellent *prose* sequence" (emphasis added), in *Byron and Romanticism*, ed. James Soderholm, Cambridge Studies in Romanticism (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 230.

39. Hejinian, *Writing*, sec. 7; Leonardo da Vinci, *The Genius of Leonardo da Vinci*, ed. André Chastel and trans. Ellen Callmann (New York: Orion, 1961), 30.

40. Ibid., 29–30.

41. Ibid., 30.

42. Hejinian, *Writing*, sec. 13.

43. da Vinci, *Genius*, 214. This angle of reading, bisecting the frame of the page, repeats less neatly in Hejinian's compositional practice; the line "big things weigh quite thoroughly primitive as that one," from sec. 5, takes one of its segments from a phrase on the right-hand side of a page ("big things weigh"), another from the center of the page lower down ("quite thoroughly"), with the last phrase originally falling between the other two, flush to the right margin ("primitive as that one") (cf. Piaget, *Genetic Epistemology*, 16).

44. Hejinian, *Writing*, sec. 42.

45. Ibid., secs. 5; 17; 26; 2.

46. Ibid., sec. 36.

47. Ibid., sec. 8.

48. *The Book of English Trades and Library of the Useful Arts*, new enl. ed. (London: J. Souter for Richard Phillips, 1818), 56. The line "great heat to melt on emotional sympathy," for another example of selecting vocabulary from both margins, originates in a column in *Fowler's Modern English Usage* (2nd ed., rev. Sir Ernest Gowers [New York: Oxford University Press, 1965]). On the second column at the top of page 357, where the entry for *melodrama* concludes, Hejinian finds her vocabulary (Fig. 5). The first column on the same page is also the source for Hejinian's line "the schoolboy decent to retort"; Fowler illustrates *meiosis* with the examples "the schoolboy *decent/* (=very nice), the retort I'll see you *further* (i.e. in hell) first [....]"
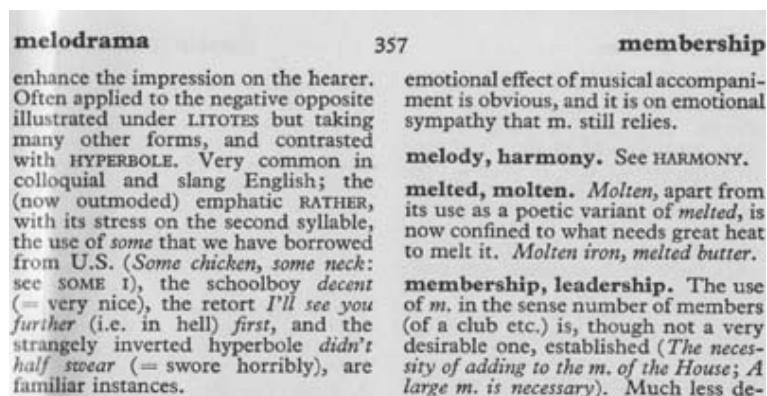

Figure 5:

Excerpt from *Fowler's Modern English Usage* (2nd ed., rev. Sir Ernest Gowers [New York: Oxford University Press, 1965]), 357.

View Asset

49. Hejinian, *Writing*, secs. 14, 23.

50. Ibid., sec. 26.

51. Ibid., secs 21.

52. Ibid., sec. 23; *Book of English Trades*, 85.

53. Peter Nicholls, "The Poetics of Opacity: Readability and Literary Form," in *Psycho-Politics and Cultural Desires*, ed. Jan Campbell and Janet Harbord (London: UCL, 1998), 155.

54. See Jan Mukařovský, *Aesthetic Function: Norm and Value as Social Facts*, trans. Mark E. Suino, Michigan Slavic Contributions 3 (Ann Arbor: Dept. of Slavic Languages and Literature, University of Michigan, 1970), 9–10 passim.

55. See György Kepes, *Language of Vision* (New York: Paul Theobald, 1944), 36.

56. Aaron Fogel, "The Nth Muse: The Image of Prose in Prose," *Western Humanities Review* 56.2 (Fall 2002). Fogel's extraordinary essay pioneers the kind of attention to prose that I am trying to sustain here.

57. Robert Hodge, *Literature as Discourse: Textual Strategies in English and History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990), 81.

58. Joseph Roth, *The Radetzky March*, trans. Joachim Neugroschel (Woodstock, NY: Overlook Press, 1995), 60–62.

59. Stephen Crane, *Maggie, A Girl of the Streets (A Story of New York)* (New York: Palgrave, 1999), 167.

60. Ibid.

61. Eugène Ionesco, *The Hermit*, trans. Richard Seaver (New York: Viking, 1974), 100, 98; *Le solitaire* (Paris: Mercure de France, 1973), 118, 116.

62. Ibid., 97–98, 115.

63. *OED*, s.v. "coffin."

64. David Antin, "Some Questions about Modernism," n.s., *Occident* 8 (Spring 1974): 14. One might compare Sterne's black page with the ghostly illegibility of the pages in Michael Maranda's *Mikhail Bakhtin: The Bildungsroman and Its Significance in the History of Realism*, part of the artist's "Lost Book Series" which endeavors to "reconstruct books missing from the historical record" (Toronto: Parasitic Ventures, 2007). Maranda tantalizingly blurs the print of the fictitious book so that the words cannot quite be made out, although the full signifying force of prose itself remains: the rhetorical organization of language justified in the service of a critical argument into paragraphs and chapters.

65. William Faulkner, *As I Lay Dying* (New York: Vintage, 1964), 82.

66. Michael Kaufmann, *Textual Bodies: Modernism, Postmodernism, and Print* (Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell University Press, 1994), 36.

67. Faulkner, *As I Lay Dying*, 208–209.

68. Ibid., 92.

69. Ibid., 86, 247; cf. 225, 249.

70. Ibid., 241.

71. Similarly, the riddle of the paradoxically filled and empty square may have its solution in the punning connection between *vacant* and *vacca* (Latin "cow"). Furthermore, "empty," as the *OED* records, denotes a cow that is not pregnant—an ironic reminder given Dewey Dell's errand in the town at the very moment of the bovine traverse.

72. Ionesco, *Hermit*, 95; *Solitaire*, 112.

73. Ibid., 96, 113.

74. Ibid.

75. Andrei Bely, *Petersburg*, trans. Robert Maguire and John Malmsted (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1979), 12.

76. Ibid., 10.

77. Ibid., 51.

78. Lyn Hejinian, *Oxota, A Short Russian Novel* (Great Barrington, MA: The Figures, 1991), 150.

79. Bely, *Petersburg*, 10, 11, 11–12.

80. Ibid., 11, 10.

81. Ibid., 10, 11.

82. Ibid., 11.

83. Ibid., 272, 271.

84. Ionesco, *Hermit*, 98, 99–100, 102; *Solitaire*, 115, 117, 120; Bely, *Petersburg*, 271, 272, 272.

85. Bely, *Petersburg*, 272.

86. Viktor Shklovsky, *Theory of Prose*, trans. Benjamin Sher (Normal, IL: Dalkey Archive, 1990), 173.

3. Migration across Genres

1. In *Inferno* 1:85, for instance, Dante addresses Virgil: "Tu se' lo mio maestro e'l mio autore" (You are my master and my author.) *Dante's Inferno*, trans. John D. Sinclair (New York: Oxford University Press, 1939), 27.

2. In Inferno 3:94, Dante writes, "E'l duca lui: 'Caron, no ti crucciare'" (And my leader: 'Charon, do not torment yourself'). Sinclair, 51.

3. Larry Niven and Jerry Pournelle, *Inferno* (New York: Pocket Books, 1976), 22.

4. *Ibid.*, 15.

5. *Ibid.*, 188.

6. Nicholson Baker, *Human Smoke: The Beginnings of World War II, the End of Civilization* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2008), 566.

7. *Ibid.*, 4.

8. Sir Arthur Harris, *Bomber Offensive* (London: Collins, 1947), 83.

9. The estimated casualty figures varied. See Peter Calocoressi, Guy Wint, and John Pritchard, *Total War: Causes and Courses of the Second World War* (Hammondsworth: Viking, 1989), 562, and David Irving, *Apocalypse 1945: The Destruction of Dresden* (London: Focal Point Publications, 1963), 260.

10. Irving, 264.

11. *Ibid.*

12. *Ibid.*, viii.

13. Renzo De Felice, *Mussolini il rivoluzionario, 1883–1915* (Torino: G. Einaudi 1965), 40, translated and quoted in A. James Gregor, *Young Mussolini and the Intellectual Origins of Fascism* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1979), 29.

14. Dennis Mack Smith, *Mussolini* (New York: Knopf, 1982), 1.

15. *Ibid.*, 134–5.

16. Richard Lyttle, *Il Duce: The Rise and Fall of Benito Mussolini* (New York: Atheneum, 1987), 97–98.

17. Gregor, 21–8.

18. Ezra Pound, *The Pisan Cantos*, ed. Richard Sieburth (New York: New Directions, 2003), 3.

19. Philip K. Dick, *The Man in the High Castle* (New York: Vintage, 1992), 244.

20. Kurt Vonnegut, *Slaughterhouse Five* (New York: Dell, 1969), 10.

21. Homer, *The Iliad*, trans. Robert Fagles (New York: Penguin, 1990), 614.

22. Vonnegut, 19.

23. *Ibid.*, 195.

24. *Ibid.*, 197.

4. Dramatism

1. Martin Puchner, *Stage Fright: Modernism, Anti-Theatricality, and Drama* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002).

2. Martin Puchner, *Poetry of the Revolution: Max, Manifestos and the Avant-Gardes* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006).

3. Franco Moretti, *Graphs, Maps, and Trees: Abstract Models for a Literary Theory* (London: Verso, 2005).

4. Puchner, *Poetry*, 38.

5. Stephen J. Gould, *Full House: The Spread of Excellence from Plato to Darwin* (New York: Harmony Books, 1996).

6. Martin Puchner, *The Drama of Ideas: Platonic Provocations in Theater and Philosophy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010).

7. Wai Chee Dimock, *Through Other Continents: American Literature across Deep Time* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006).

8. Gérard Genette, *Introduction à l'architexte* (Paris: Seuil, 1979).

9. M. M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, ed. Michael Holquist, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), 263, 275.

10. One of the few theater scholars to have taken Bakhtin to task for his instrumentalization of dramatic categories for his theory of the novel is Marvin Carlson, in "Theater and Dialogism," in *Critical Theory and Performance*, ed. Janelle G. Reinelt and Joseph R. Roach (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1992), 313–23.

11. Scott L. Newstock, *Kenneth Burke on Shakespeare* (West Lafayette, IN: Parlor, 2007).

12. Kenneth Burke, *The Philosophy of Literary Form: Studies in Symbolic Action* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973), 103.

13. Burke, *Philosophy*, 9.

14. Kenneth Burke, *A Grammar of Motives* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969).

15. Burke, *Philosophy of Literary Form*, 107.

16. Burke, *Grammar of Motives*, 230.

17. For an expanded reading of Burke as an instance of dramatic philosophy, see Puchner, *The Drama of Ideas*, 162–66; also see, Martin Puchner, "Kenneth Burke: Theatre, Philosophy, and the Limits of Performance," in *Staging Philosophy*, ed. David Krasner and David Saltz (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2006).

18. J. L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*, ed. J. O. Urmson, William James Lectures (Harvard): 1955 (Oxford: Clarendon, 1962).

19. Jacques Derrida, *Limited Inc*., ed. Gerald Graff, trans. Samuel Weber (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1988).

20. This happened, for example, in Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex* (London: Routledge, 1993). On this debate, see William B. Worthen, "Drama, Performativity, and Performance," *PMLA* 113.5 (October 1998): 1093–1107.

21. Stephen L. Bottoms, "The Efficacy/Effeminacy Braid: Unpicking the Performance Studies/Theatre Studies Dichotomy," *Theatre Topics* 13.2 (2003): 173–87.

5. The Shandean Lifetime Reading Plan

1. Laurence Sterne, *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman*, introd. and ed. Robert Folkenflik (New York: Modern Library, 2004), I, i, 2. Laurence Sterne, *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman*, ed. Melvyn New and Joan New (Gainesville: University Presses of Florida, 1978), 1: 2. All subsequent quotations are given in the text and are keyed to volume, chapter, and page numbers in these editions.

2. Victor Shklovsky, *Russian Formalist Criticism: Four Essays*, trans. Lee T. Lemon and Marion J. Reis (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1965), 57.

3. Ibid., 12.

4. *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, s.v. "routine;" s.v. "route;" s.v. "interrupt;" accessed February 6, 2010. http://www.oed.com.myaccess.library.utoronto.ca

5. Thus Tristram's account of what motivates the delayed disclosures of his first volume: "Besides, Sir, as you and I are in a manner perfect strangers to each other, it would not have been proper to have let you into too many circumstances relating to myself all at once.—You must have a little patience" (I, vi, 6) (1.9).

6. Carol Kay, *Political Constructions: Defoe, Richardson, and Sterne in Relation to Hobbes, Hume, and Burke* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1988), 213. Even readers hostile to Sterne, as Kay observes, could and did come up with jokes about clocks and noses. David A. Brewer details the various ways in which eighteenth-century readers demonstrated that they were able to play along with and prolong the game of Shandyism beyond the bounds of the printed page: *The Afterlife of Character, 1726–1825* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005), 154–88.

7. For the second state of his engraving, the version reproduced here, Hogarth added to his image the large clock behind the Shandy brothers' heads and the hat on the floor by Corporal Trim's feet. Both additions counteract this picturing of reading as still life by reminding the viewer of time's inexorable advance. In volume 5, when Trim delivers for the servant's hall an impromptu funeral elegy for the premature passing of Tristram's brother, Bobby, he makes this same hat a "type and forerunner" of "mortality" (1.432): "——'Are we not here now;'–continued the corporal, 'and are we not'—(dropping his hat plumb upon the ground—and pausing, before he pronounced the word),—'gone! in a moment?'" (V, vii, 288) (1.432).

8. In the 1774 catalogue of his "Museum" (a fashionable tourist spot in late eighteenth-century London, now best known for being visited by the characters of Frances Burney's *Evelina* [1778]), the jeweler James Cox announced a timepiece from which, "by an

union of the mechanic and philosophical principles, a motion is obtained that will continue for ever; and although the metals of steel and brass, of which it is constructed, must in time decay (a fate to which even *the great globe itself, yea all that it inherit*, are exposed), still the primary cause of its motions being constant, and the friction upon every part extremely insignificant, it will continue its action for a longer duration than any mechanical performance has ever been known to do." As Arthur W. J. Ord-Hume, to whom I owe this quotation, explains, by being attached to a barometer responsive to changes in atmospheric pressure, Cox's clock was rendered self-winding. See Ord-Hume, *Perpetual Motion: The History of an Obsession* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1977), 110–24: the quotation appears on 111. See also Simon Schaffer, "Enlightened Automata," in *The Sciences in Enlightened Europe*, ed. William Clark, Jan Golinski, and Simon Schaffer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 126–68; and Adelheid Voskuhl, "Motions and Passions: Music-Playing Women Automata and the Culture of Affect in Late Eighteenth-Century Germany," in *Genesis Redux: Essays in the History and Philosophy of Artificial Life*, ed Jessica Riskin (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 293–320.

9. William Shakespeare, *Hamlet* 5.1.171–78. Cf. Scott Maisano, "Infinite Gesture: Automata and the Emotions in Descartes and Shakespeare," in Riskin, *Genesis Redux*, 63–84. In 1760 Sterne published two volumes of the sermons that he had preached to his Yorkshire parishioners as *The Sermons of Mr. Yorick*, presenting

them, after the fact, as more reading matter from the pen that had produced the sermon that absorbs Corporal Trim in Hogarth's frontispiece.

10. Tom Keymer, "Dying by Numbers: 'Tristram Shandy' and Serial Fiction (1)," *The Shandean* 8 (1996): 53–54.

11. Appendix to *The History of Sir Charles Grandison*, by Samuel Richardson, ed. Jocelyn Harris (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), 7: 474; Anna Laetitia Barbauld, "The Life of Samuel Richardson," in Barbauld, ed., *The Correspondence of Samuel Richardson*, ed. Barbauld, 6 vols., (London: R. Phillips, 1804), 1: xxviii.

12. See *The Richardson-Stinstra Correspondence and Stinstra's Prefaces to "Clarissa,"* ed. William C. Slattery (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1969), 6:158. In elaborating this reading regimen, the bishop was authorized by Richardson's particular way with narrative form: he was a "conscripted audience" in Garrett Stewart's sense of the term (*Dear Reader: The Conscripted Audience in Nineteenth-Century British Fiction* [Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998]). We might think, for a start, of how Richardson's epistolary fictions are set up so as to be crammed to bursting with metaparables of narrative reception: his characters are readers as well as writers, and they make it clear that the letters they send and receive do not simply represent action but exist to be read and also reread. That *Sir Charles Grandison* entertains a notion of time as something that

can be rewound—and that it is convinced that books can be also—is something that its readers feel as, seven volumes in, Sir Charles's ward, Emily Jervois, comes to be situated in exactly the lovelorn position previously occupied by the heroine, Harriet Byron—likewise sickening with hopeless love for the hero, explicitly identified and identifying as "a second Harriet" (7:321). For a brief account of these sorts of time loops in Richardson's fictions, see my "On Going Steady with Novels," *Eighteenth Century: Theory and Interpretation* 50.2–3 (2009): 89–101.

13. *Cyclopaedia of English Literature: A History, Critical and Biographical, of British Authors from the Earliest to the Present Time*, ed. Robert Chambers (Edinburgh: William and Robert Chambers, 1844–53) 2: 572.

14. See Mary A. Favret, "Jane Austen at 25: A Life in Numbers," *English Language Notes* 46.1 (2008): 9; and my "Canons' Clockwork: Novels for Everyday Use," in *Bookish Histories: Books, Literature, and Commercial Modernity, 1700–1900*, ed. Ina Ferris and Paul Keen (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 87–110.

15. Stuart Sherman, "News and Novel, Pulse and Sprawl," *English Language Notes* 46.1 (2008): 21.

16. Cf. a passage from Stanley Cavell's essay on television as providing "a graph of the normal": "If classical narrative can be pictured as the progress from the establishing of one stable situation, through the event of difference, to the reestablishing of a

stable situation related to the original one, serial procedure can be thought of as the establishing of a stable condition punctuated by repeated crises or events that are not developments of the situation requiring a single resolution, but intrusions or emergencies ... each of which runs a natural course and thereupon rejoins the realm of the uneventful" ("The Fact of Television," in *Themes out of School: Events and Causes* [San Francisco: North Point Press, 1984], 258).

17. Jeffrey Masten, Peter Stallybrass, and Nancy Vickers, introduction to *Language Machines: Technologies of Literary and Cultural Production* (Essays from the English Institute) (New York and London: Routledge, 1995), 2. The claim reappears in Stallybrass's (single-authored) "Books and Scrolls": "The novel has only been a brilliantly perverse interlude in the long history of discontinuous reading" ("Books and Scrolls: Navigating the Bible," in *Books and Readers in Early Modern England*, ed. Jennifer Anderson and Elizabeth Sauer [Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002], 47.)

18. This characterization of the chapter is Franco Moretti's, in *The Way of the World: The Bildungsroman in European Culture*, cited in Nicholas Dames, *The Physiology of the Novel* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 172. Of course, the complicated publication history of Sterne's books means that they have sponsored a whole array of modes of reading: the kind of Shandean consumption that the present essay foregrounds, the reading mode that has us,

habits formed, "doing the Shandy" and reading for life, represents only one option in that wider array. During the eighteenth century more readers likely encountered *Tristram Shandy* as the concatenation of diminutive bits arrayed in the much-reprinted anthology *The Beauties of Sterne* (1782)—a book designed to be dipped into and flipped around in—than ever encountered it as a bounded entity, as, that is, nine volumes arrayed together and in order on a shelf.

19. J. Paul Hunter concludes a deft analysis of the impaired sense of an ending one finds in so much eighteenth-century fiction by turning the tables on the present-day critics who have diagnosed that impairment. Hunter declares, on the contrary, that closure as a motive for reading is grossly overstated in current theory: see "Serious Reflections on Farther Adventures: Resistance to Closure in Eighteenth-Century Novels," in *Augustan Subjects: Essays in Honor of Martin C. Battestin* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1997), 291.

20. On the centrality of spin-offs and sequels to the generic identity of the novel, see Robyn Warhol, *Having a Good Cry: Effeminate Feelings and Pop Culture Forms* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2003); Laurie Langbauer, *Novels of Everyday Life: The Series in English Fiction, 1850–1930* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1999); and my own "Austen Extended? Austen for

Everyday Use," in *Imagining Selves: Essays in Honor of Patricia Meyer Spacks*, ed. Elise Lauterbach and Rivka Swenson (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2009), 235–65.

21. Catherine Gallagher, "Formalism and Time," *Modern Language Quarterly* 61.1 (March 2000): 229.

22. The phrase in quotation marks is Nicholas Dames's: *Physiology of the Novel*, 11.

23. Stuart Sherman, "My Contemporaries the Novelists," *Novel: A Forum on Fiction* 43.1 (2010): 108.

24. Tony Bennet proposes, in *Outside Literature* (London and New York: Routledge, 1990), that genre is best used "as a means of analyzing historically and culturally variable systems for the regulation of reading and writing practices" (81).

25. Arjun Appadurai, "Consumption, Duration, and History," in *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 68, which also makes a point that the scheduled novel readings that I surveyed above bear out that "even hedonistic consumption requires its bodily disciplines, and these disciplines encourage repetition and discourage inventiveness." I owe this reference to Dames's *Physiology of the Novel*: Dames's specification of the ways in which

Victorian novel theory dealt with the novel as a process rather than a structure is suggestive for the Victorians' predecessors as well (11).

26. I cite William Hone's preface explaining the nature of this genre: "Perhaps, if the good old window-seats had not gone out of fashion, it might be called a parlour-window book—a good name for a volume of agreeable reading selected from the book-case and left lying about, for the constant recreation of the family, and the casual amusement of visitors" (*The Table Book* [London: Hunt and Clarke, 1827], n.p.). In an 1809 advertisement the bookseller Richard Phillips advertised a book list designed, he claimed, to answer the "complaint among the lovers of English Literature, that our language has been deficient in Lounging, or Parlour-window Books" (quoted in Thomas F. Bonnell, *The Most Disreputable Trade: Publishing the Classics of English Poetry, 1765–1810* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008], 347).

27. John Noorthouck, unsigned review in the *Monthly Review*, 2nd ser. (July 1791), anthologized in *Sterne: The Critical Heritage*, ed. Alan B. Howes (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul 1974), 317.

28. It also suggests how the novel form both benefits from and contributes to "the growing regularity of private life"—the growing predominance of dutiful repetition and methodical work over the spontaneity that formerly daily life had sheltered. On this transformation, see Franco Moretti, "Serious Century," in *The Novel*, 2 vols. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006), 1:380.

29. Thomas Jefferson, Letter to Peter Carr, August 10, 1787, in *Jefferson: Writings*, ed. Merrill D. Peterson (New York: Literary Classics of the United States, 1984), 902.

30. Christopher Nagle, "Sterne, Shelley, and Sensibility: Pleasures of Proximity," *ELH* 70 (2003): 828. See also Wolfgang Iser's *Laurence Sterne: Tristram Shandy*, trans. David Henry Wilson, Landmarks of World Literature (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), which gets provocative results by beginning by asking whether *Tristram Shandy* itself has a beginning. See also the discussion of the dash in Duncan Campbell, *The Beautiful Oblique: Conceptions of Temporality in* Tristram Shandy (Bern: Peter Lang, 2002), pp. 36–46.

31. Maurice Blanchot, "Everyday Speech," trans. Susan Hanson, *Yale French Studies* 73 (1987): 14.

32. As in, for example, J. Hillis Miller's "Narrative Middles: A Preliminary Outline," *Genre* 11 (1978): 375–87.

33. See my "Austen Extended/Austen for Everyday Use."

34. Rita Felski, introduction to *New Literary History* 33.4 (2002): 607–22. Think, for instance, of how, as Felski says, Henri Lefevre and Michel de Certeau champion habitual activities as actually disordering, aleatory, and disruptive, thus championing the everyday in terms that negate its everydayness—and how seldom

one encounters in their theorizing any recognition that "everyday life might include desire 'from below' for order, stability and the security of ritual" (612).

35. Felski, introduction, 613.

36. When, in *The Resources of Kind: Genre Theory in the Renaissance*, ed. Barbara K. Lewalski (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973), 116, Rosalie Colie wrote that "the kinds"—genres—"could easily be seen as tiny subcultures with their own habits, habitats, and structures of ideas as well as their own forms," she presaged the connections I am seeking to make here between our attitudes to genre and our attitudes to the habit-forming. She also made it sound as if inhabiting a genre might be a bit like inhabiting Shandy Hall. John Frow cites this passage from Colie's book as he notes, in terms that resonate with Felski's account of the animus against the everyday detectable in its advocates, the belated Romanticism both of Derrida's deconstruction of what he calls "The Law of Genre" and of Thomas Keenan's declaration that the heart of the literary experience is "our exposure to the singularity of a text" (Frow, *Genre*, New Critical Idiom, [Abingdon: Routledge, 2006], 27).

37. Anon., "The Projector, No. XLIX," *Gentleman's Magazine* 75 (1805), quoted in Ina Ferris, *The Achievement of Literary Authority: Gender, History, and the Waverley Novels* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991), 43, as in my own *The Economy of Character: Novels, Market Culture, and the Business of Inner Meaning* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 223.

38. Martha F. Bowden, *Yorick's Congregation: The Church of England in the Time of Laurence Sterne* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2007), 216.

39. Elizabeth King, "Perpetual Devotion: A Sixteenth-Century Machine That Prays," in *Genesis Redux*, 278.

40. See Lorna Clymer's introduction to *Ritual, Routine, and Regime: Repetition in Early Modern British and European Cultures* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007).

41. J. Paul Hunter, "Clocks, Calendars, and Names: The Troubles of Tristram and the Aesthetics of Uncertainty," in *Rhetorics of Order/Ordering Rhetorics*, ed. J. Douglas Canfield and J. Paul Hunter (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1989), 175.

42. Stuart Sherman, *Telling Time: Clocks, Diaries, and English Diurnal Form, 1660–1785* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 6–12.

43. "Running out of Matter: The Body Exercised in Eighteenth-Century Fiction," in *The Language of Psyche: Mind and Body in Enlightenment Thought*, ed. G. S. Rousseau (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 160.

6. Form and Informality: An Unliterary Look at World Literature

1. Erika Doss, *Elvis Culture: Fans, Faith and Image* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1999), 223.

2. This official collection of Elvis sightings contrasts sharply with the stories archived at the many unofficial fan sites (e.g., honorelvis.com), where conspiracy-minded enthusiasts share truly haunting tales of having seen the *King himself* boarding an airplane or having heard his voice in a hotel lobby.

3. Rosemary J. Coombe, *The Cultural Life of Intellectual Properties: Authorship, Appropriation, and the Law* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1998), 90.

4. Doss, *Elvis Culture*, 229.

5. Michel Foucault, "What Is an Author?," in *Textual Strategies: Perspectives in Post-Structuralist Criticism*, ed. J. V. Harari (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1969), 151.

6. On the anthropomorphizing of intellectual property more generally, see Paul Saint-Amour, "Introduction: *Modernism and the Lives of Copyright*," in Modernism and Copyright, ed. P. Saint-Amour (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010): 1–36.

7. Coombe, *Cultural* Life, 99.

8. Ibid., 98.

9. Moisés Naím, *Illicit: How Smugglers, Traffickers, and Copycats Are Hijacking the Global Economy* (New York: Doubleday, 2005), 126. In Naím's vision of a new world disorder, illegal copies of *The Lion King* raise money for the IRA; pirated copies of Gabriel Garcia-Márquez novels support the FARC; knockoff brake pads finance Hezbollah; and the "tried-and-true cigarette scam" probably funded the 9/11 hijackers, just as the sale of counterfeit T-shirts in midtown Manhattan apparently paid for the first World Trade Center bombing (127). One form of illicit behavior and attack on world trade supposedly supports another: our creative and intellectual insecurities are exploited to assault our physical and national securities. In a sense this is a modern variant on an old theme: the mortal danger that a copy without conscience poses to the original.

10. William P. Alford, "Intellectual Property, Trade and Taiwan: A Gatt-Fly's View," *Columbia Business Law Review* (1992): 99. For a good discussion and bibliography of the "second enclosure movement" argument, see James Boyle, "The Second Enclosure Movement and the Construction of the Public Domain," *Law and Contemporary Problems* 66.23 (2003): 33–74.

11. A number of good studies, in addition to Coombe and Saint-Amour, have considered some of the cultural implications of this shift. See especially Mitsuo Matsushita, "A Japanese Perspective on Intellectual Property Rights and the Gatt," *Columbia Business Law Review* (1992): 81–95; Debora Halbert, "Intellectual Property Piracy:

The Narrative Construction of Deviance," *International Journal for the Semiotics of Law* 10.28 (1997): 55–78; Vandana Shiva, *Protect or Plunder?: Understanding Intellectual Property Rights* (London: Zed Books, 2001).

12. Paul K. Saint-Amour, *The Copywrights: Intellectual Property and the Literary Imagination* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2003), 218.

13. United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), *Human Development Report* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 68. The location of the ownership of these intellectual properties contrasts sharply with the location of the resources from which many of these "ideas" are extracted; according to the same report, "90% of the world's store of biological resources" and biodiversity are located in "developing countries" (70). A huge percentage of the patents granted each year are for derivatives (and the processes to derive them) that are drawn from the vast resources and "raw" materials (or germplasm) of the developing world.

14. Because copyright numbers are so difficult to track (compared to patents, which require registration for protection), WIPO has developed a set of guidelines to help nations assess a more nebulous quality: "the economic contribution of the copyright-based industries," http://www.wipo.int/ip-development/en/creative_industry/economic_contribution.html.

15. Pascale Casanova, *The World Republic of Letters* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), 175.

16. Franco Moretti, *Graphs, Maps, Trees: Abstract Models for Literary History* (New York: Verso, 2005), 90.

17. Franco Moretti, "Conjectures on World Literature," *New Left Review* 1 (2000): 58, 60. To follow the novel is to predetermine, at least in some way, the shape of world "literary" space—perhaps it tells us something about the novel, or world-novelistic space, but why be so grand with it and make claims about the literary, or world literature, based on the novel? Moretti proposes his various methods of analysis as investigative tools for the study of world/comparative literature, but the conclusions to be drawn are almost always foregone; so, for example, here is what "a literary criticism finally transformed into a *comparative historical morphology*" will "one day" find "in the geographical variation and dispersal of forms": "the power of the center over an enormous periphery." Franco Moretti, *Atlas of the European Novel: 1800–1900* (London: Verso, 1998), 195. In his discussion of *Graphs, Maps, Trees*, Christopher Prendergast identifies a similar tendency for *petitio principii* in the "logical structure" of what he calls Moretti's "house style." Christopher Prendergast, "Evolution and Literary History: A Response to Franco Moretti," *New Left Review* 34 (2005): 42.

18. Casanova, *World Republic*, 116, 177, 183, 44, 95.

19. Ibid., 21, 23, 21.

20. This assertion has more than metaphorical value, particularly if we accept the implications of Vandana Shiva's account of the history of modern patents, which were the legal mechanisms by which colonial charter companies were granted monopoly rights to the land, resources, and labor of Africa, Asia, and the Americas in the high-imperial Age of Discovery (11–13). The patent process of conquest and capital accumulation created much of modern Europe's wealth and consolidated the trade-related advantages (which are also cultural and military advantages) that are protected today under the guise of intellectual property law. This is another way of demonstrating Said's provocative assertion that "without empire ... there is no European novel as we know it." Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Knopf, 1993), 82.

21. Casanova is ambivalent about the "relative autonomy" of literary space that "can never," she writes, "be completely superimposed upon the political geography of the world's nations" (*World Republic*, 95). Her point is, I take it, that aesthetic politics cannot simply be reduced to geopolitics, but the logic and operations of intellectual property so fully crosscut the political, economic, and literary realms that, at least from the perspective of intellectual resources (which is a dominant, if merely metaphorical, vocabulary in her account), it becomes very difficult to maintain the idea of the "relative autonomy" of "aesthetic" matters.

22. For example, books are species of copyright properties—that's easy, since things have been that way for a very long time. But, under what genus do we put oral epics? And what do we do with indigenous or traditional knowledge, which, by most accounts, seems to be inherently antithetical to modern property conceptions and regimes. I mention these only to name a problem.

23. Casanova, *World Republic*, 11.

24. Ibid., 117. I have elsewhere examined some of the national and international structural and infrastructural reasons why the bildungsroman has become the dominant form for novels coming out of Africa and other postcolonial spaces. See especially, Joseph Slaughter, "*Clef à roman*: Some Uses of Human Rights and the *Bildungsroman*," *Politics and Culture* 3 (2003); and *Human Rights, Inc.: The World Novel, Narrative Form, and International Law* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2007).

25. Society's margins provide the typical social setting of the picaresque novel, but the bourgeois fascination with the informal is perhaps best exemplified in the middle section of many bildungsromans, when the protagonist slums it in some fashion among the lower classes until she or he is "straightened out" and becomes amenable to the proper norms of formal society.

26. Ashley Dawson, "Surplus City: Structural Adjustment, Self-Fashioning, and Urban Insurrection in Chris Abani's *Graceland*" *Interventions* 11.1 (2009): 24.

27. Chris Abani, *GraceLand* (New York: Picador, 2004), 11–12.

28. Ibid., 78.

29. Dawson, "Surplus City," 24.

30. Abani, *GraceLand*, 8. Michael Walzer, "Passion and Politics," *Philosophy & Social Criticism* 28.6 (2002): 621–22.

31. Abani, *GraceLand*, 7–8.

32. Casanova, *World Republic*, 209.

33. Stephanie Newell, "Redefining Mimicry: Quoting Techniques and the Role of Readers in Locally Published Ghanaian Fiction," *Research in African Literatures* 31.1 (2000): 46. My essay shares the spirit of Newell's; Newell quite brilliantly challenges the overly simplistic diffusionist models of globalization—which see dominant "Western popular culture" as unilaterally overwhelming the local cultures of postcolonial societies—by looking closely at the sociological and cultural contexts within which particular, "unorthodox" citational practices developed in popular Ghanaian literature.

34. Abani, *GraceLand*, 167.

35. Adélékè Adéèkó, "Power Shift: America in the New Nigerian Imagination," *Global South* 2.2 (2008): 18.

36. Gérard Genette, *The Architext: An Introduction* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 12–13.

37. Gérard Genette, *Palimpsests: Literature in the Second Degree* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1997), 10.

38. Linda Hutcheon, *A Theory of Parody: The Teachings of Twentieth-Century Art Forms* (New York: Methuen, 1985), 75.

39. It is worth noting the linguistic irony of the UNESCO Convention. Article 18 states, "This Convention is drawn up in English, French, Russian and Spanish, the four texts being equally authoritative." Of course, these are the dominant colonial appropriative languages of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

40. This is the basic logic of intellectual property imperialism, which advances throughout the globe by dispersed systems of diffusion and dissemination of (cultural) forms that sometimes "out-compete," and often reduce the diversity of, "local" cultural forms. The double bind of TRIPS for developing countries is outlined in two articles of the agreement: article 66 obliges developed countries to provide incentives for their own intellectual property owners to transfer technology to the developing world in order to help establish "a sound and viable technological base"; article 67 obliges developed countries to provide "technical and financial" assistance for "the preparation of laws and regulations on the protection and enforcement of intellectual property rights." The obligations assumed by developing countries are, of course,

ultimately self-interested: obligations to help the developing countries to protect the obliged nations' IP rights. World Trade Organization, "Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights," http://www.wto.org/english/tratop_e/trips_e/t_agm0_e.htm.

41. Might something similar be at work in the World Republic of Letters, abetted by the current regimes of IP law that protect only some kinds of intellectual creations and knowledge? As property regimes push further across the globe, do the resource-rich societies and cultures of the Global South become more condensed? Are they condensed in the same way as when a monoculture in crops expands it concentrates biodiversity in ever smaller spaces, in the shrinking tropical rain forests, for example?

42. On the history of these ideas in the discipline of anthropology, see Peter J. Hugill and D. Bruce Dickson, introduction to *The Transfer and Transformation of Ideas and Material Culture* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1988): xi-xxii.

43. Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin, *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literature* (London: Routledge, 1989). At their most facile, less nuanced empire-writes-back readings represent merely a globalization of Harold Bloom's Oedipal "anxiety of influence" theory of writing that cannot help but to recast authors from the global periphery as intellectually

immature and culturally dependent or, by Bloom's definition, as just plain "weak." Harold Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973).

44. Chinweizu, Onwuchekwa Jemie, and Ihechukwu Madubuike, *Toward the Decolonization of African Literature* (Washington, DC: Howard University Press, 1983), 16–17.

45. Casanova defines "peripheries" (or "peripheral dependencies") by their "aesthetic distance" from a literary capital (*World Republic*, 12); Moretti gives one more quantitative, and especially suggestive, gloss of "periphery": "Almost by definition, *the periphery of a system is a place where data are least abundant*" (*Atlas*, 184). This is an unobjectionable description of a periphery, at least in systemic terms, but saying that what a system knows least about constitutes its periphery is tantamount to admitting that this system is not a "world system," just a system that appropriates the name of "the world," If we employ that logic to think about the current international intellectual property systems, then copyright (as opposed to patents and trademarks) represents the periphery of the IP system. Thus, literary criticism that takes the traditional literary text as its object would, by implication, represent the back of beyond of contemporary social, economic, and cultural analysis as it relates to the power dynamics of international intellectual relations. If that is the case, then my objections to Moretti's and Casanova's models are rather inconsequential. However, I clearly think such matters matter, and I've come to realize, while working

on this essay, that I am not the audience imagined by Moretti or Casanova; they are not writing for people with my sort of training in ethnic and third-world literatures. Rather, they are writing for those implied readers whose reading "revolv[es] around the river Rhine" (as Moretti readily admits about his own concentration in "Conjectures on World Literature" [54])—those who, as Casanova puts it, "ignore the basic fact of the inequality of access to literary existence" (*World Republic*, 354). To their credit, neither Moretti nor Casanova ignores such inequality, even if their modes of accounting for it lack, at least for me, a certain necessary nuance.

46. See Djelal Kadir, "To World, to Globalize—Comparative Literature's Crossroads," *Comparative Literature Studies* 41.1 (2004): 1–9.

47. Most discussions of world literature are, in some sense, already about property; this is borne out, I think, in the ways that genre analysis often becomes an indirect way of talking about cultural property (the Italian comedy, the Greek epic, the German bildungsroman, the African novel—notice that the scales are almost always off).

48. UNDP, *Human Development Report*, 57.

49. This difference might be illustrated by the different claims of corporate authorship and modes of distribution between Disney's *The Lion King* and one of its apparent sources, the Mande epic of Son-Jara.

50. International Labour Office (ILO), Employment, *Incomes and Equity: A Strategy for Increasing Productive Employment in Kenya* (Geneva: International Labour Office, 1972), 503–4.

51. See especially, Barbara A. Misztal, *Informality: Social Theory and Contemporary Practice* (London; New York: Routledge, 2000); and Barbara A. Misztal, "The New Importance of the Relationship between Formality and Informality," *Feminist Theory* 6.2 (2005): 173–94.

52. Colin Leys, "Interpreting African Underdevelopment: Reflections on the ILO Report on Employment, Incomes and Equality in Kenya," *African Affairs* 72.289 (1973): 426.

53. Karen Tranberg Hansen and Mariken Vaa, introduction, to *Reconsidering Informality: Perspectives from Urban Africa* (Spain: Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, 2004), 7.

54. Keith Hart, "Small-Scale Entrepreneurs in Ghana and Development Planning," in *People Planning and Development Studies: Some Reflections on Social Planning* (Geneva: United Nations Research Institute for Social Development, 1970), 109. Hart noted a tendency in the informal sector that may have some interesting ramifications for literary studies: the informal economy tends to reward the "diversification of … interests" rather than the specialization that typically characterizes the economic activity of businesses in the formal sector (108).

55. ILO, *Incomes and Equity*, 6. The ILO analysts went to some effort to legitimize the informal sector in Kenya by giving it a kind of cultural or ethnic genesis; so, interestingly, they emphasize parallels between it and "the Harambee, or self-help, movement which has been such a fundamental part of Kenya social and economic development in the period since the attainment of national independence" (225). The links seem forced, but the logic of analogy would suggest that Julius Nyerere and other postcolonial East African leaders and thinkers (rather than European anthropologists, sociologists, and the ILO) were the true theorists of informality.

56. Saskia Sassen, *Globalization and Its Discontents* (New York: Norton, 1998), 153.

57. Naím, *Illicit*, 110.

58. ILO, *Incomes and Equity*, 504.

59. Adrian Johns, *The Nature of the Book: Print and Knowledge in the Making* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998).

60. Comfort Owusu, *Comprehensive Notes, Questions, and Answers on General Knowledge of Literature* (Accra, Ghana: Comfort Owusu, 2003), 39.

61. Hart, "Small-Scale Entrepreneurs," 104.

62. Carolyn Nordstrom, *Global Outlaws: Crime, Money, and Power in the Contemporary World* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), xvii.

63. Abani, *GraceLand*, 98.

64. Meir Sternberg, *Expositional Modes and Temporal Ordering in Fiction* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978), 1.

65. If "we have come to invoke 'culture' as the name for the gap between us here and them there" (quite problematically, as Anthony Appiah suggests), then we might think of exposition as always a narrative expression of cultural difference. K. Anthony Appiah, "Citizens of the World," in *Globalizing Rights: The Oxford Amnesty Lectures*, 1999 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 212. When a lab technician on a current TV crime drama explains how DNA identification works to an investigator who surely already knows, having brought, for the umpteenth time, some piece of evidence for DNA analysis, the writers are addressing a perceived cultural difference between the show's up-to-date staff and of its potentially out-of-date viewers.

66. It's possible that the phrase appears in one of "the records of the despised British anthropologists" that Iris Andreski had in mind when she chastised Achebe (whom she called a "rural African novelist") for supposedly working from colonial source materials rather than from "the memories of his grandfathers" (cited in Chinua Achebe, "Colonialist Criticism," in *Hopes and Impediments:*

Selected Essays [New York: Doubleday, 1989], 71). The colonial, or postcolonial, writer gets it coming and going: not English enough; not ethnic enough.

67. Chinua Achebe, *Things Fall Apart* (Oxford: Heinemann, 1996), 13, 19.

68. See especially Austin J. Shelton, "The Offended *Chi in Achebe's Novels*," Transition 13, (1964): 36–37.

69. Chinweizu et al, *Toward the Decolonization*, 264. The "question of introducing 'anthropological' or 'sociological material'" into African literature has been a contentious matter for writers and critics since the early days. For example, the *Bolekaja* critics insisted that "the proper audience" for "the African novel" is African readers and, therefore, that "expositions required solely by the deficiencies of non-African audiences ought not to be encouraged," Achebe has been rather consistently praised for the subtlety of the formal solutions he developed to "cushion" the readers' (African and non-African alike) entry into his fictional world. For an overview of these critical discussions, see Oyekan Owomoyela, "The Question of Language in African Literatures," in *A History of Twentieth-Century African Literatures* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1993).

70. Charles R. Larson, *The Novel in the Third World* (Washington, DC: INSCAPE, 1976), 40.

71. Similar arguments are made about Francophone and Lusophone African literatures.

72. For discussions of the role that Western education and elite Euro-American universities played in the creation of African literature as a field, see Simon Gikandi, "Globalization and the Claims of Postcoloniality," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 100.3 (2001): 627–58. See also A. O. Amoko, "The Problem with English Literature: Canonicity, Citizenship, and the Idea of Africa," *Research in African Literatures* 32.4 (2001): 19–43.

73. In Julien's analysis, the problem of the double audience is obviated by the diasporic (or alienated) condition of the African portion of the audience; these "extroverted novels" "speak outward and represent locality to nonlocal others, be they expatriate communities abroad, other African nationals on the continent, … or U. S. students." Eileen Julien, "The Extroverted African Novel," in *The Novel: History, Geography, and Culture*, ed. Franco Moretti (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006), 684.

74. Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, *Decolonizing the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature* (Portsmouth, NH: James Currey/Heinemann, 1986), 22.

75. Julien, "Extroverted African Novel," 681. Another way of making Julien's point could emphasize the effective fungibility of "the African novel" within World literature, where (from the institutional

perspective) individual literary creations are largely incidental: the analytic and consecrating instruments of official World Literature are calibrated to discover (or identify) only certain kinds of literary production that are generally characterized, as Julien says of the African examples, by "intertextuality with hegemonic or global discourses" (Ibid).

76. Larkin's analysis of "pirate modernity" in the Nigerian video industry is relevant to my own discussion of informal literary sectors. He argues that the material conditions of the informal pirate networks that developed to reproduce and distribute foreign films in Nigeria not only provided the infrastructure for the emergent "legitimate" Nigerian video industry but also established qualities that have become generic features of Nigerian videos: "poor transmission, interference, and noise." Brian Larkin, "Degraded Images, Distorted Sounds: Nigerian Video and the Infrastructure of Piracy," *Public Culture* 16.2 (2004): 291.

77. There is an analogy to be made here between these literary devices of cultural difference and trademarks, which tend over time to lose their originating (linguistic) metaphors to become discrete entities in their own right—so that "Sunkist," in Leo Spitzer's famous example, no longer explicitly invokes the poetic "sun-kissed" quality that originally made the name and the oranges attractive. See Leo Spitzer, "American Advertising Explained as Popular Art," in *Essays on English and American Literature* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1962), 248–77.

78. I should note that Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* (2003), which also has certain intertextual engagements with *Things Fall Apart*, often provides no gloss of Igbo words or sayings, leaving the reader either to figure out the meaning from context or to learn to tolerate a certain level of not understanding. It would be interesting to compare the techniques on this account of the whole "Third Generation" of Nigerian writers.

79. Emily Apter, "CNN Creole: Trademark Literacy and Global Language Travel," *Sites: Journal of the Twentieth-Century/Contemporary French Studies* 5.1 (2001): 27–46. Abani, GraceLand, 318, 317.

80. Graham Huggan, *The Postcolonial Exotic: Marketing the Margins* (London: Routledge, 2001), 30.

81. See Simon Gikandi, "Chinua Achebe and the Invention of African Culture," *Research in African Literatures* 32.3 (2001): 3–8.

82. Moretti, "Conjectures on World Literature," 55.

83. Abani, *GraceLand*, 111–12.

84. Jennifer Wenzel, "Intertextual Africa: National Literature and Transnational Imagining," unpublished manuscript (2008).

85. Abani, *GraceLand*, 112–13.

86. Kurt Thometz, *Life Turns Man Up and Down: High Life, Useful Advice, and Mad English: African Market Literature* (New York:

Pantheon Books, 2001), xvii.

87. Donatus Nwoga summed up the difference this way: "These books go quickly out of print …. There is no sense of preservation or continuity. Books are often not reprinted because they would be 'out of date.' … When the readers finished with a book they used it for toilet paper or rolled their tobacco in it to make cigarettes or just threw it away," which helps to explain why so few examples found their way to libraries and private collections. Donatus I. Nwoga, "Onitsha Market Literature," *Transition* 19 (1965): 26.

88. Ulli Beier, "Writing in West Africa: A Chance to Adapt and to Experiment," *Times Literary Supplement*, August 10, 1962, 570–71; Emmanuel N. Obiechina, *An African Popular Literature: A Study of Onitsha Market Pamphlets* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973). Moretti cites one of Obiechina's studies to corroborate his foreign form/local content thesis on the continent of Africa ("Conjectures," 60). However, part of Moretti's blindness in his conjectures is that he fails to historicize the literary histories on which he depends and the institutional politics in which those critics were currently engaged; thus, he generally invokes sources from the 1970s and '80s that sought to establish the legitimacy of the literary objects they were studying—that sought to demonstrate, precisely, that these texts were legitimate objects of literary study and proper candidates for formal admission into World Literature. That many of these critics adopted the strategy

of validating disrespected literatures by analogy to already accepted and respected literatures, or to the prehistory of those literatures, is both understandable and (probably) tactical. Those arguments may say more about the politics of literary acceptance and acceptability than they do about the literary forms themselves.

89. Newell makes this point brilliantly in her reading of Ghanaian popular literatures. See "Redefining Mimicry," 32–49.

90. Cited in Thometz, *Life Turns Man*, xvii.

91. Abani, *GraceLand*, 111–12.

92. Wenzel, "Intertextual Africa," 23.

93. M. M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), 294. For a nuanced discussion of the similarities and differences between the dominant British and French traditions of authors' rights that formed the basis of the current international agreements, see Alain Strowel, "Droit d'auteur and Copyright: Between History and Nature," in *Of Authors and Origins: Essays on Copyright Law* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1994) 235–53.

94. Moretti, "Conjectures on World Literature," 60.

95. Peter Nazareth, "Elvis as Anthology," in *In Search of Elvis: Music, Race, Art, Religion* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1997).

96. Abani, *GraceLand*, 318.

97. Ibid., 298.

98. R. C. Agoha, *Medicinal Plants of Nigeria* (Nijmegen: Faculteit der Wiskunde en Natuurwetenschappen, 1973), 113.

99. J. M. Dalziel, *The Useful Plants of West Tropical Africa—An Appendix to the Flora of West Tropical Africa* (London: Crown Agents for Oversea Governments and Administrations, 1937). William P. Daniell, "On the *Synsepalum dulcificum*, De Cand.; or, Miraculous Berry of Western Africa," *Pharmaceutical Journal and Transactions* 11 (1852): 445.

100. Daniell, "*Synsepalum* dulcificum,"448. See Archibald Dalzel, *The History of Dahomey, an Inland Kingdom of Africa; Compiled from Authentic Memoirs* (London: Spilsbury and Son, 1793), v.

101. Jurisdiction matters here as it does in world literature, because under national systems of patent registration, companies may take something that is common knowledge in one place (India or Igboland, for example) and patent that knowledge elsewhere, where it may legitimately be characterized as (locally) novel and nonobvious.

102. Naomi Roht-Arriaza, "Of Seeds and Shamans: The Appropriation of the Scientific and Technical Knowledge of Indigenous and Local Communities," in *Borrowed Power: Essays on Cultural Appropriation* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University

Press, 1997), 262. See also Kembrew McLeod, *Owning Culture: Authorship, Ownership, and Intellectual Property Law* (New York: Peter Lang, 2001), 173–82.

103. This is one of the biases in the IP regime against traditional knowledge, where much of the information has been transmitted for centuries in the oral mode. It permits biopiracy, and means that researchers in pharmaceutical companies may now be the biggest single readership of old colonial travelogues. A couple of patents on the Neem tree have been successfully challenged by an Indian NGO that produced evidence of "prior art" in old Sanskrit manuscripts (McLeod, *Owning Culture*, 176). See also Shiva, *Protect or Plunder?*.

7. Partial Representation

1. George Orwell, "Why I Write," in *Complete Works of George Orwell*, vol. 18, ed. Peter Davison (London: Secker and Warburg, 2002), 320.

2. *The Architext* was chosen by the organizers as the text for a roundtable discussion at the end of the English Institute's "Genre" conference and precirculated to the speakers in advance of the conference. Genette's skepticism about literary reference is not, of course, idiosyncratic at this theoretical moment. On the contrary, an anti-mimetic tendency is intertwined with the development of structural, poststructural and deconstructive criticism throughout the 1970s and '80s.

3. Gérard Genette, *The Architext: An Introduction*, trans. Jane E. Lewin (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 9.

4. Ibid., 9.

5. Ibid., 27.

6. "Consequently, there are only two conceivable ways of promoting them to poetic *dignity*. The first way is to uphold, while somewhat expanding, the classic dogma of mimesis and strive to show that that type of statement is still, in its own fashion, an "imitation." The second and *more radical way* is to *break with the dogma* and proclaim the *equal poetic dignity* of a

nonrepresentational utterance. Today these two movements seem antithetical and logically incompatible. But in fact one will succeed the other and link up with it almost unnoticeably, the former paving the way for the latter while cloaking it, *as reforms sometimes break the ground for revolutions*" (Genette, *The Architext*, 28; emphases added).

7. Charles Dickens, *The Pickwick Papers* (London: Penguin Books, 1999), 212–13.

8. Charles Dickens, *Our Mutual Friend* (London: Penguin Books, 1997), 417.

9. Miguel de Cervantes, *Don Quijote*, ed. Diana de Armas Wilson and trans. Burton Raffel, Norton Critical Edition (New York: W. W. Norton, 1999), 49–50.

10. For some of the canonical critical texts that offer accounts of one or more of these formal features of the novel, see, on circumstantial realism, Ian Watt, *The Rise of the Novel: Studies in Defoe, Richardson and Fielding* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1957); on the "reality effect," Roland Barthes, "The Reality Effect," in *The Rustle of Language*, trans. Richard Howard (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), 141–48, and S/Z (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1970); on realist detail, Naomi Schor, *Reading in Detail: Aesthetics and the Feminine* (New York: Routledge, 2007); on the dialectic between "naïve empiricism" and "extreme skepticism" built into the novel as genre, Michael McKeon, *The Origins of the English Novel,*

1600–1740 (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987); and on the constitutive contemporaneity of the novel, M. M. Bakhtin, "Epic and Novel," in *The Dialogic Imagination*, trans. Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), 3–40.

11. For a longer discussion of "partial representation" and Sayles's realism, see Alex Woloch, "Break-Ups and Reunions: Late Realism in Early Sayles," in *Sayles Talk: New Perspectives of Filmmaker John Sayles*, ed. Diane Carson and Heidi Kenaga (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 2006), 51–78.

12. Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*, trans. William D. Trask (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1953), 193.

13. Alex Woloch, *The One vs. the Many: Minor Characters and the Space of the Protagonist in the Novel* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003).

14. For this discussion of Dickens see Woloch, *The One vs. the Many*, particularly 125–33 and 143–45.

15. Dickens, *The Pickwick Papers*, 6.

16. Ibid., 9.

17. Edward Snow, *Inside Bruegel: The Play of Images in "Children's Games"* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1997).

18. Snow's book is controversial. Joseph Koerner, reviewing the

text in 1998 in *The New Republic, wrote*, "Against an art history obsessed by 'historical context,' Snow restores looking—what he calls a 'willingness to credit what one finds inside images'—as the entrance into paintings …. It will be interesting to see how Bruegel scholars respond to Snow's book …. *Inside Bruegel* should be required reading for anyone working on any aspect of the artist's iconography" ("Serious Mischief," *The New Republic*, February 1, 1999, 28 and 30). But T. J. Clark, singling out Snow for praise in a 2008 discussion of formalist theory, laments how "Snow's book has been rigorously excluded from discussion, or even acknowledgment, in almost all the Bruegel literature" ("More Theses on Feurbach," *Representations* 104 [Fall 2008]: 7). Koerner's own recent work on Bruegel offers a powerful model for his claim, discussing Snow's work, that "to become more properly historical … the study of Bruegel must become more hermeneutic" (30).

19. Snow's chapter on Peasant Dance (45–57) is the most extended reading he offers in juxtaposition to *Children's Games*. Of this detail he writes,

> "Commentators who argue that the painting is a denunciation of sinful behavior take the building to be a tavern and see the woman as attempting to pull the man into it. But in spite of the prominently displayed banner, the building looks more like a private dwelling than a public gathering place, and it is impossible to decide whether the woman is trying to pull the man inside or the man is trying to coax her outdoors. Rather than a loose woman exerting her force on a reluctant customer, she may be a virtuous wife trying to get her husband to come home, or (even more likely?) a potential partner pulling against the man's efforts to involve her in the dance …. All we can say for sure is that there is a relation across a threshold and a resistance in

one figure which the other is trying to overcome. All this makes them ironic counterparts of the upright, slack, nearly disembodied pair … pictured on the banner just above them.

The pairing of these two couples … initiates a dense sequence of pairs" (46–47).

20. Ibid., 3.

21. Ibid., 4.

22. Ibid.

23. I see these states as similar to the forms of "functionality" and "eccentricity" that I discuss as the two extremes of minorness in *The One vs. the Many*, both as general categories and in relationship to Dickens (24–26 and 155–76).

24. For "assurance," see Snow, *Inside Bruegel*, 141–60.

25. Ibid., 102.

26. Ibid.

27. Ibid., 103.

28. Ibid.

29. Joseph Leo Koerner, "Unmasking the World: Bruegel's Ethnography," *Common Knowledge* 10.2 (2004): 220–51. Koerner's essay unfolds a complicated, multilayered dialectic in this painting (and in Bruegel more pervasively) between covering, symbolism, ceremony and masking, on the one hand, and discovering,

materializing, and unmasking on the other. The central figures of "Carnival" and "Lent" thus work to allegorize *themselves*, and they succeed only to the degree that this enactment is partial: "Personification, for the fellow doing it, is a balancing act. Little of his comic costume would belong to a real prince, since it is mostly kitchen gear; and these humble stands-ins should *also* display their nonfigurative use, otherwise they would not be funny" (226). The play of such figurative and nonfigurative aspects in the objects that bedeck "Carnival" and "Lent" is far from a resting point for this dialectic in Koerner's account; on the contrary, such tension, which "lets the painting embrace the spectrum from reality to symbol"(227), is central to his reading of Bruegel's art. Koerner's discussion reanimates the question of Bruegel's realism by showing how the allegorical drive does not subsume or negate, but is dialectically intertwined with, Bruegel's materialist and "ethnographic" imagination.

30. Charles Dickens, *Barnaby Rudge* (London: Penguin Books, 2003), 89.

31. Koerner, "Unmasking the World," 244.

32. Koerner has a fine description of the "initial experience" (244) of viewing *Christ Carrying the Cross*, with the inevitable temporal delay in discovering the hidden center. The weave of centrality and obscurity that structures this partial representation is reinforced by the explicit generic shifting of the painting, as Bruegel disjunctively paints the foregrounded, biblical figures in the style of

earlier Flemish painters like van Eyck (in contrast to *both* the contemporary dress of other figures in the landscape and the deep historical time of the biblical scene itself).

33. Dickens, *The Pickwick Papers*, 527.

34. For a suggestive reading of *The Fall of Icarus* in relation to the Auden poem and, much more generally, twentieth-century modernity, see Alexander Nemerov, "The Flight of Form: Auden, Bruegel, and the Turn to Abstraction in the 1940s," *Critical Inquiry* 31 (Summer 2005): 780–810.

35. Ross Hamilton offers a reading of this same pictorial event in "Bruegel's Falling Figures," *Viator* 38.1 (2007): 385–404, which looks at *The Peasant and the Birdnester, The Parable of the Blind, and The Fall of Icarus* in addition to *The Fall of the Rebel Angels* and *The Conversion of Saul*. Hamilton argues that these paintings catalyze a contemplative, interpretative stance, on the part of the viewer, which is at odds with the vulnerability and temporal mutation implied by the event of falling. He traces this "complex relation between knowledge or insight and action" (398) to the Reformation revival of Augustinian hermeneutics. "By fixing the moment of falling and offering its representation as a subject for contemplation, the paintings preserve a motion of thought. At the same time, engaging the work in this way also abstracts the viewer from the sensation of time passing or involvement with the surrounding world" (400).

36. See, for example, Zeynel A. Karcioglu, "Ocular Pathology in *The Parable of the Blind Leading the Blind* and Other Paintings by Pieter Bruegel," *Survey of Ophthalmology* 47.1 (January-February 2002): 55–56.

37. Koerner, "Unmasking the World," 231.

38. If Bruegel looks back, in *Netherlandish Proverbs*, by inscribing a "little" big fish eating a still smaller one, does he also look forward, with the radically backgrounded but still illuminated figure of the blind leading the blind that we can so easily overlook? The swerve or pivot between background and foreground takes place not only within separate images of Bruegel but between them, as the hidden details or recessed interiors of one painting can give us the "frame" through which we view another, while the foregrounded subject of one painting can highlight a latent or *compositional* principle in another.

39. Mark Meadow, *Pieter Bruegel the Elder's "Netherlandish Proverbs" and the Practice of Rhetoric* (Zwolle: Waanders, 2002), 39. Meadow notes that "the literature on Bruegel's *Netherlandish Proverbs* is enormous. The majority of the scholarly writing on this painting is concerned almost exclusively with identifying the proverbs illustrated, and disappointingly little of it attends to the qualities and composition of the painting itself" (159).

40. For another suggestive image of the tug-of-war in Bruegel's work, see the 1558 drawing *Elck*, or *Everyman*, 1558. Pen and brown ink, London, British Museum.

41. Bruegel inscribes this comment at the bottom of his drawing *The Beekeepers* (1568). See Philippe and Françoise Roberts-Jones, *Pieter Bruegel* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 2002), 188–91.

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