THE HUMAN FORM

Literature | Politics | Ethics
from the Eighteenth Century
to the Present

ANDREA TIMÁR

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Literature, Politics, Ethics, from the Eighteenth Century to the Present

Andrea Timár

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The cover photo of this book, showing Horváth-kert surrounded by the demolished houses of Krisztina Boulevard in Budapest, 1945, was used in accordance with the policies of Fortepan.

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Contents

Foreword 7

HUMAN SYMPATHY – SYMPATHY FOR THE HUMAN 9
Sympathy, Mindreading, Ethics: From the Eighteenth Century to the Twenty-first 11
Resistances: The Murder of the Mother(tongue) – Agota Kristof's *The Notebook* 26
The Violence of Sympathy: J. M. Coetzee's *Foe* 41
What does it mean to be human? Gergely Péterfy's *Kitömött barbár* [Stuffed Barbarian] in a European Context 55

THE INHUMAN AND THE HUMAN FORM 67
"The Human Form": Aesthetic/Political Disinterest in Matthew Arnold and Immanuel Kant 69
French Theory – French Terror: The Autoimmune in Derrida and Wordsworth 85
Critical Approaches to William Wordsworth's "Composed Upon Westminster Bridge, September 3, 1802" 105
"View the ocean as poets do": The Posthuman and the Inhuman in Wordsworth, Kant, de Man, and Meillassoux 116
"Increasing store with loss, and loss with store": Keats, Shakespeare, the Elgin Marbles, and the Radical Politics of Allegory 128

List of Previously Published Essays 145

Works Cited 146

Foreword

My first monograph, *A Modern Coleridge: Cultivation, Addiction, Habits* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2015) explored what it meant to be human for the conservative, post-Enlightenment poet, philosopher, and political thinker, Samuel Taylor Coleridge. The essays of this present volume, published between 2010 and 2018,* examine what it has meant to be human from the eighteenth century to the present. The first part of the volume critically engages with eighteenth-century notions of sympathy (as elaborated by Adam Smith) and our present notion of narrative empathy (Martha Nussbaum, Suzanne Keen). It examines how novels such as Agota Kristof's *The Notebook* (1986), Noémi Szécsi's *Gondolatolvasó* [The Mind-reader] (2013), J. M. Coetzee's *Foe* (1986) and Gergely Péterfy's *Kitömött barbár* [Stuffed Barbarian] (2014) question the ethical and political stakes involved in the exercise of "sympathetic imagination" for our (lack of) understanding and/or recognition of the human. The second part of the volume offers critical readings of texts by Matthew Arnold, Immanuel Kant, William Wordsworth, John Keats, Paul de Man, Jacques Derrida, Jacques Rancière, and Quentin Meillassoux in order to investigate the poetics and the politics of human form. It establishes (further) dialogues between the long nineteenth century and our contemporary world through the notions of virtual trauma, autoimmunity, terror, the posthuman, the catastrophe and the crisis of temporality.

* See the list of previously published essays on p. 145.

HUMAN SYMPATHY – SYMPATHY FOR THE HUMAN

Sympathy, Mindreading, Ethics

From the Eighteenth Century to the Twenty-first*

1.

"Have you ever felt that reading a good book makes you better able to connect with your fellow human beings?" – asks Liz Bury in the *The Guardian* (8th October 2013). Even if the achievement of a better connection with our fellow humans is not necessarily equal to being a better person, the article, based on the findings of psychologists David Comer Kidd and Emanuele Castano, implies a strong relationship between the two: literary fiction improves "perspective-taking" empathy,[1] a skill that contributes to being a good person. As the philosopher Julianna C. Oxley puts it: a person "who empathizes is able to understand others in a sensitive way and gather information about them that can be used to make a moral decision".[2]

On the other hand, writing in the *The New Yorker* (6th November 2013) Lee Siegel strikes a more cynical note: "Two recent studies have concluded that serious literary fiction makes people more empathetic, and humanists everywhere are clinking glasses in celebration". The article, however, wrecks the celebration and enumerates the reasons why we have to be wary of seeing empathy as sign of "goodness". Siegel offers a literary example: he mentions Iago's outstanding capacity for empathy, which allows him to read Othello's various emotional states, a capacity he contrasts with the

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* This essay has been published as Timár, Andrea. "Reading Minds: Sympathy, Fiction, Ethics." *The Arts of Attention,* edited by Kállay Katalin, Budapest, L'Harmattan, 2016, pp. 253–267.

1 Oxley, Julianna C. *The Moral Dimensions of Empathy: Limits and Applications in Ethical Theory and Practice.* New York – London, Palgrave Macmillan, 2011, pp. 42. The three phrases of perspective taking empathy are: (1) *The matching phase* – in which one entertains different beliefs and adopts a different conative relation to the world in order to recreate the other's perspective on the world. (2) *The simulation phase* – having adopted the other's perspective, one starts thinking about the world from that perspective and entertaining reasons for possible actions and thoughts. (3) *The attribution phase* – after completing the simulation phase, one ceases to entertain the other's perspective and bases one's interpretation of the other's action (or expression) on her knowledge of what happened during the simulation phase.

2 Oxley, *The Moral Dimensions of Empathy*, p. 131.

relative "mind blindness"[3] of Othello, this noble character, absolutely unable to grasp what is going on in the heads of others. Nevertheless, while raising doubts concerning the equation between "goodness" and empathetic skills, Siegel does not question the empathy-enhancing effect of literary fiction.

That the question of whether empathy makes us better people, and whether literature enhances our capacity for empathy (and, therefore, whether literature, by developing our capacity to empathise, actually makes us better) has found its way into the daily press is one of the signs of the so called "crisis of the humanities". The humanities, suffering worldwide from a lack of governmental funding, are urged to legitimate their presence at universities by pointing, among other things,[4] to the social "usefulness" of teaching literature, by insisting, for example, that the reading of literature makes us more effective social agents, or better persons, for that matter.[5]

Writing in 1789, Clara Reeve, establishing the difference between the "romance" and the realist "novel" of the eighteenth century argues as follows:

> The Romance is a heroic fable, which treats of fabulous persons and things. – The Novel is a picture of real life and manners, and of the times in which it is written. The Romance in lofty and elevated language, describes what never happened nor is likely to happen. – The Novel gives a familiar relations of such things, as pass every day before our eyes, *such as may happen to our friend, or to ourselves*; and the perfection of it, is to represent every scene, in so easy and natural manner, and to make them appear so *probable*, as to deceive us into a persuasion (at least while we are reading) that all is real, until *we are affected by the joys or distresses, of the persons in the story, as if they were our own*.[6]

3 Cf.: Baron-Cohen, Simon. *Mindblindness: An Essay on Autism and Theory of Mind*. Cambridge, MIT Press, 1995.

4 The other general claim made for the study of the humanities is that it enhances "critical thinking". Cf.: http://chronicle.com/blogs/conversation/2013/11/19/humanities-crisis-mad-libs/. Accessed 20 January 2020.

5 The need to justify the social "usefulness" of literature is at odds with what many still believe to be the "disinterestedness of aesthetic judgement" (grounding vague notions about the "autonomy of art"). On the other hand, however, the argument that empathy, which the reading of literature supposedly enhances, has not much to do with morality would be equally perplexing for those who entertain a belief in the liberal ethos of the academia itself: these latter tend to regard empathy as a feeling that is more "feminine" and (therefore) more "valuable" than the conservative, "masculine" adherence to an abstract, rational "moral order". (Cf.: Prinz, Jesse J. "Is Empathy Necessary for Morality?" *Empathy: Philosophical and Psychological Investigations,* Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2011, pp. 223–224.)

6 Reeve, Clara. *The progress of Romance; and The history of Charoba, Queen of Aegypt, Reproduced from the Colchester Edition of 1785,* with a bibliographical note by Esther M. McGill, New York, The Facsimile Text Society, 1930, p. 111. http://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=inu.30000007087707;view=1up;seq=9. Accessed 20 January 2020. [emphasis added]

The "perfection" of the novel is its ability to generate readerly identification, and to move the reader to the point of feeling the characters' feelings as if they were their own. In other words, the capacity to generate empathy (a feeling that, in the eighteenth century, was still called "sympathy"[7]) is singled out by Reeve as the most important feature that distinguishes the novel from the romance, such as, for example, Edmund Spenser's *Fairy Queen*. Interestingly, it is this very same feature, namely to be able to trigger readerly identification, that Samuel Taylor Coleridge, almost half a century later, will use to differentiate between his own "supernatural poems", such as *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, and the Gothic – a genre that, using supernatural machinery, exotic settings, and describing, as Reeve put it "what never happened nor is likely to happen", seems to be, at first sight, much closer to what Reeve calls "romance" than to the eighteenth-century "novel". In 1817, Coleridge famously explains that his own supernatural poems, by virtue of their human interest and semblance to truth, are to generate "that wiling suspension of disbelief for the moment that constitutes poetic faith".[8] And with this definition, Coleridge distances himself precisely from gothic romance writers, such as for example Lewis, author of *The Monk*, who can also trigger a "temporary belief to" even "the strangest situation of things", but the way in which his characters act and feel in these strange situations, does not, according to Coleridge, harmonise with real human feelings. And this disharmony, in its turn, makes "us" (i.e. Coleridge) "instantly reject" Lewis's "clumsy fictions", and the Gothic, at least the Lewisian kind, fails to yield what Coleridge calls "poetic faith".[9] Hence, even though the realist novel of the eighteenth century and Coleridge's poetry of the supernatural seem to be worlds apart, both can generate the readerly identification (i.e. readerly symptahy) implied in Coleridge's definition of "poetic faith", which latter has been canonised, precisely, as one of the definitions *par excellence* of literary experience itself.

7 "'Sympathy' is derived from the Greek συμπάθεια, the state of feeling together (derived from the composite of fellow [συν]- feeling [πάθος]). A solid Latin translation would be *compassio*. Unfortunately, whatever is exactly meant by 'sympathy,' to English ears, 'compassion,' that is, to quote a dictionary, 'a feeling of wanting to help someone,' would seem to denote merely a subset of sympathy, perhaps the paradigmatic feeling consequent of 'empathy.' So, we cannot simply equate sympathy and compassion. 'Empathy' (from the Greek ἐν *[en]*, 'in, at') is a word that was coined only in the twentieth century in order to capture the meaning of the German *Einfühlun*g, which means to enter into somebody's feelings." (Schliesser, Eric. *Sympathy: A History.* Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2015, p. 1.)

8 Coleridge, Samuel Taylor. "Biographia Literaria." *The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, edited by James Engell and W. Jackson Bate, vol 7, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1983, vol. 1, p. 9. On Coleridge and sympathy see Timár, Andrea. *A Modern Coleridge: Cultivation, Addiction, Habits*. Basingstoke – London, Palgrave Macmillan, 2015, pp. 53–61., especially: "Coleridge criticises *both* Kant's disinterested morality *and* passive sensibility in order to endorse the middle ground of *active* feelings and affections." p. 54.

9 Coleridge, Samuel Taylor, "Review of *The Monk*." http://www.english.upenn.edu/~mgamer/Etexts/coleridge.reviews. Accessed 20 January 2020.

In England, the eighteenth-century rise of the novel exactly coincides with the promotion of sympathy, defined by the greatest eighteenth-century theoretician of sympathy, Adam Smith (1723–1790), as "our fellow-feeling with any passion whatsoever",[10] to the status of the most important "moral feeling", considered as the basis of our social behaviour.[11] In the twenty-first century, scholars use advanced fMRI techniques to measure readers' more or less empathetic responses to novels, and, without questioning the possibility conditions of empathy outside the individual human brain, unproblematically define empathy, on a merely psychological basis, as "the drive to identify another person's emotions and thoughts, and to respond to them with an appropriate emotion".[12] In contrast, eighteenth-century philosophers still went to great lengths to describe both the characteristics and the possibility conditions of sympathy. In what follows, I shall enumerate some of the major differences between the findings of twenty-first-century advocates of empathy and the ideas of eighteenth-century philosophers of sympathy.

First, although David Hume (in *A Treatise of Human Nature,* 1739–40) still regards sympathy as a kind of emotional "contagion", an unconscious "transport" of emotions between individuals resulting in the individual's feeling exactly what the other person feels, his critical reader, Adam Smith argues in *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759) that when we sympathise, we do not necessarily adopt the other's perspective but imagine what we ourselves would feel if we were in the other person's situation.[13]

10 Smith, Adam, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments.* New York, Prometheus Books, 2000, p. 33.

11 For the German and Hungarian contexts of eighteenth-century sympathy and the sentimental novel see: Lacházi, Gyula. *Társiasság és együttérzés a felvilágosodás magyar irodalmában*. Budapest. Ráció Kiadó, 2014.

12 Baron-Cohen, Simon. *The Essential Difference: Male and Female Brains and the Truth About Autism.* New York, Basic Books, 2003, p. 2.

13 Cf.: "The two attitudes to fellow feeling reflect the two prevailing trends in 18th century theories of sympathy: On the one hand, Hume and Shaftesbury consider sympathy as potentially dangerous 'contagion', or 'affective migrancy'. [...] On the other hand, Adam Smith's theatrical conception of sympathy (Marshall) keeps the boundaries between self and other intact. As Chandler notes, '[Shaftesbury's] contagion model of sympathy proves to be exactly the model that Smith rejects' (*Archaeology of Sympathy*, 240). Smithean sympathy necessitates impartial judgement, and is predicated upon an aesthetic distance to be always insufficiently bridged by an always 'deceitful' imagination (Smith, *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, 7)." (Timár, *A Modern Coleridge*, p. 54.). Meanwhile, Smith also insits that "when imaginatively entering into the situation of another, I must 'consider what I should suffer if I was really you, and I not only change circumstances with you, but I change persons and characters.' It is in this way that we can sympathize with those whose experiences are unlike anything that could ever happen to ourselves, given the particular facts of our characters and identities. A man, for example, can successfully sympathize with a woman in childbirth, 'though it is impossible that he should conceive himself as suffering her pains in his own proper person and character'". (Frazer, Michael. *The Enlightenment of Sympathy: Justice and the Moral Sentiments in the Eighteenth Century and Today*. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2010, pp. 146–147.).

Clearly, modern neuroscience would never be able to tell whether the empathising subjects are feeling the others' feelings, or are only imagining what they themselves would feel in a similar situation.

Second, contemporary psychologist Simon Baron-Cohen takes it for granted that if our individual empathy quotient (EQ) is high enough, then empathy necessarily "propels [us] to sit with the victim of a crash".[14] Adam Smith, on the other hand, investigates the possibility conditions of the awakening of sympathy too, and shows that we always need a certain aesthetic (!) distance in order to be able to sympathise with the passions of our fellow beings. As he puts it: while "[v]iolent hunger […] is always indecent; and to eat voraciously is universally regarded as a piece of ill manners, […] [w]e can sympathise with the distress which excessive hunger occasions, when we read the description of it in the journal of a siege, or of a sea-voyage".[15] Otherwise, as Smith insightfully points out, the closeness of the others' misery leads to our desensitization: when they express "in any strong degree passions which arise from a certain situation or disposition of the body",[16] or when the *narration* of their distress "is every moment interrupted by those natural bursts of passion which often seem almost to choke them in the midst of it, […] we may even inwardly reproach ourselves with *our own want of sensibility*."[17]

Thirdly, despite the difference between their respective approaches to sympathy, both Hume and Smith consider our capacity for fellow feeling innate and universal,[18] that is, as opposed to twenty-first-century scholars, they do not regard sympathy as an individually variable capacity that can or should be, as William Wordsworth would have it, "enlarged".[19] In this respect, they contrast later advocates of empathy who, relying on the individual variability of scientifically measurable empathy quotients, often underline that empathy is a capacity to be developed, and to be developed, precisely, through the reading of literary fiction.

The first, or perhaps the most outspoken advocate of the imperative to sympathetically engage with literary characters was Martha Nussbaum, who, in *Poetic Justice* (1995) both relied on and misread Smith's theory of sympathy: she did not consider Smith's critical reading of Hume, and translated Smithean sympathy

14 Baron-Cohen, *The Essential Difference…,* p. 23.

15 Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments,* p. 33.

16 Ibid.

17 Ibid., p. 65. [emphasis added]. On the aesthetics of Smithean sympathy see also: Timár, *A Modern Coleridge,* pp. 53–60.

18 "The greatest ruffian, the most hardened violator of the laws of society, is not altogether without it [sympathy]." (Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments,* p. 3.)

19 "Thus daily were my sympathies enlarged, / And thus the common range of visible things / Grew dear to me: already I began / To love the sun." (Wordsworth, William. "The Prelude." *The Works of William Wordsworth*, London, The Wordsworth Poetry Library, 1994, p. 644.)

as complete readerly identification in order to be able to use Smith to fit her own purposes.[20] Teaching at the Chicago Law School, she argued that lawyers and judges should all read novels by Charles Dickens in order to enlarge their capacity for sympathetic identification, and, therfore, become not only better people in general, but also morally better lawyers and judges in particular, sympathetic to culprits, too. Later, at the beginning of the twenty-first century, Lynn Hunt argued that it had been, precisely the eighteenth-century sentimental novel and its ability to generate readerly sympathy that had paved the way for the invention of "human rights", and, by extension, to the French Revolution, and *The Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen*:

> Novels made the point that all people are fundamentally similar because of their inner feelings, and many novels showcased in particular the desire for autonomy. In this way, reading novels created a sense of equality and empathy through passionate involvement in the narrative. Can it be coincidental that the three greatest novels of psychological identification of the eighteenth century – Richardson's *Pamela* (1740) and *Clarissa* (1747–48) and Rousseau's *Julie* (1761) – were all published in the period that immediately preceded the appearance of the 'rights of man'?[21]

In what follows, I shall argue that Coleridge's and Reeve's critical descriptions of readerly identification, while bearing both Hume's and Smith's influence, rather than anticipating Nussbaum's or Hunt's theories, could more accurately describe the ways in which "mind reading" operates during the process of reading fiction.

In fact, Hume's and Smith's approaches to sympathy are both present in Reeve's and Coleridge's respective descriptions of readerly empathy: whereas the claim that imaginative literature achieves readers' complete identification with characters (as if their fortunes and misfortunes were their own) bears the influence of Hume's "contagion" version of sympathy, the fact that both Reeve and Coleridge speak only about *fictional* characters (without having *any* recourse or reference to the sympathy one may feel towards one's "real" fellow beings) evokes Smith's aesthetic version of sympathy and, particularly, his emphasis on the necessity of an *aesthetic distance* for sympathy to rise. Hence, both Reeve and Coleridge anticipate Suzanne Keen's most important claim that empathy with fictional characters does not necessarily yield either empathy with real people or benevolent, charitable actions. Indeed, there is no

20 Nussbaum, Martha C. *Poetic Justice: The Literary Imagination and Public Life.* Boston, Beacon Press, 1995. For a detailed critical reading of Nussbaum, see later the end of chapter "The Violence of Sympathy: J. M. Coetzee's *Foe*", pp. 50–54.

21 Hunt, Lynn. *Inventing Human Rights.* New York, Norton, 2007, p. 39.

proof that a person who easily identifies with a narrative of suffering would be eager to approach, let alone hospitably receive a beggar, do charity work, or help those, who are in need.[22]

At the same time, Coleridge's warning that the readerly empathy generated by imaginary characters should only be awakened "for the moment", and Reeve's remark that identification with the characters of a realist novel lasts only "while we are reading", evoke that constant, not to say "dialogic" (Gadamer), play of proximity and distance, identification and reflection which characterises our engagement with literary fiction in general. Indeed, Coleridge's greatest fear (as I discuss elsewhere[23]) is, precisely the potential contamination of the readers, or else, their corruption by characters as a result of their excessive identification which they transpose to their real life.[24]

Hence, following Coleridge's advocacy of a "*willing* suspension of disbelief *for the moment*",[25] which allows for us to become not only "sadder" but also "wiser" when we analyse novels (similarly to the Wedding Guest listening to the ancient Mariner's tale), literary scholars tend to shift the focus from empathy with characters to disinterested judgement, to what we may call the disinterested investigation of the manipulation of the narrative, eminently considered as a *text*. Rather than closeness and identification, this implies distance, and a constant awareness of the *narrative techniques* operating in the novel, or else, what cognitive narratologist Lisa Zunshine calls the pleasurable engagement of our Theory of Mind. This pleasure, according to Zunshine, can even explain, to use the title of one of her works: *Why We Read Fiction*.[26]

> [B]y imagining the hidden mental states of fictional characters, by following the readily available representations of such states through the narrative, and by comparing our interpretation of what the given character must be feeling at

22 Cf.: Keen, Suzanne. *Empathy and the Novel.* Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2007, pp. 145–168.

23 Timár, Andrea. „Re-Reading Culture and Addiction: Coleridge's Writings and Walter Benjamin's Analysis of Modernity and the Addict." *Critical Engagements: A Journal of Criticism and Theory,* vol. 2, no. 2, 2008, pp. 210–231.

24 From a political point of view, being transported by the emotions of another person, and, particularly, by the emotions of others, translates, in the eyes of Coleridge, into a susceptibility to radical, or revolutionary fanaticism. Conspicuously, Hannah Arendt in the twentieth century condemns the "compassion" driving the French revolutionaries on the same grounds as Coleridge does: "Historically speaking, compassion became the driving force of the revolutionaries […] after the Girondins had failed to produce a constitution and to establish a republican government." (Arendt, Hannah. *On Revolution.* New York, Penguin, 1962, p. 75.)

25 Coleridge, "Review of *The Monk*." [emphasis added]

26 Zunshine, Lisa, *Why We Read Fiction*: *Theory of Mind and the Novel*. Columbus, Ohio State University Press, 2006.

> a given moment with what we assume could be the author's own interpretation, we deliver a rich stimulation to the cognitive adaptations constituting our Theory of Mind.[27]

Zunshine has recourse to what Baron-Cohen calls "Theory of Mind", which, being more or less equivalent to the *cognitive* aspect of empathy, "permits the representational mapping of others' emotional states in a manner that is *different from* picking up their emotions directly",[28] which latter would be proper to what scholars call emotional empathy. Zunshine herself foregrounds the constant framing and reframing of given narratorial utterances by attempting to read, however problematic this sounds, the author's own mind. Alan Palmer explains what has recently been called "attribution theory", as it has evolved from the concept of "theory of mind" as follows:

> Attribution theory rests on the concept of *theory of mind.* This is the term used by philosophers to describe our awareness of the existence of other minds, our knowledge of how to interpret our own and other people's thought processes, our mind-reading abilities in the real world. Readers of novels have to use their theory of mind in order to try to follow the workings of characters' minds […] to attribute states of mind to them.[29]

Having equally taken lessons from Adam Smith (or Aristotle, or Edmund Burke, for that matter), literary scholars are equally aware that while empathy, sympathy or the emotional identification with fictional characters is always pleasurable,[30] regardless of the content of the feeling that we share, empathy with the sufferings of real persons hardly ever is. Indeed, as Suzanne Keen has also noted (see above), there might be

27 Zunshine, *Why We Read Fiction*, p. 25. For instance, even though we easily identify with Humbert's feelings while reading Nabokov's *Lolita*, we equally have to be aware that Nabokov is manipulating us into being empathetic with a paedophile by omitting certain "source tags", such as "Humbert thinks" or "Humbert claims" (Ibid., pp. 103–109.).

28 Baron-Cohen, *Mindblindness*, p. 21. [emphasis added]

29 Palmer, Alan. "Ontologies of Consciousness." *The Emergence of Mind: Representations of Consciousness in Narrative Discourse in English,* edited by David Herman, Lincoln, University of Nebraska Press, 2011, p. 278. [emphasis in the original]

30 "How selfish soever man may supposed to be, there are evidently some principles in his nature, which interest him in the fortune of others, and render their happiness necessary to him, though he derives nothing from it, except *the pleasure of seeing it. Of this kind* is pity or compassion which we feel for the misery of others, when we either see it, or are made to conceive it in a very lively manner." (Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, p. 3. [emphasis added]). See also: Breithaupt, Fritz. "Empathic Sadism: How Readers Get Implicated." *The Oxford Handbook of Cognitive Literary Studies,* edited by Lisa Zunshine, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2015, pp. 441–459.

no connection between our capacity to empathise with characters in a novel and our willingness to empathise with real people. Further, as Jesse J. Prinz remarks, "other emotions [such as pride or indignation] appear to have much greater impact" on altruistic behaviour than empathy.[31] The altruism of the "dramatic minority" of Holocaust rescuers, notes Suzanne Keen, was also the result of an indignation stemming not only from prior shared feelings but, more importantly, from moral principles.[32]

Of course, the debate around the ethics of sympathy is hardly new. It is partly in objection to Hume's and Adam Smith's appraisal of sympathy as the highway to morality that Kant argues:

> It is very beautiful to do good to human beings from love of them and from compassionate benevolence, or to be just from love of order; but this is not yet our conduct's genuine moral maxim appropriate to our station among rational beings *as human beings.* […] Duty and obligation are the only designations that we must give to our relation to the moral law.[33]

Kant famously dismisses sympathy as a mere inclination: sympathy, a symptom of passivity, and of one's being determined by inclinations, has nothing to do with Reason or the moral Law, which stem from human autonomy and freedom.

Meanwhile, although Reason, in Kant, is the very faculty that makes us human (rather than animal), the contrasting idea that emotions make us human (rather than machines) often overwrites, both in philosophy and in the popular imagination (cf.: Ridley Scott's *Blade Runner*), the Kantian investment in Reason. This widespread belief in the morally beneficial effects of empathy is predicated upon the following preconditions:

1.) Every human being possesses emotions with which one can potentially empathise. (Differently put, there is a psychological interiority proper to all humans that can and must be taken into consideration in our dealings with them.)
2.) These emotions can be and have to be, at least partially, accessed by "us".

31 Prinz, "Is Empathy Necessary for Morality?", p. 220.

32 At the same time, the survey examining rescuers' motivation asked no question about their reading habits (Keen, *Empathy and the Novel*, pp. 23–25); but my own guess would be that – contrary to many top members of the SS – they were not necessarily cultivated individuals.

33 Kant, Immanuel. *Practical Philosophy*. Translated and edited by Mary J. Gregor, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1996, p. 82. [emphasis added]

3.) People who lack emotions and empathy are inhuman ("psychopaths"), prone to aggression and violence.[34]

However, as I will show in what follows, the belief that empathy makes us both human and ethical has been challenged not only on a philosophical (i.e. post-Kantian) basis.

2.

Juan Carlos Gomez suggests that "attentional contact" is needed for basic communication. Humans need to attend to others' gaze in order to be able to read their intentions and mental states.[35] Attentional contact is seriously impaired in individuals suffering from "autism spectrum disorders".[36] Autistic individuals often feel and are often considered to be "aliens" in a world where the most basic forms of communications necessitate "mind-reading". As Lynn Hunt equally puts it:

> Children who suffer from autism, for example, have great difficulty decoding facial expressions as indicators of feelings and in general have trouble attributing subjective states to others. Autism, in short, is characterised by the inability to empathise with others.[37]

Considering autistic individuals' relative inability to feel empathy, Deborah R. Barnbaum, in *The Ethics of Autism,* asks whether these individuals can be considered moral agents at all.[38] Baron-Cohen, however, underlines that even though autism is a disorder of empathy and autistic individuals have difficulties with mind reading

34 As Suzanne Keen remarks, "lacking empathy often correlates with sociopathic behaviour, with the profiles of serial killers, and with developmental disorders such as autism" (Keen, *Empathy and the Novel*, p. 9.). However, the argument that emotions are necessary for moral behaviour is contradicted by a recent finding: the 23rd November 2013 issue of the *Salon* introduces the University of California Emeritus Professor of neuroscience James Fallon, a "happily married family man", who has learnt, accidentally comparing the brain scans of serial killers with his own, that he is a "psychopath" (!), "lacking in empathy and prone to aggression, violence" (Stromberg, Joseph. "The neuroscientist who discovered he was a psychopath." http://www.salon.com/2013/11/23/this_neuroscientist_discovered_he_was_a_psychopath_partner/. Accessed 20 January 2020). The argument of the Salon article actually replicates the old debate between Reason and sympathy; for what has prevented him from becoming an amoral monster is, according to his book, *The Psychopath Inside: A Neuroscientist's Personal Journey into the Dark Side of the Brain,* are his happy childhood and, especially, his "free will".

35 Gómez, Juan Carlos. "Visual behavior as a window for reading the mind of others in primates." *Natural Theories of Mind: Development and Simulation of Everyday Mindreading,* edited by A. Whiten, Oxford, Blackwell, 1991, pp. 195–207.

36 Baron-Cohen, *Mindblindness*, pp. 102–120.

37 Hunt, *Inventing Human Rights*, p. 39.

38 Barnbaum, Deborah. *The Ethics of Autism: Among Them, but Not of Them*. Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 2008.

(i.e. with regarding the world from someone else's perspective and reacting accordingly), someone with autism would certainly run to the rescue of a person who has been unjustly treated.[39]

In what follows, I shall briefly consider two Hungarian novels, *Gondolatolvasó* [The Mind-reader] (2013) by Noémi Szécsi[40] and *Le Grand Cahier [The Notebook]* (1986) by the Hungarian *émigré* Agota Kristof,[41] which both comment upon processes of mind-reading to show that novels that place obstacles to the exercise of readers' mind-reading skills, and that characters who resist reading the mind of other characters are not necessarily "evil". "The Mind-reader" is a first-person singular account of a portion of the life of a deaf boy (an alien or exile in some specific sense) in the second half of the nineteenth century.[42] Fülöp, its character narrator, has learnt how to read and write through having first acquired sign language in a boarding school; then, a later tutor also gives him lessons in "mind-reading".[43] He does not have to know what others say, or to understand words one by one; it is enough to pay close attention to their eyes, and their postures to be able to understand them. As the narrator puts it, "I cannot grow hearing ears, but can learn how to read their minds."[44] Paying close attention to the facial expression, to the eye and the lip movements of others, Fülöp gathers more accurate information about their emotional and mental states than the other "healthy" characters. However, while acquiring the ability to understand others, he remains literally voiceless, and his language (i.e. sign language) is neither spoken, nor understood by others. Meanwhile, we, readers are given the chance to access his feelings and thoughts fully through a completely reliable first-person singular narration.

This paradoxical narrative situation, in which a voiceless narrator gradually acquires a (writing) voice, or else, a deaf person, severed from the word of language and communication, gradually becomes the most insightful character of a novel, could have given rise to various, postmodernist plays of "attributional unreliability",[45] when

39 Baron-Cohen, *The Essential Difference...*, p. 137.

40 Szécsi Noémi. *Gondolatolvasó* [The Mind-reader]. Budapest, Európa, 2013. [All translations are mine.]

41 Kristof, Agota. *The Notebook, The Proof, and The Third Lie*. Translated by Alan Sheridan, David Watson and Marc Romano, New York, The Grove Press, 1997 [1989].

42 Critical readers of *Gondolatolvasó* typically forcus on the content and the language of the book, rather than the narrative technique, and applaud its revolutinary theme and engagement with the problems of language, and find faults in its avoidance of history (I don't think that this latter feature is a mistake: the novel is filtered through Fülöp's consciousness, who is more interested in people than in politics). See especially: Nagy Csilla. "A 'másik' 19. század." *Műút,* 21 June 2014., or Hercsel Adél. „Hiába hiszed, hogy torzszülött." *Tiszatáj,* vol. 69, no. 3, 2015, pp. 129–130., or "ÉS Kvartett" with Károlyi Csaba, Bárány Tibor, Szilágyi Zsófia, Keresztesi József: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oyE4rJ9xdxc. Accessed 20 January 2020.

43 Szécsi, *Gondolatolvasó*, p. 74.

44 Ibid., p. 75.

45 Ibid., p. 279.

readers do not know what states of mind they should attribute to characters, precisely because the novel blocks or places obstacles to the workings of their theory of mind.

However, "The Mind-reader" plays it safe, and, as if it had inscribed itself into the context in which it is set, namely the nineteenth century, and its most important genre, the *Bildungsroman,* it does not question the reality of "truth", "essence", or "depth" of either the character narrator or of other characters, only their accessibility. Indeed, while we are getting access to Fülöp's thoughts and feelings, Fülöp also get access to *the* truth or *the* essence of each and every person, as well as to that of the world around him. In other words, although Fülöp is a disabled, homodiegetic narrator (which should raise our suspicions concerning his reliability), he actually *is* a most reliable source of narration. He does learn how to read others' states of mind, and the fact that his attributions never turn out to be incorrect or mistaken in any sense suggests that even though the novel is eminently critical of human language as a way to truth, it betrays a naïve belief in the body (including, of course, the eye) as the perfect, "natural", "immediate" mirror of the soul. Drawing a clear boundary between "performance" (lie) and "essence" (truth), the novel introduces Tita, Fülöp's sister, an actress playing minor roles, who personifies "lie". Initially, her talent as an actress, writes Fülöp, is only apparent in her habit of lying. "I often watched how often she lied. For her, lying was like breathing fresh air."[46] Yet, Fülöp is able to intuit the "truth" behind the "appearance": truth vs. appearance are viable concepts in the world of the novel. Eventually, Fülöp even gets to the core of Tita's "secret": she was raped as a child.

And this is precisely the reason why the novel does not offer any challenge to the *reader's* theory of mind. Fülöp's extreme mind reading skills, and the way in which he carefully and always reliably guides the reader through the reading process (i.e. he remains the only focaliser all along) allow us to have a full grasp of the mental state of practically all the characters. Meanwhile, his own mental transparency, the sincere disclosure of his own thoughts, feelings, and desires renders his mind equally accessible to the reader: he easily offers himself up to the readers' narrative empathy. Consequently, although from a moral point of view, the absolute reliability of the narrator is to be applauded (i.e. the "disabled" character is, in fact, the most "able", and the other characters gradually turn out to be more "deaf" and "mute" than Fülöp is), and the novel thus reverses, indeed, the "able"– "disabled" binary, the ostensible "otherness" of the narrator does not, in fact, place any obstacle to an easy, or unproblematic readerly identification. In this sense, as we will see in a later chapter, the novel's take on otherness starkly opposes a more complex and problematic engagement with alterity, namely, J. M. Coetzee's *Foe.* However, to investigate further

46 Szécsi, *Gondolatolvasó*, p. 54.

the stakes involved in the capacity and the incapacity to empathise, I shall first turn to Agota Kristof's work.

Agota Kristof's *The Notebook* can be similarly read as a fiction of exile. As opposed to "The Mind-reader", however, *The Notebook*'s child protagonists are often presented, in critical literature, as having an autistic worldview: like Fülöp, they are aliens in the world that surrounds them; however, in contrast to the protagonist of "The Mind-reader", they consciously refrain) from even attempting to read others' subjective states of mind.

The novel is presented as a notebook written by twin boys in the first-person plural, using the "timeless", or viewed in another way, all too temporal present tense. The two or three page chapters tell about the life of the two boys left by their mother in the care of their grandmother in a village on the border during and after the Second World War. The book is predicated upon the narrative imperative of absolute objectivity: both the narrative strategy, in which each "I" of the plural "we" is there to legitimate the truthfulness of the story, and the diary form and use of the present tense are supposed to ensure "the faithful description of facts":

> We have a very simple rule: the composition must be true. We must describe what is, what we see, what we hear, what we do.
> For example, it is forbidden to write, "Grandmother is like a witch"; but we are allowed to write, "People call Grandmother a Witch". […]
> Similarly, if we write, "The orderly is nice", this isn't a truth, because the orderly may be capable of malicious acts that we know nothing about. So we would simply write, "The orderly has given us some blankets".
> We would write, "We eat a lot of walnuts", and not "We love walnuts", because the word "love" is not a reliable word, it lacks precision and objectivity. "To love walnuts" and "to love our Mother" don't mean the same thing. The first expression designates a pleasant taste in the mouth, the second a feeling.
> Words that define feelings are very vague. It is better to avoid using them and stick to the description of objects, human beings, and oneself, that is to say, to the faithful description of facts.[47]

I discuss the novel at length elsewhere;[48] suffice it to say here, that as opposed to the protagonist of "The Mind-reader", whose only chance of survival in a world otherwise inaccessible to him is, precisely, mind-reading, whereas the twins' survival seems to be

47 Kristof, *The Notebook*, p. 29.

48 Timár, Andrea. "The Murder of the Mother(tongue): Agota Kristof's *The Notebook*." *Bicultural Literature and Film in French and English,* edited by P. Powrie and P. Barta, London, Routledge, 2015, pp. 222–236.

predicated upon their literal-mindednessand their conscious resistance to attributing any mental state to others. They soon realise that there is no connection between signifiers and signifieds / appearances and truths: their seemingly loving mother abandons them to their grandmother's care, but their unkind grandmother, who looks "like a witch", is, in fact, the only person they can rely on. On the other hand, the priest's nice housekeeper, their only friend, turns out be utterly mean: she makes fun of starving Jews marching through the village: "The housekeeper smiles and pretends to offer the rest of her bread; she holds it close to the outstretched hands, then, with a laugh, puts the piece of bread into her mouth."[49]

The twins therefore reject both the possibility of mind-reading and the moral imperative to do so. This, however, yields a singular conception of justice, devoid of feelings or emotions. As Slavoj Žižek puts it, "[t]he twins are utterly immoral – they lie, blackmail, kill". However, as he goes on to say, "[t]his is where I stand – how I would love to be: an ethical monster without empathy [...] helping others while avoiding their disgusting proximity."[50] In fact, the twins are *not* immoral; they take revenge on, or else, severely punish what they rightly consider to be sins: for example, they disfigure the housekeeper's face by hiding an explosive in her stove, and calmly look on as their returning mother is blown up by a bomb in their garden. But the justice they administer is entirely disinterested, emptied of all "sympathy" or "fellow-feeling". This almost Kantian rigour yields an apathetic, not to say unconditional respect for other people's personal autonomy, psychic and physical integrity. They volunteer to set their neighbour's house on fire when she wants to die, or offer to flog a masochistic German soldier who asks to be struck. Indeed, their literal-mindedness and resistance to sympathy is the precise opposite of Fülöp's constant and successful attempt at mind-reading.

Meanwhile, the twin's resistance to either expressing emotions, or to entertaining fellow-feelings also constitutes an immense challenge to readers' theory of mind. It is just as difficult to decipher the twins' motivations, their intentions, or mental states, that is, to apply what Palmer has termed "attribution theory" during the reading process, as it is difficult for the twins to access other minds. Hence, the novel generates a narrative empathy always at odds with itself: one would be inclined to sympathise with the first-person account of the sufferers (i.e. the twins), but the inaccessibility of their psychological or emotional states, their (almost inhumane) insensitivity and their complete lack of empathy render readerly identification almost impossible. As opposed to the narrator of the "The Mind-reader", the narrators of *The Notebook* do not offer themselves up easily to readerly sympathy, and place in jeopardy those theories of

49 Kristof, *The Notebook*, p. 107.

50 Žižek, Slavoj, and John Milbank. *The Monstrosity of Christ, Paradox of Dialectic?,* edited by Creston Davis, Cambridge, The MIT Press, 2009, p. 301.

empathy that argue, like Szécsi's "The Mind-reader", for the possible transparency of the soul. *The Notebook* thus equally challenges the empathy enhancing effects of novel reading, as well as any possible equation between "goodness" and the empathetic skills. In fact, it offers a plea for an ethics without feelings, and for an ethics without sympathy, or, as Adam Smith would have it, without any "fellow feeling with any emotion whatsoever".[51]

51 Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments,* p. 3.

Resistances

The Murder of the Mother(tongue) – Agota Kristof's *The Notebook*[*]

1. MOTHER TONGUE

The Hungarian born Agota Kristof (1935–2011) immigrated to Switzerland in 1956. She wrote her first novel, *Le Grand Cahier* (1986) thirty years later in French. She did not intend to to produce further novels, but *Le Grand Cahier* was soon followed by its sequels, *La Preuve* and *Le Troisième Mensonge* (1991).[1] These three volumes make up her trilogy, so far translated into forty-six languages. Opening the conference *Immigrant Literature – Writing in Adopted Languages*, Leonard Orban, then-EU Commissioner for Multilingualism optimistically states:

> When immigrant writers choose to write in their adopted language, they are expressing their sense of belonging and affection for the new culture. It is an act of courage, because it is a conscious decision to abandon part of one's cultural heritage and tradition in order to be understood in one's new country.[2]

Although Kristof's choice to write in French might be considered an act of courage, it hardly expresses any affection for, let alone a sense of belonging to, her adopted culture and, particularly, language. In her autobiography, suggestively entitled *L'Analphabète* [The Illiterate] (2004), she calls French "une langue ennemie", which is "en train de

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1 English translation: Kristof, Agota. *The Notebook, The Proof, and The Third Lie*. Translated by Alan Sheridan, David Watson, and Marc Romano, New York, The Grove Press, 1997 [1989].

2 See: http://www.eunic-brussels.eu/documents/dynamic/Statement_Orban.pdf. Accessed 12 February 2012.

tuer [sa] langue maternelle",[3] and Switzerland the "[d]ésert social, désert culturel"[4]. She was only twenty-one when her husband, her former history teacher, organised their escape from Hungary with their four-month-old daughter. Settling down in Neuchâtel, her husband received a scholarship, but Agota spent many years working in a watch-making factory. As her autobiography testifies, she slowly acquired spoken French, and learnt how to read and write in a language school. Later she became an avid reader of French literature: "Je peux lire Victor Hugo, Rousseau, Voltaire, Sartre, Camus, Michaux, Francis Ponge, Sade, tous ce que je veux lire en français."[5] Meanwhile, she kept writing her novels with the help of dictionaries.

Conspicuously, the phrase '*langue ennemie*' first appears in Kristof's autobiography with reference to German. Describing her family's life in the borderland town of Kőszeg, where a quarter of the population spoke German, she writes: "Pour nous, les Hongrois, c'était une langue ennemie, car elle rappellait la domination autrichienne, et c'était aussi la langue des militaries étrangers qui occupaient notre pays".[6] The similarity between her experience of German and Swiss French foreshadows another, more disturbing, parallel between her experience of the Swiss refugee camp and that of people whose relatives did not survive another, apparently "similar situation" – that of the concentration camps:

> De jeunnes femmes habillées comme des militaires prennes nos enfants avec des sourires rassurantes. Hommes et femmes sont séparés pour la douche. On emporte nos vêtements pour les désinfecter… Ceux parmi nous qui ont déjà vécu une situation semblable avouerons plus tard qu'ils ont eu peur. Nous sommes tous soulagés de nous retrouver après, et surtout, de retrouver nos enfants propres, et déjà bien nourris.[7]

3 Kristof, Agota. *L'Analphabète*. Carouge-Genève, Éditions Zoé, 2004, p. 24

4 Translation: "French is the enemy language", which is "in the process of killing [her] mother tongue" and Switzerland is the "social and cultural desert". Cf.: Ibid., p. 42.
Unless otherwise indicated, all translations from French are mine.

5 "I can read Victor Hugo, Rousseau, Voltaire, Sartre, Camus, Michaux, Francis Ponge, Sade, everything that I want to read in French." Cf.: Ibid., p. 54.

6 "For us, Hungarians, this [i.e. German] was an enemy language, because it reminded us of the Austrian domination, and because it was also the language of the foreign soldiers who occupied our country at this time." Cf.: Ibid., p. 34. (Hungary was part of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy from 1867 to 1918, and had been part of the Habsburg Empire for almost two hundred years. The "foreign soldiers" refer to Hitler's troops.)

7 "Young women dressed like soldiers take our children with a reassuring smile. Men and women are separated from each other before having a shower. They take our clothes to disinfect them... Those among us who have already experienced a similar situation later confess that they were afraid. We are relieved when we meet afterwards, and find our children clean and well fed." Cf.: Ibid., p. 39

Of course, the two kinds of experiences are far from being the same, or even comparable.[8] The parallel rather seems to suggest that for Kristof, crossing the border meant the exchange of one camp (first Nazi then Communist East-Central Europe) for another: the "disinfected" West, which doomed her to a life of exile. In fact, her written French is just as simple and "disinfected" as the clothes she was wearing in the Swiss camp: it sounds uprooted, devoid of all flesh and blood, as if to register with apathy the loss of any sense of belonging. In fact she states :

> J'ai laissé en Hongrie mon journal à l'écriture secrete, et aussi mes premiers poèmes. J'y ai laissé mes frères, mes parents. […] Mais surtout, ce jour-là, ce jour de fin novembre 1956, j'ai perdu définitivement mon appartenance à un peuple.[9]

In what follows, I shall focus on *Le Grand Cahier* alone, and investigate the ways in which the novel complicates our received notions of trauma and/or exile, offering a running commentary on both trauma and immigrant fiction. The novel is presented as a notebook written by twin boys in the first-person plural, in a timeless, or else, all too temporal present tense. The two- or three-page long chapters tell about the life of the two boys left by their mother to the care of their grandmother in a borderland village during and after the Second World War. The book is predicated upon the narrative imperative of absolute objectivity: both the narrative strategy, in which each "I" of the plural "we" is there to legitimate the truthfulness of the story, and the diary form in the present tense are supposed to ensure "the faithful description of facts".[10] In order to eliminate all subjective feelings and memories both from psyche and language and to arrive at a state of complete apathy, the twins perform "exercises" in self-torture which they describe in an almost telegraphic style. At the same time, apathy is neither a sheer means of survival, nor is it only a psychological phenomenon that testifies to

8 Cf.: Derrida, Jacques. *Demeure*. Paris, Galilée, 1998, p. 58.

9 "I left in Hungary my secret diary, as well as my first poems. I left my brothers, my parents. [...] But, above all, on this day, on this late November day of 1956, I definitively lost my sense of belonging to a people." Cf.: Kristof, *L'Analphabète*, p. 35.

10 See: Kristof, *The Notebook*, p. 29. Brian Richardson devotes a chapter to the study of "we" narratives; yet, Kristof's *Le Grand Cahier* is *not* included into the group of "narratives with significant sections in the 'we' form listed in the 'appendix'" (Richardson, Brian. *Unnatural Voices: Extreme Narration in Modern and Contemporary Fiction.* Columbus, The Ohio State University Press, 2006, p. 141.). According to Richardson, it is "the very ambiguity and fluctuations of the precise identity of the 'we' that are the most interesting" features of these novels, which exhibit the voice of a most often "unreliable" (Ibid., p. 58), "collective identity" (Ibid., p. 56). Kristof's "we", however, stands in an uneasy relationship with the first-person plural narratives treated by Richardson. On the one hand, the collective identity of the twins – of these two inseparable and indistinguishable beings who, quite unbelievably, think the same, speak the same and act the same – is indeed a source of empowerment in their marginal position. On the other hand, however, what they wish to avoid by all means is, precisely, unreliability.

trauma. More importantly, it is an ethical stance: the twins gradually become the self-appointed, strong and sometimes cruel guardians of justice, and their narrative clearly suggests that it is precisely subjectivity (memories, feelings, interpretations, psychic predispositions) that leads to injustice and suffering. They cruelly punish their closest friend and carer,[11] the priest's young housekeeper, when they realise that she made fun of starving Jews marching through the village; they let their returning mother be blown up by a mine, only to hang her cadaver in the attic. The book ends with the separation of the twins: they send their father off into the minefield separating two countries so that one of them can cross the border by going over his dead body.[12]

Critics investigating the trilogy can be divided into two categories. The first comprises those who, using mostly psychoanalytic approaches, interpret it as a fiction of exile, dealing with the loss of the mother and the mother tongue. Michèle Bacholle, for instance, considers the book the representation of a "double bind": the schizophrenic situation of a bilingual writer torn between her native and adoptive countries. In her reading, the use of the first-person plural and the ban on emotions are symptomatic of borderline disorder, a subcategory of schizophrenia.[13] By contrast, Tijana Miletić argues that the fate of the inseparable twins of *Le Grand Cahier* exemplifies the successful adoption of a new culture and a new language (represented, in the book, by the grandmother), and Kristof's French is the language of (successful) "mourning", which "holds the key of creativity".[14]

Critics in the second camp interpret the book as a testimony engaging with the traumatic histories of the peoples of Central Europe, whose lives have been disrupted by wars and the violence of the German and Russian occupations. Marie Bornand reads the trilogy as a fiction of testimony *(fiction du témoignage)*, the narrative of a survivor *(reascapé)*, which constantly provokes a troubling sense of disorientation.[15] Martha Kuhlman sees Kristof as a "transnational" writer, and the twins' traumatic separation as "an allegory for the division of Europe".[16] These readings concur in bestowing upon Kristof "a permanent position in the canon [...] of post-war, post-fascist

11 They put an explosive device into her stove, which disfigures her face.

12 The next two sequels, *La Preuve* and *Le Troisième Mensonge,* are written in third and first person singular, respectively, and raise the possibility that their shared existence was just an illusion (a lie?) that helped one party to survive the all too painful losses fracturing his life.

13 Bacholle, Michèle. *Un passe contraignant: double bind et transculturation*. Amsterdam, Rodopi, 2000, p. 75.

14 Miletić, Tijana. *European Literary Immigration into the French Language: Readings of Gary, Kristof, Kundera and Semprun*. Amsterdam, Rodopi, 2008, p. 30.

15 Bornand, Marie. *Témoignage et fiction. Les récits de rescapés dans la littérature de langue française (1945–2000)*. Genève, Librairie Droz. 2004, p. 210.

16 Kuhlman, Martha. "The Double Writing of Agota Kristof and the New Europe." *Studies in Twentieth Century Literature*, vol. 27, no. 1, 2003, p. 124.

regime testimonies".[17] I would, however, suggest that *Le Grand Cahier* challenges our reading strategies of trauma fiction in an important way, which is supposed to invite us to "listen" and ethically to "respond" to the protagonist(s).[18] More accurately, the uncanny effect of the novel results primarily from readers' incapacity to situate themselves ethically and to define their attitude to the characters. For the assumptions on which the narrative strategy is predicated (narration in first-person plural and in the present tense) turn out to undermine the imperative of absolute objectivity and the twins' actual cruelty challenges the ethics of apathy that was supposed to transcend the world surrounding them.

Le Grand Cahier carefully avoids references to concrete historical events and geographical locations, as if to preclude the possibility of referential reading, thereby creating, as Bornand suggests,[19] a constant sense of geographical and historical disorientation. At the same time, the fact that it is written from the perspective of children renders the absence of historical, geographical and political referents "realistic". The lack of historical and geographical signposts, coupled with that of proper names,[20] however, offers a guarantee that no reader, whatever their national or linguistic origin, can ever feel "at home" whilst reading the novel. In fact, the first sentences of the book ("Nous arrivons de la Grande Ville. Nous avons voyagé toute la nuit."[21]) indicate that in the self-enclosed world *of Le Grand Cahier*, the twins are always already exiles, and the final border-crossing only repeats and intensifies the primary experience of loss – that of the mother – they suffered in the first place.

Yet despite these obstacles placed in the way of referential and historical interpretations, Kristof does rely on readers' implicit knowledge, and acknowledgment, of important historical facts (e.g. that "deserters" and "air raids" are connected to the Second World War, or that the march of "the human herd" refers to Jews being deported), as well as on their recognition of a specific geographical location: Central Europe (the village, inhabited by some foreign soldiers, is eventually occupied by "l'armée victorieuse des nouveaux étrangers"[22]). In other words, however, disoriented

17 Ringer, Loren. "Review of *The Notebook (Het Dikke Schrift) by* Agota Kristof." De Onderneming, Théatre National de Bretagne, Rennes, France, 28 November 2001, respectively Ringer, Loren. "Review of *The Proof (Het Bewijs*) by Agota Kristof." *Theatre Journal,* vol. 54, no. 3, 2002, p. 476.

18 Whitehead, Anne. *Trauma Fiction.* Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 2004, p. 8

19 Bornand, *Témoignage et fiction*, p. 210.

20 See: Suleiman, Susan Rubin. "Monuments in a Foreign Tongue: On Reading Holocaust Memoirs by Emigrants Author(s)." *Poetics Today,* vol. 17, no. 4, 1996, pp. 639–657.
In the next two sequels, the twins do acquire non-Hungarian proper names: they are called Claus and Lucas. The same applies to other characters too.

21 Kristof, Agota. *Le Grand Cahier*. Paris, Points French, 1986, p. 9. Cf.: "We arrive from the Big Town. We've been travelling all night." (Kristof, *The Notebook*, p. 3.)

22 Kristof, *Le Grand Cahier*, p. 146. Cf.: "the victorious army of new foreigners." (Kristof, *The Notebook*, p. 157.)

readers may feel that they are constantly required to fill in the gaps provided by the limited perspective of the protagonists and to make historical sense of the narrative.[23]

Kristof's use of an almost telegraphic style and her conscious estrangement from the French language would certainly make it possible to place *Le Grand Cahier* in the context of testimonies. Indeed, although Kristof never speaks about her literary inspirations, there is one Hungarian writer she had certainly met, read and whose book she had greatly appreciated, Imre Kertész.[24] Kertész, who won the Nobel Prize in literature in 2002, is famous for his dispassionate style, and the thirteen-year-old narrator of *Fatelessness* is similar to Kristof's twins in yet another important respect: he "does not seem to feel".[25] In Kertész's work, however, apathy is both a consequence of, and a means to survive the trauma of the camp, whereas the language without emotions proves to be the only form of communication suitable to convey what "cannot be imagined".[26] In *Le Grand Cahier,* however, the use of unemotional language is a conscious choice that serves to eliminate (existing) feelings,[27] and the twins' dispassionate language, which, in another context, could aptly be called "traumatic language", becomes a model for them consciously to construct their world.

> [N]ous avons un règle très simple la composition doit être vraie. Nous devons décrire ce qui est, ce que nous voyons, ce que nous entendons, ce que nous faisons. [...]
> Nous écrirons: "Nous mangeons beaucoup de noix", et non pas : "Nous aimons les noix" car le mot "aimer" n'est pas un mot sûr, il manque de précision et d'objectivité. "Aimer les noix" et "aimer notre Mère", cela ne peut vouloir dire la même chose. La première formule désigne un goût agréable dans la bouche, et la deuxième un sentiment.
> Les mots qui définissent les sentiments sont très vagues; il vaut mieux éviter leur emploi et s'en tenir à la description des objets, des êtres humains, et de soi-même, c'est a dire à la description fidèle des faits.[28]

23 This is especially true for Hungarian readers, who "know" that Kristof was born in Hungary, so the book "must" be set in Hungary.

24 See: Bornand, *Témoignage et fiction*, p. 208., respectively Sobra, Marie-Anne. "Cruelle Agota." *Revue Regard sur L'Est*, 2 March 2006. http://www.regard-est.com/home/breve_contenu.php?id=625. Accessed 15 March 2011.

25 Lichtig, Toby. "An Awakening in Auschwitz. A Review of Kertész's *Fatelessness*." 2005. http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2005/aug/28/fiction.features. Accessed 20 April 2011.

26 Kertész Imre. *Sorstalanság* [Fatelessness]. Budapest, Magvető, 2002, p. 312.

27 The twins even mimic, and thereby parody and subvert, the discourse of psychiatry: they manage to become exempt from school because of their "traumatisme psychic" (Kristof, *Le Grand Cahier*, p. 151. ["psychic trauma" – Kristof, *The Notebook*, p. 162.]).

28 Kristof, *Le Grand Cahier*, p. 32. For the English translation see p. 23 of this book.

As the quotation testifies, the ban is on the representation of feelings. It suggests that, feelings *can* be represented and therefore all too well imagined, but their representation cannot be but misleading. The twins' endeavour to eliminate feelings from both language and the psyche stems from a deep sense of betrayal.[29] Although the mother's wish to save them from the atrocities of war could well serve as a proof of her love, they feel abandoned. Furthermore, their mother's choice to leave them in their grandmother's care becomes an indication to them that her words of endearment have always been empty. Hence, the distrust of "mots qui définissent les sentiments" ("words that define feelings") results from an overall suspicion towards rhetoric, towards the power of language not only to represent but also to generate feelings, and deceptively create bonds and emotions.

> Notre Mère nous disais:
> Mes chéris! Mes amours! Mon bonheur! Mes petits bébés adorés!
> Quand nous nous rappelons ces mots, nos yeux se remplissent de larmes.
> Ces mots, nous devons les oublier, parce que, à present, personne ne nous dit des mots semblables et parce que le souvenir que nous en avons est une charge trop lourde à porter.
> Alors, nous recommençons notre exercice d'une autre façon.
> Nous disons:
> Mes chéris! Mes amours! Je vous aime… Je ne vous quitterai jamais… Je n'aimerais que vous… Toujours… Vous êtes toute ma vie…
> A force d'être répétés, les mots perdent peu à peu leur signification et la douleur qu'ils portent en eux s'atténue.[30]

In psychological terms, during this "exercise to toughen the mind", the twins reject the mother, because the loss of her love is unbearable. As Kristeva puts it in *Soleil Noir,* with regard to the aggression the mourner experiences towards the lost object:

29 See: Freyd, Jennifer. "Betrayal Trauma: Traumatic Amnesia as an Adaptive Response to Childhood Abuse." *Ethics & Behavior*, vol. 4, no. 4, 1994, pp. 307–333.

30 Kristof, *Le Grand Cahier*, p. 27.
"Mother used to say to us:
My darlings! My loves! My joy! My adorable little babies!
When we remember these words, our eyes fill with tears. We must forget these words because nobody says such words to us now and because our memory of them is too heavy a burden to bear.
So we begin our exercise again, in a different way.
We say:
'My darlings! My loves! I love you… I shall never leave you… I shall never love anyone but you… Forever… You are my whole life…'
By force of repetition, these words gradually lose their meaning, and the pain they carry in them assuaged." (Kristof, *The Notebook*, p. 21.)

"Je l'aime […] mais plus encore je le haïs".[31] At the same time, the conscious repetition of the mother's words turns the repetition involved in post-traumatic states upside down. In Freud's words, the traumatised is "obliged to *repeat* the repressed material as a contemporary experience, instead of, as the physician would prefer to see, *remembering* it as something belonging to the past".[32] In the twins' case, however, repetition is not compulsive. Yet, nor can it be said to be part of the process Freud would call remembrance. Rather, they learn to sterilise the past, to keep it at bay by repeating again and again all of its details. Repetition helps to sever the bond between affect and the language evoking it, and to trigger the splitting, so often present in trauma survivors, between "emotional" and "intellectual" memory.[33] What is peculiar about this splitting in *Le Grand Cahier* is that it is voluntarily initiated by the protagonists, who realise that repetitive performance has the power not only to generate affections but also to kill them.[34] Their self-hardening "exercises" comprise both the repetition of the mother's words of kindness and that of the hurtful words of their surroundings, as well as the hitting of each other with a belt.

Repetition, generating the split between emotions and intellect, or else, between "emotional" and "intellectual" memory, has a self-protective function – it constitutes a shield against the invasion of emotions of the past, always threatening the self from inside. In fact, the constant use of the present tense also translates the twins' relentless vigilance, their ceaseless being on guard against the threats of an overwhelming past (the realm of the mother's love and bonding), which would otherwise keep intruding into the present.[35] By writing in the present, and destroying all emotional bonds through "objectivity", the twins effectively kill (consciously abject) the mother, at least what she used to mean to them in the past. In other words, the mother has been murdered through language before she is actually killed by a bomb, before she becomes a "real" abject and her dead body is hung in the attic. In this sense, the

31 "I love him, but I hate him even more." Kristeva, Julia. 1987. *Soleil noir, Dépression et mélancholie*. Paris: Gallimard, 1987, p. 20.

32 Freud, Sigmund. *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. Translated and edited by J. Strachey, New York, WW Norton, 1961 [1920].

33 Whitehead, Anne. *Memory.* London, Routledge. 2009, p. 118.

34 Repetition is not only the possibility condition of any successful performance, nor does citation, or quotation constitute an unsuccessful performance (see Derrida's critique of Austin in Derrida, Jacques. "Signature, Event, Context." *Limited Inc...* Evanston, Northwestern University Press, 1988.). On the contrary: citation suceeds all too well in *destroying* feelings.

35 Amit Marcus, who analyses the novel against the background of Ricoeur's concept of narrative identity, argues that *Le Grand Cahier* challenges the notion that "self-identity is a matter of teleology and of the merging of past, present, and future". For him the constant use of the present tense indicates the narrators' aspiration to a complete stability, which leaves no place for selfhood. See: Marcus, Amit. "Sameness and Selfhood in Agota Kristof's *The Notebook*." *Partial Answers: Journal of Literature and the History of Ideas*, vol. 4, no. 2, 2006, p. 83.

notebook equally stages the performative power, the violence involved in any language that camouflages itself as purely constative or else, "descriptive".

By staging the erasure, or the murder of memory, however, the twins not only forget, but also cultivate a peculiar version of the imperative of remembrance. What they do preserve is, on the one hand, the awareness of the mother's unforgivable and unforgettable betrayal. "Nous n'oublions jamais rien", as they write.[36] On the other hand, they do offer a memento for what has to be forgotten through the open display of the process of forgetting.

The gap so forcefully introduced between past and present turns the twins' citation of the mother's words into a perfect embodiment of the figure of allegory. As Paul de Man famously claims, "the meaning constituted by the allegorical sign can [...] consist only in the *repetition* (in the Kierkegaardian sense of the term) of a previous sign with which it can never coincide, since it is of the essence of this previous sign to be pure anterioriority".[37] The mother's past words constitute the very anteriority with which the twins' same words renounce to coincide, and they equally disclose the (mother's) discourse of love as always already an allegory in its difference from the meaning it creates. As de Man further argues:

> allegory designates primarily a distance in relation to its own origin, and, renouncing the nostalgia and the desire to coincide, it establishes its language in the void of this temporal difference. In so doing, it prevents the self from an illusory identification with the non-self, which is now fully, though painfully, recognised as a non-self.[38]

The twins' repetition not only lays bare but effectively activates the non-coincidence of words and referents, or origins. Yet, rather than merely suffering the consequences of what de Man called our shared linguistic "predicament", the active dismantling of the bond between signifiers and signifieds is presented in *Le Grand Cahier* as the condition of possibility of survival. The twins' survival is predicated upon their complete detachment from their previous selves (painfully recognised as non-selves), from a world in which the mother was still present, and the signifiers and the signifieds used to coincide, as it turns out, deceptively. Yet, allegory is also the most effective means of remembrance. The citation of feelings both erases and uncovers these feelings, since their evocation points to a past sense of fullness beyond language (and beyond *Le Grand Cahier*) that the twins both lost and destroyed.

36 Kristof, *Le Grand Cahier*, p. 120. Cf.: "We never forget anything." (Kristof, *The Notebook*, p. 126.)

37 de Man, Paul. *Blindness and Insight.* Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1983, p. 207.

38 Ibid.

Consequently, the cadaver of the abjected mother also serves as a signal that the past cannot, and is not to be, buried once and for all. As Kristeva puts it: "The corpse (or cadaver: cadere, to fall) [...] seen without God and outside of science, is the utmost of abjection. [...] It is something rejected from which one does not part, from which one does not protect oneself as from an object. Imaginary uncanniness and real threat, it beckons to us and ends up engulfing us".[39] In *Le Grand Cahier*, the corpse hanging in the attic evokes both the abject mother (her loss and her love) and what has remained of her: cold, dead bones of objective rationality. Hence, her rattling remains in the attic parallel the way in which citations evoke feelings in language and the mother tongue haunts Kristof's French. This double allegiance in the twins' melancholy discourse, which remembers through forgetting and forgets through remembering, reveals again that the same words have the power both to kill and to create affects. Indeed, it is in the most forceful moments of negation, such as the one in which the twins hit each other with a belt, and at each blow they say "ça ne fait pas mal",[40] that the novel achieves the most troubling evocation of pain.

2. FATHER TONGUE

Agota Kristof's own writing of the novel in French echoes the twins' use of their father's dictionary to write the notebook. Their action resembles the need to learn a foreign language. Their opting for the "father tongue" of rationality becomes a means of survival and translates their integration into, and their capacity to manipulate, the symbolic order. For example, when they want to get hold of pencils and a notebook, which will become *the* notebook, they formulate their request to the reluctant bookseller as follows: "Nous sommes disposés à effectuer quelques travaux pour vous en échange de ces objets".[41] When the bookseller complains that they do not speak "normally", they tell him that they speak "correctly". The association of the father with the dictionary and with writing itself signals the rootless, "unnatural" character of their apathetic language and their hard-earned insensitivity. This perverted *Bildungsoman* can then equally be considered an Oedipal trial. The elimination of the father at the end of the novel, and the subsequent separation of the twins from each

39 Kristeva, Julia. *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection.* New York, Columbia University Press, 1982, p. 3–4.

40 Kristof, *Le Grand Cahier*, p. 22. Cf.: "it doesn't hurt" (Kristof, *The Notebook*, p. 17).

41 Kristof, *Le Grand Cahier*, p. 32. Cf.: "We are quite prepared to perform certain tasks for you in exchange for these things." (Kristof, *The Notebook*, p. 26.)

other appear as necessary steps towards individuation: they must leave behind the symbiotic relationship that replaced the intimate bond with the mother.

As noted earlier, the fate of the twins parallels in many ways that of Kristof and, particularly, Kristof's choice to write in French. Commentators generally mention her making the French language strange by way of her dispassionate style.[42] One of her Hungarian translators, András Petőcz, also notices her use of Hungarian syntax. Indeed, her French has the effect of being translated from a language, a mother tongue, that it simultaneously wants to forget and commemorate. Petőcz himself draws attention to the lack of participles and to the frequent appearance of active, rather than passive, sentences, which is a characteristic trait of Hungarian.[43] Hungarian is, therefore, not only a language that haunts the narrative, but haunts it in a very specific way. For while the predominance of the active voice is a normative feature of Hungarian, in French it foregrounds the active agency, rather than the passive suffering, of the subject of the utterance. The twins' (manly) agency is therefore underlined by the active voice rooted, quite paradoxically, in Kristof's mother tongue.

For Kristof, French similarly appears to embody the name of the Father, or the Law. As she says in her autobiography: "Je parle le français depuis plus de trente ans, je l'écris depuis vingt ans mais je ne le connais toujours pas. Je ne le parle pas sans fautes, et je ne peux l'écrire qu'avec l'aide de dictionnaires fréquemment consultés".[44] As we said before, she considers French the "langue ennemie", which destiny and the circumstances imposed upon her, most particularly the circumstance that her *husband* chose to emigrate to Switzerland. If she had had a choice, she says, she would rather have stayed in Hungary in poverty and oppression than working eight-hour shifts in a Swiss watch factory. Turning the cruel literality of the watch factory into a metaphor, we get a glimpse of the ways in which immigration may erase the depths of time and experience: the objective time of the clock obliterates the subjective time of memories. Kristof, however, has always considered her fate a "challenge", turning the passive role of the wife and the labourer into the active role of the writer. Paradoxically, while she laments that French has been "killing her mother tongue", she makes it equally clear that she has never even wished to write in Hungarian. Although in the past, she had been accustomed to composing poems in her native language, she found these too "sentimental" and came to the early realisation that "nothing was born from

42 Cf.: Bacholle, *Un passe contraignant...,* respectively: Miletić, *European Literary Immigration into the French Language*.

43 Petőcz, András. 2007. "Az analfabéta." http://www.petoczandras.eu/konyvek/analfabeta.html. Accessed 28 April 2011.

44 Kristof, *L'Analphabète*, p. 24. Cf.: "I have spoken French for more than thirty years, have written in it for twenty years, but I still do not know it. I do not speak it without making mistakes, and I need to consult the dictionary frequently when I write."

Hungarian".[45] Whereas French has turned into the enemy outside, Hungarian, the mother tongue has remained the abject within.

In *Beyond the Mother Tongue,* Yasemin Yildiz draws attention to what she calls our ultimately post-monolingual condition. Relying, among others, on Derrida's argument[46] about the impossibility of "assimilating" or "owning" a language, she considers how the writings of bilingual authors subvert the assumptions surrounding the idea of monolingualism (such as the sense of "origin", "true identity", "natural belonging", and "true affective attachments"). She suggests that the native tongue is always an "aggregate of differential elements".[47] The plot of *Le Grand Cahier* addresses the problematic status of the mother tongue explicitly. Sometimes, the grandmother (the mother's mother) gets drunk, and during these temporary states of delirium, she speaks a foreign language which the twins do not understand. This is most probably a Slavonic language since it enables the grandmother to communicate with the "new foreigners" (i.e. the Soviet Army) who invade the village. However, the uncanniness (or else, the inherent heteroglossia) of the twins' mother tongue, is thoroughly repressed in their "manly", professedly monolingual notebook, which is supposed to obey only the Law of the Father.[48]

For Julia Kristeva, the psychoanalytic process enabled the translation of childhood memories into a foreign language. "Without such an experience", says Kristeva, "a foreign language would be merely a second skin, artificial and mechanical".[49] As for Kristof, she burnt her own childhood diary to erase her memories, rather than to translate and assimilate them into the new language.[50] This physical annihilation of the diaries endowed Kristof with an agency to complete what trauma had initiated: it encrypted memories into a place beyond language. The transfiguration, translation, or assimilation of these memories into the new language has been equally resisted by

45 The quotations are translated from an interview that Kristof gave in Hungarian in 2006. See http://hvg.hu/kultura/20060915agotakristof/. Accessed 19 April 2011.

46 Derrida, Jacques. *Monolingualism of the Other or, The Prosthesis of Origin.* Translated by Patrick Mensah, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1998.

47 Yildiz, Yasemin. *Beyond the Mother Tongue: The Postmonolingual Condition.* New York, Fordham University Press. 2012, p. 205.

48 At the beginning of her carrier, in order to avoid any possible confusion with Agatha Christie, Kristof wanted to borrow the family name of her grandmother of Bohemian origin, Zaik (see: Yotova, Rennie. *La Trilogie des Jumaux d'Agota Kristof,* Gollion, Infolio, 2011, p. 9.). Her (just like the twins') mother, did not speak a language that was completely "one". Yet, Kristof eventually abandoned the project of assuming a pseudonym: it is her father's name Kristof, and her given name Agota that eventually appear on the cover page of *Le Grand Cahier.*

49 Cited in Rice, Alison. "Francophone postcolonialism from Eastern Europe." *International Journal of Francophone Studies,* vol. 10, no. 3, 2007, p. 315.

50 Durante, Erica. "Agota Kristof du commencement à la fin de l'écriture." 2007. http://www.revuerectoverso.com/spip.php?article19. Accessed 28 April 2011.

Kristof, and her French has become precisely what Kristeva calls an artificial second skin, covering aching wounds. In Kristof's own words: "Il y a des gens qui croient que l'écriture, ça ressemble à une psychoanalyse, qu'elle vous guérit, qu'il y a le Bonheur au bout. Moi, je peux vous dire que c'est faux. Plus on écrit, plus on se rend malade. […] Et pourtant c'est une nécessité. […] Même si je n'étais pas publiée, je continuerais."[51] Writing is no cure, but rather a symptom, a kind of addiction, a relentless return to the point where pain is located. Thus, even if it threatens to dislocate the symbolic subject in Kristof, the loss, or more precisely, the abandonment of the mother tongue is a constitutive loss which keeps her at the process of writing. This empowering sense of loss is probably the same as the one that informs the twins' Hungarian-inspired use of the active voice.

3. AN ETHICS OF FRENCH

Following their self-imposed imperative of absolute objectivity, the twins wish to buy only "[h]istory books and geography books, [b]ooks that tell true things, not invented things" at the shopkeeper's. The twins choose, in fact, history (and the reading of history books) rather than memory, since these are facts and the father tongue that secure their survival. In *The Holocaust and the Postmodern,* Robert Eaglestone draws a distinction between memory and history, which latter he considers as a science that relies upon a correspondence theory of truth:

> One of the ways in which "truth as revelation" appears is as memory. [...] Memory reveals a world and, in so doing, reveals the other. Memory is not reducible to an understanding of history as correspondence because it underlies the idea of history, since it manifests the "ethical relationship".[52]

Eaglestone, drawing on Levinas' philosophy, argues that only memory (linked to both the Platonic *anamnesis* and the Heideggerian *aletheia*) reveals "existential ethical truths".[53] As opposed to a correspondence theory of history which claims a mastery over the past, memory exposes us to the other, to the world of others, and the truth

51 Durante, "Agota Kristof...". Cf.: "Some people think that writing is like psychoanalysis, that it is a cure, that there is Happiness in the end. I can tell you that this is wrong. The more one writes, the sicker one makes oneself. [...] And still, it is a necessity. [...] Even if I were not being published, I would keep on writing."

52 Eaglestone, Robert. *The Holocaust and the Postmodern.* Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2005, p. 158.

53 Ibid.

of this world cannot be "assimilated or reduced by the process of thinking of truth as only correspondence".[54]

Eaglestone not only maintains that personal identity is predicated upon memory, but also that it is memory that can testify the most faithfully to the past (as another world), and, therefore, to the world of the other. The twins, claiming a "correspondence theory of truth",[55] not only defend themselves against the intrusion of their own memories and feelings, but also refuse to access, let alone to share, others' emotions. This way, they acquire a sense of authority over "others", which renders the ethical stakes of their exile somewhat dubious. In *Le Grand Cahier,* the characters are identified according to the function they have in the twins' life (grandmother, father, curée, officer), as if they were deprived of any individuality of their own. The use of a purely exterior narrative voice belonging to this "we", this first-person plural in the present tense, suggests that the twins always remain exiles and deny any possible access to the minds of others. "Les gens disent que notre voisine est folle, qu'elle a perdu l'esprit quand l'homme qui lui a fait l'enfant l'a abandonnée. / Grand-Mère dit que la voisine est simplement paresseuse et qu'elle préfère vivre pauvrement plutôt que de se mettre au travail."[56] Objectivity eliminates the possibility of gaining access to the minds of others. Furthermore, the narrative device indicates that in their "new country" it is much safer to see people as empty than to trust outward signs. At the same time, it also translates their rejection of the possibility of empathy.

In their self-enclosed world, justice seems to be entirely disinterested, emptied of all subjective or "sentimental" inclinations. They tell the "deserter" whom they help with food and a blanket: "Nous ne voulions pas être gentils. Nous vous avons apporté ces objets car vous en aviez absolument besoin."[57] In the same vein, they are ready to inflict pain on a masochistic German soldier who asks to be hit and they volunteer to set their neighbour's house on fire when she wants to die. At the same time, they protect a Jewish girl against the grandmother's wishes, because they "promised" to do so. Their disinterestedness thus comes across as a viable ethical stance.

The twins' belief, however, that their judgements are just results, however, from the single perspective of a first-person plural (who "ne font qu'une seule et même personne"[58]) and therefore puts into jeopardy the ethical position they occupy. For *Le Grand Cahier* not only stages the camouflaged, performative violence involved

54 Ibid., p. 171.

55 Ibid.

56 Kristof, *Le Grand Cahier*, p. 34. Cf.: "People say that our neighbour is mad, that she lost her mind when the man who made her pregnant abandoned her. / Grandmother says that the neighbour is simply lazy and prefers to stay poor rather than get down to work." (Kristof, *The Notebook*, p. 30.)

57 Kristof, *Le Grand Cahier*, p. 44. Cf.: "We weren't trying to be kind. We've brought you these things because you absolutely need them." (Kristof, *The Notebook*, p. 43.)

58 Kristof, *Le Grand Cahier*, p. 28. Cf.: who "are one and the same person" (Kristof, *The Notebook*, p. 22.).

in the seemingly constative statements, but also discloses that the twins' apparently dispassionate objectivity is but a mask that hides beyond language their (well motivated) hatred.[59] In fact, it is often their sense of betrayal that triggers their urge to punish, or, differently put, they want to destroy the gap suddenly opening wide between signifier and the signified. The mother who abandoned her children is dead, the face of the kind housekeeper who poked fun of the starving Jews is blown up, and the father, who they overheard speaking about their separation when they were younger,[60] is killed by a mine. The more they wish to eliminate the soul, the clearer it becomes that the kind of justice they administer is neither apathetic, nor disinterested.

The uncanny effect of the novel primarily results from the readers' incapacity to find the firm ground on which to define their attitude to the characters. Loss and exile strike deep, familiar chords, yet the singularity of the twins' response, the insensitivity they develop, and the ethical practice they follow generate narrative empathy always at odds with itself. Kristof's estrangement of the French language thus translates the strangeness, not to say, bizarre character of this men's world. Meanwhile, French is not only estranged but it also makes strange: while drawing attention to itself as eminently artificial, it also alienates the reader from the protagonists. It is emptied of all emotions, like the twins themselves, which renders the reading experience of *Le Grand Cahier* somewhat painful: French kills the mother tongue, but also stands as an uncanny reminder of the unrecoverable loss it generates. And since, like the mother, Hungarian would only "betray" and "mislead" (Hungarian language is too "sentimental"), French becomes *the* allegory that both erases and testifies to a past. This past, however, also recedes at the precise moment of its representation.

59 "First person narration with an insistence on 'truth' typically generates a reader response that wishes to unearth a truer truth." (Coetzee, John Maxwell. "Confession and Double Thoughts: Tolstoy, Rousseau, Dostoevsky." *Comparative Literature*, vol. 37, no. 3, 1985, p. 200.)

60 This is the only episode of the past that is actually described by the twins. They start out by saying that it happened three years ago, but then go on with the description of the scene in the present, as if it were still happening.

The Violence of Sympathy

J. M. Coetzee's *Foe*[*]

In this paper, I shall read John Maxwell Coetzee's *Foe* (1986) as a response to Adam Smith's theory of sympathy in *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759), arguing that these works challenge us with questions concerning the possibility conditions of both trauma theory and postcolonial criticism. Trauma theory is often considered as a branch of ethical criticism: it endows reading, considered as attentive (non-) comprehension, with the responsibility of witnessing and remembering. It opts for an ethics of memory respecting the alterity of the trauma, its essential difference from conscious remembrance, without trying to assimilate it into linear, narrative memory. Trauma theory is also often inspired by a Levinasian ethics, which claims that the ethical subject is always already split and has been traumatised by the encounter with the Other, which at the same time constitutes him or her as subject. This Levinasian ethics respecting the absolute alterity of trauma, and its complete resistance to narrativisation implies the lack of, or infinite postponement of healing. Therefore, it seems to undermine the ethics of psychoanalysis, which aims at mourning, working through, and eventual healing through the transformation of the traumatic event (and its assimilation) into experience. The double bind implied by these opposing tendencies is addressed in Dominick LaCapra's famous essay, *Trauma, Absence, Loss*, formulating the imperative to remain on the borderline between mourning and melancholy.[1] LaCapra evokes Roland Barthes's concept of intransitive writing as a medium suitable for the representation of the singularity of historical traumas; intransitive writing can bear witness and be faithful to the past while also being responsible for the future.

Coetzee's *Foe* is generally subsumed under the genre of historiographic metafiction, since it can be read as a rewrite of Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (canonised as "the first English novel"), *Moll Flanders* and *Roxana*. Meanwhile, it also offers a commentary on the genre

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* This essay appeared in Hungarian as Timár Andrea. "Trauma, együttérzés, Coetzee [Trauma, Sympathy, Coetzee]." *Jelenkor,* vol. 54, no. 10, 2011, pp. 1034–1046.

1 LaCapra, Dominick. *Writing History, Writing Trauma*. Baltimore, The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001, pp. 43–85.

of Confession, or spiritual autobiography – just like *Robinson Crusoe,* which has often been read as a specifically eighteenth-century autobiographical narrative of fall, conversion and redemption. (E.g.: Crusoe calls his setting on a voyage on the sea his "original sin".) Susan Barton, the first-person narrator of Coetzee's *Foe* is writing a confession: she addresses Mr Foe, her interlocutor, as an "author who had heard many confessions",[2] when she wants to tell him about her encounter with Crusoe and Friday on the island.[3] The problem of the confession did indeed occupy Coetzee at the time of writing *Foe:* a year before its publication, Coetzee, following the footsteps of Philip Lejeune, Paul de Man, and Jacques Derrida, published an essay entitled *Confessions and Double Thoughts* (1985). Here, he considers confession a possible subgenre of autobiography, and calls Defoe's favourite genre fictive confession.[4] According to Coetzee, confession is one link in the chain of transgression, confession, punishment and redemption, in which redemption means the end, the closure of the chapter, the liberation from the burden of

2 Coetzee, John Maxwell. *Foe*. London, Penguin Books, 1987, p. 48.

3 For a fair summary, see, for example, the New York Times' review: "The human image in 'Robinson Crusoe' is unforgettable, but limited: it is a man's world; women appear only as terrified anonymities, domestic servants in Cape Verde, or the honest widow in London who holds Crusoe's money for him. Crusoe seems to have managed well enough without women during the 28 years, 2 months and 19 days he spent on the island. Near the end of the book we hear that he has married, 'not either to my disadvantage or dissatisfaction,' that he has had two sons and a daughter, and that his wife has died: these matters are accomplished in a sentence. Crusoe goes back to his island, and then to Brazil, 'from whence I sent a bark, which I brought there, with more people to the island; and in it, besides other supplies, I sent seven women, being such as I found proper for service, or for wives to such as would take them.' 'Foe' makes up for these severities: it tells a woman's story, and lets her prescribe the terms on which it is to be construed. Susan Barton, of an English mother and a French father, has a daughter of the same name. The daughter is abducted by an Englishman 'and conveyed to the New World.' Susan follows her to Brazil, but in Bahia the trail goes cold. She stays there for two years, then takes ship for Lisbon and becomes the captain's lover. On the voyage, the sailors mutiny, kill the captain and set Susan adrift in a small boat. She lands on an island, where she is found by Friday and brought to his master, here called Cruso. Cruso is an irascible, lazy, imperious fellow: he has lost interest in escaping from the island or even in recalling the events of his early life there. Friday's tongue has been cut out, either by slave owners or by Cruso. After a year on the island, the three are rescued by an English ship under Captain Smith, but on the voyage back to England, Cruso dies, pining for the island. The rest of the book deals with Susan and Friday in England, and her efforts to persuade Daniel Foe to turn her account of life on the island into a popular book of adventure. Foe is not much interested in Cruso and Friday; he regards their island as a boring place on which the same nothing happened every day. He is far more interested in Susan's two years in Bahia, a time of indifference to her. But Foe is too busy, and too pestered, to get the book going: he is sunk in debt, the bailiffs have taken his house. Susan tries to write the story as 'The Female Castaway,' but she thinks she needs Foe's flair and fancy to turn it into fame and money." See: Donoghue, Denis. "Her man Friday." 22 December 1987. https://www.nytimes.com/books/97/11/02/home/coetzee-foe.html. Accessed 13 January 2020.

4 Coetzee, John Maxwell. "Confession and Double Thoughts: Tolstoy, Rousseau, Dostoevsky." *Comparative Literature*, vol. 37, no. 3, 1985.

memories.[5] It is most often triggered by a crisis, which generates the *sincerity* of the one who makes the confession. The crisis itself is an event within the subject, which makes it impossible for him or her to live on in bad faith, to entertain further illusions. Indeed, the stake of the confession is not so much truthfulness, but rather authenticity: the reader demands from the narrator to see all of their motivations, to be aware of the ultimate triggers of their actions. The genre of confession therefore generates a readerly attitude of seeking for ever-deeper motivations behind the surface, in an infinite regression.[6]

Besides commenting on the genre of confession, *Foe* equally thematises the relationship between self and other, focusing on the narrator protagonist's, Susan Barton's various attempts at understanding the other while trying to bear witness to Friday's trauma, the loss of his tongue. Indeed, Susan, by making her confession, seeks, in fact, to testify for the trauma Friday suffered. In what follows, I shall first argue that Adam Smith's *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* can be considered as one of the eighteenth-century hypotext of *Foe.* It will be shown that Smith's theorisations of the possibility conditions of sympathy point to the crux of postcolonial theory itself: the understanding and representation of otherness. As is well known, postcolonial theory aims to represent the other in *both* the literary and the political spheres.[7]

1. SYMPATHY

We owe the most comprehensive eighteenth-century theory of sympathy to Adam Smith, who considers sympathy the prime glue of social cohesion and the main pillar that upholds the edifice of society. In *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, Smith not only describes the workings of sympathy, but is particularly interested in the conditions of possibility of its awakening. He argues that sympathy denotes our "fellow-feeling with any passion whatsoever",[8] and "arises in our breast from the imagination".[9]

5 Ibid., p. 194

6 Ibid.

7 As is equally well established, Gayatry Spivak advocates what she calls strategic or operational essentialism: she argues that though language may be capable of representing the traumatised subject in its fragmentation or even silence, politics must represent this subject as if unified, following the logic of allegory. Only allegory displays an awareness of the irreducible alterity and singularitry of the other, of the unbridgeable gap between signifier and signified, that is, that it is not the other that we represent, while, for the sake of political expediency, it represents this other as unified. See: Spivak, Gayatri. "Can the Subaltern Speak?" *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, edited by Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg, Urbana, University of Illinois Press, 1988, pp. 271–313.

8 Smith, Adam. *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*. New York, Prometheus Books, 2000, p. 5.

9 Ibid., p. 7.

Imagination is the faculty that allows us to put ourselves in the situation of others,[10] but imagination itself is "deceitful".[11] The most extreme instance of this deceit is the way in which we sympathise "even with the dead".[12] As Smith says:

> as we put ourselves in his [the dead man's] situation, as we enter, as it were, in his own body, and in our imaginations, in some measure, *animate anew* the deformed and mangled carcase of the slain, when we bring home in his manner his case to our own bosoms, we feel, upon this, as upon many other occasions, an emotion which the person principally concerned is incapable of feeling, and which yet we feel by an illusive sympathy with him.[13]

This specific passage suggests that when we sympathise with the dead, imagining ourselves being buried alive, it is neither with *their* passions, nor with their *passion* that we sympathise, but we imagine what passions would arise in *us*, if we ourselves were in their *situation*. In other words: "when we put ourselves in [the other's] case, [a] passion arises in our breast from the imagination, though it does not in his from the reality".[14] Sympathy in somewhat more average situations is similar to this: sympathetic imagination is deceitful, we can never feel what the other person feels, only what we ourselves would feel in a similar situation. Yet, Smith still holds that sympathy, as a universal human faculty, can actually counter the no less universal self-interest. He starts *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* as follows:

> How selfish soever man may be supposed to be, there are evidently some principles in his nature, which interest him in the fortune of others, and render their happiness necessary to him, though he derives nothing from it, except the pleasure of seeing it. *Of this kind* is pity or compassion which we feel for the misery of others, when we either see it, or are made to conceive it in a very lively manner.[15]

This passage suggests not only that sympathy is a universal faculty and we find pleasure in seeing the other's happiness, but also that we find some pleasure in seeing the other's misery too. However, the possibility to conceive of the other's pain is explicitly predicated upon a previous aesthetic formalisation. In fact, in order for our sympathy

10 Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, p. 7.
11 Ibid.
12 Ibid., p. 99.
13 Ibid. [emphasis added]
14 Ibid., p. 7.
15 Ibid., p. 3. [emphasis added]

to rise, and we can imaginatively place ourselves in the other's situation, this situation must be part and parcel of a narrative:

> General lamentations that express nothing but the anguish of the sufferer don't cause in us any actual strongly-felt sympathy. The Propriety of Action what they do is to make us want to inquire into the person's situation, and to make us disposed to sympathize with him. The first question we ask is "What has happened?". Until this is answered, our fellow-feeling is not very considerable.[16]

This is so much so that we are simply unable to sympathise with the excessive hunger of our companion, but "we can still sympathise with the distress which excessive hunger occasions, when we read the description of it in the journal of a siege".[17] A danger that presses too close precludes the pleasure, and only if we do not suffer *with*, but *for* those in pain can we feel sympathy for them. In other words, only aesthetic distance permits the figurative move necessary for sympathy to be aroused. Otherwise, as Smith insightfully points out, the closeness of the others' misery is simply traumatising, and leads to our desensitisation: when they express "in any strong degree passions which arise from a certain situation or disposition of the body",[18] or when the *narration* of their distress "is every moment interrupted by those natural bursts of passion which often seem almost to choke them in the midst of it, […] we may even inwardly reproach ourselves with our own want of sensibility."[19] If the accidental irruption of the real, of the other's incontrollable, natural body suspends aestheticization, or resists the sublation of his or her pain into a narrative, compassion is not aroused, sympathy does not work, and we simply lose our "natural" moral sense.

Meanwhile, even though Smith argues that sympathy is a universal faculty, and is the "main pillar" that upholds the "edifice of society", he is equally well aware that it cannot prevent injustice and unlawfulness. As he makes it clear right in the first paragraph:

> this sentiment [sympathy], like all the other original passions of human nature, is by no means confined to the virtuous or the humane. [...] The greatest ruffian, the most hardened violator of the laws of society, is not altogether without it."[20]

16 Ibid., p. 4.
17 Ibid., p. 33.
18 Ibid.
19 Ibid., p. 65.
20 Ibid., p. 3.

While sympathy is universal, people endowed with sympathy can still violate the laws of society; that is, there is nothing in "human nature", not even our allegedly universal capacity for sympathy, which could prevent people from becoming perpetrators of crimes.

2. *FOE*[21]

Friday's tongue was cut out, he is unable to speak and narrate his story, the story of his tongue. Later in the novel, it is also suggested that he might also have been castrated, that he has lost his penis. He is an example for Spivak's "subaltern", the materially and socially dispossessed, the wholly other.[22] But can we sympathise with someone who is mutilated and whose body we find repulsive and who cannot narrate his story? This is one of the questions asked by the novel, resonating with Adam Smith's inquiries. As Susan Barton, *Foe's* narrator protagonist, writes:

> But now I began to look on him – I could not help myself – with the horror we deserve for the mutilated. It was no comfort that his mutilation was secret, closed behind his lips (as some other mutilations are hidden by clothing), that outwardly, he was like a Negro. Indeed, it was the very secretness of his loss that caused me to shrink from him.[23]

It is not "natural" that we sympathise with the other's pain. Susan has to make conscious efforts to be able to exercise her sympathetic imagination. If she only listened to her natural feelings, she would shrink with horror from the mutilated other. When and why, then, does Susan's sympathy awaken? At a certain point in the story, Friday scatters

21 On Coetzee's *Foe* in Hungarian, see: Bényei Tamás. "Az elveszett történet (J. M. Coetzee: *Foe*)." *Élet és Irodalom*, 25 March 2005. www.es.hu/print.php?nid=10092. Accessed 20 January 2020, Hites Sándor. "A történelem és a metafikció az angolszász regényirodalom közelmúltjában." http://www.forrasfolyoirat.hu/0206/hites.html. Accessed 20 January 2020, Kroó Katalin. "A kulturális betagolódás mint lét- és szövegélmény J. M. Coetzee *Foe* című regényében." *Publicationes Universitatis Miskolcinensis*. Sectio Philosophica. Tomus XV. – Fasciculus 1, Miskolc, E Typographeo Universitatis, 2010, pp. 73–84., Vallasek Júlia, „A kegyetlenség hangjai, a gondolkodás csöndje. J. M. Coetzee regényeiről." *Holmi*, October 2011, pp. 1285–1295.

22 On the difficulties of giving voice to the subaltern, see, also in Hungarian: Zsadányi, Edit. "Dictatorship, Infantilisation, and the Focalization of a Child: Zsuzsa Rakovszky's *A hullócsillag éve* (The Year of the Falling Star) and Ferenc Barnás's *Kilencedik* (The Ninth)." *Hungarian Studies: A Journal of the International Association for Hungarian Studies and Balassi Institute,* vol. 27, no. 2, pp. 325–342.; respectively Zsadányi Edit. "Együtt érző narratívákkal együtt érezve?" *Társadalmi Nemek Tudománya Interdiszciplináris eFolyóirat,* vol. 3, no. 2, pp. 35–51.

23 Coetzee, *Foe*, p. 24.

a handful of petals over the water, and, according to Susan, this "casting of petals was the first sign I had that spirit or soul – call it what you will – stirred beneath that dull and unpleasing exterior."[24] The casting of petals, which Susan interprets as superstition, as an offering to the gods of the water, is then the first sign of Friday's "humanity".

From the moment she regards Friday as a human being, her own identity, her own self-representation will be predicated on her capacity to sympathise with Friday, and get to know his story, i.e. to "read" him, and make her reading public. *Her* confession to Foe has to be the story of the loss of *Friday's* tongue.

> Then, there is the matter of Friday's tongue. On the island, I accepted that I should never learn how Friday lost his tongue, as I accepted that I should never learn how the apes crossed the sea. But what we can accept in life we cannot accept in history. To tell my story and be silent on Friday's tongue is no better than offering a book for sale with pages in it quietly left empty. Yet, the only tongue that can tell Friday's secret is the tongue he has lost.[25]

But how could the trauma of the silent "other" be narrated? Ultimately, how is it possible to testify at all?

3. GENDER AND THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

At first, Susan's purpose is not so much to testify but to gain money. As the captain says, who eventually rescues them: "It is a story you should set down in writing and offer to the booksellers," he urged – "There has never before, to my knowledge, been a female castaway of our nation. It will cause great stir."[26] As the example of Defoe's *Moll Flanders* also shows us, the only means for an eighteenth-century woman to earn money, if she cannot marry a rich man, and does not want to prostitute herself, or become a thief, is to write stories that sell well. It is, however, difficult for Susan to write, or, at least, as an eighteenth-century woman, she can never become a proper "writer". Therefore, after their rescue, she turns to Foe, the famous author, to write her story in her stead.

> Return to me the substance I have lost, Mr Foe: that is my entreaty. For though my story gives the truth, it does not give the substance of truth. [...] To tell the truth in all its substance you must have quiet, and a comfortable chair away

24 Ibid., p. 31.

25 Ibid., p. 67.

26 Ibid., p. 40.

> from all distraction, and a window to stare through; and then the knack of seeing waves when there are fields before your eyes, and of feeling the tropic sun when it is cold; and at your fingertips the words with which to capture the vision before it fades, I have none of these, while you have all.[27]

What are the capacities of the author which Susan lacks? An author has to possess a room (of his or "her own") and a comfortable chair, that is, they must have a social and financial position that allows them to practice writing as a profession. Then they must also have a window, which separates them from the outside world so that they can keep an aesthetic distance from reality. Third, they must have to be able to present things that are absent – this faculty will be called, in the nineteenth century, creative imagination. Lastly, they must possess words that "capture" the products of this imagination.

Although this description suggests that Susan has an eighteenth-century conception of language, that she speaks from before the linguistic turn, we will later see that she is very much aware of the ways in which language shapes reality. Indeed, Susan, as we will see, is equally conscious of the immense power of language to do violence to the world, to Friday's real.

But let us see first what Susan means by her "substance"; is there a selfhood that she is unable to (re)present? Susan is not an "author", and the novel does *not* stage the process of her becoming one. On the contrary, it seems that the reason she can bear witness to the loss of Fridays tongue is precisely the fact that she never becomes a writer – as opposed to (the original, fictional) Robinson Crusoe, for instance, who was presented by Defoe as being able to shape the events of his life into a linear, teleological, autobiographical narrative. Can she represent Barthes' intransitive writer, then?

> Dear Mr. Foe,
> I am growing to understand why you wanted Cruso to have a musket and be besieged by cannibals. I thought it was a sign you had no regard for the truth. I forgot you are a writer who knows above all how many words can be sucked from a cannibal feast, how few from a woman covering from the wind. It is all a matter or words and the number of words, is it not?[28]

Indeed, Coetzee's *Foe* is part of the strain of historical metafictions that ally with Walter Benjamin's *Theses on the Philosophy of History* in claiming that "there is no document of civilisation that is not at the same time a document of barbarism".[29] By focusing

27 Ibid., p. 51–52.

28 Ibid., p. 94.

29 Benjamin, Walter. *Illuminations*. Translated by Harry Zohn, edited and with an introduction by Hannah Arendt, New York, Schocken Books, 1968, p. 236.

on Friday and inventing a female narrator while rewriting *Robinson Crusoe,* this arch-colonial/imperialist novel of the West, Coetzee, just like Walter Benjamin's good historical materialist, "brushes history against the grain". Susan Barton resists Foe's demand to write an adventure story and present Friday as a cannibal, instead, she insists that the "truth" must be told. She equally resists Foe when, rather than telling the story of her whole life, she only tells about the events that happened to the three of them in the island. Thus, even though she asks for her "substance" from Foe, she does not want to assume a narrative identity that would conform to the (male) literary and social norms of the eighteenth century.

> I choose not to tell it because to no one, not even to you, do I owe proof that I am a substantial being with a substantial history in the world. I choose rather to tell of the island, of myself and Cruso and Friday and what we three did there: for I am a free woman who asserts her freedom by telling her story according to her own desire.[30]

A gender-focused interpretation would only emphasise Susan's subordination to Foe, and her attempts at finding her own voice. Indeed, Susan defies conventional narrative forms and thereby secures her freedom. She is a woman with desires, and wants to tell her story according to her own desires. And what we actually read are her letters to Foe rather than Foe's or her own novel, in the conventional sense.

But the issue of gender is further complicated by the question of the postcolonial. The female subject *can* have a voice and can gain the right to speak up, as opposed to the colonised subject who is, like Friday, forever deprived of his. He is doomed to silence.

> You err most tellingly in failing to distinguish between my silences and the silences of beings such as Friday. Friday has no command of words and therefore no defence against being re-shaped day by day in conformity with the desires of others. I say he is a cannibal and he becomes a cannibal. I say he is a laundryman and he becomes a laundryman. What is the truth of Friday? You will respond: he is neither a cannibal, nor a laundryman, these are mere names, they do not touch his essence, he is a substantial body, he is himself, Friday is Friday. But that is not so. No matter what he is to himself (is he anything to himself? – how can he tell us?), what he is to the world is what I make of him. Therefore the silence of Friday is a helpless silence.[31]

30 Coetzee, *Foe*, p. 130.

31 Ibid., p. 121–122.

Friday is what words, what language and power, the performative power of language make of him. Since Susan should therefore represent an "other", who falls outside all systems of representation (i.e. both outside language and politics).

4. THE TRAUMA OF THE OTHER – REPRESENTATION

What is the reason why the loss of Friday's tongue must be part of Susan's confession? If we accept that Susan's story, just like Robinson Crusoe's, inscribes itself into the tradition of confessions, then we also have to acknowledge, via Coetzee's *Confessions and Double Thoughts*, that the (traumatic) core of the confession is always a secret, a sin as yet untold or unconfessed. And Susan's sin (just like J. M. Coetzee's) and the guilt accompanying it is that of the survivor, which can be put in parallel with the non-knowing knowledge of those who survived the various mass murders of history, remorseful for just looking on, doing nothing. Apart from what Coetzee calls the inner crisis triggering the need for confession, Susan still shares, of course, Friday's marginal position. This could be the other reasons why Susan decides to testify, and make a *self*-confession *including* the trauma of the *other*. This still begs the question, how would it be possible to listen to the trauma of the silent other, and how would it be possible to testify, that is, represent it in the sphere of language and (therefore) politics?

The novel offers two (ultimately failed) solutions to this problem; let's call the first "representation", and the other "sympathy". Representation means that Susan, as the benevolent agent of the feminist discourse wishes to endow the silent other with a voice. At the end of the novel, she tries to teach Friday how to write so that he can eventually represent himself. However, Friday resists all her endeavours made to teach him, which, by the same token, unveils the violence involved in Susan's desire to make him represent himself and give up on his silence. Friday draws circles on a sheet of paper, which become letter *o*-s in Susan's wishful interpretation, which can just as well mean void and nothingness, or wholeness, or simply nothing. Although both Susan and Foe interpret Friday's *o*-s as a first step towards his integration into the symbolic order ("Tomorrow, you must teach him *a*"[32]), tomorrow does not come, and we don't get to know whether *o* has any meaning, or whether there is anything that Friday means for himself. Friday's alterity, his trauma is the very thing that cannot be represented

32 Coetzee, *Foe*, p. 152.

in the linguistic sphere of the same.[33] Of course, the desire to make the other write is no less violent than the wish to make him speak. Considering Coetzee's essay on confessions, we may even venture to say that the "truth", the "ultimate motivation" behind Susan's confession is her awareness of the violence that was involved in her benevolent attempts to rescue Friday. This violence was and still is implied in all humanistic desire for equality and justice, opposing the attitude of the slave-owner, Cruso. However, it seems that there is some strange and non-violent aspect of Cruso's respect towards Friday's silence. As Susan Barton puts it:

> I tell myself I talk to Friday to educate him out of darkness and silence. But is that the truth? There are times when benevolence deserts me and I use words only as the shortest way to subject him to my will. At such times, I understand why Cruso preferred not to disturb his muteness. I understand, that is to say, why a man will choose to be a slaveowner.[34]

In fact, Susan equally makes less violent attempts at understanding Friday. These attempts are emotionally, rather than coginitvely based, and are directed towrds a sympathetic identification with him. Susan is trying to establish a dialogue with Friday through imagined rituals, through dance or music. ("As long as I have music in common with Friday, perhaps he and I will need no language"[35]). However, this turns out to be an illusion, the tones get disharmonious, and music proves no better way to understand or get closer to Friday than language. Offering an ironic critique of the Western conception of non-western "rituals", it turns out that Friday's flute playing is no sign, no "music", no ritual, and no art. It does not even empower Friday. In the same vein does Susan try to identify with Friday by imitating his "dance": "I stretched out my arms and, with my head thrown back, began to turn in Friday's dance",[36] but to no avail: she falls into a trance, but the stepping out of herself does not lead her closer to Friday; it does not yield communication, nor understanding. What Susan, however, does actually share is Friday's position as an outlaw: "Twice have Friday and I been called gipsies. What is a gipsy? What is a highwayman? Words seem to have more meanings here in the west country. Am I become a gipsy unknown to myself?".[37] Yet, similarity is not sameness: what affects Friday as loss (mutilation, the loss of his tongue and castration) is, for Susan,

33 Considering Adam Smith's theory of sympathy, this also means that the reader will not have the opportunity to sympathise with Friday, because Friday will have no story, his pain will not become part of a narrative. However, the one who falls beyond the aesthetic sphere of representation also remains outside the political sphere of representation in Smith's theory. (See: Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, p. 125.)

34 Coetzee, *Foe*, p. 60–61.

35 Ibid., p. 97

36 Ibid., p. 103

37 Ibid., p. 108

an absence (that of the penis), which, as LaCapra has shown us, is far from being the same.[38] (As Foe puts it with regard to Susan: "The pain you feel is the pain of lack, not the pain of loss."[39]) So despite the fact that by conquering her initial repulsion towards Friday, Susan does eventually experience her own body, her desire to identify with Friday does not bring her closer to him, but to the other within herself, i.e. to the stranger within.[40] Meanwhile the stereotypes about the "barbarian" equally turn out to be false, the community-creating power of music and dance is but an illusion. Susan's failure thus also reveals the utter loneliness, and the consequent helplessness and vulnerability of Friday, while showing us again and again an unbridgeable gap between self and other.

Therefore, the novel can be equally read as a critique of sympathy. Susan's experiences keep revealing that similarity is not sameness, that the stranger within is not the same as the stranger without, and that the identification with the other is always illusory, i.e. that sympathetic imagination is, as Smith would have it, deceitful.

38 According to LaCapra, absence and loss often get confused; sometimes, we conceive of absence as if it was loss and we conceive of loss as if it was absence. The conception of absence *as* loss serves as a foundation for those nostalgic or utopistic political imaginings which are characterised by a longing for a perfect past or future. Of course, the conceptualisation of absence *as* loss generates the false narrativisation of absence: an original state of innocence is followed by the loss (such as a fall or a crisis), which is to be remedied by the hope of a future recovery of the lost unity, a redemption, or a higher insight. Yet, the conception of loss *as* absence is no less problematic, according to LaCapra. When the singularity of loss is generalised or abstracted into an absence, then we get clichés like "this society is the society of wounds", and face the impasse of never being able to recover. For if loss if turned into absence, then loss loses its historicity and temporality; it cannot be narrativised and, therefore, worked through anymore. Hence, in the framework offered by LaCapra, Levinasian ethics may serve as an example for the turning of loss into absence, which is problematic, according to LaCapra, precisely (and quite ironically) from an ethical view point. LaCapra takes a Freudian vantage-point to argue that endless melancholy is but a narcissistic identification with the lost object. The complete faithfulness to the victims offers a false ethical foundation for the appropriation of the victims' voice or subject position. This is what happens, according to LaCapra, with the audience of Lanzmann's *Shoah,* who suffer a secondary traumatisation while watching the documentary. The identification with the lost person or people also leads to a life where *thanatos* prevails over *eros,* characterised by repetition compulsion, the literal reliving of the past. Melancholy thus serves as a basis for those fragmented narrative identities that are proper to post-traumatic states. However, as opposed to those critics and writers who consider melancholy as a kind of ethical imperative, LaCapra argues that in the absence of clear boundary lines between past and present, it is impossible to turn to the future with responsibility. Only the person who acknowledges that the past is different from both the present and the future, and is able to take a critical distance from the events can act responsibly towards the future. At the same time, LaCapra also questions the Freudian standpoint, and in this respect, his argument is congenial with that of other trauma theorists. The all-too-successful work of mourning, as has equally been suggested by Paul de Man, Jacques Derrida, or Cathy Caruth, yields optimistic forgetting, and the illusion of a linear and teleological narrative identity, figured as a story of *Bildung* offering closure. (This optimistic illusion of closure is offered by films such as *Schindler's List*.) LaCapra, *Writing History, Writing Trauma,* p. 44–71.

39 Coetzee, *Foe*, p. 91

40 Kristeva, Julia. *Strangers to Ourselves*. New York, Columbia University Press, 1991.

At the same time, the failure of Susan's sympathetic imagination goes hand in hand with her failure to present a coherent narrative of Friday. *Foe,* however, still suggests that the failure of sympathy, and therefore, of the narrative, points precisely to the imperative of representation: I cannot, therefore I must. This representation, however, cannot but be allegorical: the absent voice of Friday is represented by Susan in a way that makes it clear that this is not Friday's voice.

The anonymous, third person narrator appearing at the end of the novel describes Friday at the bottom of the sea, "which is not a place for words. Each syllable, as it comes out, is caught and filled with water and diffused. This is a place where bodies are their own signs. It is the home of Friday".[41] This suggests that the home of the singular body can be found outside and beyond all systems of representation. Even though literature is able to represent that which resists representation, literary representation does not necessarily yield political or social representation. In this sense, the last lines of the novel point, precisely, to the limits of the literary.

Hence, we can consider Coetzee's *Foe* the controversial object of ethico-political criticism. As is well known, Martha Nussbaum, one of the most often-criticised advocate of ethical criticism, argues that by reading novels and sympathising with the characters, we become better people. However, *Foe* makes us aware of the limits of sympathy, and thus seems to support Robert Eaglestone's argument contra Nussbaum, that the ethical force of a text lies in its capacity to make us realise the inescapable alterity of the other, including texts themselves.[42] Meanwhile, the irreducible alterity

41 Coetzee, *Foe*, p. 157

42 See: Eaglestone, Robert. *Ethical Criticism, Reading After Levinas*. Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 1997. Martha Nussbaum, in *Poetic Justice* draws on Smith's account of sympathy to argue that while reading novels we should assume the role of Smith's "Judicious Spectator" (a term that Smith himself never uses), and that this will, in its turn, help us to develop a sympathetic (i.e. "morally good") judgement of other people (Nussbaum, Martha C. *Poetic Justice: The Literary Imagination and Public Life*. Boston, Beacon Press, 1995, pp. 73–74.). Robert Eaglestone, in his sharp, Levinasian-Derridean critique of Nussbaum's book, points out that Nussbaum "reads artworks as people" in a characteristic effacement of "the idea of the [singularity of the] text" (Eaglestone, *Ethical Criticism*, p. 46.). In fact, Nussbaum's Smith-inspired suggestion that we should read artworks as people may make one also wonder about the consequences of the potential effacement of peoples' singularity and difference – notions equally related to Eaglestone's (deconstructionist) idea of the text. For instance, calling for the necessity of "judicious imagination" at the court, Nussbaum singles out the following passage from Smith: "the spectator [i.e. the judge] must […] endeavour, as much as he can, to bring home to himself every little circumstances of distress which can possibly occur to the sufferer" (Nussbaum, *Poetic Justice*, p. 73–74.). As we have seen Smith is emphatically critical of the phrasing "bring home to himself", and his exploration of the conditions, the direful consequences and the workings of his own version of sympathy renders Nussbaum's argument that "the ability to think of other people's life in a novelist's way is an important part of the equipment of a judge" (Ibid., p. 73.) equally suspect. Indeed, Nussbaum pushes to its extremes Smith's aesthetic version of morality, and does not show any self-reflectivity concerning the consequences of this aestheticiation. As Shoshana Felman, drawing on Adorno, equally points out (in the framework of trauma-theory): what aesthetic pleasure, or else, aesthetic representation

of trauma and its resistance to reprensentation may also remind us of Levinas' (and Adorno's) anti-representationalism. Indeed, Susan Barton seems to be the ethical subject traumatised by the trauma of the other, who tries to work through Friday's (the other's) loss. This attempt is, however, doomed to fail: she remains deprived of any narrative identity, in a process of intransitive writing without any totalising closure. Her writing evokes LaCapra's Barthian middle voice, representing a middle ground between mourning and melancholy: it allows for both a critical distance necessary for responsible action and the non-forgetting of the wound or the pain of the other. In other words, Susan bears witness to Friday's wound while also opening up for the future. Meanwhile, by pointing to both Friday's lack and the lack of Friday, i.e. the other's resistance to representation, and by staging the failure to represent him, the novel equally shows up the violence involved in Susan's seemingly benevolent, humanistic desire for a narrative, and the consequent necessity of an inescapably allegorical representation. For, as de Man and Spivak also had it, only allegory can respect the gap and the temporal distance between signifier and signified without ever giving the illusion to reduce it. Showing up the political stakes of allegory, the novel thus also offers a political reading of the literary.

forgets and erases is, precisely, the body, the wound, the suffering, and the memory of it. Felman closes off a paragraph of her analysis of Paul Celan's *Death Fugue* as follows: "The drinking of black milk [in Celan's poem can be interpreted] as the impossibility of forgetting and of getting a reprieve from suffering and memory, and as the sinister, insistent, unforgettable return of what the aesthetic pleasure has forgotten." Felman, Shoshana. "Education and Crisis, or the Vicissitudes of Teaching." *American Imago*, vol. 48, no. 1, 1991, pp. 47–48. www.jstor.org/stable/26304031. Accessed 22 January 2020.

What does it mean to be human?

Gergely Péterfy's *Kitömött barbár* [Stuffed Barbarian] in a European Context*

> "In terms of its etymology, the ancient Greek word *barbarian [βάρβαρος]* is supposed to imitate the incomprehensible mumblings of the language of foreign peoples, which to Greek ears sound like "bar-bar" (or, as we would say today, "bla bla"). As such, it has a double implication: on a first level, it signifies a lack of understanding on the part of the other, since the language of the other is perceived as meaningless sounds. At the same time, it suggests an unwillingness to understand the other's language and thus to make the encounter with the other a communicative occasion. Consequently, the term *barbarian* entails a collective construction of the other in a way that helps define the civilized subject itself – by specifying its negative limits. In this construction, the other is supposedly invalidated because it can never speak back and question its construction (its language would not be understood). The barbarian thus appears as an abjected outside, which, according to Judith Butler, is always inside the subject 'as its own founding repudiation'."[1]

Gergely Péterfy's *Kitömött barbár* [Stuffed Barbarian] was published in 2014, and is the outgrowth of Péterfy's doctoral thesis on the Hungarian poet, translator, and linguist Ferenc Kazinczy, and his friendship with Angelo Soliman, who was transported to Europe as a slave, and lived in Vienna as a free man at the time of his meeting with Kazinczy. The novel was translated into German, and is summarized in English on Péterfy's page as follows:

> The book focuses on the most enigmatic and outlandish aspect of the poet's life: his close friendship with Angelo Soliman, a renowned scholar and high-society figure in 18th century Vienna, who was brought to Europe as a slave and managed, through his learning, to become the Grand Master of the Masonic lodge, and also a personal friend to Mozart and Emperor Joseph II. The story of this friendship and of those hectic, transformative years is narrated by Sophie Török, Kazinczy's wife in a truly memorably and iconic location: the attic of the Viennese Imperial Natural History Collection, among the damaged and discarded exhibition items, facing the stuffed figure of the late Angelo Soliman.

* The essay grew out of the following paper: Timár Andrea and Laczházi Gyula. „Ember." *Média- és kultúratudomány: Kézikönyv*, edited by Kricsfalusi Beatrix, Kulcsár Szabó Ernő, Molnár Gábor Tamás and Tamás Ábel, Budapest, Ráció Kiadó, 2018, pp. 40–53.

1 Boletski, Maria. "Barbarian Encounters." *Comparative Literature Studies*, vol. 44, no. 1–2, 2007, p. 68.

> After a lifetime of scholarly achievements and of being considered a model of integration, the "enlightened" gentlemen of Vienna had used his actual skin to exemplify and realize the racist stereotype of the "savage African". The terrifying and outrageous fate of his friend haunted Kazinczy all his life, not only because of the traumatic experience of losing a kindred spirit, but also because of the disheartening insight such a symbolic treatment brought to the internal contradictions of the "civilized" world of *Aufklärung* and *Bildung*. The Hungarian poet struggled with the meaning and the articulation of Angelo's peculiar demise, and managed to pass on this unsettling and significant story only on his own deathbed.[2]

Although this summary claims that the friendship is narrated by Kazinczy's wife, almost two thirds of the novel, including the story of Soliman's life in Vienna, is narrated, in the past tense, by an omniscient narrator who has unlimited access to Soliman's life events, thoughts, feelings and memories, even to those that could not have been but unknown to his friend Ferenc, who entrusted Soliman's story to his wife on his deathbed. Readers of the book either praise Péterfy's originality in using a female, third person narrator,[3] or note that Péterfy shifts to omniscient narration in those parts of the book that tell about Soliman's life.[4] Or they remark, I think correctly, that the implied author of the book pretends, but, in fact, fails to use character narration, i.e. Sophie's voice all along.[5] Indeed, the real author, Péterfy explicitly says in an interview that he realised after having written the first two hundred pages, that he would continue to use Sophie as a narrator until the very end,[6] and the very last words of the book allegedly written by Sophie herself equally indicate that the story is supposed to have been narrated by her. She reminisces that standing in front of the stuffed corps of Angelo Soliman, she thought: "I knew that

2 László, Szabolcs. "A story of enlightened taxidermy." https://hlo.hu/review/a_story_of_enlightened_taxidermy_gergely_peterfy_the_stuffed_barbarian.html. Accessed 2 March 2016.

3 Pogrányi Péter. "Idegen szemmel." *Revizor*, vol. 7. no. 10, 2014. http://www.revizoronline.com/hu/cikk/5243/peterfy-gergely-kitomott-barbar/. Accessed 20 January 2020.

4 Ujvárosi Emese: "Idegen testek (Péterfy Gergely: *Kitömött barbár*)." *Holmi*, August 2014. http://www.holmi.org/2014/08/ujvarosi-emese-idegen-testek-peterfy-gergely-kitomott-barbar. Accessed 20 January 2020.

5 Győrfy Miklós. "Pályám képzelt emlékezete (Péterfy Gergely: *Kitömott barbár*)." *Jelenkor*, no. 5, 2015, pp. 583–589. http://www.jelenkor.net/userfiles/archivum/JELENKOR%202015-5%20(teljes).pdf. Accessed 20 January 2020. See also: Koncz Tamás. "Péterfy Gergely: *Kitömött barbár*." July–August 2015. http://www.kortarsonline.hu/archivum/2015/07/arch-peterfy-gergely-kitomott-barbar.html. Accessed 20 January 2020.

6 See: Rostás Eni. "A kitömött udvari néger problémái mindannyiunk problémái." *KönyvesBlog*, 4 August 2014. http://konyves.blog.hu/2014/08/04/peterfy_gergely_773. Accessed 20 January 2020.

I was standing in front of myself."[7] While these last words of the book are meant to evoke the shared marginality of women and Africans in "enlightened" eighteenth and nineteenth-century Europe, which made it easier for Sophie to sympathise, and eventually identify with Angelo[8] (which is a strongly questionable claim in itself), this chapter rather wishes to foreground that the narrative technique of the novel is at odds with the ethico-political stakes implied by its content.

From an epistemological standpoint, Péterfy's use of an improbably omniscient character narrator stems from an all too improbable disregard for the obvious difference between characters and real people.[9] A probable character narrator (and Péterfy is far from playing a "postmodernist" game with improbable narrators, like, for example, Rushdie in *Midnight's Children*) *cannot* have access to another character's consciousness to such an extent as a fictional, omniscient narrator can. The purpose of this paper, however, is not to focus on this narrative inconsistency.[10] Instead, it investigates the ethico-political implications of Péterfy's past tense, omniscient, third person narration. I shall first elaborate on the eighteenth-century cultural-political context in which this novel inscribe itself, focusing, this time, on the second half of the eighteenth century.

According to Lynn Hunt, it was the eighteenth-century sentimental novel, and its ability to generate sympathy that had paved the way for the invention of "human rights". Indeed, Olaudah Equiano's 1798 autobiography, *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano,* which was written in the voice of and from the point of view of an ex-slave, contributed in an important way to the passage of the British Slave Trade act in 1809. Paradoxically, however, while female subjectivities were often depicted in sentimental novels, and readers indeed learnt to sympathise with

7 Péterfy Gergely. *Kitömött barbár*. Kalligram, Budapest, 2014, p. 448.

8 "The unique subject of British women's role in colonial slavery is explored in Moira Ferguson's study, *Subject to Others: British Women Writers and Colonial Slavery, 1670–1834,* which critiques anti-slavery writings by Hannah More, Sarah Scott, and others. I am not altogether convinced, though, by Ferguson's argument that Anglican women's participation in the anti-slavery effort 'displaced anxieties about their own assumed powerlessness and inferiority onto their representations of slaves.' I believe that British women's abolitionism more likely resulted from a dual, paradoxical identification with enslaved blacks because of shared forms of oppression. But because of racial acculturation, Anglican women also identified, in part, with a white, male patriarchy." See: Woodard, Helena. *African-British Writings in the Eighteenth Century: The Politics of Race and Reason.* London, Greenwood Press, 1991, p. 68.

9 As Suzanne Keen succinctly points it out in an introductory work to narratology: "While your friend can tell you what he is thinking, or you may guess what your mother feels from her expression, or you may read in a diary entry another's private thoughts, no living being experiences the sort of access to consciousness – including thoughts, emotions, memories, motives, and subverbal states – that modern and contemporary fictional narrators routinely render up to the reader about fictional characters." (Keen, Suzanne. *Narrative Form*. Basingstoke – London, Palgrave Macmillan, 2003, p. 59.)

10 This was amply commented upon by Csaba Károlyi, István Margócsy, Beatrix Visy in *ÉS Kvartett*. See: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EHUtEs3LcKk. Accessed 20 January 2020.

protagonists who were emphatically different from them, "women's rights", such as, most importantly, women's right to vote, were hardly ever discussed in (French and English) pre-revolutionary debates about "human rights".[11] These latter, as Lynn Hunt points out in a different article, tended to focus on questions concerning the "humanity" of Africans, and the abolition of slavery, the rights of Jews, Protestants (in France) and Catholics (in England), or the rights of the poor and the dispossessed.[12] Therefore, reading the work of the historian, Lynn Hunt, one has to accept that that even though eighteenth-century sentimental fiction only centred upon the representation of female consciousness, and even if the "woman question" itself, i.e. women's right to participate in the *political* sphere became an object of discussion only in the second half of the nineteenth century, eighteenth-century sentimental fiction still contributed to a widespread discourse on human rights *in general*. Meanwhile, Hunt also calls our attention to the important bifurcation at the heart of the Enlightenment discourse on human rights, which cut through gender, racial and religious divides, and introduced the active vs. passive citizen binary. In fact, a distinction was made between those who were entitled to active (political) rights, such as the right to elect representative and be elected as a representative, and those who possessed only passive (civil) rights, such as the right to marry, to acquire property, or religion.[13] Of course, it was, precisely, the question who (slaves? servants? Jews? Protestants? Catholics? actors? executioners? women?) were entitled to civil, and, then, to political rights that was the main object

11 Hunt sums up the implications of our contemporary concept of human rights as follows: "(1) all human beings have certain inherent rights simply by virtue of being human, and not by virtue of their status in society; (2) these rights are consequently imagined as 'natural,' as stemming from human nature itself, and they have in the past often been called 'natural rights'; (3) rights belong therefore to individuals and not to any social group, whether a sex, a race, an ethnicity, a group of families, a social class, an occupational group, a nation, or the like; (4) these rights must be made equally available by law to all individuals and cannot be denied as long as an individual lives under the law; (5) the legitimacy of any government rests on its ability to guarantee the rights of all its members." (Hunt, Lynn. *Inventing Human Rights.* New York, Norton, 2007, p. 2.)

12 "Although many thinkers, both male and female, had raised the question of women's status through the centuries, most of them had insisted primarily on women's right to an education (rather than on the right to vote, for instance, which few men enjoyed). The status of women did not excite the same interest – as measured in terms of publications – as that of slaves, Calvinists, or even Jews in France; the issue of women's rights did not lead to essay contests, official commissions, or Enlightenment-inspired clubs under the monarchy. In part this lack of interest followed from the fact that women were not considered a persecuted group in the same way as slaves, Calvinists, or Jews. Although women's property rights and financial independence often met restrictions under French law and custom, most men and women agreed with Rousseau and other Enlightenment thinkers that women belonged in the private sphere of the home and therefore had no role to play in public affairs. […] Women could ask for better education and protection of their property rights, but even the most politically vociferous among them did not yet demand full civil and political rights." (Hunt, Lynn editor. *The French Revolution and Human Rights.* New York, St Martin's Press. 2016, pp. 11–12.)

13 Ibid., p. 19.

of Enlightenment discourses of human rights, which were obviously conditioned by questions concerning the boundaries of the human. Of course, the answer to the question who counts as human (i.e. "who is in and who is out"[14]) has never been purely descriptive, but rather performative: "scientific" descriptions always had serious political consequences.

Discussing the "humanity" of Africans in his PhD dissertation, Péterfy draws attention to the outrageous racism of figures like Hume, Kant, and Blumenbach.[15] However, the dissertation does not seem to emphasise enough that epistemological questions of race were always deeply intertwined with the political discourse of slavery in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. More precisely, slavery was mostly justified and made legitimate by the "scientific" claims of Enlightenment anthropology. Carl von Linné in the tenth, authoritative edition of his *System of Nature* (1758) was the first to classify man as a species *(homo sapiens)* separate from the apes but still part of the animal kingdom (which he saw as an uninterrupted chain), and divided humans into four races, with the European at the peak. Later, Buffon, in *Natural History, General and Particular* (1748–1804), drew a sharper dividing line between humans and animals, maintaining that humans, as opposed to animals, have soul, and while supporting the idea of monogenesis (i.e. that all humans share a single origin), he established a clear hierarchy between races, ascribing both climatic and biological causes to the alleged differences in the intellectual abilities, habits and customs of people of different skin colours.[16] Indeed, as Silvia Sebastiani argues, Enlightenment science ended up fixing in biological terms the historically determined distances between races.[17]

Sebastiani also outlines the causes – such as colonisation, and geographical discoveries – and the complex intellectual and political consequences of theories of both monogenesis (like Buffon's) and the less widespread idea of polygenesis.[18] According to polygenetic theories, the savage was no longer understood to have a Biblical descent, and these were the "scientific" classification, based on "objective" observation (skin colour, skull size, facial angle) of the polygenesists that contributed the most to the development of theories of racial inferiority, which then served as

14 Cf.: Kronfeldner, Maria. "Recent work on human nature: Beyond traditional essences." *Philosophy Compass*, vol. 9, no. 9, 2014, pp. 642–652.

15 Péterfy Gergely. *Orpheus és Massinissa. Kanzinczy Ferenc és Angelo Soliman*. PhD Dissertation. Miskolc, 2007. http://www.uni-miskolc.hu/~bolphd/letolt/peterfydissz.pdf. Accessed 20 January 2020.

16 Eze, Emmanuel Chukwudi. *Race and the Enlightenment: A Reader.* London, Blackwell, 1991, p. 15. On the question oif the "Human" and the sciences behind it see: Timár and Laczházi. "Ember".

17 Sebastiani, Silvia. *The Scottish Enlightenment. Race, Gender and the Limits of Progress*. New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2013, p. 12

18 "The polygenetic explanation was a response to the discovery of savages, to encountering peoples whose existence had not been envisaged or who did not fit into the traditional schemes with which European man had conceived himself until the sixteenth century." (Ibid., p. 9.)

justifications for slavery.[19] Other critics, however, argue that it was, in fact, slavery that produced "race" as a side effect of, and a justification for, the violence on which it depended. As George Boulukos puts it, the "dehumanisation of slavery, in this account, leads to the conceptualisation of blacks as less than fully human".[20]

Meanwhile, Boulukos also suggests that in the second half of the eighteenth century, metropolitan discourse in Britain already expressed a distaste for slavery and rejected "race" in both theory and practice. Abolitionists maintained that planters on the colonies must have believed that their slaves are inferior only in order to be willing to treat them so cruelly.[21] Indeed, the Enlightenment discourse of the metropolis (as opposed to the openly racist discourse of the colonies) in the second half of the century was generally abolitionist, and the Enlightened minority (such as Kazinczy, or Joseph II in Austira and Hungary) held that since slaves shared the humanity of Europeans, and their difference (especially their skin colour) was the result of the different climate (see: famously Montaigne and Montesquieu's influence on European thought), they were just as "perfectible" as a white child (see: Rousseau's *Origins of Inequality* on human perfectibility). This, of course, did not amount to complete equality, since without proper *Bildung* and the entire, and, therefore, impossible, erasure of their past (i.e. biology, culture and climate), ex-slaves were still considered as "less than human", less human than a white child. But while an ex-slave who freed himself in Europe (e.g. Angelo Soliman, or, as we will see, Ignatious Sancho) could be given certain rights, even the "active" right to vote based on their property, there is no depiction in eighteenth-century literature of the actual liberation of a slave in the colonies themselves.[22]

In fact, the sympathetic portrayal of the "negro" as fully human, and, therefore, as possessing either passive, or, later, active political rights, required from the sympathetic novelist the preliminary erasure of the slave's origins/past in the colonies, and the reshaping of their character and personality in Europe. This latter was presented (by novelists) as benevolent Enlightenment *Bildung.* Indeed, it was only this pre-configuration (!) of the "humanity" of the slave that could generate readerly sympathy.

19 See: Sebastiani, *The Scottish Enlightenment*, p. 12. Meanwhile, since monogenetic theories, in fact prevailed, and even in polygenetic theories, the different races were still considered as part of the same human species, while this latter was defined as the capacity to produce prolific offspring, white paranoia concerning potential contagion and impure mixture became also widespread. On the gender difference between slaves and their relationship with their masters, and the difference between the mainland and the colonies concerning the treatment of sexual relationship with slaves, see: Nussbaum, Felicity. *The Limits of the Human: Fictions of Anomaly, Race and Gender in the Long Eighteenth Century.* Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2003. (See also: Doris Lessing's *The Grass is Singing* for a twentieth-century treatment of the problem.)

20 Boulukos, George. *The Grateful Slave: The Emergence of Race in Eighteenth-Century British and American Culture.* Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2008, p. 95.

21 Ibid., p. 97–98.

22 See: Ibid.

In other words, while the question of the shared humanity of the "barbarians" was the subject of both scientific and political (especially) abolitionist discourses, for an eighteenth-century reader, sympathy with a "non-Enlightened", i.e. "non-civilised" ("barbarian") African slave would have been unimaginable.[23]

Péterfy seems, therefore, to follow in the footsteps of Enlightenment humanism in that it is, precisely, the "*non*-barbarian" character of Angelo Soliman (the fact that he is cultivated, speaks many languages, is knowledgeable in the arts and sciences, all in all, that he had already undergone a process of *Bildung*) that makes him worthy of consideration as a fully-fledged human, and, therefore, capable of generating readerly empathy. Indeed, at first sight, the way in which Angelo's fate is represented even looks similar to Friday's in Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719): Friday's native language is not even evoked and Robinson does not make any attempt at getting to know it. Likewise, while we do get to know that Angelo has undergone terrible sufferings on the merchant ship that transported him to Europe, he is said to have entirely forgotten both his childhood memories and his native tongue. We could well speak of a traumatic erasure, but this "traumatic" past has been somewhat all too unproblematically (i.e. improbably) replaced and overwritten by his "new culture" and by his "new languages", particularly German, and all the other languages he is made to learn in Europe. As a contrast to *Robinson,* however, Angelo does become one of the main focalisers of "Stuffed Barbarian": even though we cannot hear his own voice, he is emphatically given a point of view, i.e. eyes that can see and interpret the world around and his own situation in it. Therefore, as opposed to Defoe's Friday, with whom we are not supposed to sympathise as readers (i.e. we identify with Crusoe, the focaliser-narrator of the story), Angelo is able to generate readerly sympathy. However, when Péterfy invites us to sympathise with his "otherness", our readerly sympathy cannot but result from an imaginative self-projection: Soliman is (almost, but not quite) like us, and his consciousness is also perfectly accessible to us. Thus, Péterfy's humanistic belief in a universal humanity eventually results in the erasure of "otherness" and, especially, of the *secrecy* of the "other".

The historical Kazinczy, Angelo's friend, was the first Hungarian translator of Laurence Sterne's *Sentimental Journey Through France and Italy* (1768). Sterne, as is well known, both contributed to and ironically subverted the eighteenth-century sentimental tradition. Yorick, the first-person singular narrator of *Sentimental Journey,* stages both the recto and the verso of sympathy: while offering a bathetic ode to

23 For an obvious reference, see also the way in which Robinson "civilizes" Friday in Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe,* and presents him as almost but not quite the same as a European.

Sensibility,[24] Yorick famously finds the most (erotic) pleasure in being moved by the sufferings and plights of beautiful women. Meanwhile, although Sterne's *Tristram Shandy* is a masterpiece of irony too, it is, at the same time, a rare piece of early eighteenth-century sentimental fiction in that it contains an allusion to the imperative to sympathise with "barbarian" "negros", only because they have "souls" and are able to exercise mercy (and are, therefore, distinct, from animals). In volume nine of *Tristram Shandy*, Sterne writes:

> When Tom, an' please your honour, got to the shop, there was nobody in it, but a poor negro girl, with a bunch of white feathers slightly tied to the end of a long cane, flapping away flies – not killing them. – 'Tis a pretty picture! said my uncle Toby – she had suffered persecution, Trim, and had learnt mercy –
> – She was good, an' please your honour, from nature, as well as from hardships; and there are circumstances in the story of that poor friendless slut, that would melt a heart of stone, said Trim;
> […] Then do not forget, Trim, said my uncle Toby.
> A negro has a soul? an' please your honour, said the corporal (doubtingly).
> I am not much versed, corporal, quoth my uncle Toby, in things of that kind; but I suppose, God would not leave him without one, any more than thee or me –
> – It would be putting one sadly over the head of another, quoth the corporal.
> It would so; said my uncle Toby. Why then, an' please your honour, is a black wench to be used worse than a white one?
> I can give no reason, said my uncle Toby –
> – Only, cried the corporal, shaking his head, because she has no one to stand up for her –
> – 'Tis that very thing, Trim, quoth my uncle Toby, – which recommends her to protection – and her brethren with her; 'tis the fortune of war which has put the whip into our hands now – where it may be hereafter, heaven knows! – but be it where it will, the brave, Trim! will not use it unkindly.
> – God forbid, said the corporal.
> Amen, responded my uncle Toby, laying his hand upon his heart.[25]

24 „– Dear sensibility! source inexhausted of all that's precious in our joys, or costly in our sorrows! thou chainest thy martyr down upon his bed of straw – and 't is thou who lift'st him up to Heaven – eternal fountain of our feelings! – 't is here I trace thee – and this is thy divinity which stirs within me – not that in some sad and sickening moments, *'my soul shrinks back upon herself, and startles at destruction'* – mere pomp of words! – but that I feel some generous joys and generous cares beyond myself – all comes from thee, great – great Sensorium of the world! which vibrates, if a hair of our heads but falls upon the ground, in the remotest desert of thy creation. –" See: Sterne, Laurence. *Sentimental Journey Through France and Italy*. 1768. http://www.bartleby.com/303/1/67.html. Accessed 20 January 2020. [emphasis in the original]

25 Sterne, Laurence. *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman*. 1762. http://www.gutenberg.org/files/1079/1079-h/1079-h.htm. Accessed 20 January 2020.

Here, uncle Toby argues that black people are used worse than whites only because there is no one to stand up for them (i.e. "represent" them in a modern sense), and are, therefore, in need of protection. This is an advanced claim in the period, all the more so that Sterne included this specific passage in *Tristram Shandy* upon the request of an ex-slave, Ignatius Sancho (1729–1780), whose life of *Bildung* was surprisingly similar to that of Angelo Soliman – with the important exception that *his* life (i.e. Sancho's) did have a happy ending.

Indeed, Péterfy mistakenly claims in his dissertation that we know of only two ex-slaves, besides Angelo Soliman, who achieved a higher social status, the philosopher, Friedrich Wilhelm Amo, and Puskin's great grandfather, Abram Petrovich Hannibal. For there is, in fact, at least one clear British parallel to the life of Angelo, Ignatius Sancho's, Sterne's friend's. He was a cultivated ex-slave, who had many influential (Whig) friends, he bought his freedom, and even acquired the right to vote (based on his wealth), and became the first black man to get an obituary in the periodical press when he died. Meanwhile, as opposed to Angelo, he also played a significant role in abolitionist debates, and managed to persuade in a private letter the great "sentimental novelist", Sterne himself, to stand up against slavery: "Consider slavery – what it is – how bitter a draught – and how many millions are made to drink it!"[26]

As a contrast to Ignatius Sancho, Angelo Soliman does not mention the global problem of slavery in the novel and, unlike Sancho, he does not want to speak for his "brethren", to "represent" them or "speak for them" in any sense. This is partly because the Habsburg Empire had no colonies to speak up for, and partly because as a (psychological and social) strategy, he choses to assimilate into European (high) culture as much as he can. Meanwhile, Angelo is also playing the role of the "barbarian" assigned to him by the majority, forgetting, and, indeed, obliterating, the predicament he used to share with slaves.

On a thematic level, Péterfy does seem to exhibit an awareness of a few post-colonial theories, such as Edward Said's *Orientalism,* or Homi Bhabha's theories of mimicry: Angelo makes fun of those who "exoticise" him, and is shown to have learnt to ward off all kinds of psychic and physical injuries provoked by his visible difference from the majority. He also plays the "barbarian" game, like Shakespeare's Othello: he dresses up *as if* he exemplified the prototype of the African, wearing colourful cloths and a turban. His subjective feelings and thoughts concerning the gentle *and* cruel ways in which Viennese society treats him are also wonderfully rendered by Péterfy, who conscientiously shows how Soliman both defies and is compelled to conform to stereotypes, while also suffering from them (e.g. his first permanent lover is a Jewish woman, and his eventual wife is a French *déclassée*, suggesting that he cannot get

26 Sancho, Ignatius. *Letters of the Late Ignatius Sancho.* 1782. http://www.brycchancarey.com/sancho/letter1.htm. Accessed 20 January 2020.

access to and be understood by to women except those in marginal positions). Péterfy also shows how he is forced to be constantly conscious of his body, which others find either attractive, or disgusting or both, and how the repressed body-centeredness of the Viennese society will culminate in his stuffing after his death. In this sense, the Enlightenment of Vienna is shown to be a mockery of the Enlightenment: their acceptance of the possibility of Angelo's *Bildung* – a process that, in Enlightenment Europe, mostly implied the transcendence of the "animal" body – turns out to be fake.

Recently, Shameem Black has argued for the need to confront "the spectre of invasive imagination" and warned against the use of "representational violence" and "discursive domination" in novels.[27] She has evoked John Updike's comic mock interview with one of his fictional creations:

> Q (Beach): And this Jewishness you give me. What do you know about being Jewish? *Très peu,* I venture to estimate. As much as you learned listening to the *Jack Benny* program back in Shillingtom, Pennsylvania. Ask Cynthia Ozick. Ask Leon Wieseltier. Ask Orlando Cohen.[28]

Updike's irony is that Orlando Cohen is also his own creation, and Beach's argument raises the question whether it is possible to have complete imaginative access to another person's mind. Can we access the mind of another, isn't there a limit to the extent to which we can think ourselves to the being of another? And even if there was no such limit, should *we* not *put* a limit to the extent to which we endeavour to access, and/or represent another person's interiority? These are the basic questions Shameem Black asks throughout her work, focusing, largely speaking, on the ethics of narrative representation. In fact, as she argues, novels always speak about (and implicitly speak for) others; therefore, the representation of "other minds" is always present as a problem. Especially so when the authors speak from a position of dominance (i.e. they belong to the powerful majority of "white" / "healthy" / "rich or middle class" / "cultivated" / "heterosexual" / "men"). Péterfy himself exemplifies of all of these categories, and even though his intention to represent the "other" would count as "ethical", the realisation is less so. For the improbable omniscience of Sophie Török seems to imply omnipotence, a God-like knowledge of a person's innermost thoughts and feelings. This is especially manifest because Sophie is a woman, that is, someone in a non-privileged position – someone who should, in principle, experience precisely the absence of both omnipotence and omniscience. Similarly, past tense,

27 Black, Shameem. *Fiction Across Borders. Imagining the Lives of Others in Late Twentieth-Century Borders.* New York, Columbia University Press, 2010, pp. 12, 23.

28 Ibid., p. 22.

retrospective narration gives the illusion of knowing well-established facts, and the relative importance of each and every event. And while there is nothing inherently "wrong" with omniscient retrospection (this is the technique the most widely used in nineteenth-century fiction), a novel *about* otherness, which didactically advances the moral imperative to respect this otherness, may call for narrative techniques that do not imaginatively invade or appropriate this other, and that are devoid of what critics call "totalising closure".

Hence, the political agenda of Péterfy's book does not lie or does not stem from its figuration of Soliman's "otherness", nor does it want to "speak for" or "bear witness to" the sufferings of the dispossessed, let alone the poor. Rather, Soliman's fate serves as an allegory for the "barbarian" way in which the Hungarian majority treats minorities, and to speak up for those who, like Kazinczy himself, strive to live a life of *Bildung*. Kazinczy thus stands as an allegory "for *us* all", while the novel holds a mirror up to twenty-first-century Hungarian society, which disavows the ideals of European Enlightenment. However, by failing to testify to Soliman's otherness (his secrecy, his traumatic past, his own culture thus erased) and to display the dark sides of humanism, it perpetuates the exclusive ideology of the European Enlightenment that it mourns.

THE INHUMAN
AND THE HUMAN FORM

"The Human Form"

Aesthetic/Political Disinterest in Matthew Arnold and Immanuel Kant*

This paper shall treat Kant's "inhuman" aesthetics and the problem of the "disinterestedness" of aesthetic judgement. As a launching pad, I shall first outline the implications of Matthew Arnold's later, different notion of disinterestedness to be able to show the higher stakes involved in Kant's philosophy. Then, I will ask how it is possible for beauty to be the symbol of morality in Kant, if aesthetic judgement is disinterested, by investigating Kant's arguments on the beauty of the human figure. Third, I will show that as opposed to Derrida's claim that it is impossible to make a pure aesthetic judgement of the human figure, it is, in fact, impossible to decide whether the human figure can, or cannot be the object of purely aesthetic judgement. Eventually, I shall argue that there is a bifurcation in Kant's treatment of the human figure and point to the political and ethical stakes involved in the ways in which this figure is read.

1. MATTHEW ARNOLD

In *The Politics of Aesthetics,* Marc Redfield claims that "in Victorian middle-class discussions on acculturation, to acculturate […] means to produce a subject capable of transcending class identity by identifying with what Arnold famously called 'our best self'; which is to say 'the idea of the whole community, *the State*".[1]

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1 Redfield, Marc. *The Politics of Aesthetics, Nationalism, Gender, Romanticism*. Stanford, Stanford University Press, 2003, p. 76. In *On the Constitution of the Church and State* (1829), Coleridge calls for the necessity of "cultivation", a process that he defines as "the harmonious development of those qualities and faculties that characterise our *humanity*." And, influentially linking the individual's degree of cultivation to their capacity to be a good subject of the State, he concludes: "We must be men in order to be citizens." (See: Coleridge, Samuel Taylor. "On the Constitution of the Church and State." *The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge,* edited by John Colmer, vol. 10, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1976, p. 43. [emphasis in the original])

Redfield's argument points to the ideological and political implications of culture or, properly speaking, cultivation. It has the task to produce subjects who are able to "transcend [their] class interests in a moment of contact with a formal identity – the transcendental body, as it were – of humanity, […] the State".[2] The State is therefore an abstraction and ideal that unites the diversity of historical men into a transcendental, harmonious whole, which serves as a realm of imaginary reconciliation for a highly fragmented Victorian social order.

While producing subjects who are supposed to transcend their class interests, cultivation also has to originate from those who equally transcend any interest whatsoever. This is, in fact, the reason why the tutors of humanity can cultivate the individuals into subjects and produce good subjects for the State.[3]

In *The Function of Criticism at the Present Time*, the eminent Victorian, Matthew Arnold, singles out the figure of the critic as the one who is able to perform this acculturating role[4]: it is the critic – rather than the artist or the genius – who has both the opportunity and the capacity to become disinterested enough.

As against the Romantic exaltation of the literary genius as the purveyor of universal truths, Arnold argues that the quality of literature itself is something contingent, always depending on "the spiritual atmosphere" of a given time – Wordsworth, for instance, would have been a greater poet if he had read more books.[5] And since critical power makes "an intellectual situation of which the creative power can profitably avail itself",[6] good criticism has to be elevated above particular works of genius, as the *"disinterested endeavour to learn and propagate the best that is known and thought in the world"*.[7]

2 Redfield, *The Politics of Aesthetics…,* p. 12.

3 See also: Lloyd, David and Paul Thomas. *Culture and the State.* New York, Routledge, 1998.

4 Coleridge's cultivating order, preoccupied with and propagating these eternal truths, is the *"clerisy"* – as *On the Constitution of the Church and State* makes it clear.

5 See: Arnold, Matthew. *Lectures and Essays in Criticism*, edited by Raymond H. Supper and Ann Arbor, The University of Michigan Press, 1962, p. 6. This idea is already anticipated by Coleridge, who writes in the second "Lay Sermon" that whereas the "Living of former ages", such as the Sidneys, Milton or Barrow, "communed gladly with a life-breathing philosophy", "all the men of genius, with whom it has been my [Coleridge's] fortune to converse, either profess to know nothing of the present [philosophical] systems, or to despise them" (Coleridge, Samuel Taylor. "Lay Sermons." *The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge,* edited by R. J. White, vol. 6, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1972, p. 173.). The result of this, as he says, is "an excess in our attachment to temporal and personal objects" (i.e. the lack of disinterestedness), which, according to Coleridge, can be "counteracted only by a preoccupation of the intellect and the affections with permanent, universal, and eternal truths" (Ibid.).

6 Arnold, *Lectures and Essays in Criticism*, p. 6.

7 Ibid., p. 38. [emphasis in the original]

This, in its turn, results from the "disinterested love of a free play of the mind on *all subjects*, for its own sake".[8]

As is well established, disinterestedness, for Arnold, means both the critic's transcendence of their own political, social and personal interests, and freedom from the opinion of authorities.[9] As he comments on Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, which he considers to be one of the "finest things in English literature"[10]:

> That is what I call living by ideas: […] when all your feelings are engaged, […] when your party talks this language like a steam engine – still to be able to think, still to be irresistibly carried, if so it be, by the current of thought to the opposite side of the question, and, like Balaam, to be unable to speak anything but *what the Lord has put into your mouth*.[11]

To face up to the stakes of this disinterestedness that keeps the critic "aloof from what is called 'the practical view of things'"[12], one may look at the way in which Arnold attacks those who claim that "the Anglo-Saxon breed [is] the best in the whole world"[13], by making reference to a paragraph he recently read in a newspaper:

> A shocking child murder has just been committed at Nottingham. A girl named Wragg left the workhouse there on Sunday morning with her young illegitimate child. The child was soon afterwards found dead on Mapperly Hills, having been strangled. Wragg is in custody.[14]

8 Arnold, Matthew. "The Function of Criticism at the Present Time." *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*, edited by Meyer H. Abrams, vol. 2, London – New York, Norton, 1999, p. 1521. Arnold is considered to have taken the idea of disinterestedness from Sainte-Beuve. See: the editor's note in Arnold, *Lectures and Essays in Criticism,* p. 473.

9 Arnold, "The Function of Criticism…", p. 18.

10 Ibid., p. 1520.

11 Ibid., p. 1520–1521. This eulogy of Burke on the basis of his disinterestedness is equally anticipated by Coleridge, who argues in *Biographia Literaria*, that Burke "referred habitually to *principles*", and that, *therefore,* he was a "*scientific* statesman; and therefore a *seer*" (Coleridge, Samuel Taylor. "Biographia Literaria." *The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, edited by James Engell and W. Jackson Bate, vol 7, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1983, vol. 1/2, p. 191.). In this sense, Burke is exemplary in his disinterestedness, in his seeking for the transcendental "laws" that determine "all things" (Ibid.). However, for Coleidge, it is still first and foremost the good and proper criticism of the Bible, rather than history or principles in themselves, which characterises the exemplary, disinterested educator who trains up good citizens for the State (cf.: Coleridge, "On the Constitution of the Church and State").

12 Arnold, "The Function of Criticism…", p. 1522.

13 Ibid., p. 1524

14 Ibid.

Although the existence of such "things" as Wragg ("The sex lost in the confusion of our unrivalled happiness"[15] [i.e. for Wragg being in custody]) proves, for Arnold, that the Anglo-Saxon is not "the best race" in the world, and that the critic, in order to become the tutor of humanity, must elevate himself above these materialities and concentrate on those "wider and more perfect conceptions to which all duty is really owed".[16] According to Arnold, the necessity of this shift of interest from the material to the transcendental should *not*, however, persuade us that the Anglo-Saxon breed is not the best, since if one does not have to take into consideration the existence of Wragg's materiality, then the Anglo-Saxon breed can just as well be the best as the worst. Yet, according to Arnold, we do not even have to think about the value of a breed, for what we have to concentrate on are universal truths, and these truths will, in their turn, better (not the world but) the nation itself.

Yet, Wragg's example cannot be so easily dismissed. For Arnold does undoubtedly engage with her – despite his endeavours to imaginary dissolve differences in the transcendental body of the cultivated state. Furthermore, his stance is disturbingly unclear: his comments do not make it evident whether he considers Wragg herself, as an individual, a blemish, per se, on the body of the nation, or blames the general social circumstances that produce such impurities as Wragg.

On the one hand, he reflects upon the "hideousness" of the truly Anglo-Saxon (rather than Christian) name, Wragg:

> has anyone reflected what a touch of grossness in our race, what an original shortcoming in the more delicate spiritual perceptions, is shown by the natural growth amongst us of such hideous names – Higginbottom, Stiggins, Bugg […] what an element of grimness, bareness, and hideousness mixes with it and blurs it?"[17]

The reference to her name renders Wragg herself an always already impure figure, material and gross "by nature", because of the non-melodious, un-Christian sound of her name.

On the other hand, Arnold seems to sympathise with Wragg as a figure embedded in those historical social circumstances that have rendered her so hideous in the first place: "the workhouse, the dismal Mapperly Hills – how dismal those who have seen them will remember – the gloom, the smoke, the cold, the strangled illegitimate child".[18]

15 Arnold, "The Function of Criticism…", p. 1524.

16 Ibid., p. 1525.

17 Ibid., p. 1524.

18 Ibid., p. 1524–1525.

This tension between the "always already" (Wragg is corrupted "by nature") and Arnold's historical consciousness pointing to the responsibility of the given society is not resolved; in fact, it is not even taken account of. Arnold considers the whole case unimportant, not worthy of lengthy discussion, since the true task of the critic is, indeed, to be disinterested, that is, to concentrate on transcendental truths. As he further argues:

> I say, the critic must keep out of the region of immediate practice in the political, social, humanitarian sphere if he wants to make a beginning for that more speculative treatment of things, which may perhaps one day make its benefits felt even in this sphere, but in a natural, and thence irresistible manner.[19]

However, Wragg's equivocal case undeniably found its way into *The Function of Criticism*, and made its disinterested author perplexed, not to say, momentarily interested in worldly matters. Yet, Arnold's transcendental approach clearly shows the stakes of his own disinterestedness, not to say indifference: the critic should investigate an aesthetic realm severed from the material world, and thereby endlessly defer, in the name of culture, any attempt to resolve, in the present, existing social antagonisms or to care for the singularity of the individual.

2. KANT

Although Arnold's emphasis on the autonomy of the intelligentsia owes something to Kant's idea of the Enlightenment, the term "disinterestedness" itself has clearly run a long course since Kant. Yet, the fact that Arnold explicitly links the institution of cultivation to some version of disinterestedness allows one to track down the way in which Kant's disinterested "aesthetic judgment" has been used and abused by the advocates of cultivation.

First of all, as opposed to Arnold's disinterest in social or political matters, and his interest in some transcendental truth, for Kant, disinterestedness has nothing to do with actual political and social interests, and the investigation of truth has nothing to do with truth itself.

As is well established, in the *Critique of Pure Reason,* Kant investigates *the possibility conditions* of metaphysics, that is, the possibility conditions of those true propositions about the phenomenal world (i.e. about the world as we experience it)

19 Arnold, "The Function of Criticism…", p. 1526.

that are themselves not based on experience.[20] Its main scope is the understanding that, as Kant claims, is the only cognitive power that contributes "from its own roots to the cognition that we actually possess", and that, through its a priori concepts, prescribes the laws to nature, as it appears to us. [21] This, however, does not mean that the concepts of the understanding can also circumscribe "the area within which all things in general are possible".[22]

In the *Critique of Judgement,* from the possibility conditions of true propositions which are determined by necessity, Kant turns to what transcends the domain of our theoretical power,[23] namely, to the investigation of the possibility conditions of morality, of what ought to be done.[24] His main scope is reason, the faculty that contains the concept of freedom. The premise of Kant's position is that we have a consciousness of the moral law as a fact of reason revealed to us *a priori*.[25] This law commands us absolutely, or "categorically", against our inclinations or circumstances. It is reason that gives laws to the higher power of desire,[26] the will,[27] which, as opposed to the lower power of desire related to inclinations, has as its object the final purpose, the highest good in the world.[28] The moral law, as a fact of reason, presupposes thus another, namely, that we have will that is free.[29] The freedom of the will means both the "ability of the will to give laws to itself (to be autonomous) and to obey or disobey these laws independently of nature".[30] The law free will gives to itself is thus the moral law (that commands us to act only on maxims that can be universalised), and it is the consciousness of this law which is revealed to us as a fact of Reason: it is not derived from experience, yet it applies to all experience, as we can discover through our own acts as manifested in experience.[31]

In the Third *Critique*, Kant sets himself the task of bridging the gap between the true, as the realm of necessity, or law-bound nature, and the good, as the realm of freedom, through the power of judgement. As Andrew Bowie outlines the problem: the "separation of the sphere of freedom [i.e. that of reason] from a wholly deterministic

20 Kant, Immanuel. *Critique of Judgement*. Translated and introduction by Werner S. Pluhar, Indianapolis, Cambridge, Hackett Publishing Company, 1987, pp. xxx–xxii.

21 Ibid., p. 168.

22 Ibid.

23 Ibid.

24 Ibid., p. xlii–xlv.

25 Ibid., p. xliii.

26 Ibid., p. 178.

27 Ibid., p. 220.

28 Ibid., p. xliv.

29 Ibid.

30 Ibid.

31 Ibid., p. xliii–iv.

nature [i.e. the domain of pure reason] leaves no way of understanding how it is that we can gain an objective perspective on law-bound nature and at the same time can be self-legislating".[32] Kant himself thus asks: "Does judgement, which is in the order of our [specific] cognitive powers a mediating link between understanding and reason, also have a priori principles of its own?".[33]

The outline of Kant's whole architectonic is far beyond my present scope, I will only focus on the role the *disinterestedness* of aesthetic judgements about the beautiful plays in this transition.

Aesthetic judgements broadly mean judgements of taste, and in the "Analytic of the Beautiful", Kant defines "taste" as "the ability to judge the beautiful".[34] Judgement itself is a "talent" that cannot be acquired by rules,[35] and it has to do largely with the relationship we establish between a concept, or rule, and the particulars.[36] This relationship can be either determinative or reflective. What distinguishes both practical judgements about the good and theoretical judgements about the true from aesthetic judgements about the beautiful is that while both theoretical and practical judgements are, ultimately, determinative, aesthetic judgements are reflective. In determinative judgements, the concepts of reason or those of the understanding are given, and judgement subsumes the particular will or the sensible intuitions under these givens. In reflective judgement, "the particular is given and judgement has to find the universal for it".[37] In practical judgements, when "we are to call the object good, and hence an object of the will", we must, as Kant argues, "first bring it under principles of reason, using the concept of purpose".[38] Likewise, when we make a theoretical judgement about an object, we must have a determinate concept of it.[39] As opposed to both, aesthetic judgement about the beautiful is reflective: "it is neither *based* on concepts, nor directed to them as *purposes*".[40]

The distinction between determinative and reflective judgement is of prime importance, because Kant connects the notion of interest, on the one hand, to the object's being determined by a concept, and disinterestedness to the judgment's freedom from any determination by concepts. As Paul Guyer also argues: we can classify "as an

32 Bowie, Andrew. *Introduction to German Philosophy from Kant to Habermas.* Cambridge, Polity, 2003, p. 36.

33 Kant, *Critique of Judgement*, p. 168.

34 Ibid., p. 203.

35 Bowie, *Introduction to German Philosophy…*, p. 25.

36 See also: Schaper, Eva. *Studies in Kant's Aesthetics*. Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 1979, p. 369.

37 Kant, *Critique of Judgement*, p. 179.

38 Ibid., p. 208.

39 Ibid., p. 207.

40 Ibid., p. 209. [emphasis in the original]

interest any pleasure in an object dependent on the subsumption of that object under a determinate concept".[41] What Kant himself says is that the practical judgement that something is "good always contains the concept of purpose, consequently a relation of reason to a volition (that is at least possible), and hence a liking for the existence of an object or action. In other words, it contains some interest or other".[42] Thus, the fact that we care for the existence of an object is entirely beyond the boundaries of aesthetic judgements. On the other hand, pure aesthetic judgement's "dependence on reflection also distinguishes the liking for the beautiful from [that] for the agreeable, which rests entirely on sensation."[43] Sensations arouse a desire, an inclination for the *existence* of the object, and the liking for the agreeable is, therefore, not devoid of all interests.[44] In other words, when our judgement is disinterested, we do not care for the object's existence, be it out of an interest aroused by the lower or by the higher power of desire. As Guyer argues, our judgement is determined neither by a desire for the object aroused by sensory gratification, nor by the object's purpose – be it what the object is good for, or the object's purpose in itself.[45] In Kant's words: "[i]n order to play the judge in matters of taste, we must not be in the least biased in favour of the thing's existence but must be wholly indifferent about it".[46]

Thus, Arnold, by excluding Wragg's example from the realm of universal truths, turns truth itself into an object of aesthetic judgement, which, at least in Kant, is exempt from all care for the object's existence. Given that Kant never says that truth must be judged aesthetically (only that truth *can* also be judged aesthetically), one may consider Arnold's imperative to dismiss Wragg's example a clear instance of the aestheticisation of politics.

Meanwhile, this misreading of the indifference of our judgement in matters of taste (i.e. in "the ability to judge the beautiful"[47]) towards the object's existence already and equally points towards the stakes of aestheticism. Oscar Wilde's famous stance, for instance, aptly illustrates the extreme stakes of this aesthetic indifference: "When Benvenuto Cellini crucified a living man to study the play of muscles in his death agony, the pope was right to grant him absolution. What is the death of a vague individual if it enables an immortal work to blossom, and to create, in Keats's

41 Guyer, Paul. "Disinterestedness and Desire in Kant's Aesthetics." *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, vol. 36, no. 4, 1978, p. 245.

42 Kant, *Critique of Judgement*, p. 207

43 Ibid.

44 Ibid.

45 Guyer, "Disinterestedness and Desire…", pp. 244–245.

46 Kant, *Critique of Judgement*, p. 205.

47 Ibid., p. 203.

words, an eternal source of ecstasy?".[48] Once the disinterestedness of art is not only understood as art's freedom from practical moral considerations but as the elevation of art *above* any practical moral considerations (including the care for the object's existence), it is easy to arrive at the suspect aesthetic pleasure taken in another body's actual suffering.

Thus, it must be underlined that Kant, as opposed to Arnold and Wilde, does not *confuse* aesthetic with moral and theoretical judgements. He is eager to point out that one (i.e. the aesthetic) is reflective while the others (the moral and the theoretical) are determinative. In other words, for Kant, these two kinds of judgements are simply incommensurable: when we judge something aesthetically, moral or theoretical considerations are not important, and when we make moral or theoretical judgements, it is the beauty of the object that remains beyond our interest. As Guyer says: "what pleasure in the beautiful must be separated from is not existence itself, but the kinds of judgements we typically make about the existence of objects [...] [these latter] require the application of determinate concepts to their objects".[49]

Yet, according to Kant, the pleasure taken in the beautiful still has "an inner causality (which is purposive)", "namely, to keep us in the state of having the presentation itself, and to keep the cognitive powers engaged without any further aim".[50] Guyer remarks that this "desire for the continued existence of an object […] is certainly one thing we could mean by an *interest* in the beautiful".[51] However, the pleasure of this *lingering upon* the beautiful, "is not practical in any way",[52] and has, therefore, nothing to do either with morality, or with the actual existence of the object.

To sum up, in contrast to practical and theoretical judgements, aesthetic judgements do not depend on any determinate concept (not even on that of purpose), but on a reflection that, while leading to a concept, leaves undetermined to which concept. This also means, as Kant underlines, that a judgement of taste (as distinguished from a cognitive judgement) "is wholly independent of the concept of perfection".[53]

Meanwhile, the fact that aesthetic judgement is neither directed to concepts as purposes, nor can it be subsumed under concepts does not mean that the liking that determines the judgement of taste is entirely devoid of purposiveness. In fact, as Kant argues, this liking is "the subjective purposiveness in the presentation of an object".[54]

48 Quoted in Jay, Paul. *Force Fields: Between Intellectual History and Cultural Criticism*. New York, Routledge, 1993, p. 76. Jay does *not* make reference to Kant.

49 Guyer, "Disinterestedness and Desire…", p. 245.

50 Kant, *Critique of Judgement*, p. 222.

51 Guyer, "Disinterestedness and Desire…", p. 243.

52 Kant, *Critique of Judgement*, p. 222.

53 Ibid., p. 227.

54 Ibid., p. 221.

According to Bowie, when Kant talks of the "subjective purposiveness of nature for the power of judgement", he means that "[a]esthetic judgements look at nature *as though* nature *aimed* at being appropriate to our cognition".[55] Yet, in this case, "we move from particular to general via *assumptions* about the systematic coherence of things which do not have the status of knowledge. […] This gives us pleasure."[56]

Most obviously, the pleasure nature gives us is merely subjective, and merely attests to the harmony of our *own* cognitive powers: to the free harmony between imagination and understanding. For whereas in determinative theoretical judgements, the imagination apprehends what is given in sensible intuitions, and combines this diversity so that it matches the concept of the understanding,[57] in reflective aesthetic judgement, the imagination *in its freedom* harmonises with the lawfulness of the understanding *as such*, apart from any specific concept.[58] Yet, by attesting to nature's purposiveness precisely for our own cognitive powers, aesthetic judgment, which has nothing to do with concepts, and, therefore, it does not constitute a knowledge of the object, still attests to a harmony between us and nature as it appears to us. Meanwhile, as Bowie argues, by saying that imagination, not being determined by existing concepts, is free, Kant "also introduces a notion, freedom, which for him belongs to the realm of the supersensuous, into our sensuous relations to the world".[59]

Meanwhile, the *"possibility"*[60] that aesthetic judgements have a universal validity, that is, the possibility of the famous *sensus communis*, which is not determined by any object, concerning the pleasure we *all* take in the free play of our faculties can easily yield the misreading of that "*deeply hidden basis*, common to all human beings, underlying their agreement in judging".[61] For Kant, the universality of judgement attests to people's social connectedness, to some version of equality, since the "pleasure that taste declares valid for mankind as such"[62] makes us discover "the art of reciprocal communication of ideas between [society's] most educated and cruder segments".[63]

However, even if Kant never says *what* is to be judged beautiful ("there is no rule of taste that determines what is beautiful"[64]), and, therefore, he only gives examples to explain *how* we judge the beautiful, his "postulation" of the "universal voice" (or the

55 Bowie, *Introduction to German Philosophy…,* p. 37. [first emphasis added]
56 Ibid., p. 36. [emphasis added]
57 Kant, *Critique of Judgement*, p. xxxv.
58 Ibid., p. lvii. [emphasis added]
59 Bowie, *Introduction to German Philosophy…,* p. 37.
60 Kant, *Critique of Judgement*, p. 232.
61 Ibid. [emphasis added]
62 Ibid., p. 356.
63 Ibid.
64 Ibid., p. 232.

"idea" of it[65]), and his subsequent claim that aesthetic judgment "*requires* agreement" from everyone,[66] will serve as the basis of the aesthetic ideology of high culture. For it is precisely the famous *sensus communis* regarding matters of taste that turns into an actual prescription in the hands of the élite, instructed minority, such as Matthew Arnold's: vindicating the right to represent Kant's universal voice, it imposes its own voice as universal.

3. BEAUTY AS THE SYMBOL OF MORALITY

In what sense, then, is beauty "the symbol of morality"? In other words, how is it possible that the beautiful, which we like without interest, can be the *symbol* of the morally good, which is "connected necessarily with an interest"[67]? In other words, why does Arnold's dismissal of Wragg's "hideous" example from the realm of universal truth and morality, and therefore, from the (idea of) the State, constitute another serious and ethically suspect misreading of Kant?

Kant argues that symbols contain "indirect exhibitions of the concept", and "symbolic exhibitions use an analogy".[68] Kant's example for the symbol that exhibits this concept analogically is the "animate body" that symbolically exhibits "a monarchy ruled according to its own constitutional laws".[69] Since there is no similarity between the symbol and what it symbolises (i.e. between the animate body and monarchy), "there is certainly one between *the rules by which we reflect on the two* and on how they operate".[70] In other words, we reflect by the same rules on the operation of the body as on monarchy. The similarity between these reflections is that of the relationship between the subject and the objects of its presentation, which, in both cases, is "free". As Kant argues, taste (i.e. the ability to judge the beautiful) "legislates to itself, just as reason does regarding the power of desire".[71] Both our judgment about the beautiful and our judgement about the good contain the element of freedom. Yet, aesthetic judgement, which is supposed to offer a bridge from truth to morality, is only *similar* to moral judgement while remaining *distinct* from it (one is determinative while the other is reflective), and it is only an analogy, the fact that aesthetic judgments are

65 Ibid., p. 216.
66 Ibid. [emphasis added]
67 Ibid., p. 354.
68 Ibid., p. 352.
69 Ibid.
70 Ibid. [emphasis added]
71 Ibid., p. 229.

as if they were moral judgments, that allows for beauty to become the symbol of morality. As Kant puts it later, while "judging the beautiful, we present the *freedom* of the imagination (and hence of our power of sensibility) as harmonising with the lawfulness of the understanding", "[i]n a moral judgement, we think the *freedom* of the will as the will's harmony with itself according to universal laws of reason".[72] Thus, the sensible object (the animate body) exhibits the concept of freedom "not by means of direct [sensible] intuition but only according to an analogy with one, i.e. a transfer of our reflection on an object of intuition to an entirely different concept, to which perhaps no intuition can ever directly correspond".[73] Thus, the analogy seems to lie between the two mental acts: between that of judging the beautiful and that of judging the good. In the first case, judgement is autonomous in the sense of being free from all interest, in the second case, reason legislates for itself, it gives itself its own laws.

As Alexander Rueger and Sahan Evren equally explain:

> In the case of beauty and the morally good the probably most significant parallel between the judgement of taste and moral judgements lies in the role freedom plays in both instances. In judgements of taste the imagination is able to unify a manifold intuition without a (determinate) concept and hence its operation is free. [...] In the moral case, by analogy, the will is free in the sense that it determines itself 'in accordance with the laws of reason'. In this way an analogy is established w*ithout* the claim that there is a further undelying principle or concept that would unify.[74]

Yet, the question rises, in what sense we can judge, according to Kant, the animate body as beautiful? What are the implications of the disinterested contemplation of the body, what would it mean that we do not care for the body's actual existence?

Arkady Plotnitsky explains Kant's conception of the *natural* body as it emerges from the First *Critique* as follows:

> [w]hen we think of our bodies as having a certain shape or organization, defined by such features as the head, the arms and the legs, and so forth, we think of it on the basis of (phenomenal) appearances. The very concept of the body is defined by this way of looking at it, possibly with inner organs, such as the heart, the liver, the brain, and so forth, added on. When, however, we think of

72 Ibid., p. 354. [emphasis in the original]

73 Ibid., p. 353.

74 Rueger, Alexander and Sahan Evren. "The Role of Symbolic Presentation in Kant's Theory of Taste." *British Journal of Aesthetics*, vol. 45, no. 3, 2005, p. 232. [emphasis added]

> the body as constituted by atoms or elementary particles, even if we think of the latter classically (in terms of physics or epistemology), we think of the body as a (material) thing in itself.[75]

In contrast, what applies to the "sublime and the beautiful in the human figure", Kant describes as follows:

> we must not have in mind, as bases determining our judgement, concepts or purposes *for which* man has all his limbs, letting the limbs' harmony with these purposes *influence* our aesthetic judgement (which would then cease to be pure), even though it is certainly a necessary condition of aesthetic liking as well that the limbs not conflict with those purposes. Aesthetic purposiveness is the lawfulness of the power of judgement in its *freedom*. Whether we then like the object depends on how we suppose the imagination to relate to it, but for this liking to occur the imagination must on its own sustain the mind in a free activity. If, on the one hand, the judgement is determined by anything else, whether a sensation proper or a concept of the understanding, then the judgement is indeed lawful, but it is not one made by a *free* power of judgement.[76]

This passage immediately follows the passage about the ocean (i.e. "we must be able to view the ocean as poets do"[77]), which Paul de Man analyses in his discussion of the sublime,[78] even though Kant is speaking of not only the sublime, but also the beautiful. Although de Man uses this specific passage in order to point to the disarticulation of Kant's system, one can apply his argument about the "pure aesthetic vision" of the ocean to Kant's pure aesthetic judgement of the human figure. Following de Man's reading, the fact that aesthetic judgement is "pure" or else, *disinterested*, should disrupt the "aesthetic ideology", such as Arnold's, positing a metaphorical (rather than analogical) relationship between the natural body, the body judged beautiful, and the morally good. As Geoffrey Harpham puts it, in de Man's version, Kant insists that "'the faculties should maintain their internal system of differentiated powers and prerogatives, and not be tempted into various forms of illusory, premature synthesis' (Norris) of, for example, phenomenal perception and ethical categories, or theoretical

75 Plotnitsky, Arkady. "Thinking Singularity with Immanuel Kant and Paul de Man: Aesthetics, Epistemology, History and Politics." *Romantic Circles*, 2005. http://www.rc.umd.edu/praxis/deman/plotnitsky/plotnitsky.html. Accessed 20 January 2020.

76 Kant, *Critique of Judgement*, p. 270. [emphasis in the original]

77 Ibid., p. 270.

78 de Man, Paul. *Aesthetic Ideology*. Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1996, p. 82.

reason".[79] Indeed, this is precisely what Kant claims in the above passage: when we aesthetically judge the human figure, we contemplate it without interest, without subsuming our presentation of it either under the concepts of the understanding or under the concepts of reason. We do not care whether it is good, or what it is good for, we do not consider what its meaning is, or how "we *think* it".[80] Instead, we base our judgement merely on "how we see it",[81] and find pleasure in the free play of our own faculties during its presentation. Thus, Arnold, by reminding us to forget Wragg's "hideousness" (related to the *disharmonious sound* of her name) when we think about cultivation, and concentrate on the idea of the State, constitutes another instance of the misreading of Kantian "disinterestedness", since Arnold posits a metaphorical relationship between the realm of the beautiful and the realm of the good, which he, as a rhetorician of the aesthetic state, posits as an object of beauty.

4. THE HUMAN FIGURE

Yet, Kant's use of the term "human figure", in the above passage, is, at the same time, indeed deeply problematic: as if contradicting the passage quoted above, §17 "On the Ideal of Beauty" claims that "the ideal of the beautiful […] must be expected solely in the *human figure*",[82] and that, therefore, man *cannot* be the object of a pure aesthetic judgement that has nothing to do with "ideals". As Derrida puts it in *The Truth in Painting*: although "the ideal of the beautiful can be found only in the human form", man "cannot be the object of a pure judgement of taste".[83] Thus one encounters two paradoxes: the one analysed by Derrida lies within §17 itself, while the other lies between §17, which ultimately points to the *impossibility* of pure aesthetic judgment about the human figure on the one hand, and Kant's argument in the "General Comment on the Exposition of Aesthetic Reflective Judgments" quoted above on the other, which concerns precisely the *possibility conditions* of pure aesthetic judgement about the human figure. Let us consider the paradox involved in §17 first.

In §16, Kant argues that there are two kinds of beauty: free beauty, which "does not presuppose a concept of what the object is meant to be",[84] and accessory beauty,

79 Harpham, Geoffrey. *Shadows of Ethics: Criticism and the Just Society.* Durham, Duke University Press, 1999, p. 52.

80 Kant, *Critique of Judgement*, p. 270.

81 Ibid.

82 Ibid., p. 235. [emphasis in the original]

83 Derrida, Jacques. *The Truth in Painting*. Translated by Geoff Bennington and Ian McLeod, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1987. p.

84 Kant, *Critique of Judgement*, p. 229

which "does presuppose such a concept, as well as the object's perfection in terms of that concept".[85] Hence, pure judgements of taste only occur when we judge "free beauty". Since the "beauty of the human being" does "presuppose the concept of the purpose that the thing is meant to be",[86] and man "has the purpose of its existence within himself",[87] his beauty cannot be but adherent beauty, and, therefore, the human being cannot be the object of a pure aesthetic judgement of taste. Redfield calls this an "empirical event",[88] by which he means that, contradicting Kant's whole endeavour to investigate the subjective *possibility conditions* of judgements, it is the object itself that decides whether our judgement upon it can or cannot be pure.

In §17, Kant further claims that since there is a deeply hidden basis, common to all human beings, underlying their agreement in judging, there must be an *idea of taste* by which everybody judges any object of taste.[89] This idea, according to Kant, is the ideal of the beautiful. Since this is an ideal, it "must be fixed by a concept of objective purposiveness", that is, "there must be some underling idea of reason, governed by determinate concepts, that determines a priori the purpose on which the object's inner possibility rests".[90] Since only man has the purpose of its existence within himself, it is equally "*man,* alone among all objects in the world, who admits of an ideal of *beauty*, just as the humanity in his person […] is the only thing in the world that admits of the ideal of *perfection*."[91] As mentioned above, pure aesthetic judgements, because they are reflective, are "wholly independent of the concept of perfection".[92] In contrast, the human being is utterly defined by a purpose and does admit of the ideal of perfection. Meanwhile, "the ideal in this figure consists in the expression of *moral*".[93] Thus, the ideal of the beautiful is a rational idea, which, according to Kant, "makes the purpose of humanity, insofar as they cannot be presented in sensibility, the principle of judging his figure, which reveals these purposes as their effect in appearance".[94] Consequently, the judgement about man can only be determinative (i.e. *not* reflective or disinterested as would be proper to aesthetic judgements), and, also, the human figure *cannot* be the symbol of morality: it *expresses* the moral, or else, it reveals the purposes of humanity "as their effect in appearance". Hence, we simply cannot judge

85 Ibid.

86 Ibid., p. 230.

87 Ibid., p. 233.

88 Redfield, Marc. *Phantom Formations: Aesthetic Ideology and the Bildungsroman*. Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1996, p. 16.

89 Kant, *Critique of Judgement*, p. 232.

90 Ibid., p. 233.

91 Ibid. [emphasis in the original]

92 Ibid., p. 227.

93 Ibid., p. 235. [emphasis in the original]

94 Ibid., p. 233.

the human figure aesthetically, as the poets do: "apart from the moral, the object would not be liked universally".[95] As discussed above, pure, disinterested aesthetic judgements presuppose universal consent, and here, Kant says that there is one object (man), the universal liking of which is predicated precisely upon our judgement's being impure. According to Derrida, Kant's argument suggests that "there is no place for an aesthetic of man, who escapes the pure judgement of taste to the very extent that he is the bearer of the ideal of the beautiful and himself represents, in his form, ideal beauty".[96] This would mean that there is simply no place for what there *is* a place for in the "General Comment on the Exposition of Aesthetic Reflective Judgments", that is, for the disinterested judgement of the human figure, quoted above.

Marc Redfield, drawing on Derrida, summarises Kant's position as follows:

> a bifurcation occurs in the Third *Critique* between the pure and the ideal: as the ideal of beauty, "man" is also strictly speaking the only entity incapable of serving as an object of pure judgement of taste. Man is the "impurity" necessary to provide taste with its ideal, even though the purity of the judgement of taste is what provides the system with its guarantee of internal and external harmony.[97]

The bridge between the First and the Second *Critiques,* the pure (reflective/disinterested) judgement of taste, is predicated upon an ideal that already belongs to the realm of (moral) interests. What is problematic with both Redfield's and Derrida's analysis of Kant's bifurcation is, in fact, Kant's further bifurcation, discussed above, concerning the use of the term "human figure". This bifurcation suggests that at this point, what Redfield calls an "empirical event" does not seem to be truly empirical: as the "General Comment on the Exposition of Aesthetic Reflective Judgments" suggests, there is a case when we can judge the human figure as beautiful.

The stakes of this argument can be found in the fact that Kant, despite this ambivalence, does problematise the relationship between the trope of the human body and the sphere of morality, and does everything to separate (and only by analogy posit) the aesthetic and the moral judgements upon the human figure. And it is precisely this reflectivity, which also leads to a certain ambiguity that is missing in those thinkers, such as Arnold, who, by positing a metaphorical relationship between beauty and morality (i.e. between the beautiful and the moral, as well as the political and the natural body), contribute in an important way to the nationalist discourse of the aesthetic state.

95 Kant, *Critique of Judgement*, p. 235.

96 Derrida, *The Truth in Painting,* p. 112.

97 Redfield, *Phantom Formations,* p. 17.

French Theory – French Terror

The Autoimmune in Derrida and Wordsworth*

As discussed in the previous chapter, the establishment of a metaphorical relationship between the human body and the body politic is one of the most prominent features of aesthetic nationalist discourses, which conceptualise the political body *as if* it was a living, biological body, and thereby posit the "health" of the biological, and, *therefore*, the political body as the *moral* norm. Interestingly, Jacques Derrida's term "autoimmunity", as I will show, also establishes such a relationship, but does so precisely in order to subvert the ideology of nationalism. Instead of positing the "health" of the body politic as the moral norm, he regards autoimmunity (a disease), and, therefore, the autoimmune (self-destructive) processes of democracy, as the unconditional condition of the ethical within (rather than beyond) the political.

The present essay, after a brief outline of Derrida's often-reviewed term "autoimmunity", goes further, however, and examines the autoimmunity of Derrida's term itself , and the unforeseeable events that it produces but cannot master. First, it shows that Derrida's definition of autoimmunity, and especially his claim that during autoimmunitary processes the immune system turns against *itself*, is at odds with the way in which experts of immunology coming from what Derrida calls the "domain of biology" define the term. It thus pushes to its extremes Sontag's Aristotelian claim that the metaphorical transfer is the mental operation of "saying a thing is or is like something-it-is-*not*".[1] Secondly, it investigates the stakes involved in Derrida's rhetorics that posits, as a catachresis, the term autoimmunity to describe the biological workings of HIV. This will turn out, with some important restrictions, to parallel the description

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The second part ("Autoimmunity in Wordsworth, and the Terror of French Theory") is published as "French Terror – French Theory: Macbeth, Wordsworth, Derrida." *Festschrift for Péter Dávidházi*, edited by Panka, Dániel, Pikli, Natália and Ruttkay, Veronika, Budapest, ELTE BTK Anglisztika Tanszék, 2018, pp. 395–402.

1 Sontag, Susan. *AIDS and Its Metaphors*. New York, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1990, p. 5. [emphasis added]

Derrida gives of the "terrorists". Thirdly, it uses Derrida's non-concept of autoimmunity to understand the analogy between the *political* and the *critical* stakes involved in anti-theoretical statements againts Derrida, in which he is often called *the* representative of "French theory", understood as a synonym for terror. Drawing a parallel between Edmund Burke's warning againts French Revolutionary "terrorists" and contemporary "anti-theorist" warnings against French Theory (i.e. deconstruction), it turns to the analysis of William Wordsworth's reconstruction of his missed encounter with the French Revolution in *The Prelude,* showing that in the aftermath of Edmund Burke's introduction of the term "terrorist" in English political discourse, the inevitable autoimmunity of both textual and political bodies is often figured as terror.

1. DERRIDA, TERROR, AUTOIMMUNITY

In the aftermath of 9/11, during an interview published in *Philosophy in a Time of Terror,* Derrida defines the autoimmunitary processes of democracy as follows: "As we know, an autoimmunitary process is that strange behavior where a living being, in quasi-suicidal fashion, 'itself' works to destroy its own protection, to immunize itself against its 'own' immunity."[2] This definition is, as is well established, almost a word-for-word repetition of the earlier, more openly biological description of autoimmunity[3] proposed in 1998, well before the September 11 attacks:

> It is especially in the domain of biology that the lexical resources of immunity have developed their authority. The immunitary reaction protects the "indemnity" of the body proper in producing antibodies against foreign antigens. As for the process of auto-immunization, which interests us particularly here, it consists for a living organism, as is well known and in short, of protecting itself against its self-protection by destroying its own immune system.[4]

Although Derrida asserts that he wishes to "extend to life in general the figure of an autoimmunity whose meaning or origin first seemed to be limited to so-called natural life",[5] few critics have taken the claim that the term derives from the domain of biology

2 Derrida, Jacques. "Autoimmunity: Real and Symbolic Suicides – A Dialogue with Jacques Derrida." *Philosophy in a Time of Terror*, edited by Giovanna Borradori, Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 2003, p. 94.

3 For the history of the term in Derrida's writings, see Naas, Michael. *Derrida from Now On*. New York, Fordham University Press, 2008, p. 128–129.

4 Derrida, Jacques. "Faith and Knowledge: The Two Sources of 'Religion' at the Limits of Reason Alone." *Religion*, Cambridge, Polity, 1998, p. 73. n. 27.

5 Ibid., p. 187. n. 7.

seriously enough to investigate how the term functions in medical discourses, and ask questions about the political stakes involved in Derrida's (mis-)reading of the medical definition of the term.[6]

In *Derrida's Politics of Autoimmunity*, J. Hillis Miller avers that "Derrida uses the figure of the body's disastrous autoimmunity *in certain diseases* to define an absolutely universal condition of any political order or community", and backs up his argument with the Wikipedia definition of autoimmunity: "the failure of an organism to recognize its own constituent parts (down to the submolecular levels) as 'self', which results in an immune response against its own cells and tissues".[7] However, as the Wikipedia entry also testifies, Miller fails to recognise that Derrida's definition of autoimmunity is different from its medical definition. Whereas Derrida claims that during autoimmunitary processes the protective system of the body destroys *itself* (i.e. the immune system itself), the Wikipedia definition rightly suggests that in autoimmune diseases the immune system destroys the *body's cells and tissues*.

In 1990, one year after the publication of Sontag's *AIDS and its Metaphors*, and four years before introducing the term autoimmunity in *Spectres of Marx*, Derrida engages for the first time with the body's immune system, but is still more wary of biological metaphors. In an interview later entitled *The Rhetoric of Drugs*, he discusses AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome) at length, and argues that the politicisation of AIDS may bring forth "the worst political violence".[8] Thus, despite the fact that deconstruction itself has often been associated with the subversive work of a virus, Derrida, quite uncharacteristically, wishes to disentangle the literal (biological) and the metaphorical (political)[9] uses of the term: HIV (the Human Immunodeficiency

6 Mitchell, W. J. Thomas. "Picturing Terror: Derrida's Autoimmunity." http://www.cardozolawreview.com/content/27-2/MITCHELL.WEBSITE.pdf. Accessed 8 March 2012.

7 Miller, J. Hillis. "Derrida's Politics of Autoimmunity." *Discourse*, vol. 30, no. 1–2, 2008, p. 208. [emphasis added]

8 "If we consider the fact that the phenomenon AIDS could not be confined […] to the margins of society […], we have here, within the social bond, something that people might still want to consider as a destructuring and depoliticizing poly-perversion: a historic (historical) knot or denouement which is no doubt original. In these circumstances, the (restructuring and supposedly repoliticising) reactions are largely unforeseeable and may reproduce the worst political violence." Derrida. Jacques. "The Rhetoric of Drugs." *Points: Interviews: 1974–1994*, edited by Elisabeth Weber, translated by Peggy Kamuf et al., Stanford, CA, Stanford University Press, 1995, p. 252. [originally published in 1990]

9 My equation of the literal with the biological and the metaphorical with the political is, in fact, misleading. For, as Mitchell rightly claims: "The whole theory of the immune system, and the discipline of immunology, is riddled with images drawn from the socio-political sphere – of invaders and defenders, hosts and parasites, natives and aliens, and of borders and identities that must be maintained. In asking us to see terror as autoimmunity, then, Derrida is bringing the metaphor home at the same time he sends it abroad, 'stretching' it to the limits of the world. The effect of the 'bipolar image,' then, is to produce a situation in which there is no literal meaning, nothing but the resonances between two images, one biomedical, the other political." (Mitchell, "Picturing Terror…", p. 917.)

Virus) is *not* like deconstruction, and *cannot* be used as a political metaphor. At the same time, AIDS stands in an uneasy, almost spectral relationship with autoimmune diseases. For whereas in autoimmune diseases the immune system destroys the body's own organs, in the course of HIV infection, the immune system – as I will detail in the subchapter "AIDS" – destroys itself, and becomes entangled in a process that inevitably leads to its total destruction. Thus, Derrida's definition of autoimmunity is reminiscent, in fact, of the medical definitions of AIDS, but unlike AIDS, autoimmunity becomes a political concept in Derrida's thinking.

Since the ways in which Derrida actually theorises, or asks questions about, the relationship between autoimmunity and democracy,[10] or else, the way in which he posits autoimmunity as both the condition of and the consequence of democracy, has been discussed by many and is beyond the scope of the present argument,[11] I will restrict myself to a brief introductory remark.

According to Derrida's definition of autoimmunity, the immune system, which is responsible for the body's self-protection, attacks and destroys itself, thus making the body vulnerable. Consequently, the introduction of the figure of autoimmunity in the ethico-political discourse suggests that the political body always contains *within* itself the possibility of its own undoing. But democracy's self-protection against any total(ising) self-protection, is welcomed, by Derrida, as hospitality, as an openness to the possibility for the other to arrive. As he writes, "autoimmunity is not an absolute ill or evil. It enables an exposure to the other, to *what* and *who* comes – which means that it must remain incalculable. Without autoimmunity, with absolute immunity, nothing would ever happen or arrive; we would no longer wait, await, or expect, no longer expect another, or expect any event".[12] At the same time, autoimmunity not only

10 "Democracy" itself is a highly saturated concept in Derrida's writings. As he argues: "it is precisely the concept of democracy itself, in its univocal and proper meaning, that is presently and forever lacking" (Derrida, Jacques. *Rogues*. Stanford, Stanford University Press, 2003, p. 34.). It has to be mentioned, however, that democracy is, among others, precisely the right to self-questioning, the questioning of democracy itself, which equally follows the logic of autoimmunity: "When I seemed to imply that it was necessary already to live in a democracy in order for anyone not just to have access to the clear and univocal meaning of this word whose semantic range is so overdetermined (and all the more so, as we have confirmed, inasmuch as it oscillates between an excess and a lack or default of meaning, inasmuch as it is excessive, so to speak, by default), but in order for anyone to be able to debate and continuously discuss it, this seemed already rather circular and contradictory: what meaning can be given to this right to discuss freely the meaning of a word, and to do so in the name of a name that is at the very least supposed to entail the right of anyone to determine and continuously discuss the meaning of the word in question? Especially when the right thus implied entails the right to self-critique another form of autoimmunity-as an essential, original, constitutive, and specific possibility of the democratic, indeed as its very historicity, an intrinsic historicity that it shares with no other regime?" (Derrida, *Rogues*, p. 72.)

11 On this, see: Thomson, Alex. "What's to Become of 'Democracy to Come'?" http://pmc.iath.virginia.edu/text-only/issue.505/15.3thomson.txt. Accessed 30 February 2012, as well as Naas, *Derrida from Now On*.

12 Derrida, *Rogues*, p. 152. [emphasis in the original]

entails the potential destruction (of the protection of) the self as both the object and the subject of the suicidal event (and of the events still to come), but it is also something that has *always already* compromised the supposed integrity, or else, ipseity of the self. As Derrida puts it: "Autoimmunity is more or less suicidal, but more seriously still, it threatens always to rob suicide itself from its meaning and supposed integrity".[13]

In a plea for the unconditional renunciation of sovereignty in the democracy to come, Derrida discusses the autoimmune vulnerability of juridical performatives as follows:

> I just referred in passing to the distinction between the *constative* (the language of descriptive and theoretical knowledge) and the *performative,* which is so often said to produce the event it declares. Now, just like the constative, it seems to me, the performative cannot avoid neutralizing, indeed annulling, the eventfulness of the event it is supposed to produce. A performative produces an event only by securing for itself [...] the power that an ipseity gives itself to produce the event of which it speaks – the event that it neutralizes forthwith insofar as it appropriates for itself a calculable mastery over it. If an event worthy of this name is to arrive or happen, it must, beyond all mastery, affect a passivity. It must touch an exposed vulnerability, one without absolute immunity, without indemnity; it must touch this vulnerability in its finitude and in a nonhorizontal fashion, there where it is not yet or is already no longer possible to face or face up to the unforeseeability of the other.[14]

13 Ibid., p. 44. In *Rogues,* Derrida gives two examples for the suicidal tendencies of democracy, which immediately indicate that autoimmunity, rather than necessarily being a threat, can be best understood as risk. On the one hand, there is always a potential suicide involved in democratic institutions themselves, since democratic elections may well lead to the rise to power of anti-democratic forces, which gain the right to put an end to the very institutions that made their victory possible in the first place. On the other hand, democracy can always, temporarily, suspend itself in order to protect itself (following the logic of autoimmunity), and prevent the rise to power of such anti-democratic forces. For instance, democratic leaders in Algeria suspended the democratic elections to prevent the rise of an Islamist party that would have put an end to all democracy. Thus, autoimmunity is, in fact, "*a double bind* of threat and chance, not alternatively or by turns promise and/or threat but threat *in* the promise itself" (Ibid., p. 82.). However, there is *no* parallel between the situation in Algeria and the measures taken by the Bush administration following 9/11. For these latter, while restricting democratic freedom under *the pretext* of protecting democracy, have failed to recognise that the risk is always already inside, and, therefore, cannot be definitively erased. Thus, rather than facing up the challenge that "there is no absolutely reliable prophylaxis against the autoimmune" (Ibid., pp. 150–151.), the US administration has defined its own fear (resulting from "risk" and uncertainty) as a 'threat' coming from the outside: they called it "terrorism", and waged "a war against the 'axis of evil'" (Derrida, "Autoimmunity…", p. 41.). This problem is also treated by Naas, *Derrida from Now On*, pp. 136–137. On the logic of such metaphorical transfers and way it leads to "naming", see also Paul de Man on Rousseau's "giant" in *Allegories of Reading* (New Haven – London, Yale University Press, 1979, p. 150–151.)

14 Derrida, *Rogues*, p. 151–152. [emphasis in the original]

The above passage easily offers itself to an analysis that examines what Derrida actually "means" by "autoimmunity". Such analyses have indeed abounded. However, despite the fact that autoimmunity has often been associated with the work of deconstruction itself,[15] critics have failed to notice that Derrida's term "autoimmunity" is itself a performative, and as such cannot avoid attempting to master the eventfulness of the event it produces. For autoimmunity is not only *about* vulnerability, the vulnerability of (juridical) performatives, but being itself a performative, it also stages this vulnerability: autoimmunity is an autoimmune term, subjected to autoimmune processes, that is, it can undo itself at the precise moment of its performance. In other words, if "there is no absolutely reliable prophylaxis against the autoimmune",[16] then the term "autoimmunity" itself is just as vulnerable as democracy, just as vulnerable as any process it describes. How to examine, then, the autoimmunity of the term "autoimmunity"? And what are the unforeseeable events that it produces but that it cannot in fact master?

Autoimmunity[17]

According to immunologists, the basic function of the immune system is to fight off foreign microorganisms but tolerate self tissues. As Mitchell Kronenberg puts it, "[f]rom a teleological point of view, an ideal set of immune receptors would recognize foreign organisms but ignore all components that make up our own bodies".[18] There are two types of autoimmunity: one comprises the various forms of *autoimmune diseases*, in which the immune system fails to remain tolerant towards the self and starts to destroy self tissues, the other is called *natural autoimmunity,* which is necessary for the body's normal functioning.

In *natural autoimmunity*, the central role is played by the "immunological homunculus", the immune system's internal image or representation of essential body molecules. This allows for the recognition of those self-antigens that are necessary for the body's survival.[19] Since any foreign pathogen attacking the body may contain elements that are the same as, or similar to, the essential molecules of the body, and these elements need to be preserved rather than destroyed, the immune system contains immune cells that can recognize self-antigens without giving or generating any aggressive, destructive response to them. In other words, the non-aggressive

15 See: Naas, *Derrida from Now On*, p. 14.

16 Derrida, *Rogues*, p. 150–151.

17 I owe special thanks to the concersations with Dr. László Timár, Professor of Infectology at Semmelweis University, Budapest, Hungary, for giving me all the information on the workings of the immune system.

18 Kronenberg, Mitchell, and Alexander Rudensky. "Regulation of immunity by self-reactive T cells." *Nature*. http://www.nature.com/nature/journal/v435/n7042/full/nature03725.html. Accessed 8 March 2012.

19 Cohen, Irun. R. "The cognitive paradigm and the immunological homunculus." *Immunology Today*, vol. 13, no. 10, pp. 490–494. See also: Falus András, Buzás Edit and Rajnavölgyi Éva. *Az immunológia alapjai* [The Bases of Immunology]. Budapest, Semmelweis Kiadó, 2007, p. 175.

autoimmune cells that participate in the body's natural autoimmunitary processes effectuate the recognition of the self even in the foreign other. At the same time, low level self-reactive immune cells also play a role in surveilling uncontrolled cell growth, and may thus reduce the incidence of cancer.[20] All in all, natural autoimmunity, ensuring the tolerance of self-antigens, has a self-protective function, and plays a positive role in the regulation of the immune system as a whole.

On the other hand, *autoimmune diseases* are associated with high level auto-reactive immune cells and the subsequent loss of immunological tolerance towards the self.[21] In fact, one of the tasks of the immune system is to control those immune cells that display a high level of autoimmunity, that is, to regulate those self-reactive cells that not only recognise, but may also turn against the body's own tissues, and thereby "pose an immediate threat of autoimmunity".[22] When the immune system is healthy and natural autoimmunity is properly controlled, some immune cells recognise and tolerate the self, while others attack the non-self. In autoimmune diseases, however, normal regulatory processes fail, and self-reactive immune cells launch an aggressive attack on the body's own tissues and organs. As Irun Cohen puts it, "[a]utoimmune disease often involves the disregulated activation of natural autoimmunity".[23] Consequently, contrary to Derrida's suggestions, in autoimmune diseases, the immune system does not make itself vulnerable, it does not undermine its own protection by turning against itself. Instead, it *works all too well* and attacks the body's own cells and tissues.

Consequently, the political implications of the medical or biological definitions of *autoimmune diseases* (i.e. the misrecognition of the self as a foreign other) would certainly not be welcomed by Derrida. For a metaphorical transfer between the

20 As Lee Eisenbach argues, "immune reaction to normal tissue antigens can lead to cancer regression" (Eisenbach, Lee, and Khaled M. El-Shami. "Antigen Specific Anti-Tumour Vaccination: Immunotherapy versus Autoimmunity." *Cancer and Autoimmunity*, edited by Yehuda Shoenfeld and M. Eric Gershwin, Elsevier, Amsterdam, 2000, p. 403.). Or, as Cohen puts it: "Tumor antigens, for the most part, are normal self antigens, and tumor immunity is mostly autoimmunity" (Cohen, Irun. R. "Discrimination and dialogue in the immune system." *Seminars in Immunology*, vol. 12, no. 3, 2000, p. 216.).

21 Autoimmune disorders fall into two general types: those that damage many organs (systemic autoimmune diseases) and those where only a single organ or tissue is directly damaged by the autoimmune process (localized). See: http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/autoimmunediseases.html. Accessed: 3 August 2012.

22 Kronenberg and Rudensky, "Regulation of immunity by self-reactive T cells".

23 Cohen, "Discrimination and dialogue in the immune system", p. 216 The main questions asked by immunologists dealing with autoimmunity concern the ways in which the aggressive autoimmune processes of the body become so successfully regulated and controlled. Kronenberg and his colleague formulate their wonder as follows: "Since only 3–8% of the population develops an autoimmune disease, it is remarkable that this enormous burden of self-reactive receptors is so well regulated in most of us." ('Kronenberg and Rudensky, "Regulation of immunity by self-reactive T cells"). They ask how it is possible that we generally remain tolerant to our own self tissues, how autoimmune processes are regulated, and how this regulation goes wrong in autoimmune diseases.

biological and the political body would suggest that the autoimmunitary processes of democracy entail the disawoval, the misrecognition, and the subsequent destruction of certain elements *proper* to the community as if they were improper, foreign, "rogues", non-self. And this, as history has so often shown us (and still does so), has disastrous consequences with regard to democracy.

The effects of *natural autoimmunity*, on the other hand, are somewhat similar to the effect of immuno-depressants that, according to Derrida, equally inscribe themselves in a "general logic of autoimmunisation".[24] These, as he puts it, "limit the mechanisms of rejection and facilitate the tolerance of certain organ transplants".[25] Transplants are necessary for our survival, which indicates that Derridean autoimmunity, as has already been suggested, constitutes a risk: it implies not only a potentially life-threatening, but also a potentially life-saving openness. It offers a chance to let the other in, who, as Michael Naas puts it, is not "properly our own", but potentially saves our life.[26]

Yet, whereas Derrida claims that "[o]ne function of the concept of autoimmunity is to act as a third term between the classical opposition between friend and foe",[27] the discourse of immunology remains structured by and keeps producing binaries between inside and outside, tolerance and intolerance. It maintains that the immune system gives distinctive responses to self and non-self (unless this process is inhibited by immune-depressant drugs). Thus, biological tolerance does indeed model the way tolerance works in the actual existing socio-political sphere. As Derrida puts it, political tolerance is the acceptance "of the foreigner, the other, the foreign body up to a certain point, and so not without restrictions", and the concomitant, "natural" rejection of immigrants "who do not share our nationality, our language, our culture, and our customs".[28]

However, Derrida clearly *disavows* any idea of democracy that would function according to the binary logic of tolerance and intolerance: although tolerance is preferable to intolerance, tolerance, according to Derrida, must always be conditioned by that impossible, "unconditional hospitality", which is beyond any definable politics or law. As he puts it in *Rogues:* "Only an unconditional hospitality can give meaning and practical rationality to a concept of hospitality. Unconditional hospitality exceeds juridical, political, or economic calculation. But no thing and no one happens or arrives without it."[29] Tolerance, designating the event when this absolute desire for justice gets

24 Derrida, "Faith and Knowledge…", p. 72–73, n. 27.

25 Ibid.

26 Naas, *Derrida from Now On*, p. 131.

27 Derrida, "Autoimmunity: Real and Symbolic Suicides…", p. 152.

28 Ibid., p. 128.

29 Derrida, *Rogues*, p. 149.

determined in a "particular language and culture",[30] inevitably perverts hospitality: it turns it into conditional hospitality, existing within the confines of particular politics and laws. And since Derrida goes as far as to say that tolerance (as "conditional, circumspect, careful hospitality") "is actually the opposite of hospitality",[31] he would also oppose any metaphorical transfer between what immunologists call "natural autoimmunity" (the "tolerance" of the "other" *in case* it is necessary for the *survival* of the "self"), and the political concept of autoimmunity (an ipseity *in advance* open to its own *undoing*).

Now, I am going to show first that Derrida draws, in fact, his arguments on autoimmunity from the discourse of AIDS. In the framework that I propose, the first question to be answered will be whether it is possible to regard HIV, which clearly comes from the outside, as a metaphor for something that blurs the distinction between friend and foe.

AIDS: Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome

The causative agent of AIDS is HIV, that is, the human immunodeficiency virus. The major targets of HIV are immune cells called helper T cells (a type of white blood cell developed in the thymus). Helper T cells play an essential role in the self-protective system of the body, because they are involved in activating and directing other immune cells. In the course of HIV infection, the virus infects and thereby destroys precisely those immune cells that are responsible for the immune response as a whole. However, since not all of the helper T cells are infected at the same time, the healthy ones can still activate the immune cells specific to the virus. These, in turn, start to destroy those helper T cells that are infected by HIV. As a result, the major helper T cells are attacked on two fronts: they are attacked, on the one hand, by HIV itself, and, on the other, by the specific immune cells that eliminate the infected T cells themselves. Despite this double attack, it would be possible for the body to gain a victory over HIV infection, since the immune cells specific to the virus could very well eliminate all the infected helper T cells. Nevertheless, since HIV is a mutating virus, that is, it can constantly change its antigen (the very thing to which the immune system specifically responds), by the time the immune cells specific to the virus could destroy all the infected helper T cells, another, new type of HIV emerges, which needs another kind of specific immune response. This process, that is, the mutation and remutation of HIV, the resulting infection of new helper T cells, and the concomitant development of new types of immune responses can last for years and decades, but, eventually, the immune system gives up the fight. In the end, the whole immune system is destroyed by the parallel attacks of HIV and the specific immune

30 Naas, *Derrida from Now On*, p. 24–25.

31 Derrida, "Autoimmunity: Real and Symbolic Suicides…", p. 127–128.

response eliminating all the infected immune cells.[32] In what follows, I shall first outline the most conspicuous parallels between the workings of the immune system infected by HIV on the one hand, and Derrida's outline of the logic of autoimmunity on the "other", and then show the reasons why these parallels are, in fact, untenable.

First, the specific immune cells that destroy the major immune cells infected by HIV, and eventually make impossible the working of the immune system as a whole, perform precisely that function which Derrida ascribes to autoimmunity, namely, one which "consists for a living organism [...] of protecting itself against its self-protection by destroying its own immune system."[33]

Second, the fact that the virus keeps mutating and remutating all along, in an unforeseeable, incalculable way, and without ever being identifiable once and for all, parallels the unidentifiable, anonymous character of terror, as it is presented and theorised by Derrida in the aftermath of the September attacks. As he puts it, "[f]rom now on, the nuclear threat, the 'total' threat, no longer comes from a state but from anonymous forces that are absolutely unforeseeable and incalculable".[34] Third, since the virus lives and reproduces itself within the body's own immune cells, that is, within the immune system itself, it does not leave the boundary between self and other, friend and foe intact. It acts, so to speak, as a "third term" between friend and foe. As Derrida also claims in *The Rhetoric of Drugs*, the virus "belongs neither to life nor death", and "may *always already* have broken into any 'intersubjective' trajectory".[35] There is no virus without the immune cells that act as hosts, there is no "other" without the self. This is exactly the reason why the immune system, infected by HIV, has to destroy itself, which destruction obviously entails both the death of the "other" (the virus), and the death of (the protective system of) the self.

Fourth, the way in which the biological body reacts to the attack of HIV, and the desparate attempts it makes to neutralise it, bears uncanny resemblances to the way in which the political body destroys itself while wanting to protect itself in Derrida's account of autoimmunity. He outlines the relationship between autoimmunity and the vain, performative attempts to master, or neutralise the event – as well as any events still to come – in the following way:

> all these efforts to attenuate or neutralize the effect of the traumatism (to deny, repress, or forget it, to get over it) are but so many desperate attempts. And so many autoimmunitary movements. Which produce, invent, and feed the very

32 The above outline of AIDS ows the most to my pernonnal conversations with László Timár, Professor of Immunology (see above).

33 Derrida, "Faith and Knowledge…", p. 73. n. 27.

34 Derrida, "Autoimmunity: Real and Symbolic Suicides…", p. 150–151.

35 Derrida, „The Rhetoric of Drugs", p. 251. [emphasis added]

> monstrosity they claim to overcome. What will never let itself be forgotten is thus the perverse effect of the autoimmunitary itself.[36]

The more the immune system struggles to overcome traumatism, the more it becomes entangled with it, and the more it becomes exhausted by the vain struggle to neutralise it. In fact, one of the most conspicuous parallels between the immune system's reaction to HIV infection, and the political community's reaction to terrorism is their common, lethal exhaustion in trying to suppress or repress both the trauma past and yet to come.

However, whereas in Derrida's version of autoimmunity, the protective system (of democracy) destroys itself in order to make *itself* vulnerable ("a living being, in quasi-suicidal fashion, 'itself' works to destroy its own protection*, to immunize itself against its 'own' immunity*"), in the medical definition of HIV, the immune system destroys itself in order to eliminate the *virus*. It is this virus that, at first sight, appears to parallel Derrida's "terrorist", who cannot live *without* (as both outside of, and deprived of) the system it invades. As Derrida puts it:

> the aggression [...] comes*, as from the inside*, from forces that are apparently without any force of their own but that are able to find the means, through ruse and the implementation of high-tech knowledge, to get hold of an American weapon in an American city on the ground of an American airport [...], these hijackers *incorporate*, so to speak, *two suicides in one*: their own (and one will remain forever defenseless in the face of a suicidal, autoimmunitary aggression – and that is what terrorizes most) but also the suicide of those who welcomed, armed, and trained them.[37]

And although the double suicide implied in the "autoimmunitary aggression" of the terrorists seems to parallel the double suicide of the immune system infected by HIV (which destroys both itself and the virus), in Derrida's account, the viral logic of terrorism *is predicated upon* that of autoimmunity: events like 9/11 have always the potential to happen when democracy, as something necessarily autoimmune, is in place. As if the openness resulting from the autoimmunity (the vulnerability) of democracy always potentially entailed the unforeseeable arrival of the virus, of any virus. In this sense, Derrida seems to imply that infection is the potential risk generated by a protective system that is always already autoimmune.[38]

36 Derrida, "Autoimmunity: Real and Symbolic Suicides…", p. 99.

37 Ibid., p. 95. [emphasis added]

38 This, of course, contrasts with the tenets of immunology, which posit "natural autoimmunity" as part of the "healthy immune system" and necessary for our survival, while "autoimmune disease" is regarded as something "abnormal", as an excess of "natural autoimmunity", that destroys the body's own tissues.

Hence, what Derrida calls an (always necessary) "autoimmunitary perversion" is very much *like* (and I emphasise like again, because we also have to see the difference in the similarity) having unprotected sex and then welcome its risks: its potentially deadly or potentially happy consequences. The aporia that thus seems to emerge from Derrida's writings is the unconditional imperative of opening up to a potentially lethal and potentially life-giving contact with the "Other" – which "unconditionality", as he says, "is a frightening thing, it's scary".[39] At the same time, Derrida also warns us: the politicization of the virus is able to bring forth the worst political violence. Hence, it is only the (non-)concept of autoimmunity that allows for the recognition that a discourse simply shifting the responsibility from "us" (who refuse to acknowledge that democracy *always* contains the seeds of its own undoing) to "them" (who actively attacked "us" through "ruse") would only show up its own failure actively to embrace the ethical position of passivity in the face of the "Other". This might be one of the reasons why one has to have recourse to the metaphor of autoimmunity, which, for Derrida, implies a body, a community always open to its own undoing, to an undoing that may happen from within, even without enemies outside. Autoimmunity thus becomes a catachresis that points to the *question* of the relationship between *politikon* and *bios*, but averts the terrifying consequences of any parallel between the functioning of the self-protective systems of biological and political bodies.[40]

39 Derrida, Jacques. "Politics and Friendship. A Discussion with Jacques Derrida," Centre for Modern French Thought, University of Sussex, 1 December 1997. http://www.livingphilosophy.org/Derrida-politics-friendship.htm. Accessed 3 August 2012.

40 Yet, one might still ask the question, as Mitchell did recently, whether an ethical community can actually "learn" anything from the functioning of the biological body. Mitchell, who equally investigates the political implications of the metaphor of the immune system argues that "one clue [to fight terrorism] is offered by the metaphor (and the literal operations) of the immune system itself. [T]he immune system [...] learns by 'clonal selection,' the production of antibodies which mirror the invading antigens and bond with them, killing them. The implications of this image are quite clear. The appropriate strategy for international terrorism is not war. [...] The best strategy is highly targeted and *intelligent* intelligence, [...] infiltrators who can simulate the enemy, who speak his language, understand, sympathize – who can clone themselves as "friends" of the terrorists." (Mitchell, "Picturing Terror…", p. 6.)
According to the latest findings of immunology, the processes of natural autoimmunity indicate that the binary between self-protection and auto-destruction is untenable. Derrida also points to the non-contradictory relation between the immune and what threatens it, when he evokes, for instance, the double meaning of the term *salut* as both greeting (the hospitality of visitation) and salvation (immunity, health, security) in an analysis of Heidegger: "the relation is neither one of exteriority nor one of simple contradiction. I would say the same about the relationship between immunity and autoimmunity." (Derrida*, Rogues,* p. 114.) Immunologists also maintain that the task of the healthy immune system is to find "appropriate responses" to changes and to keep the system "fit". (Cohen, "Discrimination and dialogue in the immune system".) In fact, it is precisely the term "change" that introduces a third term between self and non-self in recent discourses of immunology. Further, as Cohen argues, the immune system, rather than giving one singular response to change, "orchestrates the spectrum of responses dynamically over time according to the shifting needs". In other words, the self-protective system of the body finds

2. AUTOIMMUNITY IN WORDSWORTH, AND THE TERROR OF FRENCH THEORY

In what follows, I shall examine the parallel Edmund Burke and William Wordsworth establish between the functioning of the self-protective systems of biological and political bodies. I shall particularly focus on the ways in which the (non-)concept of autoimmunity can complicate our understanding of Burke's and Wordsworth's earliest

appropriate responses to changes, which responses always correspond to the extent to which the change affects the system's "fitness". As Cohen claims, "The immune system is about fitness." […] The answer is not a *single* discrimination [between self and non-self], but a *series of ongoing* discriminations" (Ibid., p. 216. [emphasis added]). Thirdly, the physical body makes the series of discriminations that generate responses always appropriate to the given situation by either *"dialogue"* or *"correspondence"*. As the immunologist puts it, "I think it is fitting to talk about an immune dialogue because the immune system continuously exchanges molecular signals with its interlocutor, the body." (Ibid., p. 217.) "Correspondence", on the other hand, implies that "each cell type is led by the responses of the other cell types to respond with more or less vigor, and with different response molecules and behaviors. The immune system, in short, responds to its own responses. [...] This is correspondence. Correspondence is decision-making by committee." (Ibid., p. 218.) The decisions that the "committee" make are, therefore, always singular, and are always dependent upon the given context. Consequently, even though Cohen does not deny the fact that the immune system, which is endowed with "memory cells", *learns* how to give appropriate responses to changes, the decisions it makes are always singular and are always orchestrated dynamically, according to the shifting needs. In the Derridean analysis of the body politic, the "fitness" of the system would amount to "peace", best defined as "tolerant cohabitation" (Derrida, *Terror,* p. 127.). Putting aside, for a moment, Derrida's misgivings concerning tolerance, it is worth pursuing Cohen's argument. His focus on processes, appropriate responses and dialogic negotiations, rather than one immediate reaction and one singular decision, may already point towards Derrida's emphasis on the necessity of responsible and irreducibly singular decision*s*, which are not dictated by any normative program (Ibid., p. 132.). This, however, would also necessitate a universal alliance or solidarity that extends well beyond the interests of the nation-state: transformations, and as yet unheard-of forms of shared and limited sovereignty (Ibid., p. 131.). As he puts it: "in a context that is each time singular, where the respectful attention paid to singularity is not relativist but universalizable and rational, responsibility would consist in orienting oneself without any *determinative* knowledge of the rule. To be responsible, to keep within reason, would be to invent maxims of transaction for deciding between two just as rational and universal but contradictory exigencies of reason as well as its enlightenment. The invention of these maxims resembles the poetic invention of an idiom whose singularity would not yield to any nationalism, not even a European nationalism – even if, as I would like to believe, within today's geopolitical landscape, a new thinking and a previously unencountered destination of Europe, along with another responsibility for Europe, are being called on to give a new chance to this idiom. Beyond all Eurocentrism." (Ibid., p. 158.)

Consequently, it is only by considering the physical body as a metaphor for a universal community understood as a web of carefully orchestrated decisions, responses and responsibilities, which respect the always shifting needs, that the analogy between the animate and the political bodies can escape the trap of biologism. Still, as has been suggested all along, the metaphorical transfers between the processes of biological body and those of the political community are far from being easy ones. These are difficult transfers, transfers that respect distinctions more than similarities. For "democracy", as Nancy puts it, "is not figurable", after all. (Nancy, Jean-Luc. *The Truth of Democracy.* New York, Fordham University Press, 2010, p. 27.)

writings on (political) terror at the turn of the nineteenth century, and examine how the *reading* of autoimmunity dismantles those eighteenth-nineteenth-century organiscist conceptions that posit the biological well-being of both the political and the textual body as the moral norm. Meanwhile, Derrida's non-concept of autoimmunity will also help us understand the analogy that exists between the political and the critical stakes involved in British debates around "French theory" (most often understood *as* terror) since the late eighteenth century.

As is well established, although Derrida was not particularly interested in British Romanticism, "certain literary critics who were variously interested in his work in the early 1970s – Geoffrey Hartman, Harold Bloom, Paul de Man – were romanticists".[41] The work of these thinkers was considered by many as an "aggressive attack" on the supposed "organic unity" of textual bodies, which concept itself is central to the Romantic period. In an interview, Derrida remarks that his work, attacking institutions, authorities, "sacred" texts, "often demands certain gestures that can be taken as aggressive with regard to other thinkers or colleagues".[42] Of course, the aggression did not come "from elsewhere" (i.e. from Derrida) as Derrida himself put it with regard to the inevitably autoimmunitary processes of democracy, but only revealed the autoimmunitary logic always already at work within the texts under scrutiny.

However, the advocates of New Criticism, these largely speaking "anti-theorists",[43] kept regarding the pre-Derridean times of literary criticism as a kind of "age of chivalry" that is "gone", and just like Edmund Burke, who, in his *Reflections of the Revolution in France*, called the age of the French Revolution "[t]hat of sophisters, economists, and calculators",[44] who yielded the "extinction" of "the glory of Europe", "anti-theorists" still associate the rise of theory with the demise of "proper" criticism, and the parallel extinction of the glory of English literature. Simply put, American deconstruction has been regarded as a form of "French terror".

In his 1795 "Letter on a Regicide Peace", Burke denounces the French "terrorists" in the following terms: "Thousands of those Hell-hounds called Terrorists […] are let loose on the people. […] The whole of their Government, in its origination, in its continuance, in all its actions, and in all its resources, is force; and nothing but force."[45]

41 Redfield, Marc. "Aesthetics, theory, and the profession of literature: Derrida and Romanticism." *The Free Library*, 22 June 2007. http://www.thefreelibrary.com/Aesthetics, theory, and the profession of literature: Derrida and-a0172908075. Accessed 20 January 2020.

42 See: „Derrida's Terror." 24 November 2008. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NNwTLb4YVd4. Accessed 20 January 2020.

43 Cf.: Sarbu, Aladár. *The Study of Literature.* Budapest, Akadémiai, 2009, pp. 355–362.

44 Burke, Edmund. *Reflections on the French Revolution. The Harvard Classics. 1909–1914.* http://www.bartleby.com/24/3/6.html. Accessed 20 January 2020.

45 Quoted in Redfield, Marc. *The Rhetoric of Terror: Reflections on 9/11 and the War on Terror*. New York, Fordham University Press, 2009, p. 73.

Marc Redfield draws attention to Burke's equation of theory with terror, and undelines that it was through Burke's writings that the French term "terrorist" reached England, and that it was also Burke's writings that shaped the Anglo-Ameican reception of the term. At the same time, it was, in fact, also Burke's idea of the "organic state", in which the state develops "naturally" as a flower does, without any violent or "mechanical" intervention that was taken over by Coleridge, who modelled the idea of the "organic unity" of the work of art on the idea of the organic or aesthetic state. Coleridge, like Burke, applies organic structures to social forms,[46] and conceives of the ideal state as a natural, organic unity. This organic, "natural" unity is then always threatened by the "arbitrariness" of (French) terror, which Coleridge sees as the consequence of the "mechanical" character of Rousseau's *Social Contract*. For according to Coleridge, it is, precisely, the "abstract", "mechanical" character of Rousseau's *theory* that "cleared the way for military Despotism, for the satanic Government of Horror under the Jacobins, and of Terror under the Corsican".[47] Coleridge denounces the *Social Contract* in the following terms: "the *Contrat social* of that sovereign Will [...] applies to no one Human Being, to no Society or Assemblage of Human Beings"; and Rousseau "was doomed to misapply his energies to materials the properties of which he misunderstood".[48]

Small wonder that this very same rhetoric emerges from his *Lectures on Shakespeare* (1812), where he describes the organic (as opposed to the mechanical) work of art as follows:

> the true ground of the mistake [...], lies in the confounding mechanical regularity with organic form. The form is mechanic when on any given material we impress a predetermined form, not necessarily arising out of the properties of the material. [...] The organic form on the other hand is innate, it shapes as it develops itself from within, and the fullness of its development is one & the same with the perfection of its outward Form.[49]

Hence, while the organic state serves as a model for the ideal work of art, the organic work also serves as a model for the ideal of the perfect state. The historical idea of the aesthetic state has often been commented upon (especially with regard to Schiller); what is interesting to us here is that Coleridge's argument against the "inhuman" and "mechanical" character of the *Social Contract*, resulting in the Jacobin and the

46 See also: Frey, Anne. *British State Romanticism: Authorship, Agency, and Bureaucratic Nationalism.* Stanford, Stanford University Press, 2010, p. 24.

47 Coleridge, Samuel Taylor. "The Friend." *The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, edited by Barbara E. Rooke, vol. 4, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1969, 2/2 vols, pp. 127–128.

48 Ibid., p. 120–121.

49 Coleridge, Samuel Taylor. "Lectures 1808–1819 on Literature." *The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, edited by R. A. Foakes. vol. 5, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1987, 1/2 vols, p. 495.

Napoleonic terrors, anticipates by 150 years the "humanist" arguments pushed forward against deconstruction, and, particularly, the works of Derrida. Derrida's readings have also been considered to be "arbitrary", and deconstruction itself has been (mistakenly) criticised for being a "method" of reading that can be "mechanically" applied to the analysis of individual texts. Further, when American "deconstructionists" gained some prominence at universities, traditional readers of literature considered the "reign" of "Yale Critics" as a form of "terror".

Since the many reasons why deconstruction is *neither* a method, *nor* a form of terror have been discussed by many,[50] in what follows, I will elaborate on a conspicuous instance of the staging of terror *as* autoimmunity in one of the most canonised texts of Romanticism. I have chosen a passage from Book X of *The Prelude or, Growth of a Poet's Mind* [i. e. *The Prelude* (1805; 1850)], the great, autobiographical poem by Wordsworth. It is entitled "Residence in France and French Revolution", and contains a reference to the famous "September massacres" of 1792, a phrase that may obviously strike familiar chords with the theorists of the 2001 September attacks.

Wordsworth, like his conservative contemporaries, derived his sense of British identity from Britain's war with Napoleonic France, and its conflicts with the "French", while his poetry often displays the rhetoric of health that posits the biological well-being of the political body as the moral norm, and Britain as a self-sufficient unity to be protected against anything "foreign". For example, in a sonnet composed in 1810, he makes clear that "from *within* proceeds a Nation's health",[51] and in another one entitled "Lines on the Expected Invasion" (1803), he characteristically demands his fellow Britons to "save this honoured Land from every Lord / But British reason and the British sword".[52]

Book X of *The Prelude* (1805; 1850) aims to establish Wordsworth as an eminently English poet, and offers a retrospective account of Wordsworth's (missed) encounter with the Revolution during the Fall of 1792, when he was still an ardent revolutionlist.[53] The passage I shall examine stages not only the autoimmunitary logic at work in both textual and political bodies that go to great length to protect their immunity, but also what Marc Redfield has recently called the "virtual trauma" suffered by the distant witnesses of the September 2001 terror attacks.[54] The passage starts with a glimpse at Wordsworth's revolutionary hopes that lead him to Paris, with a hint at his apparent openness towards

50 See, particularly Rajan, Tilottama. *Deconstruction and the Remainders of Phenomenology: Sartre, Derrida, Foucault, Baudrillard*. Stanford, Stanford University Press, 2002, or Roye, Nicholas. *Deconstruction: A User's Guide*. London, Palgrave Macmillan, 2000.

51 "O'erweening Statesmen have full long relied." *The Works of William Wordsworth,* London, The Wordsworth Poetic Library, 1994, p. 320.

52 Ibid., p. 310. See also: Frey, *British State Romanticism…,* p. 65.

53 See also Friedman, Geraldine. *The Insistence of History: Revolution in Burke, Wordsworth, Keats, and Baudelaire*, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1996.

54 Redfield, Marc. "Virtual Trauma: The Idiom of 9/11." *Diacritics,* vol. 37, no. 1, 2007, p. 56.

the arrival of the "event", and goes on with the description of the effects of his belated arrival to Carousel Square, and his missed encounter with the "September massacres":

> This was the time in which, enflamed with hope,
> To Paris I returned. […]
> I crossed – a black and empty area then –
> The square of the Carousel, a few weeks back
> Heaped up with dead and dying, upon these
> And other sights looking as doth a man
> Upon a volume whose contents he knows
> Are memorable but from him locked up,
> Being written in a tongue he cannot read,
> So that he questions the mute leaves with pain,
> And half upbraids their silence. But that night
> When on my bed I lay, I was most moved
> And felt most deeply in what world I was; […]
> With unextinguished taper I kept watch,
> Reading at intervals. The fear gone by
> Pressed on me almost like a fear to come.
> I thought of those September massacres,
> Divided from me by a little month,
> And felt and touched them, a substantial dread
> (The rest was conjured up from tragic fictions,
> And mournful calendars of true history,
> Remembrances and dim admonishments): […]
> all things have second birth;
> The earthquake is not satisfied at once' –
> And in such way I wrought upon myself,
> Until I seemed to hear a voice that cried
> To the whole city, "Sleep no more!"[55] To this
> Add comments of a calmer mind – from which
> I could not gather full security –
> But at the best it seemed a place of fear,
> Unfit for the repose of night,
> Defenceless as a wood where tigers roam.[56]

55 Shakespeare, William. *Macbeth,* Act 2, Scene 2. "Methought, I heard a voice cry, 'Sleep no more, / Macbeth does murder sleep'" See: http://shakespeare.mit.edu/macbeth/full.html. Accessed 20 January 2020.

56 Wordsworth, William. "The Prelude." *The Norton Anthology of English Literature,* edited by Meyer H. Abrams, vol. 2, New York, W. W. Norton & Company, 1999, pp. 357–358.

Wordsworth arrives at Carousel Square where both a great number of the mob storming the Tuileries Palace and a great number of the guards protecting it had been killed: "a few weeks back", the square was "[h]eaped up with dead and dying". The sight (or rather non-sight) of collective massacre would have been surely traumatising, but at the time of Wordsworth's visit, the place is blank and empty. This emptiness is the mark of his (characteristically) missed encounter with history, and of history's utter resistance to his comprehension: the place resembles a book "written in a tongue [most probably French] he cannot read".

First of all, Wordsworth's awareness that an "event" has taken place that he missed, that he does not understand, but that will, or has already, changed the course of history, parallels the threat felt by certain traditional New Critics facing the effects of French or American deconstruction, written in a "tongue" they could not read.[57] Like Wordsworth's, theirs was equally a missed encounter: they had a sense, but not an understanding of the impact of the event, and this discrepancy triggered, as Coleridge would have it, "an involuntary sense of fear from which nature has no means of rescuing itself but by anger".[58]

At the same time, Wordsworth's visit to Carousel Square equally bears uncanny resemblances to the experience of those who visited Ground Zero after 9/11: even though the "empty area" had been emptier than Ground Zero was (in Paris, there had not even been ruins), the after effects of the shock are similar, as we will see. Meanwhile, Wordsworth's response to the September massacres may also complicate our understanding of the "virtual trauma" suffered by the distant witnesses of the September attacks. Redfield argues as follows:

> Wherever one looks in 9/11 discourse, trauma and the warding-off of trauma blur into each other, as the event disappears into its own mediation. All traumatic events arguably do this; but as many have commented, there is something particularly virtual and hyperreal about the central "9/11" event – the World Trade Center catastrophe. To those not immediately threatened by it, this disastrous spectacle could seem at the time at once horrifically present and strangely unreal – "like a movie," as the saying went.[59]

Arguably, Wordsworth does not experience the event as if it were a movie. But he foreshadows the reaction of the distant witnesses of 9/11 in warding off trauma by

57 See also: Redfield, Marc. "Theory and Romantic Lyric: The Case of 'A Slumber Did My Spirit Seal.'" *Theory at Yale: The Strange Case of Deconstruction in America*. Fordham University, 2016. pp. 62–83. www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt175x2jb. Accessed 22 January 2020.

58 Coleridge, Samuel Taylor. *Biographia Literaria*, edited by Nigel Leask, London, Everyman's Library, 2003, p. 19.

59 Redfield, "Virtual Trauma…", p. 56.

turning the unfamiliar into something familiar. In other words, the utterly shocking unfamiliarity, the whole "otherness" of the event that he missed is being warded off through its familiarisation: in his terror, he reminisces about "tragic fictions, / And mournful calendars of true history", and reads Shakespeare's *Macbeth* "at intervals". In fact, while disaster films serve as a shield of protection against the actual, real disaster, which they both erase and intensify, the fictional voice ("Sleep no more! / Macbeth does murder sleep") that haunts Wordsworth helps him render comprehensible what resists comprehension: the inassimilable historical event is somewhat de-realised, and becomes part of a tragic *plot*.[60] However, Wordsworth's attempt to "neutralize" the eventfulness of the event is doomed to failure from the start: it is one of those "autoimmunitary movements", which "produce, invent, and feed the very monstrosity they claim to overcome."[61] For while Wordsworth's quotation from *Macbeth* obliterates the singularity of the September massacres, it also heightens their effects. Wordsworth's terror, or else, his terror of the terrors yet to come ("The fear gone by / Pressed on me almost like a fear to come"), is the joint consequence of the traumatic character of the utterly unfamiliar but missed event and the attempt to neutralise it through its imaginative familiarisation. By familiarisation, I mean the substitution of the "non-assimilated", the "real" and the "French" by the "organic", the "aesthetic", and the "British" (Shakespeare), as well as the inscription of the the "historical" into the "natural" – apparently deduced from the cycles of nature ("all things have second birth; / The earthquake is not satisfied at once"). Of course, Wordsworth himself is representative of a political body, that of the British "nation", and his erasure of the otherness of the other (the event) through its reinscription into the organicist, naturalist aesthetics of unified wholeness can be considered as an attempt at the re-establishment of the indemnity of this "healthy", "natural" "body".

At the same time, Wordsworth's reference to *Macbeth* also betrays a certain autoimmunitary logic. First, we have to remind ourselves that Wordsworth wrote this passage around 1805, two years after his sonnet "Lines on the Expected Invasion". The passage is not only about his "Residence in France", but also about the threat France poses to England. From this angle, the reference to Shakespeare is far from being reassuring: the plot of *Macbeth* (Macbeth kills the legitimate king of Scotland, and turns into a tyrant, or, in Burkian terms, a "Terrorist") foreshadows, according to the logic of the passage, that of the September massacres followed by the Reign of Terror. This, however, also suggests that the threat of terrorism is within the (nineteenth-century) precincts of the British Isles, and that a British (i.e. Scottish) version of terror temporally precedes (or even serves as a model for) the French Revolution.

60 On the tragic plot-line see also: Jacobus, Mary. "'That Great Stage Where Senators Perform': Macbeth and the Politics of Romantic Theatre." *Studies in Romanticism*, vol. 22, no. 3, 1983, pp. 353–387.

61 Derrida, "Autoimmunity: Real and Symbolic Suicides…", p. 99.

And although *Macbeth* ends with the tyrant's ("Terrorist's") death and the restoration of political order, Wordsworth, having recourse to the "wisdom" of "nature" (the "earthquake is not satisfied at once"), points to some inescapable necessity driving the nation to the repetition of the catastrophe. Hence, if, as Wordsworth says, "from *within* proceeds a Nation's health", then Britain is "defenceless" ("as a wood where tigers roam") against the "disease" that is always already within, that is, against the workings of the autoimmune.

The quotation "Sleep no more!" is even more telling of the suicidal tendencies of this passage.[62] The sentence, in *Macbeth,* is uttered by Macbeth himself: he tells Lady Macbeth that he thinks he heard this sentence while killing the two chamberlains. Wordsworth's quotation is thus a double quotation: he quotes Macbeth quoting an imaginary voice. Wordsworth himself seems to suggest that the imperative "Sleep no more!" warns him and the "whole city" of an impending, deadly danger. Hence, Wordsworth, rather than representing those ("proper" Englishmen) who sleep, and are threatened by Macbeth (the "Terrorist") in their sleep, echoes Macbeth himself; hence, he turns, quite ironically, into the uncanny double of the French revolutionaries, that is, the "Terrorists" themselves. We have thus arrived at the ultimate, self-suicidal event of this passage: the self that wants to protect his integrity unwittingly turns into the figure against which it fights. This figure necessarily destroys the self, and the autoimmunitary logic of politics and of language thus dismantles the supposed, "organic unity", the integrity of both the political and the textual bodies.

62 See also: Redfield's "Romanticism and the War on Terror" in *The Rhetoric of Terror: Reflections on 9/11 and the War on Terror*.

Critical Approaches to William Wordsworth's "Composed Upon Westminster Bridge, September 3, 1802"*

When I attended Ferenc Takács's course on T. S. Eliot as a university student, we spent a seminar discussing the title of Eliot's poem "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock". When I became a doctoral student, the time devoted to the discussion of the generic and linguistic ambiguities of this single line amounted to two entire classes.[1] In what follows, I shall offer a similar exercise in literary analysis. However, I will not so much focus on generic and linguistic ambiguities *per se*, but on the *possible ways* of reading a poem. My choice is Wordsworth's sonnet, "Composed Upon Westminster Bridge, September 3, 1802", known simply as "Westminster Bridge". I generally "use" this poem to demonstrate that there is no such thing as pure reading, so I shall place each particular reading in dialogue with a specific critical frame. And if there is no such thing as pure reading, there is, of course, no such thing as pure, deliberate choice either. Robert Eaglestone, in *Doing English*, concentrates on one term in the last line of the poem ("lying") to offer a typical example of undecidability.[2] Ortwin de Graef also offered an analysis of this poem during a seminar held in 2005 at the University of Leuven, pointing to the presence of the ideology of Englishness in Wordsworth's most innocent (seemingly apolitical) poem.[3] De Graef's reading, in his turn, had been influenced, in many different ways, by Geraldine Friedman's

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1 These were classes held by Ferenc Takács.

2 Eaglestone, Robert. *Doing English*. London, Routledge, 2004, p. 39.

3 An early version of de Graef's analysis can be found here: de Graef, Ortwin. "Over Het Buitenaardse (Wordsworth, 3 September 1802)." *Provincialismen/Ontworteling*, edited by Bart Verschaffel and Mark Verminck, Leuven – Amsterdam, Kritak, Meulenhoff, 1993, pp. 131–150.

The Insistence of History,[4] as well as Alan Liu's groundbreaking work, *Wordsworth: The Sense of History*.[5]

This paper thus grew out of an introductory university lecture on literary theory at the English Department of ELTE. It shows the many possible approaches to a literary text known as "schools", the ways in which one single text can break all the critical frames that are supposed to contain it (New Criticism, deconstruction, New Historicism, Gender Studies, Psychoanalysis), while also exemplifying the pleasure involved in thinking through the variety of possible interpretations.[6] Here is the poem:

*Composed Upon Westminster Bridge, September 3, 1802**

Earth has not anything to show more fair:
Dull would be of soul who could pass by
A sight so touching in its majesty:
This City now doth, like a garment wear
The beauty of the morning: silent, bare,
Ships, towers, domes, theatres, and temples lie
Open unto the fields, and to the sky;
All bright and glittering in the smokeless air.
Never did sun more beautifully steep
In his first splendour, valley, rock, or hill;
Ne'er saw I, never felt, a calm so deep!
This river glideth at his own sweet will:
Dear God! The very houses seem asleep;
And all that mighty heart is lying still!

* The date of this experience was not September 3, but July, 1802. Its occasion was a trip to France (see Dorothy Wordsworth's *Grasmere Journals*, July 1802, p. 395). The conflict of feelings attending Wordsworth's brief return to France, where he had once been a revolutionist and the lover of Annette Vallon, evoked a number of personal and political sonnets. (Editor's footnote to the poem.) [7]

4 Friedman, Geraldine. *The Insistence of History: Revolution in Burke, Wordsworth, Keats, and Baudelaire*. Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1996.

5 Liu, Alan. *Wordsworth: The Sense of History*. Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1989.

6 On Wordsworth in Hungarian, see for example: Fogarasi György. *Nekromantika és kritikai elmélet*. Debrecen, Debreceni Egyetemi Kiadó, 2016, p. 77–197.; Komáromy Zsolt, "Emlékezet és retorika Wordsworth poétikájában." *Forradalom és retorika: tanulmányok az angol romantikáról*, edited by Gárdos Bálint and Péter Ágnes, Budapest, L'Harmattan – Ninewells Alapítvány, 2008, pp. 161–201.; Komáromy Zsolt. "Hogyan írjunk Wordsworth-ről Az angol irodalom magyar történetében?" *Filológiai közlöny*, vol. 59, no. 4, 2013, pp. 410–416.

7 Wordsworth, William. "Composed Upon Westminster Bridge, September 3, 1802." *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*, edited by Meyer H. Abrams, vol. 2, New York, W. W. Norton & Company, 1999, p. 296.

If one does not know this specific poem by Wordsworth, the fact that it was written *by* Wordsworth, the "Romantic poet", certainly generates expectations; for instance, that the poem will be about "nature". However, the title declares that the poem was written in London, which suggests that it will most probably also *be* about London, the big, industrial city of the beginning of the nineteenth century. The time and the place of the composition in the title has a reality effect (i.e. Wordsworth was truly there), and also creates an effect of presence: we imagine the speaker (i.e. Wordsworth), standing on Westminster Bridge on an early September day in 1802, watching the Thames flowing, enjoying the morning sight, and, *at the same time*, composing a poem.

Reading through the poem, one has the impression that it is about the beauty of London. It says that "London is beautiful" – i.e. this is what the poem "means". As the great theorist of New Criticism, Cleanth Brooks, master of "close-reading" (and enemy of paraphrase) paraphrases it, "I believe that most readers will agree that it is one of Wordsworth's most successful poems, yet most students have the greatest difficulty in accounting for its goodness. […] The poem merely says: that the city is beautiful in the morning light and it is awfully still".[8] Brooks first evaluates the poem on a basis of some undefined *sensus cummunis* (*we* all *agree* that this is one of Wordsworth's *most beautiful* poem), thereby establishing a community of readers (taken for granted) who, endowed with enough "natural sensibility", are able to judge this poem. Then, he tells us what the poem *means* ("the city is beautiful in the morning light and it is awfully still"). His question concerns the specific form that creates or contributes to this single meaning, and to the poem's singular "power": "The reader may ask: Where, then, does the poem get its power?".[9] To paraphrase the paraphrase: the "reader" asks, or rather, should ask, what makes it possible for the poem to be so *good*, what are the formal conditions that make this possible? Having taken the poem's meaning for granted (London is beautiful), he goes on to scrutinise the poem's formal characteristics, focusing all through on the "text itself". The gist of his argument is that in this poem Wordsworth manages to reconcile the oppositions between city and nature by showing that "London is part of nature too, and is lighted by the sun of nature"[10] (the city wears "the beauty of the morning"). The last lines of the poem anthropomorphise both the houses ("the very houses seem asleep") and London ("And all that mighty heart is lying still!"), turning inorganic entities into organic, living figures, only to reveal that London is beautiful *because* it is part of an organic nature. According to Brooks, the poem's "power" results from

8 Brooks, Cleanth. *The Well Wrought Urn: Studies in the Structure of Poetry.* London, Harvest Books, 1960, p. 5.

9 Ibid.

10 Ibid., p. 6.

the shock generated by this surprising reconciliation of opposites into an "organic unity".[11]

Reading Brooks's analysis, the deconstructive critic would immediately push forward the claim that New Critical "close-reading" is not close enough. However, their focus would still remain on the "text itself." (Despite the acknowledgement that literature, or language in general, has the power to shape history, deconstruction hardly ever produces readings that take into account the poem's actual historical or political context.) At the same time, since the meaning constituted by the text (i.e. London is beautiful) will be shown to be undermined by the very same text, the close examination of the poem's rhetorics will certainly bring self-contradictory sets of meanings "into play". Eaglestone's highlighting of the ambiguity of the term "lying" has already been mentioned. Yet, the reason why this specific ambiguity complicates the poem's "meaning" or the ways in which it can produce two equally valid (mis)readings of the same "text" have been left without further analysis. According to Eaglestone, the last line of the poem, "And all that mighty heart is *lying* still!" [emphasis added], can mean either that London is indeed "sleeping" (i.e. the houses "seem asleep") or that London is not telling the truth: although the houses "seems asleep", they are, in fact not asleep. Eaglestone, however, leaves some questions unexplored. What are the implications of these two possibilities? If the houses of London are not asleep but only seem asleep, then the anthropomorphised houses of London (metonymically "representing" the inhabitants of London) only

a.) "seem asleep" because a house is an inanimate entity and, therefore, cannot sleep. In this case, the term "seem" would draw attention to the power of language to anthropomorphise, and thereby give the *illusion* of a possible unity of organic and inorganic, natural and non-natural.

b.) "seem asleep" because the inhabitants are not asleep but, rather, dead. Here, the deconstructionists would be careful to distinguish between death (as the end of life) and the inorganic quality of objects (like "rocks" in "A Slumber did my Spirit Seal," or "houses" here).

c.) "seem asleep" because the houses (i.e. the inhabitants of London) are, in fact, very much awake. They only pretend to be sleeping. This solution, however, must remain unexploited by the deconstructionist, because the "text itself" does not offer any further hint as to the question: and so what? What if they seem to be asleep but are, in fact, awake?

11 Brooks's reading is exemplary in illustrating the most important tenets of New Criticism. He pursues the Coleridgean (i.e. Romantic) method of "practical criticism" in his emphasis on "organic unity", on the reconciliation of "discordant qualities" in the perfect work of art, which he regards as "autonomous" (that is, transcending history or politics) as well as in the assumption that no element can go against the harmony of the whole, which whole, or unity, rather than being considered as an effect of language, is equally seen as something "natural". Meanwhile, Brooks' choice of a poem by Wordsworth perpetuates the canon of ostensible works of genius.

The reading of the rest of the poem would support points (a) and/or (b). Exploring and criticising Brooks's argument that, "surprisingly", in this poem the industrial city wears the (natural) beauty of the morning, the deconstructionist would point out that the line "the city, *like a garment, wears* the beauty of the morning" [emphasis added] implies precisely that the city (i.e. London) is, in fact, *not* beautiful: it merely wears the beauty of the morning as a garment. Although the city is indeed anthropomorphised, the use of a simile (instead of a metaphor) indicates that beauty is attributed to the morning, rather than to London, and this beauty is like a garment. That is, there is no natural, or essential, connection between the city and beauty: the city, without the beauty of the morning, is a mere body, which we know nothing of. If we connect this insight to the last lines of the poem, then the term "seem" also appears in a new light. For a beautiful garment can hide something utterly ugly as well as something beautiful or ordinary. In other words, the fact that the city wears a beautiful garment does not say anything about the city itself: the city only *seems* to be beautiful but it is not certainly so. What kind of body is London, then? What kind of body does the beautiful garment of the morning hide? That is, what do we get to know, from the poem, about the city itself? Having a "closer" look at this short poem, one finds that, apart from the long passages describing nature, the few lines presenting London, the actual *body* wearing the garment of the beautiful morning, are as follows: "*silent, bare*, / Ships, towers, domes, theatres, and temples *lie* / Open unto the fields, and to the sky" [emphasis added]. The ending already belongs to nature, while the description of the city (a sheer enumeration preceded by two adjectives) is lacking in any so-called high poetic imagery. Yet, it still begs the questions: what kind of body is a "silent" and "bare" body? What kind of body is a body the disconnected members of which (ships, towers, domes, theatres and temples) are lying open unto nature, "the fields, and to the sky"? Does this *bare* body *wear* the beauty of the morning?[12] Leaving apart, for the moment, the implications of the term "lying", the answer would be either:

a.) a sleeping body, which is lying naked and vulnerable, or
b.) a dead body, which has not been buried – this body only seems to be silent because it is, in fact, mute like a corpse, or
c.) the body of a naked woman.

The deconstructionist would not care much for solution (c), which points towards questions of gender. However, solutions (a) and (b) may make one ask: is London's *true* "essence" the bare corpse, and, therefore, the houses of London only "seem asleep" because they are actually lying dead? Or is the city a vulnerable, naked body, which is, indeed, asleep? Only one thing is certain: although Wordsworth does indeed

12 On the paradox of being bare and, at the same time, wearing a garment, see: Gill, Stephen. *William Wordsworth: A Life*. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1989, p. 389, 4186n.

anthropomorphise nature, the anthropomorphisms involved in the images of the city are uncertain – as if the poem suggested an awareness of the unbridgeable gap separating nature, the organic, eternally living entity, and the city, which is utterly and definitively inorganic, or if not inorganic, then doomed to decay. And even though the power of language or rhetorics (which, itself, is part of human civilisation) can bridge this gap, it also points to the abyss separating them. In other words, while the "prospect", that is, the all-encompassing vision of Wordsworth (the traveller standing on the bridge) is able to connect and transcend, his language ultimately dissolves.

However, the deconstructionist focus on the text itself has left some trains of thought suspended. The first one was the possible answer to the question: What if the inhabitants of London only pretend to be sleeping, while they are very much awake? This inquiry does not seem to have any consequence for the deconstructionist since the answer it may yield does not immediately concern the text itself or language *per se.* The fact that this poem was not actually written on September the 3rd but in July, and that its occasion was a trip to France, briefly, that written records, that is, the contexts, reveal that Wordsworth himself was *lying* in the title, would not be of much relevance either. For the New Historicist, however, this would certainly be one of the starting points. Departing from the date of composition, a New Historicist scholar of Romanticism would focus on Wordsworth's changing relationship to the French Revolution, his initial support and later rejection of the revolutionary ideals in the name of the British Monarchy. For even though Wordsworth's poem creates the illusion of transcending the political world (and thereby perpetuating what Jerome McGann has called "Romantic ideology"[13]), the poem is, *in fact*, very much embedded in history. For instance, the editor's footnote tells us that "[t]he conflict of feelings attending Wordsworth's brief return to France, where he had once been a revolutionist and the lover of Annette Vallon, evoked a number of personal and political sonnets". In a New Historicist vein, one could wonder, in what sense this peculiar sonnet is a personal, let alone a political, sonnet? Clearly, the poem seems to transcend and deny the world of politics and history by imaginatively linking London to an ahistorical nature, even though its rhetorics does point to the problematic character of this linkage. At the same time, however, Wordsworth, for some reason, was lying about the date of composition and, consequently, about the date of his own visit to London. He was pretending to be writing this poem on his way *back* from France (where he had once been a revolutionist and the lover of Annette Vallon), whereas, in fact, he wrote it on his way *to* France. As Alan Liu demonstrates, Wordsworth went to France in July 1802 to settle his affair with Annette Vallon, with whom he had an illegitimate child, Caroline – before marrying his future wife, the "proper" Englishwoman, Mary Hutchinson. By this time, England was at war with Napoleonic France, and for Wordsworth, the

13 See: McGann, Jerome. *The Romantic Ideology.* Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1989.

encounter with Annette and their child also meant an encounter with his former self, the "revolutionist". This former self had been so enthusiastic about the French Revolution that he had, as many different contexts indicate, gone to Paris shortly after its peak. Thus, Wordsworth's denial (or ostensible "transcendence") of history (and his "escape" in "English nature") went together with a denial of both his initial support of the Revolution and his affair with Annette. These denials might have resulted in the change of the date of the poem's composition: Wordsworth pretends that he has already come back from France, for which he is still heading, as if his tranquillity and his love of England (both urban and natural) was the result of an already accomplished journey to "France", which he has definitively left behind in the preceding months. In fact, Wordsworth, who had turned into the most ardent supporter of the Monarchy by 1802, disliked everything that was French: "French ideas", imported in England, among others, by Thomas Paine's *The Rights of Man* (which was widely available as well as widely read by the lower classes due to the "dangerous" increase of literacy at the time), seemed to threaten the idea of the British Constitution and the British Monarchy. Wordsworth's poetry of nature, as James Chandler has so persuasively demonstrated, is, eminently, a poetry of Englishness[14]: the English landscape becomes a synonym for England, and England becomes a synonym for the Anglican Church and the State.

Let us then examine Wordsworth's own references to Paris, focusing on the context in order to determine the text in a New Historicist vein. The easiest would be to search for such references in *The Prelude or, Growth of a Poet's Mind*, Wordsworth's long, autobiographical poem, which retrospectively establishes him as the true "English" poet of nature.[15] Wordsworth describes his memories of his first trip (1792–1794) to France in Books IX–X of *The Prelude* (1805) as follows:

> I crossed – a black and empty area then –
> The square of the Carousel, a few weeks back
> Heaped up with dead and dying, upon these
> And other sights looking as doth a man
> Upon a volume whose contents he knows
> Are memorable but from him locked up,
> Being written in a tongue he cannot read,
> So that he questions the mute leaves with pain,

14 Chandler, James. *Wordsworth's Second Nature: A Study of the Poetry and Politics.* Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1984, passim.

15 The analysis of the Paris episode of *The Prelude* can be found in Friedman, Geraldine. *The Insistence of History: Revolution in Burke, Wordsworth, Keats, and Baudelaire*. Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1996.

And half upbraids their silence. But that night
When on my bed I lay, I was most moved
And felt most deeply in what world I was; […]
With unextinguished taper I kept watch,
Reading at intervals. The fear gone by
Pressed on me almost like a fear to come.
I thought of those September massacres,
Divided from me by a little month,
And felt and touched them, a substantial dread
(The rest was conjured up from tragic fictions,
And mournful calendars of true history,
Remembrances and dim admonishments): […]
all things have second birth;
The earthquake is not satisfied at once' –
And in such way I wrought upon myself,
Until I seemed to hear a voice that cried
To the whole city, "Sleep no more!"[16] To this
Add comments of a calmer mind – from which
I could not gather full security –
But at the best it seemed a place of fear,
Unfit for the repose of night,
Defenceless as a wood where tigers roam.[17]

Of course, the conservative, anti-French Wordsworth, composing *The Prelude* in 1805, retrospectively rewrites or, at least, reshapes, his youthful experience of the revolutionary Paris. Here, Paris is presented as a book that is written in a language (French?) he cannot read, which already indicates that Wordsworth typically aestheticises something that he misses to encounter: history itself. The Revolution, for a tourist, a passenger like Wordsworth, remains sheer chaos, the meaning and purpose of which he cannot comprehend, and is, indeed, written in a "tongue" – French – "he cannot read". The traumatic shock of actual violence, "The Dead, upon the Dying heaped" cannot be assimilated nor integrated by consciousness. In his fear, Wordsworth withdraws into his room and tries to read, choosing a book that he *can* read. What he is reading, according to *The Prelude*, is, of course, the most eminently

16 Shakespeare, William. *Macbeth,* Act 2, Scene 2. "Methought, I heard a voice cry, 'Sleep no more, / Macbeth does murder sleep'" See: http://shakespeare.mit.edu/macbeth/full.html. Accessed 20 January 2020.

17 Wordsworth, William. "The Prelude." *The Norton Anthology of English Literature,* edited by Meyer. H. Abrams, vol 2, New York, W. W. Norton & Company, 1999, pp. 357–358.

English poet, Shakespeare. "Sleep no more" is a quotation from *Macbeth*,[18] the plot of which foreshadows, in retrospect, that of the French Revolution. Macbeth kills the legitimate king of Scotland and usurps his throne, and Wordsworth retrospectively (in 1805) knows that the 1792 September massacres will be followed, in January 1793, by the beheading of the legitimate king of France, Louis XVI.

To consider *The Prelude* as a context for "Westminster Bridge" allows one to establish a parallel between the vulnerable London of "Westminster Bridge" and the revolutionary Paris. The inhabitants of London only "seem asleep", while Paris, "all hushed and silent as it was", also appears "unfit for the repose of the Night, / Defenceless as a wood where tigers roam". And if there comes a voice that cries "To the whole city" (i.e. Paris *and* London) "Sleep no more," then this city will not be sleeping anymore but will be very much awake. In other words, "Westminster Bridge" exhibits Wordsworth's worst fears, namely, that London will suddenly metamorphose into Paris: people who "seem asleep" will suddenly rise up against the British Monarchy. The New Historicist would thus point out that even though Wordsworth does everything to transcend and deny history, "Westminster Bridge" is, in fact, haunted by the trauma of the French Revolution: "history" has left its traces on the composition of the poem. To push this conclusion to its extremes: although "Westminster Bridge" *seems* to be about the beauty of London, it is, *in fact,* about revolutionary Paris.

Still, some issues are left unexplored by the New Critic, the deconstructionist and the New Historicist alike. These are mostly available to the Feminist and the Psychoanalytic critic. The Feminist would start out by focusing on the editorial note saying that

a.) the poem's occasion was Wordsworth's trip to France, which is revealed by "Dorothy Wordsworth's *Grasmere Journals,* July 1802, p. 395"[19]; and
b.) Wordsworth went to France to settle his affair with Annette Vallon (i.e. that this sonnet is not only political but also personal).

Further, in the poem itself, the city is presented as a *"silent"* and *"bare"* body, and its members, can be seen as the ample, protruding body parts of a woman ("Ships, towers, domes, theatres, and temples") "*lie / Open* unto the fields, and to the sky" ([emphasis added] i.e. unto an all-encompassing "Nature").

First of all, if we look at Dorothy Wordsworth's journal entry, it immediately becomes clear that William was not alone when he was standing on Westminster Bridge. As Dorothy writes: "It was a beautiful morning. The City, St. Paul's, with the River & a multitude of little Boats, made a most beautiful sight as *we* crossed

18 See footnote no. 6.

19 See the editor's footnote on p. 106 of this book.

Westminster Bridge."[20] Indeed, Wordsworth (William, that is) hardly ever mentions Dorothy's presence in the description of the sights they visited together. In "Tintern Abbey", for example, Wordsworth seems to be alone all along, and when Dorothy (addressed as "my dearest Friend") makes her sudden appearance in the end, she is presented as a younger version of Wordsworth, who learns to appreciate nature and becomes a lover of "humanity" not from nature (as Wordsworth did), but from William. "Westminster Bridge", in its turn, simply erases Dorothy from the scene, and even though Wordsworth does not explicitly say that he was alone, no reader would surmise that he was *not* alone, and that the experience of the beautiful sight was, in fact, an experience shared with a "woman" – as the Feminist would have it.

Annette equally offers a fruitful ground for analysis. The connotations of the French Woman in the English national imagination obviously include the "prostitute". The association of luxury, libertinism and, most importantly, sexual depravity with the French aristocracy did not change because of the decline of the same aristocracy. With Annette, Wordsworth had an illegitimate child, which, needless to say, was enough at the time to call *her* a prostitute. It was domesticity – legitimate wives and legitimate children, lying asleep in good English "houses" guarded by God – that constituted the germ of all that Wordsworth loved about England, as opposed to France. However, in "Westminster Bridge", the lines describing the silent and bare city lying open to Nature are not always easy to accommodate to this ideology of domesticity, bound up with Wordsworth's idea of nature and, therefore, Englishness. On the one hand, London, considered now as a "female body", wears the beauty of the morning as a garment, while, at the same time, lying open to Nature, the eminently male principle. (Feminists tend to associate Wordsworth's nature with maleness, since it mostly represents Wordsworth's own mind, while the Sun, as the all-encompassing light, is generally associated with the male gaze.) London would be thus the female body embraced by male Nature. Such a reading would easily inscribe itself into Wordsworth's politics of domesticity. On the other hand, however, the Feminist would also point to the possible traces Wordsworth's expected but certainly troubling encounter with Annette might have left on the poem. The city lying "bare" and "silent" would then be the image of Annette, who, in her nakedness, offered herself up to Wordsworth but whose voice has been definitively silenced by the poet of 1802, having "settled" or heading to "settle" their affair in France. Consequently, what the beauty of the morning actually veils is the troubling, naked body of the French woman (Annette). She only "seems asleep", but is, "in fact", an unburied, naked corpse (lying open to the sky), with a potential to become the haunting spectre of Wordsworth's English marriage.

20 Dorothy Wordsworth's journal entry from 29 July 1802, *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*, edited by Meyer H. Abrams, vol. 2, W. W. Norton & Company, 1999, p. 395. [emphasis added]

Apart from the possibility that the poem testifies to "Wordsworth's" hardly repressed repulsion from and desire for the French woman, this Kristevan abject, the poem does not lend itself to any obvious psychoanalytic interpretation. For the Psychoanalytic critic, it is the New Historicist context that might offer the most fruitful points of reference. Wordsworth's "missed encounter" with the French Revolution (that is, with the – Lacanian – "Real" of history), and especially the September Massacres that left their mark on Carousel Square (where "Dead upon the Dying heaped") can be considered as the traumatic core not only of *The Prelude* but of "Westminster Bridge" as well: it is this specific encounter with the "other", which is to say, history, that haunts Wordsworth's poem of natural Englishness. In Paris, Wordsworth is traumatised by the sight of violence (he suffers what Freud calls an "accident neurosis"): he is numbed, unable to feel, consciously process or assimilate the chaotic events. He can "see, not feel",[21] as Coleridge would have it. And despite the fact that he can distance himself from his own terror, from the sudden fear of the danger that presses too close by withdrawing into his room and reading Shakespeare (turning the shockingly unfamiliar into something familiar – i.e. *Macbeth*), the event, this (hardly missed) encounter with the Real, cannot be erased. First, it appears in his nightmares: his reading of Shakespeare gets mixed with the terror he has just experienced (there is a voice that cries "Sleep no more," and there are "tigers" roaming in his head), disturbing the repose of the night. It is this specific trauma (triggering terror) that makes its spectral presence felt in "Westminster Bridge": the threat that the houses of London only "seem asleep" testifies to Wordsworth's prevailing fear, even terror, triggered by the trauma of Carousel Square.

It seems, then, that the New Critique, the deconstructionist, the New Historicist, the Feminist, and the Psychoanalytic critiques would all have a lot to say about this single poem. To see what else it can offer, how we can possibly read Wordsworth as if he was our contemporary, as if Wordsworth's historical situation could somewhat parallel our own, we can turn back, as a prequel to this chapter, to Derrida's analysis of terror and of the necessarily autoimmune character of democracy, and look at the ways in which his analyses can be placed in a dialogue with Wordsworth's take on terror in *The Prelude.*

21 Coleridge, Samuel Taylor, "Dejection, an Ode." *Coleridge's Poetry and Prose,* edited by Nicholas Halmi, Paul Magnuson and Raimonda Modioano. A Norton Critical Edition. New York – London, Norton, 2004, p. 155.

"View the ocean as poets do"

The Posthuman and the Inhuman in Wordsworth, Kant, de Man, and Meillassoux*

In *Essay Upon Epitaphs*, Wordsworth associates death, memory, and survival with the image of the sea:

> Amid the quiet of a church-yard thus decorated as it seemed by the hand of Memory, and shining, if I may so say, in the light of love, I have been affected by sensations akin to those which have risen in my mind while I have been standing by the side of a smooth sea, on a Summer's day. […] I have been roused from this reverie by a consciousness suddenly flashing upon me [...]. The image of an unruffled sea has still remained; but my fancy has penetrated into the depths of that sea, with accompanying thoughts of shipwreck, of the destruction of the mariner's hopes, the bones of drowned men heaped together, monsters of the depth, and all the hideous and confused sights which Clarence saw in his dream.[1]

When Wordsworth imagines how other survivors mourn their deads, how others colour their losses with love and remembrance, the church-yard resembles a smooth sea, and death appears as God's tranquil restoration. However, when his fancy penetrates the depth, and he sees his own brother drowning,[2] the smooth sea becomes a coffin, a dark receptacle for bones and corpses. The pain he feels at his brother's loss renders his loss incomparable to other losses. And even though the literal (unaestheticised) images of "the bones of drowned men heaped together" are relieved by the aesthetic,

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* This chapter has been published as Timár Andrea. "A tenger és a kagyló. A katasztrófa már megtörtént, avagy a poszthumán poétikák lehetőségei [The sea and the seashell. The catastrophe has already happened, or the possibilities of posthuman readings]." *Verskultúrák*, edited by Kulcsár-Szabó Zoltán et al., Budapest, Ráció, 2017, pp. 304–316.

1 Wordsworth, William. "Essays Upon Epitaphs." *Prose Works of William Wordsworth*, edited by William J. B. Owen and Jane Worthington Smyser, vol. 2, Oxford, Oxford University Press. 1974 [1810], p. 64.

2 Jacobus, Mary. *Romantic Things: A Tree, a Rock, a Cloud*. Chicago, Chicago University Press, 2012, p. 99.

that is, by the reference to Shakespeare (that is, to Clarence's dream from *Richard III*), the disturbing image of his brother's remains still remind us of the slimy things that Coleridge's ancient Mariner saw in the sea.

The Romantic sea is often associated with loss: Wordsworth is mourning his brother, Coleridge's Mariner is doomed to endless melancholy over the killing of an albatross. However, one may also ask whether it is possible to conceive of a sea without sense, and of a loss without mourning or melancholy. Would it be possible to imagine a "sunless sea" surviving not only survivors like Wordsworth or the Mariner, but even "the last man" on earth?[3] What kind of nonhuman, or posthuman vision would that be?

Recently, critics have inquired about the possibility of posthumanist readings, implying a no one's vision of no one, who could mourn the loss of humans. In what follows, drawing on the works of Claire Colerbrook, Paul de Man, Quentin Meillassoux, and Timothy Morton, I shall propose a reading of Kant's recommendation, in "The Analytic of the Sublime", that we should "view the ocean as poets do, merely in terms of what manifests itself to the eye",[4] and show the ways in which this passage may, paradoxically, serve as a point of departure for our thinking about the posthuman.[5]

3 See: Coleridge, Samuel Taylor. "Kubla Khan" *Coleridge's Poetry and Prose,* edited by Nicholas Halmi, Paul Magnuson and Raimonda Modioano. A Norton Critical Edition. New York – London, Norton, 2004, p. 183.; Shelly, Mary. *The Last Man,* edited by Morton D. Paley, Oxford, Oxford Paperbacks, 1998.

4 Kant, Immanuel. *Critique of Judgement.* Translated and introduction by Werner S. Pluhar, Indianapolis, Cambridge, Hackett Publishing Company, 1987, p. 270.

5 To see the stakes of and the difficulties involved in questions regarding the posthuman, one may consider Mary Shelley's *The Last Man,* which tries to imagine a "lastness" that is beyond human imaginings, telling about the extinction of humans on Earth. The novel was ridiculed by its contemporaries because of the resistance of this lastness, precisely because, as Morton Paley succinctly puts it, it "presupposes a recipient or reader whose very existence negates the Lastness of the narrating subject" (Paley, Morton D. "Mary Shelley's *The Last Man*: Apocalypse Without Millennium." *Romantic Circles*, 1997 [1989]. https://www.rc.umd.edu/editions/mws/lastman/paley.htm. Accessed 26 August 2016.). In other words, the novel implies a narrator and a reader who survive the last man on earth, and, therefore, undermine our concept of the posthuman. One may equally evoke the famous the last lines of Percy Shelley's *Mont Blanc*: "And what were thou, and earth, and stars, and sea, / If to the human mind's imaginings / Silence and solitude were vacancy?" The question whether this question is "rhetorical" or "real" has long been debated; however, the posthuman question, or the question of the posthuman does not concern the (potential) indifference of the universe that these lines (perhaps) reveal. The real stakes of the posthuman lie in the distinction between Shelley's *human* vision of a (potentially) indifferent, inhuman universe and the *nonhuman* vision implied in questions regarding the posthuman. Differently put, the question is *not* whether the universe is inhuman or not, but rather, whether it is possible to imagine a nonhuman vision of any universe whatsoever. This vision would be indifferent to the extinction of humans, and would not mourn, nor revel in what Wordsworth calls, in Book V of *The Prelude,* "Destruction to the children of the earth." (Wordsworth, William. "The Prelude." *The Works of William Wordsworth*, London, The Wordsworth Poetry Library, 1994, p. 666.)

As opposed to the second "Essay on Epitaphs", in book V of *The Prelude,* Wordsworth envisions the extinction of humanity, "the Destruction to the Children of the Earth / By deluge now at hand."[6] However, he does not mourn for man as a mortal human being vulnerable to suffering, but for the human *spirit* and "all the adamantine holds of truth / by reason built, or passion"[7] whose material and, therefore, necessarily temporal traces, such as books, have to perish: "Oh! hath not the Mind / Some elements to stamp her image on / In nature somewhat nearer to her own?".[8] This gesture typical of proleptic mourning does not lament the mortality of the human body but the transitory character of books that Wordsworth considers the Mind's material receptacles. Indeed, in line with his gesture to overwrite through an allusion to Shakespeare his terror provoked by the (imaginary) sight of corpses, he posits the book (rather than the body) as the repository, not to say embodiment, of the immortal human mind.

Later in the passage, he famously tells about the dream vision he once had while falling asleep over Cervantes's *Don Quixote*, a book he was reading in a cave by the seaside. The Arab of this dream holds a bright stone (signifying Euclid's elements or reason), and stretches forth a beautiful shell (signifying poetry) to hold it to his ear:

> […] I did so,
> And heard that instant in an unknown tongue,
> Which yet I understood, articulate sounds,
> A loud prophetic blast of harmony;
> An Ode, in passion uttered, which foretold
> Destruction to the children of the earth
> By deluge now at hand.[9]

Having Wordsworth listen to this prophecy, the Arab eventually buries the stone and the shell, which are transformed, in Wordsworth's dream, into books: "Although I plainly saw / The one to be a book, the other a shell; / Nor doubted once but that they both were books".[10] In Wordsworth's alleged source, Josephus's *History of the Jews*,[11] Sesostris of Egypt buries two pillars illustrating the astronomical inventions of the ancients, in order to preserve knowledge from destruction. Yet, although these two

6 Wordsworth, "The Prelude", p. 666. lines 97–98.

7 Ibid., p. 666. lines 39–40.

8 Ibid., p. 666. lines 45–47.

9 Ibid., p. 666. lines 92–98.

10 Ibid., p. 666. lines 111–113.

11 See: Kelly, Theresa M. "The Case for William Wordsworth." *Rhetorical Traditions and British Romantic Literature,* edited by Don H. Bialostosky and Lawrence D. Needham, Indiana University Press, 1995, p. 132.

pillars may have indeed inspired Wordsworth's dream, they are different from the book upon which Wordsworth actually fell asleep before his dream. The reference to Cervantes's *Don Quixote* adds a rather ironic twist to Wordsworth's use of Josephus: it may point towards the quixotic character of any desire for, or belief in, the survival of the human spirit – without or within books, including, of course Wordsworth's.

Claire Colebrook, in *Death of the Posthuman: Essays on Extinction* evokes another text by Wordsworth to imagine a human world without humans that is still there *to be seen.* However, as opposed to Wordsworth's eminently human vision of destruction in *The Prelude,* she asks what happens if one thinks of a no one's vision of no one, surviving the extinction of humans. In what follows, I shall argue that the posthuman vision evoked by Colebrook, is a specific way of (non-)reading, which can also be exemplified by de Man's and Meillasseaux's respective ways of similar (non-)readings. In the essay, Colebrook first recalls when, in 1982, Stephen Knapp and Walter Benn Michaels asked their readers to imagine encountering the marks "a slumber did my spirit steal" drawn in the sand on the beach; the marks appear to be drawn (by, one assumes, a human) but then a subsequent wave flows and recedes and leaves the rest of Wordsworth's poem. According to Colebrook's interpretation of Michaels' and Knapp's argument, once we *read,* we immediately attribute intention; and therefore it is impossible, according to Michael and Knapp, to conceive of an entirely detached, non-referential object of reading – such as a text without context, readers or authors. That is, it is impossible to conceive of what will turn out to be, in Colebrook's presentation, an entirely nonhuman or posthuman vision.[12]

In fact, Michael and Knapp argue against the way of reading they associate with what they call 'deconstruction'. For a deconstructionist reading does exactly what they deem impossible, namely, it posits a text without context and intentions. There are two kinds of reading, according to Colebrook: on the one hand, the one proposed by Michael and Knapp posits someone who meant to leave marks in just this precise way in order to say something to someone, on the other hand, 'deconstruction' understands reading merely as seeing the lines some waves leave on the shore and discerning some pattern. This latter would not even be a reading understood in the traditional sense: it might only indicate that someone or something had existed, but would not attribute meaning or intention to it. And, as Colebrook goes on to say, the thought of extinction, the thought of a posthuman universe (a universe without mourning, nostalgia or melancholy) would involve precisely this latter kind of reading. This posthuman reading would take a detached, indifferent look back on human extinction, and would serenely accept the impossibility to decide what was left by a human hand and what not. This no one's vision of no one, according to Colebrook,

12 Colebrook, Claire. *Death of the Posthuman: Essays on Extinction.* Open Humanities Press, 2014, pp. 33–35.

would only register "a hybrid assemblage of marks, stains, signs, tears, human-animal-technical inscriptions that comprise *any* archive".[13]

Colebrook enumerates some recent theoretical attempts to confront life without the human look, life without praxis, life without meaningful action: among them, we find Deleuze, Badiou, Meillassoux, as well as a brief hint at "'theory's most scandalously 'apolitical' moments". Such as, for instance, Paul de Man's suggestion that "theory begins when one reads a text as if there were no readers, no contextual life that would be its site of emergence, and no living horizon that might maintain or animate its sense".[14] Most scholars would nowadays ascribe to the assumption that de Man's contention that we should read a text as if there were no contextual life that would be its site of emergence, is fuelled by the energy of his scandalous secret, his efforts to erase the memory of his writings in Belgian pro-Nazi newspapers in the 1940s. Indeed, so goes the argument, it is de Man himself who might have wished for readers who read his texts regardless of their contextual life, regardless of any "living horizon". As the passage from Montherlant that de Man famously quotes in the Belgian *Le Soir* in 1941 indicates: "When I open the newspapers and journals of today, I hear the indifference of the future rolling over them, just as one hears the sound of the sea when one holds certain seashells up to the ear."[15] At this point, we may remember the seashell held to Wordsworth's ear by the Arab in *The Prelude,* which image immediately reveals the difference, or even contrast between Wordsworth and de Man. Wordsworth "knows" all along that the seashell is a book, that it has a spiritual meaning, and that the spirit of humanity embodied by it is to be proleptically mourned, or its survival hoped for. As a contrast, de Man is convinced of (or, perhaps, hopes for) the indifference of the future, an indifferent future. Indeed, de Man's seashell, rather than being a meaningful book like Wordsworth's, emits meaningless, inarticulate sounds, a noise, *as* an echo of a past. And whereas Wordsworth hopes that the past will appear for the future as a meaningful book, de Man hopes that the past, embodied by magazines and newspapers such as *Le Soir,* will appear for the future as meaningless noise. Should de Man's wish for indifference, his hope for a future view of the past as nothing but noise, that is, an archive, rather than a book, be considered as a model for a posthuman reading, which, if understood in the traditional sense, is, precisely, a non-reading?

Pieter Vermeulen, in the "Posthumanism" issue of the *European Journal of English Studies,* edited by Ivan Callus and Stephan Herbrechter, argues that in de Man's writings, the profoundly nonhuman workings of language testify to the presence of

13 Colebrook, *Death of the Posthuman*, p. 34.

14 Ibid., p. 38.

15 Quoted by Derrida, Jacques. "Like the Sound of the Sea Deep within a Shell: Paul de Man's War." *Critical Inquiry*, vol. 14, no. 3, 1988, p. 591.

posthuman affects (rather than human emotions).[16] Vermeulen examines de Man's analysis of a passage from Kant's "Analytic of the Sublime" to suggest that what de Man means by the inhuman force of the "materiality" of language must be understood in terms of posthuman affect.[17] This same passage by de Man will now serve as the point of departure for the following analysis of de Man's analysis of Kant's analysis of the sublime. However, rather than equating the posthuman with the *inhuman,* that is, with the inhuman workings of both language and affect, I use the term "posthuman" the way Colebrook does, as something related to the aftermaths of the extinction of humans. And I shall again ask the question how to imagine the world without humans that is still there *to be seen*, or, as Quentin Meillassoux, the contemporary French philosopher, author of *After Finitude* (2008) puts it in a different context, "how is thought able to think what there can be when there is no thought?".[18] Let's tackle this problem first via Kant.

For Kant, the experience of the sublime is explicitly conceived in opposition to knowledge. Kant famously argues that the apprehension of the sublime is only possible if

> we judge the sight of the ocean […] not [...] on the basis of how we *think* it, enriched with all sorts of knowledge which we possess […] e.g., as a vast realm of aquatic creatures, or as the great reservoir supplying the water for the vapours that impregnate the air with clouds for the benefit of the land […] etc; for all such judgement will be teleological. Instead we must be able to view the ocean as poets do, merely in terms of what manifests itself to the eye – e.g., if we observe it while it is calm, as a clear mirror of water bounded only by the sky; or if it is turbulent, as being like an abyss engulfing everything – and yet find it sublime.[19]

Kant's "we" is an emphatically human we: we, humans can find something sublime if our judgement is not based on concepts of purposes, nor is it determined by any concept of the understanding, or sensations proper. Aesthetic judgements, including the judgement of both the beautiful and the sublime, are, therefore, entirely disinterested: they not only oppose knowledge, they are not only devoid of any interest in the object's meaning, purpose or in the sensation we feel encountering it but also,

16 Vermeulen, Pieter. "Posthuman Affect." *European Journal of English Studies*, vol. 18, no. 2, 2014, pp. 121–134.

17 See: ibid.

18 Meillassoux, Quentin. *After Finitude: An Essay on the Necessity of Contingency*. Translated by Ray Brassier, London, Continuum, 2008 [2006].

19 Kant, *Critique of Judgement,* p. 270.

consequently, of any interest in the object's existence. As Kant's puts it, "[i]n order to play the judge in matters of taste, we must not be in the least biased in favour of the thing's existence but must be wholly indifferent about it".[20]
In de Man's reading, this indifferent poetic vision of the sublime, which, as he puts it, "entirely ignores understanding", is called "material vision". As he puts it,

> in the Kantian vision of ocean and heaven. […] The sea is called a mirror, not because it is supposed to reflect anything, but to stress a flatness devoid of any suggestion of depth. In the same way and to the same extent that this vision is purely material, devoid of any reflexive or intellectual complication, it is also purely formal, devoid of any semantic depth, and reducible to the formal mathematization or geometrization of pure optics.[21]

The experience of the Kantian sublime is an entirely indifferent vision. Meanwhile, de Man also capitalises on Kant's emphasis that these are, first and foremost, the poets who are capable of this indifferent vision, and view an object regardless of its purpose or end, its meaning or semantic depth, let alone any desire for or interest in the object's existence. Paradoxically, however, according to de Man's reading of Kant, the experience of the poets is *not* what is conventionally called an aesthetic experience. Indeed, the poets Kant talks about are, according to de Man, clearly different from Wordsworth, and, therefore, Kant's sublime is the precise opposite of Wordsworth's humanistic version of a similar experience. We may remember, on the one hand, how Wordsworth associates the quiet of the church yard shining in the light of love to the image of, precisely, a "smooth sea", how this sea becomes ruffled, how its depths reveal death and destruction, that is, how it turns into Kant's "abyss engulfing everything". Because of the overwhelming character of the flashing images that press too close, Wordsworth, as opposed to Kant's poet, does not, or rather cannot, make a pure aesthetic judgement: rather than judging the ocean sublime, he recoils in terror. On the other hand, the properly Wordsworthean sublime, that is, when Wordsworth *does* find nature sublime is equally distant from the sublime of Kant's poet. As de Man argues "Wordsworth's sublime is an instance of the constant exchange between mind and nature, of the chiasmic transfer of properties between the sensory and the intellectual world",[22] which allows him to address, in Book V of *The Prelude,* the "speaking face" of nature.[23] As opposed to this, claims de Man, "[t]he critique of the

20 Kant, *Critique of Judgement*, p. 205.

21 de Man, Paul. "Phenomenality and Materiality in Kant." *Aesthetic Ideology*, edited by Andrzej Warminski, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1993, p. 83.

22 Ibid.

23 Ibid., p. 82.

aesthetic ends up, in Kant, in a formal materialism that runs counter to all values and characteristics associated with aesthetic experience".[24] What does it mean that Kant's aesthetic judgement of the sublime runs counter to what is generally called aesthetic experience?

By aesthetic experience de Man means an experience serving as a bridge between moral and epistemological judgements: traditionally, when the viewer makes an aesthetic judgement upon an object, he or she cannot help endowing this object with a transcendental meaning (or "semantic depth"), and is unable to resist what Kant does, that is, for example, to attribute some inherent purpose or sense to the scene of "an abyss engulfing everything". Apart from Wordsworth, one may also think of Coleridge's *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, where the Mariner's sudden insight into the transcendental beauty of the water snakes is an aesthetic experience of the type (de Man's) Kant, and de Man himself, would reject on the basis of not being purely aesthetic. As a contrast, when the albatross is falling "like lead" into the sea (i.e. its corpse is compared to a thing, to dead metal), then we encounter what de Man calls "material vision". Not only because of the materiality of the sinking metal, but also and mainly because the comparison of the dead albatross to the dead metal deprives the albatross of any meaning whatsoever that it could have previously had (i.e. it had been associated with Jesus, with the cross, with God's name, etc). And, according to de Man, it is the same kind of "material vision", implying a complete indifference towards the body (potentially in pain, potentially vulnerable to suffering), that characterises Kant's pure aesthetic judgements about the human figure:

> After lingering briefly over the aesthetic vision of the heavens and the seas, Kant turns for a moment to the human body: "The like is to be said of the sublime and the beautiful in the human body. We must not regard as the determining grounds of our judgment the concepts of the purposes which all our limbs serve *[wozu alle seine Gliedmqfien da sind]* and we must not allow this unity of purpose to influence our aesthetic judgment (for then it would no longer be pure)" (p. 197; 111). We must, in short, consider our limbs, hands, toes, breasts, [...] in themselves, severed from the organic unity of the body, the way the poets look at the oceans severed from their geographical place on earth. We must, in other words, disarticulate, mutilate the body.[25]

Hence, what de Man calls "material vision" consists not only in an indifference concerning the "object's existence" as Kant put it, nor even in one's capacity to see the body dismembered, mutilated; we must, according to de Man, go as far as to

24 Ibid., p. 83.

25 Ibid., p. 88.

disarticulate, mutilate the body. And even if de Man understands this dismemberment or mutilation metaphorically (these terms will, later in the analysis, characterise the effects of the power of the materiality of the letter), we can, in the present context, conclude, that de Man's reading of Kant turns Kant's pure aesthetic judgement into a precursor of Colebrook's posthuman vision: rather than mourning the death of humanity or the destruction of the children of the earth, "it" merely looks on, with complete disinterest and detachment. This disinterested, material vision of the human body (and of the potential suffering and eventual extinction of human bodi*es* in general) is, of course, hugely different from Wordsworth's apocalyptic disregard for the body in *The Prelude:* while Wordsworth recuperates human extinction, that is, the destruction of bodies, for a transcendental aesthetic revolving around the immortality of books, de Man watches over the disarticulation and mutilation of the body with an indifference that he claims to be akin to Kant's pure aesthetic judgement of taste.

For although de Man proposes the inhuman vision of bodily mutilation *a propos* the Kantian sublime, the Kantian sublime itself is, in fact, very much centred upon the human. The sublime feeling, in Kant, arises precisely from "the mind's exultation in its own rational faculties, in its ability to think a totality that cannot be taken in through the senses".[26] The ocean can be calm, or turbulent like an "abyss engulfing everything", *"andyet"*, we are able to find it sublime.[27] Indeed, the futile effort of reason to make the presentation of the senses adequate to the idea of totality is itself an exhibition of the subjective purposiveness of the mind for its "supersensible vocation".[28]

Previously, I asked the question how thought is able to think what there can be when there is no thought. As opposed to de Man for whom the realm of "no thought" is of prime importance (i.e there is no thought accompanying the non-phenomenal, material power of language, yielding both the production and the disarticulation of meaning always at work), Kant maintains that there is *always* thought. As he famously claims in the opening of §16 of the "Transcendental Deduction of the Categories", in the second edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason*: "The I think must be able to accompany all my representations".[29] In fact, Kant's transcendental method, as Greg Ellermann also puts it, "ultimately prevents us from engaging with nature other than it is shaped by the conditions of human knowledge".[30] At the same time, there is, famously, something beyond all our representations even in Kant's philosophy. It is the "thing-in-itself", which, despite being "unknowable", is "still *thinkable*", as

26 Hertz, Neil. *The End of the Line.* New York, Columbia University Press, 1985, p. 40.

27 Kant, *Critique of Judgement,* p. 270

28 Ibid., p. 265.

29 Kant, Immanuel. *Critique of Pure Reason,* edited by Paul Guyer and Allen Wood, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1999, p. 246.

30 Ellermann, Greg. "Speculative Romanticism." *SubStance*, vol. 44, no. 1, 2015, p. 155.

"the prerequisite for all thought"– as Meillassoux puts it.[31] And I shall now turn to the thoughts of Meillassoux, who is one of the greatest contemporary opponents of what he himself calls Kant's "correlationist" thinking.

In fact, the question "how is thought able to think what there can be when there is no thought" has been actually asked by Meillassoux, who is known, precisely, for his stark critique of Kant's critique, and for his plea for what he calls a non-correlationist thinking, a kind of thinking that is not centred upon the human, and the relation of the world to humans. He is a philosopher of radical contingency (everything that exists could be otherwise) and of speculative realism (reality is absolute, it is independent of us and knowable).[32] The question he asks can thus mean two things at the same time: on the one hand, it can concern thinking's ability to think beyond its own boundaries, that is, it may ask whether it is possible to approach or envision the 'Great Outdoors' or the absolute outside of pre-critical thinkers. On the other hand, it may concern the challenge to think what there can be *when* there are no humans anymore. To both of these questions Meillassoux answers in the positive. What he ultimately claims is that there is a kind of thinking that is able to think what there is when there is no thought, and this is scientific, or properly speaking, mathematical thinking. This latter only registers what Descartes and Locke called the "primary qualities" of objects (which are opposed to the secondary qualities, such as odour, or colour, or taste, which only exist in relation to humans). Differently put, the qualities that exist without humans are the mathematisable properties of the object, the properties that characterise the thing without humans, independently of its relation to humans. As he puts it: "All those aspects of the object that can give rise to a mathematical thought (to a formula or to digitalization) rather than to a perception or sensation can be meaningfully turned into properties of the thing not only as it is with me, but also as it is without me."[33]

At the same time, science, according to Meillassoux is not only able to think beyond the human, *where* there is no relationship to the human, but is also able to think diachronically, or else, proleptically, to imagine what there can be *when* there is no human thought anymore. His argument concerning the future extinction of humanity goes as follows: "science's diachronic statements assume that the 'question of the witness' has become irrelevant to knowledge of the event. [...] This hypothesis […] expresses [science]'s general capacity to be able to formulate laws irrespective of the question of the *existence* of a knowing subject."[34] These claims are emphatically

31 Meillassoux, *After Finitude*, p. 31.

32 See also: Critchley, Simon. "Back to the Great Outdoors. Review of Quentin Meillassoux's *After Finitude: An Essay on the Necessity of Contingency*." *Times Literary Supplement,* 28 February 2009, p. 28. http://www.kjf.ca/114-TACRI.htm. Accessed 28 August 2016.

33 Meillassoux, *After Finitude*, p. 3.

34 Ibid., p. 188.

critical of Kant's correlationist thought. However, they still bring to mind de Man's phrasing that the material vision we find in Kant's "Analytic of the Sublime" is "purely formal, devoid of any semantic depth and reducible to the formal mathematization or geometrization of pure optics".[35]

In fact, both de Man and Meillassoux set mathemathics and pure optics as models, and these two types of scientific "visions" are entirely devoid of those humanist, or hermeneutical drives that would always posit seeing as seeing *as*. While Meillassoux conceptualises a posthuman, non-anthropocentric vision of the planet that can both pre-date or succeed the existence of humans on earth, de Man's vision of the text (for which the material vision of Kant's poet serves as an analogy) registers forces or traces in texts, without attributing any meaning, let alone human meaning to them. In this sense, the non-correlationist philosophy of Meillasoux is a kind of reading, which, just like de Man's, is model for non-hermeutics. This parallel between de Man and Meillassoux, which turns Meillassoux's scientist into a *reader* (i.e. a non-reader in the traditional sense), can thus also bring into sharp focus the stakes involved in Colebrook's metaphor that associates the (imagined) posthuman science of geology with the reading of the archive:

> [G]eologists are arriving at consensus regarding an "Anthropocene epoch" where man's effect on the planet will supposedly be discernible as a geological strata readable well after man ceases to be, even if there are no geologists who will be present to undertake this imagined future reading.[36]

According to Colebrook, man's effect on the planet will be available merely as a geological stratum for a potential posthuman reading of the future. At the same time, this imagined, posthuman (future) reading will occur at one of those moments that serve as just those reference points for Meillassoux's nonhumanist, non-anthropocentric scientific statement about the future. This latter refers to a time after the extinction of humans, and, as Meillassoux puts it, it is "an 'objective' statement, but it has no conceivable object".[37] This lack of conceivable or imaginable reference characterising scientific statements about the future may equally bring to mind the non-phenomenalisable (i.e. non-perceptible) material forces of language theorised by de Man. However, it is not so much the analogy between their objects (i.e. the non-conceivable references of scientific statements and the imperceptible material forces at work in language) that testifies to a possible congeniality between de Man's and Meillassoux's respective posthuman visions. Rather, both of these visions can be

35 de Man, "Phenomenality and Materiality in Kant", p. 83.

36 Colebrook, *Death of the Posthuman,* p. 10.

37 Meillassoux, *After Finitude*, p. 17.

understood as *readings* that stage what Colebrook calls the reading of the archive, which starkly opposes what Wordsworth, as well as Michaels and Knapp, call the reading of the book.

We may indeed remember that Wordsworth's vision, in Book V of *The Prelude,* is *not* a posthuman vision: Wordsworth proleptically mourns the destruction of the human spirit and dreams about its survival in books. However, there exists a recent, posthuman reading of Wordsworth's all too human, apocalyptic reading of the sound of the shell that prophecies the "Destruction of the Children of the Earth". Timothy Morton, rather than concentrating on the content of the prophecy, focuses on its medium, "the sound of the seashell" (as de Man had in his wartime journalism), and theorises it as Jacobson's "contact", the technical medium of the message, similar to the sound one hears when putting a telephone to the ear. In Morton's reading, the "aeolian" or the "acousmatic" and definitely nonhuman sound of the seashell, the source of which is unknown, is like a technical recording cutting through Wordsworth's humanistic dream. As Morton puts it:

> The immersive sound of the seashore, the quietness here amplified so as to threaten overwhelming (literally, over-whelming) noise, is heard throughout modern new age and environmental music as the sounds of a disaster-stricken planet: disappearing lifeworlds recorded for elegiac evocative pleasure. The innocent seeming hush of an environmental soundscape is thus a threat of imminent destruction: as if the recoding said, "I could be your last chance to hear a world such as this."[38]

Morton's reading is non-anthropocentric, and nonhumanistic, indeed, it is yet another kind of (non-)reading. He reads the sound as a mere record testifying to a (fading) human presence on earth. The sound evokes that someone or something exists, or had existed, but is not evocative of any meaning or intention. Hence, one may equally theorise Morton's (non-)reading via de Man's contention also quoted by Colebrook: Morton reads the nonhuman sound of the seashell as something the source of which is unknown and is addressed to a future where there are "no readers, no contextual life that would be its site of emergence, and no living horizon that might maintain or animate its sense".[39] And while recording disappearing life worlds, it equally fulfils de Man's hopes expressed in his wartime journalism: its testifies to "the indifference of the future [...], just as one hears the sound of the sea when one holds certain seashells up to the ear."[40]

38 Morton, Timothy. "Romantic Disaster Ecology: Blake, Shelley, Wordsworth." https://www.rc.umd.edu/praxis/disaster/HTML/praxis.2012.morton.html Accessed 20 January 2020.

39 De Man quoted in Colebrook, *Death of the Posthuman,* p. 38.

40 De Man quoted in Derrida, "Like the Sound of the Sea...", p. 591.

"Increasing store with loss, and loss with store"

Keats, Shakespeare, the Elgin Marbles, and the Radical Politics of Allegory*

"There is no document of civilisation which is not at the same time a document of barbarism."
(Walter Benjamin)

The reception of antique Greek ruins in England is linked to the second generation of the Romantics, namely, the circle of Keats, Byron, and Shelley. For the "Lake Poets", ruins were predominantly medieval, Christian ruins, which they associated, on the one hand, with an "age of chivalry [that] is gone" (Edmund Burke), and, on the other, with the destruction and decay brought about by the industrial revolution, and the modern processes of urbanisation and the rise of capitalism. The more radical and more democratic second generation, however, while still being attracted to the "dark Middle Ages", often saw its idea of artistic and political freedom realised an idealised image of Greece.[1] Hence, their enthusiasm for antique Greek art, and Greek democracy opposed the Lake Poets' politically conservative turn. Indeed, the two generations of the English Romantics cultivated different kinds of ruins, which illustrates well the widely accepted critical claim that English Romanticism can be interpreted as a response to the French Revolution. Although the Lake Poets were, at first, extremely supportive of the ideas of the Revolution, with the advent of the Reign of Terror and the rise of Napoleon, they became disillusioned, and turned into conservative supporters of the Monarchy, the Anglican Church, and the British Empire. At the same time, they projected their ideals of freedom first into a nature transubstantiated by a God given imagination, and then, into a spiritualised, Christian culture. The second generation, on the other hand, did not give up its hope for the possibility of a democratic transformation. Some painters, antiquarians, and critics – such as Robert Haydon, William Hazlitt, or Richard Payne Knight – also belonged to the "radical" group of second generation Romantics, even though

* This chapter is the longer version of an article appeared as Timár Andrea. "Hellenizmus az angol romantikában: Keats és az Elgin-márványok sokkja [British Romantic Hellenism: the Shock of the Elgin Marbles]." *Ókor*, vol. 15, no. 4, 2016, pp. 11–17.

1 Groom, Nick. "Romantic poetry and antiquity." *The Cambridge Companion to British Romantic Poetry*, edited by James Chandler and Marshall McLane, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2008, pp. 35–52.

in debates on aesthetic values they occupied opposing positions. The circumstance that Greece was suffering under Turkish rule at the time, only strengthened their enthusiasm for democracy: in the preface to *Hellas,* Shelley famously declared that "We are all Greek", and Byron actually participated in the Greek revolution on the side of the Greeks.

The Hellenism of the second generation has two stages. The first bears the influence of Joachim Winckelmann, the second was born out of the shock provoked by the exhibition of the Parthenon Marbles (re-christened as "Elgin Marbles") in the British Museum in London. The writings of Winckelmann were translated into English by the Swiss born Henry Fuseli in 1765; Fuseli became the member of the Royal Academy, and the good friend of William Blake and the Shelleys. Winckelmann was, famously, the inventor of the discipline of art history,[2] his artistic ideal was the classical *Apollo Belvedere*, which in the eighteenth century was exhibited in the Vatican. The Parthenon fragments, as we will see, represent a stark contrast to Winckelmann's ideal.

It was in 1817 that the fragments of the Parthenon statues, shipped from Greece to England by the Earl of Elgin ten years previously, were first displayed in the British Museum. In 1816, one year before their actual display, "a SELECT COMMITTEE [had been] appointed to inquire whether the Elgin Marbles, which [had been] presented to The House on the l5th of February in 1816, should be purchased on behalf of The Public, and if so, what Price it [might] be reasonable to allow for the same".[3] The consensus quickly emerged among the experts, artists, classical archeologists, and antiquarians of the time that the Marbles were truly exceptional, surpassing all previously known specimens of antique sculpture.[4] Among these previously known specimens was, significantly, the *Apollo Belverede,* representing the artistic ideal of the Royal Academy, which had been itself been strongly influenced by the Greek ideals of the German Joachim Wincklemann, who, however, never had any first hand experience of any original Greek statue. Indeed, the *Apollo* found in Italy during the Renaissance, was the Roman copy of Hadrianic date (ca. 120–140 AD) of a lost bronze original supposedly made between 350 and 325 BC. Compared to the Apollo, the Parthenon Marbles were "truly" antique and truly Greek: they were made in the school of Phidias, around 447–438 BC. One of the opponents of the general opinion about the magnificence and antiquity of the Parthenon fragments

2 Radnóti Sándor. *Jöjj és láss! A modern művészetfogalom keletkezése – Winckelmann és a következmények.* Budapest, Atlantis, 2010.

3 *Report from the Select Committee of the House of Commons on the Earl of Elgin's Collection of Sculptured Marbles & c.* London. 1816, pp. 92–93.

4 Potts, Alex. "The Impossible Ideal: Romantic Conceptions of the Parthenon Sculptures in Early Nineteenth-Century Britain and Germany." *Art in Bourgeois Society*, edited by Andrew Hemingway and William Vaughan, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1998, p. 103.

was Richard Payne Knight. When asked by the committee: "Do you think that none of them rank in the first class of art?", Knight answered, "Not with the Laocoön and the Apollo, and these which have been placed in the first class of art".[5] One of the reasons for Knight's preference for the *Apollo* was that he did not even believe that that the Elgin Marbles were of high antiquity. Instead, he kept repeating that they "were Roman, from the time of Hadrian".[6] However, despite the fact that Knight placed *Apollo Belvedere* over the Elgin Marbles, he, like many of his contemporaries, opposed the idealising Hellenism of the Royal Academy. In his first published work, *The Worship of Priapus* (1786), he dealt with the symbolism of Greek fertility rites, and the work was censured precisely because of its libertine approach towards the orgiastic sexuality of the Greeks.[7] Then, in his *Analytical Inquiry into the Principles of Taste* (1805), he emphasised the importance of novelty in matters of aesthetics, and exhibited an empirical approach to the appreciation of art, poking fun at the idealising Hellenism of the British Academy, which was inspired by Plato, and identifying perfection with boredom. These emphatically "modern" aesthetic principles could have well made Knight an admirer of the Parthenon fragments; his stubborn adherence to his own false dating of the Marbles, and his mistaken attribution of its origin, however, seem to have served as a shield to ward off the shock of the Marble's paradoxically unprecedented, revolutionary (i.e. new) antiquity.

Of course, the question of whether the *Apollo* of Belvedere or the Parthenon Marbles are "better" cannot be seen as a pure question of taste, especially at a time when the *Apollo* has just been repatriated from the Louvre to the Vatican, following Napoleon's fall, after its having been exhibited in Paris from 1798 until 1815, following Napoleon's Italian Campaign. As if repeating Napoleon's gesture of transplanting the roots of European civilisation in France through the exhibition of the *Apollo* in the Louvre, the exhibition of the Parthenon Marbles, rechristened as the Elgin Marbles in the British Museum was obviously supposed to transplant the roots of European civilisation in England. Thus, any preference for the *Apollo Belvedere*, such as Knight's, was seen as a betrayal of the English cause, and an impediment to English tradition- and nation-building.

Lord Byron, however, also expressed his disagreement with what he considered British imperial piracy. The Parthenon Marbles, according to Byron, should not have been severed from their origin, the Acropolis, which, as a representative of antique Greek democracy, stood for Byron's own democratic ideals. He famously satirises the Scottish Lord Elgin in *Child Harold's Pilgrimage,* as follows:

5 See: *Report from the Select Committee of the House of Commons,* p. 92.

6 Ibid., p. 92–93.

7 Magnuson, Paul. *Reading Public Romanticism*. Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1998, p. 178.

XI

But who, of all the plunders of yon fane
On high, where Pallas linger'd, loth to flee
The latest relic of her ancient reign;
The last, the worst, dull spoiler, who was he?
Blush, Caledonia! such thy son could be!
England! I joy no child he was of thine:
Thy free-born men should spare what once was free;
Yet they could violate each saddening shrine,
And bear these altars o'er the long-reluctant brine.

XII

But most the modern Pict's ignoble boast,
To rive what Goth, and Turk, and Time hath spared:
Cold as the crags upon his native coast,
His mind as barren and his heart as hard,
Is he whose head conceived, whose hand prepared,
Aught to displace Athena's poor remains:
Her sons too weak the sacred shrine to guard,
Yet felt some portion of their mother's pains,
And never knew, till then, the weight of Despot's chains.

XIII

What! shall it e'er be said by British tongue,
Albion was happy in Athena's tears?
Though in thy name the slaves her bosom wrung,
Tell not the deed to blushing Europe's ears;
The ocean queen, the free Britannia, bears
The last poor plunder from a bleeding land:
Yes, she, whose gen'rous aid her name endears,
Tore down those remnants with a harpy's hand,
Which envious Eld forbore, and tyrants left to stand.

It must be noted, however, that Lord Byron did possess the means to go to Greece and look at the Marbles for himself, as opposed to most people, for whom the exhibition of the Marbles in London constituted the only opportunity to encounter the Greek marvels. So even though the appropriation of the Marbles by the British was certainly

an act of violence, and a blow against those democratic hopes that have been destroyed in Europe, in another sense, the exhibition of the Marbles in the British Museum also meant the democratisation of art. Indeed, in one single day, the Marbles received more than a thousand visitors, and Hellenism itself ceased to be a "discipline" practiced by a small circle of "experts": the problem of the Elgin Marbles, and, therefore, questions relating to aesthetics, and the politics of aesthetics, became part and parcel of public discourse.

At the same time, we may also look at the problem of the Marbles in the broader context of the philosophy of history and the history of art. For example, Jacques Rancière considers the exhibition of the Elgin Marbles an important contribution to the birth of the aesthetic regime. The aesthetic regime, according to Rancière, is the unprecedented rearrangement of the system of perception that makes certain objects visible as art, which makes it possible for art itself to exist, at least in principle, as a separate world.[8] As he claims, art "ceases to have an ethical or representative function, but becomes recognized as valuable in itself".[9] Meanwhile, Rancière also maintains that historically, "[i]ts point of departure is the historical moment, in Winckelmann's Germany, when Art begins to be named as such".[10] For Rancière, that is, the Romantic appraisal of the Elgin Marbles as the highest form of art evidently follows from Winckelmann's appreciation of the *Apollo Belvedere*, *Laocoön*, or *Hercules*, for that matter. To put it differently, there is no rupture, no abyss, in Rancière's philosophy of art, that would separate the polished surfaces of the Apollo on the one hand, and the unchiselled surface, the fragmented pieces of the Parthenon Marbles on the other. (I will return later to the politics of Rancière's aesthetics.)

In tandem with the birth of what Rancière calls the aesthetic regime, antiquity ceased to be regarded as an example to be copied, and was/became radically separated from the present. As Nicholas Halmi puts it "from the mid-eighteenth century on, the present was recognised as distinct from the past and hence unassimilable to a temporally closed conception of history".[11] Reinhart Koselleck influentially links this "sense of historical discontinuity"[12] to the French Revolution; this latter, according to Koselleck, brought about a change in the meaning of the "concept of crisis", which

8 Rancière, Jacques. *Aisthesis: Scenes from the Aesthetic Regime of Art*. Translated by Zakir Paul, London, Verso Books, 2013.

9 Rockhill, Gabriel. „The Silent Revolution." *SubStance*, vol. 33, no.1, 2004, p. 60.

10 Rancière, *Aisthesis*, p. xiii.

11 Halmi, Nicholas. "Romanticism, the Temporalization of History, and the Historicization of Form." *Modern Language Quarterly,* vol. 24, no. 3, 2013, p. 468

12 Ibid., p. 369.

became "the fundamental mode of interpreting historical time".[13] Halmi quotes Koselleck quoting Tocqueville as follows: "Koselleck himself adduces, as recognition of this emergent temporality, Tocqueville's observation on modern society: 'I go back from age to age up to the remotest antiquity, but I find no parallel to what is occurring before my eyes: as the past has ceased to throw its light upon the future, the mind of man wanders in obscurity'."[14] However, Halmi also adds that "the kind of perplexity that Tocqueville acknowledged had already found expression four decades earlier in Burke's assessment of the French Revolution as 'the most astonishing thing that has hitherto happened in the world'".[15]

Following Koselleck's and Halmi's thread, I am going to argue in what follows that the effect of the Elgin Marbles in London testifies to a crisis *of* history, reflected in the marbles' radical difference from Winclemann's ideal (i.e. I will disagree with Rancière here). I suggest that the exhibition of the Elgin Marbles (the rupture emerging from its displacement from its origin, and the sight of its radical fragmentation) constituted an event that, like the French Revolution, was unassimilable to any previous structures of experience of history. In this sense, I shall, to some restricted degree, even aestheticise the concept of historical trauma, and elaborate on, but also importantly depart from the opposition d'Arcy Wood establishes between Winckelmann's sentimental, idealising, nostalgic descriptions of an absent Greek art and what he calls "the shock of the real" provoked by the presence of the Elgin Marbles.[16]

William Hazlitt hopes that the Parthenon Marbles will initiate a revolution in British art, and their truly "natural" character will counter the "artificial" perfection, the purely spiritual character of an idealised nature, represented by the *Apollo*, and, of course, by the Royal Academy.

> It is to be hoped, however, that these Marbles with the name of Phidias thrown into the scale of common sense, may lift the Fine Arts out of the Limbo of vanity and affectation into which they were conjured in this country about fifty years ago, and in which they have lain sprawling and fluttering, gasping for breath, wasting away, vapid and abortive ever since, – the shadow of a shade.[17] (Willam Hazlitt, 1816)

13 Koselleck, Reinhart, and Michaela W. Richter. "Crisis." *Journal of the History of Ideas*, vol. 67, no. 2, 2006, p. 371.

14 Halmi, "Romanticism, the Temporalization of History…".

15 Halmi, Nicholas. "Ruins Without a Past." *Essays in Romanticism*, vol. 18, 2011, p. 9–10.

16 d'Arcy Wood, Guilliem. *The Shock of the Real. Romanticism and Visual Culture, 1760–1860*. New York, New York University Press, 2001.

17 Hazlitt quoted in Kelly, Theresa M. "Keats and 'ekphrasis'." *Keats and History*, edited by Nicholas Roe, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2007, p. 218.

Robert Haydon speaks in a similarly revolutionary tone about the Elgin Marbles, saying:

> It is this union of nature with ideal beauty, the probabilities and accidents of bone, flesh, and tendon, from extension, flexion, gravitation, compression, action, or repose, that rank the Elgin marbles above all other works of art in the world. The finest form that man ever imagined, or God ever created, must have been built on these eternal principles: *the Elgin marbles have as completely overthrown the old antique, as ever one system of philosophy over threw another.* Were the Elgin marbles lost, there would be as great a gap in art as there would be in astronomy if Newton had never existed: they have thrown into light principles which could only have been discovered by the successive inspirations of great geniuses, if ever at all; because we have had what the Greeks had not, a false system to overthrow, and misplaced veneration and early impressions to root out.[18]

For its supporters, the Marbles, overthrowing the old antique, marked, in a seemingly escapist, or displaced analogy with violent reality of the French Revolution, the future revitalisation and important revolutionalization of British art. For as opposed to the smoothly polished surface of the *Appollo* serving as a model for Sir Joshua Reynold's conservative Royal Academy, the Elgin Marbles exhibited, according to Haydon, the "union of nature with ideal beauty – the probabilities and accidents of bone, flesh, and tendon, from extension, flexion, compression, gravitation, action, or repose".[19] Indeed, the Elgin Marbles "overthrew" the old antique by their peculiar mode of being: they were like stone made flesh, death made life, bringing about an uncanny confusion of the inanimate with the animate, of the material, which is subject to decay, and the immaterial, which is eternal. However, by applauding the displacement of the Parthenon Marbles from Greece, by calling them the Elgin Marbles, and assimilating them into British art history, and, therefore history, Haydon's stance may, at the same time, evoke Walter Benjamin's dictum that there is no document of civilisation which is not at the same time a document of barbarism.[20] In what follows, I shall suggest that we'd rather brush history against the grain (these are again Benjamin's words) and show how John Keats's take on the Elgin Marbles reveals that the display of the

18 Haydon, Benjamin Robert. *Lectures on Painting and Design: Origin of the Art. Anatomy the Basis of Drawing. The Skeleton. The Muscles of Man and Quadruped. Standard figure. Composition. Colour. Ancients and Moderns. Invention*. London, 1844, p. 18. [emphasis added]

19 Magnuson, *Reading Public Romanticism*, p. 185.

20 Benjamin, Walter. "Thesis on the Philosophy of History," *Illuminations*. Translated by Harry Zohn, edited and with introduction by Hannah Arendt, New York, Schocken Books, 1968.

Parthenon Marbles in the British Museum, like the French Revolution, constitutes an event unassimilable to any previous structures of experience. That it subverts all organic conception of time, and, therefore, symbolic interpretation of history.[21] Further, that by exhibiting time itself through the logic of allegory, it points to a politics of dissent uncontainable by any concrete historical context.

John Keats went to see the Elgin Marbles at the British Museum with his friend Robert Haydon on the 1st or 2nd of March 1817, and immediately wrote two sonnets, which he sent to Haydon on the 3rd of March. The second one reads as follows:

On Seeing the Elgin Marbles

My spirit is too weak – mortality
    Weighs heavily on me like unwilling sleep,
    And each imagined pinnacle and steep
Of godlike hardship tells me I must die
Like a sick eagle looking at the sky.
    Yet 'tis a gentle luxury to weep
    That I have not the cloudy winds to keep
Fresh for the opening of the morning's eye.
Such dim-conceived glories of the brain
    Bring round the heart an undescribable feud;
So do these wonders a most dizzy pain,
    That mingles Grecian grandeur with the rude
Wasting of old time – with a billowy main –
    A sun – a shadow of a magnitude.

The sonnet has been interpreted as an ekphrasis, representing the Parthenon fragments through its own fragmented syntax, as a failed ekphrasis in which the only descriptive word is the deictic "these wonders", or as an outright resistance to, or refusal of ekphrasis. Indeed, it seems as if Keats warded off this shock of the Marbles, this shock

21 Referring to "symbolic" interpretation, I am following Coleridge: „Now an Allegory is but a translation of abstract notions into a picture-language which is itself nothing but an abstraction from objects of the senses; the principal being even more worthless than its phantom proxy, both alike unsubstantial and the former shameless to boot. On the other hand, a Symbol is characterized by a translucence of the Special in the Individual or of the General in the Especial or of the Universal in the General. Above all by the translucence of the Eternal through and in the Temporal. It always partakes of the Reality which it renders intelligible; and while it enunciates the whole, abides itself as a living part in that Unity, of which it is the representative. The other are but empty echoes which the fancy arbitrarily associates with apparitions of matter." Cf.: Timár, Andrea. *A Modern Coleridge: Cultivation, Addiction, Habits*. Basingstoke – London, Palgrave Macmillan, 2015, ch. 1.

of the real, and this poem stood as a substitute, a non-mimetic sign emptied of all concrete reference. At the same time, it still evokes some vestige or trace of reference: apart from "these marbles", "the billowy main" may deictically point to the Eastern part of the fragments depicting the sea from which Helios's two horses are emerging. Keats might have known that these horses are Helios's precisely because he visited the Marbles with Haydon, who, having had already seen them at the private exhibition of Lord Elgin in 1808, had made a drawing depicting the horses in 1809 (Haydon's drawing can be seen in the British Museum).[22]

At the same time, the sonnet has also been interpreted as offering a commentary on human mortality, on ruination itself, or on materiality as the possibility condition of aesthetics, as well as an example of Keats's sensual poetics bearing the influence, of precisely, Richard Payne Knight's empiricist aesthetics.[23] In New Historicist contexts, it has been considered a poem either ideologically transcending, or radically engaging with British imperialism and art history as nation building. To quote a typical summary recently proposed by Angela Esterhammer: the sonnet brings on the familiar "Keatsian sensation of pleasure blended with the sublime contrast of human mortality with the eternal quality of art" but the "antiquated phrase", "billowy main", is still a reflection of Keats's awareness of the cultural piracy involved in the transport of the Marbles to London.[24]

First of all, the sonnet, as its title "On seeing the Elgin Marbles" indicates, does not intend to be an ekphrasis, the description of an artwork. On the contrary, its avowed purpose is to describe what feelings/thoughts the sight of the Elgin Marbles generates. We could compare the sonnet to another of Keats's non-ekphprases, namely, to his "Ode on a Grecian Urn", which shows the ways in which the failed constative (i.e. description) can turn into a performative (i.e. creation) In case of the "Ode" the ekphrastic competition seems to be eventually won by poetry, even though the poem initially claims the primacy of visual arts ([the urn can] "express / A flowery tale more sweetly than our rhyme"). The sonnet inspired by the Elgin Marbles, however, does not even attempt to take part in an ekphrastic competition, as if the speaker did not even attempt to verbally represent the Marbles. The only phrase clearly referring to the Marbles is "these wonders", as if the sublimity of the Marbles, or else the sublime experience of the Marbles reduced the mortal speaker to nothingness, as if it deprived the speaker of his narrative voice.

22 Apart from the innumerable English and American interpretations, see, in Hungarian: Péter Ágnes. *Roppant szivárvány, a romantikus látásmódról.* Budapest, Akadémiai, 1996.

23 Magnuson, *Reading Public Romanticism,* p. 186

24 Esterhammer, Angela. "Translating the Elgin Marbles: Byron, Hemans, Keats." *The Wordsworth Circle*, vol. 40, no. 1, 2009, p. 30.

The most interesting feature of the sonnet, however, is that it is hardly comprehensible unless we read it as a *pastiche* of other texts: the poem brings together fragments that barely fit together, thereby putting fragmentarity itself on display, while also foregrounding the limits of its own capacity to represent. Indeed, the speaker is struck dumb by the sight, and the "sick Eagle looking at the sky" is an allusion to all the other eagles which, in Keats's other poems, stand for true, eternal poetry, and the unequalled magnanimity of Keats's models: in "The Fall of Hyperion", or in "On First Looking into Chapman's Homer", the eagle represents Apollo, Shakespeare, or Córtez. At the same time, the Marbles evidently remind him of his own mortality, the certainty of death. The event of seeing the Marbles (a shock in Walter Benjamin's sense) is, paradoxically, an experience of gravity: the speaker collapses under the weight of the Marbles, it makes him feel his own materiality. Of course, the speaker's ordinary mortality is different from the sublime temporality exhibited by the Marbles, which embody both eternity and decay. Hence, whereas "Ode on a Grecian Urn" establishes a contrast between the eternity of the silent Marble forever enlivened by the poetic imagination on the one hand, and human mortality on the other, the sight of the Elgin Marbles evokes in the speaker

1.) the feeling of his own, ordinary mortality,
2.) eternity, that is, the "wonder" resisting the passing of time, and
3.) destruction, decay, and the inescapable ruination of the matter/marble itself.

To face this triple temporality is painful, and the pain is vertiginous, it is a "dizzy pain", similar to the one felt when looking into an abyss. The narration ceases, the verbs disappear, and all that remains is the Sun, a "billowy main" and the "shadow of magnitude".

In the last line of the sonnet, the "shadow of magnitude" refers back, according to Theresa M. Kelly, to Hazlitt's above quoted phrase "shadow of a shade".[25] It signals, according to Kelly, that the Marbles are *not* the shadows of a shade but those of magnitude – which, we may add, is a rather ambiguous image, also evocative of Plato's allegory of the cave. The fact that it may also refer to Helios's horses, as depicted by Haydon, immediately foregrounds the way in which the sonnet brings other artworks and other texts into play, as if it wanted to cover or un-see the material abyss opened up by the Marbles themselves.

If we turn back to the *pastiche*-like quality of the sonnet, however, we may also note that because Keats' is a Petrarchan sonnet, the fact that the theme, or the subject matter of the poem is eminently Shakespearean. i.e. that the poem, like many of Shakespeare's sonnets, talks about ruination, temporality and decay, and raises the question whether art can outlive death, seemed to elude critical attention. In what

25 Kelly, "Keats and 'ekphrasis'", p. 218.

follows I shall suggest that rather than focusing on the relationship between the Parthenon Marbles and the sonnet itself (as an ekphrarsis, a failed ekphrasis, or the a refusal of ekphrasis) we should look at the ways in which the sonnet draws attention to itself as quotation, inscribing itself into the temporality of poetic tradition. For the sonnet does not represent the Marbles, that is, antiquity, but, as I will show, it presents the experience of what antiquity is. It does not represent Greek art, but, more exactly, the dizzying gap, the rupture between the modern and the antique, through a temporal chain of intertextual references.

On the 22nd November 1817, Keats wrote to Reynolds: "One of the three Books I have with me is Shakespeare's Poems: I neer found so many beauties in the sonnets – they seem to be full of fine things said unintentionally – in the intensity of working out conceits […]".[26] This letter was written more than eight months later than the sonnet, and we do not know how long, exactly, Keats has been familiar with Shakespeare's sonnets.

Shakespeare: *Sonnet 12*

When I do count the clock that tells the time,
And see the brave day sunk in hideous night;
When I behold the violet past prime,
And sable curls all silver'd o'er with white;
When lofty trees I see barren of leaves
Which erst from heat did canopy the herd,
And summer's green all girded up in sheaves
Borne on the bier with white and bristly beard,
Then of thy beauty do I question make,
That thou among **the wastes of time** must go,
Since sweets and beauties do themselves forsake
And die as fast as they see others grow;
    And nothing 'gainst Time's scythe can make defence
    Save breed, to brave him when he takes thee hence.

26 Keats, John. *Letters of John Keats 1814–1821*, edited by H. E. Rollins, vol. 1, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1958, p. 122.

Shakespeare: *Sonnet 64*

When I have seen by Time's fell hand defaced
The rich-proud cost of outworn buried age;
When sometime lofty towers I see down-razed
And brass eternal, slave to mortal rage;
When I have seen the hungry ocean gain
Advantage **on the kingdom** of the shore,
And the firm soil win of **the watery main**,
Increasing store with loss, and loss with store;
When I have seen such interchange of state,
Or state itself confounded to decay;
Ruin hath taught me thus to ruminate,
That Time will come and take my love away.
This thought is as a death, which cannot choose
But weep to have that which it fears to lose.

Edmund Spenser: *The Ruines of Rome* by Du Bellay

VII.

Ye sacred ruins, and ye tragic sights,
Which only do the name of Rome retain,
Old monuments, which of so famous sprites
The honour yet in ashes do maintain:
Triumphant arcs, spires neighbors to the sky,
That you to see doth th' heaven itself appall,
Alas, by little ye to nothing fly,
The people's fable, and the spoil of all:
And though your frames do for a time make war
'Gainst time, **yet time in time shall ruinate**
Your works and names, and your last relics mar.
My sad desires, rest therefore moderate:
For if that time make ends of things so sure,
It also will end the pain, which I endure.[27]

27 Quoted in Hadfield, Andrew. *Edmund Spenser. A Life.* Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2014, p. 281.

I have highlited in bold the possible intertextual connections between the poems. In Keats's sonnet, the phrase "Wasting of old time" may allude to the "wastes of time" from Shakespeare's *Sonnet 12*, but the theme of the sonnet as a whole, and particularly the archaic phrasing "billowy main", as I will show, resonates with Shakespeare's *Sonnet 64*. Even though according to Google books, the actual phrase "billowy main" can come from various other sources, from a contemporary translation of Virgil's *Georgics*, from John Stuart's "The Pleasures of Love", or from Clarence's dream in Shakespeare's *Richard III*,[28] for example. However, my argument does not really revolve around the question of *what* the sonnet alludes to, or *what* other texts it brings into play, but *that* it brings other texts into play. And if we accept that there are lines reminiscent of Shakespeare in Keats's sonnet, then it must also be noted that, remarkably, *Sonnet 64* is a commentary on Spenser's *The Ruines of Rome*, being itself a translation of Joachim Du Bellay's *Les Antiquités de Rome*.[29]And both are strangely evocative of the theme of Keat's sonnet reacting to his encounter with antiquity and ruination. However, while Spenser and Du Bellay make *vanitatum vanitas* their topic, and suggest the eventual victory of the immortal world over the mortal one, Shakespeare's *Sonnet 64* is more modern: it laments loss, ruination, the decay of kingdoms and human mortality. And, indeed, if we

28 Interestingly, as was mentioned in the essay on Wordsworth and the posthuman, this passage is also evoked in Wordsworth's second essay on epitaphs. Clarence: „As we paced along / Upon the giddy footing of the hatches / Methought that Gloucester stumblèd, and in falling / Struck me (that thought to stay him) overboard / Into the tumbling billows of the main. / O Lord! methought what pain it was to drown! / What dreadful noise of waters in mine ears! / What sights of ugly death within mine eyes! / Methoughts I saw a thousand fearful wracks; / A thousand men that fishes gnawed upon; / Wedges of gold, great anchors, heaps of pearl, / Inestimable stones, unvaluèd jewels, / All scatt'red in the bottom of the sea: / Some lay in dead men's skulls, and in the holes / Where eyes did once inhabit, there were crept / (As 'twere in scorn of eyes) reflecting gems, / That wooed the slimy bottom of the deep / And mocked the dead bones that lay scatt'red by. / I passed (methought) the melancholy flood, / With that sour ferryman which poets write of, / Unto the kingdom of perpetual night. / The first that there did greet my stranger soul / Was my great father-in-law, renownèd Warwick, / Who spake aloud, 'What scourge for perjury / Can this dark monarchy afford false Clarence?' / And so he vanished. Then came wand'ring by / A shadow like an angel, with bright hair / Dabbled in blood, and he shrieked aloud, / 'Clarence is come – false, fleeting, perjured Clarence, / That stabbed me in the field by Tewkesbury: / Seize on him, Furies, take him unto torment!' / With that (methoughts) a legion of foul fiends / Environed me, and howlèd in mine ears / Such hideous cries that with the very noise / I, trembling, waked, and for a season after / Could not believe but that I was in hell, / Such terrible impression made my dream." (Wordsworth, William. "Essays Upon Epitaphs." *Prose Works of William Wordsworth*, edited by William. J. B. Owen and Jane Worthington Smyser, vol. 2, Oxford, Oxford University Press. 1974 [1810], pp. 63–80. p. 64.)

29 Melehy, Harold. "Spenser and Du Bellay: translation, imitation, ruin." *Comparative Literature Studies*, vol. 40, no. 4, 2003, pp. 415–438.

take seriously Esterhammer's claim that Keats's "billowy main" may refer to the transport of the Marbles over/across the sea, then the line "increasing store with loss and loss with store" from Shakespeare's *Sonnet 64* is even more evocative of what Elgin actually did when he transplanted the Marbles of the Acropolis in the British Museum.

What might be more interesting than these random guesses and associations are the parallels that exist between the *formal logic* of Keats's Petrarchan sonnet and Shakespeare's Shakespearean sonnet.[30] Let's put them side by side:

On Seeing the Elgin Marbles

My spirit is too weak – mortality
    Weighs heavily on me like unwilling sleep,
    And each imagined pinnacle and steep
Of godlike hardship tells me I must die
Like a sick eagle looking at the sky.
    Yet 'tis a gentle luxury to weep
    That I have not the cloudy winds to keep
Fresh for the opening of the morning's eye.

Such dim-conceived glories of the brain
    Bring round the heart an undescribable feud;
- -
So do these wonders a most dizzy pain,
    That mingles Grecian grandeur with the rude
Wasting of old time – with a billowy main –
    A sun – a shadow of a magnitude.

[emphasis added]

30 Many thanks for Michael Raiger, who drew my attention to this parallel after the oral presentation of this paper at the conference on *Disbelief: from the Renaissance to Romanticism* (ELTE, 25–27 May 2017), and to Győző Ferencz who helped me establish the formal parallels between the two sonnets.

Shakespeare: *Sonnet 64*

When I have **seen** by Time's fell hand defaced
The rich-proud cost of outworn buried age;
When sometime lofty towers I see down-razed
And brass eternal, slave to mortal rage;
When I have **seen** the hungry ocean gain
Advantage on the kingdom of the shore,
And the firm soil win of **the watery main**,
Increasing store with loss, and loss with store;
When I have **seen** such interchange of state,
Or state itself confounded to decay;
- -
Ruin hath taught me thus to ruminate,
That Time will come and take my love away.

This thought is as a death, which cannot choose
But weep to have that which it fears to lose.

[emphasis added]

As far as their strictly speaking metrical form is concerned, the two sonnets are different: Keats sonnet exhibits the ABBAABBA (octave) + CDCDCD (sestet) structure of the Petrarchan sonnet, whereas the Shakespearean sonnet has the following form: ABABABABABAB + CC (couplet). However, if we also take meaning, i.e. logical form into consideration, they are surprisingly similar: both are divided into 10 and 4 lines, with a logical turning point after the tenth line.[31]

Even if these connections do not exist, "billowy main" does draw attention to itself as a quotation from another text, as, precisely, "an antiquated phrase" as Esterhammer put it. And through this intertextual allusion the origin of which is lost, or, alternatively, through this chain of intertextual references going back to the Renaissance and ruins of Roman antiquity, Keats's sonnet shows up, primarily, the figure of allegory as a means, perhaps the only possible means of evoking a crisis of history, the rupture between past and present may or may not be bridged through language. For allegory, according to the famous definition by Paul de Man, designates "primarily a distance in relation to its own origin, and, renouncing the

31 I would like to express my gratitude to Győző Ferencz, who patiently explained the metrical and prosodic properties of these two sonnets.

nostalgia and the desire to coincide, it establishes its language in the void of this temporal difference."[32]

Nicholas Halmi claims that from the perspective of Romantic classicism, especially Schelling, the achievement of classical Greece was so complete that nothing could be added to it, and that, therefore, Greek artworks were necessarily symbolic, complete, and closed upon themselves. Keats's approach to the antique fragments, however, stands in sharp contrast with Schelling's view of antiquity: the sonnet, which does not represent antiquity, but rather *what* the experience of antiquity *is,* can be read as an interpretation without an artwork, as well as a commentary, somewhat *avant la lettre,* on Benjamin's famous phrase: "allegories are, in the realm of thoughts, what ruins are in the realm of things".[33] And, as we all know, the reading of allegory (as opposed to any Romantic faith in an ideal radiating from the symbol) always shows up the historical character of meaning, the necessity of interpretation, while betraying a deep doubt in the possibility of a harmonious unity between signifier and signified, sign and meaning, representation and idea.

Rancière, while speaking about the independence of art in the aesthetic regime, also establishes a link between asethtetics and the political community.

> By making the mutilated statue of Hercules the highest expression of the liberty of the Greek people, Winckelmann established an original link between political freedom, the withdrawal of action, and defection from the communitarian body. The aesthetic paradigm was constructed against the representative order, which defined discourse as a body with well-articulated parts […].[34]

The Elgin Marbles, like Winckelmann's favourite statues, also lacked well-articulated parts, and therefore, did not have a representative function. Hence, Keats's sonnet is representative of the Marbles precisely because it fails, or refuses to represent them, and opts, rather, for a circuit of intertextual allusions closed upon themselves. Thus, Keats' sonnet puts on display precisely what Rancière means by freedom, the egalitarian politics of an aesthetics freed from referential constraints.

But what would be the politics of allegory then? On the one hand, one may argue that Keats's sonnet exhibits the escapist politics of poets traumatised by an encounter with the real, with history, and with the abyss of historical time and human mortality: he recoils to the safe realm of allegories and textual quotations (from Shakespeare, from Hazlitt, from himself), the same way as Wordsworth withdrew into his room

32 de Man, "The Rhetoric of Temporality", p. 207.

33 Benjamin, Walter. *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*. Translated by John Osborne, London, Verso, 1985, p. 178.

34 Rancière, *Aisthesis*, p. xiv.

to read Shakespeare, after having visited, during the French Revolution, the empty square of the Carousel in Book X of *The Prelude.* On the other hand, however, one may also contrast the politics of allegory with that of the symbol. The symbol, based on the logic of the synechdoche, of the part for the whole, but hiding the mechanisms of its signification, has been famous, at least since Burke, Schiller, or Coleridge, for serving as a rhetorical basis for nationalist, organist ideas of the aesthetic state. Indeed, the symbol is not free of referential *consequences.* In this sense, the anti-aesthetic, or non-totalising politics of allegory, which establishes a reflective distance towards origins, and lays bare the temporality and artificiality of signification, can dismantle all belief in the possibility of symbolic totality, and can testify to the crisis of history[35] characteristic of the aftermath of the French Revolution. Consequently, it can point towards a radical politics uncontainable by its concrete historical context. Hence, the allegorical chain of intertextual references revealing itself in the sonnet can further contribute to our understanding of the relationship between form, history, and politics, and posit allegory as politics, as a means of dissent, as a radical subversion of the Romantic, and necessarily nationalist ideals of the aesthetic state. In this sense, the fragmentary, pastiche-like, and non-referential character of Keats's sonnet (like an allegorical space, or a horizontal allegory), works in tandem with the temporal, as if vertical, allegory of intertextuality to evoke the disturbance of all symbolic, organicist conception of time, and history, and, therefore nation and nation-state.[36]

35 Koselleck and Richter, "Crisis", p. 371.

36 See first and foremost: Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities.* London, Verso, 1984.

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