GENRE TRAJECTORIES

IDENTIFYING, MAPPING, PROJECTING

Edited by **Garin Dowd**
and **Natalia Rulyova**

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Introduction

Garin Dowd and Natalia Rulyova

Since Plato and Aristotle, debates concerning the centrality of taxonomy, classification and type to knowledge formations have been conducted across multiple disciplinary fields. Such debates have been accompanied by interrogations of what and how types, categories, varieties, *genera*, kinds and demarcations appear and operate both enduringly and temporarily in the arts, but also in the sciences and in philosophy. Increasingly, however, an intensification of applications of genre as a coordinating concept, often deriving impetus from so-called rhetorical genre studies models, has taken place in fields such as the social sciences, education studies, law and communications studies. Developments within these diverse fields are in part driven by changes in different political and social approaches to the study of classification, to 'the order of things', in Michel Foucault's phrase (Foucault, 1970, p. xxiv), a characteristic which Carolyn Miller has analysed in terms of the concept of emergence (Miller, 2011).

One of the common resources and thus problems for theoretical analysis in the humanities (including the digital humanities) remains this question of kind. The genealogy of 'genre' itself functions as an often privileged and foregrounded, but also frequently generative but occluded, structuring device and regulator of models of meaning, representation, interpretation and analysis. As Jacques Derrida asserts in his essay 'The Law of Genre', the 'remark' of generic identity within a text or work in any discursive medium can be reflexively presented, while it may, and he argues always is, equally be unconsciously inscribed within the performative supplementarity of a text or work (Derrida, 1980, p. 211). In the *Republic*, Plato places the questions of the performance of genre at the very heart of an idea no less significant than the very constitution and maintenance of the political State itself (Plato,

1

1974). The city will be assisted in the regulation of its *polis* all the better if it establishes a hierarchy between three categories of poetry (or more generally artistic expression) to be employed for the enrichment of the populous: simple narrative or diegesis (the dithyramb), dramatic poetry characterized by a particularly damaging form of mimesis, and the mixed genre (associated with Homer) which combines narrative and mimetic elements. Taking these Platonic models of classification, and taking a significant distance from them, Aristotle introduces further criteria for the identification of type (Aristotle, 1976). Derived from the object of imitation and from the medium of expression, Aristotle's classical system of genres (or, more accurately, modes) distinguishes between, *inter alia*, tragedy, epic and comedy (including parody). These classifications – often taking on what Gérard Genette describes as 'the too seductive pattern of the triad [i.e. drama, comedy, epic]' (Genette, 1992, p. 44) – continue to be reviewed many times throughout the centuries, as fundamental models for the registration (in literature as this term has been understood since the beginning of the 19th century) of events, affective states, embodied socio-political structures and systems, resistances to received modes of classification (of ways of being) and as aesthetic criteria. Genre's defining quality might well be this combination of prescriptive decree and in-built critique. As such, acting as a point of registration, genres are fundamentally unstable models, and are paradoxically applied as something that is always already inaccurate, and historically located. Genre is always untimely, and for this very reason it retains a gravitational force for scholars, artists, scientists, poets, musicians, writers and linguists interested in articulating their models of the world.[1] As the call for papers for the 2013 conference Emerging Genres, Forms, Narratives in New Media Environments at North Carolina State University put it, 'As social recognitions that embed histories, ideologies, contradictions – as sites of inventive potential – as recurrent social actions – genres are constitutive of culture.'[2]

The forms and trajectories of genre theory thus remain temporally contextual, yet have been productive of many recognizable ways of seeing, perceiving and being in the world. German romanticism, for example, provides a pivotal moment in the conceptual development of genre theory. The triadic distinction made by Friedrich Schlegel between subjective form (the lyric), objective form (the dramatic) and subjective-objective form (the epic) initiates a reconsideration of the Platonic and Aristotelian founding texts of genre theory by questioning the very notion of a 'truth' of representation (or a finality inherent in the kind), even though and because of the ironic nature of 'types

of representation', or what we describe as genre, ultimately provides a critical position from which no transcendent position can be claimed. Schlegel's interest in the fragmentation of a text, and the text as inherently fragmentary, and the implications of this for writers, poets, literary theory and genre analysis, finds its apogee in the early 19th-century circle of which he was the leading figure, known now as the Jena romantics (Schlegel, 1971). The use by this group in the texts published in the journal *Athenaeum* of an interrogation of genre such that the classificatory template is transcended was later echoed in the work of symbolist authors (e.g. Mallarmé) and in the 20th century by modernist authors (e.g. Proust, Woolf and Joyce). These, among others, open up the field for the theorization of writing as writing (textuality, *écriture*, literature as literature) and analysing the collapse of the viability of the genre systems that dominate the period between Aristotle and themselves (Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy, 1988).

Beyond the domain of theorizations of genre and its undoing in the field of literature (which has nonetheless been the most important in terms of the theorization of genre in itself, divorced from actual empirical content), in the 20th century, different theories and framings of genre emerge, often both responding to and driving forward innovations and changes in the fields of radio, film, television, gaming and more recent communication technologies. The proliferation of different forms of technological mediation occasioned by the implementation of digital platforms since the 1990s has enriched the field of genre studies and stimulated new areas of research. In her paper given at the first Genre Studies Network (GSN) workshop at the University of Birmingham in 2012, leading genre studies scholar Carolyn Miller asserted a link between surges in technological progress and developments in genre theory by comparing an increased interest in genre in the European Renaissance and in the early 21st century (Miller, 2012).

Through technological change, engagement with 'genre' in both its theoretical guises and its more vernacular usages, the term has become ubiquitous in academia and among the general public, the latter encouraged by internet search engines, online retail and new platforms for the dissemination of film to think in patterns, types and categories. Writing in 2000, and thus in advance of some of the latter developments, in his introduction in *Modern Genre Theory*, David Duff observed that

> the increasing cultural dominance of the popular genres themselves
> (in literature, film and television), and of labelling and labelling

systems that accompany them, have ensured that it is less and less plausible to portray our era as one that has, in any decisive sense, moved 'beyond genre'.

(Duff, 2000, p. 2)

The assertion becomes all the more pertinent in the era of social networks, something which emerges in different ways in several of the chapters in this volume. Changes in genre are not just due to semantic shifts, nor to technological developments, as many contributions to genre studies would assert, but rather, as the research in this volume details, are tacitly and explicitly involved in engaging political discourses of expression, representation and the production of subjectivity in the context of the societies and cultures in which they emerge.

The overarching ambition of this volume is the exploration of trends and developments in genre studies in the early 21st century. While the first approach to genre trajectories is undoubtedly one of identification, the chapters here engage in paradoxical and dynamic manifestations problematizing the idea of a succession of genres. This book comprises six parts: Reassessing Theoretical Traditions; Memory, Testimony, Politics; Revisiting Literary Genres; Visual Cultures; Film Genres; and Pedagogies.

Part I, 'Reassessing Theoretical Traditions: From Ancient Greece to Bakhtin', begins with Garin Dowd's 'Philosophy's Broken Mirror: Genre Theory and the Strange Place of Poetry from Plato to Badiou' (Chapter 1). Dowd argues that poetry, as its form shifts in meaning in the work of Plato, Wallace Stevens and Alain Badiou in particular, plays a paradoxically constitutive role in the development of genre theory, and of philosophy as genre theory. Michael Volek's 'Remembering to Forget: The Role of Time, Space and Memory in Mikhail Bakhtin's Treatment of Language' (Chapter 2) examines the links between genre, memory and the Bakhtinian chronotope. Volek comes to the conclusion that traditions associated with the memory of genre are important in that they help engage the present.

One of the emerging trends captured by the volume is that genre plays an increasingly crucial role in memory studies. In Part II, 'Memory, Testimony, Politics', this trend is represented by Béatrice Damamme-Gilbert (Chapter 3) and Katya Krylova (Chapter 4), who explore the relationship between fiction and non-fiction in literary, dramatic and cinematic texts about the Holocaust. Specifically, Damamme-Gilbert explores the tension between fictional and autobiographical discourses in the work of Modiano, in the context of the German occupation

of France, in her chapter 'The Question of Genre in Holocaust Narrative: The Case of Patrick Modiano's *Dora Bruder* (1997)'. She argues that Modiano's Holocaust texts tend to blend genres and challenge established literary conventions. Katya Krylova's 'Genre and Memory in Margareta Heinrich and Eduard Erne's *Totschweigen* and Elfriede Jelinek's *Rechnitz (Der Würgeengel)*' further explores this theme by focusing on Heinrich and Erne's documentary film *Totschweigen* (*A Wall of Silence*) and Jelinek's play *Rechnitz* (*Der Würgeengel*). She examines how both works manage to uncover truth about the Holocaust through a complex engagement with the multiplicity of genres employed.

Part III 'Revisiting Literary Genres: Writing Back/Writing Forward' begins with the theme of resistance to established associations between roles prescribed by genre conventions. Sarah Parker in 'The Muse Writes Back: Lyric Poetry and Female Poetic Identity' (Chapter 5) examines lyric poetry as a genre with particular gender conventions, related to the roles of the muse and the poet, and how these conventions developed over time and were subject to increasing challenge both within the lyric genre and in the commentaries on it. Timothy S. Murphy's examination of the object of genre itself in 'How (Not) to Translate an Unidentified Narrative Object or a New Italian Epic' (Chapter 6) describes how established literary genres translate, or rather fail to translate, into other languages, examining the New Italian Epic and how it has been interpreted in English by American translators, and the consequences of mis/translations.

Part IV 'Visual Cultures: Technologies, Institutions and Genres' begins with Lesley Stevenson's '*Seduced by Art*: The Problem of Photography' (Chapter 7), which explores the impact of curatorial strategies and interpretative templates on the reception of visual art forms. She argues that the influence of established hierarchies in fine art on the mediation in gallery institutional contexts of photographic genres is stronger than may be thought at first glance. In relation to contemporary visual culture, genre-based approaches continue to respond to both rapidly changing technological contexts and to the pulse of a longer duration. Thus in his 'Vernacular Photographic Genres after the Camera Phone' (Chapter 8), Peter Buse presents one of the first in-depth studies of the 'selfie' as a genre that is, on the one hand, related to the old and well-known genre of self portrait and, on the other hand, rooted in new popular social practices facilitated by recently developed technologies.

Part V, 'Film Genres: Endurance and Transformation', explores both established genres and an emerging subgenre. In his 'The Enduring

Reach of Melodrama in Contemporary Film and Culture' (Chapter 9), Michael Stewart looks at the metamorphoses in the genre and mode of melodrama with a particular interest in how certain aspects of melodrama are developed in contemporary cinema. Erin K. Stapleton's 'Objects after Adolescence: Teen Film without Transition in *Spring Breakers* and *The Bling Ring*' (Chapter 10) identifies an emerging subgenre of the teen film which stages and interrogates the excessive consumption which characterizes advanced capitalist societies as mediated and sustained by the burgeoning cult of celebrity.

Finally, in Part VI, 'Pedagogies: Applications in Education', Anne Smedegaard's 'Student and Teacher Constructions of the "Generic Contract" in High-School Essays' (Chapter 11) discusses the use of the essay as a genre in comparison with other genres that are used in examination in the context of Danish high schools. Her analysis draws on the Bakhtinian concept of voice, and the linguistic use of personal pronouns by pupils. In their 'Perceptions of Prior Genre Knowledge: A Case of Incipient Biliterate Writers in the EAP Classroom' (Chapter 12), Natasha Artemeva and Donald N. Myles transport the reader to North America and discuss the significance of genre approaches to teaching and learning in the multilingual environment in Canada. They consider the effect of often innate and unarticulated genres learnt in the first language in the development of academic bi- or multiliteracies.

This volume is based on the papers given at the seven workshops organized as part of the Arts & Humanities Research Council-funded international GSN led by one of the editors (Rulyova at the University of Birmingham) and organized jointly with the other (Dowd at the University of West London). The workshops took place in Birmingham, London and Leeds in the course of a year, between October 2012 and October 2013. The chapters of this collection emerge from the themes of the workshops: genre theory, genre and gender, genre and translation, genre and new technologies, genre and memory, and genre and visual culture. Examining the trajectories of these different fields of genre enabled the momentum for the volume to be created.

Insofar as it is concerned with embracing three trajectories – in the geometrical sense – cutting across the family of trajectories known as genre studies, then, the volume seeks both to evoke and to problematize genre and genre studies by exposing the field to new identifications, mappings and projections. By virtue of the ambition announced in its subtitle and made manifest in its contents, it makes the claim that genre studies remains a fertile ground for genre studies activities, and for a broader engagement with the political, social and economic contexts of

our time, as, for example, Lievrouw's (2011) analysis of various modes of online activism argues.

Beyond their academic codification according to medium or artform (e.g. photographic, cinematic or literary genres), which in this volume works as one type of organizing principle, there lie many other ways of thinking about trajectories in genre and in genre studies. The chapters collected here pose several questions for the field: Do certain areas of genre studies find themselves propelled along a common trajectory? Are there many different trajectories coexisting with and/or in conflict with one another? What happens when trajectories cross and something unexpected occurs? One of the aims of the volume (and of the AHRC network upon whose resources it draws) is to create the conditions for the emergence of new zones of engagement with the hermeneutic and creative possibilities of genre-centred approaches to cultural production.

Notes

1. Thus, for example, Alain Badiou, writes in 2005, against what he calls 'the democracy of opinion': 'true democracy, as Plato saw, is equality before the Idea and the repudiation of imitative "communications." Today in particular, when, as in Plato's time, the city is collapsing into futility, democracy is equality before the political Idea, which must be reinvented against its dissolution in the play of interests' (Badiou, 2006, p. 40).
2. At the time of writing, a book, edited by Carolyn Miller, is forthcoming from the proceedings of this event in 2015.

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Part I

Reassessing Theoretical Traditions: From Ancient Greece to Bakhtin

1
Philosophy's Broken Mirror: Genre Theory and the Strange Place of Poetry and the Poem from Plato to Badiou

Garin Dowd

This chapter explores the rather striking manner in which at key moments in the history of philosophy, in the discipline's attempts at self-definition, the genre or literary form of poetry plays a key role. Philosophy, at these moments, has been defined, *inter alia*, as the enemy of poetry, the guiding light for the philosopher who can only try and inevitably fail to emulate its brilliance, or as the anomalous guest at the philosophical table with whom the host discipline has relations which result in either generative or degenerative effects. Insofar as it lays claim to or liaises with philosophy – as we have come to know it today – poetry has thus played a part in the self-definition of genre theory. The aim of this chapter is to capture a very specific set of transfers, transpositions, metonymies and other modes of reversible relations of substitution and surrogacy between philosophy and poetry, and along the way between genre-theory-as-philosophy and poetry.

In the *Republic*, Plato, through the voice of Socrates, casts doubt on the good of purveyors of poetry (and the imitative artforms for which it stands) for the walled-in *polis* of Athens; in his *Poetics*, Aristotle would likewise urge a resistance to mimesis; at the close of the 19th century, the group convened around the journal *Athenaeum* would reverse this position and find in poetry and in its particular embodiment of *poiesis* a model and refuge for philosophy itself – which along with the *polis* was one of the recipients of protection in different ways in Plato and Aristotle. If the Jena romantics mark a turning point in the development

of genre theory, they do also in the theorization of the relationship between poetry (as mimesis) and thought (as *dianoia*). In this respect they also issue in what Jean-Luc Nancy and Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe call the 'literary absolute' (Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy, 1988). Such an advent is for Alain Badiou also the inauguration of what he calls the Age of the Poets, the debilitating play operative in philosophy of imitation and deception via false autorecognition (and 'suture') of which he advocates the undoing (Badiou, 1999). In each of these moments, philosophy enters into a particular relationship with poetry and also in the course of this negotiation enters a self-reflexive exploration of genre, of philosophical utterance and poetic utterance in generic terms, as effects of genericity (Schaeffer, 1989) or of what Derrida calls 'degenerescence' (Derrida, 1980), which for him is ultimately the paradoxical mark and remark of the genre gesture.

In her book *Genres of Philosophy*, Robyn Ferrell summarizes the play of repetition, reflection and mirroring, modulated by difference and repetition, which operates between philosophy and the matter of genre:

> *Genre emerges for philosophy as an ontological question.* Genre is the concept which seeks to capture the generative in thought. One might articulate this process of a reproduction of thought as one in which the new thinking is produced but not immaculately. It is the process whereby new thinking can represent something of the old while being an original departure, *reiterating* something *as* new.
>
> (Ferrell, 2002, p. 8)

Repetition and difference: we are very much observing here the standard terrain of genre theory. One of the most significant moments in the modern history of the field was the 1979 Colloque International on Genre at the University of Strasbourg. This conference belongs to a key period in the history of humanities disciplines which had, in 1979, undergone a significant period of self-scrutiny under the impetus of Derridean deconstruction. As the bulletin serving to situate the colloquium states, as the hold of structuralism weakened,

> in recent years much of the interest previously directed at the discovery of or elaboration of scientific models for humanistic research has shifted towards those forms of articulation that have historically engaged the enigmatic aspects of language in the most radical manner. Of these practices, the equivocal but dynamic interrelation of

literature and philosophy has progressively emerged as a decisive area
of investigation.

(Chartin et al., 1980, p. 234)

The Strasbourg bulletin locates the crux of its interests in a particular historical context, namely in Jena romanticism of the late 18th and early 19th centuries. Hence it goes on to state that the focus of the colloquium will not be genre theory but, rather, the transition, in thinking about genre, from the plural to the singular; specifically the event will explore 'the *singularisation* of the concept ... [as] this transition was effected most of all by German romanticism' (Chartin et al., 1980, p. 235).

   The aim in what follows is to reprise and reframe some of the questions associated with the transition. In particular, however, through a discussion of Alain Badiou's proposition that what he calls the Age of the Poets inaugurated by the Jena romantics and perpetuated in his view by philosophy, to its own detriment it will be argued that a return to the questions posed at the 1979 colloquium, as well as in Plato and Aristotle, offers insights for contemporary genre theory and genre studies.

   The interrelated questions to be pursued hereunder then are the following: Why is it that in some ways and to some degree, that when the discipline of philosophy attempts to define itself, it has so often felt the need to have recourse to the explanatory power of the genre (or literary form) of poetry or the poem? Why has poetry so frequently been synonymous with the beyond of literary taxonomy, while at the same time it seems to be the core element of genre theory? How can poetry and philosophy be both anomalous and synonymous, at one and the same time? And why is it that philosophy and poetry are so strange and familiar to each other?

Poetry and philosophy

The first significant intervention in this topic is not by any means the Strasbourg colloquium. Commentators frequently mention the great philosophical poem of being written by Parmenides. In Parmenides, philosophy and poetry are born together, not as non-identical twins but as conjoined. If we turn to Plato and Aristotle we find poetry to be at the core both of philosophy's self-definition by means of negation (in the case of Plato) and as providing the occasion for the first major instalment in the tradition of genre theory as such (Aristotle).

If for Plato poetry is what philosophy first and foremost is not, for Aristotle poetry stands in as the very exemplar of genre or kind of literature.

In Book X of the *Republic*, Plato returns to his theme of the banishment of the poets from the State. He does so for two reasons. The first of these is that he wishes to elaborate on, and provide further support for, the judgement as expressed earlier in Part III of Book III. There he asserts:

> So if we are visited in our state by someone who has the skill to transform himself into all sorts of characters and represent all sorts of things, and he wants to show off himself and his poems to us, we shall treat him with all the reverence due to a priest and giver of pleasure, but shall tell him that he and his kind have no place in our city.
>
> (Plato, 1974, 398 b)

In this edict, Plato would have banished almost all poets and artists aside from those dedicated to specifically pedagogical tools serving military purposes (398 b). The second reason is that Plato seems to wish to offer the illusion of a potential reprieve to the poets and musical performers (and their advocates). For though the poets deserve, for the pleasures they afford, to be, in Book III, praised ('anointing him with myrrh and crowning him with fillets of wool' [398 b]), Plato would still have them escorted to the perimeter of the city. In Book X, however, the notion is at least hypothetically entertained that it is not impossible that one day someone may come, either in poetry or in prose, successfully to argue the case for the poet and associated artists (607 d–e). At least, in Book X, the ranks of admissible works now include 'hymns to the gods and paeans in praise of good men' (607).

With regard to the first aim, however, namely confirming the need for the banishment of the poets, Plato in Part X of Book X has this to say: the danger inherent in poetry resides in its appeal to the imagination rather than to reason, or, as he puts it, 'the instinctive desires of a part of us' (606 b). Moreover, given its position, at a third remove from the world of forms, poetry has what Plato calls a 'low degree of truth' (605 b).

To give political power to poets would be equivalent to handing over the affairs of state to its worst-equipped citizens. To yield authority to the poet is, for Plato, to delegate to someone who is incapable of a sense of proportion; someone incapable of maintaining the proper hierarchy

of form-copy-simulacrum; the poet is one who views with indifference the distinction between the truthful and the chimerical.

Genre, in this case exemplified in the empirical instantiation of poetry (in various forms), is concerned both with form and with politics. This genre with its constituent types, of poetry as understood by Plato, produces political effects; it alters the shape of the polity. In particular, if it is allowed free rein, it has the capacity to deform the latter. The deformation of the polity by the redistribution of values and the distortion of perspectives and shake up of proportionality brought about by the genre of poetry is to be accounted for by the distance from truth at which it is found to operate.

The two gestures – in Plato – are suggestive of the definition of genre itself as they also are of the paradox of genre. For a work to be included in a genre, it has to alter that genre; the act of belonging to a genre is in some ways the act of belonging to itself as constitutive and founding of that embracing category. It is this paradoxical ambiguity of the whole genre enterprise that informs the philosopher's ludic erasure of literary taxonomy (as in Derrida's *loi du genre*) as well as the more sober retrenchments (Todorov, Genette, Schaeffer) of literary theorists all taking place in, or in the aftermath of, the 1979 colloquium on Genre at the University of Strasbourg.

The colloquium explicitly set itself up as a forum for addressing literature and philosophy. Continental (and, in particular, French) philosophy has regarded the legacy of the Aristotelian and Schlegelian attempts to think genre into the two quite different modes of philosophy and the poem, respectively, with an attentive eye. Under the sway of continental philosophy, the Strasbourg colloquium was presided over by the theoretical mantras developed by one of its organizers, Jean-Luc Nancy, in collaboration with Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, taking the themes of their book, published but a few years prior to the colloquium, *The Literary Absolute* (1978). Clear traces of the presiding influence of this doctrine may be seen in the 'Bulletin' issued in advance to the speakers, signed also by Jean-Jacques Chartin and Samuel Weber:

> the literary work came to be considered as an autonomous process, self-instituting and self-reflexive, entailing the laws of its own production and of its own theory. Hence, genre, in the sense of the literary genre, became the genre of self-generation ... in its generalized and self-generating movement, literature seems to imply its own specification.
>
> (Chartin et al., 1980, p. 236)

The theoretical ground for literature as genre is developed at length in Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy's study of the Jena romantics. The latter group convened around the journal *Athenaeum* were responding to a triple crisis: a bourgeoisie with increased access to culture; the political crisis represented by the French Revolution; and the challenges of the Kantian critique (Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy, 1988, p. 5). The perspectives on literature developed in *Athenaeum* are thus to be thought of less as pertaining to literature as such than as being concerned with a general crisis and a general critique 'for which literature or literary theory will be the privileged locus of expression' (p. 5). Schlegel's core concern, as expressed in the famous fragment 116, is as follows:

> The romantic kind of poetry is still in the state of becoming; that, in fact, is its real essence: that it should forever be becoming and never be perfected. It can be exhausted by no theory and only a divinatory criticism would dare try to characterise its ideal . . . The romantic kind of poetry is the only one that is more than a kind, that is, as it were, poetry itself: for in a certain sense all poetry is or should be romantic.
>
> (Schlegel, 1971, pp. 175–176)

The name of the journal (of which only three numbers were to appear between 1798 and 1800) in which brothers Friedrich Schlegel, August Wilhelm Schlegel and their associates (including Dorothea Schlegel, Caroline Schlegel, Novalis and Friedrich Schleiermacher) published their unsigned texts and fragments signals that aspect of Jena romanticism which entailed a sublation of ancient and modern (Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy, 1988, p. 11) and the 'completion' entailed in such an act of dialectical synthesis. The completion would entail the '*production* of something entirely new' (p. 11, emphasis added). The something in question amounts to what they call literature:

> They . . . will approach it explicitly as a new genre, beyond the divisions of classical (or modern) poetics and capable of resolving the inherent ('generic') divisions of the written thing. Beyond divisions and all de-finition, this genre is thus programmed in romanticism as *the* genre of *literature*: the genericity, so to speak, and the generativity of literature, grasping and producing themselves in an entirely new, infinitely new Work. The *absolute*, therefore, of literature. But also its *ab-solute*, its isolation in its perfect closure upon itself (upon

its own organicity), as in the well-known image of the hedgehog in *Athenaeum* fragment 206.

<div align="right">(Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy, 1988, p. 11)[1]</div>

The fragment is both the theme and the form of exposition chosen to articulate the theme of fragmentation in its role both in poetry and in philosophy's approach to the poem. Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy position this in the context of the common ground between Schlegel's 'System-Programme' and the Kant of the *Third Critique*: 'there appears to be very little distance between romanticism and idealism' (Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy, 1988, p. 35). The status of the work of art for romanticism and, at least in outline for Kant, means that 'Philosophy must fulfill itself in a work of art; art is the speculative *organon par excellence*' (p. 35). Philosophy for the Jena romantics, as it had for Kant, had a relationship to a lost or absent *organon* (p. 36). In its pursuit of its speculative fulfilment, philosophy needs to consider itself according to an analogy with poetry (*Dichtkunst*). What poetry as fragment, the *poiesis* in the fragment, achieves is a self-positing (pp. 40–41). The fragment, however, is defined by its incompletion. Yet paradoxically the fragment is the work (p. 43) – the whole work which remains absent and yet is there in a virtual form inscribed in the fragment.

   The turn to literature here as the genre which is capable of formulating and theorizing itself (as well as that by means of which philosophy could be inaugurated) is comparable, *mutatis mutandis*, to the designation by Bakhtin of the novel as the genre beyond genre capable, in its polyphonic composition, of such self-reflexivity and an analysis of its own conditions of possibility. In this context, characterized by a valorization on the one hand and a delegation of the task of philosophy on the other, Jean-Jacques Lecercle has noted that

> the continental philosopher is not merely a reader of texts (all philosophers are) but a *writer*, with a taste for literature both in the active and in the passive sense, a tradition that goes back to Parmenides, whose philosophy took the form of a poem, and to Plato, whose Platonism is concealed beneath a veil of irony and the labyrinth of dialogues that are also literary games.

<div align="right">(Lecercle, 2010, p. 41)</div>

In his comments, Lecercle is specifically addressing two philosophers from the continental tradition – both of them far from Strasbourg and far from many of the philosophers involved – Alain Badiou and Gilles

Deleuze (to whose contrasting approaches to literature his 2010 book is devoted).

The age of poets

If in this way one of the primary gestures of the Jena romantics and one of the gestures deserving of our commendation according to *The Literary Absolute* is this inauguration of philosophy as *poiesis*, it is one viewed with scorn by Badiou. In books such as *Manifesto for Philosophy* and *Handbook of Inaesthetics*, he confronts what he regards as the debilitating *suture* of philosophy to one of its conditions – namely, poetry.[2]

Like the authors of *The Literary Absolute*, for Badiou, the key historical turning point is Jena romanticism. One might choose a more specific symbolic date, that of the famous fragment authored by Friedrich Schlegel concerning the status of the individual poem as a genre in itself: 'eine Gattung für sich'. In the context of genre theory and the history of the development of theorizations of genre, it is the turn signalled and symbolized in this moment that marks a definitive break with the classic normative system of genre.[3] Although he is not commenting explicitly on the reflection on genre in Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy, for Badiou the moment of romanticism is the same but the consequences are measured very differently. How one measures the consequences of what is symbolized by the *Athenaeum* fragment – here standing in for what Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy call the literary absolute, and for what Badiou calls the suture to the poem of philosophy – results in radically distinct self-images of the discipline of philosophy.

Badiou's reading of the pervasive effects of the inauguration of the Age of Poets has the provocative advantage, as far as our purposes are concerned, of gathering within it at once a historical era, a group of some of the most important poets of the post-romantic era (among them Mallarmé, Pessoa and Celan), and a range of the philosophers who have sustained some of the most influential and controversial debates in genre theory. Among these, pride of place seems more often than not to be taken by Lacoue-Labarthe.

Aside from him, primary among those to have performed the suture, and centrally located in Badiou's sights, is, of course, Heidegger. In Badiou's estimation, Heidegger has a particular relationship with Greece. This is well known, of course, but for Badiou the key element of this relationship concerns poetry and poetic language. In a short essay entitled 'Heidegger Viewed as Commonplace', Badiou charts Heidegger's path towards his 'resacralisation' of the earth – or the return of the

Gods – back to its originating point. If technological enframing (*Gestell*) has produced the desacralized and destitute earth, it is only a few poets who for Heidegger, in Badiou's rendering, 'pronounced the conditions of a turnabout of thought, out of the subjective prescription of technological willing toward unconcealedness and the Disclosed' (Badiou, 1999, p. 50). Hölderlin, Rilke and Trakl are the poets who for Heidegger keep asking the question of Being and in doing so resist the *Gestell* specific to modernity. They do not preserve Being itself but they keep posing the question: for Heidegger, in Badiou's summary, ' [p]oets have been the shepherds, the vigils of this question which the reign of technology renders universally unpronounceable' (p. 50).

At the heart of the short essay, however, lies a sentence which demands commentary:

> The Platonic interruption of the poetic and metaphoric narrative by the paradigmatic ideal of the matheme – Heidegger interprets this as the inaugural orientation of the destiny of Being toward the forgetting of its unconcealedness, the relinquishing of this initial appropriateness to the Greeks' poetic language. (pp. 50–51)

Badiou thus locates the entirety of Heidegger's thought firmly in the domain of genre and of genre alone. The context is the well-known aspect of Plato's philosophy – that it is conveyed in the form of dialogue. Dialogue, Ferrell reminds us in *Philosophy as Genre*, is the quintessential non-genre. Yet, within his dialogues, Plato is persistently thinking through the language of metaphor, or of what Badiou and others would willingly describe as poetic language.[4]

In this way, then, the history of the epoch which has led to the possibility of the annihilating will of technology may be traced back to a genre decision: Plato interrupts the poetic and metaphoric narrative by the paradigmatic ideal of the *matheme* – or, to put it back into more a recognizably Platonic idiom, metaphor is the mere vehicle by way of which to reveal the ideal world of Forms.

This chapter of *Manifesto for Philosophy* is followed by one on nihilism which asks why, faced with the opportunity to resacralize, philosophers did not do so. Then comes the key chapter entitled 'Sutures'. Now, generally speaking, the model of philosophy advocated by Badiou may be described as a Platonism of the multiple. Badiou insists on multiplicity as opposed to Platonic univocity. In this context, he goes on to define philosophy as the configuration of what he calls its four generic conditions. The generic conditions are all to be found in Plato: they are

the poem (think of any of Plato's famous metaphors; that of the cave will do for our purposes), the matheme (the form), the political (as in the *Republic*) and love (the *Symposium*). Philosophy, or its operation as Badiou advocates it, will not follow Plato in blocking the interplay of the generic procedures, which is what he does when he interrupts the poetic and metaphoric narrative with the matheme (form). In doing so, Plato makes philosophy delegate its functions to one of its conditions. It hands 'over the whole of thought to one generic procedure' – in the case in question, to the matheme. Instead, philosophy must be able to circulate between its four generic conditions without debilitating suture.

Suture to the poem, then, is for Badiou bad news, but suture to the matheme is not much better. Leaving aside the other sutures of which space here prevents a thorough discussion, in his conclusion to the chapter, Badiou turns his attention once more to Heidegger. For the purposes of the present argument, however, what is especially interesting occurs within parentheses. In the course of this transitional phase in the argument, a rapidly delivered list of names is produced of many of the philosophers, some of them near-contemporaries of Badiou, who have followed in the wake of Nietzsche in Germany and Bergson in France, besotted in the first instance by the 'cult of poets' and in the second by the 'fetishism of literature'. His parenthetical list offers the names Blanchot, Derrida and Deleuze. In them, the 'living flesh of thought' is delegated to the poem, or to the condition summarized as the poem.

Having listed these theorists and philosophers as all linked, despite the diversity of their approaches and outputs, by their practice of the debilitating suture to the poem, Badiou proceeds to take account of the Age of the Poets, the age of the great poets as well as the age wherein philosophy is lured into the replication of the suture to the poem. In order, however, for the purposes of this chapter, to sum up Badiou's argument with Heidegger, one or two of the more provocative moments deserve to be singled out. In an account of how Heidegger positions the poet Paul Celan, Badiou asserts that what one witnesses in Heidegger's negotiation of the poems of Celan sums up the use made by Heidegger of the genre of poetry: philosophers exist in order for there to be poets. Heidegger wants to 'break the poet's mirror'. As the quasimythical encounter of Celan and Heidegger which took place in the Black Forest in 1967 is replayed in Badiou's account, Celan finds a way through poetry to confront Heidegger with the unspoken in their encounter – the Holocaust. Heidegger's silence faced with the Jewish survivor poet was not only repugnant on its own human terms; it was moreover the marker

for Badiou of 'an irremediable philosophic deficiency'. Why? Badiou's answer bears once more on our topic: 'because it brought to its peak, and to the point of the intolerable, the reductive and nihilating effects of the suture' (p. 87).

This poetry, then, is a genre which takes on massive historical and political burden: 'Celan would experience here what the philosophical fetishism of the poem ultimately produced. The most profound sense of his poetic work is to deliver us from this fetishism, to free the poem from its speculative parasites' (p. 87).[5] We need to remind ourselves perhaps that the argument which Badiou is having is with philosophy, with a debilitating aspect of philosophical method.

That which Badiou identifies as problematic in Heidegger is that he breaks the mirror of Celan's poetry. What he shows Celan to have achieved in his poems, which may among other things be regarded as part of his engagement with the thought of Heidegger, is to have resisted the force of the reading and the silence of Heidegger on the Holocaust, and of Celan's survival thereof – to have restored the mirror of his poetry.

Thus Heidegger may be confronted with a failure of philosophy to live up to the very challenge thrown down to it by the great poets. The latter make work which thinks, and which in the sense understood by Hannah Arendt leaps from *poiesis* to *praxis* (as far as action within the city of Athens was misconstrued by Plato), whereas for Badiou philosophy has not been able to make itself worthy of a thought like that of the Portuguese poet Fernando de Pessoa. He observes: 'in a movement that would be directly internal to the remodelling of the theses of philosophy. We must therefore conclude that philosophy is not – at least not yet – under the condition of Pessoa' (p. 38). In this way, then, Badiou is offering these poets more than myrrh and wool. He thus argues that there is an urgent need to 'set philosophy the task of measuring up to his work' (p. 39).

Thus the poem is that which thinks and philosophers fail to think. The position on poetry adopted here by Badiou, while motivated by the task of desuturing, is, however, quite oddly, close in at least one respect to the 'new romantic' position of Wallace Stevens – a poet in fact cited with approval both by the arch protagonist in philosophy's suture in the Age of Poets, Lacoue-Labarthe, and by Badiou himself. Poetry, in Badiou's account, remains close to what Stevens argued it was in the first of his 'Three Academic Pieces'. Stevens frequently turns to the question of the relationship between poetry and philosophy in the volume which encompasses the latter text, *The Necessary Angel: Essays on Reality and the*

Imagination (1942). Indeed, in an echo of some of the debate above, the opening essay in the volume, 'The Nobel Rider and the Sound of Words', begins with a discussion of how Plato in the *Phaedrus* produces one of his poetic metaphors – a pair of winged horses and a charioteer – which is an example, Stevens follows Coleridge in judging, of the philosopher's 'dear, gorgeous nonsense' (Stevens, 1951, p. 3). Aside, however, from his appreciation of such nonsense at the heart of rational argument, throughout the volume Stevens returns to the relationship embodied in the opening example. The volume therefore participates, this time from the point of view of the poet rather than the philosopher, in a debate going back to Plato. Poetry and philosophy as construed by Stevens, just as by philosophers, play out an ancient dialectic between generative and degenerative inscriptions, surrogacies and sutures. To summarize Stevens, whose most programmatic statement on the matter is the first of the 'Three Academic Pieces', the manner in which the poem participates in the world of objects elevates it above other objects which function merely to prove that we enjoy the discovery of resemblance (whether one chooses to understand resemblance as mimesis as such or as reflection of a genre). Poetry for Stevens must engage and create a supplement which belongs to the structure of resemblance but at the same time exceeds it. The figure of exceeding is underlined in the conclusion to Part I of 'Three Academic Pieces' in which Stevens asserts that the repetitions of resemblances may be a source for the ideal (p. 81), in the Platonic sense. Thus Stevens reverses Plato: in the poetic project, according to him, we are continually outliving this ideal, to which the endeavour and the object would both belong, but the curious thing is that, even though we outlive it, it survives, and with an abundant life (p. 82).

To return, however, to Badiou, it has been noted that the restoration of the mirror is not without its problems. Lecercle takes up this theme:

> producing a symmetrical position to that of the philosopher who becomes a surrogate poet: the position of the poet as surrogate philosopher. If, when the limits of argumentative thought, of *dianoia*, have been reached, philosophy waxes poetic, then we may call for a moment when, the vatic impulse of the poem being exhausted, the poem abandons *pathos* for *logos*.
>
> (Lecercle, 2010, p. 105)

Badiou's thinking of the poem means that it is possible to argue, following Jacques Rancière this time, that in the end 'le poème dit seulement

ce que la philosophie a besoin qu'il dise et qu'il feint de découvrir la surprise du poème' (Rancière, 2004, p. 109).[6] The poem requires philosophy to dictate to it, or to ventriloquize its orientations (*sens*) on its behalf. This would be, to paraphrase Rancière in his attack on what he calls *la malaise d'esthètique* to which Badiou in his view contributes, to tether the poem to the Platonic order of the *logos*. It is another way of breaking the mirror of poetry with the force of the philosopher's strong reading.

Badiou is a philosopher; as such we have no right to demand of him that, to adopt Bakhtinian vocabulary, the speech genre he adopts in writing about poetry replicate or bow to any of those employed by a literary critic. In some ways, however, it does seem that he may often come close to repeating the error of Heidegger in having the poem repeat back to him, having the poem become a mere reflection of philosophy. However – as his analysis of Celan and Heidegger facing each other shows – in at least insisting on the ethical and political implications of such *genreflections* one is tempted to permit Badiou his strong reading. In this way, if nothing else is resolved in the encounter between philosophy, genre-theory-as-philosophy and the genre of poetry, one at least gets to anoint the poet Celan over the philosopher Heidegger.

Conclusion

Thus in conclusion we turn once more to Stevens, this time adopting the mantle of poet as opposed to essayist. The second of the 'Three Academic Pieces' begins by invoking a youthful citizenry who should attend to the activity of the poet:

> O juventes, O filii, he contemplates
> A wholly artificial nature, in which
> The profusion of metaphor has been increased.

The poem which follows the discursive exposition of the theme of resemblance and the notion of exceeding an escape which characterizes poetry (summarized above) picks up the theme but models it in verse this time, not in discursive prose. It is as if the fear expressed by Plato about representation and imitation has not only been realized but, in fact, embraced.

The title of the piece is 'Someone Puts a Pineapple Together': poetry is *poiesis* here. The title of the poem in which a pineapple will be contemplated is given to a poem which elaborates a pineapple – a poem

which, moreover, is not only a poem and cannot entirely coincide with the poem as a genre or as a literary form (the 'poem' in question being one of the three 'academic pieces' grouped in ambivalent hybrid form). The poet is both inhabitant and expositor, in another echo of Plato. The poet is the content of the poem: the one is constitutive and generative of the other – a mutual mimesis. If the poet is to be defined (according to the third tercet) as the X at the base of the material pineapple, their geometries do not end there: they are also (in the seventh tercet) the tangent of the object as the tangent of themselves. Posited in the second tercet as a potential form, by the end of the first part of the poem they are also occupying a space in which 'ephemeras of the tangent swarm', governed by the planetary cosmic order of 'originals'.

Stevens thus in the first section establishes a paradoxical interplay of poet and object in which there are traces of a Platonic debate about making (*poiesis*). The second section is framed by the theme of metaphor. It begins by invoking the challenge to avoid the 'metaphor that murders metaphor' and ends by referring to the green tuft (evoking hair to top the pineapple as head) of the pineapple which is an invitation to 'false metaphor'. In between, however, it is this tuft which becomes (falsely) a metaphor for an age before the poet felt the compulsion to expand and expound on the green tuft:

> There had been an age
> When a pineapple on the table was enough,
> Without the forfeit scholar coming in,
> Without his enlargings and pale arrondissements,
> Without the furious roar of his capital.

In such a time, Stevens continues, green had 'its own implacable sting'. The implacable sting of green is the implacable real of the tuft of the pineapple not requiring the poet-scholar's exposition, without requiring the sort of tangential labour on the potential form of a pineapple on a table that would conjure out of it – via enlargement – first the zones ('arrondissements') of a city and then an encompassing urban territory ('capital'). Yet, continuing the paradoxical disposition characteristic of the first section, here, in order to explain the implacability of the sting, Stevens has in fact employed extended metaphor. At one and the same time the tuft is a reassuring 'real' (of another earlier time) – but also ideal – and a call to metaphor. In articulating the lure and explaining how it is overcome, the poem, however, needs, paradoxically, to

lapse. As if to comment on this very fact, the third and final section begins:

> How thick this gobbet is with overlays
> The double fruit of boisterous epicures

The pineapple has been subject to overelaboration; there has been an excess of *poiesis*. There are two manifestations of it, but it has by being subject to the double attention named in the paradoxical operations of refusal and lapse (into metaphor) been subject to a kind of half digestion (becoming a 'gobbet') or decomposition. The final section of the second of the three pieces multiplies perspectives (in a classic Stevensian Cézanne gesture) on the pineapple which is located at the ungraspable centre – the always absent poem which recurs in Stevens' work (which aspect links him to the Jena romantics):

> The slight incipiencies, of which the form,
> At last, is the pineapple on the table or else
> An object the sum of its complications, seen
> And unseen

The eye which is invoked in the poem's final tercet is host to a 'geometric glitter' produced by the multiplied and heteroclite scrutiny convened nonetheless on 'the greenest cone': a central and evasive locus of the impossible ideal.

The final academic piece – again in verse – centres on a 'choice' which can be read as one between the paradoxical operations:

> The dot, the pale pole of resemblances
> Experienced yet not well seen, of how
> Much choosing is the final choice made up

What will occur out of this deliberation is a statement, an 'oration', which also amounts to a 'dissertation'. In a reprise of the geometrical metaphor which in some sense endures throughout the poem, the penultimate stanza asks about 'the centre of resemblance', echoing 'the irreducible X/at the bottom of imagined artifice' of the first section and the various focal points of the final section of the second 'academic piece'. The nature of the text that is equivalent, or the vehicle, of/to the celebration is, however, 'thought's compromise'. The celebration in the discursive oration/dissertation which would position

the poet (and the human) at the centre of resemblance, in place of the irreducible X, is only possible at the price of compromise. That place is, in fact, so much as a result of the compromise of *dianoia* that it amounts to the sacrifice of philosophy itself, as the question hypothesizes:

> A world agrees, thought's compromise, resolved
> At last, the centre of resemblance, found
> Under the bones of time's philosophers?

The dissertation of the philosopher takes place in the wake of philosophy and at its expense, such that the final saying can only take place in poetry and in the poetry of this poem, this academic piece which resembles a poem and yet says:

> The orator will say that we ourselves
> Stand at the centre of ideal time,
> The inhuman making choice of a human self.

In fact, Badiou has written on Wallace Stevens and the essay is included in a recent collection which comprises the key texts by Badiou on the age of poets (Badiou, 2014). Contrary to Badiou, however, for whom Stevens is another poet who, like Celan, presents what Lacoue-Labarthe summarizes as 'the event which gives to thought the necessary desuturation of philosophy from the poem' (Lacoue-Labarthe, 1992, p. 40) in his 'Three Academic Pieces', while Stevens does negotiate a play of pathos and *logos*, the dissertations of philosophy are inscribed in the vacillations between modes and between genres.

We have seen, then, how the dispute with mimesis, understood as the debilitating and deformative labour of the simulacrum in both Plato and Aristotle, is singled out for attention by each – by Plato for the good of the *polis* and by Aristotle to produce a theory of literary kinds which would endorse his more general teleology and hylomorphism. The Jena romantics return to the scene of this exclusion and in the aptly named *Athenaeum* rethink the relationship of poetry as a particular manifestation of *poiesie* which transcends genre and the Aristotelian reign of class and of type. The driving force of *poiesis* in the context of ancient Greek philosophy is closely linked to Heidegger's engagement with poetry. It is this engagement which implicates Heidegger in what Badiou calls the suture to the poem and inscribes his place in the Age of the Poets which, according to Badiou, is at once a lineage including the

Jena romantics, a poetic canon and an eclectic group of philosophers. In the course of this unfolding play of recognition, false recognition and corrective reframing, it is the poem, as exemplified here in the unde-cideable guise of Stevens, which testifies to the compromised reflective surface of philosophy and of philosophy when it concerns itself with genre.[7]

Notes

1. 'A fragment. Like a miniature work of art, has to be entirely isolated from the surrounding world and be complete in itself like a hedgehog' (Schlegel, 1971, p. 189).
2. By 'inaesthetics [Badiou writes in an epigraph] I understand a relation of phi-losophy to art that, maintaining that art is itself a producer of truths, makes no claim to turn art into an object for philosophy. Against aesthetic specula-tion, inaesthetics describes the strictly intraphilosophical effects produced by the independent existence of some works of art' (Badiou 2005).
3. For Lacoue-Labarthe in terms more or less agreed upon by theorists operating in advance of, and indeed far from, the theoretical terrain of the literary or any other absolute. The signal for Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy is found in philos-ophy, in philosophy reflecting on poetry and adopting some of the generic features of the poetic.
4. For instance, David Antin reminds us of the playful way in which Aristotle's *Poetics* may be regarded both as a response to Plato but also as a subversive deconstruction of the foundation of the Platonic denigration of poetry in Book X of *The Republic* (Antin, 1988, p. 242). In The *Poetics*, Aristotle, Antin points out, smuggles in a playful critical commentary on the fact that Plato's philosophy has a particular kinship with poetry; the Socratic dialogues them-selves effectively display the fact that Plato would have to banish himself from his own republic.
5. Although the category identified by Badiou in his list of the generic conditions is expressed as 'the poem' in a specific meaning – as we have done above in our citing of the passage on metaphorical language in Plato (which issues in nothing less than the wrong turn of philosophy, albeit wrongly diagnosed by Heidegger) – it is emphatically, and without any extension into authors associated with other genres, poets to whom philosophy sutures itself. The momentary loosening of the list to include Deleuze is, however, revealing. While in the case of Blanchot it is easy to see a prevailing preoccupation with certain great poets – Mallarmé, notably – as capable of characterizing all his critical writing in some fashion, and Derrida spent sufficient time writing on poets for him to be thought of in this manner, Deleuze did not.
6. Translation: 'the poem only says that which philosophy needs it to say and to feign the discovery of the poem's surprise'.
7. As Ziarek suggests in his book on philosophy and Stevens and Celan, 'For both Hölderlin and Stevens, poetry becomes its own theme, as their poems reflect upon themselves and often thematise the origin and essence of poetic language' (Ziarek, 1994, pp. 109–110).

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2

Remembering to Forget: The Role of Time, Space and Memory in Mikhail Bakhtin's Treatment of Language

Michael Volek

This chapter discusses the interrelated questions of time, space and memory in the work of Mikhail Bakhtin. In particular, it addresses a claim he makes in his best-known work in the Anglophone world, the essays collected as *The Dialogic Imagination*, where he observes that

> All words have the 'taste' of a profession, a genre, a tendency, a party, a particular work, a particular person, a generation, an age group, the day and hour. Each word tastes of the context and contexts in which it has lived its socially charged life; all words and forms are populated by intentions.

> (1981, p. 293)

We might paraphrase this as something like: words and genres always remember their past. Indeed, in another important work, entitled *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, Bakhtin says almost exactly that: 'A genre lives in the present, but always *remembers* its past, its beginning' (1984, p. 106).

This is frequently taken to mean that language acquires a particular social significance on the basis of its historical usage.[1] Jeffrey Olick in a paper entitled 'Genre Memories and Memory Genres' gives clear expression to this view. He writes:

> The central idea in Bakhtin's work is that of dialogue – the ongoing addressivity and historicity of language: All utterances take place within unique historical situations while at the same time contain

'memory traces' of earlier usages – meaning not that any utterance can be decoded to reveal earlier usages but that the specificity of every term is the product of a long historical development.

(1999, p. 383)

Bemong and Borghart (2010) even describe the cognitive processes involved. Citing Keunen (2000), they explain:

In the course of their cognitive development, readers acquire a genre memory consisting of an aggregate of mental structures tantamount to varying generic chronotopes. During the reading process, one of these memory schemata will be activated, thus enabling the reader to recognize the relevant chronotope and its corresponding narrative genre.

(2010, p. 12)[2]

James Wertsch offers a colourful example of this commitment to prior speech in the use of the word 'flip-flop'.[3] He writes:

By being used so widely and repeatedly in the 2004 [US presidential] campaign, it is now difficult, as least in the aftermath of the campaign, for a speaker of American English to use the term 'flip-flop' without hearing the dialogic overtones of those who levelled the charge against [John] Kerry. It was nearly impossible in the months following the 2004 . . . campaign to use the term as if it belonged to no one.

(2007, p. 64)

The idea that a speaker will use a given form of speech as a means of drawing on its associations is a familiar one among sociolinguists. Philips puts this view in a nutshell when she refers to

the idea that by speaking in a particular style which is highly valued and/or associated with authority, or by speaking from within a particular discourse genre that is authoritative or associated with authoritative people, a speaker is more persuasive, more convincing, and more attended to.

(2004, p. 475)

It is a view we still see being applied to linguistic analyses as, for instance, when Scheuer (2003) describes a job interview during which the speaker consciously employs a speech style that indexes academia.

More recent sociolinguistic work (e.g. Coupland, 2007; Rampton, 2009; Bauman, 2011) theorizes a more complex relationship between the speaker's intentions and the historically developed meanings and connotations of the style or genre that has been employed. On this view, the speaker is not committed simply to reproducing the earlier overtones but may engage with them (polemicize with them, parody them and so forth). As Bauman explains, 'the act of expression itself is framed as display: objectified, lifted out to a degree from its contextual surroundings, and opened up to interpretive and evaluative scrutiny by an audience, both in terms of its intrinsic qualities and its associational resonances' (2004, p. 9). But even the creative, and potentially critical, appropriation of linguistic form seems to entail a reproduction of historically developed meanings. We can challenge or subvert the significance of a style or genre only if we have sufficient cultural literacy to recognize its semiotic value (Coupland, 2007).

This observation is extremely important, but it represents only a small part of the story. Indeed, what I want to argue here is that it is a rather misleading part, for it suggests that we are, in some ways, committed to that long historically developed significance. I would like to argue, on the contrary, that memory is crucial to the Bakhtinian notion of genre – and to his treatment of language in general – not because we are committed to the past for its own sake but for the sake of surpassing it, of moving past it and, in a sense, of forgetting it, and that only by remembering are we able to forget. What I mean by this is that we may turn to the past not simply to situate contemporary significance (which, after all, is a very old idea) but as the benchmark against which contemporary meanings are newly established. As Morson and Emerson put it in their excellent discussion of Bakhtinian prosaics, 'without memory and a rich sense of the past, freedom and meaningful change are illusory' (1990, p. 224). Genre memory and the broader cultural memory of language serve as a link between the fixed past and an unfinalizable future: 'Memory establishes identity, enables responsibility, and creates meaningful potential' (1990, p. 224).

I must begin, however, by acknowledging that Bakhtin's discussion of genre memory seems to take an oddly conservative line. He (1984, p. 159) writes: 'We are not interested in the influence of separate individual authors, individual works, individual themes, ideas, images – what interests us is precisely the influence of the *generic tradition itself*'. Bakhtin (1981) expends enormous effort in tracing the modern novel back to its roots in the genre of the Socratic dialogue and the Menippean satire, insisting that a proper understanding of the genre requires us to

return to its sources. This careful scholarly work, which exposes what Bakhtin (1984, p. 101) calls 'the generic and plot-compositional characteristics' of the modern novel, grounds his view of language in a train of literary developments that began at the close of classical antiquity, establishing the role of dialogue and the seriocomical genres. But it does not represent a model for our relationship to language. That is to say, we can better understand the workings of the modern novel by grasping its living roots in the genres of classical antiquity – but it is the workings themselves that interest us, and this entails something other than simply accounting for the past. Indeed, it requires a careful rethinking of what constitutes the past and our relationship to it. My efforts here will be devoted to unpacking these ideas in Bakhtin's work.

One of the concepts for which Bakhtin is most well known – and which is central to the question of time and memory – is what he calls the 'chronotope' – literally 'time-space' – a notion apparently inspired by the work of Albert Einstein. Bakhtin writes:

> In the . . . chronotope, spatial and temporal indicators are fused into one carefully thought-out, concrete whole. Time, as it were, thickens, takes on flesh, becomes artistically visible; likewise, space becomes charged and responsive to the movements of time, plot and history. This intersection of axes and fusion of indicators characterizes the artistic chronotope.
>
> (1981, p. 84)

We might suppose from this that he was concerned with how the various literary genres manifested time and space. Indeed, he goes on to say:

> The chronotope in literature has an intrinsic generic significance [that is to say, a significance for Bakhtin's theoretical notion of genre]. It can even be said that it is precisely the chronotope that defines genre and generic distinctions, for in literature the primary category in the chronotope is time.
>
> (1981, pp. 84–85)

Bakhtin even proposes a typology of times (and spaces) as constituted in the different genres. However, he is concerned with two in particular – the 'high genres' of classicism (the epic, the tragic, the ode and so forth) on the one hand, and the romantic on the other. These appear to serve

as foils for his description of time and space in the modern novel – and, more generally, in the modern linguistic consciousness – and therefore illuminate the role of genre memory in his treatment of language. These will be our focus, too.

Let us begin with time as construed in the epic genre – and to a greater or lesser extent in all the high genres from classical antiquity to the Middle Ages (1981, p. 18). Bakhtin identifies three characteristics: (1) an orientation towards the absolute past; (2) a concern for national tradition; and (3) a profound distance between the represented world and contemporary reality (1981, p. 13). Notable here is the emphasis on the past.

We must be careful, however, not to construe this notion of 'past' in terms of the present – as a moment tied to the present through a flow of temporal transitions. When Bakhtin speaks of an 'absolute past' situated at an 'absolute distance', he has in mind something other than chronological time; it is, rather, a 'temporally valorized hierarchical category' (1981, p. 18) – a conceptual space in which we locate our 'beginnings' and 'peak times', our 'firsts' and 'bests' (1981, p. 13). Instead of the usual arrow of time, divided between past and future by the present moment, the classical genres thus constitute time as a closed circle situated in a sort of orbit that never approaches the present. Bakhtin writes:

> within this time, completed and locked into a circle, all points are equidistant from the real, dynamic time of the present; insofar as this time is whole, it is not localized in an actual historical sequence; it is not relative to the present or to the future; it contains within itself, as it were, the entire fullness of time. As a consequence all high genres of the classical era, that is, its entire high literature, *are structured in the zone of the distanced image, a zone outside any possible contact with the present in all its openendedness*.
>
> (1981, p. 19; emphasis added)

We will return to this description in a moment. But first let us briefly consider what might be taken as the very opposite of the epic world-view: the 'natural-idyllic' chronotope of the pastoral novel, in which everything is interpreted through the lens of a particular space and time. Whereas the epic is characterized by a profound distance, the idyllic is irremediably bound to the local and familiar – 'an organic fastening-down, a grafting of life and its events to a place, to a familiar territory with all its nooks and crannies, its familiar mountains, valleys, fields, rivers and forests, and one's own home' (1981, p. 225):

> Idyllic life and its events are inseparable from this concrete, spatial corner of the world where the fathers and grandfathers lived and where one's children and their children will live. This little spatial world is limited and sufficient unto itself, not linked in any intrinsic way with other places, with the rest of the world.
>
> (1981, p. 225)

What we find, however, is that the idyll, like the world of the epic, is wholly cut off from contemporary reality. And even within the idyll, authentic spatiotemporal distinctions break down, replaced by a transcendent ideal: this particular moment is replaced by a characteristic moment, one that has come and passed countless times; this particular space is replaced by a typical space, one that endures as such throughout time. Bakhtin writes:

> This unity of place in the life of generations weakens and renders less distinct all the temporal boundaries between individual lives and between various phases of one and the same life. The unity of place brings together and even fuses the cradle and the grave (the same little corner, the same earth), and brings together as well childhood and old age (the same grove, stream, the same lime trees, the same house), the life of the various generations who had also lived in that same place, under the same conditions, and who had seen the same things. This blurring of all the temporal boundaries made possible by a unity of place also contributes in an essential way to the creation of the cyclic rhythmicalness of time so characteristic of the idyll.
>
> (1981, p. 225)

Once again, the present is eclipsed by a moment that transcends chronological time, a moment in which an imperfect present serves only to manifest the ideal past: this is a moment that has always come – birth, death, the planting, the harvest – and it will come again and again. The circle is closed. Past, present and future are already written.

Let us turn, then, to a genre that makes a more definitive break: the romantic. While the particularity of the idyll turns out not to offer a genuine alternative to the absolute distance of the epic, Romanticism posits an inescapably subjective point of view. Rather than framing the world from the perspective of a timeless ideal, it structures it entirely from within the limits of the 'sealed-off individual life' (1981, p. 199). Here, it seems, we must surely discover a radical alternative to the classical

treatment of time. But this turns out not to be the case. Indeed, while the romantic perspective is conceived, in some sense, as the mirror image of the epic, this makes it the opposite face of the same basic paradigm. Rather than grounding its themes on a valorized past, it makes its own present intentions the evaluative centre: the past is construed, in a sense, as 'the inert crust, the hardened lava of language creativity' (1973, p. 48). As Bakhtin observes,

> in such a world, a man can only function as an isolated and private individual, deprived of any organic connection with his country, his city, his own social group, his clan, even his own family. He does not feel himself to be a part of the social whole. He is a solitary man, lost in an alien world. And he has no mission in this world. Privacy and isolation are the essential features of the human image.
>
> (1981, p. 108)

This makes possible what Bakhtin calls 'adventure-time', characteristic of romantic-adventure novels, which are notable, in his view, for the absence of any real biographical development among the characters (what we might call 'biographical time'). All the events 'are a pure digression from the normal course of life; they are excluded from the kind of real duration in which additions to a normal biography are made' (1981, p. 90). Such a form of time is frequently characterized by words such as 'suddenly' and 'at just that moment', which serve to link one episode to the next:

> In this kind of time, nothing changes: the world remains as it was, the biographical life of the heroes does not change, their feelings do not change, people do not even age. This empty time leaves no traces anywhere, no indications of its passing.
>
> (1981, p. 92)

Imagine what would happen in such a chronotope if biographical time were allowed to elapse: we could find ourselves in the sort of situation parodied by Voltaire in *Candide*, where at the novel's end the heroes consummate the obligatory happy marriage only after they have grown old and ugly (1981, pp. 90–91).

I suggested earlier that Bakhtin constructs his investigation of literary chronotopes around variations of these two perspectives – the epic (and other high genres) on the one hand, and the romantic on the other. This, I believe, is because his real intention is to articulate an

alternative to such a dichotomy – one that combines the traditional, valorized ideas of the high genres with the adventure of the romantic genres.

Bakhtin is perhaps most famous (at least in some circles) for ideas about the grotesque and the medieval carnival in the work of Rabelais.[4] We may even speak of a 'Rabelaisian chronotope'. But I would argue that this serves a larger purpose in Bakhtin's treatment of time and language, marking a transitional phase in the history of the novel, heralding the final, decisive break with the tendencies of the past, and preparing the way for the modern linguistic consciousness. He writes:

> Rabelais' task is to purge the spatial and temporal world of those remnants of a transcendent world view still present in it, to clean away symbolic and hierarchical interpretations still clinging to this vertical world, to purge it of the contagion of 'antiphysis' that had infected it. In Rabelais this polemical task is fused with a more affirmative one: the re-creation of a spatially and temporally adequate world able to provide a new chronotope for a new, whole and harmonious man, and for new forms of human communication.
>
> (1981, p. 168)

The essence of this method consists, first of all, 'in the destruction of all ordinary ties, of all the habitual matrices . . . of things and ideas, and the creation of unexpected matrices, unexpected connections, including the most surprising logical links . . . and linguistic connections' (1981, p. 169). But the polemically driven embrace of the monstrous and grotesque relies on the very orthodoxy it opposes for its effect. Otherwise, its own series of connections and associations – death and laughter, for instance – will be undermined either by false seriousness (and thus the inauguration of a new hierarchical past) or by perpetual ambivalence.

We must therefore look beyond the carnivalization of traditional relationships. Consider, first, the 'sociopsychological' or 'biographical' novels. Bakhtin writes:

> the modes for plotting the story link one character to another not as one person to another person but as father to son, husband to wife, rival to rival, lover to beloved, or as landlord to peasant, property-owner to proletarian, well-to-do-bourgeois to déclassé tramp, and so forth. Relationships of family, of life-story and biography, of social

status and social class are the stable all-determining basis for all plot connections; contingency has no place here.

(1984a, p. 104)

We seem to find ourselves far removed from anything resembling an epic chronotope. But we must ask ourselves: Where do these ideas of father, son, landlord, peasant and so forth – and their connections, father to son, landlord to peasant and so on – come from? They are not open for evaluation; they are handed to us fully developed and complete. The story may be set in contemporary times but its pieces and the relationships among those pieces have already been established.

And this perhaps sheds a little light on a passage we encountered earlier, in which Bakhtin observes that the high genres 'are structured in the zone of the distanced image, a zone outside any possible contact with the present in all its openendedness' (1981, p. 19). By relying 'wholly on the social and characterological definitiveness of the hero', even contemporary genres like the 'sociopsychological' or 'biographical' novel can be seen to reproduce an epic orientation to the absolute past. Much as we discovered in the idyllic chronotope, the particularity of the present in the 'sociopsychological' or 'biographical' novel is eclipsed by the timelessness of the idea: the individual appears merely as a manifestation, for instance, of the idea of 'father' or 'husband' or 'property-owner'. The present is thus represented as the working out of timeless truths: relationships between father and son, husband and wife, property-owner and proletarian, and so forth. The intrinsic humanity of the character 'is to such an extent made concrete and specific by his place in life that it is . . . denied any decisive influence on plot relationships. It can be revealed only within the strict framework of those relationships' (1984a, p. 104).

The 'adventure' novel, on the other hand, pays little heed to established ideas and relationships:

[It] relies not on what the hero is, not on the place he occupies in life, but more often on what he is not, on what . . . is unexpected and not predetermined. The adventure plot does not rely on already available and stable positions – family, social, biographical; it develops in spite of them . . . All social and cultural institutions, establishments, social states and classes, family relationships are no more than positions in which a person can be eternally equal to himself.

(1984a, p. 104)

The adventure hero is precisely not the idea signified by 'his class or social station, his family position, his age, his life and biographical goals', which merely clothe the underlying person. He may function, for instance, in the 'clothing' of an aristocrat, but 'he shoots, commits crimes, flees from enemies, overcomes obstacles, and so forth' as a person (1984a, p. 104) – which is to say, as an individual. This individual, however, is completely defined by the plot – by the challenges he meets – in the absence of which he remains empty and incapable of establishing connections with any other characters (1984a, p. 105). Whereas the epic makes its characters portable to such an extent that contingency vanishes, the romantic literally uncovers the individual in his manner of responding to the particularity of his encounters. He is thus 'not a substance, but a pure function of adventures and escapades' (1984a, p. 102).

For Bakhtin, the modern novel – epitomized in the work of Dostoevsky – is an adventure not of the costumed character (of the adventure novel) but of the fully fledged idea and the 'man of the idea'. At the same time, however, the given idea no longer collides with another – as 'property-owner' collides with 'proletarian' – in the interest of plot development; rather, just as the hero is tested in the adventure novel, here the idea itself is tested against the unexpected and 'unpredetermined' – that is to say, the very notion of 'property-owner' and 'proletarian' is put to the test:

> In Dostoevsky, the adventure plot is combined with the posing of profound and acute problems; and it is, in addition, placed wholly at the service of the idea. It places a person in extraordinary positions that expose and provoke him, it connects him and makes him collide with other people under unusual and unexpected conditions precisely for the purpose of testing the idea and the man of the idea, that is, for testing the 'man in man'.
>
> (1984a, p. 105)

Now, how does all this play out with respect to time and memory? What we see, first of all, is that in contrast with both the epic and the romantic perspectives, everything here is subject to change. Neither the idea nor its carrier can remain untouched by events. They are thus brought into the present, their significance moulded by contemporary realities. But they are not simply the products of contingent events. The aristocrat (for instance) is not an empty signifier for the hero within; he is the real thing – in whatever sense we understand the notion. Indeed, the

understanding we bring to the text – of the aristocrat as such – is essential to the author's artistic intentions. This understanding, of course, differs from one socioideological position to the next, positions that are memorialized in various styles and genres of speech and literature. Words, utterances, genres – even the genre of genres, the novel itself – preserve their histories, and they do so in the same way that their histories are established in the first place: in their uptake and reproduction from one speaker or writer to the next:

> A genre is always the same and yet not the same, always old and new simultaneously. Genre is reborn and renewed at every new stage in the development of literature and in every individual work of a given genre. This constitutes the life of the genre. Therefore even the archaic elements preserved in a genre are not dead but eternally alive; that is, archaic elements are capable of renewing themselves. A genre lives in the present, but always remembers its past, its beginning. This constitutes the life of the genre . . . *A genre lives in the present, but always remembers its past, its beginning*.
>
> <div align="right">(1984a, p. 106; emphasis added)</div>

A genre always remembers its past, but what sort of past would that be? Here we return to the problem of the epic and romantic. What we 'remember' from the epic perspective is that which has been raised up as worthy of the future. Bakhtin writes: 'Greatness always makes itself known only to descendents, for whom such a quality is . . . located in the past (it turns into a distanced image); it has become an object of memory and not a living object that one can see and touch' (1981, p. 19). Between the present and the remembered past is an unbridgeable gap. Likewise from the romantic perspective: the past is simply another position from which a person can be eternally equal to himself – the individual is revealed as a hero in spite of his criminal history. The past has no power, no significance, aside from the obstacles it throws in the path of the hero's self-realization.

Living genres do not engage with the past in either such sense. The past, rather, presents itself in the unbroken chain of a given generic tradition – that is, in real moments tied to the present in an uninterrupted flow of temporal transitions. This is why Bakhtin says genres always live in the present while remembering the past: genres represent a continuation – or, rather, a contemporization, a renewal – of the past. His emphasis on the past, then, turns out really to be in the service of the present – again, not in the sense of subordinating the present to the past

(that is, of framing or structuring the present in terms of the past) but, rather, of bringing the past into the present.

But there is something even more profound in Bakhtin's treatment of time: to say that a given genre can be renewed or contemporized in its contact with the present is really to suggest that it can be renewed in its contact with ideas in the present – ideas that can come from anywhere. And this is what Bakhtin sees as the defining characteristic of the modern novel (and, by extension, the modern linguistic consciousness):[5] the recognition that different voices and genres, each grounded in its own separate, living history, can be tested against one another, each revealing new and unexpected facets in the other's light. In this way the past is never complete, never authoritative and always open-ended.

Notes

1. I should emphasize that this discussion concerns the sociolinguistic engagement with Bakhtin in the Anglo-American tradition, and that other communities, and other disciplines, will undoubtedly draw on Bakhtin in different ways. For more on the sociolinguistic uptake of Bakhtin, see Volek (2014).
2. Indeed, Kuenen goes so far as to say that, in Bakhtin's view, 'all prior knowledge needed for encoding or decoding literary texts is organized by means of stereotypical cognitive structures' through a process he calls 'template matching' (2000, pp. 4–6).
3. Cf. Lempert (2009).
4. Cf. Bakhtin (1984b). For a good overview of the role of the carnivalesque in Bakhtin's work, see Morson and Emerson (1990). For a broader sampling of the scholarly work on this theme, see Shepherd (1993).
5. Indeed, Bakhtin (1981, p. 80) argues that the 'novelistic word' played 'a titanic role in the formulation of a new literary and linguistic consciousness'. For more on this notion, see Giltrow (2003) and Volek (2014).

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Part II
Memory, Testimony, Politics

3

The Question of Genre in Holocaust Narrative: The Case of Patrick Modiano's *Dora Bruder*

Béatrice Damamme-Gilbert

'Writings *about* the Holocaust began to appear almost simultaneously with the occurrence of the events themselves' (Lang, 1988, p. 1). No less promptly, however, debate ensued about what could legitimately be written about something which is not 'a conventional or "normal" subject at all' and how this could be written. Historiography and literature have both been scrutinized as to their ability to communicate and represent the uniqueness of the Holocaust, both as event and as lived experience, the implication being that unique modes of expression and representation were needed. Witness statements, often recorded on film but also written, have noticeably been present in the discursive space opened up by Holocaust memory. The issue of truth and the crucial importance of facts that only witnesses and perhaps historians can narrate have understandably informed the controversies about legitimacy, but many have also stressed the role literary fiction can play, particularly as a conduit for imaginative transmission to later generations, now that first-hand contact with the lived reality of the Holocaust is slowly disappearing (Sicher, 1998). New types of narrative are being produced, transposing and processing, for new audiences, inherited trauma, interacting meanwhile with other forms of public and private remembrance, and raising new ethical and political questions (Horowitz in Kluge and Williams, 2009, pp. vii–viii). Our main concern will be to look at the way issues surrounding the Holocaust and genre are played out in the sphere of narrative literature, taking the example of Patrick Modiano's *Dora Bruder* (1997), a prominent text from French Holocaust literature.

Discussions about form and genre of Holocaust writing revolve around the tension between the sheer impossibility of producing a text

which could approach an adequate representation of traumatic events felt as outside the norms of what it is to be human, and the irrepressible need to tell and transmit Holocaust experience, 'lest we forget', and therefore to find a workable (and legitimate) form as a vehicle for that incommunicable experience largely made up of void, absence and erasure.[1] Experimenting with form and language has been at the heart of many of the major Holocaust texts.[2]

The concept of genre is potentially confusing and is used differently in a variety of contexts. At its most basic it refers to different types of text and is inevitably concerned with form. Within literature (one of the spheres of discourse) one can quite easily contrast narrative texts with poetry and drama. However, narrative texts themselves can be divided up into subgenres such as, among others, fiction (which might include novel, novella, short story or simply *récit* [narrative]), biography and autobiography. The intended conformity to truth and facts as they are known to have unfolded in the real world (a critical issue where the Holocaust is concerned) provides a relatively clear criterion for differentiation between fiction and non-fiction, but, in the case of autobiography, a commonly recognized genre, Philippe Lejeune (1975) proposed that the defining characteristic was a question of contract between author and reader.[3] Bakhtin (1984, 1981) by then had shown the complexity of the literary novel form where narrator and character voices introduce different layers of speech and multiple points of view, and therefore possible subgenres.[4] The question of the intended reader, or receiver, is another crucial dimension which is often discussed in the context of genre (Bakhtin, 1986). Holocaust texts being stories of tragedy and loss, the writers of such texts are often extremely aware of their purpose, their desire to contribute to the perpetuation of Holocaust memory; it is therefore impossible not to include an ethical dimension as a potential criterion when reflecting on their genre. Leaving aside other spheres of discourse and the important area of visual representation, we are aware that the different approaches to genre in literature risk overlapping and muddying our discussion. Rather than excluding any one criterion at this stage, we will attempt to explain how the different facets of the concept we have briefly introduced (fiction vs. non-fiction, importance of facts, narrative voices, intended reader, purpose and ethics) can work productively alongside each other, when examining a text which, on first reading, appears difficult to classify and multidimensional.

In the context of France's difficult relationship with its past, notably the four years of German occupation, and particularly with the issue

of its responsibility in the persecution of Jews, different periods of collective (or, more accurately, social) memory (and amnesia) have been established (Rousso, 1987; Bragança, 2014). Cultural productions (film and particularly documentary, but also literature) have been recognized as hugely instrumental in helping France to come out of its period of partial amnesia following the end of the Second World War until the late 1960s and early 1970s.[5] Patrick Modiano is frequently cited as a major figure in the process of French society's confrontation of the murky past of the occupation (which includes not simply anti-Semitism but also collaboration, denunciation and black-market activities, alongside resistance in its many forms). He was even seen as the leader of the *retro* movement, a label he has always rejected (Morris, 1992; Bragança, 2014, p. 314) The very fact that his readership has always been wide, even before he became the subject of academic interest, shows that his work strikes a chord in the sensibility of his contemporaries.

Patrick Modiano was born in 1945 of a Jewish father and a Flemish mother, who met in Paris during the occupation. He describes himself as the offspring of these dark years, claiming even that his memory reaches back to the period preceding his birth. Certainly his ability to recreate imaginatively the dangerous and criminal climate of the period with eerie accuracy and sensitivity was confirmed by readers from older generations (and very recently recognized with the award of the 2014 Nobel Prize). He burst onto the French literary scene in 1968 with a title, *La Place de l'étoile* (*The Place of the Star*), which says much about the centrality of the Holocaust in his work.[6] Far from being a conventional narrative of any genre, the book uses the voice of a hallucinating first-person narrator who is both anti-Semitic and Jewish and navigates wildly in time and place, France and Israel being two important points of reference. *La Ronde de nuit* (*Night Rounds*) (1969) and *Les Boulevards de ceinture* (*Ring Roads*) (1972), his next two novels, continue to evoke, openly, if in a slightly more restrained manner, the world of the occupation. Often described as centred on the problematic figure of his father, a Jew who survived in the Paris of the occupation by associating with black-marketeers and collaborators, these books form the first phase of the novelist's production. Obsessed with the question of Jewish identity and the realities of France's anti-Semitic past, none of these texts, however, could, arguably, be described as Holocaust narratives if we use as a working definition those narratives where the Holocaust and its victims form an explicit, or at least a major, narrative theme. The Holocaust is a powerful underlying signifier rather than an unambiguous motif. In his next phase, broadly until the 1990s, he developed a characteristically

muted style, where a continuing obsession with the past and its capacity to destabilize the present, and a difficulty with establishing any form of identity were conveyed through narrative and temporal uncertainty. Typically a first-person narrator is engaged in a search to elucidate an ill-defined crime, and shady figures and places bear the weight of past deeds which will never be cleared up but continue to cast a profound existential malaise. Although events connected to the Holocaust are often alluded to and sometimes offer a key to the reader's understanding, none of these texts could easily be classified as Holocaust narratives either.

Discussions of form and genre in Modiano's work have been frequent. Particularly in France, they have centred largely on his idiosyncratic style and on the extent to which his fictional narrator doubles up as an autobiographer, his own biography being closely (sometimes jokingly) intertwined with that of his literary alter-egos. Some texts can be described as resembling autobiographies, episodes of the markedly difficult, forlorn childhood and youth of the author being, for example, represented in several books from that period.[7] The term 'auto-fiction', coined by Serge Doubrovsky (1977) to describe fictions of the self, has repeatedly been applied to Modiano (Laurent, 1997; Cooke, 2005), and critics interested in postmodernist forms (Kawakami, 2000) have also seen in his work many features typical of the instability, game-playing and self-referentiality of literature in the post-modern era. Meanwhile, Modiano's extensive use of real or distorted names of real individuals and real events (recorded in the press, for example) in his novels was also brought to light by dedicated researchers such as Morris (2007). All of these approaches problematize the question of fiction and the issue of the writer's/narrator's positioning towards their text and help to understand *Dora Bruder*'s critical reception. They also mirror closely interrogations pervading the ongoing debate about genre and Holocaust literature. However, the specific question of the possible genre of this text placed in the broader context of Holocaust writing and its future deserves further analysis.

Published in 1997 (with a revised paperback edition in 1999), *Dora Bruder* in many ways breaks with the long list of novels (and auto-fictional works) published hitherto by Modiano. Using as title the name of a Holocaust victim marks out this book as different and places it unambiguously in the category of Holocaust narrative.[8] The text is built around the author's search for the eponymous 15-year-old girl whose existence he discovered, in 1988, in an old copy of a December 1941 newspaper in which her parents had placed an advertisement following her disappearance:

PARIS

On recherche une jeune fille, Dora Bruder, 15 ans, 1m55, visage ovale, yeux gris-marron, manteau sport gris, pull-over bordeaux, jupe et chapeau bleu marine, chaussures sport marron. Adresser toutes indications à M. et Mme Bruder, 41 boulevard Ornano, Paris. [Missing, a young girl, Dora Bruder, age 15, height 1.55 m, oval-shaped face, grey-brown eyes, grey sports jacket, maroon pullover, navy-blue skirt and hat, brown gym shoes. Address all information to M. and Mme Bruder, 41 Boulevard Ornano, Paris.]

(p. 7; p. 3)[9]

Running away from boarding school, as she did, was something Modiano himself had experienced several times during his adolescence and with which he could therefore identify. Her parents' address was also familiar to him. In many ways this is a typical example of the genesis of most of his novels: a fragment of the past recorded in the press becomes the starting point of one of his fictions. Only this time, such was his obsession with the 15-year-old girl that the fragment led to a long and thorough investigation and the start of a very different project. Modiano soon discovered that Dora's name appeared with that of her parents on the lists, established by Serge Klarsfeld (1978), of the convoys which left the internment camp of Drancy for Auschwitz. As recorded in his book, she was part of the 18 September 1942 convoy, with her father; her mother was deported on 11 February 1943. Klarsfeld's name and *Le Mémorial de la déportation des Juifs de France* are not mentioned in the text but the lists are easy to identify as his source.[10]

Modiano published several fictions over the eight years during which *Dora Bruder* was maturing as a writing project. In one of them, *Voyage de noces* (*Honeymoon*) (1991), he remodelled the basic material from the advertisement and invented a fictional Jewish character, Ingrid Teyrsen, who runs away from home in 1941 in Paris and survives in hiding, while her father is deported; she eventually commits suicide many years later.

His search for all information regarding the missing Dora eventually led to the 1997 publication of the eponymous work which might, initially, be described as composite.

Although the narrator, at first sight, resembles closely most other ambiguous but largely fictional Modianesque narrators, several clear markers indicate this time that the reading contract with the reader (if we use Lejeune's terminology) is that of the autobiographer, overlapping here with that of the biographer, since his primary motivation is to understand who Dora was and what happened to her in the highly

dangerous city Paris had become in the winter of 1941. In other words, we can conclude that he speaks in his own name, as the writer that he is, and is committed to uncovering the true facts of the young girl's life. He refers, for example, metanarratively, to the writing of *Voyage de noces*, noting that, using solely his imagination to invent a fate for the fictional Ingrid, he had failed to come near the truth of the real Jewish girl, except at one small moment of the narrative (pp. 53–54; pp. 48–49). The text also contains, through a technique of collage, says Annelies Schulte Nordholt (2012, p. 524), many authentic documents which are transcribed, in part at least: Dora's birth certificate, her parents' marriage certificate, excerpts from police registers, letters from relatives of Jewish deportees (and one by a deportee *en route* to Auschwitz) and an extract from an administrative report. Furthermore, it describes a number of authentic photographs of Dora and her parents, which brings it, in places, closer to a documentary or even a historical account than any of Modiano's previous work. It is generally accepted now that *Dora Bruder* cannot, overall, be read as a work of imagination, although not all critics agreed initially and further comments, as we shall see, are certainly needed.

Biographical narrative, fiction, ekphrasis

At the core of the book is an attempt at a biographical narrative, using, wherever possible, factual and documentary evidence. As we will see, Modiano's attempt does not, however, really succeed in spite of extensive research and enquiries. If his primary investigation concerns Dora and her whereabouts in 1941–1942, his approach leads him also to reconstruct her parents' background, similar to that of many immigrants from Eastern Europe: her father came from Vienna after first joining the French foreign legion; her mother had arrived from Budapest with her parents. He traces their addresses and workplaces. His narrative blends documentary evidence with hypotheses and occasional imaginary scenes based on facts. He identifies the boarding school from which Dora ran away: a catholic convent in Paris, in the 12th *arrondissement*, long devoted to educating girls from deprived families. He guesses that her parents, who did not register her as Jewish in the autumn of 1940, when they registered themselves (pp. 47–48; pp. 42–43), were trying to hide her there, which gives a tragic edge to the reality of her escape and its likely consequences. He even traces a cousin of hers who remembers her vaguely as rebellious, and scrutinizes attentively the family photos he has obtained. But he finds very little about what happened to her

when she ran away. A few mentions of her on police registers gradually emerge – particularly the fact that she was eventually interned in Paris in a grim institution called Les Tourelles, where delinquent minors and women were imprisoned during the war – before finally being transferred to Drancy (where her father was, by then, himself interned) and from there to Auschwitz.

His narrative is methodical, providing wherever possible the detail of the evidence that he has uncovered, sometimes, but not always, explaining how and where it came to light. He pays close attention to relevant factual details of the period: the records of the weather, and the streets she must have taken when she ran away, which he scrutinizes for possible clues. He focuses meticulously on places, transformations of the urban landscape through successive layers of time, using a method long practised in his novels. One example might be the Ornano 43 cinema, close to where she lived, no longer used as a cinema now but once showing films that Dora no doubt would have seen. In many ways, nevertheless, the biographical narrative is a failure; she remains a shadowy, absent figure. The text concludes by admitting that what Modiano so much wanted to discover – what happened to her on the two occasions when she ran away – will remain secret, the only thing that remains of her: 'C'est là son secret. Un pauvre et précieux secret' ('That is her secret. A poor and precious secret') (p. 145; p. 137).

Modiano, however, uses two different methods to bring his biographical subject to life, going beyond the mere facts and using what could be described as a literary approach. These methods have an impact on his readers' engagement with the narrative.

First, he resorts to moments of fiction. Here and there he is reduced to constructing hypotheses about her whereabouts: her parents took her to the Ornano 43 cinema across the road from where she lived, or did she go by herself (p. 34; p. 29)? When she was arrested, was she perhaps the young girl with whom Modiano's father once sat in a police van, when he himself was caught (p. 63; p. 58)? Starting from facts, he uses his skill as a novelist to build a scene – in particular he imagines the last morning in Les Tourelles, where, under the chestnut trees, the last roll call took place before the bus transport to the Drancy camp:

> Le 13 au matin à dix heures, l'appel interminable commença dans la cour de la caserne, sous les marronniers. On déjeuna une dernière fois sous les marronniers. Une ration misérable qui vous laissait affamée. [At ten o'clock on the morning of 13 August, the interminable roll

call began under the chestnut trees on the barrack square. A last meal.
A meagre ration which left you famished.]

(p. 141; p. 134)

In French, the system of past tenses used in this scene (*passé simple*
and imperfect) is particularly evocative of novel-writing together with
the description of the setting; the phrase 'sous les marronniers' ('under
the chestnut trees') is used twice in the French original. Modiano, how-
ever, refrains from slipping into pure fiction mode; the reader is perfectly
aware that he is constructing a generic narrative founded on empathy
(note the use of the ambiguous 'vous' ['you'], seemingly addressing both
Dora and similar Jewish girls in her situation). These brief literary, nov-
elistic moments are significant nevertheless in terms of genre as they
give readers the possibility of identifying emotionally and imaginatively
with Dora, during scenes which read very differently from the terse
account of his documentary enquiry. Critics, particularly those com-
paring *Dora Bruder* with Modiano's novels hitherto, and seeing many
similar devices, have been uneasy about these incursions into fictional
mode, sometimes connecting his narrative method to that of the often
vertiginous ambiguity of earlier texts. The unease is of the same moral
order as the doubts often expressed about fictional Holocaust stories.
Can the reader trust the accuracy of the tale?[11] Can Modiano bear wit-
ness to Dora's life on her behalf? Does fiction somehow undermine the
pain and tragedy of the victims concerned or show disrespect towards
them? We will agree, however, with Dervila Cooke (2005, p. 300) to
say that it does not matter, fundamentally, if Modiano's enquiry into
the facts of Dora's life are injected, here and there, with sympathetic
renderings of fictional scenes which she is likely, but not guaranteed,
to have lived through, in order to fill some of the gaps of her life or
that of her parents. The distortions remain minimal, and hypotheses
are very frequently made obvious through questions and adverbs mod-
ifying the truth value of what is narrated ('Je me demande' ['I wonder'];
'peut-être' ['perhaps']). The partially fictionalized story, important on
an emotional and communicative level, is very much at the service
of the documentary, biographically accurate narrative. Modiano's cor-
rections, in the 1999 edition, of small erroneous details which were
pointed out to him by readers seem to confirm this broad interpre-
tation. The fact that he did not correct every single mistake (Morris,
2006, p. 274)[12] suggests also that retaining some independent control
over his creative production is very much part of his self-awareness
as a writer and responsibility to his text, a topic to which we will

return. Modiano's approach can thus far be described as hybrid: primarily documentary but literary in parts, allowing a small measure of fiction.

A second method used to bring his biographical subject to life is the description of photographs of Dora and her parents which had come into his hands. There has been widespread critical interest in this. Some of the photographs were added to the Japanese, German and American translations. The American translation also features a map of the two Parisian *arrondissements*, the 12th and the 18th, crucial to the story, but neither photographs nor maps appeared in the original text or in the translation published in the UK. Little is known of any authorial or editorial intervention behind these variations, but they have led critics to comment on the very different effect created by their presence in the text. Leaving aside the publishing issue, Modiano's textual commentary has led several critics to describe his text as a work of ekphrasis, the textual representation of a work of visual representation (a specialized genre of writing in its own right), and linked it to Marianne Hirsch's (1997) work on 'Postmemory' and family photos where she analyses the tragic importance of photographs (or their absence) for relatives of Holocaust victims. Annelies Schulte Nordholt (2011, pp. 530–534), for example, has given a meticulous and thoughtful analysis of Modiano's prose description of the photographs, comparing the first generally laconic mention and description of them in the text (pp. 31–33; pp. 26–28) to the second, more tragic, commentary on a final photograph of Dora standing in line between her mother and grandmother, where Modiano's desperation comes through (pp. 90–91; pp. 85–86).[13]

Ekphrasis is without doubt a powerful dimension of the genesis of the text. The recovery of images of Dora and her parents (thanks, once again, to Serge Klarsfeld and his work on children who disappeared in the Holocaust) is likely to have played, as pointed out by Morris (2006), a significant role in crystallizing Modiano's writing project (supplementing the discovery by the writer himself of the missing person advertisement), and it helps the reader to connect with Modiano's often unarticulated emotional involvement. As documents, the textual discussion of these photographs (and their physical presence, in the case of some of the foreign translations) obviously reinforces the biographical project. However, Modiano's obsession with penetrating the mystery of the missing Dora hits here against a new form of enigma: the photographs act as concrete evidence that Dora once existed, but they are no help in recapturing the lost details of her life or what she thought. Modiano comments after describing the final one: 'Des photos comme

il en existe dans toutes les familles. Le temps de la photo, ils étaient protégés quelques secondes et ces secondes sont devenues une éternité' ('Such photographs exist in every family. They were caught in a few seconds, the duration of the exposure, and these seconds have become an eternity') (p. 92; p. 86).

As Barthes has examined in *La Chambre claire* (1980) each photograph is a reminder that the instant captured when the shot was taken did take place, but it has now long gone and is for ever lost. In the case of a disappeared person, the meaning of this loss in the present is greatly accentuated. So, if the brief moments of ekphrasis do contribute to the biographical genre and sustain the reader's faith in the veracity of the writer's tale, they also need to be interpreted as demonstrating, in spite of the laconic commentary, Modiano's very personal and poetic engagement in the crafting of his book, to which we will return. Here again, the multidimensional nature of his text is in evidence – each facet of its form cannot be seen in isolation.

History and its controversies

As the narrative develops, the paucity of objective details and facts concerning Dora leads Modiano to resort to deductions, as we have seen, but also, working laterally, to what can be known of the conditions of Jewish individuals in Paris during the occupation. This produces sections of text which are far more historical in genre, if we accept that factual and documentary evidence, together with the intent of building a broader social picture, can be understood as constituting a historical narrative. Modiano mentions, and sometimes quotes extensively, by-laws of the period: those which gradually restricted the life of Jews under the occupation. He reproduces part of a 1943 administrative report describing the methods used by the notorious French Alsatian inspector Schweblin when Jews were rounded up and searched, and often beaten up and removed of their possessions. He copies many entries on police (or other administrative) registers. If these do not always enlighten us about Dora (some concern other rebellious girls), they give a documented insight into the reality of day-to-day life for the Jewish community in Paris and contribute to a view of history from below. It is important that whole sections of the book consist of these lists and administrative entries which punctuate the narrative. Modiano in his novels is prone to giving street names and telephone numbers, concrete marks of a life, but here the painstaking quotes and details are crucial to the picture he is gradually, if patchily, building of Dora as one of a community

erased. The insights he gives into the daily life of humiliations and vexations affecting Jewish families is a powerful contribution to dispelling collective ignorance and neglect of these circumstances and, by implication, of France's and its citizens' responsibilities in the Holocaust. The historical account also reproduces authentic letters – letters of naive families of internees writing to make their case to the representatives of the French State, the so-called birthplace of human rights. A long letter, written by a certain Robert Tartakovsky preparing to leave for Auschwitz from Drancy, finally provides evidence of the conditions, thoughts and suffering endured by deportees. If Modiano is here offering an indirect account of what Dora and her parents went through (he does not paint a fictional picture of her on her last journey), the cognitive impact on his readers produced by the accumulation of small but accurate pieces of the jigsaw of Jewish daily life in Paris in 1941 and 1942 amounts to far more than a sympathetic engagement with one figure. Crucially, the role played by the French authorities in the Holocaust is demonstrated in small but significant ways. The effect is utterly different from the one created through his work of fiction up till now, even if we know that in his fiction he is also prone to inserting fragments of reality.

Modiano's relationship to historical methods in this text deserves a long comment since it is at the heart of a lively controversy. It is now well documented that Serge Klarsfeld was enormously helpful to Modiano in the uncovering of concrete evidence on Dora. The origin of the book is the discovery of the advertisement by Modiano himself, a tiny fragment of newspaper he must have perused from his substantial private archive of the occupation. Modiano was well aware of the *Mémorial de la déportation des Juifs de France* published by Klarsfeld in 1978 (he wrote to Klarsfeld in May 1978 to express his admiration for what he and his wife Beate had achieved), and there he found the three Bruder names. A friendship and collaboration in the search for Dora developed at some stage between the two men. In November 1994, Modiano published a moving and powerful article in the newspaper *Libération* where he not only described the profound shock he experienced when he first read Klarsfeld's (1978 and 1994) work and the doubts it provoked in him about the status of literature, but also acknowledged his help with Dora Bruder (Modiano and Klarsfeld, 2012). Klarsfeld put him in touch with a cousin of hers and gave him the pictures of Dora and her family. They are now also published in full (Heck and Guidée, 2012) and several of them are displayed alongside many others in the Mémorial de la Shoah Museum in Paris.

The controversy centres on Modiano's failure to acknowledge Klarsfeld's contribution and help inside his book, even in its revised or foreign editions. Klarsfeld himself wrote to Modiano to express his surprise that his name does not appear anywhere. Morris (2006, p. 284), quoting Cima, remarks on the vastly greater readership enjoyed by Modiano compared with Klarsfeld's and justifies the understandable surprise felt by many at this omission. Given that Modiano paid Klarsfeld a public tribute in the daily press in 1994, it seems that the reason for this omission is to be found elsewhere than a superficial ingratitude on his part.

Acknowledging the various stages of Klarsfeld's help fully, other than through the vague reference to 'un ami' ('a friend'), as he does (p. 101; p. 95), would undoubtedly have changed the balance of the narrative, cluttered it with extraneous references and, more importantly, altered the delicate equilibrium in which Modiano's writing holds the different facets of his text.[14] As we have suggested, the cumulative effect of accurate details of Jewish life in 1941 Paris lends the work a genuinely historical dimension (particularly for his readers), but nowhere (except when quoting a reference to the Schweblin report) could Modiano be credited with using what could be described as a truly historical method, particularly when it comes to acknowledging his sources. He expands on the difficulty of his inquiry when the search itself, as was the case when he went to apply for Dora's birth certificate in a labyrinth of administrative corridors, generates painful moments and private reminiscences, for example, of his own father's fate. But the primary intention is not to produce a historical narrative, as it is not to produce a fiction. Fragments of the real are very obviously part of the patchwork, or fabric, he weaves together but, in some ways, Klarsfeld's work as a historian needs to be kept at a clear distance from Modiano's own literary undertaking, not confused with it. The question of genre, as we can see, is closely interwoven with matters of overall authorial intention and the way the main narrative voice holds the text together. We are reminded here of Bakhtin's (1981, 1984) great sensitivity to voice in his pioneering work on literary narrative.

To reach a clearer view of Modiano's overall project, and a satisfactory understanding of the multiplicity of genres contributing to its overall success, it is crucial to address how the narrator's presence (and, behind him, that of the author who can arguably be identified with him) is being felt in the text. Several strands of personal engagement with the material can be identified.

The narrative of a search

The main thread which joins together the different fragments of this composite work and the different genres of text we have identified so far is not, in fact, the story of Dora's life, which gradually dissolves into absence and gaps, but Modiano's narrative of his own search for her. The narrator plots very carefully the chronology of his quest ('Il y a huit ans, dans un vieux journal, *Paris-Soir* ... je suis tombé à la page trois sur une rubrique' ('Eight years ago in an old copy of *Paris Soir* ... a heading on page three caught my eye') (p. 7; p. 3); 'j'ai écrit ces pages en novembre 1996' ('I am writing these pages in November 1996') (p. 50; p. 45); 'J'ai trouvé par hasard, il y a deux ans' ('Two years ago I happened to find) (p. 121; p. 115), but also the mistakes he makes in his hypotheses, the many questions that remain and, of course, the blanks he is facing. The text is punctuated by verbs of cognition (ignorer, penser, douter [ignore, think, doubt]), modal phrases and speaker-oriented adverbs (peut-être, en tout cas) [perhaps, in any case]) which portray his mental efforts, imaginative and deductive, but also highlight his talent for patience and perseverance: 'je suis patient. Je peux attendre des heures sous la pluie' ('I am a patient man. I can wait for hours in the rain') (p. 14; p. 10). The first person is everywhere, weaving together what are often fragments of evidence together with traces of what he feels, and tries to persuade us, must be faint echoes of Dora's presence, still perceptible in the city. The map of Paris, both physical and mental, a familiar feature of Modiano's work, and so evocative of a network of synaptic connections on a memory map, serves as an implicit referent to the search. The idea of Dora trapped in the Nazi-occupied streets of the city obsesses him. It is no wonder that his search unlocks, often without transition, powerful moments of personal recollection.

The place of autobiography

From the very beginning, the text of the advertisement – Modiano's first contact with Dora – offers him a strong personal connection: as a child in 1958, and again during 1965, he was acquainted with the area where she lived. His search for her through the streets of Paris, maps onto his own close knowledge of the city, and stimulates his skill at gauging the spaces where she lived and roamed, and thus, through her imagined wanderings, he engages in a process of recovery of his own past. His main bond and source of identification is that she is a runaway from boarding school. His search is therefore an opportunity

to re-examine the bitter-sweet memories of his own escape, at the same age as her, in 1960. He repeatedly, but briefly, uses his own experience to understand what Dora had to live through, producing moments of self-analysis hidden behind a semigeneric narrative:

> sentiment de révolte et de solitude porté à son incandescence et qui vous coupe le souffle et vous met en état d'apesanteur. Sans doute l'une des rares occasions de ma vie où j'ai été vraiment moi-même et où j'ai marché à mon pas. [feelings of rebellion and solitude, carried to incandescence, taking your breath away and leaving you in a state of weightlessness. It was probably one of the few times in my life when I was truly myself and following my own bent.]
>
> (pp. 77–78; p. 71)

The most painful autobiographical connections, however, come from his need to confront his relationship with his late father. He, like Dora, was fighting for his life in the Paris of the occupation. Modiano knows little of what he endured: a few scenes loom large in his memory, but the text seems to function cathartically, as a way of finally coming to understand, perhaps, why he behaved so unlovingly towards his son. The interleafing of Dora's story, his father's and his own works most revealingly around the episode of the *panier à salade* (Black Maria), where the narrator admits wanting Dora and his father to have sat together when they were both arrested. He constructs a scene, partly based on one of the few facts he knows of his father in early 1942 and partly imaginary, where Dora is concerned, which then works as a prototype for the replicated but authentic scene of himself and his father in a police van in the 1960s. The latter was consequent on a sordid incident where he had been used as a go-between by his estranged parents, a lived and now remembered moment of anguish which had heightened his feelings of alienation towards his father. Powerful emotions, hidden in the past but throwing a shadow over the present, are therefore communicated and reworked in the text through multiple live connections. Other critics have been sensitive to the fact that *Dora Bruder* is partly a work of mourning, a *livre des morts* (book of the dead) (Schulte Nordholt, 2008, pp. 126–127; Hilsum, 2012, p. 190). Modiano's book is a memorial to Dora (and the French Jewish community), but also to his late father with whom his relationship was problematic, and, of course, to his adored younger brother, Rudy, who died in 1957 and whose presence is hidden behind Dora Bruder's German name.[15]

A distinct writer's voice

If the intimate dimension is undoubtedly powerful in Modiano's text, there exists yet another way in which his personal authorial position is mobilized. One thread of the narrative is a self-reflective, metatextual commentary on his own position as a writer. Reading the list of deportees compiled by Klarsfeld had profoundly shaken his faith in the power of literature, he had revealed in his *Libération* article; *Dora Bruder* is partly an answer to this interrogation (and here is perhaps another reason why Klarsfeld is not mentioned). His belief in the visionary powers of the writer is asserted (pp. 52–53; pp. 47–48): a gift derived, in his analysis, from painstaking cerebral 'efforts d'imagination' ('imaginative efforts') and 'brèves intuitions' ('brief flashes of intuition') which are part of his craft, his *métier*.

It is no surprise, therefore, that many literary connections are called upon to contribute to the narrator's search. Modiano remembers that Jean Genet was imprisoned in Les Tourelles in 1943, the institution where Dora was first interned, not long before him. He borrows a phrase Genet had used to describe Parisian slang – 'tendresse attristée' ('sad tenderness') (p. 138; p. 131) – to paint a picture of so many immigrant children made to wear the yellow star but who spoke in that very same, Parisian, slang. At other times he pays tribute to many writers: 'Beaucoup d'amis que je n'ai pas connus ont disparu en 1945, l'année de ma naissance' ('So many friends I never knew disappeared in 1945, the year I was born') (p. 98; p. 92). He evokes Robert Desnos, the surrealist poet, another Holocaust victim, from whom he unknowingly stole the title of his first book, *La Place de l'Étoile* (p. 100; p. 94), the poet Gilbert-Lecomte and the German writer Friedo Lampe, who also died in 1945. Bringing these writers into his text is not a question of simply transcribing thoughts nostalgically flashing through his mind. The community of (dead) writers and their cumulative imaginative powers are there to help him in his difficult undertaking. He alone is still alive to commemorate the work they had to abandon prematurely. The most eerie connection is made with Victor Hugo, who happens to have imagined in *Les Misérables* Jean Valjean's flight with Cosette in the very streets (imaginatively rendered) where Dora was at school and therefore must have roamed. Both (fictional characters and very real Jewish victim) were being pursued by dark forces conspiring to obliterate them. Modiano's passionate assertions of the position he writes from and the methods he uses are important as guarantors of the authenticity of his quest. They are the foundations of his ethical stance which

is revealed repeatedly, though discreetly, throughout the text. Critics have, of course, noticed that he appeals to his readers: 'En écrivant ce livre, je lance des appels, comme des signaux de phare dont je doute malheureusement qu'ils puissent éclairer la nuit. Mais j'espère toujours' ('In writing this book, I am sending out signals, like a lighthouse beacon in whose power to illuminate the darkness I have, alas, no faith. But I live in hope') (p. 42; p. 37). He hopes to acquire new facts – which perhaps explains why he revised his text when new details or corrections came to light. He also laments being the only one engaged in his kind of quest, aware of the disappearance of traces and changes in the city: 'J'ai l'impression d'être tout seul à faire le lien entre le Paris de ce temps-là et celui d'aujourd'hui, le seul à me souvenir de tous ces détails' ('I feel as if I am alone in making the link between Paris then and Paris now, alone in remembering all these details') (p. 50; p. 45). Behind the regretful tone, a voice addressing his contemporaries can be heard, if only faintly: a voice which verges on the accusatory genre, a voice certainly belonging to the conative function in Roman Jakobson's (1960) nomenclature of the functions of language.[16] He urges his readers to remember. The thorny issue of France's responsibility in the Holocaust is foregrounded through examples of French police work, and the reminder that most administrative records regarding Jewish affairs were deliberately destroyed, a point noted by Pierre Lepape (1997) (cited in Modiano et al., 2004, p. 185). The fact that the book was eventually printed by Gallimard in a 2004 school edition, augmented by pedagogical material offering an explanatory historical frame, shows how much impact it had collectively as a contribution to France's badly needed memory work.[17] One reviewer, Czarny (1997, pp. 7–8), described it as 'un livre violent' ('a violent book') in its style when it was first published. Superficially it could also be described as very restrained, yet its force is explosive once all its different strands are put together.

Modiano's pared-down style enables him to juxtapose seemingly heterogeneous sections throughout his book, some offering documents which speak for themselves and remain devoid of commentary, and others voiced by a personally engaged narrator who follows Dora through the streets of Paris or unwinds the skeins of memory, prompted by an initial date or memory of a place. The overall patchwork, or woven cloth, is not an incoherent amalgam; each thread, belonging to its own genre, contributes to the strength and effectiveness of the whole. It is crucial that Dora is a genuine Holocaust victim and that as many of the details of her ordinary life as possible are recovered, thus extending the tribute paid to her, to the whole of her community and to those tracked

down by mindless officialdom. However, moments of imagination, fiction even, are very much part of Modiano's craft, who seems also to be asserting here the power of literature, beyond dry facts. He does not shy away from leaving little gaps showing through his technique. One such moment appears half-way through his narrative, when after reviewing closely the weather conditions in Paris at the time of Dora's escape, he ends a paragraph with a sentence which leaves the reader baffled, unable to identify who might be speaking and to whom: 'N'oublie pas: demain après-midi, rendez-vous à la terrasse des Gobelins' ('Don't forget: rendezvous tomorrow afternoon, on the terrace of the Café-des Gobelins') (p. 90; p. 85). The voice arranging this hopeful meeting comes from somewhere outside the text, prompted perhaps by the mention of a rainbow in the previous sentence.

Modiano's foregrounding, on different levels, of his own literary writing position is what enables the text to function, and to function effectively as a Holocaust narrative. His ability to identify personally with Dora, to read her story in the light of his own anguish (whether connected with his difficult youth, the tragic loss of his brother, his urge to run away from school or his profound uneasiness towards his father to which he nevertheless faces up bravely), far from diminishing the tribute he writes to her, or undermining the integrity of the story he tells, justifies the authenticity of his quest. His many references to the act of writing and to dead writers whom he sees as his friends are similarly a vital ingredient in the overall fabric of the text. The book can thus give us an insight into a possible future for Holocaust narratives. Transmission in language and culture of such a traumatic set of events can only continue if writers are fully transparent about the way they personally connect with Holocaust memory. The ethical dimension of their work needs to be in full view of all, however unfinished this work might be. Thus some have described *Dora Bruder* as a work in progress (Morris, 2006, pp. 284–286; Howell, 2010, p. 68).

It takes courage to write a Holocaust narrative. The tensions around the idea of genre we identified early on suggest that rigidity and strict adherence to conventions are not likely to produce the most effective way of describing this elusive form. Other writers of Holocaust narratives, past and present, have experimented with the careful interweaving and juxtaposing of genres.[18] So powerful are the emotions still mobilized by the topic, and so painful the need to confront loss and absence, that calling on all the methods and resources available from one's own writing position, and finding an authentic voice, as Modiano does, can open the way for negotiating an individual solution to the communication

of what remains an immensely difficult project. Several areas of possible friction between genres, generating ambiguities and controversies, have been analysed by the many critics who have shown interest in *Dora Bruder*. The remarkable achievement of crafting it, in its multidimensional yet carefully balanced form, should, in my view, be rightly stressed. Its overall impact is undeniable.

Notes

1. Several important volumes have explored the various difficulties resulting in often emotionally charged debates surrounding Holocaust memory and Holocaust writing. See, among others, Horowitz (1997), Lang (1998), Reiter (2000), Suleiman (2006) and Kluge and Williams (2009).
2. In French we could mention the works of Charlotte Delbo and Georges Perec as two examples.
3. Serge Doubrovsky's (1997) coining of the term 'auto-fiction' has, of course, complicated the debate considerably. See *infra* p. 48.
4. As is well known, there was a long gap between the original publication of Bakhtin's work and its translation into English. The chronology of the translations does not match that of the original work.
5. A range of powerful literary texts dealing with the Holocaust (e.g. André Schwarz-Bart's *Le Dernier des Justes,* which was a bestseller in 1959) were, of course, published during the so-called period of amnesia, but until the late 1960s it is fair to say that France was not collectively engaged in active memory work. The complicated topic of France's relationship with its past is beyond the scope of this chapter.
6. The title is a pun which refers both to the famous square of national importance in Paris (now renamed Place Charles de Gaulle), near which infamous collaborators were known to be based during the occupation of France, and to the Jewish star, the pun appearing in a Jewish story used as the epigraph to the novel.
7. *De si braves garçons* (1982), to give one example, echoes the periods he spent as a boarder.
8. It is the only one of Modiano's books to use a real name.
9. All quotes and references to the text of *Dora Bruder* will give in brackets the page reference to the 1999 paperback French edition followed by the page reference to the English translated edition (2000), whose title, confusingly, is *The Search Warrant*.
10. Alan Morris (2006) has explored in painstaking detail Modiano's relationship with Klarsfeld and the publication of *Le Mémorial de la déportation des Juifs de France* (1978) followed by several editions of *Le Mémorial des enfants juifs déportés de France* (1994–2005).
11. Susan Suleiman (2006) explores the related question 'Do facts matter in Holocaust memoirs?' in her book: *Crises of Memory and the Second World War* (see pp. 159–178).
12. Morris (2006) gives a full list of the changes which were made or not made and offers his own comments on this question of accuracy.

13. See also Howell's (2010) extremely relevant and perceptive article.
14. Schulte Nordholdt (2008, p. 127) also refers to 'un équilibre précaire' ('a precarious equilibrium') when examining the sometimes contradictory forces at work in the text.
15. Colin Nettelbeck (1998, p. 246) is the first to have pointed this out. See also Damamme-Gilbert (2007, p. 117). Hilsum (2012) points out that Modiano also refers to a number of dead writers.
16. He uses the pronoun *nous* [we] to identify those he sees as being in charge now of guarding the memory of relatives who wrote begging letters to the authorities – letters which were not even read at the time (p. 94; p. 79).
17. The edition is framed by an introduction, commentaries and guided reading. One section points out that Modiano makes France's responsibility in the Holocaust very clear.
18. We will give only two striking examples: Jean-Claude Grumberg's (2003) *Mon père. Inventaire, suivi de 'Une leçon de savoir-vivre'*, where the metaphor of Harlequin's clothes is repeatedly used to evoke the seemingly heterogeneous composition of the book devoted to honouring his father's memory (together with anti-Semitism), and a very well received recent text by Jean-Marie Parisis (2014), *Les Inoubliables*. The author uses his rediscovered childhood connection with a Languedoc village, where a massacre of Jewish refugees took place, to produce a book negotiating history, autobiography and the empathetic narrative of victims' and survivors' lives, a work of both personal and social memory.

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4
Genre and Memory in Margareta Heinrich's and Eduard Erne's *Totschweigen* and Elfriede Jelinek's *Rechnitz (Der Würgeengel)*[1]

Katya Krylova

Towards the end of the Second World War, on the night of 24/25 March 1945, days before the arrival of the Red Army, approximately 200 Jewish slave-labourers were murdered in a small Austrian village on the Hungarian border, purportedly in the context of a party hosted by Countess Margit Batthyány at Rechnitz Castle. The exact events of that night remain shrouded in mystery, the perpetrators have not been brought to justice and the mass grave has not been found to this day. Instead a wall of silence has descended on the village regarding the events of that time, with Rechnitz serving as a model case for the repression and silencing surrounding the Nazi past in post-war Austria. In spite of its active participation in the Second World War and the Holocaust, Austria, as an 'annexed' country during the Third Reich, was not held culpable for its execution of Nazi crimes and was pronounced 'the first free country to fall a victim to Hitlerite aggression' in the 'Moscow Declaration' of 30 October 1943 (Joint Four-Nation Declaration, 1943), a *Lebenslüge* (grand delusion) upon which the Austrian Second Republic built its post-war identity. It was an illusion that was only shattered by the Waldheim Affair of 1985–1988, whereby it emerged that the presidential candidate Dr Kurt Waldheim had lied about the extent of his involvement in the Nazi war machine, which did not stop him being elected.

As Walter Manoschek (2009b) has pointed out, Rechnitz was by no means a unique case in Austria in the final stages of the Second World War. It was one of a series of so-called 'Endphasenverbrechen'

('end-phase crimes') (Rüter, cited in Manoschek, 2009b, p. 5) that took place in Austria in the spring of 1945. In contrast with the concentration camps largely situated in Eastern Europe (with notable exceptions, such as Mauthausen-Gusen and Ebensee in Austria), far away from the eyes of the Austrian and German civilian population, thereby creating a 'spatial, social and emotional distance' from the events, the camp evacuations and death marches of tens of thousands of Hungarian Jews to Eastern Austria, which began in the summer of 1944, meant that the last phase of the Holocaust 'played out in front of the house door' (Manoschek, 2009b, pp. 13–14). The 200 victims of the Rechnitz massacre were engaged in building the so-called Southeast Wall fortifications, designed to stop the Soviet advance. On 24 March 1945, 1,000 Hungarian-Jewish slave-labourers were transported from Köszeg in Hungary to Rechnitz in order to work on the wall section there, of which 180 were determined as no longer fit for work and murdered on the night of 24/25 March by 14 or 15 guests (led by local Gestapo chief Franz Podezin) attending a party hosted by the Batthyány family for local Nazis and Hitler Youth at Rechnitz Castle (Kovacs, 2009, pp. 31–32). A further 18, who had to bury those killed the previous night, were murdered on the following day (25 March 1945).

As Manoschek (2009b, p. 14) describes, the Rechnitz massacre was just one of a number of atrocities against Jews that took place in Deutsch Schützen, Engerau, Hofamt Priel and dozens of other places in Austria in the spring of 1945, constituting the largest number of killings on Austrian territory carried out during the Holocaust, a fact often neglected by historical discourse. Due to a number of factors, the Rechnitz massacre has, however, received the most media attention. One reason for this, as Manoschek highlights, has been the repeated search for the mass grave where the victims were buried, beginning in 1968 (Kovacs, 2009, p. 37). Related to this has been the lack of information about the possible location of the gravesite from the local population, which has made Rechnitz into a 'pars pro toto für den Umgang Österreichs mit dem Nationalsozialismus: Schweigen und Verdrängen' ('*pars pro toto* for Austria's approach to National Socialism: silence and repression') (Manoschek, 2009b, p. 6). The massacre also attracted renewed international attention in 2007 through the publication of a book examining the Thyssen dynasty (from which Rechnitz's Countess Margit Batthyány was descended) by British journalist David Litchfield (2006), where he asserted that the countess personally took part in the massacre, leading to a surge of media interest in the figure of Margit Batthyány, labelled 'the killer countess' (Litchfield, 2007a),

'Gastgeberin der Hölle' ('hostess of hell') (Litchfield, 2007b) and a 'Monster' in an account by her nephew Sacha Batthyany (Batthyany, 2009, p. 14). As Manoschek has asserted, the danger of this stylization of the massacre into a 'sadistische Sex & Crime-Geschichte' ('sadistic sex-and-crime story') risks a historical decontextualization and its designation as a 'bizarre[r] Ausnahmefall' ('bizarre, exceptional case') (Manoschek, 2009b, p. 6). Yet it is not least the medial presence of the Rechnitz massacre that has led to a number of artistic treatments of the events of 24/25 March, treatments which have, in all cases, gone beyond journalistic cliché to explore the extremity of the massacre as well as its legacy in the post-war era.

   This chapter will examine perhaps the two most important artworks, of diverse genres, that have thematized the Rechnitz massacre: Margareta Heinrich's and Eduard Erne's 1994 documentary film *Totschweigen* (*A Wall of Silence*), and a play by the Nobel laureate Elfriede Jelinek, *Rechnitz (Der Würgeengel)* (*Rechnitz (The Exterminating Angel)*) (2008). Both works highlight the difficulty of uncovering the truth about the past through unreliable witnesses, and the culture of what has been termed 'geschwätziges Verschweigen' ('garrulous silencing') (Wieler, cited in Rényi, 2010). Yet, through their diverse genres, the two works are able to offer distinctive perspectives on the massacre. While Heinrich's and Erne's sensitive documentary depicts the fraught endeavour of unearthing the past in Rechnitz, with poignant images of an excavator fruitlessly digging up earth on purported sites of the mass grave, Jelinek is able to use the poetic licence offered by fiction to provide a radical treatment of the Rechnitz massacre in her post-dramatic play, illuminating the self-exculpatory strategies of the perpetrators and their successors, who continue to obfuscate and cover up the past. My chapter will explore the intersections and diverse possibilities of the filmic and theatrical texts for confronting the past and representing the continuing repercussions of the past in the present.

Totschweigen

Totschweigen (*A Wall of Silence*),[2] a film made by the Austrian documentary filmmakers Margareta Heinrich and Eduard Erne (2011 [1994]), arose out of the directors accompanying the search for a mass grave (initiated by Holocaust survivor Isidor Sandorffy and continued, following Sandorffy's death in 1993, by Rabbi Simon Anshin), containing the bodies of the victims of the Rechnitz massacre, over the course of three years, from November 1990 through to the summer of 1993. The

documentary was well received in Austria, with reviewers praising its treatment of an issue that may be regarded as symptomatic for Austrian history (Wörgötter, 1995, p. 6), its poetic language ('Massengrab und Grabesstille', 1994, p. 30) and its profound engagement with its subject-matter (Omasta, 1994, p. 20). As Michael Omasta (1994, p. 20) comments in his review, the film does not only show 'die bloße Oberfläche von Ereignissen' ('the mere surface of events'); instead it becomes an 'Ereignis' ('event') itself by taking part in the search for a mass grave. The directors' own participation in the search for the mass grave certainly stretches the limits of the documentary film genre as we commonly understand it, which we associate with documenting events rather than actively participating in them. Erne has asserted that, initially, the directors had hoped that their film would document the successful excavation of the bodies and the local population's reactions to this event (Erne, cited in Freitag, 1994, p. 10). When it became clear that this was not going to be possible, the directors proceeded to interview the local population with regard to the events of the night of 24/25 March 1945 and to document Isidor Sandorffy's continued efforts to find the mass grave.

Exactly what constitutes a documentary film has been a perennial source of debate, with Bill Nichols asserting that 'documentary is what we might call a "fuzzy concept" ', whose definition has changed over time (Nichols, 2001, p. 21). Patricia Aufderheide similarly underlines the fluidity of the concept of the documentary film genre, providing only a very broad definition for a documentary as a film that 'tells a story about real life, with claims to truthfulness' (Aufderheide, 2007, p. 2). Some of the formal elements that we typically associate with the documentary film include 'voice-of-God' narration, an analytical argument, interviews with experts (talking heads), stock images and serious classical music (Aufderheide, 2007, pp. 10–11). However, as Aufderheide (2007, pp. 12–13) describes, many of the best documentary films (Aufderheide mentions Luis Buñuel's *Land without Bread* (1932), the BBC's *The Spaghetti Story* (1957) and Scott Barrie's *In Search of the Edge* (1990)) have self-consciously parodied these conventions.

Totschweigen does make use of a number of documentary film conventions. These include partial voiceover by Erne. However, for the most part the film dispenses with an omniscient narrator and allows the interviews with the Rechnitz population to speak for themselves. An analytical argument is, in any case, not presented. Viewers are thereby invited to draw their own conclusions from the words of the interviewees and the images presented in the film. As Jiranek and Scheucher describe, in

this manner, *Totschweigen* avoids 'd[ie] Gefahr jedes Dokumentarfilms, mit der Moralkeule die Zuseher und Zuseherinnen zu bevormunden' ('the danger of every documentary film of patronizing its viewers with a moral club') (Jiranek and Scheucher, 2009, p. 185). Apart from interviews with victims' relatives and the initiators of the search for the mass grave, the interviews are not with individuals who can be described as experts, but rather with local Rechnitz residents who, instead of shedding light upon the events of the night of 24/25 March 1945, serve to obfuscate the past by talking around the issue and effectively communicating very little. Stock archive photographs of the death marches in Burgenland are used to punctuate the recollections of victims' relatives, and photographs of Franz Podezin are used in a sequence where the filmmakers travel to the former Gestapo chief's new home in South Africa. Similarly, the melancholy and haunting main title theme music, composed by Peter Ponger, punctuates the fruitless search for a mass grave depicted in the film throughout, underlining the lack of progress and closure with regard to finding the burial site of the 200 slave-labourers.

Yet while the film makes use of certain documentary conventions, it dispenses with others. This is most evident in the interviews with the Rechnitz residents, who are not introduced either by means of voiceover narration or by captions. They are not differentiated in this manner, underlining the fact that what they say and communicate differs very little from the statements of their neighbours. Instead, the Rechnitz population are shown to espouse essentially very similar views with regard to the massacre. These may be summed up as follows: a denial of personal culpability ('Ich weiß nichts' ['I don't know anything'] and 'Des hab' ich nicht gesehen' ['I didn't see that'] are recurring phrases), a manner of talking about the past that fails to register the extremity of what happened ('Die waren sehr arm' ['They [the victims] were very unfortunate']) and a desire to lay the unpalatable past to rest. The latter sentiment is best exemplified by the words of one local man: 'Aber das eine Glück hat Gott dem Menschen gegeben, dass er das verdrängen kann. Man kann das verdrängen im Bewußtsein' ('However, God has given man one blessing, that one can repress it. One can repress it in one's consciousness'). This standpoint is underscored time and again in the film, with a shop-owner telling the filmmakers to 'get lost', and asking why the past should be 'stirred up' again, a sentiment echoed by a co-worker in the store: 'Es soll Ruhe geben, genau' ('They should let it rest, exactly'). Disapproval towards the grave search is voiced repeatedly by several residents: 'es wirbt mehr Staub auf und macht mehr Negatives wach, als was Positives zum Durchbruch käme' ('it blows up more

dust and rouses too many negative things than any positivity that could break through').

The metaphor of uncovering a troubling past, buried in Rechnitz ground, is used consciously throughout the film. The image of an excavator fruitlessly digging up earth is one that recurs time and again, illustrating the repeated excavation and search attempts that Erne and Heinrich witnessed in the course of making *Totschweigen*. The remains of the murdered slave-labourers, which Isidor Sandorffy and his colleagues look for, constitute the past that some of the Rechnitz residents, interviewed by Erne and Heinrich, would prefer to keep repressed and hidden. While the search for the mass grave for the purpose of exhuming the bodies and giving them a dignified burial in accordance with Jewish burial rites is unsuccessful, the mere 'Aufrühren' ('stirring-up') of the ground (as one interviewee puts it), where the truth regarding Austrian complicity in the crimes of the Holocaust lies, ensures that, even if the full truth about the past cannot be brought to the surface, the presence of the excavators and the disturbance that they instigate serves to ensure that the past is not laid to rest (as, again, some of Erne and Heinrich's interview partners would wish it to be), but rather that the 'open wound' of the Austrian National Socialist past remains open.[3] As Erne has asserted, '[e]s ist auch fast wie eine Metapher für den gesamtösterreichischen Umgang mit der Vergangenheit. Die Vergangenheit wird mit diesem Massengrab konkret ans Tageslicht geholt, und das wird abgewehrt. Die Toten kehren zurück, und man kann das alles nicht mehr so leicht abtun' ('it [the search for the mass grave] is also almost like a metaphor for the way the whole of Austria deals with the past. The past will be brought to light in a concrete way with this mass grave, and that is fended off. The dead return, and all of this can no longer be dismissed so easily') (Erne, cited in Schüttelkopf, 1995, p. 18). The sheer number of times that we see sequences featuring the excavation of Rechnitz ground, panoramic shots of the field and the Kreuzstadl homestead, near which the massacre took place and where the bodies are thought to be buried (Kovacs, 2009, p. 32), emphasizes the presence of the past in its purported absence. As such, the film finds powerful visual images for the ongoing and complex process of coming to terms with the past in Austria, and is testament to the capacity of the documentary film genre not only to depict, but also to illuminate, aspects of reality.

The film opens with a close-up of a cross in a cemetery where a Catholic burial is taking place. We see a grave-digger digging up the earth in preparation for a burial, something that is emphatically denied

the 200 victims of the Rechnitz massacre. As the grave-digger digs up the earth, he uncovers the bones of those who have previously been interred in the ground and comments that they will have to be put back as, once they have been blessed, they cannot simply be thrown somewhere else. His words anticipate the statements of Rabbi Simon Anshin at the close of the documentary, who explains how he considers it his duty to search and uncover the places where people were killed because they were Jews, and to give them a proper burial. Following this opening there is a sequence evidently shot from the window of a car, where we see a snowy road illuminated by the headlights. As the car makes its journey towards Rechnitz, we hear the disembodied fragments from the interviews with local residents, which will later feature in the film. The non-diegetic narrative fragments, together with the partially illuminated landscape, suggest that those looking for the mass grave have to piece fragments and clues together in a similar manner. This sequence precedes the title frame, which merely shows an aerial shot of the Kreuzstadl homestead in a snowy, inhospitable landscape, while the wind can be heard moaning around it. The motif of a snow-covered landscape concealing a dark past is a recurring one in post-war Austrian literature. A notable example can be found in Thomas Bernhard's debut novel *Frost* (1963), where snow serves as a master trope for repression, covering over all evidence of a mysterious cattle rustling incident, as well as all traces of the central protagonist, Strauch, who goes missing in driving snow (Krylova, 2013, pp. 111–135). As such, the opening of *Totschweigen* establishes the central thematic concerns of the film: the issue of a proper burial, the search for the mass grave, and the inhospitable landscape that covers rather than yields the secrets buried within it, in a similar manner to the open hostility and obfuscation of the past practised by some of the local population. It is this eerie atmosphere of the documentary that has led some critics to label the film an unintentional 'historische[r] Thriller' ('historical thriller') (Rebhandl, 1994, p. 11), and a 'Krimi, in dem sehr wenig entdeckt...wird' ('a crime story, where very little is detected') (Buchschwenter, 1994, p. 31). However, while the piecing together of information to arrive at definitive knowledge regarding a crime, as depicted in the documentary, shares similarities with a detective story, the Rechnitz massacre, which occurred in the context of the industrialized mass murder of the Holocaust, precludes *Totschweigen* being read as a 'crime thriller'.

Through its visual imagery the film attests to the loss caused by the Holocaust in Rechnitz, which until 1938 had a sizeable Jewish community (Neumüller, 2009, pp. 200–202). The only testament to this today

is the dilapidated Jewish cemetery, which is shown twice in the film. The first instance occurs near the beginning of the documentary, as the fate of Rechnitz's Jews, who were deported from the village in 1938 to a 'Niemandsland an der jugoslawischen Grenze' ('no-man's land on the Yugoslavian border'), is narrated in voiceover. The second time is in the middle of the film, following a sequence shot near Podezin's villa in South Africa, where the reasons given by a district attorney in Kiel for not mounting a case against the former Gestapo chief are narrated in voiceover: that it is better not to risk an acquittal in 'der jetzigen politischen Situation' ('the current political situation'). The precise nature of the political situation is shown in the following shot: we see desecrated gravestones in the Jewish cemetery in Rechnitz, covered in graffiti reading 'Sieg Haider' ('Victory to Haider'), 'Juden raus' ('Jews out') and 'Gas' ('gas'). *Totschweigen* was filmed in the early 1990s, a period which saw the rise of the populist Austrian Freedom Party led by Jörg Haider, which culminated in the entry of his party into the Austrian coalition government following the 1999 general elections. In another sequence we see a florist ambiguously referring to a new generation of Haider supporters. These sequences shot in Rechnitz attest to the legacy of a past which, because never properly confronted, resurfaces in grotesque forms.

Throughout *Totschweigen*, the portrayal of Rechnitz is distinctly anti-idyllic. Immediately following the title sequence, we see a panoramic aerial shot of the village come into view, with the church spire rising into the sky. Rechnitz appears as an unassuming, pretty village in a beautiful, rural part of the country, a place that we would certainly not associate with mass murder, although historical facts prove otherwise (Manoschek, 2009a). This fallacy of viewing the Austrian rural landscape as allegedly untainted by the Second World War is one that was successfully exploited in post-war Austria with the aim of furthering mass tourism. The beauty of Rechnitz in contrast with the brutality of the massacre that occurred there is underlined by the words of the Hungarian relatives of two victims of the massacre (who refuse to have their faces shown on camera, at the time of the making of *Totschweigen* in the early 1990s, due to the renascent anti-Semitism in Hungary and Europe) who carried out their own searches for the mass grave after the war: 'Upon our arrival we were surprised at how beautiful this little village looked, well-to-do, attractive, clean. It was hard to imagine, how, in the town square, where there was a beautiful church, people could be battered and beaten to death.'[4] As the sequence in the living room of the Hungarian couple is followed by scenes of night-time

Rechnitz, the vision of the village that is now presented is one that is dark, inhospitable and sheltering a dark secret. As this sequence of shots finishes back in the living room of the Hungarian couple, this montage of images, a favoured technique of documentary filmmakers, further underscores the contrast between the surface image of Rechnitz and its legacy of brutality and violence, which continues to impact the lives of those far removed from the village.

The village on the Austro-Hungarian border is presented as an inhospitable and heavily guarded territory, with the barbed wire of the Cold War era mutating into the border posts of the Austrian army on the lookout for illegal immigrants. Further images underline this anti-idyllic presentation of Rechnitz, for which the recurring aerial shot of the Kreuzstadl homestead (also used in the title frame), cutting a bleak, austere figure in the snow-covered landscape, is emblematic. Rather than focusing on the buildings and architecture, the filmmakers repeatedly choose to direct their attention to the field where the Kreuzstadl is located, emphasizing that the village's real essence is to be found in its ground rather than in the façades of its buildings and architecture. Repeated pans and aerial shots of the sweeping landscape emphasize the enormity of the task faced by Isidor Sandorffy and his team, as do recurring medium shots of the ploughed fields surrounding the Kreuzstadl. As Heinrich and Erne document the search attempts over several years, shots of the snow-covered field alternate with the scorched earth of summer, thereby accentuating the changing of the seasons and the passing of time as Elke Schüttelkopf highlights (1995, p. 18). All the while, the gravesite remains undiscovered.

As we have seen, *Totschweigen* adheres to some genre conventions of the documentary film (through its use of music, stock images and, to some extent, voiceover), but it dispenses with others, such as presenting an analytical argument. It depicts an attempt to confront the past that remains frustratingly incomplete and unresolved, and that precludes any 'voice-of-God' commentary. Instead Erne and Heinrich are able to find a powerful visual language for the repression of memory in Rechnitz, the impenetrability of the landscape, its people and the dark secret that lies at the heart of the village. The film's narrative is circular, with the closing shot showing Rabbi Anshin walking along the field near the Kreuzstadl, having vowed to continue the search for the mass grave. Together with the interviews, which serve as oral testimonies of 'garrulous silencing' (Wieler, cited in Rényi, 2010), the documentary succeeds in finding images for the ongoing confrontation (or lack of it) with a deeply fraught historical legacy.

Rechnitz (der Würgeengel)

Rechnitz (Der Würgeengel) (*Rechnitz (The Exterminating Angel)*) is a play by the Austrian Nobel Prize for Literature Laureate Elfriede Jelinek, which premiered at the Munich Kammerspiele on 28 November 2008 under the direction of Jossi Wieler. Jelinek was awarded the coveted Mühlheimer Dramatikerpreis (Mülheim Dramatist Prize) for the play in 2009, and Wieler was awarded the Nestroy Theatre Prize for his production. Jelinek, who has had a fraught relationship with the Austrian state and its media throughout her literary career, decided not to stage the work in Austria, where she expected a negative media reaction to it (Jelinek, 2009b, p. 23). *Rechnitz* was, however, very well received in Vienna during a guest performance by the Munich Kammerspiele in May 2010, and the first Austrian production of the play premiered in Graz in March 2012. There have also been notable productions in Düsseldorf and Chemnitz in Germany.

The first and longest section of the play is set in a castle in Austria, filled with an unspecified number of messengers. It was theatre director Jossi Wieler's idea to pick up on Luis Buñuel's film *El ángel exterminador* (*The Exterminating Angel*) for the 2008/2009 season at the Munich Kammerspiele (Jelinek, 2009b, p. 17), and, as such, the subtitle to Jelinek's play alludes to Buñuel's 1962 film, where, during a dinner party at the home of Señor Edmundo Nobile, the servants inexplicably disappear, leaving the dinner party guests and their hosts trapped in the house. In Jelinek's play, however, it is the messengers (who, among the multiple identities that they take on in the play, also identify themselves as the absent masters' servants) who are left behind to communicate their knowledge of the events of the night of 24/25 March to the audience. The masters of the castle have fled, and the castle set on fire prior to the arrival of 'die Russen' ('the Russians') (Jelinek 2009a, p. 56). This echoes the historical narrative of the Rechnitz massacre and its aftermath, as Countess Margit Batthyány left Rechnitz Castle together with her husband on 25 March 1945, eventually settling in Switzerland, while the castle itself was set on fire by the German anti-aircraft defence on 31 March 1945 in the course of fighting with the Red Army (Kovacs, 2009, p. 33).

However, as Pia Janke has asserted (2009, p. 243), *Rechnitz* should not be understood as a work trying to reconstruct historical events; rather, it asks questions about how knowledge about historical events is communicated, specifically through the 'Botenberichte' ('messenger reports'), which allow for the integration of witness statements, memories, stories,

historical analyses, media debates and television reports (Scheit 2013, p. 159). Like many of Jelinek's previous works, *Rechnitz* is a play that is insistently preoccupied with the discourse that is constructed about the past and transmitted by the media. For this reason, in a 'Danksagungen' ('acknowledgements') section at the end of the published play, Jelinek makes reference to a newspaper interview with German philosopher Hans Magnus Enzensberger, which is reproduced almost verbatim in the words of the 'Ausnahmebote' ('exceptional messenger') in *Rechnitz*. This is just one of a number of intertextual references, to works belonging to diverse genres, in *Rechnitz*, which are explicitly acknowledged by Jelinek. These include Litchfield's biography of the Thyssen dynasty, Friedrich Nietzsche's philosophical text *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, the ancient Greek drama *The Bacchae* by Euripides, T. S. Eliot's poem 'The Hollow Men', Friedrich Kind's libretto for Carl Maria von Weber's opera *Der Freischütz* (*The Marksman*), and a book entitled *Interview mit einem Kannibalen* (*Interview with a Cannibal*) by the Austrian filmmaker and author Günter Stampf where he interviews the infamous 'Rothenburg Cannibal' Armin Meiwes. In addition to this, Jelinek has also highlighted the profound influence of *Totschweigen*, from which she first learned about the Rechnitz massacre (*Nachtkritik*, 2009).

   The range of intertexts in *Rechnitz* is generically diverse, and the play itself similarly resists straightforward genre delimitation. It lacks any of the features that we would typically associate with a play, such as clearly defined *dramatis personae* (the 'Ausnahmebote' ('exceptional messenger') is the only 'named' messenger in the play) or dialogue. Instead, for the majority of the play, the audience is confronted with long, unbroken passages of text (47 in total), which collectively have been described as 'ein einziger langer Sprachstrom, ohne Figurenzuschreibungen, ohne Bildvorgaben, ohne Handlung im klassischen Sinne' ('one long current of language, without the attribution of roles, without scene specifications, without action in a classic sense') (Lochte, 2009, p. 412). It is for this reason that Jossi Wieler and his team of actors at the Munich Kammerspiele had to spend a significant amount of time working with Jelinek's text, breaking it up, determining which actor could speak which section, and transforming it into a performance text (Lochte et al., 2009, p. 413). Making her directors 'co-authors' of her plays in this manner is something that Jelinek views as very important (Lochte, 2009, p. 412). All of these formal features of her play, from its necessity for director's theatre to the lack of action or clearly defined roles, would place it within the category of post-dramatic theatre as defined by Hans-Thies Lehmann (1999). However, in contrast with a central

aspect of post-dramatic theatre, as defined by Lehmann, whereby the text itself is deemed no longer primary, in Jelinek's *Rechnitz*, as in all her plays, the dramatic text itself is of crucial importance, with her dissecting language being the main vehicle for her social and cultural critique. From her earliest plays in the 1970s, Jelinek has never favoured nuanced characterization, instead making her characters 'Sprachflächen' ('linguistic surfaces') where what is said is not associated with an individual, but rather where characters are the sum of existing social and media discourses (Vogel, 2006, p. 213). For Jelinek, such a mode is the only fitting way to write about the Holocaust: 'Die massenhafte Tötung von Menschen hat, für mich jedenfalls, das Ich ausradiert, und sie hat das individuelle Sprechen des Schauspielers, der Schauspielerin auf der Bühne zerstört' ('the mass murder of people has, for me at least, erased the I, and destroyed the individual speech of the actor or actress on the stage') (Jelinek, 2009c, p. 454).

Nowhere is this more evident than in *Rechnitz*, whose primary concern is how knowledge about the Second World War and the Holocaust is transmitted to the 'Nachgeborenen' ('those born after') as we approach an age where 'Botenberichte' ('messenger reports') will replace eyewitnesses (Jelinek, 2009b, p. 20). Through the multitude of voices contained in the messengers' words, Jelinek is able to portray strategies of repression and denial of the past, negation of guilt or personal culpability. Eschewing any psychological depth, in her play she indeed uses her messengers as 'linguistic surfaces' (Vogel, 2006, p. 213) to reflect how the Rechnitz massacre and the Holocaust more broadly are remembered today. Through the staged performance the audience are confronted with discourses that they will instantly recognize from the media and elsewhere which, through Jelinek's virtuoso play with language, are regurgitated and exposed for what they really are. With no dramatic action or character development to 'distract' the audience, they are forced to focus entirely on what the messengers communicate. The messengers address the audience or speak in a collective 'we' form. In Jossi Wieler's Munich production, they wave and smile to the audience, speaking in a light-hearted tone and eating throughout, all the while talking about the Rechnitz massacre. Indeed, Norbert Mayer (2012), reviewing the Graz production of *Rechnitz*, has asserted that the audience are made into 'Komplizen' ('partners in crime'), provoking 'shame' and recognition of the 'Ungeheure, an dem Österreich noch immer würgt' ('the monstrosity on which Austria continues to choke'). The audience finds itself in the uncomfortable position of being invited to sympathize with the messengers (played by popular actors)

while identification is precluded by the nature of what the messengers say. Jelinek utilizes the genre of the theatre play to full effect by addressing her Austrian and German audience in this manner, forcing her viewers to confront the obfuscation, repression and falsity that, in her view, characterizes contemporary discourse about the Nazi past. In this manner she follows in the footsteps of the late Austrian author and dramatist Thomas Bernhard (1931–1989), who in his last play, *Heldenplatz* (1988), which provoked the biggest scandal of his career, confronted his audience with the long shadow of Austrian history by thematizing the continuing and inescapable effects of the Holocaust on an Austrian-Jewish family.

The messengers in *Rechnitz*, who may be described as perpetrators or by-standers, emphatically deny any suggestion of personal culpability (Jelinek, 2009a, p. 185). They engage in a relativizing of history, which functions as a strategy of repression and denial of the past: 'es ist egal, es ist heute egal, das weiß man ja, wer Henker und wer Opfer war … Wahr und Falsch gibt es auch nicht mehr, es gibt auch hier nur noch ein Dazwischen' ('it's all the same, it's all the same today, as we all know, who was the hangman and who the victim … There is no longer right and wrong, there is only an in-between here') (p. 85). As Allyson Fiddler (2014, p. 208) has pointed out, Jelinek is 'writing hard against the relativizing of values' in her play. Moreover, the messengers assert that they will contradict one another, that some will not say anything, 'doch ohne uns wüßten Sie überhaupt nichts' ('but without us you would know nothing at all') (Jelinek 2009a, p. 143). As such, Jelinek highlights the difficulty of the endeavour of trying to find out historical facts about the Rechnitz massacre, specifically the location of the mass grave, when clues have to be pieced together from the words of the perpetrators and their descendants. The victims are dead and, as such, emphatically absent from her play: their story is told from the perpetrators' perspective. Through replicating 'die Sprache der Täter' ('the language of the perpetrators') (Jelinek, 2009b, p. 20), who deny the victims' their humanity and dignity, Jelinek illustrates how the victims are murdered a second time. The messengers employ the Nazi discourse of 'Vernichtung durch Arbeit' ('destruction through work'), and the Nazi ideology of racial superiority to justify the massacre: '[z]ur Arbeit waren diese Hohlen, die ich dort gesehen habe, ohnedies nicht mehr, nicht mehr zu gebrauchen' ('these hollow ones, that I saw there, could, in any case, no longer be used for work') (Jelinek, 2009a, pp. 167–168). For the messengers-as-perpetrators, the Rechnitz victims are alternately T. S. Eliot's 'hollow men' (p. 131), 'schäumenden Narren,

die sich ihre Abstammung nicht besser ausgesucht haben' ('frothing idiots, who could not choose their ancestry better') (p. 130), 'Nullen' ('zeros') (p. 129), '200 Stück' ('200 pieces') (p. 141) and 'Wild' ('wild game') (p. 94). In *Rechnitz*, Jelinek replicates the dehumanization to which Holocaust victims were subjected on a linguistic level: 'Menschen sind das keine mehr. Menschen sind sie nicht mehr. Menschen werden sie nicht mehr' ('these are not people any more. They are no longer people. They will not be people any more') (p. 141). The use of anaphora functions as a means of performing social and cultural critique by emptying out language to reveal the real issues at stake, or engaging in a play with words as, for example, with the term 'schwindeln' (which means both 'to feel dizzy' and 'to tell fibs' in German), as one of the messengers reports rising to 'Schwindelhöh' ('dizzying heights') to watch the mass grave being dug, but asserting 'ich werde immer schwindeln, wenn ich später davon rede' ('I will always tell fibs when I talk about it later on') (pp. 124–125). In this manner, Jelinek shows how 'garrulous silencing' about the past, which is documented in *Totschweigen*, may become a virtuosic performance masking terrible atrocities.

Another characteristic that the play shares with the documentary *Totschweigen* is its focus on the mass grave, with Jelinek's use of language emphasizing the covering up of the past that the grave symbolizes. The messengers, whose narrative switches between past, present and future throughout the play, predict that the mass grave will prove difficult to find: 'wir graben ein Grab, das keiner findet, das alle übersehen' ('we are digging a grave that no one will find, that everyone will overlook') (Jelinek, 2009a, p. 124). The attitudes of some sections of the Rechnitz population are parodied through the messengers' concerns: 'Daß die bloß nichts ausgraben, wenn sie schon so lang graben! Aber solang sie an der falschen Stelle graben, ist es mir im Prinzip wurscht' ('That they don't manage to unearth something, when they've already been digging for such a long time! But as long as they're digging in the wrong place, I basically couldn't care less') (p. 132). These statements echo the words of a farmer interviewed in *Totschweigen*, who summarizes the views of some of the local Rechnitz population regarding the search for the mass grave as follows: 'Lass sie graben bis sie deppert werden, na, die hören von alleine auf, dann ist die Sache erledigt für uns' ('Let them dig until they lose their minds, they'll stop of their own accord, then the whole matter will be settled for us'). The messengers' words are hauntingly prophetic: 'Dieses Grab will nicht gefunden werden und wird auch nicht gefunden' ('This grave does not want to be found and will not be found') (p. 133).

By making language, rather than characterization or action, the real 'protagonist' of her drama, an aspect noted by André Jung, one of the actors in the Munich Kammerspiele production of *Rechnitz* (Jung, 2009, p. 441), Jelinek offers a critique of contemporary discourse in Austria and Germany about the Nazi past. Jelinek has repeatedly voiced the view that despite concerted efforts 'to confront the past' in Germany and Austria, this process has become ritualized and devoid of meaning: 'Indem man diese Sünden der Väter und Großväter gebetsmühlen-haft immer wieder hervorholt, ohne ihnen wirklich analytisch auf den Grund gehen zu wollen oder ihr Fortwirken in der Gegenwart zu unter-suchen, deckt man Geschichte zu' ('By rolling out these sins of the fathers and grandfathers again and again, like a mantra, without really wishing to probe these analytically or investigate their continuities in the present, one covers over history') (Jelinek, 2009b, p. 22). Jelinek bor-rows a term from German philosopher Hermann Lübbe, who used the concept of 'Sündenstolz' (literally: 'pride in one's sins'; metaphorically: 'pride in rituals of remembrance') to refer to Germany's remembrance culture, and reaffirms its literal meaning, as the messengers voice their pride in committing atrocities during the Third Reich: 'und doch sind wir stolz auf unsere Sünden und reden darüber, denn welchen Sinn hätte es zu sündigen, wenn man danach nicht darüber reden dürfte' ('and yet we are proud of our sins and talk about them, since what would the point of transgressing be, if one couldn't talk about it afterwards') (p. 131). In her analysis of the play, Allyson Fiddler describes how *Rechnitz* constitutes a 'critique of what might be summed up as mere lip-service to the project of atonement or of "mastering"/overcoming the past' (Fiddler, 2014, p. 202).

In *Rechnitz*, Jelinek strives to work against the rationalization that she sees as now dominating the discourse on the Holocaust, for which Hannah Arendt's concept of 'the banality of evil' has become emblem-atic. There is an explicit allusion to Arendt in *Rechnitz* through Jelinek's reference to 'unsere tägliche Sendung von der Banalität des Bösen' ('our daily programme about the banality of evil') (Jelinek, 2009a, p. 99), as Fiddler (2014, p. 209) has also observed. As Hermann Schmidt-Rahmer, the director of the 2010 Düsseldorf production of *Rechnitz*, describes,

> Es ist commonsense geworden, den Holocaust als einen gut geschmierten, deutsch-perfekt organisierten Verwaltungsakt zu be-schreiben, der relativ emotionslos ist und einem delirierendem Pragmatismus folgt. Das ist im Grunde der Blick der Historiker . . . Das heißt aber, wenn Jelinek die Verbindung zieht zwischen dem

Kannibalen von Rotenburg und der Gräfin Batthyány und einem Fest, bei dem Menschen getötet wurden, evoziert sie automatisch – natürlich auch durch die Einführung des Euripides-Textes über die Bakchen – den Gedanken, die Judenvernichtung im Nationalsozialismus sei ein dionysischer, lustvoller, orgiastischer Vorgang gewesen, der metaphorisch in ihrem Text – nein, ganz konkret in ihrem Text – kulminiert im Kannibalismus . . . Sie stellt also diese polemische Behauptung auf als Gegensatz zum Holocaust als Verwaltungsakt. Sie sagt nicht, die Täter waren nüchtern, sondern sie waren lustbesessen, dionysisch und haben lustvoll gefressen. Es ist eine absolut polemische, politisch inkorrekte Meinung, mit der sie meinen Aufschrei provozieren möchte. (It has become common practice to describe the Holocaust as a perfectly-organised Germanic administrative machine, running like clockwork, which is relatively emotionless and follows a delirious pragmatism. That is essentially the view of the historians . . . This means, however, that when Jelinek draws the connection between the cannibal of Rotenburg and the Countess Batthyány and a party during which people were murdered, she automatically evokes – also through the introduction of Euripides's Bacchae text – the thought that the Holocaust under National Socialism was a Dionysian, sensual, orgiastic process, which culminates metaphorically in her text – no, actually in a very concrete way in her text – in cannibalism . . . She therefore sets up this polemical assertion in contrast to the Holocaust as an administrative process. She does not say, the perpetrators were level-headed, rather that they were lustful, Dionysian and that they sensuously gorged themselves. It is an absolutely polemical, politically-incorrect view, with which she wants to provoke my outrage.)

(Schmidt-Rahmer et al., 2010, pp. 21–22)

Through her radical depiction of the Rechnitz massacre as an orgiastic killing, Jelinek presents a challenge to an established understanding of the Holocaust as an 'administrative process' (Hilberg, cited in Browning, 2007, p. 11), yet her treatment of the massacre is not sensationalist in the manner of Litchfield (2006). Instead her play reaffirms the Rechnitz massacre as something that exceeds human comprehension (Jelinek, 2009b, p. 17), and which therefore radically destabilizes the ritualized and sanitized forms of remembrance that she criticizes. At the close of the play the messengers depart, following in the footsteps of the Countess Batthyány, Podezin and Oldenburg (manager of the Rechnitz estate), who, as the messengers relate, are happy and unrepentant of

their actions. The audience, meanwhile, leaving the theatre, gain an appreciation of the ways that the past may be consciously obfuscated, distorted, repressed and relativized.

This chapter has examined how both Heinrich and Erne's film and Jelinek's play have sought to utilize the possibilities of their respective genres in order to thematize the Rechnitz massacre, and explore its repercussions and legacy in the present day. As we have seen, *Totschweigen* is able to find a powerful visual language for the repression and denial of the past, as well as for the difficult endeavour of searching for the mass grave. Through its oral testimonies from local eyewitnesses as well as the relatives of the victims of the Rechnitz massacre, the film documents the strategies of repression, and offers a sensitive treatment of the pressing need to uncover the past. *Rechnitz*, meanwhile, is a work of fiction – with no compulsion to document reality, as is the case with *Totschweigen*. Jelinek presents her audience with a radical treatment of the Rechnitz massacre, with messengers using the language of the perpetrators to recount an orgiastic killing, for which they show no remorse. Almost 15 years after *Totschweigen* was made, Jelinek utilizes the unique power of theatre as a public forum in order to confront her audience with ongoing strategies of self-exculpation, denial and relativizing of the past. For this purpose she stretches the genre of the theatre play to its limits, making language itself rather than action the main focus. *Totschweigen* also does not adhere to all the genre conventions of the documentary film, dispensing, for example, with an authoritative commentary. In both cases the subject-matter exceeds the formal conventions of the particular genre. At the same time, both works fully utilize the potential of their respective genres. While *Totschweigen* harnesses film's unique ability to document reality in order to provide a moving portrayal of the confrontation with the past in one Austrian village, *Rechnitz* utilizes the power of performance to reveal hidden truths about our existence; in this case, the empty rhetoric and rituals of talking about the past, which mask the true horror of historical events.

Notes

2. This is the English translation of the film title as given on the *Totschweigen* film DVD (Erne and Heinrich 2011).
3. The phrase 'open wound' is frequently used with reference to Austria's National Socialist past. See, for example, Jerker Spits (2003, pp. 105–106), who argues that the reactions to Thomas Bernhard's seminal play *Heldenplatz* (1988) illustrated that, 50 years on, the Nazi past constituted an 'offene Wunde' ('open wound') in Austria.
4. Translation from the Hungarian as given in *Totschweigen*.

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Part III

Revisiting Literary Genres: Writing Back/Writing Forward

5
The Muse Writes Back: Lyric Poetry and Female Poetic Identity

Sarah Parker

Introduction

This chapter examines the genre of lyric poetry, focusing on one particular aspect of that genre – the convention of the muse. The love lyric directed at the beloved muse has a lengthy tradition, from Sappho and Catullus to Petrarch, through Shakespeare, Sidney and Donne, and into the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries. The muse, as the conventional addressee of the lyric, plays a crucial role in enabling the poem to come into being: she is the absent presence towards whom the poet's words are directed. But the gendered positioning of the muse–poet relationship, reiterated throughout literary history, means that the lyric muse has proved a particularly problematic concept for women poets. Due to the concept of the muse, women have been consistently associated with the passive, inspiring role rather than that of active creator – that role is preserved for men. This, along with other social and cultural factors, made it particularly difficult for women poets to claim the role of poet for themselves.

In response to the issues outlined above, this chapter poses the following questions: How do women poets play with the gendered conventions of the lyric genre in order to reconceptualize the poet–muse relationship? Do they claim a muse of their own? Do they try to write as both muse and poet? Or do they reject the concept of the muse entirely? The first section of this chapter traces the development of the muse figure in historical poetic tradition. The second section then interrogates the problematic aspects of this concept for women poets. Finally, in the concluding section, I analyse poems from the late 19th century to show how the gendered roles of poet and muse are unsettled via lyric experimentation. Before addressing these matters, however, it is crucial

to define the genre of lyric poetry and the debates surrounding the role of the lyric addressee, frequently figured as the female muse.

Lyric poetry as genre

What do we mean when we talk of 'lyric poetry'? How has the lyric been defined as a poetic genre? In his introduction to the lyric, Scott Brewster writes that the 'Lyric [as a form] has proved a problematic case for genre theory. At times it is treated as a timeless, universal aesthetic disposition, at others it is identified as a generic category clearly defined by its subject matter, formal features and purposes' (2009, p. 2). Indeed, the comparative literary critic René Wellek believes that 'one must abandon attempts to define the general nature of the lyric or the lyrical. Nothing beyond generalities of the tritest kind can result from it' (1970, p. 252). One immediate issue we face in defining the lyric is that, for many, the lyric has become inextricably associated with poetry itself. As Rhian Williams observes, 'the lyric is the form of poetry that most people will think of when they think of poetry in general' (2009, p. 18). Broadly defined as a short poem with a single speaker expressing thought or emotion, the lyric's apparent simplicity seemingly evades further generic definition.

The problem of defining the lyric begins with Aristotle, whose *Poetics* (ca. 335 BCE) defines literary genres as epic, dramatic and lyric, but gives little further comment on what the lyric actually is. Aristotle refers to 'Dithyrambic poetry, and the music of the flute and lyre in most of their forms' (1997, p. 1), before moving on to discuss the dramatic genres (comedy and tragedy) in more detail. Despite centuries of debate, genre theorists continue to disagree over what exactly constitutes 'lyric' poetry, and what defines it in contrast with other poetic genres. M. H. Abrams, for example, defines it as 'any fairly short poem, consisting of an utterance by a single speaker, who expresses a state of mind or a process of perception, thought and feeling' (1993, pp. 108–109). Abrams' definition focuses on the 'I' of the lyric poem, the speaker, but the 'you' or addressee plays an important role as well. 'Lyric' is etymologically connected to song: it comes from the Latin *lyricus*, 'of or for the lyre', which itself derives from the Greek *lyrikos*, 'singing to the lyre'. This links the lyric to its original context of a public musical performance before a listening audience. In keeping with this, W. R. Johnson defines the lyric as a collective genre, as 'a speaker, or singer, talking to, another person or persons, often, but not always, at a highly dramatic moment in which the essence of their relationship ... reveals itself in the singer's

lyrical discourse' (1982, p. 3). However we define it, the lyric is therefore 'fundamentally concerned with the conditions and nature of address' (Brewster, 2009, p. 2). In keeping with its original role as public entertainment, it is both personal and public, an 'utterance' addressed to an unheard audience or addressee. Despite this, the lyric is often understood by theorists as having 'no hearer beyond the poet himself, no true *you*' (Waters, 2003, p. 3). Such a view of the lyric as a solitary expression derives from Victorian theorists such as John Stuart Mill, who, taking his cue from the Romantic lyric ode in 'Thoughts on Poetry and Its Varieties' (1833) defined lyric poetry as 'feeling confessing itself to itself in moments of solitude' (2014, p. 37).

The debate about whether the lyric is a solitary utterance or is truly dialogic in nature continues into the 20th century. Mill's understanding of it as overheard speech is taken up by later influential theorists such as Northrop Frye, who argues that the 'lyric poet normally pretends to be talking to himself or someone else: a spirit of nature, a muse, a personal friend, a lover … The poet, so to speak, turns his back on his listeners' (1957, pp. 249–250). According to Jonathan Culler, this address to an absent 'you' (termed 'apostrophe') forms such a central part of lyric tradition that 'one might be justified in … seeking to identify apostrophe with lyric itself' (1981, p. 137). However, William Waters reminds us that lyric address is not just a convention but often seeks to make contact with a real, historical person, such as a literary patron or a specific intended reader: 'Such poems *are* mindful of their addresses and are concerned to guide their uptake' (2003, p. 4). The intended addressee is often the reader themselves. For example, Johnson writes that in the lyric the 'you' addressed is actually a 'metaphor for readers of the poem and becomes a symbolic mediator, a conductor between the poet and each of his readers and listeners' (1982, p. 3).

Therefore, whether they are addressed to a real person or an imagined receptive audience, lyric poems are often 'poems that say *you* to a human being' (Waters, 2003, p. 1). This listener or addressee, the one who is invoked by the lyric speaker, has frequently been represented as a female muse – either a goddess invoked by the poet, who grants him the ability to sing, or later, the beloved of the courtly love lyric. Thus the concept of the muse is central to the lyric genre – although it has often been overlooked by critics (e.g. the majority of the theorists cited above make no mention of the muse in their studies of the lyric). The next section of this chapter traces the history of the concept of the muse from its classical origins to the present day.

The history of the muse

The traditional female muse, invoked in male-authored poetry through-out centuries of Western literature, has a long, complex history. This account is in no way exhaustive, but it provides a glimpse of the her-itage of this key literary concept through five broad developments: the classical, the medieval, the Renaissance/early modern, the Romantic and the 19th/20th century. The nine muses have their classical debut in Hesiod's *Theogony* (ca. 700 BC). The poem opens with the shepherd Hesiod encountering the muses on Mount Helicon. In terms of their genealogy, the muses are the offspring of a union between Zeus and Mnemosyne, the goddess of memory. Their various attributes have been further expanded on in literature following their initial appearance in the *Theogony*. They are, from eldest to youngest: Calliope, muse of epic poetry; Clio, muse of history; Erato, muse of love poetry; Euterpe, muse of music and lyric poetry; Melpomene, muse of tragedy; Polyhymena, muse of sacred song; Terpsichore, muse of choral song and dance; Thalia, muse of comedy; and Urania, muse of astronomy and astrology.

As the daughters of the goddess of memory, the muses' original role was to help a poet remember and sing events of the past, such as the his-tories of gods and heroes. As Hesiod's account demonstrates, the muses' gift could bring fame and greatness to the lowliest of shepherds, for 'every man is fortunate whom the Muses love' (Hesiod, 1988, p. 6). How-ever, power relations between the poet and the muses are ambiguous, as they warn him: 'we know to tell many lies that sound like truth' (1988, p. 3). Therefore, although the muses themselves are infallible, they often mix lies and truth, perhaps in order to remind the mortal poet that he is merely a passive receiver of their wisdom. In writings of antiquity, the relationship between the male poet and the classical muses is often understood in terms of divine possession or *enthusiasme* – a kind of mad-ness, described in Plato's *Phaedrus* as the 'madness [that] comes from the Muses: taking a soft, virgin soul and arousing it to a Bacchic frenzy of expression in lyric' (Plato, 2005, p. 24). As Gayle A. Levy explains, for the Ancient Greeks, the muses 'are not simply a passive catalyst behind the poet's creative act. The author is the compliant recipient and the Muses fill him with their creativity, their ideas and their words' (1999, p. 13).

As Ancient Greek mythology shifted first into Roman, and then Christian, culture, the concept of a divine, inspiring feminine power lived on, but became corporealized and connected to an actual, living woman. As Mary DeShazer puts it, rather than a goddess, the muse becomes 'woman spiritualized, the earthly manifestation of heavenly powers . . . a divine mediator between man and God' (1986, p. 14).

Within Christianity, a key figure who embodies this mediating role is, of course, the Virgin Mary, a human woman who bore the divine Word on earth, and inspired countless songs of devotion from her followers. These songs of devotion eventually evolved into the courtly love tradition of the medieval troubadours which spread throughout France, Germany, Spain and Portugal during the 13th century. In courtly tradition, the divine and erotic aspects of the female muse are collapsed together; the muse becomes an unattainable mistress whom the poet worships, such as Petrarch's Laura or Dante's Beatrice. But though ostensibly human, these women are still connected to the divine: 'positioned somewhere between the Virgin and actual flesh-and-blood woman' (Prose, 2003, p. 5). For example, Petrarch's passion for the married Laura, who he encountered in church one day, remains unrequited: he worships her idealized beauty from afar. On her death, Laura becomes even more unattainable, and thus the ideal subject for even more longing love lyrics, collected in *Il Canzoniere* (ca. 1327–1374).

Poets of the 16th century, such as Sir Thomas Wyatt, Henry Howard (Earl of Surrey) and Philip Sidney, continued this Petrarchan tradition. For example, Sidney's *Astrophil and Stella* (1591) chronicles a similar desire for an unattainable woman. William Shakespeare also draws on such Petrarchan conventions in his sonnets but begins to disrupt and parody them. Shakespeare's 'Sonnet 130' (1609), for example, inverts the conventions of the Petrarchan blazon (a term for the praising of the beloved's features in a series of metaphors), declaring: 'My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun;/Coral is far more red than her lips' red' (2005, p. 30). In the 17th century, John Donne wrote a number of sensuous love lyrics, such as 'To His Mistress Going to Bed' (1654), which praises the naked beloved using colonial metaphors: 'Oh my America! my new-found-land' (1963, p. 89).

Aside from lyric, the muse was also a vital tool for those writing in other poetic genres, such as epic and political poetry. For example, Edmund Spenser invokes the muse in his Christian epic *The Faerie Queene* (1596) in order to justify his move from pastoral to historical subject-matter:

> Lo I the man, whose Muse whilome did maske,
> As time her taught, in lowly Shepheards weeds,
> Am now enforst a far unfitter taske,
> For trumpets sterne to chaunge mine Oaten reeds,
> And sing of Knights and Ladies gentle deeds

> (1995, p. 3)

Equally, in *Paradise Lost* (1674), John Milton's 'Heav'nly' muse, Urania, enables him to forge a connection between the nine muses of Ancient Greek mythology (in which Urania is the muse of astronomy) and the Holy Spirit of Christian theology. His muse will 'soar/Above th' *Aonian* Mount' of Homer and Virgil, helping the poet 'assert Eternal Providence,/And justifie the wayes of God to men' (2000, p. 3). In both cases the female muse acts as a cover and displacement for the male poet's own epic ambitions, granting him permission to speak about historical and religious matters. In the 18th century, poets such as Alexander Pope and Jonathan Swift use the muse in a similar way, with Pope protesting that his satirical muse is not vicious but merely a way of coping with life: 'The Muse but serv'd to ease some friend, not wife,/To help me thro' this long disease, my Life' (2004, p. 159).

   The medieval idea of the muse as positioned somewhere between a living woman and a divine mediator persisted into the Romantic tradition of the early 19th century. However, rather than being associated with the Virgin Mary, the muse became associated with the more secular (but no less sublime) natural world in the form of Mother Nature. Irene Tayler explains that Romantic male poets such as William Wordsworth frequently used actual women from their lives as inspiration, turning them into 'personae' of the male creative imagination, embodying the 'natural' values that they felt cut off from, as socialized male subjects (1990, pp. 18–19). Mother Nature and real women therefore become connected in Romantic poetry, representing the non-linguistic world of the imagination. Tayler links this Romantic conception of Mother Nature to the role of the mother within Freudian psychoanalysis, arguing that the male Romantic poet's longing for a union with nature reflects his desire to return to the womb. However, the prospect of returning to the womb – of being devoured by the Eternal Feminine – is also a threatening one. Therefore Tayler argues that the male poet contains these powers within a specific woman, allowing him to explore such feminine 'transcendence' from a safe distance:

> The muse as literal woman – a Dorothy Wordsworth, or even better a Lucy (as fictional variant of the actual sister) – thus offers a safer object of love; she represents the sum of all being, yet her dimensions are sufficiently human to allow of human embrace, and as poetic topic she is safely encoded in language. In this way the male artist's female muse offers him a way to encounter both Mother Earth and lost Edenic paradise in a form that is not annihilative but restorative.
>
> (Tayler, 1990, pp. 20–22)

The muse as a real woman who embodies the various erotic and terrifying facets of femininity continues as a strong presence in later 19th-century literature. For example, the Pre-Raphaelite artist and poet Dante Gabriel Rossetti found inspiration through a series of muses, including his wife Elizabeth Siddal, his housekeeper and mistress Fanny Cornforth, and Jane Morris (the wife of his friend William Morris). In his paintings he obsessively depicts these women as mythical goddesses, literary heroines, angels – even the Virgin Mary herself. His sister, Christina Rossetti, critiques this process in her poem 'In an Artist's Studio' (1856):

> One face looks out from all his canvasses, . . .
> A queen in opal or in ruby dress,
>   A nameless girl in freshest summer greens,
>   A saint, an angel; – every canvass means
> The same one meaning, neither more nor less.
> He feeds upon her face by day and night
>
> (2008, p. 49)

The image of the artist 'feeding' on the muse's face suggests the exploitative nature of this relationship, in which he depicts her as a manifestation of his own desires: 'Not as she is, but as she fills his dream' (2008, p. 49). But by the *fin-de-siècle* it is more often the female muses themselves who are depicted as vampiric and dangerous *femmes fatales*. Literature and visual art in the late-Victorian period repeatedly features women who endanger men with their voracious sexual appetites and ruthless cruelty; from Charles Baudelaire's *Les Fleurs du mal* (1857) to Sheridan Le Fanu's *Carmilla* (1871) and H. Rider Haggard's *She* (1887), female power and sexuality is frequently represented as a terrifying threat to social order – even Dracula, a classic male monster, attacks through manipulating female desire, as he states: 'Your girls that you all love are mine already. And through them you and others shall yet be mine' (Stoker, 1998, p. 21). The archetypal *femme fatale* of the 1890s is Salomé, depicted in Oscar Wilde's controversial play of 1896. Following her infamous 'dance of the seven veils', her unrequited lust for John the Baptist leads her to demand his head on a platter.

   The role of Salomé was originally written with Sarah Bernhardt in mind – an actress who could be said to be one of the first modern manifestation of the muse as celebrity. In the early 20th century, new technologies and media (mechanical printing, the popular press, photography, radio, film and television) led to the development of a

recognizably modern celebrity culture. Thus muses were increasingly fascinating women of stage and screen – whether Kiki de Montparnasse, photographed by Man Ray; Josephine Baker and Isadora Duncan, whose dances captivated audiences across Europe and the USA; or silver-screen actresses such as Mary Pickford, Greta Garbo and Marilyn Monroe. The muse continues to be present in contemporary culture, although the words we might use for a muse figure now are more likely to be 'celebrity', 'icon' or 'star'. In the 21st century we usually attribute this inspiring feminine role to an artist's lover, model or collaborator, rather than to a goddess or divine power. Books and films are regularly produced that promise to unveil the secrets of the glamorous and famous muses (often Hollywood actresses and models). Kate Moss, for example, has been depicted by several artists in recent years. Even less glamorous muses still attract the interest of the media – the painter Lucien Freud's muse, Sue Tilley, who posed for the 1995 painting 'Benefits Supervisor Sleeping', was interviewed by several newspapers following the artist's death in 2011. As these examples suggest, popular culture reveals an enduring fascination with the idea of the muse, with its connotations of female power, sexuality and creativity. However, this concept has also proved highly problematic for women who wished to write themselves, rather than inspire others to do so, as the next section will explain.

Women poets and the muse

Although the concept of the muse is in many ways an appealing and potent one, offering images of women as powerful goddesses and inspiring beloveds, historically women have found in difficult to assert an actual artistic creativity in their own right. This is in part because, throughout history, the active task of poetic creation has been associated with masculinity, while the role of the silent, inspiring muse has been associated with femininity. Therefore reconciling female and poetic identity has often seemed a difficult task. Even the earliest and most famous woman poet, Sappho of Lesbos, was designated 'the Tenth Muse' by writers of antiquity and 'ranked alongside the nine muses' (Prins, 1999, p. 23). In keeping with this, several women poets writing after Sappho were also repeatedly referred to by epithets that defined them as muses rather than poets – for example, in 1650 the American poet Anne Bradstreet's first volume of poetry was published under the title *The Tenth Muse, Newly Sprung Up in America*.

  Whether they wrote or not, women were frequently portrayed as 'poetry', rather than 'poet', implying that, in Susan Brown's words,

'Poetry is for women a mode, not an occupation . . . They live and inspire it but they do not write it, while other people – namely, men – have the privilege to do so' (2000, p. 181). Although 19th-century poems often included women as symbolic representatives of poetic art (such as Tennyson's Lady of Shalott), this 'association of poetry and femininity, however, excluded women poets' themselves (Mermin, 1986, p. 68). Even projects that ostensibly seemed to support women poets' contributions often served only to reassert their inferiority. For example, in his 1883 anthology *English Poetesses*, Eric S. Robertson writes in the preface: 'women have always been inferior to men as writers of poetry; and they always will be' (p. xv). He concludes that women's biological capacities will always trump their creative abilities since 'children are the best poems Providence meant women to produce' (p. xiv). The belief that women were poetically inferior to men is also seen in an anonymous 1890 article entitled 'Poetry in Petticoats' which declares:

> In woman, indeed, the capacity of art . . . is rarely if ever completely developed . . . The Greeks once figured the Muses as women: and – for the Greeks were wise – they may well have meant to signify thereby that the Muses would endure the caresses of none but men. Certain it seems that Poetry in petticoats is only poetry on sufferance; only woman essaying to do the man's part.
>
> (*Scots Observer*, 8 March 1890, pp. 438–439)

The attitude that women's 'natural' role was that of muse persisted into the 20th century. This view was expressed by Robert Graves in his study *The White Goddess* (1948), in which he states: 'woman is not a poet: she is either a Muse or she is nothing' (1952, p. 446).

As the preceding examples show, the muse emerges as a highly problematic concept that women must reject in order to assert their own poetic creativity. However, as we have already seen, this concept is also central to the lyric genre. The issues and problems surrounding the muse raise the question: Is it possible for the woman writer to claim 'a muse of her own'? Is the muse even necessary, and if so, how might a woman poet reimagine this role? The question of how the female writer should situate herself within (a historically male-orientated) literary tradition, in order to enable and foster her own creativity, has been an object of concern for several feminist critics, particularly during the latter half of the 20th century. The muse is one of the issues confronted by Adrienne Rich in her essay on her own poetic development, 'When We Dead Awaken: Writing as Re-Vision' (1971). She argues that women

have found it difficult to recognize themselves as a source of their own inspiration because, throughout literary history, woman is the image men have made her:

> A lot is being said today about the influence that myths and images of women have on all of us who are the products of culture. I think it has been a particular confusion to the girl or woman who tries to write…She goes to poetry or fiction looking for *her* way of being in the world…she meets the image of Woman in books written by men. She finds a terror and dream, she finds a beautiful face, she finds La Belle Dame Sans Merci, she finds Juliet or Tess or Salomé, but precisely what she does not find is that absorbed, drudging, puzzled, sometimes inspired creature, herself, who sits at a desk trying to put words together.
>
> (1993, p. 171)

In order to challenge and transform these false, destructive images of women, Rich proposes that women writers turn to women poetic precursors: 'So what does she do? What did I do? I read the older women poets with their peculiar keenness and ambivalence: Sappho, Christina Rossetti, Emily Dickinson, Elinor Wylie, [Edna St. Vincent] Millay, H. D.' (1993, p. 171). These female voices, though they are often compromised and conflicted, provide an alternative tradition from which the female muse can be salvaged and remade.

Therefore Rich advocates identifying with female precursors, in order to forge and celebrate an alternative, female tradition. Such revisionist feminist approaches to literary tradition take their cue from Virginia Woolf's famous statement in *A Room of One's Own* (1929): 'we think back through our mothers if we are women' (2000, p. 76). Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar continue this emphasis on identifying with literary foremothers in their influential study *The Madwoman in the Attic* (1979). They agree with Rich that women writers have been alienated from themselves by male-orientated images of women, arguing that before the woman writer 'can journey through the looking glass toward literary autonomy…she must come to terms with the images on the surface of the glass, with, that is, those mythic masks male artists have fastened over her human face' (2001, p. 596). Gilbert and Gubar conclude that if women are to claim poetic identity, they 'must deconstruct the dead self that is a male "opus" and discover a living, inconstant self' (2001, p. 598).

Through turning to the female poetic tradition, women writers need not constantly confront and contend with reductive male-authored

images but regain a sense of their own inspiring multiplicity. By reconciling the distorted, binary images of the mother-precursor, women writers can finally uncover the continuity between the two 'masks' of woman (which portray them as either angelic inspirers or demonic *femme fatales*), rediscovering their humanity. Identifying with their female precursors will also enable women writers to imagine themselves in the position of creator, rather than that of silent muse. Studies such as Mary DeShazer's *Inspiring Women: Reimagining the Muse* (1986) and Alice Suskin Ostriker's *Stealing the Language: The Emergence of Women's Poetry in America* (1987) reveal how this revisionary project gains momentum in the 20th century, with poets such as Louise Bogan, H. D., Anne Sexton, Sylvia Plath, Adrienne Rich and Audre Lorde increasingly able to claim poetic identity for themselves. But this reimagining of the muse and transformation of lyric conventions began in the late 19th century.

The muse writes back

Women in the late 19th century took centre stage in many arenas – including poetry – as never before. As Elaine Showalter, Sally Ledger and Sheila Rowbotham (and others) have observed, the late 19th century witnessed the much-discussed rise of the New Woman and the beginnings of the modern feminist movement, catalysed by significant marriage, education and employment reforms during the mid 19th century. Political action such as mobilizing around the Contagious Diseases Acts (1864–1869), trade union strikes (such as the matchgirl strike of 1888) and the campaign for women's suffrage (the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies was formed in 1897) resulted in women's increased visibility in the public arena and raised further questions about the rights and status of women. At the same time, men's roles were changing too. The aesthetic and decadent movements encouraged men to cultivate their aesthetic tastes and emotional sensibilities, in contrast with previous models of masculinity which emphasized productivity, imperialism and stoicism. Oscar Wilde epitomized this new male dandy, and later became associated with another new 'type' – the male homosexual – following his trial and imprisonment for gross indecency in 1895 (see Sinfield, 1994). At the same time, writers such as John Addington Symonds and Havelock Ellis argued for the rights of 'sexual inverts', and Sigmund Freud developed his theories of infantile sexual development founded on the Oedipus complex. Meanwhile, socialist and utopian writers such as Olive Schreiner, George Bernard Shaw and H. G. Wells dreamed of a world in which men and women could work together for a better future.

In addition to these social and political factors, in 1892 the literary terrain was substantially altered by the death of Alfred, Lord Tennyson. This unseating of the poet laureate (who was succeeded by the less impressive Alfred Austin in 1896) enabled 'minor' poets – including women – to come to the fore. According to Marion Thain, this shift was 'beneficial for women poets...[who] were publishing in such great numbers and with such vigour by the end of the century that there is no longer a polarity between a "women's tradition" and a mainstream...the marginal became central' (2007, p. 224). These factors combined made conditions ripe for a major reimagining of the muse–poet relationship during the late 19th century, for as women increasingly gained voices of their own, they also sought to give the silent muse a voice. We can observe this shift in poems from the 1890s where the muse writes – or talks – back. For example, in Edith Nesbit's 'The Goose-Girl' (1898, published under 'E. Nesbit'), a young girl answers back to a would-be male poet. Nesbit's male speaker is clearly a parody of a stereotypical Romantic poet – his opening words echo Wordsworth's famous 'I wandered lonely as a cloud'. On his daily walk he encounters a beautiful young girl driving geese across a field:

> I wandered lonely by the sea.
>   As is my daily use,
> I saw her drive across the lea
>   The gander and the goose.
> The gander and the gray, gray goose,
>   She drove them all together;
> Her cheeks were rose, her gold hair loose,
>   All in the wild gray weather.
>
>   (Nesbit, 1997, p. 33)[1]

The male speaker's perspective here recalls numerous Wordsworth poems from *Lyrical Ballads* (1798) in which the speaker admires an impoverished girl or woman – for example, 'We Are Seven' and 'Lucy Gray'. In the first, the speaker converses with an 8-year-old 'cottage girl', admiring her prettiness: 'She had a rustic, woodland air,/And she was wildly clad;/Her eyes were fair, and very fair, /– Her beauty made me glad' (2013, p. 49). In 'Lucy Gray', Wordsworth describes the 'solitary child' as 'The sweetest thing that ever grew/Beside a human door!' (2013, p. 232), as if the girl were a fine piece of shrubbery. Nesbit obliquely references this poem in 'The Goose-Girl' through her repetition of the word 'gray'.

In the second stanza of 'The Goose-Girl', Nesbit's speaker addresses the 'dainty maid' with a romantic proposal to 'come and be my bride' (1997, p. 33). Proudly declaring himself a 'poet from the town', he tells her that among the 'ladies there/There is not one would wear a crown/With your charming air!' (1997, p. 33). But the pompous poet is in for a surprise. In the final stanza of the poem, the maid replies:

> She laughed, she shook her pretty head.
>   'I want no poet's hand;
> Go read your fairy-books,' she said,
>   'For this is fairy-land.
> My Prince comes riding o'er the leas;
>   He fitly comes to woo,
> For I'm a Princess, and my geese
>   Were poets, once, like you!'
>
> (1997, p. 33)

In this humorous conclusion to the poet's reverie, the object of his admiration boldly shoots him down, assertively taking control of his fantasies about her and transforming them to her own advantage. Declaring herself already a princess of her own domain, she informs him that she has already chosen a prince (who comes to 'woo', but will not necessarily win, her favour) and that the geese she drives were actually once poets. Like Circe, the maiden is revealed to be a powerful sorceress who turns men into her helpless subjects. The goose-girl's words are a thinly veiled warning to the poet: you may stare at my beauty and objectify me, but I will answer back to such admiration and transform it into my own fantasy of power. By the end of the poem, he is *her* creature rather than the reverse.

Another late-Victorian poem in which the muse answers back is Constance Naden's 'Love's Mirror' (1894). In contrast with the flippant tone of Nesbit's 'The Goose-Girl', 'Love's Mirror' is an earnest love lyric written in the first person:

> I live with love encompassed round,
> And glowing light that is not mine,
>   And yet am sad; for, truth to tell,
>   It is not I you love so well;
> Some fair Immortal, robed and crowned,
>   You hold within your heart's dear shrine.
>
> (1997, p. 27)

In an inversion of poetic convention, the speaker ('I') here is the female beloved, who fulfils the role of adored muse ('robed and crowned') for her lover ('you'). However, she seeks to remind him that the 'fair Immortal' that he worships actually bears very little resemblance to her true self ('truth to tell,/It is not I you love so well'). As Thain observes, the title suggests that the woman 'is used by her lover to reflect back to himself his own idealised identity, acting as the Imaginary mirror to his ego' (1998, p. 29) – the role conventionally fulfilled by the lyric muse. In the next stanza she entreats him to recognize her as a flawed human being, not as an idealized paragon:

> Cast out the Goddess! let me in;
>   Faulty I am, yet all your own,
>   But this bright phantom you enthrone
> Is such as mortal may not win.
>
>   (1997, p. 27)

But despite fighting her idealization, in the final stanzas, the woman capitulates to her lover's standards, resolving to 'learn of that transcendent grace' (1997, p. 27) and become more like the 'glorious Vision you adore' (1997, p. 27). Yet looking beyond this rather depressing conclusion, the powerful entreaty to 'cast out the Goddess' leaves a lasting impression – anticipating later women poets attempts to 'deconstruct the dead self that is a male "opus"' (Gilbert and Gubar, 2001, p. 598) and find inspiration within themselves.

In the poems discussed above, the muse – the conventional 'you' to whom the lyric poem is directed – finally gains her own voice, becoming the speaker or 'I' of the lyric. In this way, late 19th-century women poets begin to assert their poetic identity, moving from being the passive object to the active subject of the poem. The key to this, somewhat paradoxically, resides in the genre of lyric poetry itself. As explained earlier, lyric has traditionally been structured as a gendered dialogue, with the masculine role associated with poet-speaker ('I') and the feminine role linked to the addressee-muse ('you'). However, the lyric genre, with its 'I' and 'you' pronouns, also contains within itself the potential to undo that rigid dynamic, allowing a multiplicity of gendered positions and desires to come into play. As Virginia Blain observes,

> The lyric form of expression in poetry is a mode of discourse which
> can most easily produce the effect of an effacement or an elision of

sexual difference in the subject or speaker; yet it is this very elision or effacement, this absence, that promotes the desire of the reader to attribute signs of such difference to the discourse of the poem.

<div align="right">(1999, p. 156)</div>

In other words, while we might, according to literary convention, assign gender roles to the (presumed male) speaker of the love poem, and the (presumed female) addressee of the love poem, the uncertainty of the 'I' and 'you' in the lyric can also lead us to 'question our fixed assumptions about gender roles' (Blain, 1999, p. 135). Therefore a variety of different gender positions can be projected onto the lyric poem. For example, the speaker can be imagined as female, and the muse can be interpreted as male, switching the conventional roles of poet/muse.

In this sense, although the roles of 'poet' and 'muse' – the 'I' and the 'you' of the lyric – have accumulated gendered associations due to centuries of poetic convention and tradition (not least the literary convention of the female muse), they do not inherently pertain to either men or women. During the *fin-de-siècle*, many poets began using the 'I' and the 'you' in increasingly flexible ways to encode a variety of different desires. For example, 'Antinous' by Olive Custance (1902) introduces questions of gender ambiguity and desire from its opening stanza: 'I spoke of you, Antinous, with her who is my/heart's delight,/The while we watched the dawn of night/through veils of dusk diaphanous' (1902, p. 50). These opening lines instantly complicate a reading of the poem predicated on either hetero- or homoerotic desire by introducing two beloveds: one male (the Greek youth Antinous) and one female (the speaker's companion), who is his or her 'heart's delight'. If we read the speaker as male, he has a homoerotic passion for a male statue; if female, she has a homoerotic love for a friend who is her 'heart's delight', while both express concurrent heterosexual desire. Such a reading is supported by biographical details from Custance's life: she was at this time romantically involved with both Lord Alfred Douglas (her future husband, and former lover of Oscar Wilde) and Natalie Barney, a notorious lesbian salon hostess.[2]

So we can see from this poem how the lyric 'I' and 'you' can be used to encode various gender ambiguities. In other poems the 'you' is wholly androgynous or hermaphroditic. For example, in 'Love Without Wings' by A. Mary F. Robinson (1891), the 'I' and the 'you' remain ungendered throughout. The poem is split into eight short sections. In the first the speaker affirms the life-giving powers of their beloved:

> I thought: no more the worst endures
>   I die, I end the strife, –
> You swiftly took my hands in yours
>   And drew me back to life!
>
> (1997, p. 180)

This opening stanza suggests the speaker is completely reliant on their lover for their existence. We might even read this speaker as the muse, who relies on the poet-lover for affirmation of her existence (as in Naden's 'Love's Mirror'). However, as the poem develops, it becomes clear that theirs is a reciprocal, if indefinable, relationship. For example, in the third section the speaker claims to be 'the soul of you' (1997, p. 180), affirming that their partner is equally invested in their relationship. The seventh section reveals that the speaker 'haunts' their beloved: 'I haunt you like the magic of a poet,/And charm you like a song' (1997, p. 181). As Thain observes, the lyric roles of 'I' and 'you' gradually dissolve in this poem as it 'defies conventional poet and muse positionings by trying to rediscover an ungendered state before difference was recognized: when "I" and "you" were indistinct' (1999, p. 168). The poem thus articulates a space in which difference is erased and the two subjects can speak (or sing) in chorus. It concludes with the speaker imagining themselves singing alongside their beloved:

> But once I dreamed I sat and sang with you
>   On Ida's hill.
> Therefore, in the echoes of my life, we two
>   Are singing still.
>
> (1997, p. 182)

The possibility of collaboration introduced by this final stanza is also borne out in a poem by Michael Field, the pseudonym of Katharine Bradley and Edith Cooper. Aunt and niece, Bradley and Cooper considered themselves 'closer married' than the Brownings and celebrated their relationship in a series of love lyrics (see Donoghue, 1998). One poem in particular, entitled 'A Girl' (1893), appears to reflect on their writing partnership:

> A girl,
>   Her soul a deep-wave pearl
> Dim, lucent of all lovely mysteries;
>   A face flowered for heart's ease,
>   A brow's grace soft as seas

>Seen through faint forest-trees:
>   A mouth, the lips apart,
>Like aspen-leaflets trembling in the breeze
>
>From her tempestuous heart.
>Such: and our souls so knit,
>I leave a page half-writ –
>   The work begun
>Will be to heaven's conception done,
>   If she come to it.

<div align="center">(1997, p. 61)</div>

At first the poem appears to be conventional romantic lyric, drawing on Petrarchan tradition by listing and praising the beloved muse's beautiful features. However, in the final lines of the poem, the muse is invited to complete the poem herself, undoing the separation between the 'I' and the 'you', and hinting at Bradley and Cooper's collaborative practice. The poem will not be fully conceived or born until the 'you', the girl of the title, has made her contribution. In this sense, 'A girl' appears to 'free the love lyric, long a genre of possession, into an ownerless, borderless "field" without master or serf' (Koestenbaum, 1989, p. 174).

   As this chapter has demonstrated, during the *fin-de-siècle*, the lyric genre began to be radically transformed in a number of different ways. A particularly significant aspect of this transformation was the revision of the concept of the lyric muse. Many women poets of this period, such as Edith Nesbit and Constance Naden, wrote poems in which the muse answers back, finally giving a voice to the silent female found in the male literary tradition. Others, such as Olive Custance and A. Mary F. Robinson, wrote love lyrics with ambiguously gendered participants – poems in which the muse might be male, or in which a variety of desires might be expressed. Through such experiments, the 'I' and the 'you' of the love lyric are gradually revealed to be fluid positions that can be occupied by both genders. Such transformations eventually mean that the concept of the muse is no longer a wholly problematic one for women who wish to write. Through reimagining the muse, women poets begin to harness the potential of the lyric genre to articulate fluid gender positionings and to celebrate multiple, shifting desires. This revision of the muse is one important facet of a gradual process which eventually enabled women poets to claim poetic identity for themselves.

Notes

1. The majority of poems cited in this final section (with the exception of Olive Custance's 'Antinous') are collected in R. K. R. Thornton and Marion Thain's *Poetry of the 1890s* (1997). The original publication dates are given in parentheses in the text.
2. For an expanded reading of this poem, see S. Parker, 2011, 'A Girl's Love: Lord Alfred Douglas Homoerotic Muse in the Poetry of Olive Custance', *Women: A Cultural Review*, 22(2–3), 220–240.

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6
How (Not) to Translate an Unidentified Narrative Object or a New Italian Epic

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The aim of this chapter is to demonstrate that the notion of the New Italian Epic, a concept that is equal parts genre (or metagenre) definition and periodization proposal, and which was introduced into Italian literary studies by the Wu Ming collective in 2008, can help critics and scholars of Anglo-American literature to map the contemporary literary landscape, a landscape that lies beyond post-modernism and its characteristic genres (historiographic metafiction, New or Gonzo Journalism, etc.). I will first briefly situate the New Italian Epic historically and conceptually, and then, after discussing how not to translate it into English-language generic terms, will explicate its most prominent practitioners' definition of its salient features. I will conclude by proposing a useful English-language translation framework for it and then applying that to the fiction of American writers David Foster Wallace and William S. Burroughs.

To begin, interested readers must attend to a critical debate that has been raging in Italian studies for the past seven years – a debate that involves the greyest of literary critical eminences such as Alberto Asor Rosa, the most influential literary historians such as Carla Benedetti, the most renowned contemporary writers such as Roberto Saviano, a number of other critics and novelists and a large group of more or less anonymous online commentators. This rollicking debate, which readers of Italian can follow most readily on the website carmillaonline.com, has stirred up relatively few echoes in the Anglophone world (so far).[1] It concerns the literary category of the New Italian Epic. The term was introduced by Wu Ming 1, a member of perhaps the best-known writing collective in Europe today, which calls itself Wu

Ming. These terms – New Italian Epic, writing collective, Wu Ming – may be unfamiliar to many readers, so let us examine them briefly. In 1999, four Bolognese former members of the 'open reputation' Luther Blissett, a large and amorphous group of cultural provocateurs which had become notorious during the mid-1990s for media hoaxes and online activism around Europe, used that pseudonym (originally borrowed from a Jamaican-born footballer who played at the international level for England, in the English domestic league for Watford, and briefly for AC Milan) for the author credit on their collaboratively written novel *Q*, which became a huge bestseller in Italy and has been translated into more than a dozen languages, including English. Those four writers, joined by a fifth in 2000, subsequently adopted the collective name Wu Ming – Mandarin for 'nameless' or for 'five names', depending on the tone used to pronounce it – and since then they have published four more collaborative novels: *54* (Wu Ming, 2002), *Manituana* (Wu Ming, 2007), *Altai* (Wu Ming, 2009b) and *L'Armata dei sonnambuli* (*The Army of Sleepwalkers*) (2014), the first three of which are available in English translation. The individual members of Wu Ming (Wu Ming 1, Roberto Bui; Wu Ming 2, Giovanni Cattabriga; Wu Ming 3, Luca de Meo, who left the group for personal reasons in 2008; Wu Ming 4, Federico Guglielmi; and Wu Ming 5, Riccardo Pedrini)[2] also publish solo works of fiction, and the band (their preferred term for their collective identity) also writes non-fiction of several varieties, including political analysis, cultural journalism and literary criticism.

That explains Wu Ming and 'writing collective'. Now on to New Italian Epic. That category originally arose from Wu Ming 1's literary critical writing, which was later supplemented by Wu Ming 4. In April 2008, Wu Ming 1 posted on the Wu Ming Foundation's website what he called a 'memorandum' that posited the existence of a new category of Italian writing that had emerged since 1993, following the collapse of the First Republic and the demise of all its major political parties, especially those on the left, which had been fatally compromised in various ways by their Cold War strategies and thus could no longer function. He named this category New Italian Epic, with the 'New' clearly intended to mark this simultaneous break in both political and literary periodization. The category did not constitute a conscious project or preconceived genre choice of the diverse group of writers included in it but was rather an 'electrostatic field' that 'draw[s] to itself works that appear to be different but that have profound affinities' (Wu Ming, 2009a, p. 11).[3] I will discuss these affinities in a moment. Informed readers will recall that, for the English-speaking world, 1993 was dominated

politically by neoliberal self-congratulation in the wake of the collapse of the Soviet Union, the end of the Cold War, and the apparent triumph of free-market fundamentalism (the so-called Washington Consensus in the promotion of global investment and development) and culturally by the largely uncontested reign of the post-modernist aesthetics of vertiginous irony, proliferating self-reflexivity, and pastiche or blank parody. In Italy, on the other hand, all the ideological and cultural certainties of the previous period, far from being apparently confirmed by global events, were melting into air, as Wu Ming 1 notes: 'So while the rest of the world's intelligentsia were discussing [Francis] Fukuyama's witticism that considered human history to be at an end, and while post-modernism was reducing itself to mannerism and triggering its own implosion, among us [Italians] energies were being liberated' (Wu Ming, 2009a, p. 9). The anomalous specificity of Italy in this period contributed to the emergence of the new epic form, but we will see later that this specificity should not prevent us from borrowing or adapting the category for use in the Anglophone context. Indeed, Wu Ming 1 explicitly acknowledges that, 'in a world of transnational fluxes, markets and communications, it is not merely possible but rather inevitable that [the New Italian Epics] are the heirs of several traditions and have other influences than national ones' (Wu Ming, 2009a, p. 17). Thus they can also contribute to traditions other than strictly national ones.

Having addressed the 'New' and 'Italian' parts of the term, however schematically, we must now turn to the 'Epic' aspect. This is perhaps the most important element of the new category, and it deserves a more extensive description:

> These narratives are *epic* because they involve exploits that are historical or mythical, heroic or in any case adventurous: war, anabasis, initiatory voyages, struggles for survival, always in the midst of vaster conflicts that decide the outcome of classes, peoples, nations, or even humanity as a whole, against the backdrop of historical crises, catastrophes, social formations on the verge of collapse. Often the tale fuses historical and legendary elements, when it is not bordering on the supernatural. Many of these books are historical novels, or at least they have the semblance of historical novels, because they take up the conventions, stylistic characteristics and stratagems of that genre.
> (Wu Ming, 2009a, p. 14)

Wu Ming 1 lists many works as examples of the New Italian Epic, by authors such as Valerio Evangelisti, Giancarlo De Cataldo, Marco

Philopat and Girolamo De Michele, which have not yet been translated into English. According to WorldCat, only nine examples of New Italian Epic have been translated into English so far, and they have not been viewed as examples of a common approach by English-speaking reviewers or critics. The most widely reviewed and influential of those nine examples are the four Luther Blissett/Wu Ming novels previously mentioned (*Q*, *54*, *Manituana* and *Altai*) and Roberto Saviano's quasijournalistic investigation of organized crime in Naples, *Gomorrah*.[4]

In the English-language press, the Luther Blissett and Wu Ming novels have most often been categorized as post-modernist texts, usually by comparison with Umberto Eco's 1980 novel *The Name of the Rose*, which is often taken to be a metafictional model for more recent Italian historical or historiographical narrative. For example, the comparison with Eco appears in reviews of *Q* by *The Independent*, *The Daily Telegraph*, *The Times*, *The TLS* and *The Washington Post*. However, Wu Ming 1 makes an effort to distance their practice from Eco's: *The Name of the Rose*, he notes, is a

> tongue-in-cheek novel, a manifesto of European postmodernism, a fascinating multi-level parody of the writing of historical novels, and even of novels *tout court* ... [It] is not a historical novel but rather a reflection on the historical novel, on its topoi, on intertextuality, a reflection written so as to give notice that if he had wanted to, Eco would have been capable of writing a very beautiful novel which he *did not* actually write.
>
> (Wu Ming, 2009a, p. 16, n. 10)

This, of course, is the very definition of historiographic metafiction, proposed by Linda Hutcheon as the characteristic narrative genre of post-modernism (see Hutcheon, 1988). The collective considers its 'Epic' historical fiction, then, to be something other than an example of such historiographic metafiction.

Saviano's work has been received quite differently in the USA and the UK. Because *Gomorrah* is concerned with exposing the operations and scope of organized crime in his home region of Naples, it has been categorized as investigative journalism or 'true crime', which has meant that it is often judged by the perceived accuracy of its reporting. Since Saviano uses many novelistic devices in the book, including free indirect discourse and an extremely mobile narrative 'I', which are largely foreign to those existing genres, his credibility has sometimes

been questioned, as, for example, by the *New York Times*' reviewer Rachel Donadio:

> In Italy, *Gomorrah* was described as a 'docufiction,' suggesting that Saviano took liberties with his first-person accounts. Farrar, Straus & Giroux calls it a work of 'investigative writing,' a phrase that suggests careful lawyering. Some anecdotes are suspiciously perfect – the tailor who quits his job after seeing Angelina Jolie on television at the Oscars wearing a white suit he made in a Camorra sweatshop; the man who loves his AK-47 so much he makes a pilgrimage to Russia to visit its creator, Mikhail Kalashnikov. Did the author change any names? If so, readers aren't informed. These are not small matters, and should have been disclosed.
>
> (Donadio, 2007)

For Wu Ming 1, the reviewer's bafflement and suspicion are evidence that Saviano has invented a new form that does not conform to the generic criteria of true crime, or even the established post-modernist genre of reporting, the New or Gonzo Journalism associated with Hunter S. Thompson and Tom Wolfe.

If Wu Ming's novels aren't historiographic metafictions and Saviano's 'docufiction' isn't New Journalism, then what are they? In other words, if these post-modernist categories are inadequate English translations of recent Italian literary practices, then how should these works be translated into English-language categories? We can begin by recognizing that they are New Italian Epics according to the criteria that Wu Ming 1 provides in the main body of his memorandum. Those criteria may be summarized as follows, using Wu Ming 1's own numbered list:

1. Don't keep it cool-and-dry

Maurizio Vito suggests that this first criterion constitutes a 'basic condition' of the New Italian Epic that is common to all works that fall into the category, while the later criteria are 'essential features' that may be present to different degrees and in variable forms (Vito, 2010, p. 396). 'Cool and dry' is shorthand for the pervasive and undecidable irony that characterized the monuments of post-modernist narrative. Fredric Jameson memorably defined this as pastiche or blank parody, satire deprived of critical leverage (Jameson, 1991, pp. 16–19). In contrast with that arch and alienating mode of humour,

> The works of New Italian Epic don't lack humor, but they reject the detached and coldly ironic tone that is typical of postmodernist pastiche. In these tales there is a fervor, or in any case a taking of position and assumption of responsibility, which transports them beyond the obligatory playfulness of the recent past …
>
> (Wu Ming, 2009a, p. 23)

It is not clear that we can translate this directly into the language of the political engagement or commitment of literature, as it was defined in the well-known post-Second World War debate between Jean-Paul Sartre (1988) and T. W. Adorno (1978). However, as Wu Ming 1 goes on to say, 'The important thing is that, notwithstanding the inadequacy of the textual results, we recognize an ethics *within* the narrative labor' (Wu Ming, 2009a, p. 25). In other words, the New Italian Epic text takes its political and ethical obligations seriously even when it jokes, and thereby it revives the possibility of both literary satire and polemical exhortation.

2. Oblique gaze – taking chances with point of view[5]

If any element of the New Italian Epic distinguishes it formally from previous modes of historical fiction, it is this one: the adoption of the most unexpected viewpoints for narration. In Wu Ming's *54*, for example, recurrent passages in the narrative are presented from the point of view of a stolen US television set, a 'McGuffin Electric Deluxe', which is broken but endowed with consciousness. As it makes its way up the Italian peninsula, 'The darkened screen is its retina, everyday life is reflected on the glass, and it says to itself: this is a barbaric country, I want to go home' (Wu Ming, 2009a, p. 28). Other passages are narrated from the viewpoint of a pub or bar in Bologna where old resistance fighters and young communists meet – the pub speaks as a 'we' that does not correspond to the viewpoint of its clientele. The wandering 'I' of Saviano's *Gomorrah*, which so troubled the *New York Times*' reviewer, often casts a similarly oblique gaze over the operations of the Camorra.

3. Narrative complexity, popular attitude

> New Italian Epic is complex and popular at the same time, or at least it's seeking such a marriage. These narratives demand considerable cognitive labor on the part of the reader, and yet in many cases they have been successes with the public that sold very well.
>
> (Wu Ming, 2009a, p. 32)

Q, for example, offers a vastly entertaining surface narrative of war, escape, betrayal and subterfuge during the Radical Reformation that can

also be read as an allegory of its own collective writing process (the multiple pseudonyms of both the ultimately nameless Anabaptist narrator and his adversary, the papal agent), or of recent Italian political and social history from the radical confrontations of the 1970s through the collapse of the First Republic to the struggle over globalization. *54*, which sold well in Europe but was not as successful in the English-speaking world, is a Cold War spy epic involving Cary Grant, Marshal Tito and Lucky Luciano that is also a meditation on the routinization of warfare under the contemporary security regime. *Manituana* is simultaneously that most European of stories, an American Indian adventure, and at the same time a counterhistory of the American Revolution as the kick-off not of a period of democratic constitutionalism but of an era of systematic racist expropriation – in other words, a story in which the American revolutionaries are portrayed as the villains for a change.

4. Alternative histories, potential uchronies

Let us return momentarily to the debate with Eco examined above. New Italian Epics are not conventional historical novels that evoke a sense of the necessary causality that leads from the past to the present and thus constitute foundational texts for national(ist) literary traditions, nor historiographic metafictions that reflect upon the formal conditions of possibility common to fiction-writing and the writing of history, but rather stories that restage the precariousness and possibilities of history in the making from unexpected points of view. In 1876 the French historian Charles Renouvier coined the term 'uchronie' ('non-time') to name the practice of imagining different outcomes to real historical cruxes; historiographers now call it 'counterfactual history'.[6] This is a fairly common narrative practice in science fiction, where it generally goes by the name of 'alternate history', exemplified by Philip K. Dick's *The Man in the High Castle*, which is set in a late 20th-century USA that was conquered by the Nazis and imperial Japanese at the conclusion of the Second World War. Some New Italian Epics, such as Evangelisti's, take this explicitly science-fictional form, but most, including Wu Ming's, 'don't make up "counterfactual" hypotheses about how the world produced by a bifurcation of time would look, but they reflect on the very possibility of such a bifurcation by recounting the moments during which alternative developments were possible and history *could have* taken other paths. The "what if" is potential, not actual' (Wu Ming, 2009a, p. 35). In a follow-up essay, 'We're Going to Have to Be the Parents', Wu Ming 1 describes this aspect more polemically as

'An explicit preoccupation with the loss of the future, with a propensity to use alternative history [*fantastoria*] and alternative realities to force our gaze into imagining the future' at a historical moment when every collective future is being systematically foreclosed – for example, by climate change and rising economic inequality (Wu Ming, 2009a, p. 109). This approach converges with (but in its constructive aim goes beyond) the recent analyses of Franco 'Bifo' Berardi regarding the specific conditions of political struggle at present, which can be summed up in the Sex Pistols' nihilistic punk lyric 'No future for you!' (see Berardi, 2011).

5. 'Hidden' subversion of language and style

New Italian Epic works play with language at the level of the clause and the sentence, but they do so in subtle and indirect ways that are easy to overlook; 'often it involves a *dissimulated* experimentation that aims to subvert the linguistic register commonly used in genre fiction from the inside' (Wu Ming, 2009a, p. 37). Some of these techniques resemble the formal restrictions adopted by the Oulipo group. For example, the text may systematically avoid adjectives ending in '-ly' (in Italian '-mente') or leave out the pronouns required by reflexive verbs. Like the strategy of alternative history, this low-key subversion is linked to the use of the oblique gaze, and it can easily be lost in translation or go unnoticed by even a careful reader.

6. Unidentified narrative objects

As indicated in the earlier brief resumé of American and British book reviews, the few New Italian Epic works that have been translated into English have been misrecognized and miscategorized because uninformed readers assign them to relatively fixed contemporary genres while at the same time acknowledging – and indeed deploring – their departure from those genres' characteristics. Wu Ming 1's model of the New Italian Epic foregrounds those departures and deviations, extolling the innovative value of what he calls 'unidentified narrative objects' (UNOs), by which he means

> books that are *indifferently* narrative, essayistic and so on: poetic prose that is journalism that is memoir that is a novel . . . The definition conceals a play on words, an acrostic: the initials of 'unidentified narrative object' form the word UNO; each of these objects is *one*, irreducible to pre-existing categories.
>
> (Wu Ming, 2009a, p. 12)

The combination of characteristics often goes beyond the hybridiza-tion of artistic and commercial narrative genres in the modernist and post-modernist novel to embrace the full range of available forms and styles:

> It's not merely an 'endo-literary' hybridization among the literary genres, but rather the utilization of whatever can serve the purpose... UNOs are experiments whose outcome is uncertain, unsuccessful because they tend toward the unformed, the indeterminate, the unfinished. They are no longer novels but not yet something else.
>
> (Wu Ming, 2009a, pp. 42–43)

The notion of UNOs as a major subset of the New Italian Epic genre pushes the latter concept to the brink of logical inconsistency and collapse, but it remains viable despite its precariousness.

7. Community and transmediality

Along with the first criterion of narrative ethics and engagement, this last criterion most clearly distinguishes the New Italian Epic from post-modernist narrative. If Roland Barthes' conception of the writerly text, in which the reader participates actively in the construction of meaning (Barthes, 1974, pp. 3–4), was a touchstone for modernist and post-modernist fictional practices that nevertheless remained strictly delim-ited and proprietary, then the New Italian Epic takes that participation to an entirely new level.

> Every book of New Italian Epic is potentially surrounded by a quantum cloud of homages, spinoffs and 'lateral' narrations: stories written by readers (fan fiction), comics, drawings and illustrations, songs, websites, even network games or tabletop games inspired by the books, roleplaying games with characters from the books and other contributions coming 'from below' that are by nature open and that change the work and the world that exists in it.
>
> (Wu Ming, 2009a, pp. 44–45)

Wu Ming's *Manituana* is one of the best examples of this: in addition to the published novel and its direct translations, the work exists as part of a website (www.manituana.com) that contains additional texts by Wu Ming ('side stories'), fan-composed stories, comics, songs and games that actively extend and modify the narrative, and in so doing anticipate and modify the collective's own announced sequels. The creative labour of

writing, already collective in Wu Ming's case, is raised to a higher power by the immediate, concrete participation of their readers in extending their texts.

*   *   *

These criteria are both tendentious and ambiguous, and it is no surprise that the proposal of the New Italian Epic as a categorical or generic term for the most interesting narrative productions of the past 20 years in Italy has generated controversy. The Marxist critic Alberto Asor Rosa has welcomed the proposal as the first significant attempt to historicize the recent flowering of the novel in Italy (Asor Rosa, 2009), while the post-structuralist-influenced Carla Benedetti has dismissed the proposal as nothing more than the Wu Ming collective's shameless and transparent effort at self-promotion (see Borgonovo, 2008). But many of the writers themselves, such as Giuseppe Genna and Evangelisti, have taken it up as a means of engagement with the members of Wu Ming, other authors and their own readers. Now it is time that critics and readers outside Italy should also take up the proposal to see what we can do with it, not by translating it into pre-existing English genre categories but instead by conceptually 'translating' English-language works into its terms. We are encouraged in this by Wu Ming 1's very formulation of the term: although the memorandum that defines it is written in Italian (and so far unavailable in English), the English term New Italian Epic is used on the book's cover and throughout its discussion, not the equivalent Italian term, 'nuova narrazione epica italiana' (Wu Ming, 2009a, p. 10). Similarly, the English term 'unidentified narrative object' is used throughout the Italian text, and in criterion 6, its initials 'UNO' are used as an acronym to emphasize the radical singularity of the New Italian Epic, not the Italian initials 'ONN' (for 'oggetti narrativi non-identificati'). Finally, Wu Ming 1 first introduced the concept of the New Italian Epic at English-language literary conferences at McGill University and MIT in 2008. He did this in English, he notes,

> because I was addressing a heterogeneous and multinational audience, and also because it gives an idea of the minimum detachment necessary to understand what is happening in Italian culture. You have to get out of yourself a bit, from the usual shared perceptive field, and climb onto an elevation (in reality all you need is a little hill) to see the swarm of people, things, information.
>
> (Wu Ming 1, 2008, cited on Wikipedia)

If we English-speaking critics borrow the Italian (meta-)genre and periodization of the New Italian Epic to use as a means of translating our categories into theirs, of detaching ourselves from the 'usual shared perceptive field' of Anglophone post-modernist fiction, perhaps we too will see a swarm of new writing practices, new narrative ethics and new collective linguistic agents lurking under our very noses.

To conclude this preliminary effort at shifting the *gestalt* of Anglophone genre studies, let us take up two of Wu Ming 1's criteria for the New Italian Epic and apply them to examples of American fiction that have been labelled post-modernist but seem to defy the category's conventions. We will begin with criterion 1, 'Don't keep it cool-and-dry', the shorthand for a renewed commitment to narrative ethics and social responsibility in fiction and a concomitant avoidance of vertiginous post-modernist irony. The title of Wu Ming 1's follow-up essay that was quoted earlier, 'We're Going to Have to Be the Parents', is taken from a famous interview given by the late American novelist David Foster Wallace in 1993. Wu Ming 1 cites Wallace's last statement at length:

> For me, the last few years of the postmodern era have seemed a bit like the way you feel when you're in high school and your parents go on a trip, and you throw a party. You get all your friends over and throw this wild disgusting fabulous party. For a while it's great, free and freeing, parental authority gone and overthrown, a cat's-away-let's-play Dionysian revel. But then time passes and the party gets louder and louder, and you run out of drugs, and nobody's got any money for more drugs, and things get broken and spilled, and there's cigarette burns on the couch, and you're the host and it's your house too, and you gradually start wishing your parents would come back and restore some fucking order in your house. It's not a perfect analogy, but the sense I get of my generation of writers and intellectuals or whatever is that it's 3:00 A.M. and the couch has several burn-holes and somebody's thrown up in the umbrella stand and we're wishing the revel would end. The postmodern founders' patricidal work was great, but patricide produces orphans, and no amount of revelry can make up for the fact that writers my age have been literary orphans throughout our formative years. We're kind of wishing some parents would come back. And of course we're uneasy about the fact that we wish they'd come back – I mean, what's wrong with us? Are we total pussies? Is there something about authority and limits we actually need? And then the uneasiest feeling of all, as we start gradually to

realize that parents in fact aren't ever coming back – which means we're going to have to be the parents.

<div align="right">(Wallace, 1993)</div>

The last few sentences make Wallace's point and provide the title for Wu Ming 1's restatement of the New Italian Epic. He glosses this passage quite simply:

> Fifteen long years have passed since that interview, Wallace is not with us anymore and finally we understand how right he was. *We're going to have to be the parents*, the progenitors, the new founders. We need to reappropriate a sense of the future, as something radically new is taking place under the sun.
>
> <div align="right">(Wu Ming, 2009a, p. 121)</div>

Criterion 4, regarding alternative history aimed at restoring the possibility of a collective future, follows from this formulation of criterion 1, and I will turn to it later.

Wallace's statement is not some reactionary denunciation of post-modernist fiction, of the nostalgic and regressive sort that has been fairly common throughout the past three decades, but a plausible hypothesis for reading his work as writing that is trying to pass beyond the weightlessness of ludic post-modernism to a new (and not a revived or nostalgic) ethical and political responsibility, to pass from 'partying' to 'parenting'. At least some of his fiction stages the effort to pass through post-modernism's wall-to-wall irony and come out the other side, in the process gaining a new possibility of vital connection between people, especially between author and reader. This effort can perhaps most readily be seen in his short fiction, particularly the sequence of four stories entitled 'Brief Interviews with Hideous Men', that is found in his book of the same title. These stories take the form of interviews, complete with catalogue numbers, dates and locales, with various unsavoury or disturbing unnamed men who talk primarily about their attitudes towards, encounters and relationships with women. The stories consist solely of the men's answers, from which the reader can sometimes – but not always, and not with any certainty – reconstruct the interviewer's questions, which are never provided. Their answers offer an unsettling panorama of the modes of miscommunication and failed relation between straight men and women that have proliferated, ironically enough, during an era of exponentially expanded, accelerated, multimediated and self-conscious communications.

Before engaging directly with Wallace's stories, we should recall Umberto Eco's famous characterization of post-modernism in terms of heterosexual romantic communication, from *Postscript to the Name of the Rose*:

> I think of the postmodern attitude as that of a man who loves a very cultivated woman and knows he cannot say to her, 'I love you madly,' because he knows that she knows (and that she knows that he knows) that these words have already been written by Barbara Cartland. Still, there is a solution. He can say, 'As Barbara Cartland would put it, I love you madly.' At this point, having avoided false innocence, having said clearly that it is no longer possible to speak innocently, he will nevertheless have said what he wanted to say to the woman: that he loves her, but he loves her in an age of lost innocence. If the woman goes along with this, she will have received a declaration of love all the same. Neither of the two speakers will feel innocent, both will have accepted the challenge of the past, of the already said, which cannot be eliminated; both will consciously and with pleasure play the game of irony . . . But both will have succeeded, once again, in speaking of love.
>
> (Eco, pp. 67–68)

Wu Ming 1 cites the first part of this passage in his discussion of criterion 1 of the New Italian Epic, 'Don't keep it cool-and-dry', adding that 'in the years that followed, the abuse of this attitude brought about a *stagflation* of the word and an overabundance of *metafiction*: telling the tale of the tale's telling in order not to have to tell of anything else' (Wu Ming, 2009a, p. 24). These are the restrictive and impoverished aspects of post-modernism that the New Italian Epic seeks to escape. Like Wu Ming's memorandum and novelistic practice, Wallace's 'Interviews' may fruitfully be read as a rejoinder to Eco's profession of faith that successful declarations of love can still be made in ironic, self-reflexive post-modernist terms.

In book form the first and second stories in Wallace's sequence contain seven interviews each, the third story contains three interviews, and the final story consists of a single interview that may be read as the culmination of the entire series.[7] The series begins, interestingly enough, with a short interview with a man afflicted with coprolalia, the 'uncontrolled yelling of involuntary words or phrases', which has prevented him from establishing any long-term sexual relationships with women. The phrase he yells involuntarily at the moment of orgasm is

'Victory for the Forces of Democratic Freedom', which unsurprisingly spooks his partners (Wallace, 1999, p. 14). Keep this opening image of language as an obstacle to interpersonal relationships in mind because I will return to it briefly later. The ensuing interviews provide a taxonomy of sexual incomprehension, manipulation and predation, much of it characterized by elaborately self-reflexive analyses of gender politics, deconstructions of personal identity and agency, displacement of responsibility across webs of social coding, and other immediately recognizable tactics (or symptoms) of post-modernist irony. Only in the last interview, the one that appears alone as the penultimate item in Wallace's story collection, do such metacritical operations result, as Eco insists, in something like a successful declaration of love, but this only happens as a consequence of the narrator's progressive abandonment of the ironic armour of 'lost innocence' and the 'already said'.

The final interviewee is a hyper-self-conscious, intensely post-modernist graduate student, probably in law school, who recounts through a haze of self-reflexive qualifications and air quotes the story of a one-night stand that seems to have changed his life. He picked up a New Age/neo-hippy woman at a music festival, intending to sleep with her despite his antipathy towards her retro (i.e. non-post-modernist) earnestness or sincerity and her clichéd spirituality. After their lovemaking is over, she tells him the story of how she survived an encounter with a serial rapist-murderer by using precisely that earnestness, sincerity and spirituality to establish a bond with the rapist that prevents him from murdering her. In the course of the story the interviewee realizes that his ironic post-modernist sensibility is essentially equivalent to the rapist's psychosis: the bond she established, he realizes,

> addressed the psychotic's core weakness, his grotesque shyness as it were, the terror that any conventional, soul-exposing connection with another human being will threaten him with engulfment and/or obliteration, in other words that *he* will become the victim . . . Nor is this of course all that substantively different from a man sizing up an attractive girl and approaching her and artfully deploying just the right rhetoric and pushing the right buttons to induce her to come home with him . . . [and after the sex is over, wanting] to be in some absolutely antipodal spot from wherever she is from now on . . . And that an all too obvious part of the reason for his cold and mercenary and maybe somewhat victimizing behavior is that the

potential profundity of the very connection he has worked so hard to make her feel terrifies him.

<div style="text-align: right">(Wallace, 1999, pp. 258–259)</div>

The interviewee, like Eco's post-modernist lover, has deployed the right rhetoric – the 'already said' – in order to make a connection possible, though he has done so without 'meaning' it and indeed with the intention of breaking the connection as soon as his desire is sated in order to avoid the loss of control implicit in any such real connection. (As the situationist music critic Greil Marcus once said, apropos of the Sex Pistols' punk aesthetic, what is irony if not a way to avoid having to mean what you say?) He realizes this in the course of the woman's story, which allows him, perhaps, to establish a connection with her that overcomes his irony, just as her sincerity and spirituality overcame the rapist's psychosis. The role of narrative and fiction in this process is clear:

> I did not care whether it was quote true...I was moved, changed...And that whether or not what she believed happened happened – it seemed true even if it wasn't. That even if the whole focused-soul-connection theology, that even if it was just catachrestic New Age goo, her belief in it had saved her life, so whether or not it's goo becomes irrelevant, no?

<div style="text-align: right">(Wallace, 1999, p. 270)</div>

Likewise, it is his connection to her, his belief in her story, not that story's demonstrable mimetic truth, that could save him from the isolating and potentially murderous psychosis of his own suffocating post-modernist irony.

Despite its convergence with the New Italian Epic's characteristic refusal of post-modernist irony and distance, Wallace's story sequence cannot fully be categorized as what we might call a New American Epic because the vital connections between people that it advocates and struggles to enact remain individual and interpersonal. Those connections can only be established between atomized subjects after tremendous conceptual and rhetorical struggle, figured in the tortured metafictional reversals that scar these stories, and they never really expand to the 'epic' social level of 'vaster conflicts that decide the outcome of classes, peoples, nations, or even humanity as a whole' that is expressly included in Wu Ming 1's definition of the Italian genre. (Whether such expansion of scale and such an incorporation of

collectivity can be seen in Wallace's novels is a separate question that cannot be answered here.) The first interviewee in the 'Brief Interviews', the one who involuntarily shouts 'Victory for the Forces of Democratic Freedom' and thereby drives all his sexual partners away, seems emblematic of this blockage: in the performative act of laying claim to collective political agency, he paradoxically forecloses it.

To reach the vaster conflicts of which Wu Ming 1 writes, we could turn back even further in literary history to William S. Burroughs, whom I polemically defined many years ago as an 'amodern' author, one who uses modernist and post-modernist techniques critically in the service of political subversion and social alliance, rather than a post-modernist artist of ironic metafiction and pastiche (see Murphy, 1997). In Burroughs' underappreciated last trilogy of novels (*Cities of the Red Night* [1981], *The Place of Dead Roads* [1983] and *The Western Lands* [1987]), he draws upon varieties of genre fiction – pirate stories, detective novels, science fiction, westerns – in order to restage the history of North and South American colonization and the building of global empires as what Wu Ming 1 calls 'uchrony' or alternative history (New Italian Epic criterion 4), for the purpose of reactivating collective political agency in the post-modernist period (New Italian Epic criterion 1). In the overture to the first volume of the trilogy, Burroughs explicitly presents these novels as 'retroactive utopias' which 'actually could have happened in terms of the techniques and human resources available at the time . . . The chance was there. The chance was missed' (Burroughs, 1981, p. xiv). But unlike Wu Ming 1's preferred mode of potential uchrony, Burroughs attempts to imagine the historical counterfactual as actual. In *Cities*, this involves the establishment of anarchist pirate settlements throughout Africa and the Americas during the 17th and 18th centuries – 'Had they been able to [survive], the history of the world could have been altered' (Burroughs, 1981, p. xiii).

And unlike Wallace, who calls out to 'Forces of Democratic Freedom' that never quite materialize, Burroughs has no difficulty imagining and depicting collective political subjects who would be capable of restaging history:

> At once we have allies in all those who are enslaved and oppressed throughout the world, from the cotton plantations of the American South to the sugar plantations of the West Indies, the whole Indian population of the American continent peonized and degraded by the Spanish into subhuman poverty and ignorance, exterminated by the Americans, infected with their vices and diseases, the natives of Africa

and Asia – all these are potential allies … The white man is retroactively relieved of his burden. Whites will be welcomed as workers, settlers, teachers, and technicians, but not as colonists or masters.

<div style="text-align: right">(Burroughs, 1981, pp. xiii–xiv)</div>

The three novels offer numerous narrative manifestations of such alliance-building in pursuit of an alternative vision that encompasses not only global history but also the contemporary world order which would have emerged from that counterfactual history. The stakes could not be higher:

> Imagine such a movement on a world-wide scale. Faced by the actual practice of freedom, the French and American revolutions would be forced to stand by their words. The disastrous results of uncontrolled industrialization would also be curtailed, for factory workers and slum dwellers from the cities would seek refuge in [the anarchist settlements]. Any man would have the right to settle in any area of his choosing. The land would belong to those who used it. No white-man boss, no Pukka Sahib, no Patróns, no colonists.
>
> <div style="text-align: right">(Burroughs, 1981, p. xiv)</div>

These are precisely those 'vaster conflicts that decide the outcome of classes, peoples, nations or even humanity as a whole, against the backdrop of historical crises, catastrophes, social formations on the verge of collapse' that Wu Ming 1 sees being staged in many New Italian Epics, especially the Wu Ming collective's own.

To say that Burroughs aims to make the counterfactual actual, however, is not to say that he projects an easy retroactive victory for his imagined global revolutionaries – the allies must struggle to prevail not only against the tide of capitalist development but also against the even more insidious tide of deterministic history, the history of actual colonialism and its still-resonating consequences, which the reader as well as the characters must learn how to resist in order to imagine alternative history intensively in the first place. To this end, Burroughs deploys the characteristic post-modernist gesture of incorporating into each novel the representation of its own scene and process of writing – in other words, he foregrounds the precarious progressive construction of the counterfactual, the uchrony, as the characters' task within as well as the overall goal of the novel. Each book is both framed and fractured by the activities of writers – 18th-century cabin boy Noah Blake and 20th-century detective Clem Snide in *Cities*, gunfighter Kim Carsons

and western author William Seward Hall in *Place of Dead Roads*, Hall again in *Western Lands* – who are engaged in the subversive practice of forging the past, in a double sense: falsifying it from the view-point of actual history, but rectifying it from the viewpoint of alternate history. Like Wallace, then, Burroughs uses post-modernist metafic-tional techniques as a means to mount an escape attempt from the post-modernist ethical-political impasse. My earlier work on Burroughs analysed these retroactive utopias in terms of Gilles Deleuze's concept of 'falsifying narration', which suspends the law of mimesis, and the 'direct time-image', which disrupts the death-bound historical teleolo-gies of modernity (see Murphy, 1997, Chapter 6), but the uchrony of the New Italian Epic offers a parallel critical framework that makes the sub-versive possibilities which remained implicit or embryonic in Deleuze's formulation explicit and available for appropriation, by readers as well as writers.

If space permitted I could also examine how Burroughs' textual prac-tice embodies the other criteria that Wu Ming 1 lists, but for now let us simply recall number 7, 'Community and transmediality'. More than any other late-20th-century American writer, Burroughs made use of new media himself and encouraged his readers to participate in those media along with him, from tape recorders in the streets to guerilla film and video to hip-hop sampling (see e.g. his do-it-yourself instruc-tions for media subversion in 'The Invisible Generation' [1967] and *The Job* [1974]). Since the 1960s, at least, his published works have been surrounded by a 'quantum cloud' of collaborative multimedia, just as Wu Ming's *Manituana* is. Although no Burroughs-inspired role-playing games have appeared on the market (black or otherwise), it is well known that he worked directly or indirectly with many of his own readers and fans: Anthony Balch and Gus Van Sant in film, Kurt Cobain, Ornette Coleman, Donald Fagen and Tom Waits in music, and Robert Wilson in the theatre, among many other artists and media forms (see Murphy, 1997, Conclusion). Parallel to these collaborations, independent fan-produced works inspired by his writings have also pro-liferated, often through zine and blog culture. These features confirm that Burroughs' work comes closer even than Wallace's to constituting a New American Epic, or at least its post-post-modernist pre-figuration, one that would translate, complement and extend – though not nec-essarily imitate directly – the New Italian Epic. Both Burroughs and Wu Ming aim to extract us from the narcissistic mirror-play of post-modernism, to lead us back out onto the streets and into the networks where we can join the new social collectives and movements that are

reactivating the collective social subject that Wu Ming, following the lead of Italian philosophers such as Antonio Negri and Paolo Virno, and their English-speaking allies, such as Michael Hardt, calls the multitude (see Wu Ming, 2001).

Notes

1. The most substantial of these echoes is undoubtedly the special issue of *Journal of Romance Studies* dedicated to the New Italian Epic (Boscolo, 2010).
2. Although they have adopted a collective pseudonym and resist the circulation of their images in the mass media, the members of Wu Ming are neither clandestine (like the Red Brigades) nor secretive (like J. D. Salinger and Thomas Pynchon). On the significance of their form of collective anonymity, see Thoburn (2011).
3. All translations from this work are my own.
4. Helena Janeczek's *Swallows of Monte Cassino*, Gabriella Ghermandi's *Queen of Flowers and Pearls*, Giorgio Vasta's *Time on My Hands* and Andrea Camilleri's *Brewer of Preston* appeared in English translation between 2013 and 2015. Camilleri is also the author of the Inspector Montalbano mysteries, which have been appearing in English since 2004. An important textual precursor to the New Italian Epic, Pier Paolo Pasolini's unfinished work *Petrolio* (Pasolini 1992), is also available in English translation; see Patti (2010).
5. In a later elaboration entitled 'We're Going to Have to Be the Parents', Wu Ming 1 modifies or perhaps replaces this criterion with the following: 'A sense of *political* necessity – and you can choose between the broader and the stricter sense of the adjective "political" ' (Wu Ming, 2009a, p. 108).
6. Niall Ferguson provides a clear and comprehensive (though predictably rightwing) overview of the debates concerning this practice in his introduction, 'Virtual History: Towards a 'Chaotic' Theory of the Past', to *Virtual History: Alternatives and Counterfactuals* (Ferguson, 1996, pp. 1–90). For a more sophisticated assessment of the practice, see Tetlock and Belkin (1996).
7. The stories appeared in different groupings and in a different order in previous periodical publications.

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Part IV

Visual Cultures: Technologies, Institutions and Genres

7
Seduced by Art: The Problem of Photography

Lesley Stevenson

At the end of 2012, London's National Gallery hosted its first large-scale, temporary exhibition of photography, *Seduced by Art: Photography Past and Present.* Coming a full 75 years after photographic shows became commonplace at New York's Museum of Modern Art, this was an important departure for the National Gallery which until then had been exclusively devoted to Western painting from the 13th century onwards. Yet painting ('Art') still provided the frame of reference within which photography was viewed and judged. The exhibition offered a series of carefully staged comparisons between high cultural practice and the newer medium. In an attempt to co-opt photography into the realm of Art, the transition from painting to photography was presented as apparently seamless, inevitable and triumphant: photography had 'come of age'. Both this narrative and the curatorial strategies at work in the exhibition are, however, open to challenge.

By bringing photography and painting together within the context of a national institution of high culture, questions were inevitably raised about how we continue to classify paintings (and by extension photographs) within the museum and gallery according to different genres. In particular, the exhibition relied upon the notion of the hierarchy of the genres which had first been developed in the 17th century.

Painting is unique in the history of genre classification in having this institutional underpinning. Codified by the French *Académie royale* in two key statements by André Félibien in 1660 and 1669, the traditional genres of history painting, portraiture, landscape, genre scenes and, subsequently, still life not only provided a blueprint for the kind of subject-matter that was acceptable within painting but entailed equally a hierarchy of scale and a concomitant statement about the appropriateness of treatment. The kind of repetition and sameness decried today

in the most generic of popular artforms had been encouraged by an academic system for Art for well over 250 years from the middle of the 17th century. Heavily policed, this academic system effectively operated an exclusionary regime with history painting (grand, idealized scenes, with subject-matter taken from the Bible, history and mythology) regarded as the most important and worthy of the 'great' artist's attention, and the lower genres (especially still life) effectively marginalized.

Seduced by Art relied upon this long-established classificatory regime as a means of imposing order onto a disparate set of images in two distinct media to suggest a meaningful coherence. Using genre as the organizing principle for the exhibition and accompanying catalogue, *Seduced by Art* treated photography in the way in which paintings had been categorized since the 17th century and with all of the inherent generic hierarchies undisturbed. Moreover, at the exhibition, those issues of production, consumption, collection and curation that applied uniquely to photographic production went largely uninterrogated.

This chapter will therefore address a number of occluded questions: What was the apparent rationale for subjecting photography to the same classificatory generic strictures as painting? Might this kind of classification affect the way we think about photography? Can photography be disciplined according to the same hierarchies as painting and sculpture and, if so, does it thereby acquire the same values? And, finally, what happens to photography when it enters the spaces of the museum?

Although generic classification has often been used as a way of organizing photography when it is exhibited and when it is written about in both popular histories and textbooks, nevertheless as a concept, genre remains strangely undertheorized in photography. In fact, it is often used in such a way that seems to accept the *status quo*, with a rationale laid down in painting theory: this was especially evident at the exhibition at the National Gallery. And yet there have been opportunities to theorize photographic genres. As early as 1965, Pierre Bourdieu in *Photography: A Middlebrow Art* discusses the consumption of photographs in terms of audience expectations, suggesting that this requires an 'effort of recognition [which] is accomplished by classification within a genre' (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 89). Certainly his sociological findings may have little relevance in a post-digital era, but in 1965, for his middlebrow consumers, genre was the most obvious way to categorize a photograph: 'It is from its participation within a genre that each individual photograph derives its purpose and its *raison d'être*' (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 89), That is, for Bourdieu, photography's very identity seems to depend upon generic classification.

Similarly, in Roland Barthes's *Camera Lucida*, it is suggested that one of the key ways in which we classify photographs is according to their rhetorical functions – Barthes lists landscape, objects, portraits and nudes as examples (Barthes, 1980, p. 4) – that is, the kind of genres recognizable from painting theory and which provided the National Gallery exhibition with its organizational rationale.

But after those early suggestive texts, the opportunity to forge a generic classification that applied uniquely to photography went largely ignored until Paul Frosh's *The Image Factory* (2003). As that title suggests, the possibilities afforded by mechanical reproduction inevitably led to the highly generic stock photography. This commercial imperative, dependent upon a full-proof archive, means that stock photographs share many of the features of those heavily commodified leisure practices such as Hollywood movies, pop music and crime fiction which several writers on genre have identified as relying on the expectations of consumers.

However, in contemporary popular textbooks on photography, little is discussed at the metadiscursive level. Photographic genres are presented without historical or institutional contextualization or without addressing how this might affect audience expectations. Liz Wells's bestseller *Photography: A Critical Introduction* states categorically that the term genre was 'Developed within film studies', although she then analyses that most painterly of genres – landscape – in order to say something about photographic genres in general (Wells, 2015, p. 331).

Each chapter in David Bate's *Photography* (2009) is devoted to a different genre, including 'documentary and story-telling', which seems both to co-opt and to update the categories of history and genre painting (or scenes of everyday life), portraiture, landscape and still life, as well as introducing the more uniquely photographic genres in chapters devoted to 'art photography' (again, a hybrid of history painting and genre painting) and 'global photography', less the examination of a genre and more an examination of new modes of distribution. Bate notes that the study of genre has not been taken up by photography theory in the way that it has in film theory or in literature, although he concedes that the visual arts might have had a role to play, claiming that genres emerged from 'the eighteenth-century academies' (Bate, 2009, pp. 3–4).

His book, too, depends on genre as the organizing principle, albeit one that departs from the more rigorously codified and limited genres in painting theory; he gives something of the flavour of their mutability within photography when he suggests, for instance, that the category

'documentary' is an invention of photography, or that something like 'family photography' is a hybrid of portraiture and documentary.

Finally, Graham Clarke's *The Photograph* (1997), like the other two textbooks, acknowledges the role that 'the ghost of painting' plays by imposing its generic precepts onto photography (Clarke, 1997, p. 19). He notes that despite photography being a popular form, it still 'retains the values and hierarchies ... [of] its opposite: academic painting' (Clarke, 1997, p. 18). Nevertheless, he also uses these predetermined categories as an armature upon which to build each of his chapters.

Key photographic texts, therefore, use generic categories imported from painting and bequeathed to photography with little critical attention to the implications or plausibility of this act of transposition.

Seduced by Art added to this consensus in having each room represent a different genre, consolidated by being interwoven with a broadly teleological discourse: photography was effectively inserted into a continuous linear development in Western visual culture in which painting is positioned as the parent of a rather truculent child. Of course, that issue of parentage – photography as the continuation of a tradition – does not go uncontested in the critical attention paid to photography. David Campany (2008), for example, examines the role photography plays as the parent of cinema, rather than the child of painting. Of course, it could fulfil both roles, but perhaps it has less to do with ancestry and more to do with legitimacy, as Peter Galassi in the Museum of Modern Art publication *Before Photography: Painting and the Invention of Photography* trenchantly observes when he argues that photography is 'not a bastard left by science on the doorstep of art, but a legitimate child of the Western pictorial tradition' (Galassi, 1981, p. 12). At the National Gallery show, the more recent photographs by practitioners such as Jeff Wall and Thomas Struth confirm this 'coming of age' narrative as they both acknowledge and struggle to break free of the apron strings. These works conform to what has been described as the 'tableau' form of photography in being large and framed. They look like (and invite being looked at like) Art: they are large and framed with complex compositional formats that appeal to the viewer's sense of narrative, placing them at some distance from the small, domestic, hand-held photograph. That is, they borrow the rhetoric of history painting in order to claim financial and museological legitimacy.

The public-facing aspects of the exhibition were interesting. As is commonplace in the current climate for public-sector institutions, strenuous – possibly cynical – efforts were made to bring in new audiences. The cover for the catalogue of *Seduced by Art* reproduced Ori Gersht's

still life *Blow Up, Untitled 5* (2007), which confronts the stillness of the still-life genre with the suggestion of the representation of time. Freezing the bouquet with liquid nitrogen and then secreting small explosive charges at its heart, Gersht caught the detonation on a high-speed digital camera. That is, this relatively intimate piece attempted to inject that same sense of narrative, of time captured, found in the works by Wall and Struth, apparently subverting what had long been regarded as painting's limitations, as first codified by Lessing in the *Laocoön* in 1768. This was still life at its most spectacular, representing an entry through the portals of the National Gallery, and also perhaps an explosion of the traditional values that that institution enshrines. That point was laboured within the spaces of the exhibition by the unfortunate pairing with Fantin-Latour's dreary, pot-boiler, *The Rosy Wealth of June* (London, National Gallery, 1886).

Similarly, the official poster for the exhibition, depicting Richard Learoyd's *Man with Octopus Tattoo II* (2011), was a cunningly deployed strategic attempt to appeal to a popular audience while not alienating those traditional visitors who saw the tattooed back as the reworked other of Ingres's *Valpinçon Bather* (1808, Paris, Louvre). That is, by this act of double-coding, any threat afforded by photography to the National Gallery's traditional demographic was effectively neutralized: the ghost of Ingres's *Bather* offered the reassurance that photography still relied on painting; indeed, it quoted freely from it. Similarly, within the exhibition itself, the debt owed by Jeff Wall's *The Destroyed Room* (1978, printed 1987) to Eugène Delacroix's *Death of Sardanapalus* (1827, Paris, Louvre) was made explicit. Yet each of these comparisons was effectively robbed of any wider meaning within the space of the gallery; at best they represented the opportunity for some formal comparison-spotting.

The chance to exploit a good seduction was not overlooked, with painting's relative experience winning over the hesitancy of photography's novice. The manner of these quotations reinforces the line that this is an unavoidable trajectory from painting to photography and one that assumes an epistemological coherence, granted legitimacy by its incarceration within the museum.

As is often pointed out, the discourse of art history, with its reliance on the museum, was developed in the 19th century. That both art history and the museum relied on photography was not coincidental, and it contributed to the fashioning of Modernist aesthetic theory.

The museum's Enlightenment principles, coupled with its reliance on distinct, autonomous disciplines, encourages a rigidly observed

hierarchy of artforms and indeed genres. In this new domain of knowledge, photography was often regarded merely as an instrument for recording. Elizabeth Edwards and Sigrid Lien describe the use of photographs within museum collections as 'tools' and 'objects' (Edwards and Lien, 2014). Yet this ambivalent relationship between photography, Art and the museum had already been apparent not long after the development of photography. Roger Fenton was commissioned by the British Museum between 1853 and 1858 to produce a series of photographs both to archive the collections and to make them commercially available (Brusius, 2013). Yet now their category has slipped sufficiently to rank alongside other works of Art.

At the National Gallery in 2012, the figure of the connoisseur helped secure these hierarchies through an exercise of taste dependent on what Rosalind Krauss calls 'the space of exhibition', by highlighting photography's aesthetic significance (Krauss, 1985, p. 133). Karen Knorr's *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* (1986–1990), one of the *Connoisseurs* series, takes a wry look at this acquisition of taste, based as it is on an accumulation of cultural capital. Here the role of photography within the image is apparently reduced to that of instrument, both 'tool' and 'object', as the viewer examines the plates in the book, seemingly oblivious to the Art that surrounds him. That tantalizing book of photographs serves as a reminder that photographs can, as Edwards and Lien attest, be 'reproduced, repurposed [and] remediated' (Edwards and Lien, 2014, p. 5).

From as early as the 1930s, the Museum of Modern Art, New York, had begun to exhibit photographs as autonomous objects, providing an alternative museological model in which they were not organized by the generic classifications borrowed from painting theory. Beaumont Newhall's blockbuster show *Photography 1839–1937* – organized to celebrate the centenary – is usually regarded as having inaugurated photography into the spaces of the museum. The 841 works represented at that exhibition were arranged as a linear progression, focusing on what were to become a canonical body of practitioners and grouped by technical innovations, mapped onto their contemporary applications (press photography, X-ray, etc.) (Phillips, 1989, p. 18).

Crucially, Newhall took the opportunity both at the exhibition and in later spin-off publications to attempt a formulation of aesthetic judgements for photography. His efforts to establish a canon of key works drew on standard art-historical notions of authenticity, rarity and the privileging of personal expression (Phillips, 1989, p. 21). This approach was also enacted on the gallery walls as photographs were

given the same status as paintings: matted, glazed, framed, labelled and hung in a single tier at eye level. This *'museological-mise-en-scène'* which Christopher Phillips identifies was precisely that which Walter Benjamin in the essay 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction' (1936), only a few years before the exhibition but in a very different context, had thought photography would eradicate.

Something of that flavour, but without the white walls, was represented at the National Gallery in *Seduced by Art*. In addition, the vintage print – made within a few years of the exposure of the negative – was given a key role. Jeff Wall's *The Destroyed Room* had been produced in 1978 but not printed until 1987. However, the rest of the works in the show were 'vintage' prints – that is, they gained much of their value within the gallery by being linked directly/immediately with their negatives and with the name of a particular practitioner. In 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction', Walter Benjamin had suggested that 'to ask for the "authentic" print makes no sense' (Benjamin, 1973, p. 226). Yet within the museum with its hierarchy of values, it made complete sense. The model established at the Museum of Modern Art – and continued at *Seduced by Art* – saw photography assimilated into the museological discourse by investing it with the aura of high Art/painting. The threat to those institutional certainties that Douglas Crimp claims that photography poses in its insistent reference to the 'world outside' and the subsequent implosion of a belief in the autonomy of art is exactly what failed to happen in *Seduced by Art*. There was none of the predicted leakage between 'high' and 'low' culture, nor any recognition of the breaks in the canonical model that happened in the 1970s/1980s such as a newfound interest in 'the domestic' or the found object. The National Gallery, with its emphasis on authenticity and authorship, provided no space for photography to contaminate Art or the Enlightenment values on which it depends because it was corralled by that most ossified of academic value systems, the hierarchy of the genres. Despite the painter Paul Delaroche's declamation on hearing of the development of photography in 1839 that 'from today painting is dead', the early relationship between the two might rather be characterized as having settled into one of accommodation: painting did not die and photography imitated painting by assimilating some of its more important precepts.

In *Seduced by Art*, still life, the lowest of the genres, occupied a pivotal role, providing a kind of narrative pause in the room ('Studies of Time and Beauty') devoted to it at the National Gallery show. Traditionally marginalized within academic painting theory, the still life

was regarded as humble, usually banal, and with a scale and technique to match. Crucially it made no attempt at any kind of narrative, and instead it depicted inanimate objects in the controlled environment of the artist's studio, often carefully preplanned. Regarded as useful for learning technical skills, it was frequently practised by students early in their artistic careers. In addition, it was heavily gendered: its institutional exclusion both contributed to, and was derived from, the fact that it was frequently practised by women. Yet the traditional painted still life, sidelined within academic theory and practice, was to play an important part in the development of early Modernism in the 20th century because it seemed to embody a kind of aesthetic purity in its apparent absence of subject. In Picasso and Braque's early Cubist idiom, the still life became the terrain on which formalist experiments with the medium of painting itself might be assayed because, simply put, it was already attempting to do so little in terms of subject-matter (Stevenson, 1993). This was possible because it was at the opposite end of the hierarchy from history painting, the highest and most important of the painterly genres which had the apparent ability to sustain narrative within a single frame. At the opposite end of the scale, the painted still life betrayed no such attempt.

The autotelic nature of the Modernist still life was a key tenet of the push towards the theorization of abstraction in painting (Stevenson, 1993). But photography, on the other hand, always refers to something beyond itself (what had once existed in front of the lens). In that respect, still life's debased position within the hierarchy of the genres becomes interesting. If it is normally dealt with in narratives of Modernist painting as the purest of the genres (because of the apparent absence of discourse), in photography it simply becomes the same as other genres – and in that respect no different from a nude or a portrait, because a photograph always refers to something else. The history of the photographic still life, therefore, provides a test case for the way in which the strictly regulated hierarchy of the painted genres was turned on its head, and not merely because early photographers were drawn to the genre as a response to the very stillness of the subject-matter, until advances in chemistry shortened exposure time considerably.

Like the other genres represented at the National Gallery in *Seduced by Art*, the still lifes were all drawn from two key moments in the history of photography: either the early heroic period after photography's development in the mid 19th century or the much more recent, post-digital period. The exhibition aimed to demonstrate by building on, quoting from, and imitating the scale and authority of models from

art history – the phrase used in the show was that they provided 'an engine for early photographic innovation' – that the works from this latter period are presented as belonging to the category of Art.

Early photographic still lifes were represented by William Henry Fox Talbot's *Articles of Glass* (ca. 1844), a work produced only five or so years after the triumphant announcement of the development of photography. His careful arrangement of the glassware in the courtyard of his home to control lighting conditions means that this is not a 'studio piece' and, indeed, it could be said that it stretches the category of 'still life'. Already it is no longer like a painting; and the photograph blatantly participates in a rhetoric of commercial display. This effect is heightened by its quasi-scientific quality, partly a function of its indexicality, which meant that Talbot immediately saw the potential for this and similar works as proof for insurance claims (Sekula, 1989, p. 344). This is still life at its most functional with an important classificatory potential. Similarly, Adolphe Braun's *Bouquet with Hollyhocks* (ca. 1857), although sold as a picture in its own right to new middle-class consumers, was the kind of photograph originally produced as a pattern for fabrics and wallpapers.

That is, both these early works already subverted that key requirement of Art: that it be divorced from any kind of usefulness. The institutional invisibility which had dogged the painted still life was turned around with the early photographic still life as it found new markets. Yet the effect of exhibiting the works at an institution of elite culture in 2012, where they were shown with glazing, framing and so forth, was to disavow any sense of the commercial.

If there is a relative absence of much theorization of genre in critical writings about photography, then the evidence offered by *Seduced by Art* suggests that at least part of the reason for that is that art historical discourses (in some respects still paying lip service to the theory of the hierarchy of the genres and the privileging of painting), and heavily imbricated with museological discourses, continue to reach out like octopus tentacles. Photography's seduction by Art is possible precisely because of the museum. Knorr's *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* (1988) recognizes that mechanical reproduction is a necessary condition for the production of the discourse of art history with the gallery visitor in the work looking at the serially produced illustrations in his book. The statues that surround him may not have been mechanically reproduced, but they are casts rather than 'originals'. Knorr's work serves as a reminder that our access to paintings and sculpture is now largely through photographs.

Yet, as the case of Fenton demonstrates, photography's relation to the museum was there from the outset – not just on the walls but offering up mechanical reproductions of its treasures and effectively removing the aura of high Art. Of all the early photographic works, his records of the British Museum perhaps come closest to what Walter Benjamin prophesied photography might eventually do: both replicate and, in some respects, replace Art, becoming just one in a series of interchangeable copies. Any work of art that can be photographed can now take its rightful place in the museum without walls. Not only have painting's auratic functions not diminished but they have now reached out to photography as well.

Seduced by Art looked at first glance like an exhibition that attempted to efface the boundaries between high and popular culture, and with a democraticizing impulse; certainly the Gersht and the Learoyd publicity images seemed to reach out to new audiences. In the end, however, the opposite was true with the hierarchization – of genre, of medium – still firmly entrenched. Instead, it represented an attempt to co-opt photography into the realm of Art. It is this paradoxical mixture of caution regarding classification and hierarchy, underpinned by an unsustainable teleological narrative, that makes the exhibition an interesting test case for questions of both genre and medium in the contemporary and future institutional framing of photography.

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8
Vernacular Photographic Genres after the Camera Phone

Peter Buse

I

What is the place of photography in a book on genre? Genre theory, as Garin Dowd notes, has played a 'minor role...in the areas of the musical, visual, and plastic arts', with the most fertile ground found in literary studies (Dowd, 2006, p. 21). In genre studies, visual culture is nonetheless prominent, but mainly in its narrative-based forms, such as cinema and television. John Frow, in his introduction to genre, cites as relevant the following visual or plastic arts – drawing, painting, sculpture, architecture, film, television, opera and drama – but does not mention photography (Frow, 2006, p. 1). In photography studies, meanwhile, genre is neither a key category of analysis nor subject to extensive theorization. Photography critics usually call their object a medium or consider it primarily a technology with specific properties, a distinction behind which many controversies rage. In the key volume *Photography Theory*, for example, central figures in photography studies lock horns and come to a stalemate over issues such as 'medium specificity' and photography's 'indexicality' (Elkins, 2007, pp. 183–196, 256–269). Nowhere in this dispute does genre raise its head.

The parameters for this exclusion of generic questions were perhaps set in 1961 when Roland Barthes characterized photography as '*a message without a code*', 'a mechanical analogue of reality' (Barthes, 1977, pp. 17–18). If genre suggests conventions and formal patterning, where is there room for it here, in a 'codeless' medium or technology that provides a direct 'analogon' of the real (Barthes, 1977, p. 17)? Almost 20 years later, in *Camera Lucida*, he echoed this claim, asserting that 'the Photograph...is the absolute Particular, the sovereign Contingency, matte and somehow stupid' (Barthes, 1984, p. 4). To put it another

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way, Barthes locates individual photographs at the pole of absolute singularity, at the greatest distance possible from the 'general' of genre.

And yet, at the same time, photography is constantly subject to categorizations and classifications: architectural, documentary, landscape, portrait, snapshot, still life and war photography are just some of the recognizable subfields that organize knowledge of photography and shape how photographic images are consumed. Even without theorization, such divisions of the field rely implicitly on a sort of generic thinking. In addition, at least some of these photographic kinds – architectural, landscape, portrait, still life – inherit their names directly from established genres in painting. As Naomi Rosenblum usefully explains, architecture and landscape, although low in the hierarchies of genre in the 19th century, were among the most popular subjects of early photography. One reason for this was that buildings and mountains did not move, and were outdoors, making them ideal subjects for slow film requiring long exposures and large amounts of light (Rosenblum, 1997, p. 95).

The technological determinants of these early photographic 'genres' remind us that many forms of photography – macrography, astrophotography, ultraviolet photography – would be very difficult to characterize as genres, and are much better described as technical processes. It is in fact an open question whether landscape, for instance, is a photographic genre or simply a mode in which photography participates. A failure, or inability, to decide should not trouble us too much, though, for as Frow puts it,

> in dealing with questions of genre, our concern should not be with matters of taxonomic substance ('What classes and sub-classes are there? To which class does this text belong') – to which there are never any 'correct' answers – but rather with questions of use: 'What models of classification are there, and how have people made use of them in particular circumstances?'
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> (Frow, 2006, p. 55)

Even if genre studies has not made much headway with photography, photography itself has been subject to considerable taxonomic attention, and the causes and consequences of those taxonomies deserve scrutiny, particularly since they are invariably accompanied by hierarchies. In what amounts to a manifesto for genre studies, David Duff calls for a close examination of such hierarchies and asks the critic to identify dominant genres and 'to explain how they attained that position of

dominance . . . and how the cultural assumptions and aspirations of an era are reflected in the hierarchy of genres' (Duff, 2000, p. 19). His call refers in the first instance to literary hierarchies, but it is also applicable to photography, a field in which value is distributed unevenly across different modes, genres, types (or what you will). A case in point is vernacular photography, at once denigrated and lionized in its complex position at the intersection of aesthetics, technology and social distinction.

Vernacular photography accounts for the greatest proportion of the world's image-making. While it is sometimes described as a genre, it might be better understood as a social practice which partakes of many photographic modes. It is highly dependent on and responsive to technological change, since so many (although not all) of its practitioners rely on equipment that requires little skill and the exact workings of which they do not need to understand. Vernacular photographs are usually made by amateurs whose intentions in the first instance are not aesthetic, commercial or scientific. It is often assumed that the main form of vernacular photography, the snapshot, is a spontaneous product of an untutored eye, and that any obedience it shows to rules of composition is the result of chance rather than deliberation. For this reason it is scorned by some, and for the same reason it is embraced by art photographers alert to its 'primitive' charms. Even so, the prevalence in snapshot history of pets, mothers and children, birthday parties, sunsets and proud owners in front of new cars suggests that amateur photographers are well trained in the sorts of pictures they are supposed to take, even if they have not learnt them formally. At the same time, from the beginnings of snapshot photography, keen amateurs have relied on guidebooks and photographic periodicals which advised them in detail on the conventions of composition, lighting and exposure, as well as offering guidance on typical subject-matter, much of which falls neatly into recognizable genres of wider visual cultures.

Recent developments in photographic technologies have made snapshot cameras smaller and lighter, and have incorporated them into a range of other devices, most often phones. These changes have contributed to the ubiquity of vernacular photography in consumer cultures (see Hand, 2012). In addition, digital technologies allow amateur photographers an unprecedented array of filtering tools (Hipstamatic, Instagram, etc.) and modes of circulation (photo-sharing social networks, from Facebook to Flickr to Instagram). Apart from a rump of enthusiasts, chemical film has been all but abandoned, the framed photo has been superseded by the screen-based image, and the volume of pictures taken has reached unprecedented levels. But have these

changes also led to changes in vernacular photographic practices, changes to the subject-matter and 'genres' in which amateurs shoot? Has the tagging and labelling enabled by social networking software led to a proliferation, even explosion, of categories, or are the traditional subjects (pets, sunsets, new cars) of vernacular photography still alive and well?

If volume and intensity of commentary are the yardsticks, then the most significant new photographic subgenre in the era of the net-worked image is, of course, the 'selfie'. Responding to widely circulated celebrity images (de Generes, Kardashian) and political gaffes (Obama, Cameron), the Oxford English Dictionary chose it as word of the year in 2013. Photographic portraits are nothing new: the vogue for them in the 19th century prompted Baudelaire to lament the very discovery of photography: 'From that moment onwards, our loathsome society rushed, like Narcissus, to contemplate its trivial image on a metallic plate. A form of lunacy, an extraordinary fanaticism took hold of these new sun-worshippers' (Baudelaire, 1980, pp. 86–87). Metallic plates were not as handy as smartphones, and the professional studio photographer held a monopoly on the form until automatic timers and shutter-release cables placed photographic portraiture in the hands of any amateur who was willing to take up these tools. Similarly, the selfie had to wait for very specific technological advances before it could give expression to a pre-existing drive for self-fashioning. While the photograph taken into a mirror pre-dates the camera phone, the arm's-length self-portrait or group portrait is new, encouraged by two developments in photographic technology: the preview screen, which began to appear in amateur digital cameras at the beginning of the 21st century, and the double-lensed device, with one lens pointing in the same direction as the preview screen. These features allow the untrained portrait-taker to treat the preview screen as if it were a mirror, and so judge pose and expression, and also ensure the image is correctly focused.

According to media theorists who seek to define this subgenre of portraiture, the arm's-length exposure alone does not constitute a selfie: the image only becomes a selfie once it has been tagged as such (#selfie), and has been shared through networked platforms. As a generic product, then, it is technologically determined in more than one way: not just by the contents of the image, which are made possible by the preview screen and smartphone camera, but by the online apparatus, the computational media, into which the image is inserted. The selfie is defined by the uses to which it is put: it is not just a self-portrait but also a self-portrait taken to be posted online (Tifentale, 2014, p. 11).

This exhibitionist dimension of the selfie generates a corresponding discourse condemning their makers as 'self-obsessed attention-seekers in constant need of validation', but Julian Stallabrass, for one, warns against this reproach. He claims that selfie-takers show 'considerable sophistication in the making of images and skepticism about their effects. The artifice of commercial imagery is understood through practical emulation. Most selfies are pastiche and many tip into parody' (SelfieCity, 2014a; Stallabrass, 2014, p. 20). In other words, we should take selfies seriously as a new subgenre of portraiture: not only do they have a complex intertextual relation to the existing visual field but often they display self-reflexivity about their own codes.

It is easy enough to comment on the selfie in the abstract, but another matter when it comes to assessing it in its multiple empirical manifestations. The study of amateur photography has always faced the daunting problem of what is now called 'big data'. In 1939, photohistorian Lucia Moholy was already estimating that somewhere in the region of 160 million amateur snapshots were taken every year in the UK alone. Later scholars cited the 'billions' of amateur snaps taken each year, the 'colossal' number and the 'ceaseless tide' of photos, and the 'avalanche' of family albums (Chalfen, 1987, p. 13; Crawley, 1989, p. 153; Collins, 1990, p. 311; Langford, 2001, p. 78). In the digital era, if anything, the tide has increased at such an exponential rate that it is not clear where one would begin. For some, the image world has now become 'an unmanageable and unimaginable excess' (Lister, 2013, p. 9). In spite of this excess, the selfie is already the subject of a major data-gathering exercise (see selfiecity.net), which brings together a team of cultural theorists and computer scientists to examine the selfie trend in five major cities: Bangkok, Berlin, Moscow, New York and São Paolo. Using algorithms and automated facial analysis software, the project was able to make some general observations about a very large dataset of images posted to Instagram. Among the findings were the following: more women than men take selfies; only 4% of photos posted on Instagram can be classified as selfies; in Moscow, selfie-takers smile the least and in Bangkok the most; and selfies in São Paolo have the greatest average head tilt (Selfiecity, 2014b).

The project is accompanied by a critical apparatus that considers the social and cultural milieu of the newly networked image, but, on the face of it, these findings are banal, even superficial. The image-analysis software can drill down into the big data and detect recurrent patterns that a human observer might suspect, but could not quantify it with any reasonable certainty. However, there is a huge gap between purely

descriptive pattern recognition and the kinds of aesthetic judgements that inform Stallabrass' assessment of the selfie, an assessment that in turn is not backed up by any real empirical evidence. How are we to join up the bland raw data with the bigger claims made by Stallabrass, claims which are compelling but which rest on unstable ground? ('Most selfies are pastiche,' he says, 'and many tip into parody', but he neither quantifies 'most' nor proves the 'many'.) One starting point would be to consider the selfie not in isolation as a singular subgenre with certain recurring features, but as one iteration of amateur photographic practice that stretches back well before the digital era, and which is marked, as Bourdieu puts it, by its 'social definition.'

Bourdieu makes this claim in *Photography: A Middle Brow Art* (1965), a collectively written work that does not overtly foreground photographic genres but which is nonetheless a rich source for any consideration of the classificatory constraints at work in popular amateur photography. While he and his co-writers concede that in theory anything is photographable and that there are no formal limits to what an amateur might choose for subject-matter, in practice they argue: 'a finite and well-defined range of subjects, genres, and compositions' are adopted by the amateur photographer (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 6). Bourdieu does not explain what, if any, distinctions he is making between 'subject', 'genre' and 'composition', but it is clear that he mobilizes the term 'genre' for two main purposes. First, he wants to show that vernacular image-making is neither spontaneous nor random, but bound tightly by conventions. Second, he suggests that amateur photography is socially stratified and subject to hierarchies, with photographic habits and choice of subject-matter dictated by class position, but more importantly by a division between photographers who have aesthetic pretensions and those who do not, the former usually belonging to camera clubs and characterized by what he calls a 'fervent practice' (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 47). For shorthand we can call them the snapshooter and the 'serious amateur'.

These two groups are equally dedicated to what Bourdieu calls the 'family function' of amateur photography. For the occasional photographer who is not a member of a camera club and for whom the workings of the camera and the darkroom are a mystery, picture-taking follows a familiar ritual pattern: weddings, babies, holidays, all recorded as affirmations of domestic intimacy, as part of the process of the integration of family bonds (Bourdieu, pp. 26–28). For this photographer, photography is reserved for special events, and the camera is rarely or never used to record the everyday. The other kind of amateurs, the devotees with

darkroom skills, define their practice against this family function, and in fact do their utmost to 'liberate' photography from the family function, avoiding at all costs the favourite themes of domestic photography (Bourdieu, p. 62). Their practice may attempt, then, to break with the conventions of domestic genres, but, even if they succeed in liberating photography from the family, they remain firmly bound to the family function themselves, since their practice is only meaningful in relation to that which it negates.

Whether the subject-matter is the workplace, landscapes or still lifes in makeshift studios, the photography of the serious amateur is still socially defined in Bourdieu's sense because it is making a bid for distinction. Serious amateurs need the casual family snapshooter to validate their own 'skilled' practice through its very inferiority in a hierarchy of taste. But in Bourdieu's view, the distinction on offer from photography is paltry and second-rate, due to photography's own lowly position within the hierarchy of the representational arts. There is no institutional legitimation of photography, so, 'unlike going to museums or concerts, it does not have the support of an authority with the explicit role of teaching or encouraging it', and 'attempts to apply artistic intentions to photography appear excessive because the models and norms required for this are missing' (Bourdieu, pp. 70, 72). As a consequence, a devoted fanaticism for photography is actually taken to be a sign of a lack of distinction by those in possession of genuine cultural capital: the opera-goers, the collectors of modern art. It is for this reason that Bourdieu calls photography a 'middle brow art' or, in the original French, 'un art moyen'.

Photography: A Middle Brow Art was written before the photo-boom of the 1970s when photography conquered the art galleries, growing sharply in monetary value and cultural capital, while at the same time gaining wider admission to the universities and art schools. But it is doubtful whether the serious amateur was swept along with professional and artist photographers in this ascension. Distinction remains elusive for those with a 'fervent practice', partly because of the continuing technological basis of that practice. One of the main markers of distinction between serious amateurs and their counterparts dedicated to the family function is a greater knowledge of the technical workings of the photographic apparatus. And, as Bourdieu says, it is invariably experience in the darkroom developing one's own prints that evidences this greater knowledge (Bourdieu, p. 107). However, as soon as know-how takes on this special status, then it is as much mechanics and technical skill that are at stake as it is aesthetics. 'It might thus be part of the "essence"

of photography,' Bourdieu says, 'to oscillate between the imitation of painting and *an interest in technology*' (Bourdieu, p. 104).

II

This oscillation extends right back to the early days of photography and constitutes a basic tension in a field whose proponents have always wavered between art and science. It can be seen in the specialist publications aimed at photographers from the 19th century onwards, professional and amateur alike. In the UK there were three such publications to begin with: *The Photographic Journal* (1853), which published Royal Photographic Society news, *The British Journal of Photography* (1854), aimed at the professional photographer, and *Photographic News* (1858), for the amateur. The amateur was, of course, a different creature in the mid-19th century, when a large income, plenty of leisure time and knowledge of chemistry were prerequisites for the non-professional. Unsurprisingly perhaps, throughout the 19th century the editors of all three of these periodicals were chemists, and their pages were filled with illustrations of technical processes and advances, with extended discussion of such pressing matters as the permanence of photographic images. As photography became accessible to a wider range of amateurs, a key new entrant in the field was the weekly *Amateur Photographer* in 1884. It too was edited in the first instance by a chemist, but the editorship was assumed in 1895 by A. Horsley Hinton, a pictorialist, for whom aesthetic concerns, and with them ones of genre, took priority. Technical matters remained a constant in the pages of the periodical, but from the arrival of Horsley Hinton, *Amateur Photographer* took on a role that it still maintains as a site of practical advice for amateur photographers on matters of style, subject-matter and composition.

Popular photography magazines and journals are in fact a vital resource for anyone wanting to move beyond the undifferentiated mass of big data, which may lead us to treat photographic images in isolation, when in fact they are better understood in their textual and social settings. If we want to draw both qualitative and quantitative judgements, even a single issue of a magazine is valuable because of the repetitive nature of the magazine format, which relies on recurring features that allow regular readers to navigate its pages easily, seeking out the sections or contributors they most enjoy. To read a single issue is also to get an insight into a magazine's contents over a longer duration: the format will, of course, evolve and change, but over any given extended timespan it will generally be relatively stable. The other advantage of

magazines as sources is that they make visible the coexistence of histor-ical continuity and discontinuity. Photographic technologies in 2014 may be radically different from those available in 1884 when *Ama-teur Photographer* was launched, and indeed photographic practices may have altered significantly as well. However, the continued publication of the magazine shows that technological breaks are not absolute but are integrated into existing practices and adapt themselves to those practices.

   To get a sense of the discourse at work in these magazines in the era during which Bourdieu was writing, and selecting almost at random, we could cite the following appraisal of a new camera in the American magazine *Popular Photography* in 1973:

> Although the SX-70 is a true SLR, it lacks certain features that could make it a fully creative tool for some advanced amateurs and pros. The lack of any control over depth of field, due to practically idiot-proof exposure automation, is one problem. This can be particularly nettling in extra-close shooting, where depth of field is a major image-quality determinant . . . The other is lack of control over shut-ter speed, an absolute 'must' when trying to stop fast action. One would actually hope for a 'professional' Polaroid SLR in the not-too-distant future. This is said with no malice intended. The Polaroid SX-70 appeals to, and is eminently suited to, a mass market. And it is the ability to stay in business via this mass market that eventually lets manufacturers give us 'enthusiasts' the specialty merchandise we want.
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> (Rothschild, 1973)

This striking assessment is almost a manifesto for the serious ama-teur of Bourdieu's book. Critically, the writer Norman Rothschild places 'advanced amateurs' and 'pros' on a shared continuum of 'enthusiasts' and separates them from the 'idiots' of the mass market against which the SX-70 has been proofed. The reader of the magazine is most likely an advanced amateur, but Rothschild holds out the possibility to that reader of a movement between categories, suggesting that he aspires to produce photographs of a professional standard. At the same time, Rothschild's summing up captures succinctly the technological basis on which the serious amateur's identity rests. He twice uses the phrase 'lack of control' to describe the full automation of the SX-70. Why does the advanced photographer want 'control' of exposure and shut-ter speed? In order to make the camera a 'fully creative tool.' For *Popular*

Photography then, creativity and control are the markers of distinction which separate its kind of photography from the unskilled snapping enabled by the SX-70. The title of the magazine may signal an ambition to democratize photography, but technological advances that made photography even more popular were clearly considered a threat to the identity of their core audience. The serious amateur's is a popular practice, then, but not too popular.

To evaluate what has changed in the field that Bourdieu described in 1965 as defined by the 'family function', and since this striking statement from 1973, I propose examining single issues of two magazines from the post-digital era. One of them, *Amateur Photographer*, already existed in the analogue era; the other, *Photography Monthly*, was founded at a time when digital cameras were becoming readily available to amateur photographers.[1] The issues in question are *Photography Monthly* 131 (February 2012) and *Amateur Photographer* of 23 August 2014. Priced respectively at £3.99 and £2.95, they are differentiated from each other by frequency and size (at 114 and 82 pages), and from other key magazines by relative cost and quality of production. By comparison, the *British Journal of Photography* has a stiff cover, is printed on better paper and is priced at £6.99, containing longer features on photographers of greater renown than the ones found in the pages of *Photography Monthly* and *Amateur Photographer*. Of these two magazines we can ask three questions: What do they reveal about the continuing social stratification of amateur photography? What hierarchies of subject-matter or photographic genres does the advanced amateur subscribe to in the digital era? And to what extent is this practice dependent on a technological substructure?

The addressee of the two popular photography magazines is clearly the enthusiast, the camera club member, of Bourdieu's study, for whom photographic distinction lies in departures from the family function of domestic photography. A less dedicated practice does not require reference to specialist publications, and, as Margaret Beetham argues, the periodical form itself is particularly suited to aspiration:

> Serial publications have to secure purchasers/readers who keep returning regularly every day, week or month. The periodical must, therefore, offer its readers models of identity which they can regularly recognize and indeed occupy and which they are prepared to pay for again and again. These identities may be aspirational as much as actual.
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> (Beetham, 2000, p. 95)

If we assume with Beetham that readers return to a magazine because it offers them a picture of themselves that they recognize or an ideal that they aspire to, then models of identity can be 'read off' the pages of the magazine. However, there is no guarantee that the 'target reader', the 'actual purchaser' and 'the reader constructed in the text' coincide. Instead, Beetham argues, we should think of the 'historical reader' as the dynamic result of a negotiation between these different positions (Beetham, 2000, p. 96). In most magazines it is possible to see this negotiation at work, because readers so often become contributors – through letters pages, advice columns, competitions and sometimes even guest copy.[2] In the case of the photomagazine, we can add to this list pictures, since many photomagazines solicit photos which are then displayed in 'readers' galleries'. The magazine teaches its reader how to desire then, but this is not a one-way street, and through different modes of contribution the reader engages in a dialogue with those forms of desire offered up by the magazine.

In the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s it was fairly safe to assume that the subject of this photographic desire was male. With notable exceptions such as Cora Wright Kennedy, regular staff writer for *Popular Photography* in the 1960s, the named contributors to photography magazines are almost exclusively male, as are the figures represented in images illustrating photographers. In addition, as the obsession with 'control' in Rothschild's review indicates, this is a heavily masculinist discourse. The same logic is at work in the visual material of photomagazines in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s, with the 'glamour' photo being very prominent. Whether the actual readers were women or men, these magazines consistently elicited a masculine gaze. Finally, as Rothschild's meticulous and comprehensive review of the SX-70 demonstrates, there is in these magazines a stereotypically masculine preoccupation with technology, or what is now simply called 'gear'. In common with the earlier periodical press, which was given over in large part to reviewing, the photomagazines always dedicated a considerable portion of their pages to this function, as befitted their role as arbiters and mediators of new phototechnology. This much has not changed. Every issue of *Photography Monthly* devotes its final 20 or so pages to 'Photo Gear', and in the 23 August issue of *Amateur Photographer*, taking in advertising and reviews, just over 50% of the magazine is committed solely to the assessment and promotion of photographic equipment.

The commitment to technology alone gives a strong sense of the readership of these magazines, but a closer analysis brings out a more nuanced picture, starting with the *Photography Monthly* of February

2012. Its emphasis is almost exclusively on digital rather than film photography, and, like most magazines, it is heterogeneous in content, mixing together images, advertising, news stories, reviews, competition pages, interviews, round tables, features and tips sections.[3] There is no letters page, but it does dedicate a column each to comments from its 'fans' and 'followers' on Facebook and Twitter. In the former case, readers respond to prompts from the magazine both jocular ('Anybody else had too many mince pies?') and serious ('What local landscapes encourage you to get creative?') ('From Facebook', 2012). The presence of readers is strongest in the seven-page 'Readers' Gallery', where we find the best images which have been uploaded to the magazine's website in January, and which includes an 'Image of the Month', in this case a motocross racer spraying mud. The other notable reader contribution is a book review by Adele Carne, a 24-year-old 'photography graduate with big dreams of running her own fashion and music portrait business' (Carne, 2012).

There could hardly be a clearer statement of the 'aspirational' dimension of the magazine than Carne's description of herself. In fact, aspiration runs right through the issue, from the reviews section on the latest desirable and expensive photoproducts, to the envy for the contents of professionals' camera bags ('Brad's Gear'; 'Inside Ezra's Kitbag') and the emphasis on exotic travel, both in the features and in the advertising for 'safari photography' trips. (In a tacit recognition that safaris may be out of the reach of many of its readers, the issue includes a feature on techniques for photographing pigeons in town centres.) There is also an abundance of tips and advice 'to help you become the photographer you want to be', as the strapline for the 'Photo Technique' section puts it. Some of this advice might have come straight out of the amateur photography magazines of an earlier epoch – not in the detail, of course, but in the assumption that the reader is looking for 'challenges', for technically difficult photographic situations. As one of the interviewed professionals insists, echoing Norman Rothschild 40 years earlier, 'you have to take the camera off AUTO' if you want to be creative ('Hobbyists' Corner', 2012). In fact, the words 'creative' and 'creativity' are touchstones of value running right through the magazine, just as they did through the magazines of earlier generations. To judge by the images in the 'Readers' Gallery', and the magazine as a whole, creative challenges include stopping motion, experiments with depth of focus, and the inventive use of light. The overwhelming emphasis is on landscape and nature photographs, with a large proportion of sunsets and sunrises. With images of animals the next largest category, there is no

real departure from the conventional subject-matter of the serious amateur of 40 or 50 years earlier. In sum, in *Photography Monthly* the serious amateur combines an interest in technical innovation, a curiosity about new methods and a conservatism of content.

At the same time it is apparent that the implied reader of *Photography Monthly* aspires to more than releasing this 'creativity' so familiar from the old discourse on the 'serious amateur'. Carne's guest review is part of a special section devoted to 'Turning Pro', which is in fact a magazine within the magazine, with its own front and back cover and editorial. As well as pragmatic counsel on setting up different kinds of photobusinesses, it includes a review of degree courses at Middlesex University. Meanwhile, in the Facebook letters section, the magazine asks readers if they are doing, or have done, a photography degree, and if the tuition fee rise will affect them. This sort of formalized training is of a different order from the workshops and short courses advertised at the back of the magazine. It suggests that the non-professional photographer addressed by *Photography Monthly* is more than a 'hobbyist' who, as the term suggests, separates the enthusiasm for photography from some other daily non-photographic activity. The vocabulary of the magazine may be as it ever was – creativity, challenges, the 'difficult shot' – but there is also a steady expectation, or at least a hope, that the amateur's passion for photography will translate into sustained financial reward.

One of the respondents to the Facebook prompt about degree courses is none other than Adele Carne, who therefore appears in two different places in the issue. Should she be taken as the representative of today's aspirational amateur, telling us that this is no longer a stereotypically male preserve? Certainly, if we look at the list of paid contributors on the editorial page, *Photography Monthly* is not the male-dominated forum of the past. Five out of nine writers are women, including one who describes herself as 'a gadget girl'. In the 'Readers' Gallery' there is a slightly different balance, with photos by men outnumbering those by women by approximately three to one. As for the overall visual regime of the magazine, glamour or fashion photos make up a smaller proportion of the overall image count than they might have in the past (approximately 7 out of 140 images, with no 'tasteful nudes', a former staple of photomagazines), but they are still there, while their counterparts, the 10 images of sport, are all of men. However, the most telling fact is the following: in this single issue, 15 professional photographers are profiled or interviewed in one form or another. They are presumably featured in the magazine as ideals for the aspirational amateur to strive towards, and they are all men. Is this a result of editorial bias or simply an accurate

reflection of the conditions facing the would-be professional photographer? Either way, it would appear that one of the greatest challenges facing the new breed of aspirational amateur keen to move into the profession is a familiar obstacle that has not changed since the 1960s.

In the more venerable publication, *Amateur Photographer*, the masculine *status quo* is even more solidly in place. The editor is a man, all three regular columnists are men, as indeed are all the named writers, and all four living professional photographers who are interviewed, or whose work is featured in the magazine, are men. The single exception is a story about the celebrated Chicago street photographer Vivian Maier, whose work came to light posthumously and is the subject of a feature film and a BBC documentary. Where *Photography Monthly* has a 'Readers' Gallery', *Amateur Photography* has a 'Reader Portfolio', in this case showcasing the work of two male readers. Interestingly, there is one contribution from a female reader, in the letters page. Kathryn J. Scorah writes in to say that there is still a reluctance to take women seriously as photographers, and asks if the magazine might 'redress the balance a little' by showing some of her images, which it does, but printed very small ('Inbox', 2014). *Amateur Photographer* sometimes invokes the 'artistic' as an ideal, but its rhetoric about creativity is muted compared with *Photography Monthly*, although like *Photography Monthly* it emphasizes the importance of difficulty in photography, with its central feature stories on techniques for getting good portraits of indigenous peoples in exotic locales, and for capturing recalcitrant, even dangerous, wildlife.

Writing in the 1990s about photography magazines, Julian Stallabrass observed that

> photographers are constantly urged to do the unusual, to break with clichéd subject matter and handling, but simultaneously they must also learn about a complex structure of rigid genres and their associated techniques . . . Each rule is discrete, parasitic on subject matter, and taken together they have little coherent shape.
>
> (Stallabrass, 1996, p. 20)

It is the only time in his influential essay 'Sixty Billion Sunsets' that Stallabrass uses the term 'genre', which he does not define beyond hinting that genres involve 'rigidity'. Instead he returns quickly to his preferred 'subject-matter', a flatter term which resonates more closely with Barthes' view that a photograph is a direct 'analogon' of the real. Whether we refer to genres or subject-matter, the 'Reader Portfolio' in *Amateur Photographer*, like *Photography Monthly*'s 'Readers' Gallery', gives

us a good sense of how little the photographic hierarchies of a 'fervent practice' have changed in the digital era. In each portfolio the reader is given five images. The first portfolio consists of images of cars and motorbikes by Jeffrey Eatley, with praise from the magazine for his achievements with close-ups, with the inventive use of flash, with composite shooting and with the use of diffused light. For each image we are given details of camera types, exposure length, aperture and film speed – obligatory content for a technophilic practice, and for distinguishing this photography from casual snapshots. The same sort of details are provided for the second portfolio, by Richard Hurst, and in this case featuring coastal landscapes which are in turn praised by the magazine for their composition, use of filters and light. In *Photography Monthly*, meanwhile, there are 21 images, each from a different reader-contributor, and consequently with a wider range of genres represented, none of them stretching beyond the familiar canons of which Stallabrass despairs: landscapes, architecture, glamour, street photography, wildlife and motorsports are all present. Many of these images may have been discreetly modified after the fact in Adobe Photoshop, and perhaps two are composite images made possible by digital software, but otherwise there is no sense that they are responding to the new photographic landscape of the camera phone and the networked image.

Besides their reliance on recognizable and longstanding categories of advanced amateur practice, the images contributed by readers to the two magazines are unified by their steadfast refusal of the family function. So, Eatley's portfolio in *Amateur Photographer* may contain motor vehicles – integral elements of domestic life – but three aspects of his images clearly separate them from any hint of the domestic: the absence of any people; their *mise-en-scène*, isolated by lighting and context from references to family; and the choice of vehicles (a Humvee, a classic motorcycle, a collector's Bel Air), none of them a family sedan. Equally, Hurst's coastal scenes, whether they are fjords in Norway, low tides in Dorset or rocky beaches, are devoid of any human presence that might connote tourist or holiday snap. The same logic applies to the readers' images in *Photography Monthly*. Although some of them allude aspirationally to professional practice (fashion, sports or music journalism), none of the staple figures or events of domestic photography are to be found there: landscapes and architectural shots are empty of people, and there are no weddings, babies or holidays snaps to signal photography's role in constituting the family and its narrative. Where there are allusions to such traditions (a puppy with a tennis ball; a mother and child), contamination by the family function is mitigated by the

site of shooting (studio), or film type and composition (black and white, asymmetrical). There is not a selfie to be seen, not even an ironic one, nor does either issue appear to draw on the new rich seam of vernacular photography that takes the everyday as its subject-matter (images, as Susan Murray argues, of 'the small and mundane', a 'navigation and documentation of daily life' [Murray, 2013, p. 166]), and that makes use of popular filtering apps such as Instagram or Hipstamatic. In *Photography Monthly*'s online gallery, images tagged 'Landscape' number 17,000, 'Portraits' 13,000, 'Nature' 11,500, and 'Wildlife/Pets' 10,000, while 'Art Filter Images' come in at a mere 64, and pictures labelled Instagram amount to only 326 ('Gallery', 2014).

And yet, even as these readers' images distance themselves from more popular vernacular practices, they remain indebted to them. Although there are no pictures of domestic pets in the print version of *Photography Monthly* for February 2012, only of wild animals that are more difficult to shoot, there is a certain amount of slippage in the online galleries, obliging their keepers to concede the category 'Wildlife/Pets'. Both magazines give examples of and guidance on travel photography, much of which goes towards composing the 'Landscape', 'Nature' and 'Portraits' categories. These may all studiously avoid looking like typical tourist snaps, but it is only a small step from the magazines' images of famous buildings, breathtaking vistas and characterful locals to Aunt Edna in front of the Eiffel Tower or Uncle Reg atop the Grand Canyon. As for Jeffrey Eatley's fetishizing pictures of shining red classic cars torn from any social context, this is merely the thinnest of disguises for that most familiar of scenes found in any photo album from the 1950s, 1960s or 1970s: a new owner's economic success and successful participation in consumer culture solemnized by the proud portrait in front of a shining new car. In *Amateur Photographer* the selfie does in fact make an appearance, but only as an amusing miscellany, in the form of a small news story announcing that an A-level in sociology will include selfies in its syllabus on social media, the examination board insisting that 'it is "not a soft option" ' ('News round-up', 2014).

Like any magazine, *Photography Monthly* and *Amateur Photographer* are complex assemblages of different kinds of text and image which surely cater simultaneously to a number of distinct audiences. A more in-depth study would have to analyse even more closely the codes and conventions governing the images in the magazine, taking in a comparative dimension: we would need to ask, for instance, how these images relate to, or differ from, photography in art magazines. A good starting point would be *Photography Monthly*'s online gallery of images submitted by

readers. The size of this gallery is daunting, but minuscule in comparison with the gargantuan storehouses of Flickr and Photobucket, and at least *Photography Monthly* does some of the work for us by asking readers to tag their images according to a manageable number of predetermined categories.

While the big data algorithm processors could no doubt give us some insight into the patterns at work in the online collections of photographic images stored by photomagazines, it may be that we need to look elsewhere to determine what has changed post-digital in advanced amateur practice, since, on the face of it, very little is different in terms of favoured subject-matter. With cameras in the hands of so many now, and advanced amateurs finding the grounds of their distinction increasingly eroded, they are turning again to what we might call technical capital in order to mark their practice out from the selfie-taking networked photographer. In this vein, some scholars suggest that it is no longer so much what is photographed that distinguishes the two types of photographer but the choices made in the storage and circulation of digital images. So, for example, in his ingenious history of the JPEG file, Daniel Palmer claims that this ubiquitous and convenient file type (although perhaps not quite a genre) is looked down upon by some:

> For 'serious' amateurs and professional photographers, JPEGs have come to be considered as degraded, even inauthentic, copies of a camera's sensors. These photographers prefer so-called RAW and DNG files, which are akin to 'digital originals', wherein the data is uncompressed and camera settings are saved separately from the image data.
>
> (Palmer, 2013, p. 155)

A similar sort of logic is at work in the photographer's decision about whether to post images on Facebook or Flickr, the two largest photo-sharing sites in the world. In her detailed analysis of the community-building aspects of Flickr, Susan Murray argues that Flickr is the favoured platform of those photographers engaged in what Bourdieu called a 'fervent practice'. These enthusiasts are likely to choose Flickr over Facebook because the former 'provides an interface that, more than any other social media platform, emphasizes the *practice* of photography and overtly addresses its members as practitioners, artists, and/or image-makers' (Murray, 2013, p. 167). In sum, Flickr is primarily a photo-sharing site which allows its users to network with each other and form online communities; and Facebook is primarily a networking

site which allows users to share photos. It may seem like the narcissism of minor differences but on such differences distinction hangs.

Notes

1. *Photography Monthly* ceased print publication in January 2015, becoming a purely online periodical.
2. For more on letters pages in magazines, see Beetham (1998).
3. On the mixed content of magazines, see Beetham (1990, pp. 19–32, 24–25).

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Part V

Film Genres: Endurance and Transformation

9

The Enduring Reach of Melodrama in Contemporary Film and Culture

Michael Stewart

Melodrama as a pervasive mode

That melodrama has become increasingly visible in film studies in recent times raises a number of theoretical and methodological questions. However, it should come as no particular surprise given the centrality of melodrama to popular culture throughout the modern period. Melodrama, argues Gledhill (1987), was both 'a central nineteenth century paradigm and a formative influence on twentieth century mass culture' (p. 14). The melodramatic mode, she notes, was part of the more general expansion of visual culture in Europe and North America in the 19th century – when the world became 'saturated with pictures' (Booth, cited in Gledhill, 1987, p. 22), and the primacy of images and illustrations was inseparable from the invention of the plate-glass window and electric lighting, and the multiple spectacles of urban architecture and life. The emphasis in 19th-century theatrical melodrama on visuality and spectacle was equally shared, notes Gledhill (p. 22), by painting, which drew frequently on acting manuals and theatrical tableaux, and the novel – not only via the greater demand for illustrations, but also in a narrative mode that favoured arresting moments and, *volte-face*, moral drama and the play of Manichean opposites. Melodrama's battle between polarized forces, argues Sypher (in Gledhill, 1987, p. 20), provided the foundation for much 19th-century culture and thought; and to this extent, Darwin, Freud and Marx might all be considered 'products of the melodramatic imagination' (Gledhill, 1987, p. 20).

Colin Mercer (1988) underlines Sypher's argument that melodrama is central to the 19th-century imagination, and argues that it should be theorized as a cultural technology (p. 53) which crosses a number of adjacent domains (p. 56) – including journalism, literature,

theatre, criminology, education and the emerging human and social sciences. In these matrices, Mercer argues, new publics and locations, individuals and families are made visible and intelligible; made popular and legitimate; made into new epistemologies and modern contractual relations. Melodrama is part of modernity and is a response to the dramatic changes wrought by modernity: 'Modernity eroded the stability, certainty, and simplicity of traditional religious faith and patriarchal tradition. The emergence of melodrama was a symptom of this loss of social and psychological moorings' (Singer, 2001, p. 134). Melodrama as a paranoid, agitated and sometimes hysterical form gave shape, Singer argues, to the insecurities of modern life, while simultaneously providing audiences with a way to cope with and comprehend change.

Modernity's social and economic changes are the conditions which made melodrama's emergence possible. Key here for Gledhill in 18th-century England and France are the productive tensions between cultural monopoly and expanding commerce – between the patent theatres and the successful and rapid development by entrepreneurs of existing and 'illegitimate' forms of entertainment – which 'laid the institutional basis for the emergence of melodrama out of a convergence between bourgeois and "popular" cultural trajectories' (Gledhill, 1987, p. 16).

This negotiation between dominant and emerging forms, argues Gledhill, can be characterized as the new middle classes' attempt to 'redefine reality and aesthetic value' (p. 15) following the decline of neoclassicism. This to an extent explains the considerable distaste for 'excessive' melodrama exhibited by middle-class critics in the 19th century (see e.g. Singer, 2001, pp. 146–147). However much this distaste endures, it overlooks, as Gledhill indicates, the characteristically mixed generic form that melodrama has taken since its beginnings. For example, while 18th-century bourgeois sentimental drama rerouted Greek tragedy towards the individual and the family, sympathetic emotions and poetic justice, moral oppositions and the defining triad of heroine–villain–hero, it failed to attract burgeoning urban audiences and sustain itself as a popular form. For this, Gledhill notes (p. 17), it needed the spectacle, violence, viscerality and 'cosmic ambition' (Brooks, cited in Gledhill, 1987, p. 17) that illegitimate theatre had refined and commercialized in the course of the 18th century. More specifically, Gledhill argues that Gothic fiction played a central role during the 18th century in the reconciliation of bourgeois and popular forms, and in the consolidation of the melodramatic mode (p. 20).

As the 18th century turned, the audiences and programmes of theatres were increasingly heterogeneous, and the mixing of legitimate

and illegitimate forms 'prepared the way for aesthetic transmutation between genres and modes – for a welding of fantasy, spectacle and realism – which would be crucial to the melodramatic aesthetic as a cross-class and cross-cultural form' (Gledhill, 1987, p. 18). Melodrama, Gledhill notes, became the mode *par excellence* for the pirating and appropriation of cultural forms – from opera to painting, street ballads to newspapers, penny dreadfuls to romantic poetry – a process which, following Mercer (1988), should be understood as interdiscursive rather than theft.

The question of genre

The centrality of melodrama to popular cultural forms in the modern period, and its remarkable ability to transmute and cross media, raise questions regarding its status as a genre. This chapter intends neither to downplay the importance of these questions nor to get too sidetracked by them. Only one theorist has questioned whether melodrama is definable as a genre – although even he, after criticizing various scholars for their lack of methodological rigour and historical specificity, concedes that 'melodrama may indeed represent a modernist genre' (Merritt, 1983, p. 31). Other scholars (Hays and Nikolopoulou, 1999) have questioned the argument that melodrama is a pervasive mode, crossing media forms and the modern period. This, they suggest, overgeneralizes both 19th-century theatre and the more contemporary forms which arguably have sprung from it.

More recently, Agustin Zarzosa (2013) has questioned the historical and theoretical basis of Peter Brooks' (1976) influential thesis regarding the origins and continued importance of melodrama. He does not question that melodrama can be theorized both as a mode and a genre. Instead he queries both the precision (and emphasis) of Brooks' argument regarding the emergence of melodrama, and the lack in Brooks' thesis of a clear explanation for the endurance of the melodramatic mode. Moreover, aligning the melodramatic mode with modernity, argues Zarzosa (p. 24), risks turning it into a monolithic European form.

There isn't space in this chapter to fully consider these questions, however much its title asserts that melodrama endures. Briefly, if Brooks is more guilty than some of reifying melodrama as a European form and as part of a monolithic understanding of modernity, then it might also be fair to say that part of Zarzosa's dissatisfaction may result from the ready and evident application of *The Melodramatic Imagination*. There is considerable evidence of sensitivity to the questions raised by Zarzosa

in the work of Gledhill (1987), Singer (2001) and others, and they have also been addressed by other scholars (see e.g. Dissanayake, 2005).

Regarding the endurance of melodrama, Zarzosa (2013) suggests that Gledhill's explanation for this is too broad, and turns 'the question about the persistence of melodrama into a question about the cultural transposition of an eminently European form' (p. 24). His answer to the question of melodrama's endurance is his retheorization of the melodramatic mode, which, he argues, avoids the reification of it (the mode) in Brooks' (and by extension others') thesis:

> The concept of the mode that I am proposing avoids this problem of cultural translation to the extent that the melodramatic mode involves no specific idea but geological shifts in the visibility of suffering ... A mode is neither a historical phenomenon nor an innate category of the human mind but the terrain in which history takes place. (p. 24)

While Zarzosa's theory of melodrama's 'modal essence' (p. 24) is more complicated than this quote might suggest, how it conceives of melodrama and history is not so different from some others' historical theorizations of the mode. Moreover, the genealogies referred to above indicate that some theorists have been overly selective in their definitions of melodrama. Brooks' (1976) thesis of the melodramatic imagination and the moral occult, for example, remains persuasive but raises questions about the centrality and enduring importance of the play between Manichean opposites in melodrama – when the mode has been variously modified from the 19th century onwards to focus frequently on moral ambivalence rather than polarity; and when melodrama scholarship in film studies has been influenced by Brooks, but, slightly perversely, taken a greater interest in films more oriented to impossible situations and antinomy (Singer, 2001, p. 54) than the play between good and evil, which is central to the production of the moral occult in Brooks' account (Smith makes this point in Neale, 2000, p. 197).

Likewise, by underlining the centrality of suffering, Zarzosa's (2013) theory of melodrama tends to privilege more modified forms or aspects of the mode, as well as particular types of suffering – in that suffering in action melodrama, as Singer (2001) indicates (pp. 54–55), is less internal and less all-consuming than in melodrama's more pathetic forms. Moreover, while Zarzosa's emphasis on suffering in the most pathetic parts of melodrama is hard to question, it nonetheless invites questions

about the apparent equal centrality of linked features – most obviously pathos, emotion and desire – to this form. His point (p. 23), though, that despite his reference to the contemporary persistence of melodrama, Brooks' focus is almost exclusively on the historical period and the emergence of the form, is useful, because it is only in recent times that scholars, including Zarzosa, have turned again to melodrama theory, focusing more frequently now (compared with previous bodies of work) on contemporary films.

Codifying melodrama in film studies

If we accept that melodrama endures and is neither waning nor outmoded, then an apparent lull in theoretical attention may indicate generic and subgeneric cycles of film production. More accurately, perhaps, it concerns how strongly coded melodrama is in film studies as a particular type of genre. As Steve Neale (2000, p. 184) notes, Thomas Elsaesser's (1987) 'Tales of Sound and Fury: Observations on the Family Melodrama', along with published interviews with Douglas Sirk (Halliday, 1971), played a central part not only in focusing theoretical attention on melodrama but also in establishing the terms of the debates, as well as the body of films first considered most worthy of analysis.

This corpus of films, generally, comprised family melodramas (as Elsaesser defined them) and 'women's films' released by Hollywood between the late 1930s and late 1950s. In his corrective, Neale reemphasizes the findings and arguments of Michael Walker – in particular the multigeneric nature of 19th-century melodrama and its cinematic heritage; and that film studies' definitions of melodrama have tended to privilege its modified forms (women's films and pathetic or family melodrama), in so doing overlooking the strength and variety of the influence of earlier, more popular forms of melodrama on film. However, Neale does not extend his analysis to contemporary film. Instead, his focus is the dominant uses and meanings of melodrama at particular historical conjunctures and in particular public and cultural spheres; the way in which melodrama is inscribed in the reviews and discourses surrounding the film industry in the middle decades of the 20th century – in a markedly different way, Neale argues, from the standard film studies account.

This is an extremely valuable piece of archeological research, and it shows how the meaning of genre is contested across historical periods and discursive domains. The extent to which it undermines the standard

film studies account is more questionable. Altman (1998), for example, argues that Neale's corrective does not by definition devalue scholarly definitions of melodrama that have been arrived at *post hoc* and without, in some cases, reference to industry or public sphere discourses. These scholarly definitions have their own motivations and historical contexts, and they have an investment in and value for critical and theoretical definitions of genre.

This point is underlined by Mercer and Shingler (2004, pp. 31–36), and by Gledhill (2000), who notes the '*inevitable* mismatch between industrial and critical histories' (p. 226). Gledhill here argues against what she calls the renewed historicism in melodramatic analysis. Too much of this work, she suggests, in opposing standard accounts of the genre and emphasizing key moments in film melodrama's production history, leans toward an entirely inappropriate sense of film melodrama's definitive origins, and 'threatens to undo much of the valuable work achieved in theorizing generic textuality' (p. 225). A proper historiography of the genre, she argues, would look carefully and critically at continuities, conjunctures and relationships, and productive tensions, rather than, or rather than only, key shifts and genre boundaries.

Gledhill here develops a post-structuralist theory of genre more fully than in her 1987 genealogy, and continues to be influenced by both Foucault and Bakhtin. Melodrama film genres, she argues, are cyclical – 'coming round again in corkscrew fashion, never quite in the same place' (Gledhill, 2000, p. 227); geological folds that expose 'older rock formations' (p. 226); intertextual relays (p. 224) or nodes on the map of cultural relations, entering into dialogue and contest with past histories (p. 232); part of a 'cultural machine' (p. 227) and 'active heteroglossia' (p. 234), which draws on various social and cultural discourses, reshaping them via genre.

However, while Gledhill also, via Habermas, modifies Brooks' theory of the melodramatic imagination, she nonetheless maintains that the melodramatic mode, by 'aesthetic necessity' (p. 240), is a polarizing force, driving 'generic signifiers towards binary oppositions' (p. 240). This in a great many instances of melodrama's generic expression in film is true; and certainly moral feeling, righteousness and legibility remain at the heart of the melodramatic mode and its genres. However, to argue that it – the obsessive play of oppositions – remains one of the inescapable and defining features of melodrama threatens to deny melodrama's characteristically mixed generic form. As Neale (2000) and others indicate, moral polarity tends to attach itself more clearly to

action-led and villain-centred versions of the mode – perhaps increasingly so, as melodramatic genres emerge and are modified in the late modern period.

In this respect there is more value perhaps in Gledhill's emphasis on legibility and a clash of moral imperatives (p. 232) – which might accommodate, via Singer (2001, p. 42), an expanded conception of melodramatic 'situations' – as well as what she refers to as melodrama's 'aesthetics of justice' (p. 236). Moreover, 'pure' melodrama – mixing action and pathos, the legitimate and the popular, exemplified in the films of D. W. Griffiths and upheld in the theories of Flitterman-Lewis (1992) and Williams (1998) – has dissipated somewhat in recent times, just as more obviously 'bourgeois' forms have increased. Assuredly, there is no shortage of low-pathos action movies in the contemporary period. But despite the arguments of Neale (2000), Gledhill (1987, 2000) and others, they remain generally neglected from the point of view of melodramatic film theory – testimony in part to the endurance of the 1970s codification of the genre.

Zarzosa (2013) is one of the few theorists who applies theories of melodrama to action genres. Mercer and Shingler (2004), too, conclude their melodrama monograph by considering action films (pp. 99–105). They also make brief reference latterly to 'gay cinema and the gay auteur' (p. 107). To broaden this heading, it is queer films that have provided the most fertile ground, generally speaking, for melodrama theory in recent times (see e.g. Chan, 2008; Needham, 2010; Pidduck, 2013).

Rethinking melodrama in contemporary film

Three examples will now be examined in order both to underline the endurance of the melodramatic mode in contemporary film, and to argue for some significant modifications to film melodrama. There is not space here to look at any of these films in detail. However, slightly more attention will be given to *Brokeback Mountain* because of its higher profile and perhaps more complex, or interdiscursive, generic status. None of the three examples is defined as melodrama in public and industry discourses. What they are defined as, generically speaking, is contested. However, historically, theoretically and aesthetically, all three are definable as melodrama – and to varying extents the woman's film – and indicate the endurance and mutability of the mode. All three films focus on trauma, suffering and loss – the shocking and abrupt death of loved ones via homophobic lynching (*Brokeback Mountain*, 2005), a drug-fuelled car crash (*Red Road*, 2006), and drunken and violent

patriarchy, and the accidental shooting of an innocent caught in a web of politics and love (*The Edge of Heaven*, 2007).

Further, if we take the standard film studies definition of melodrama to be the similar but not identical tenets provided by Neale (2000, pp. 196–197), Singer (2001, pp. 44–49) and Williams (1998, pp. 65–80) then the three examples under consideration feature some of these conventional elements, as well as slightly more modified or muted parts of them. Regarding the standard definitions, first, all three are pathetic, engendering clear elements of pathos – for example, Ennis (Heath Ledger) receiving news of Jack's (Jake Gyllenhaal) death; Jackie (Kate Dickie) clinging to her dead daughter's clothes; and Ayten (Nurgül Yesilçay) receiving news of Lotte's (Patrycia Ziolkowska) death.

Second, the films feature scenes of overwrought emotion (Singer, 2001, p. 45) – numerous of these in *Brokeback Mountain* and *The Edge of Heaven*; fewer in *Red Road*, the film building to Jackie at last having it out with Clyde – though it is arguable that *Red Road* and its central character are emotionally raw throughout, and even more so than is the case in *Brokeback Mountain*. Third, Williams' (1998) argument that melodrama begins and seeks conclusion in spaces of innocence (p. 65) is clearly applicable to *The Edge of Heaven*, unexpectedly applicable to *Red Road* and almost applicable to *Brokeback Mountain*, which begins and ends in a blank, wild place, which is also the road. Finally, in all three films, while the play of good and evil is not applicable (though all three flirt with villainy), each film makes its characters morally legible and clear in their motivations by their conclusions.

The three examples also feature melodramatic elements which certainly have recurred across the mode during the modern period, but which have not quite reached the centre of standard accounts. That is, they all use windows in characteristically (Jane Wyman in *All That Heaven Allows* [Sirk, 1955] may be film melodrama's most memorable example), but also new, melodramatic ways; and they all include elements of rescue and maternal return.

Briefly on these features, in *The Edge of Heaven* we see a repeated shot of Susanne (Hanna Schygulla) as melodrama's woman at the window (Doane, 1987, p. 288), in an attic bedroom of her home in Bremen; trapped by the past and a sense of obligation to the present. This is made explicit when her daughter, Lotte, accuses her of imprisoning her. The film then uses the window again latterly (one of the film's promotional stills) and differently, to signal Nejat's (Baki Davrak) awakening and Susanne's rebirth; as well as to re-inscribe Susanne's presumed dead mothering function.

In *Red Road*, the window is used in various ways (via flats, cars, buses, doors), but the most powerful and memorable windows are those (multiple screens monitoring parts of Glasgow) of Jackie's CCTV bank. These windows perform a number of functions (see Stewart, 2012). Generally, though, they are used as a device to articulate and work through Jackie's trauma. In *Brokeback Mountain*, the use of windows is less marked – albeit windows feature in one of the film's most affectively pathetic moments (when we witness Alma witnessing Ennis and Jack's kiss through a screen door), as well as at the tearful and melodramatically lush conclusion. The film also features a familiar moment of maternal return, when Ennis visits Jack's parents near the end of the film. In this farmhouse scene, Jack's mother (Roberta Maxwell) is 'a maternal figure...of forgiveness and understanding' (Burgoyne, 1994, p. 227); and Lightning Flat is a place Ennis has to go to in order to attain a measure of peace and, perhaps, comprehension. Likewise, Jackie turns to a forgiving mother figure (her mother-in-law, played by Anne Kidd) near the conclusion of *Red Road*, *en route* to finding some kind of reconciliation and inner peace. And in *The Edge of Heaven*, the last window scene is a maternal return of sorts; the tearful prison scene with Susanne and Ayten – Ayten breaking down and begging for forgiveness, Susanne 'setting aside her own pain' (Burgoyne, 1994, p. 227) to help a younger woman – being even more so.

These moments of forgiveness and return, in *Brokeback Mountain* and *Red Road*, are also types of rescue. In these two films, rescuing is markedly feminine and maternal – Ennis being repeatedly rescued by women in the closing parts of *Brokeback Mountain*; Jackie apparently finding her forgiving mother function impossible to resist when she at last advises Clyde (Tony Curran) that all is not lost, and that familial love (his daughter's visit to the Red Road flats, witnessed by Jackie on a CCTV recording) is closer than he thinks. These feminine rescues appear to subvert Freud's (1962) rescue fantasy, where the son feels compelled to repay a debt to his mother.

This figure, Freud's indebted son, is evident in *The Edge of Heaven*. Nejat is first driven to repay his symbolic mother, Yeter (Nursel Köse), who, broadly speaking, is also a woman who is sexually of 'bad repute' (Freud, 1962) and thus, by the terms of the fantasy, in need of saving. Nejat, however, can't save Yeter and becomes instead Freud's secret benefactor (Gillman, 1992), compelled to save a woman (Ayten, Yeter's 'wayward' daughter) he has never met, and who knows nothing of him or his quest. Not only, however, is this quest vague but the rescuing in *The Edge of Heaven* is multiple (Susanne and Lotte, for example,

also trying to save Ayten), complex and often unsuccessful, making it potentially a more fractured or 'fractal' film (Everett, 2005), and more obviously part of a trilogy.

Considering the evidence and use of these features (windows, rescue and maternal return), then, there is considerable basis for a theoretical argument that the three examples are part of the melodramatic mode, and, by the definitions provided above, are primarily family or pathetic melodramas within that mode. Bearing in mind Neale's (2000) approach to the genre, though, there is a divergence between theoretical, melodrama-led definitions and how the films are defined in the public sphere, or, more precisely, in publicity and reviews. The biggest gap is with regard to *Red Road*. Reviews of and publicity for this film define it mostly as a thriller (e.g. see the way it is described in links to *The Guardian*'s reviews).[1] Darkness and danger are tied into the looming image of the Red Road flats, the ambiguous creatures living in them, and entrenched and negative discourses about Glasgow as a mean and dangerous city – though it may be arguable that the further one pushes this public inscription of the film, the closer it gets to melodrama via sensationalism and an expectation of virtue threatened; which in turn may take it towards versions of the woman's film, with particular emphases on feminine enigma and narrative paranoia.

More than *Red Road*, *The Edge of Heaven* is defined in publicity as a prestigious international festivals film, which may or may not alienate domestic, especially Turkish, audiences. In this circuit it is understood primarily as the work of a successful auteur and the second part of his arthouse trilogy. The film's generic imprint focuses on Akin's oeuvre, underlining especially the energy and intensity of the first part, *Head On* (2004). A parallel can be drawn here with *Red Road* to the extent that a certain type of energy and visceral thrill is evident in public inscriptions of both films. At one level, this serves to disavow the melodramatic elements discernible in, and arguably more central to, both films – features such as pathos and emotion.

However, there is a productive tension here between scholarly and public definitions in that *The Edge of Heaven* is indeed a global art film that can be understood as melodrama via its 'deracinated' (Kerr, 2010, p. 49) auteur director. Like other melodramatic auteurs, Akin is consistently concerned with questions of love, family and home; and nationhood and history via love, family and home. Akin in this respect is profoundly influenced by two of family melodrama's most influential auteurs: Douglas Sirk and, especially, Rainer Werner Fassbinder.

Brokeback Mountain is perhaps the most complex of the three examples with regard to its public definitions. Clearly it has the strongest generic imprint – iconographically and as a western – of the three films. However, this instantly sets in play a number of potentially complicating relays – for example, revisionist westerns of recent times which have more or less subverted the conventions of the genre; Annie Proulx as the authorial imprint and literary source material, and her writing's very particular modes of genre and narrative; and Ang Lee's apparent and noteworthy denial that *Brokeback Mountain* is a western, or a gay western, at least (in Clarke, 2006, p. 29). His preferred description of the film as a universal love story was in many ways a gift to (or perhaps from) distributors, and is an ascription so broad as to deny genre altogether.

Genre, of course, has been a key resource in the multiple public spheres and rich cultural life enjoyed by *Brokeback Mountain*. The diversity of this biography cannot be captured here. But, briefly, some academic work is particularly useful in support of an argument for the endurance of the melodrama genre in film. First, and slightly more broadly, Erika Spohrer (2009) has argued for the importance of recognizing, not denying, *Brokeback Mountain*'s status as a western. Her article is valuable both for underlining the continued importance of genre theory – what she calls 'modern genre theory' (p. 29) and 'dialectical genre analysis' (p. 31), drawing on Bakhtin and Gledhill, among others – to film studies, and, closely allied to this, for showing how much a historical and theoretical knowledge of genre can add to the understanding of a specific film:

> *Brokeback Mountain*'s most profound genre impact is not on the future of the Western genre but on its past: by inserting *Brokeback Mountain* into the Western canon, critics force a re-vision, a re-seeing of all Westerns that have preceded it ... The film's genre classification also extends into culture by inserting history into the equation, forcing one to understand the text as a sociohistorical index rather than a free-floating abstraction.
>
> (Spohrer, 2009, pp. 30–31)

Spohrer's analysis is supported by that of Needham (2010), who defines *Brokeback Mountain* as a western and a melodrama. He argues that the melodramatic mode is particularly able, in principle at least, to accommodate and give shape to queer history and experience. It 'appears to be ideal in its potential to explore and confer on the spectator an emotional

and affecting experience that allows the painful history of queer life to be connected to the present' (pp. 83–84). Further, in his work on the western, David Lusted (2003) shows the interrelation between this genre and melodrama. He argues that the 'nineteenth-century melodrama stage...provide[d] a general dramatic framework of narrative, mood and point-of-view for all of Hollywood's popular cinema, including the Western' (p. 65). From its beginnings on screen, the western's narrative themes included suffering, victimhood and pathos, and, more romantically and expansively, Manichean moral codes and oedipal quests and traumas of accession. In this respect, historically speaking, the western has been a variable mixture of pathos and action. *Brokeback Mountain* does indeed combine action and pathetic melodrama, but it is mostly an example of the latter, suffused as it is with pathos, and with a pathetic figure (Ennis) at its centre. Moreover, following Mercer (1988) and others' theory of genre, the film is an intertextual relay point and part of specific cultural and historical matrices. Of numerous, one of these concerns gender and sexuality, another region and realism.

With regard to gender and sexuality, *Brokeback Mountain* revisits elements of the hustler in popular culture, as this figure has been defined by Moon (1993) and Dyer (1990) – hypermasculine and taciturn. The film also reproduces Dyer's sad young man stereotype (Dyer, 2002), which condenses and reworks entrenched discourses of suffering and narcissism, and expresses late-modern anxieties about youth and homosexuality. Anxiety about a specific phase of urban modernity is also evident in one of *Brokeback Mountain*'s region and realism relays. Arguably, the film has a special relationship with what Duncan Webster (1988) calls New American Fiction. This is acknowledged by Ang Lee to the extent that he notes the only film he had in mind when making *Brokeback Mountain* was *The Last Picture Show* (1971) (in Clark, 2006, p. 32). As Janice Stout (1976) notes, in Larry McMurtry's later novels, characters are attached decreasingly to the conventions of psychological realism. McMurtry in this period of writing is more interested in existential texture than novelistic structure, and this emphasis disappointed a number of his reviewers (p. 44).

This disappointment is an indication of the far reach of the hegemony of psychological realism. For not only did psychological or novelistic realism supersede melodrama as the dominant cultural mode in late-19th century Europe and North America (Gledhill, 1987, p. 27), but this move was also the continuation of a European hegemony. In this respect, the lack of a novelistic context for Ennis and Jack in *Brokeback*

Mountain may be distinctly North American and a particular strength of New American Fiction. As Webster (1988) notes, modern American writers responded to European-influenced criticisms of the USA's lack of a useable novelistic past by precisely emphasizing this perceived blankness. A historical sensibility emerged, argues Webster, that is clearest in the short-story form. Here, he suggests, there is a productive tension between the demands of literary fiction and the desire to capture verisimilitude as a slice of life (p. 122). This is not, argues Webster, merely the convention of the open-ended narrative. It is more about short stories' characters' lack of control over their destinies; the inadequacies of language; the meeting of emotion and culture; and transience as a condition of history.

This is an accurate description both of *Brokeback Mountain* and of the short story from which it was adapted. But while both are part of Webster's (1988) New American Fiction, it is the film which is part of the melodramatic mode; and by examining the ways in which literature (or other parts of culture) is adapted to film, the great value of genre analysis is revealed. In its journey from page to screen, *Brokeback Mountain* has selected, rerouted and amplified elements of its story that are primarily melodramatic. For example, if it is excessive in parts as a melodrama, then one of its key points of excess is the performance of its central character, Ennis, who embodies a particularly transient form of pathetic melodrama, less tied to teleology or moral certainty.

In this respect, it is arguable that one of the 19th-century tenets of melodrama listed by Neale (2000, p. 196) – that good will be seen to triumph over evil – is decreasingly sure or evident, however much the endings of two of the examples (*Brokeback Mountain* and *Red Road*) are upbeat and triumphant in their own ways. What triumphs in these films is a memorial quality and a certain type of revisioning – figured in *Red Road* as Jackie in a new mode (active, purposeful, optimistic) and register (CCTV now markedly humanized), and in *Brokeback Mountain* as a fantasy of the past made good and in the very final shot, the slate apparently wiped clean, the wilderness and the road being opened up to possibility once more.

The conclusion of *The Edge of Heaven* is more provisional still. But this pathetic melodrama is as marked by memory and revisioning as the other two examples. It uses family and intimacy to rethink Turkish-German relations, the concept of Europe, and home. It is arguable too that the family itself is being reimagined, and this may be evident in the three films finishing both with familial *rapprochement* and single characters, unattached and with uncertain futures – mobile, camping

out and the latest twist perhaps on the 'transcendental homelessness of modernity' (Lukas, in Schlipphacke, 2006, p. 122).

Two other closely linked parts of the standard definition indicate how these three films rework melodrama – that is, Singer's (2001) argument that melodramatic film frequently features overwrought emotion (p. 45); and Linda Williams' (1998) argument that melodrama uses realism to its own ends, and in so doing appears modern or contemporary (p. 67). Overwrought emotion is most readily attached to overdetermined mid-twentieth-century family melodrama films, and is a close relation to hysteria and excess, each of these terms having slightly different meanings, origins and usages. All three of the examples have familiar moments of overwrought emotion and tears. But it is their excesses that are most noteworthy. Ennis' performance is a key point of excess in *Brokeback Mountain*. He is, by Gledhill's (1991) terms, a maximized type who draws realism toward melodrama and suggests 'a return to the primal and ineffable gesture that underpins melodramatic acting' (p. 223), giving form to suffering and repressed desire. *The Edge of Heaven*'s excess derives in part from its fractal (Everett, 2005) or modular (Cameron, 2008) form, which has the potential at least to revise melodramatic notions of fate, destiny and reversal.

Red Road's excesses are the most obvious and noteworthy of the three examples. They can be tied to Williams' (1998) argument that realism supports melodrama's search for passion and action, and that 'melodrama appears modern by borrowing from realism' (p. 67). That is, *Red Road* uses a lightweight camera that moves close and tracks, and has an excess of kinetic energy which communicates narrative drama and personal trauma. While this mode is familiar to particular directors (e.g. the Dardenne brothers), it has also become commonplace to both film and television drama. Moreover, it can be argued to be part both of post-classical cinema – where narrative action is frequently subordinated to emotional, subjective, spatial and sensory realisms (Thanouli, 2009) – and neo-Bazinian film, exhibiting 'a nervy, fragmented feel...(and) plunging into situation' (Orr, 2004, p. 304). So following Williams (1998), *Red Road* uses contemporary forms of realism to its own ends, its close camera being put to the service both of drama and of suffering. But these realist techniques also take melodrama in new directions, making central characters more mobile, transient and individualized, and more likely to operate at the edge of, or outside the limits of, the domestic and familial, without ever entirely escaping these defining tropes and various types of impossible entrapment.

The circularity of this process is debatable, but so too is part of the rationale that supports Williams' (1998) suggestion that melodrama's ends are supported by realism – as well as the argument of Gledhill that looking backward defines melodrama and distinguishes it from forward, outward-looking realism, which supports this suggestion. There is a danger here that the melodrama genre is both reified and afforded agency (or predatory power at least), and defined only as regressive. Melodrama, like realism and frequently inseparably from realism, can be used to various ends. The reason these are mostly conservative is not to do with melodrama's form.

Melodrama endures. But as a mode, a genre and as key subgenres, melodrama has not become any more progressive or conservative in the contemporary period. Like all genres, melodrama experiences cycles of production that seem marked by both conservatism and renewal. Arguments about these cycles, frequently, are opened up to debate by the benefits of time and historical reflection, and the development of theoretical analysis, so that, for example, just as it is clear why a body of post-war Hollywood family melodramas were theorized as progressively Brechtian by film and cultural theorists in the 1970s, so do the limits both of these theories and the films at which they were aimed become evident as melodramatic film theory extends its reach and depth.

There is not space in this chapter to examine in detail this body of melodramatic work. However, the productive leads provided by theorists such as Gledhill (1987, 2000) and Mercer (1988) have been followed by scholars such as Pidduck (2013), with her emphasis on the dialogic nature of melodrama, Chan (2008), who analyses melodrama's global and emerging public spheres, and Spohrer (2009), who underlines the importance of adjacent domains and relay points to genre analysis. Furthermore, in a recent collection of essays (Stewart, 2014), Kenneth Chan (2014) extends his argument regarding melodrama's ability to articulate historical trauma and ideological contradiction via genre and affect, Sarah Artt (2014) considers melodrama's ability to reclaim the past via particular performances of memory and nostalgia, and Taraneh Dadar (2014) examines ambivalent and distressed contemporary melodrama as a form of neorealism.

Moreover, it may be that global audiences are experiencing a particularly rich moment in the international production of family melodrama, and in the renewal of the melodramatic form. Increasingly, family melodrama articulates questions of history and memory, identity and exile; expands the limits of the woman's film; and is more prepared to mix perspectives, focalization and modes of enunciation within a single

film. The films of directors such as Asghar Farhadi, Jean-Pierre and Luc Dardenne, Ann Hui, and Michael Haneke are only some of the most impressive and fascinating in this respect. Genre analysis and the study of melodrama cannot tell us all that is important about these films, but to examine them without the help of melodramatic scholarship and theory would leave too much unsaid indeed.

Note

1. http://www.theguardian.com/film/movie/112338/red.road.

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10
Objects after Adolescence: Teen Film without Transition in *Spring Breakers* and *The Bling Ring*

Erin K. Stapleton

The generic conventions of teen films include coming-of-age or discovery-of-identity narratives that reinforce adolescence as a period of transition, with social conformity, in one guise or another, as their natural consequence. The production of a stable sense of identity, or agency, is key to these narratives, primarily borne of navigations of homosocial and heterosexual relationships. The history of teen film extends to the introduction of the concept of adolescence in the 1950s into American and, by extension, western culture (Driscoll, 2011, p. 9). From *Rebel Without a Cause* (Nicholas Ray, 1955) to *Puberty Blues* (Bruce Beresford, 1981) to *Thirteen* (Catherine Hardwicke, 2003), narrative cinema has attempted to capture the intensive and transitory experience of adolescence.

Coming-of-age films, which dominate the teen-film genre, concentrate on the production of personality, agency and social perspective – finding one's place in relation to the world. Films such as those of John Hughes (*Ferris Bueller's Day Off*, 1986, *Sixteen Candles*, 1984) and Amy Heckerling (*Fast Times at Ridgemont High*, 1982, *Clueless*, 1996) reflect the restriction, frustration and confusion of adolescence for the audience's cathartic amusement. By contrast, other films, such as the *American Pie* franchise (Paul and Chris Weitz, 1999–2012), exploit the awkward physical and emotional manifestations of adolescence for the sake of gross-out body comedy, and others as a source of black humour (*Heathers*, Michael Lehmann, 1988) or horror (*Carrie*, Brian de Palma, 1976). Regardless of such distinctions, however, all of these films, as they engage with the experience of adolescence in one way or another, are focused on the communicative (and generally homosocial,

but presented as heteronormative) experience of the transition from childhood to adulthood. Boys might not be able to talk to girls, but they can talk to their friends, and eventually (and usually through team consultation) they learn to communicate with girls (*American Pie*). Girls might not know how to talk to boys or think much of them, but they discuss with their friends how to attract them and navigate their advances (*Clueless*, *Puberty Blues)*. A group of friends might not be able to talk to their parents, but they can help each other through whatever problems they might be having (*Rebel Without a Cause*, *Ferris Bueller's Day Off*). The intense relationships of adolescent women are represented as frightening and prone to extreme fluctuation (Colman, 2005, p. 357). By negotiating the pitfalls of these experiences, teenagers are shown learning to operate more effectively within a given community, and to communicate with people around them who are trying to help and who remain distantly concerned for them (usually their parents) (*Heathers*, *Thirteen*).

The films *Spring Breakers* (Harmony Korine, 2013) and *The Bling Ring* (Sofia Coppola, 2013) share many of the conventions of the teen-film genre, including the foregrounding of drug-taking practices, homosocial relationships and excessive parties (Driscoll, 2011, p. 65). They both contain narratives built around experiences of a group of people who attend high school and university (respectively), and both position these groups as though they will undergo a coming-of-age transition of some kind. The marked difference between these films, and almost any other film of the genre, is that they do not develop or transition in anyway, and are therefore not repositioned or returned to the conventions of adult society.

The narrative for *The Bling Ring* was based on a *Vanity Fair* feature article published in March 2010 by journalist Nancy Jo Sales, entitled 'The Suspects Wore Louboutins'. The film fictionalizes Sales' account of a group (which will subsequently be referred to as 'the Ringers') comprised predominantly of adolescent women who robbed the houses of several celebrities (Paris Hilton, Audrina Partridge, Rachel Bilson, Orlando Bloom and Lindsay Lohan) in Los Angeles. Most of the group's members were from privileged (upper-middle-class) backgrounds and, as the film suggests, were not as interested in the monetary value of the goods they stole (as they had access to enough money in their own lives) as in pursuit of recognition, 'the fame monster' produced by contemporary celebrity fetishization (where the celebrity body is an object to be consumed) (Sales, 2010, p. 1). While the majority of the Ringers were young women, the film primarily follows Marc Hall (fictional representative of

Nick Prugo), who was dubbed 'The Rat' by the *Vanity Fair* article for confessing to crimes, including those the police were unaware of, as well as detailing the involvement of his friends (Sales, 2010, p. 2). By her own admission, Coppola chose to use Prugo/Hall as the focal point for the film as he appeared to be the most 'sympathetic' of the group (Coppola, 2013). In addition to being panicked enough to divulge the aforementioned details of previously unknown crimes, Prugo had made a video of himself smoking marijuana while dancing and miming to music and posted it on Facebook that was so 'raw and personal' and so embarrassing that Coppola felt he could (unlike the other characters) be a point of empathy for the audience (as well as in terms of her own filmmaking practice) (Coppola, 2013). The video Prugo made was recreated as an interlude in the film.

The Bling Ring is the latest film added to Coppola's body of work, which has developed an aesthetic that approaches the experience of living in a position superfluous to production and the experience of need as an affectation of boredom and aimlessness – the sovereignty of rich-kid ennui. Her films and their characters explore the boredom of having access to every product and experience, without the need for aspiration or accumulation. In *Lost in Translation* (2003), Charlotte (Scarlett Johansson) is trapped by the tedium of an expensive, faceless hotel in Tokyo with a distracted, absent husband and the uncertainty of an unnecessary career (improbably in philosophy). In the film *Marie Antoinette* (2006), the title character (Kirsten Dunst) is shown, bound by the structure of European nobility, to have little else to do but squander vast amounts of wealth, with little pleasurable return. In *Somewhere* (2010), a washed up actor (Stephen Dorff) and his daughter (Elle Fanning) float through interchangeable hotel rooms and scenarios, with the occasional faceless servant in tow, consuming luxury with little acknowledgement of its broader value. So in Coppola's most recent film, *The Bling Ring*, the boredom and alienation induced by the saturation of constant luxury – constant surplus – is extended to the Ringers who robbed celebrity houses as a sinister development in the iteration of the same aesthetic.

Where *The Bling Ring* is constituted by characters who aspire to be recognized as celebrities (played by mostly relatively unknown young actors, with the notable exception of Emma Watson as Nikki), *Spring Breakers* (Harmony Korine, 2013) is comprised of well-known post-adolescent celebrities styled to appear with the vulnerability and imperfection of amateur, ingénue actors. The film focuses on a group of three young women (Candy, Brit and Cotty played by Vanessa Hudgens,

Ashley Benson and Rachel Korine, respectively) who attend a nameless, generic university in Kentucky, and their devout but disenchanted Christian friend, Faith (Selena Gomez), whom they enlist in their group (assuming she can provide funds) to further the goal to go on a 'Spring Break' trip. (This group will subsequently be referred to as 'the Breakers'.) Finding their collective savings inadequate, they decide to rob a restaurant and its customers, repeating the mantra 'pretend it's a video game' to accumulate sufficient funds for a holiday. Having successfully stolen adequate resources for the trip, they take a bus to Florida, where the excessive promise of the film's opening sequence awaits them. After a few days of festivities they are arrested for drug consumption, or drug adjacency, and gangster/rapper Alien (James Franco) bails them out of jail.

While visually styled as relatively average adolescent girls, three of the four actors cast in these roles are former Hollywood child stars, and two were members of the garish Disney Channel institutional stable of adolescent princesses (Vanessa Hudgens and Selena Gomez), the implications of which Korine uses to compose a damning subtextual engagement with celebrity culture. The characters pursue the experience of pleasure (underpinned by the accumulation of objects and money) without the communicative and temporally composed accumulation of desire (everything must occur immediately and is therefore without value). The film addresses boredom and anonymity as an experience of young women in the (white) American lower middle class, characterized by social and cultural disengagement and desperation borne from an overwhelming sense in which all experience is repetitious, meaningless and pleasureless. Disengagement from culture and communication has as its consequence the ability to view transgression and violence as an equally unsurprising element of detachment.

These two films have marked differences, which include questions of identity politics and aesthetics – class, gender, race – as well as the material of the films themselves.[1] However, the similarities and resonances in their approach to celebrity culture, particularly in relation to the position of young women, suggest a compelling development of a not-coming-of-age subgenre. Structurally, the films also bear resemblance to one another, as both use repetition and rhythmic distortion to build an anti-narrative around the pursuit of the consumption of objects and experiences. Both depict forms of criminality (specifically robbery) and not labour as the most efficient method of obtaining products and resources for consumption in relation to a sense of entitlement to the experience of that consumption. Both demonstrate that this

waste, however excessive, does not fulfil the characters' need for expenditure (as they do not desire, *per se*) and there is always more surplus to be consumed. Also common to both these films are overwhelming, suffocating affectations of boredom and alienation. Despite the sociopolitical distinctions between the subject-matter and positions of the films and how they approach the individual's relationship to the society in which they find themselves (through divergent questions of assumed identity), the similarities between them and their approach to the monstrous combination of celebrity and consumer culture in contemporary American society resonates with the particular moment in cultural history in which they were made (2013). The position of young women in relation to contemporary American media is clearly reflected between them – they are situated in a position of radical alienation caused by the saturation production of sacred images, celebrities.

Spring Breakers and *The Bling Ring* are filmic engagements with the experience of living as an adolescent woman in the context of contemporary American society – which is to say, to live as a sacred object, an image that reflects the culture in which it is situated without the opportunity or ability to influence it. Celebrities, and particularly those who are young women, function in culture as sacred objects. Their bodies or, more specifically, ideal images of their bodies, are the primary focus of contemporary celebrity culture, which operates around these representations of young female bodies as desirable commodities. As a result of this focus, the women themselves, as subjects, agents or identities, are excised from any form of productive agency or communicative engagement with the culture that circulates around them. If celebrity culture, and more broadly 'mass culture', as the cultural expression of capitalism can be said to function as a religion, then these women's bodies are the sacred objects of worship.[2] If capitalism does indeed function as a religion, as has been argued by Walter Benjamin with celebrity bodies as consumable and sacred objects, then this inactively sovereign position in culture is reminiscent of what Georges Bataille describes as the position of the Dalai Lama and the monks of Tibet in relation to Buddhist monasticism (Bataille, 2007, p. 93; Benjamin, 2004, p. 288).

Lamaism, Bataille writes, is constructed around the sacred object of the monk, who refuses the complexities of a socially and economically productive life in order to live in a sacred and sovereign position that is alienated from it. Monks are denied any form of social or cultural productivity, and must (silently) remain in monasteries, relying on the labour of others for their sustenance. The monks form a significant proportion of the population of Tibet and yet are barred from any form of

energetic or cultural production (Bataille, 1967, p. 105). These monasteries, then, are filled with isolated groups of indistinguishable parasitic bodies who have relinquished communication along with productivity (labour, growth, reproduction, accumulation) in order to achieve the self-obsessed goal of personal Nirvana. Bataille's account of the role of monks in Buddhist Tibet, then, fulfils a similar function to that of the post-adolescent women in *The Bling Ring* and *Spring Breakers*.

Parasitic populations: From monasticism to celebrity

I'd like to have my own lifestyle brand.

(Marc, *The Bling Ring*)

In *The Accursed Share*, Bataille describes Lamaism (Tibetan Buddhism) in opposition to the community of Islam. Where, for Bataille, Muslim social order functions by entirely subsuming the individual to the communal whole and is characterized by its austerity, practicality and outward-looking militarization, Lamaism is characterized by luxurious (in excess of need) religious behaviour along with an absolute adherence to belief in non-violence: 'Just as Islam reserved all the excess for war, and the modern world for industrial development, Lamaism put everything into the contemplative life, the free play of the sensitive man in the world' (Bataille, 1967, p. 109). This distinction is drawn to demonstrate that where social growth, or geographic growth, can no longer be achieved, the excess energy of the social group is directed inwardly, as inactive and, in this case, as religious. Bataille describes the Dalai Lama in a position of religious sovereignty whose only function is to die (and to be replaced by his reincarnation), and therefore the individual body that takes the position of the Dalai Lama is a mimesis from within the system of sovereignty, a repetition of the appearance of leadership without the possibility of actionable power. This is a wholly non-militarized, and therefore inactive, power, 'a *power that could not be* exercised' (Bataille, 1967, p. 102). Prior to the late 19th century, the Dalai Lama had absolute power over the Tibetan people, but as that position was not actionable, 'the sovereignty of the Dalai Lama was fictitious: It may have been divine, but it was also powerless' (Bataille, 1967, p. 97). As a useless religious position, it is a power without force or violence and is therefore without the possibility of exertion, and entirely reliant upon the system over which it presides.

When the 13th Dalai Lama attempted to introduce a more robust military strategy to Tibet in the early 20th century, Bataille (in reference to

the biography of the Dalai Lama, written by Charles Bell) described it as a failure that led to the unravelling of the Tibetan system in general. This was because the sacred image of Lamaist monasticism, around which the Tibetan social structure was organized, was undermined by the 13th Dalai Lama's individualist pursuit of active power and, by extension, his continued reign (rather than submitting himself to die and be reincarnated, in accordance with the established Lamaist system) (Bataille, 1967, p. 97). This undermined the fundamental proposition of Lamaism itself, where the Dalai Lama does not have an identity, his is not a subject-position, but an interchangeable sacred object. He has no discernable self other than that which he shares with his predecessors – he is simply the current incarnation of this sacred object. In order to perpetuate the idea of Lamaism, in general, the Dalai Lama's predecessors have been sacrificed, as death (in order to facilitate reincarnation) is the primary function of the position (Bataille, 1967, p. 97).

Like the Dalai Lama, the Breakers and the Ringers exist in order to be consumed by the cultural order that is formed around images that constitute ideal versions of them. Hollywood, like Tibetan Lamaism, functions around death and renewal. Celebrities such as Paris Hilton and Lindsay Lohan are to the Breakers and the Ringers as the Dalai Lama is to the rest of the monks in Tibet. The Dalai Lama inhabits the pinnacle of Tibetan monasticism, the absolute ideal version, and more specifically a recognizable identity in relation to the culture of Tibet, which is arranged around it. Bataille observes that in Tibet, 'if someone, against all likelihood, were to turn away from religion, he would still derive his meaning and his possibility of expression from the monks' (Bataille, 1967, p. 103). Similarly, if we ignore contemporary media and culture, we still derive our experience of culture in negative relation, or resistance, to the hegemony of Hollywood celebrity. However, as discussed above, the nature of the position of the Dalai Lama is such that he cannot inhabit a subject-position unique to his own experience because he is simply the latest appearance in a series of interchangeable bodies that inhabit that sovereign position. Each sacred object (a celebrity) in this culture is easily replaced with the next body to inhabit that position, and willing bodies with even features and the required shape are apparently not in short supply. The consequence of being denied an individual identity is that one has nothing to put at risk, or to sacrifice in order to communicate. Being without access to a subject-position is to be unable to communicate within the context of culture, and is therefore to be radically alienated.

In describing the sacred, Bataille reiterates a principle throughout *The Accursed Share* that the construction of the sacred involves the reduction of the thing to its function and utility as an object, and the subsequent destructive consumption of that object. The consumption (making sacred) of the sacred object is, for Bataille, 'the way separate beings communicate', so this is the process that ensures Tibetan people might define themselves in relation to Lamaism, and what enables people to communally pore over gossip magazines and discuss celebrity appearance and behaviour (Bataille, 1967, p. 58).

In contemporary commercial media, the 'celebrity' body is made sacred. Examples such as Paris Hilton, Lindsay Lohan and Audrina Partridge are people whose bodies are reduced to the function of being seen, the utility of which is to sell 'stories' (narratives of their lives) and images, which in turn sells copies of publications, and in order to do so they must be made to appeal to the readers of those publications alongside advertising for consumption.[3] While visual consumption of celebrity and the desire to be recognized appears to be as old as culture itself,[4] the remembrance of a name or image is linked to the positions or actions connected to it.[5] In late capitalist commodity culture, the position of celebrity operates in a manner akin to religious iconography, where the repetition and recognition of the sacred image itself is the focus, 'famous for being famous' (Boorstein, 2012, p. xxxviii). Hilton, Lohan and Partridge are examples of this celebrity body as solely an image for consumption, where the locus of their fame lies in the proliferation and repetition of images of them, and the recognition of those images by a consuming audience. These are examples of pure, sacred celebrity bodies created for the sole purpose of visual consumption, without the complication or taint of productive use-value. This pure celebrity position is recognized as aspirational and desirable by the characters of *The Bling Ring* (and it is no accident that Hilton, Lohan and Partridge are primary targets of their crimes). The purpose of celebrity, for them, is not to have access to money, opportunity or power (all of which they could easily obtain without it) but to be recognized, and therefore consumable, as sacred-image objects. As those celebrities are in such a position, there is a sense of entitlement over their bodies and private spaces (a sense of entitlement encouraged by visual media), and as all avenues by which they might ordinarily gain access to the position of celebrity appear to them to be laborious, they decide to instead simply invade the houses of pre-existing celebrities and take their possessions.

Key to the position shared by young women as celebrity bodies, and by Tibetan monks, is their primary function as a sacred-image object.

Women in the context of mass culture (and in Western civilization more broadly) are encouraged to relate to their experience of identity chiefly in relation to their appearance, which is an invitation that is both amplified and policed by celebrity culture (Woolf, 1991, p. 58). Tibetan monks, as a group, are important for the image they reproduce, and the idea they represent, rather than the individual actions of any one monk. What little they might be permitted to accomplish is subservient to the image of the monk, an image primarily inhabited by the Dalai Lama, in Buddhist Tibet (Bataille, 1967, p. 94). So where the monk is obliged to replicate the sacred image of the ideal monk (the Dalai Lama), women are obliged to replicate the body of the celebrity, as the sacred image of mass culture. In *The Bling Ring*, attempts to inhabit the position of celebrity take on a sinister (and criminal) appearance as the Ringers attempt to replicate the visual appearance of the bodies of the sacred-image celebrities by stealing and inhabiting their clothes. *Spring Breakers* destroys the sacred image of the celebrity bodies it uses by presenting them as average girls. Both engagements reveal and undermine the pursuit of celebrity that infects young women's bodies.

Where the Tibetan Buddhist system of expenditure is 'also a renunci-ation of expenditure', insofar as the monks live in a relatively spartan manner, the parasitic system by which the monks consume the excess energy of the larger Tibetan society is comparable to that of the depic-tion of post-adolescence in the films *The Bling Ring* and *Spring Breakers* (Bataille, 1967, p. 110). Like the monks, the characters in these films are parasitic in that they own and produce nothing in order to sustain them-selves, and rely on the energy, work and productive capital of others in order to continue to exist. The process of religious expenditure prac-tised by Tibetan monks is comparable to the alienated lives represented by these films through an object-oriented subsumption into pure expen-diture. For both the monks and the characters in both films, eroticism is entirely displaced and expelled from their lives, and the only communi-cation they are able to undertake is between themselves and consumer objects. If Western capitalism shares characteristics with fundamentalist religions, then adolescence as it is constructed in films such as *The Bling Ring* and *Spring Breakers* is an expression of capitalist monasticism. The practice of Tibetan Buddhist monks is entirely without community as it is an absolutely individualist way of being. Living in this manner is the assertion of an inactive sovereign identity (of a monk, of the Dalai Lama) over either communication (between individuals) or the larger commu-nity (as per the above example in Islam, where the individual is always secondary to community). This is an approach that finds its reflection

in the characters of *Spring Breakers* and *The Bling Ring*. They cannot communicate, bound by the system of object-oriented capitalism to destroy both communication (eroticism and language) and community, and they experience radical alienation, 'a world that is unsubordinated by any necessity' (Bataille, 1967, p. 110). The monasticism of Bataille's description of Lamaism is exclusively the domain of men (the role of women in Tibetan Buddhism is unclear and not addressed in Bataille's chapter), where the consumer, object relation system is constructed as a conspicuously feminized and vacuous distraction from the (masculine) utility of life.

Both mysticism and eroticism are 'modes of consumption of all the individual being's resources' that require the risk of communication (Bataille, 1976, p. 170). The displacement of eroticism onto a material object is to displace the deathly expenditure, as there is no risk of self-loss (death by communication) in relation to objects (even when you use armed robbery to get them). Mystics, like monks, use their energy solely in pursuit of the experience of the sacred. Monks and mystics sustain themselves only to sacrifice that energy for the experience of nothingness which is akin to eroticism – this is the obliteration of energy for an experience of the void. The expenditure of energy in pursuit of eroticized-material-object (fetish) experiences in these films is similarly constituted, but without the cumulative commitment of anticipation.

Consumption as culture: Simulation of sacred images

Look at my shit!

(Alien, *Spring Breakers*)

While Candy and Brit writhe around the bedroom, Alien of *Spring Breakers* lists his material accumulations to the lazily underwhelmed girls. Describing the direction for this scene, Korine states that he asked the actor (James Franco) to improvise a speech demonstrating 'Alien's reinterpretation of the American Dream, which consists completely of just stuff', and in the same interview, Korine goes on to say that this performance went for well over an hour, and he was tempted to include the entire take in the film (but thankfully did not) (quoted by Franklin, 2013).[6] In the cinema-released version of the film, Alien picks up objects around him (cologne, firearms, clothing) and lists them, punctuating his performance with the mantra 'look at my shiiiiit'. In doing so, he demonstrates the relationship between commodity culture, accumulation, repetition and surplus. He has accumulated massive amounts of

stuff, all of which was marketed to be the (displaced) sacred object he desired, and while the feat of accumulation, for him, is something to brag about, the objects themselves are disappointing and inert. Now they have been accumulated, Alien has little idea about what to do with them all (other than listing them as a performance-catalogue), and so they take on the position of unresolved surplus, lying around his drug-den house, to be put to use in a performance to impress the Breakers.

In Bataille's assessment of economic development, accumulation and growth, and the deferral of the release of expenditure and sacrifice, is the fundamental character of the capitalist system. Like Alien, the capitalist accumulates wealth, or 'shit', and this accumulation is the focus of the system, not the expenditure of that wealth that has been accumulated (loosely constituted as the experience of what it can buy). This system produces an endless delay or diversion from the expenditure of excess energy, instead of wasting excess energy and resources; they are diverted to further production, or stored for later use (Bataille, 1967, p. 115). Bataille observes that this system leads to massive industrial growth (citing the period of peace between the First and Second World Wars) and eventually the inevitability of war. Bataille uses the model of the general economy in the discussion of both individual bodies, and the function of society more generally, and it is therefore illuminating in the function of Alien in *Spring Breakers*, who accumulates 'shit' until the breakers come along, catalysing a violent expenditure that results in his death, along with the massacre of his enemies at the hands of Candy and Brit.

Brit and Candy's response to Alien's arsenal is to sexually humiliate him by forcing him to fellate a gun, implying to the audience, at least for a moment, the possibility that they might kill him and take his much-loved 'shit'. But the Breakers aren't interested in accumulation. Unlike Alien, who has focused on the accumulation of goods, the group of girls is parasitic and only consumes energy while being counted among the objects Alien has accumulated. Bataille makes a clear distinction between the commodity for consumption within the 'restricted economy' of production and consumption, and the necessity of 'nonproductive expenditure'. The key to the distinction between these two positions is an outcome of economic utility and recuperability. The consumption of commodities within the restricted economy of production and consumption is useful, whereas the waste of energy in pursuit of non-productive expenditure is the destruction of resources and energy without any return for the individual, or the social order beyond the

pleasure and expenditure of that waste. Given this model, Alien in *Spring Breakers* has (despite his criminal transgressions) operated within a restricted economy, through which he has accumulated commodities for consumption, but can find no way to consume them all as he has no use for them beyond further accumulation. The Breakers appear initially as a source of investment for Alien when he bails them out of jail, and in doing so he effectively purchases them as another commodity. However, unlike the other commodities that Alien has accumulated, the Breakers have value in excess of their direct economic use, and he purchases them as though they are symbolic objects to be sacrificed, where 'sacrifice is nothing other than the production of sacred things' through destructive consumption (Bataille, 2006, p. 119).

In an analysis of the quasi-coming-of-age drug film *Trainspotting*, Scott Wilson describes the creation of the 'needless need' as the creation of a need (appetite) for a consumer product, without the intervention and accumulation of desire with the example of addiction (Wilson, 2008, p. 40). After William Burroughs, Wilson compares this creation of needless need to the development of physiological addiction where addiction to an object (a substance such as heroin) creates a situation in which the addict cannot function (be useful or productive) without the object of addiction in the same way that some people cannot function without a smartphone (Wilson, 2008, pp. 44–45). By consuming the object of the addiction, the addict can both become useful (in terms of a restricted, production and consumptive economy) and construct that object as sacred (Wilson, 2008, p. 40). Simultaneous with this reliance on the sacred object in order to function, the removal of the individual from the productive economy in capitalist culture results in what that culture deems to be acts of criminal transgression. Wilson discusses the characters of the film, bound by their addiction to heroin, as living outside, and beyond, utility. This, as the novel, the film and Wilson assert, is the alternative to life as a series of commodified experiences, which is the appearance of choice without choice (Wilson, 2008, p. 36). The commodity culture represented in *Trainspotting* (a 1990s precursor to the filmic and generic positions that *Spring Breakers* and *The Bling Ring* inhabit) operates in a way that creates 'needless need . . . a concept very close to desire, but significantly different in that ultimately it collapses the spatial difference temporal deferral necessary for desire, thereby precluding it' (Wilson, 2008, pp. 44–45). This model of the construction of 'needless need' demonstrates the mode of consumption of an addict (but is also used to illustrate how products are sold to consumers in commodity culture). It is therefore a need that

has been artificially created but is, nevertheless, a specific physiological and identifiable need. The needless need is expressed in the consumer as the constant pursuit for more (and novel) experiences with, and in relation to, the object of need. Where the assemblage of characters in *Trainspotting* constitutes social outcasts, heterogeneous to the social context that has produced them (via the production of needless need), the groups of *Spring Breakers* and *The Bling Ring* operate radically differently because they are not analogous to addicts – they are the heroin.

To confirm this, Alien treats the Breakers as luxurious commodities – the kind that represent social status – and not unlike his customized sports car. He describes them, documenting them constantly as he looks at them, as though they are objects that he's attempting to get all available value out of, as he consumes them. For him, as they exist in a group, they are interchangeable and replaceable. As Faith leaves, followed later by Cotty, it is as though each girl has been consumed, or used up. Their limit has been reached and their presence in the film has been exhausted, so they disappear. The loss of each girl has little impact on Alien, because as sacrificial objects such consumption is their primary function. However, during the final scene of the film, this position is reversed as Alien succumbs to his needless need for the Breakers. Candy, Brit and Alien go to the house of a gang rival, and while Alien is killed as he arrives, the girls (still pretending 'it's a videogame') shoot everyone they see, including the head of the gang, Archie (Gucci Mane), and leave in his car. The final two girls (Candy and Brit) are not consumed by Alien, and while he dies (having overdosed on Breakers consumption), they, and their position as sacred objects, remain unaffected.

The Ringers, by comparison, are aware of their function as sacred images in commodity culture, and in the course of the film they attempt to exploit, amplify and manipulate that function. Nicki (Emma Watson), her sister (Georgia Rock) and her 'adopted' friend, Sam (Taissa Farmiga), are trained by their mother to promote themselves as sacred objects, the consumption of which is the basis for their cultural context and self-worth. They are taught to aspire to celebrity, which is to be a surface onto which the necessity of cultural consumption appears, and pursue this position at every opportunity that becomes available. Their friend Marc expresses this appetite for the position of celebrity as sacred-image object when he discusses his ambitions with Rebecca and Chloe at the beach. He wants to have a 'lifestyle' associated with his image; in essence, he wants to transform a carefully articulated image of himself into a brand. This ambition manifests as self-obsession, particularly in

relation to appearance – the girls and Marc preen constantly and take incessant photos of themselves while out clubbing (the performance of which is to show an imaginary audience how fantastic their lives are, in order to inspire aspiration to the future 'lifestyle' brand their bodies represent).

Repetition and the alienated community

> I wanna rob.
>
> (Nicki, *The Bling Ring*)

A striking similarity between *Spring Breakers* and *The Bling Ring* is in the lack of communication (real, perceived, attempted, linguistic or non-verbal) between characters and between bodies as they simultaneously inhabit the screen in each film. In *Spring Breakers* the Breakers chant and repeat empty phrases that might signify the underlying ideas of the film to the audience but have little or no bearing on their diegetic communication as such. The phrases repeat and reappear in much the same way as key scenes and images do, and may foreshadow an event in the film, but they are not used to create communication between characters in the film. When characters have conversations, they speak at each other, and they repeat phrases to each other – 'pretend it's a videogame', 'it's our chance to see something different', 'look at my shiiiiit' – but they never show any sign of having heard one another, or of having empathized or been affected by the speech or actions of another person. In *The Bling Ring*, the characters pose alongside one another, and talk at one another as though they are performing for an unseen audience, rather than for the sake of conversing. Every movement, speech act, photograph and clothing choice is focused on a performance for an imagined public audience, rather than communication between friends. When socializing, they are never shown conversing with, or reacting to, one another, nor do they interact with other club-goers. Instead their time at bars is spent posing for photos, which they immediately post on social media, and then check their posts on their phones to see who is noticing them (both at the time and later on their computers at home).

In Marc's *Vanity Fair* interview in *The Bling Ring*, he reiterates his position in relation to his appearance several times, but never discusses an inner experience independent of his understanding of his physical presence. He describes himself as 'not having a-list looks', which is his invitation for Sales to negate the description with shallow

compliments. This articulation of appearance, along with the revelation of vulnerability in relation to them, removes Marc, to some extent, from the position of appearance-only façade that his co-conspirators permanently inhabit. The irritating revelation of vanity ironically serves to illustrate a communicative insecurity, adding to character depth that the women of the film entirely lack.

Communication is founded in the sacrifice of the unity and integrity of the identity of the individual in order to enter into a communication with either another individual or a larger communal whole. As Bataille says, 'to communicate means to try to establish a unity, to make one of many', but this process is predicated on the assumption that the individuals who participate in communication have an identity, and the potential and opportunity to produce and affect culture (Bataille, 2001, p. 5). As the Breakers and the Ringers simulate the appearance of an identity, but are reduced by mass culture to the position of sacred objects, they are unable to communicate with one another, or with anyone else. Instead, the Ringers constantly reproduce images of themselves, while performing their constructed celebrity personas at one another and watching out of the corner of one eye, in case anyone of note notices. The Breakers chant repetitious phrases at the world, like monastic mantras, but disembodied as though aware of their position as watched object, rather than source of experiential pleasure. In *Trainspotting*, the need for heroin binds the group of characters together, their physical dependency on the drug providing a kind of communicative solidarity (Wilson, 2008, p. 40). The community of addicts, those who have chosen to be non-productive, who have 'chosen not to choose life' are bound by their substance, and their choice. The Breakers and the Ringers, by comparison, have no substance, symbol, needless need to mediate the construction of their alienated community. This is because they are themselves images of the needless need, not those who consume it.

The radical alienation of the Breakers and the Ringers in these films is constituted by a destruction of communication. The position in which these characters are placed, perversely synonymous with Bataille's description of Tibetan Lamaist monks, breaks their access to the possibility of communication as they are denied the ability to be useful, and to influence the creation of their own identities in assembling themselves. By being denied the opportunity for self-creation and existing only in relation to the commodity culture around them, the Ringers and the Breakers cannot access communication or empathy and become sacred-image objects.

Notes

1. In *Spring Breakers*, Korine collages different film stocks, but predominantly uses 35 mm, while *The Bling Ring* was Coppola's first foray into digital film, using the Redcode RAW format.
2. Adorno, in *The Culture Industry*, identifies the expression of late capitalism as 'mass culture', and in the essay 'Capitalism and Religion', Walter Benjamin describes capitalism as a 'cultic religion'.
3. 'Stories' such as the feature article written by Nancy Jo Sales, and films such as Sofia Coppola's.
4. And as universal as cognition, as evidenced by the entrance to the Chauvet caves which are emblazoned with the repeated handprint of a single, determined artist, ostensibly asserting 'I was here', with the mark of his distinctively crooked finger.
5. Various pharaohs (Rameses II, Amenhotep), Cleopatra, the Venetian Doge Loredan and the Florentine Medici family (of the Italian Renaissance period) are all historical examples of the active production of celebrity, but all are linked to specific positions or actions.
6. The listing of consumer goods to demonstrate the commodification of culture in *Spring Breakers* also appears to be a reference to Bret Easton Ellis' novel *American Psycho* (1991), in which the character Patrick Bateman fills entire chapters listing and describing the items he has amassed. (In addition to *American Psycho*, this device has appeared in a number of Ellis' other novels, including *Glamorama* [1998].)

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Part VI

Pedagogies: Applications in Education

11
Constructing a Voice of Authority in Upper Secondary School Essays[1]

Anne Smedegaard

Pragmatic genre theory explains and conceptualizes how shared genre conventions, developed through interaction in specific contextual spheres, function as sociocognitive frames every time we construct and comprehend new utterances in concrete situations. Resting on key references, such as the work of Mikhail M. Bakhtin (2006) and Carolyn R. Miller (1984), the pragmatic genre theory is both an epistemic stance and a mindset designed to describe the relations between language and power by examining interrelations between ideologies, genres, discourses and styles in social institutions that people engage in, such as families, workplaces, clubs and schools.

Especially three pragmatic genre schools have examined the pedagogical implications of pragmatic genre theory. The Sydney School, which originated from systemic functional linguistics and Basil Bernstein's social theories, has primarily been preoccupied with developing teaching programmes that explicitly set out the main genres encountered in primary school. English for specific purposes (ESP) has primarily outlined the conventions of university genres. Finally, rhetorical genre studies (RGS) has developed a critical genre pedagogy directed at students of rhetoric. All three schools share an interest in explicating the relationship between genre conventions, value systems and social contexts, and pedagogically all three seek to develop genre-confident, selective, reflexive and creative language users in and outside school.

In Danish upper secondary school (stx), neither of these pragmatic genre schools has yet gained much influence on curricula, pedagogy and teaching material. However, in 2005, as part of a larger reform of upper secondary school education, the Danish Government chose to define genre labels for three text types that had traditionally been used

in the examination of students' written Danish: literary article, debate article and essay. The choice of examination genres reflects the centrality of fiction, poetry and drama in the Danish curriculum. In class, students mainly analyse fiction, poetry and drama that represent contemporary trends, alongside classical works. Danish is designed to help students obtain *bildung* and to prepare them for subsequent studies, partly by teaching them to analyse the meanings of contextualized language, especially the language and symbols of high culture, and partly by teaching them how to express themselves both orally and in writing (Danish Ministry of Education, 2010, 2013).

In this chapter I will investigate one of these examination genres: the essay. For readers mainly familiar with Anglo-Saxon school systems, it is important to note that the Danish upper secondary school essay is defined in relation to Montaigne's (1533–1592) essay tradition. This has been part of Danish curricula for decades due to several teaching material resources (e.g. Sandersen, 1975; Jensen, 1999) and to the fact that the genre corresponds very well with the holistic purpose of the subject inspired by Wilhelm von Humboldt. The Danish school essay must not be confused with the Anglo-Saxon, five-paragraph essay where the key ingredient is to argue for a specific point of view. In the school subject of Danish, argumentation and discussion are key features of the debate article, whereas personal reflection and explorative treatment of the topic of the exercise are the key features of the essay. In my investigation I bring together the definition, by the Danish Ministry of Education, of the essay genre, Danish teachers' comments about the pedagogical challenges of the genre, and examples from students' essays and their teachers' comments and evaluations. My analyses of these essays particularly address the authorial voices constructed by the student, leading to a discussion of genre-specific pedagogical challenges.

Genre, voice and stance

For utterances to be understood, their relations to genres must be recognized by the listener or the reader. From a Bakhtinian perspective (Bakhtin, 1986), genres are conventionalized and shared ways to use language to obtain purposeful actions in a specific context. Genres are firm and yet flexible, personal and shared, generalized and situated, and designed for both repetition and creativity (Miller, 1984; Berkenkotter and Huckin, 1995). Genre knowledge includes knowledge about the proper voices and positionings that writers and readers can employ and assume. Throughout life we appropriate a spectrum of genres and

voices. This enables us not only to repeat but more importantly to interpret and sometimes bend, negotiate and play with the conventions, which we have experienced being used in other situations. Genre and voice conventions are never fully stable, neither phylogenetic nor ontogenetic.

Voices and positionings are intrinsically tied to genres. Depending on the genre that we wish to use, we employ a voice and, thus, represent our self by drawing on genre characteristic types of knowledge, experiences, relationships, emotions and purposes. Voices interact with other voices in a variety of complex ways, manifest intertextuality being just one of them. My conception of voice rests on Tardy's (2012) definition inspired by Ivanic and Camp's conception of writer's self-presentation (2001), Ivanic's conceptions of the discoursal self and the possibilities for selfhood (1998), and Bakhtin's concept of heteroglossia (1981). Another way to describe the relationship between voice and self-representation is that writers position themselves via the voice they invoke, borrowing the principle term from positioning theory developed by Rom Harré and others since the early 1990s (Davies and Harré, 1990; Harré et al., 2009) as a more dynamic alternative to Erving Goffman's theories about footing, frame, face-work and self-representation (Goffman, 1986, 1990). Positioning theory investigates the mechanics that are in play when individuals, both explicitly and tacitly, ascribe and are ascribed more or less favourable identities.

In my analyses of how different students position themselves and their readers when they write an examination essay, I draw on Ken Hyland's multiple studies in which he has developed a set of tools for analysing similarities and differences between genre characteristic voices of a range of academic disciplines (Hyland, 2000, 2005, 2008). More specifically, I borrow Hyland's fundamental distinction between stance and engagement. Stance is a broad concept, which encompasses notions such as evaluation (Hunston and Thompson, 2000) and appraisal (Martin and White, 2005). It 'concerns the ways writers present themselves and convey their judgements, opinions, and commitments' (Hyland, 2008, p. 7). Hyland supplies this focus on a writer's self-presentation with the notion of engagement. Engagement refers to the procedures by which writers seek to establish solidarity between themselves and their readers, and also to guide readers' thinking in anticipation of possible objections. Inspired by Hyland, I will try to define some of the most important resources by which students establish the writer and reader positions in their texts in relation to the essay genre. However, in contrast with Hyland, I will mainly rely

on qualitative analyses. The possible benefit is an enhanced and more detailed understanding of the linguistic devices, which constitute the successful versus unsuccessful essay in the subject of Danish.

Institutional understandings of the examination essay genre

Both the Danish Ministry of Education and Danish teachers define the essay as much more loosely attached to the curriculum of Danish than the two other examination genres. The Ministry of Education stipulates that the essay 'gives the student greater freedom with regard to topic, form, language style, and involvement of the prescribed text material' (Mose, 2012, p. 24). The students are expected to make a few references to the text material but not to analyse or summarize as in literary and debate articles. The essay demands that the students introduce their own thoughts and thereby create a personal perspective on the topic by invoking 'self-imposed material . . . for example texts, films, paintings, historical situations and contemporary debate topics' (Mose and Eriksen, 2011, p. 10). The essay also demands that students must give these thoughts an artistic, personal form of expression full of images and tropes, and that they metareflect upon their own process of cognition. Thus the process means that students largely invoke knowledge and skills, which they have acquired elsewhere than in the subject of Danish – either through other subjects or outside school. The most important function of the genre, reflection, combines abstract knowledge, such as academic theories and concepts, with concrete observations, such as personal experiences and art examples (Mose, 2012, pp. 24–27).

In connection with a research study of the three examination genres in Danish (stx), I have followed four teachers and one of each of their classes for three years. In the process of this I have conducted several interviews with both teachers and students about writing and the three examination genres in particular. In these interviews the teachers define the essay as a 'top' genre, reserved for the most intelligent and well-formulated students. However, I found little or no critical stance towards the paradox of having a genre almost solely for the best students. As one of the teachers says,

> The essay genre demands general knowledge. That is, you have to have a culturally specific, historical overview, and I don't know where they are to acquire that. Not from the subject of Danish. And it is also a requirement that they are reflective in general . . . And then

> some of them may have great difficulties in writing the essay because they do not possess the qualifications for creative and sparkling self-realization . . . , and it is also a problem that they do not have enough reflective power . . . I never recommend my weak students to write essays.

The teacher confirms that students need to draw heavily on private rather than scholarly resources when they write essays. This paradox relates to another paradox. By and large, the defining characteristics of the essay genre are opaque, and at best they remain implicit knowledge among teachers and students alike.

As the inspector of schools noted in one of the official documents sent out by the ministry, it is hard to define 'formal "requirements"' for this particular genre because 'freedom cannot be expressed by a formula' (Mose, 2012, p. 24). Accordingly, the core genre values of the essay (searching and reflection) are rarely discussed in the oral classroom. Here, other genre values dominate, especially the values of the literary article (analysis, interpretation and putting into perspective) and to some extent those of the debate article (account, argumentation and discussion).

A third and final paradox emerges because the Montaigne essay, by definition, is the product of an actively self-initiated action, whereas the examination essay is an ordered assignment in an institutional scope, which imposes restrictions upon the student's choice of subject, as well as upon the time and space of the act of writing.

The first two paradoxes are of particular interest, especially in a Danish context where the public school system upholds a strong position at all levels. All Danish universities are public, with 79% of all students in basic school attending a public school (Danish Ministry of Education, 2014), and private upper secondary schools only accounting for 8% of the total number of upper secondary schools. (The rate percentage has not been published but has been calculated by the Danish Ministry of Education on my request.) Moreover, the private schools are largely publicly funded. Historically, Danes share a common understanding that everybody is entitled to equal opportunities of acquiring a tertiary education. This understanding has dominated the political debate about the distribution of welfare, the importance of overcoming social marginalization, the negative social legacy of some students, and the personal responsibility of school and vocational success. But this understanding has been met with some resistance from politicians and parts of academic society. A number of national investigations have, for instance,

documented that the Nordic welfare model appears unable to get rid of the reproduction of factors that have left some students disadvantaged in comparison with their more privileged peers. A report from 2014, published by the Ministry of Higher Education and Science, shows that students whose parents have a tertiary education are much more likely to apply for a tertiary education than students whose parents have not (Danish Ministry of Higher Education and Science, 2014). Another study from 2003 showed that students whose parents have an upper secondary school certificate perform much better at the final written examination in the subject of Danish than students whose parents do not (Wiese, 2003).

As early as 1970, Pierre Bourdieu and Jean-Claude Passeron (1996), in line with Basil Bernstein's studies (1975), demonstrated that school systems have legitimate authority to take for granted and reproduce the incorporated linguistic and cultural capital of the dominant classes. Among other things, this necessarily implies resorting to symbolic violence against the students who have appropriated other types of capital during their primary socialization. The fact that the Montaigne essay genre is preserved as the ideal for one of only three genres, which Danish students are expected to master, and the fact that teachers and the ministry pay little attention to the massive challenges that this entails, proves that Bourdieu and Passeron's critique is still relevant today. School is considered a meritocratic institution and accordingly the students' achievements are regarded as an expression of individual talent, intelligence and hard work (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1996, p. 52). The consequence is that social classes are reproduced from generation to generation.

The present study will give a detailed analysis of some of the specific strategies students use in their essay-writing. The goal is not to present an exhaustive genre description but instead to give detailed analyses that reveal important parts of the repertoire used in high- and low-evaluated essays, and to find out if the teachers comment on the genre markers that the students use or fail to use. In particular, I will emphasize some of the qualities of the voice that teachers construct as essayistic, or conversely generically inappropriate, via their grading practice and ongoing commenting. As opposed to other written genres, the essay has a relative lack of compositional structure. However, it demands that writers evince a strong personal voice and, as the work presented here will show, the quality of the students' essayistic voice is closely scrutinized during the process of grading. The ministry's description entirely lacks a definition of such an essayistic voice. The only

definition found is a common description of the 'ideal writer' of all three genres, who is defined as 'the professionally skilled candidate who holds a broad perspective' (Mose, 2009, p. 1). My study is designed to broaden the definition of the essayistic voice, to find out to what extent high-graded essays display a homogenous authorial voice, and to discuss the pedagogical strategies that find expression in the teachers feedback.

Corpus and method

I will examine 10 essays that are carefully selected from my data collection. This collection consists of 631 Danish essays handed in by 40 students from four different schools located in and around Copenhagen during their three years of upper secondary school. I collected the corpus on the basis of a variety of criteria. First, I have excluded the examination essays that have not been graded and supplied with written comments by a teacher. Comments are essential in this particular study in order to grasp which resources the teachers explicitly respond to. Second, to get a uniform and small dataset suited for detailed, qualitative analyses, I have only included examination essays handed in during the final half-year of upper secondary school. Third, I have only included the examination essays that the teachers graded as either very good (A) or very bad (D-Fx), because I assume that these essays, in particular, may give us didactically useful information about the genre (in)appropriate voices of the examination essays. My data (in which all names are pseudonyms) are given in Table 11.1.

Judged by the full data collection, many students cherry-pick a favourite genre among the three, which they select every time they are

Table 11.1 A list of essays by students, grades, and schools

School	Essay no.	Student	Grade
North	168	Sigrid	A
North	178	Sigrid	A
North	198	Sigrid	A
North	186	Phillip	A
West	375	Louise	A
West	385	Louise	A
City	545	Anker	D
City	539	Lise	E/D
City	548	Lise	Fx
West	389	Sara	Fx

given a collection of assignments to choose from. This is the reason why three of the students are represented with more than one examination essay. One of the four classes is not represented in the data material because the teacher did not provide written feedback to the essays handed in during the selected period.

All essays were written in Danish by the students. In this chapter I bring multiple examples from these texts which I have translated into English with much consideration of how to preserve the voice of the students.

The explicitly present, metareflective writer who creates a semiprivate communication situation

Students create very different authorial voices due to the pronouns that they use in their essays to refer to themselves as writers, the reader and people in general. Against the background of my analysis of how the students establish self-reference by use of pronouns, I have broken the pronouns down into three groups. First I have gathered the first-person singular and the related possessive pronouns, second the first-person plural pronoun and the related possessive pronouns, and third the most important generic pronouns other than 'we', 'us' and 'ours'. Generic pronouns I define in accordance with Langacker (1997) and Jensen (2009) as pronouns, which refer to a group of human beings including the speaker, the addressee and a third, unspecified part. Generic pronouns are mainly used to address common knowledge about the world, knowledge presented as generally accepted – and this goes for the second group of pronouns as well as the third. The reason why I keep them separated is that my analysis demonstrates that the second group is given another function by some of the students, who use 'we', 'us' and 'our' to create metareflection. The table only informs about self-reference which means that it leaves out the number of times these pronouns appear in quotes. It is important to stress that the second-person singular – 'you', 'your' and 'yours' – is only included when it is used generically (Figure 11.1).

The first group – 'I', 'me', 'my' and 'mine' – are most commonly used to refer exclusively to the writer, and the table shows that the A-graded essays include these to a much greater extent than the D–Fx-graded essays. Mean usage of 'I', 'me', 'my' and 'mine' in the D–Fz essays is once every 333 words, whereas top essays use these pronouns every 58 words. However, essays no. 186 and no. 548 deviate from the general picture. I will return to this issue.
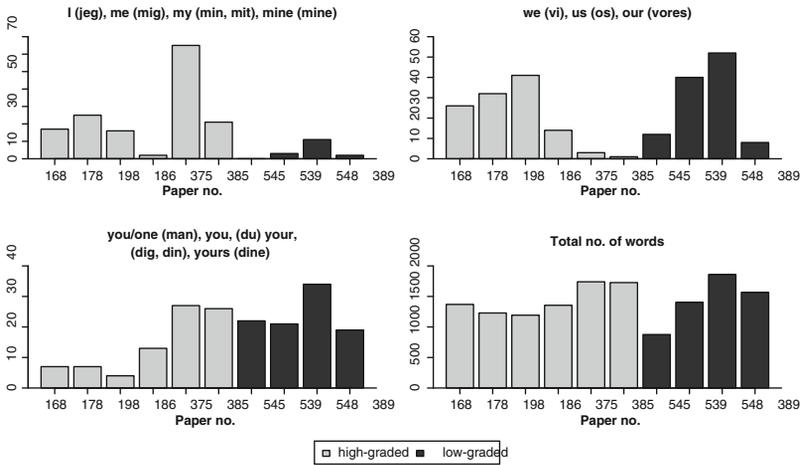
Figure 11.1 Students' self-reference by first person and generic pronouns

Explicit self-reference seems genre-appropriate. The way students use 'I', 'me', 'my' and 'mine' generally represents a case of intimization – that is, the reader is invited into a personal, semiprivate communication situation where the presence of an explicit 'I' implies that the reader takes part in a dialogue as an implicit – and sometimes explicit – 'you'.

First, the top students (Sigrid, Louise and Phillip) invoke self-reference to accentuate the subjective nature of their writing – for instance, to emphasize a personal opinion:

> *My* point is simply, that you must be very careful with the use of small talk, because, if it exceeds reasonable limits, *I* believe that it can remove focus from . . . (375)

A variant of this is to make individual circumstances and subjective reasoning explicit, which may epistemically downgrade a claim:

> Maybe it's because *I* am young . . . (168)

> Finally, 'I', 'me', 'my' and 'mine' are also used in the service of constructing personal narratives:

> A long time ago *I* found the following quote on a table in a classroom: Freedom is . . . (385)

All these examples show that writers of high-graded essays, especially Sigrid and Louise, use personal pronouns to position themselves as individuals with subjective opinions and experiences. Moreover, Sigrid, and on a smaller scale Louise, uses the personal pronoun 'I' and its object variant 'me' alongside the possessive pronouns 'my' and 'mine' to accentuate the process of writing. The following example shows how 'I' can be used to stress the dialogical process of thought and writing:

> With the idea that the medias readjust to our needs, *I come to think of* something my Danish teacher said in class today . . . (198)

Students also use first-person pronouns explicitly to metareflect – in this case Phillip inserts a sceptical comment about the essay's value – that is, its possibility of contributing new knowledge, via a combination of the plural form 'we' and the possessive determiner 'my':

> All in all one might wonder if *we* have accomplished any kind of progression at all after reading *my* 1300 words, and actually *we* might not have – or what? (186)

In fact, both Sigrid and Phillip finish all of their essays with sceptical metareflective comments upon the truth-value of their essays. For instance, Sigrid ends essay no. 178 with an isolated question mark, which conveys her doubts about the whole text, and in essay no. 198 she addresses the reader's (i.e. the teacher's) possible negative response:

> Now my Danish teacher, who is supposed to bear with this text, could ask herself if it represented any solid information at all, or if merely *my* feelings were allowed to be communicated between *us*. (198)

As mentioned, essay no. 186, written by Phillip, differs from the other high-graded essays in the sense that he uses fewer first-person singular pronouns. However, this does not mean that his essay falls short on metareflection; he just uses other resources to accomplish it. Instead of using 'I', 'me', 'my' and 'mine' he resorts to plural and generic forms. Consider, for instance, his use of plural forms that accentuate the ongoing dialogue between himself as the writer and the (unspecified) reader:

> After all, *we* will hardly reach a firm conclusion . . . (186)

In addition to a display of metareflection, this excerpt is used to downgrade a claim epistemically. The next example shows he uses 'we' to reflect on the dialogical process of thought and writing:

> Because the French Enlightenment philosophers do not give *us* an answer to this, *we* need to look inward a bit. (186)

Phillip uses 'I' very little and generally seems less engaged in the effort of intimization that proved salient in the case of Sigrid and Louise. But his use of pronouns reveals other qualities that are associated with the essay genre's overall reflection requirement. For instance, he uses 'we' to invite the reader to join him in building the cases: we reach conclusions and we look inward. Other times he builds cases where an 'I' is implied:

> It is of course an exaggeration to claim ... however, the point is not ... (186)

The three top students thus achieve largely the same skilled authorial voice, but by different means. Their reflective actions include emphasizing personal opinions and thus epistemically downgrading claims; making individual circumstances and subjective reasoning explicit; and constructing personal narratives that may embed analytical objects. Top students thereby position themselves as individuals with both personal opinions and experiences, and a reflective mindset, who are engaged in a semiprivate communication situation. Top students have available an arsenal of individual strategies that lower-graded students do not demonstrate, and which they employ to accomplish the overall goal of writing a good reflective essay. Phillip and Sigrid and on a smaller scale Louise, for instance, create a self-conscious voice via metareflections about the dialogical process of thought and writing, the quality of the text, and their own positions, purposes and credibility. Regarding sceptical comments about credibility and the value of the essay, both Phillip and Sigrid consistently round up their essays by inserting scepticism concerning their own product. They thereby position themselves as 'humble' and open-minded writers, while at the same time positioning the reader as a potentially influential and worthy conversational partner.

Unlike the use of personal pronouns, which is an integral part of the essayistic voice, the use of generic pronouns under initial examination appears to have no impact upon grading. Generic pronouns are just

as commonly used in low-graded essays as in top essays. However, a closer inspection reveals qualitative differences. In the following examples from low-graded essays, generic pronouns are invoked in order to construct a common ground including the writer, the reader and an unspecified group who all share commonsense reasoning regarding experiences, the state of affairs, privileges, habits, attitudes and emotions, for instance:

> Internet pages like Facebook where *you* create a profile and then a network, is truly the place where *we* label the persons *we* know. (539)

> In fiction *we* meet characters who tell *us* who they are through words, actions, and descriptions, and maybe *we* recognize traits and emotions, which *we* so far have not put into words or fully found a expressions for. (545)

These examples display a general pattern: the generic pronouns seek to make the writer's propositions reliable to the reader because they turn the propositions into common knowledge. This process positions the reader as a unison figure, in complete agreement with the writer. In the top essays the generic pronouns are used in a similar fashion but with additional, important layers. Most importantly, as I have already pointed out in my analysis of Phillip's essay, 'we' and 'us' may refer strictly to the writer and the (unspecified) reader in a way that positions them as 'companions' in the production of the text, if not actual joint authors:

> Good, now *we* can make a start. (168)

> It cannot surprise anybody that . . . , and it is in fact here *we* will start. (186)

'We' obviously refers to the writer and thus embeds an 'I', but it is generic in the sense that it also refers to anyone who happens to be reading the text. High-graded students are able to use such dual references for multiple communicative purposes: they display awareness of a reader, propose that the topic of the essay is of interest to this reader, metareflect upon the process of writing and the underlying reasoning, and share this process with the reader.

   Such distinct ways of exploiting the generic potential of 'we' is absent in low-graded essays. Here, instead, the voice of the writer blends with the voice of a plural 'we', 'you' or 'one' and therefore invites the reader to agree upon the essays assertions, but fails to create a dialogical

relation between the writer and the reader, let alone position the reader as a co-author of the text and the thoughts it represents. Essay 548 is an exception, which proves that the evaluation of an individual essay is based on a complex net of criteria and genre expectations. The student in this particular essay shows awareness of genre requirements, including the relevant use of an explicit 'I'. However, she writes about another topic than what was asked for in the assignment.

This analysis has established a relationship between grading and the use of pronouns, which seems unknown by the teachers represented in my corpus. Not once do they comment directly upon the use of personal, possessive or general pronouns. Perhaps the single most important effect of using pronouns is to display an awareness of recipiency. Low-graded essays consistently fail to do this, but this is only commented on once. In essay no. 539 the student writes:

The excessive use of small-talk leads to loneliness. (539)

In her comments, the teacher points to this sequence to address the student's general lack of recipiency awareness. She warns against bluntly asserting a claim and taking its truth-value for granted.

In top-graded essays (168, 198 and 186), the students are repeatedly praised for sharing their reflections with the reader. Furthermore, in two of the three top essays the students are praised for their personal style.

Thus this practice of commenting on texts suggests two characteristics that are worthy of debate. First is the teachers' lack of comments on specific devices that constitute felicitous versus infelicitous authorial voices. Second, the teachers exhibit a striking asymmetry in favour of praising the top students and avoiding explicitness about the other students' genre shortcomings.

The entertaining artistic writer who addresses an actively involved reader

Another way in which multiple voices are embedded in top essays is through stylization and parody (Bakhtin, 1984). Louise and especially Sigrid appropriate stylization as part of their expressive repertoire. This use positions them as artistic and entertaining writers. It also demonstrates their knowledge about how linguistic and artistic effects indicate voice components such as style, tone, sociolect, dialect, age and gender. In the next excerpt, for example, Louise comments upon the younger

generation's use of marijuana and how the older generation regards this use:

> are they ... as they would put it themselves using their *popular modern slang – way out wasted, excessive smokers of marijuana and other kinds of weed*, as prejudices would have us to believe? (385)

Louise's comment cleverly integrates the style of each generation's voice: The older generation is represented by the phrase 'popular modern slang'. This is vocabulary that adults would use to describe the talk of adolescents. 'Way out wasted', of course, represents the voice of adolescents. Furthermore, the heavy use of 'w' alliterations serves as an example of how the students often use artistic effects, including metaphors, rhyme, rhythm and a wealth of details, to position their own or other represented voices as creative. In this example the alliterations illustrate a key point in the essay: superficial indicators such as wordings might mislead adults into thinking that adolescents are very different from how they were at the same age. In my data, Louise and Sigrid both use imitations of other voices in this way to underline a key point and make explicit their metaconsciousness of the function of these imitations, including reflections upon linguistic and artistic effects. The following example provides a vivid illustration. Sigrid commences an essay about the development of the Danish language by imitating the voice of an old-fashioned writer. The voice is established due to complex sentences, which include syntactic features (e.g. subordinate hypotaxis), phrases that stylize academic discourse (e.g. 'language hierarchy') and words that probably associate with middle-class values (e.g. 'imbalanced language'):

> As a consequence of the completely natural development, which the Danish language has undergone since the 1950s, a so-called language-barrier has emerged that foremost strikes the historical dialects in such a way that a language-hierarchy is created and, consequently, leads to a chaotic and imbalanced language, among others in the Danish media ... albeit, this does not imply that we can remain apathetic ...

As Sigrid herself makes explicit in the subsequent text, this is hardly the authentic vernacular of an adolescent, not even if it belongs to a very talented student. She self-interrupts her line of argument with the following metareflective comment upon the boring and inauthentic quality of the previous text:

> Oh boy, that wasn't very inspiring . . .
>
> Let's try once more.
>
> Time never stands still and neither do we. Pretty cool that the language has also kept up with the times . . . it's just a bummer that we can't just chill on the couch in Denmark . . . (168)

Here, the stylized academic discourse is replaced by a more 'inspired' youthful voice that, in fact, illustrates Sigrid's claim – namely, that language is in a constant process of change. The stylized youthful voice is characterized by short sentence constructions, elliptical constructions, jargon and slang (e.g. 'bummer' and 'chill'), and creative language such as unconventional metaphors and personifications. Notice how the final phrase 'it's just a bummer that we can't just chill on the couch in Denmark' resonates with 'albeit, this does not imply that we can remain apathetic'. Sigrid cleverly asserts the same claim twice in order to exhibit their radical different stylistic voices.

The metareflection between the two stylizations underlines the fact that neither of the two voices is Sigrid's own. Instead they are consciously constructed to show that conventions about what is considered to be correct Danish are floating. The metareflection hereby shows that Sigrid uses the imitations of prototypical voices in an extremely conscious way to 'show' rather than 'tell' which topic her essay is going to deal with. Both Louise and Sigrid consciously invoke such stylizations in all their essays – Sigrid more than Louise – whereas Phillip does not do it at all.

Another way in which top students such as Sigrid position themselves as creative essay-writers by embedding multiple voices is by employing satiric effects such as parody, irony and comic intertextual references. In the following example, Sigrid shows that she is capable of submitting emotional journalism to humorous parody. The essay was written at about the time when two royal children were born in Denmark. There was a lot of speculation, particularly in the tabloids, about what they were going to be called. Sigrid opens an essay by creatively presenting these facts:

> What are the twins going to be called?
>
> Well . . . we have taken up a small bet on that, you see . . . some thought Kaj and Andrea, buuut . . . I think, I think they will be called Marie and Casper.

> In the days prior to the royal baptism of the two twins, television-channels in a whole range of programmes have had quite a few special reporters asking the Danish public about what their predictions as to what the two little gold nuggets will be named when they are baptized. That Thursday evening I sat and watched the news on DR1 and was very amused to witness the pictures of the royal séance plus the journalist Tine Gøtzsche's reflections on whether or not crown prince Frederik and crown princess Mary were proud of their beautiful children. (198)

The key element of a parody is in the recognition of an alien voice that usually represents very different values from those of the speaker. The opening lines in this example represent an interview, probably between a reporter and a citizen, both paying a lot of attention to trivial matters, such as the naming of royal children. It is a parody because it exposes their engagement in this matter; for them it is matter worth making bets about. Furthermore, it exposes their ignorance by having them discuss 'Kaj and Andrea' as serious possibilities. 'Kaj and Andrea' is an intertextual reference to two famous children's puppets from Danish national television. The parody is followed by a voice that explains the situation. This voice is also exposed to parody. The authorial voice imitates a voice that belongs to the media that present the event highly emotionally ('the two little gold nuggets') and as a matter of utmost importance. It is covered by multiple television channels 'in a whole range of programmes', and the news editors give it top priority by allowing special reporters to carry out these time-consuming interviews. Thus Sigrid parodies and mocks the media and their priorities. This short media parody is followed by Sigrid's 'authentic authorial voice', which comments on the stylized broadcast ('That Thursday evening I sat . . . '). It is unclear whether the information that she was 'amused' by watching the broadcast is an admission or an ironic statement. What is clear is that Sigrid, like Louise, displays her creativity through her stylizations, and her reflectivity by switching from the 'show' to the 'tell' mode. In fact, such qualities are put on display in five (168, 178, 198, 375 and 385) of the six top-graded essays.

Evident in the assembled corpus is another important genre marker. This involves returning in the last section of the essay to whatever was presented in the opening, and adding new knowledge, reflecting about new perspectives and/or rounding up by inserting scepticism about the essay's main claims. In essay no. 198, Sigrid once more

invokes a media voice that addresses the royal family theme. Again she comments upon it, but this time she overtly admits that she actually enjoys emotional journalism and that she does not regard it as a threat to modern democracy. By establishing such textual frames, the students successfully create distinct threads in their essays and manage to integrate different modes with one another, such as creative and reflective language use.

All these different creative elements that we find in the top-graded essays are absent or kept to a minimum in the low-graded ones: intended use of stylization, imitation of prototypical voices, parody and other satiric effects, 'show' in combination with 'tell', openings that creatively present a case in point, framing. These elements are only rarely found in low-graded essays. For example, none of the four low-graded students create scenic representations. Instead they only make a few feeble attempts to embed alien voices within their text. Sara, for instance, in essay no. 389 inserts one single word ('homies') and a fixed expression ('for life') in her description of hip-hop culture to underline hip-hop slang. But this is a rare and, arguably, simple case, which illustrates that low-graded essays tend to favour 'tell' over 'show'.

The only constitutive genre marker that is found in both high- and low-graded essays is the construction of a frame that links the conclusion to the opening. However, in the mediocre essays this is not done in creative ways, which can be illustrated with an example from essay no. 389 where Sara, in the conclusion, repeats a question from the opening and ends the essay by summing up an answer.

Now, which of these characteristics does the teacher comment on? As to the low-graded essays, the answer comes easily: the teachers do not comment on any of this, not even the construction of the frame. The frame, though, is explicitly annotated with positive remarks in three out of the six high-graded essays (186, 198 and 178). Moreover, the language is commented on in general terms in four essays (168, 178, 375 and 385). The teachers label the students' language use as 'personal', 'spectacular', 'vivid', 'lyrical', 'flexible' and 'multifaceted'. Not once do they give more detailed descriptions of the more specific creative elements, and not once do they comment on the establishment of multiple voices. Nevertheless, these comments show that teachers reward students who can create an entertaining, artistic voice for themselves as writers, but do not help the students of the low-evaluated essays with advice about how to position themselves in a more genre-appropriate way.

Conclusion

This study illuminates some of the many resources that high-graded students invoke to establish a reflective and dialogical essayistic voice. I have primarily focused on the use of pronouns, the display of metareflection and the enactment of stylization. These are resources that index the voice of an entertaining, explicit present, metareflective, open-minded and 'humble' writer. This kind of writer addresses an entrusted and actively involved reader. My analysis does not exhaust the genre description. Doubtlessly, further analysis would reveal a variety of other resources by which reflection is established in the high-graded essays. Such resources could, for example, include references to academic knowledge, use of rhetorical and 'open' questions, modal verbs and attitude markers. Moreover, my analysis has shown that top students develop their own private strategies by which they establish a reflective voice for themselves. For example, Sigrid and Phillip both end their essays with sceptical metareflective comments about the truth-value of their essays, whereas Louise does not. Sigrid and Louise frequently use first-person pronouns, but Phillip does not. This finding suggests that further analyses of top-graded essays would most likely generate an extended list of genre-appropriated resources that establish reflection, and at the same time it shows that the essay is not a very stable genre with many obligatory features.

Pedagogical perspectives

This chapter's findings resonate with an old genre-pedagogical discussion regarding the possible benefits of explicating school genres: Can students learn how to master a given genre via instructions about its linguistic and compositional characteristics combined with information about the context? Or is it necessary to be enculturated in a specific discourse community to appropriate language etiquette? Within modern pragmatic genre theory, scholars from the Australian genre school have advocated for explicit genre pedagogy, and their arguments have had considerable impact on curricula in the school system of a number of countries. The programme developed by the Sydney School integrates both a systemic functional genre theory and a pedagogical programme. This programme, developed by Jim Martin and his associates, is based upon systematic textual analysis, thus empirically derived knowledge about the production and reception of a given, single genre and of other genres that relate to it (Martin, 1999). They have managed to

produce explicit accounts of basic primary school genres (Martin and Rose, 2008). Members of the ESP and RGS communities have additionally developed pedagogical programmes. ESP programmes are targeted at university students with English as a second language (Swales, 2008), and Amy J. Devitt, a key member of the RGS community, has developed a programme for rhetoric students in composition courses (Devitt, 2004, 2009).

All three schools, in particular RGS, emphasize that students should be taught that genres are deeply contextual, ideological and, potentially, powerful. Precisely this recognition of genres as ideological and contextualized entities is the reason why several scholars, including prominent members of RGS, have argued that genre knowledge is pervasively enculturated. It is fundamentally impossible to reach the point where you master a genre on the basis of explicit instructions in school – you need to be a member of the communities of practice that use, and perhaps 'own', the genres in order to internalize the ideologies that they represent (Freedman, 1993). In terms of the essay, possible manifestations of this fundamental problem could be that students need to know from their homes, or other communities of practices, that the imitation of other voices is a resource to display reflection, that invoking facts and academic reasoning is a powerful resource to substantiate a claim, and that sceptical metareflective comments produce ethos. Above all, though, sceptics of explicit genre teaching might hold that successful students need to recognize the basic premise of the essay genre – namely, that a good essay defers from easy answers to difficult questions. Instead, the skilled essay-writer seeks to reflect upon epistemological difficulties and problematize the taken-for-granted with the purpose of inviting the reader to share and experience new perspectives.

This study has revealed that there are plenty of resources that could be made the subject of explicit instruction in the classroom – it has merely covered a small number of them. The major questions here, then, are: Can students without an affiliation to middle-class culture benefit from being taught about, for instance, the use of pronouns and stylization in essays, and can such instruction turn them into competent essayists? And can explicit teaching in this case provide a shortcut to enculturation? It is beyond the scope of the present study to answer these questions in a satisfactory manner. They would have to be tested in practice, and the study has provided preliminary tools to enable such a test. However, if the essay genre is worth such an effort, or if students are better off learning less opaque genres, is another debate.

Finally, the study proves that Bourdieu's description of a symbolic violent school system, functioning as a mechanism of selection, is still valid in some parts of the Danish upper secondary school system. Students are given extremely little explicit guidance when they practise the skills they will be tested in at the final examination. I have questioned whether the Montaigne essay can be explicitly taught to students who are not enculturated into middle-class values and its genres due to their primary socialization. I will follow up on this argument with a corollary remark: if the essay was appropriated by all students as a result of explicit genre pedagogy and scaffolding, it might be annulled as examination genre. As seen in the teachers' remarks mentioned earlier, the essay genre functions as an oasis for top students. It is valued as a celebrated genre *per se*; A-graded essayists are the personified icons of the subject of Danish, the budding authors. If essay competencies become mainstream, the essay genre will lose its power and its mechanism of selection.

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12
Perceptions of Prior Genre Knowledge: A Case of Incipient Biliterate Writers in the EAP Classroom

Natasha Artemeva and Donald N. Myles

In 2011, Nowacek raised the question, 'Why and how do students connect learning from one domain with learning in another domain, and how can teachers facilitate such connections?' (p. 3). This chapter takes a step towards answering her question by reporting on a case study of students' perceptions of such a connection between learning to write in one domain and language, and learning to write in another domain and language. Specifically, we discuss English language learners' (ELLs') perceptions of the role (if any) that their prior experience with, and knowledge of, written genres plays in learning academic genres at a Canadian university. We review two approaches to genre research and pedagogy, report on a small-scale case study, and discuss its possible implications for future research and pedagogy.

Several approaches to the study of non-literary genres and genre pedagogies have been developed in different countries over recent decades (Johns, 2002). This chapter draws on two such approaches: ESP, in particular its branch that focuses on academic genres – EAP – and RGS. The EAP genre approach has its roots in Swales' pedagogically inspired work on research article introductions (Swales, 1981, 1990; Tardy, 2011) and is 'centered on the language and activities appropriate to particular disciplines' (Hyland, 2002, p. 386). In other words, it focuses on researching, 'studying and teaching specialized varieties of English, most often to non-native speakers of English, in advanced academic and professional settings' (Bawarshi and Reiff, 2010, p. 41). Swales (1990) observed that such typified specialized language varieties are used within groups, or discourse communities, of individuals

deeply involved in specific shared contexts and sharing common goals that can be achieved through communication. He defined such language varieties as genres – that is, 'communicative vehicles for the achievement' of discourse community goals (p. 46), 'recognized by the expert members of the . . . discourse community' (p. 58). In other words, the ESP genre approach sees genres as social practices of discourse communities.

The goal of the ESP/EAP pedagogy is to raise the ELLs' awareness of the communicative purpose, social context, and textual and rhetorical conventions of the genre. By rhetorical conventions, ESP scholars understand the agreed-upon patterns of communication, which allow for effective accomplishment of the discourse community's purpose. A writer's ability to produce genre-appropriate texts that 'exhibit repeated rhetorical responses to similar situations with each generic act involving some degree of innovation and judgement' builds on their 'knowledge of prior texts' (Hyland, 2002, p. 391). Therefore to develop such an ability the writer needs to draw on their awareness and knowledge of the prior texts. Within the ESP/EAP pedagogy, this awareness is developed through the explicit analysis of genres in the classroom (Swales, 1990; Tardy, 2009). The main assumption in the ESP genre approach is that once the ELLs have become aware of the goals and communicative purposes of a particular discourse community, and of the rhetorical and textual realizations of these goals and purposes, the learners will be able to produce texts in the genres of that discourse community without further instruction. The EAP research and, by extension, its pedagogy focus on helping students to learn academic genres or 'the language of school that students must interpret and use fluently' (Cummins et al., 2007, p. 801) in order to be successful in academic discourse communities (Johns, 2013, p. 6).

Another approach to non-literary genre studies, RGS, also known as North American or New Rhetoric genre theory, focuses on the rhetorical nature of genres. If traditionally rhetoric was seen as a persuasive form of discourse meant to sway the listener or reader to the author's point of view (e.g., Connor, 1996), more recently it has been reconceived as 'the use of language to accomplish something' (Swales, 1990, p. 6). RGS developed from Miller's (1984) study of environmental statements, which led to the reconceptualization of genre from a sum of particular textual features to social action. In RGS, genre is seen as being shaped by a recurrent rhetorical situation perceived as a combination of purpose, audience and occasion (Bitzer, 1968). A written genre in RGS is therefore seen as

a broad rhetorical strategy enacted within a community in order to regularize writer/reader transactions in ways that allow for the creation of particular knowledge ... [and defined] as a distinctive profile of regularities across four dimensions: a set of texts, the composing processes involved in creating the texts, the reading practices used to interpret them, and the social roles performed by writers and readers.

<div align="right">(Paré and Smart, 1994, p. 122)</div>

As follows from the definition, RGS interprets rhetorical and textual patterns in generic texts as realizations of underlying social regularities (Artemeva and Freedman, 2006). RGS therefore perceives genres as sets of choices and 'human agents [as] continually enact[ing] genres'. During 'such enactment' the human agents 'have the opportunity to challenge and change these genres' (Freedman, 1999, p. 765). In other words, genres guide the users by supplying the sets of appropriate responses to social situations, and the users choose and enact these sets. Through this enactment of choices, genres can 'change, evolve, and decay' (Miller, 1984, p. 163). However, for the community to perceive or recognize the genre, it needs to be recognizable or, as Schryer (1994) observes, 'stabilized-for-now or stabilized enough' (p. 108). Because knowing what to write is only important if one knows how to write it in an appropriate place and at an appropriate time, as Freadman (1994) explains, to produce genres 'at inappropriate places and times is to run the risk of having them ruled out' (p. 59). That is, genre knowledge, however tacit (Polanyi, 1962), must include the knowledge of the realization of the patterns of production and consumption of genre (Bazerman, 1988; Paré and Smart, 1994). Only then does genre knowledge provide the learner with the 'keys to understanding how to participate in the actions of a community' (Miller, 1984, p. 165) and with a sense of community membership.

Even though ESP and RGS represent two distinct traditions in genre studies, more recently, genre scholars (Swales, 2009; Johns, 2011, in press; Tardy, 2012) have noticed that these genre approaches have 'coalesced somewhat, with the result that the divisions among the ... traditions have become much less sharp – even if they have not entirely disappeared' (Swales, 2009, p. 4). Tardy (2012) stresses that regardless of the differences in genre traditions, currently, all major approaches to genre studies 'define genre as social practice' (p. 167). This observation is similar to Miller's (1984) and Freedman's (1999) views in that it takes us beyond perceiving recurrent patterns of discourse 'as template-like structures that simply happen to look the way they do'

and leads us to seeing genres as 'products of the practices and values of a social group' (Tardy, 2012, p. 167).

In the past few years, genre researchers (e.g. Tardy, 2009, 2011, 2012; Reiff and Bawarshi, 2011; Bruce, 2013; Johns, in press) have started to suggest that a combination of compatible approaches to genre studies and of the concepts that, in the past, were seen as the purview of particular genre traditions may be productive for both genre research and pedagogy. Specifically, a combination of ESP and RGS, unified by their view of genre as the social practice of a community, promises to be productive, as several recent research and pedagogical studies have suggested (Adam and Artemeva, 2002; Tardy, 2009, 2011; Johns, in press). All in all, as Tardy (2006) aptly put it, 'with this growing interest in and acceptance of genre as fundamental to writing, the question of how individuals build knowledge of genres becomes crucial' (p. 79). This question is particularly pertinent for ESP/EAP genre research.

Context of the study

A diverse population of ELLs in Canadian English-medium universities reflects a broad spectrum of cultural, educational, disciplinary and linguistic backgrounds, as well as different levels of English proficiency. The ELLs do not come to Canadian universities as linguistic blank slates (Swan, 1985); on the contrary, they bring rich linguistic and genre knowledge, and experiences from educational institutions they have attended and academic programmes they have completed in their first (L1) and/or additional language (AL), and often in English (Artemeva, 1995). All ELLs accepted into Canadian English-medium universities have already reached some level of English proficiency, and, as Solano-Flores and Trumbull (2003) observed, can be viewed as bilingual and multilingual individuals who 'fall at different points' on the 'bilingual proficiency . . . continuum' (p. 4). The oral and written English and L1/AL proficiencies of these incipient bilinguals and multilinguals may vary depending on contexts of language use (Hamers and Blanc, 1993).

Upon joining a Canadian university, many ELLs face not only linguistic challenges but also challenges in the new academic culture. Even advanced ELLs who appear to have the linguistic knowledge sufficient to understand the writing assignments and produce texts at the university level may experience difficulties writing in the Canadian academe. Research has shown that these difficulties often leave the students feeling unprepared to face the demands of their university courses (Tardy, 2009; Wee et al., 2009). Even though for some of these students

English may now be the primary language for daily communication, they may still face difficulties in producing academic texts and communicating in a university context. Such students are usually identified through academic English-language proficiency assessment as needing academic support (Tardy, 2009; Dooey, 2010). Most English-medium universities in Canada provide such support through EAP programmes designed to assist ELLs with their academic acculturation, linguistic and generic knowledge, and the development of relevant oral and written proficiencies (Cheng et al., 2004).

EAP students come to Canadian universities with at least a high-school diploma, and some having completed undergraduate and even graduate programmes elsewhere – that is, these students have been able to develop academic knowledge and successfully perform in prior academic contexts. They are therefore in the possession of prior genre knowledge, often tacit, acquired in L1 and/or ALs before arriving in the Canadian EAP classroom. Over 30 years ago, researchers (Dulay et al., 1982) noted that the use of L1 in the EFL and ESL classrooms might have some general advantages. More recently, research in L1 has indicated that under certain circumstances and with instructors' support, students' prior knowledge of genres may be drawn upon in the university classroom (Artemeva and Fox, 2010; Reiff and Bawarshi, 2011; Johns, in press). The researchers observed that, if instructors better understood students' prior knowledge and its role in the development of new academic knowledge, they would be able to better support students' transition to the new university context (cf. Nowacek, 2011).

The number of studies that address issues of prior knowledge and its (possible) effects on students' performance in the university classroom has recently increased (Devitt, 2004; Rounsaville, 2012), with some studies focusing specifically on English-speaking university students' perceptions of their prior knowledge (Artemeva, 2008; Reiff and Bawarshi, 2011). However, there have been only a few studies that investigated ELLs' prior knowledge of genres, its use and the possible effects on learning genres of academic English (Gentil, 2011; Mein, 2012). Even fewer studies have investigated ELLs' perceptions of their prior genre knowledge and writing strategies (Errey and Li, 2005; Dooey, 2010).

Given the paucity of research in this area and in an attempt to locate answers to Nowacek's (2011) question about possible connections between students' prior learning in one domain and their later learning in another, we have conducted a case study in the context of a Canadian university EAP classroom, designed to provide a foundation for future large-scale research into EAP students' perceptions of their prior genre

knowledge and its effects on learning to write in English. The research questions that we raise in this chapter are:

- What, if any, knowledge of written genres do ELLs reportedly bring with them to the EAP classroom from their prior L1/AL and English education, and other contexts?
- What, if any, connections do the EAP students perceive between their prior L1 and English writing and the EAP writing requirements?
- How does the EAP programme affect the students' perceptions of academic writing in English and of the English language as a whole?

In addition to the combined ESP-RGS theoretical framework presented above, the study draws on the discussion of genre knowledge transfer.

Genre knowledge transfer

The role of genre knowledge in learning genres in L1 and second language (L2) has been the focus of recent studies investigating (1) the effects of genre knowledge developed in a writing/composition class on student writing in disciplinary classes (Wardle, 2007) and (2) genre-based L1 and L2 pedagogies (Devitt, 2004; Cheng, 2007; Johns, 2011, in press). Such studies have researched the effects of learning in an L1 (often English) context on learning in another L1 context (L1–L1 transfer) (Atemeva and Fox, 2010; Brent, 2011; Reiff and Bawarshi, 2011), and the effects of learning in an L2 (often English) context on learning in L2 in another context (L2–L2 transfer) (James, 2010). The driving force behind many studies on L1–L1 and L2–L2 transfer is the need to understand if the knowledge gained in support courses (writing/composition or EAP courses) might assist in students' disciplinary courses – that is, if and how knowledge gained in one context may positively transfer to another (Tuomi-Grohn and Engeström, 2003; Brent, 2011). In other words, such studies seek answers to Nowacek's (2011) question cited at the beginning of the chapter.

For example, in their studies of the effects of prior genre knowledge among English-speaking first-year university students in Canada (Artemeva and Fox, 2010; Brent, 2011) and in the USA (Reiff, 2008; Reiff and Bawarshi, 2011; Rounsaville, 2012), researchers observed that few students had explicit awareness of genres they had learned and successfully used elsewhere, and that only those students who had been immersed in the corresponding social contexts of genre production were able to rely on their prior genre knowledge in the production of new

genres. The need to understand how L2 writers use the knowledge developed in the EAP classroom in their disciplinary courses had motivated a number of studies that explored the effects of ELLs' prior knowledge on their learning and performance in EAP classes (Cheng, 2007; James, 2010). These studies represent an important area of research that addresses the questions of the effectiveness of current EAP pedagogies and their further development. The case study presented in this chapter further contributes to this research by investigating ELLs' perceptions of the effects (if any) of their prior genre knowledge on learning EAP genres.

Methods

This small-scale empirical qualitative case study (Yin, 2011), approved by the institutional Research Ethics Board, has emergent design (Dornyei, 2007) and uses what Yin refers to as 'a sample of convenience'. This sample consists of six advanced EAP students from a Canadian EAP programme who volunteered to participate in the study.

All student participants provided their demographic information and responded to a genre awareness questionnaire developed by Reiff and Bawarshi (2011) in their study of prior genre knowledge of the first-year composition (FYC) students in two American universities. The questionnaire asked students to select from a list of genres that they might have encountered prior to enrolling in the EAP programme, such as blog, personal letter, lab report or summary. We chose Reiff and Bawarshi's questionnaire as a tool that allowed us to compare the repertoire of English genres (Orlikowski and Yates, 1994) identified by our study participants with the repertoire identified by the American FYC students.

Further, a maximum variation sample (MVS) (Dornyei, 2007) of participants was selected from the sample of convenience for close analysis. The selection of the MVS ensured a maximum variety of L1s spoken by the participants, reflected a range of L1-dominant bilingual or multilingual writers (Butler and Hakuta, 2006) who had completed the majority of their educations in their L1s prior to entering the EAP programme under study, and represented different levels of their prior education. The MVS included three students – Greg, Alicia and Marcia – who spoke and were educated in Mandarin Chinese, Persian and Russian, respectively.

After having completed the questionnaire, each of the study participants from the sample of convenience took part in two one-on-one

30-minute semistructured interviews conducted within the five-month data-collection period. The interviews were followed by phone and e-mail communication. The genre awareness questionnaire (Reiff and Bawarshi, 2011) and follow-up communication were used to develop a thick description (Geertz, 1973) of student participants' prior L1, AL and English genre knowledge.

To maximize the validity and trustworthiness of the study, methods were triangulated (Yin, 2011). Two key informants (Fox, 2014) were recruited: the EAP programme coordinator and the EAP classroom instructor. These were interviewed in order to compare the students' and instructors' perceptions of the EAP students' prior genre knowledge. In addition, secondary data, including the EAP course syllabus and other course materials, were collected. To further triangulate the study and to confirm the accuracy of the English translations of the L1 genre names provided by the MVS participants, we recruited three expert language informants who had completed, or were completing, advanced degrees in applied linguistics. The selection criterion for expert informants was that each language informant spoke the same L1 as one of the MVS participants – that is, Mandarin Chinese, Persian, and Russian – in order to provide us with detailed explanations of the nature of the L1/AL genres of academic writing that the MVS participants identified in their responses to the questionnaire and interviews. Interviews and follow-up exchanges with all participants were digitally audio recorded and transcribed, and then thematically coded (Saldaña, 2009). We discuss the findings of the study below.

EAP students' perceptions of their prior genre knowledge

Reported students' L1 and prior English academic genre experiences

All student participants in our study reported that they had done very little writing in their prior education. In their view, their prior education did not seem to privilege writing in the same way they perceived it to be privileged in their EAP classes in Canada. Even though the students were unable to articulate their L1 writing experiences, all of them identified themselves as good L1 academic writers, a perception which seems to be based on their previous successful academic performance.

In addition to reporting on prior courses taught in L1, all student participants indicated that they had taken English classes in their home countries. They identified those classes as focusing on 'simple things'

(Greg), 'just talking, not really writing' (Alice), and predominantly focusing on grammar and vocabulary to prepare students for standardized tests. Overall the perceived focus of those classes was not on writing in English.

Reported EAP student genre knowledge

In the interviews the student participants provided little explicit information about their prior L1 academic writing or genres they might have experienced in English classes. However, their responses to the genre awareness questionnaire indicated that they had produced different academic and non-academic genres in English. The students' experiences varied according to their countries of origin, disciplines and the highest levels of education achieved prior to enrolling in the EAP programme at the Canadian university. During the interviews when the students identified L1 genres, we recoded the names of genres in the students' original languages or asked the students to write the names for us, and preserved the L1 genre names in our report because the students were not always able to find an equivalent genre name in English. Later, the expert language informants verified the genre names and provided English equivalents (if any) and/or detailed explanations in those cases where the English equivalent did not exist. The reports of the MVS participants are presented below.

Greg, who completed only high school in China before coming to Canada, described his L1 education as focusing on exams and including creative, rather than academic, writing. His prior L1 genre repertoire included 短篇小说 (short story), 简答题 and 论述题 (short- and long-answer test question), 论文 (essay), 总结 (summary), 读后感 (reflection on readings) and 观后感 (reflection on video). Greg summed up his L1 educational experience by saying: 'I write [sic] many summarizes [sic] and compositions.' Alice, who completed an undergraduate degree in statistics in Iran, reported producing انشاء (Enshah, a form of creative writing), ریاضی مشکل (short answer to maths problems or solution of equations), تمرین کردن (solution to mathematical word problem), گزارش های آماری (statistical analysis report) and خلاصه نویسی (academic summary). Alice referred to the L1 end-of-term writing assignment required for the undergraduate degree in statistics as مقاله نهایی (final paper). Marcia, a bilingual Kyrgyz-Russian speaker who completed her master's degree in international relations in Kyrgyzstan in Russian reported on a set of genres that she had produced in Russian, including *Реферат* (term paper), *Эссе* (opinion or position essay), *Доклад* (six-page essay), *Изложение* (summary) and *Презентация* (academic presentation). She was able to articulate only

those genres she produced in Russian during her time in graduate school in Kyrgyzstan, which was her most recent educational experience.

When we compared our student participants' reports of their prior exposure to and familiarity with English genres with those of the FYC students from two American universities in Reiff and Bawarshi's (2011) study, we observed significant differences in the levels of experience with genre production in literary arts. More than 70% of the students in Reiff and Bawarshi's study had reportedly produced fiction and poetry in English, whereas in our study only one EAP student, Cindy, provided information about producing such texts in English, her L2. Cindy was born in Canada to Arabic-speaking parents and moved with her family to an Arabic-speaking country before starting her education. In our sample of convenience, only Cindy reported on a rich prior English genre repertoire, which was comparable to that reported by the students in Reiff and Bawarshi's study. Cindy informed us that she had accumulated this rich English genre repertoire during her time at an American international high school she attended in the Arabic-speaking country where she had lived prior to her return to Canada and enrolment in the EAP programme. She reportedly had experience producing 33 of the 39 genres included in the genre awareness questionnaire, whereas Greg had produced 23, Marcia 12 and Alice only 4. No other student participant in our sample had been educated in English-medium institutions prior to arriving in Canada.

The comparison revealed another difference between American FYC students' prior genre knowledge and that of our EAP student participants': some of the genres that the American students and the EAP students in our study identified as most commonly produced differed. The American FYC students identified the following five genres as the ones they most commonly produced: the five-paragraph essay (95% of students in the study had produced texts in this genre), e-mail (94%), lecture notes (92%), lab report (92%) and the compare-and-contrast paper (91%). ELLs in our study identified the following genres as most commonly produced: the summary (100% of the EAP student participants from the sample of convenience had reportedly produced texts in this genre), e-mail (83%), lecture notes (83%), job applications (83%), and personal letters (67%). For the American FYC students, four of the top-five genres were academic, whereas for our EAP student participants, only two of the five most common genres were academic. In addition, there was a difference in students' familiarity with some specific academic genres, such as the genre of the academic summary. (Please note that our view of genres is disciplinary – that is, we see genres as

varying according to the needs of disciplines [Wardle, 2007; Artemeva and Fox, 2010] – however, because the students in both studies identified the summary as a genre without providing disciplinary differences, we treat it as such here.) Interestingly, if in Reiff and Bawarshi's (2011) study 69% of the FYC students surveyed reported that they were familiar with summary-writing, in our study, all student participants stated that they had experienced this genre in the EAP course, if not elsewhere in the past. (Greg, Alicia and Marcia identified this genre as familiar from their prior experience.) Interestingly, Marcia reported that she was never asked to write summaries in the disciplinary classes she was taking concurrently with the EAP course, while the EAP course had a strong emphasis on summary-writing. Given that, according to the American FYC students, the genre of the summary had not been privileged in their courses to the extent it was in the EAP course in our study, and because it did not appear privileged in Canadian disciplinary courses either, privileging summaries in the EAP course might skew ELL's perception of the prevalence of this genre and leave ELLs with unrealistic expectations of what might be required of them in disciplinary courses.

Yet another difference was observed in that the majority of the American FYC students had reported producing five-paragraph essays and lab reports, while only three EAP student participants in our study reported that they had produced those genres. This finding may reflect the differences in school curriculum in the USA and in our participants' countries of origin. In addition, none of our student participants mentioned that they had been taught by English-speaking teachers in the English classrooms in their home countries.

None of the EAP student participants was able to articulate any connections that might have existed between what they had done in their prior English courses and what they were doing in the EAP course at the time of the study. Interestingly, this information appeared radically different from the view of the students' prior English education expressed by the EAP instructor participant. The instructor was convinced that in their previous English classes, students had 'Canadian, American, or British English teachers', and that the students knew well what was expected of them in the Canadian EAP classroom.

Overall, although Cindy, who had attended an American school, approached the level of familiarity with English academic genres comparable to that of the students from the Reiff and Bawarshi (2011) study, all other student participants in our study reportedly had had far more limited experience.

EAP student perceptions of L1 vs. English academic writing

All student participants in our study reflected on their prior L1 writing as being non-academic, limited and infrequent, and more flexible and unstructured than what they were required to produce in English in the EAP class. The perceptions of having a limited experience with L1 writing appears at odds with the inventory of academic genres, identified through the analysis of their responses to the genre awareness questionnaire and interviews.

In the interviews, the student participants described English academic writing as 'very logical . . . [with] the structure [being] very clear' (Greg). They identified the importance of using formal language and in-text citations. Their perceptions were consistently focused on form and on the difficulties they experienced producing texts according to the specifications provided in their advanced EAP course. Marcia, for example, described the problems that she experienced with the structure of an English academic paper by saying that she 'didn't know about . . . [introduction, body, and conclusion] and so it was really hard for [her to write EAP papers]'. In addition, the student participants perceived the way their EAP writing assignments were marked as being different from how writing had been assessed in their prior L1 classes. In the EAP class they felt that at least 70% of the mark was based on the paper's 'organization and grammar' as opposed to their L1 classes, wherein they felt that at least 90% of the mark had been assigned to their 'ideas' or content. However, when we compared the students' perceptions of marking with the EAP course syllabus and interviews with the EAP instructors, in which the EAP marking rubric was described and explained to us, we realized that students' perceptions differed from what was explicitly stated in the course-marking rubric available to the students, wherein 50% of the mark was supposed to be assigned to the content and 50% to the grammar, format, structure and vocabulary of the papers (similar to Raymond and Parks, 2002).

Perceptions of learning to write to a specification in the EAP class

The focus of the EAP course as perceived by our student participants appears to be on what Cansagarajah (2001) identified as the mechanics of text production. He observed that, in contrast with what continues to be explicitly stated in EAP course syllabi, much of EAP teaching continues to be more focused on grammar and the organization of students'

writing than on students' ideas. However, even though our student participants struggled with the perceived 'rigidity' of English academic writing, complained that requirements made them feel 'constrained', and perceived writing in their L1s as being free and more enabling, most of them reported that they found reassurance and comfort in this perceived repetitive and structured nature of English academic writing as presented to them in the EAP course. For example, Marcia commented: 'I like this structure because…it is easier.' It has been observed in the literature (Hyland, 2004; Johns, 2011) that writing to a specification could be comforting to students once the action has become 'habitualized' (Berger and Luckman, 1966), as it can then be repeated with an economy of effort. The EAP instructor participants suggested that explicit instructions helped students to understand the expectations of the assignment and that they consciously provided 'tons of instructions' in their assignment prompts.

The EAP assignment prompts, which were collected as secondary data, strongly resembled what Freadman (1994) would call a recipe – that is, a detailed step-by-step instruction on how to organize the paper, how to cite sources, what format to follow and so on. As discussed earlier in this chapter, both ESP and RGS genre scholars see genres as rhetorical practices of the communities of genre users. If genres are presented to students as recipes, the students may simply reproduce the model without developing the understanding of the social action the genre performs, and therefore become constrained by it (Freedman, 1993). Later, finding themselves in a new situation in the disciplinary classroom, students may fall back on what they had learned in the EAP classroom without developing an understanding of the rhetorical demands of the situation, and thus experience negative transfer of a formal understanding of genre. In addition, teaching genres as a fixed set of rules does not take into account acceptable variations existing in texts that belong to the same genre (Swales, 1990; Hyland, 2004; Tardy, in press) and does not provide students with the opportunity to explore such variation in their own writing.

The student participants' perceptions that they were being taught to write to a form might also be influenced by the nature of the tasks required of them in the EAP class. As noted by Adam and Artemeva (2002), EAP instructors often reduce the selection of English presented to the students until it becomes 'teachable' (p. 179). The student participants referred to a limited number of genres they were asked to read and write in the EAP course, and the instructor participants agreed that a choice of assignments might appear limiting to students. The reason

for such a limited and limiting choice of genres, according to the EAP instructors, is that they have to select a manageable number of genres they can teach in one semester. However, and as discussed above, being exposed to a limited set of genres and writing to a specification may reinforce students' view of genre as a template rather than a situated social practice.

As a productive departure from the template-like teaching of genres, Tardy (2013, in press) introduced the idea of creativity in writing and the acceptance of departures from writing conventions or specifications. Even though Bakhtin (1986) warned us that only those who had mastered a genre can use it creatively, more recent studies (e.g., Artemeva, 2005) indicated that novices who have developed a sociorhetorical understanding of genres may be able to successfully introduce changes to genres in ways that become accepted by the community of genre users. In our study, the student participants did not appear to feel that they had much leeway to depart from the form offered to them by EAP instructors. This perception may be a concern for the EAP community because ELLs seem to develop a view of academic English as limiting and 'rigid . . . [with] no imagination' (Hyland, 1997, p. 16). As an EAP instructor in our study commented, 'we might be [boxing students in]' and, consequently, restricting their creativity. Some explicit genre instruction that raises students' genre awareness (Devitt, 2004, 2007) offered in the context of sociorhetorical genre analysis developed by EAP and RGS scholars (Swales, 1990; Devitt et al., 2004; Johns, in press) might be seen as complementary and useful because it allows the students to see genres as rhetorical practices of discourse communities and analyse their textual realizations in generic texts.

Student perceptions of the relationship between L1 and English academic writing

Artemeva and Fox (2010) and Devitt (2007) maintain that when learners are asked to produce texts in an unfamiliar genre, they more often than not fall back on a familiar prior genre acquired through their previous writing experiences. One might wonder what familiar genres our student participants might fall back on in the EAP classroom if they did not perceive anything they had learned in the past as useful. Johns (in press) suggests that the teaching of a new genre in English needs to start with a familiar genre. Both EAP instructor participants in our study agreed that some of the types of writing – for example, reports and research papers – learned by the student participants through their

prior experiences, could be applied to the production of English texts in EAP. However, as our case study indicates, the majority of the student participants did not perceive such a connection. Marcia, for example, observed: '[my] past experience doesn't help me at all ... nothing I write here in Graduate School is similar to what I wrote back home'. This was despite the fact that she was able to identify genres and writing tasks learned in her home country, which were similar to the ones used in her Canadian graduate classes. One of the reasons for the student participants' view that their prior writing experience did not help them in their current EAP class might lie in their perception that they simply could not have had any similar experiences to draw on before coming to Canada. Without recognizing that there might be a connection between what was experienced in one context and what is being experienced in a different context, the students may struggle to transfer relevant aspects of their L1 genre awareness and knowledge to their EAP writing.

In contrast, the students in our study had no difficulty comparing the genres required to be produced in the EAP class and the genres required in their disciplinary courses they took concurrently with EAP. Perhaps they were able to recognize and compare genres learned in EAP with the ones they needed to produce in disciplinary courses because of the academic genre awareness that was explicitly promoted in their EAP class.

Conclusions and implications

The purpose of the investigation presented in the chapter is to start developing an understanding of (1) the prior genre knowledge ELLs bring to EAP classes and (2) the ways (if any) that EAP instructors might assist students with using their previously acquired genre knowledge in Canadian university courses. In particular, given the limited amount of information about students' perceptions of their prior genre knowledge in the EAP context (Dooey, 2010), we chose to focus on such students' perceptions. Specifically, we investigated the EAP students' perceptions of their prior knowledge of genres developed in L1/AL and/or in English before they enrolled in an advanced EAP course at a Canadian university, and perceived connections, if any, between the students' prior genre knowledge and the requirements and expectations of the EAP classroom. Another related issue of interest was students' perceptions of the affordances of their L1s versus the English language that the ELLs developed while enrolled in the advanced EAP course.

The framing question for our case study was 'Why and how do students connect learning from one domain with learning in another domain and how can teachers facilitate such connections?' (Nowacek, 2011, p. 3). The findings of this case study suggest that the student participants have mainly implicit awareness and knowledge of the academic genres they had produced in their L1 and prior English classes. To access and document this tacit knowledge, researchers need to rely on multiple research instruments and expert language informants. The student participants in our study perceived little or no connection between their prior L1 and English genre awareness and knowledge, and their current EAP writing. This lack of awareness may further complicate any potential positive transfer of genre awareness and knowledge, or even of general writing strategies (James, 2010; Brent, 2011; Nowacek, 2011; Reiff and Bawarshi, 2011), and leads students to perceive themselves as blank slates rather than experienced L1-dominant bilingual or multilingual writers with years of relevant prior writing experience in different languages. Such perceptions may negatively affect students' learning in the EAP classroom and disciplinary courses, and prevent them from drawing on potentially useful prior genre knowledge.

In the absence of the students' awareness of their prior rhetorical and linguistic resources in L1 and English, the EAP class appears to have affected the students' perceptions of the English language, with the student participants reporting that the English language is largely formulaic, not appropriate for fiction and poetry, and more suitable for research-oriented writing.

Implications for future research

One of the main goals of the case study presented in this chapter is to develop an approach suitable for data collection and analysis for a large-scale, longitudinal study of the same nature. The presented study design revealed that a combined ESP-RGS view of genre learning and teaching provides a powerful theoretical framework for unpacking students' perceptions, and for comparing them with instructors' views. In addition, the case study indicated that some research instruments needed fine-tuning and revisions, while others would be suitable for a large-scale investigation. For example, our decision to recruit expert language informants proved invaluable to understanding and documenting prior genres that students had experienced. However, a striking discrepancy between the rich information about prior genre experiences that students were able to provide in response to the genre awareness

questionnaire versus the limited information provided in the interviews has prompted us to reconsider the sequence in which the questionnaire and interviews need to be administered to maximize their effectiveness. In a large-scale study we will first administer the genre awareness questionnaire, then build the interviews around the genres identified in the questionnaire responses, and then separately probe students' prior genre knowledge acquired in L1/AL/English.

As with any research relying on retrospective information, this case study is limited by potential inaccuracies in students' recollections of their prior writing experiences. There are two possible remedies: to conduct an international study, matching the EAP students' backgrounds with particular national, educational and linguistic locations, and/or to draw on a close analysis of student participants' writing produced in the EAP and disciplinary courses (and, if available, their prior writing in L1 and/or English). The information drawn from the analysis of the questionnaire responses and interviews should be juxtaposed with the outcomes of the analysis of student writing. This approach may help us to understand to what extent students' perceptions are reflected in their actual genre production. The scope of the small-scale case study discussed here did not allow for such an analysis.

The outcomes of the case study contribute to research on EAP students' perceptions of their prior genre knowledge and its possible use in the EAP classroom (and beyond). Further research is needed to investigate the effects of genre-based EAP pedagogies (Johns, 2011, in press) on potential positive transfer from and application of students' prior genre awareness and knowledge in new academic contexts.

Pedagogical implications

The study hints at the need for more specialized training for the EAP teaching professionals (Fox, 2009), which could include training in genre-based pedagogies (Devitt, 2009; Johns, 2011, in press; Bruce, 2013). An increase in the EAP instructors' understanding of their students' prior L1 and English genre knowledge and its role in the students' English academic writing could aid in the design of course materials, activities and curricula. These resources might lead from the learner's known genres to new genres, and assist learners in building connections between their prior L1 or English genre knowledge and current English academic writing (Johns, 2011, in press). The positive transfer of genre awareness and knowledge is more likely if the learners are able to have an accurate perception of, and identify the connection between,

what they did in the past and what they are doing now (James, 2010; Nowacek, 2011; Reiff and Bawarshi, 2011).

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