

**IDIOM**

ENGLISH UNDERGRADUATE  
ACADEMIC JOURNAL

AN ANNUAL PUBLICATION  
*of* EXEMPLARY LITERARY CRITICISM  
WRITTEN *by* UNDERGRADUATES  
*at the* UNIVERSITY *of* TORONTO

VOLUME 3 | 2009

## STAFF & CONTRIBUTORS

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF	Misha Teramura
ASSISTANT EDITORS-IN-CHIEF	Victoria Woolner Amanda Lord
ASSOCIATE EDITORS	Marie Nutter Meghan Parker Anne Song
MANAGING EDITOR	Zalika Reid-Benta
CONTRIBUTORS	David Bowden Alison Chapman Jennifer Chaskavich Roseen Giles Rodrigo Toromoreno
ACADEMIC ADVISOR	Professor Linda Hutcheon
EDITORIAL ADVISOR	Professor Andy Orchard
PRINTING	Coach House Press

## CONTENTS

5	EDITOR'S NOTE
ROSEEN GILES 7	Negativity in Alain Robbe-Grillet's <i>Jealousy</i> and Paul Celan's "Deathfugue" and "Streak"
ALISON CHAPMAN 17	<i>Trivia</i> : Ambiguity and the Convergence of Authority
DAVID BOWDEN 27	The Dramaturgy of Vomit in <i>Cymbeline</i> and <i>Ram Alley</i>
JENNIFER CHASKAVICH 39	A Fortunate Dialect: Class, Language, and Survival in Defoe's <i>Moll Flanders</i>
RODRIGO TOROMORENO 45	"Ora pro nobis": The Public Expansion of the Private Portuguese Voyage in <i>Os Lusíadas</i>
53	CONTRIBUTORS
55	SPONSORS

## EDITOR'S NOTE

On behalf of the Editorial Board, it is my pleasure to present you with the 2009 volume of *Idiom*, an annual journal of exemplary scholarship in literary criticism written by undergraduate students at the University of Toronto.

This academic year has been a period of exciting changes for our journal as we pursued new directions and broadened our intellectual scope by welcoming all literary critical essays from any disciplinary milieu, English and beyond. This year we are proud to showcase five essays discussing literature originally written in four languages. However, while much about *Idiom* has changed, our journal has remained committed to its goals of providing a forum in which to acknowledge excellent undergraduate scholarship and share this exemplary thinking and writing with the wider undergraduate community.

We heartily congratulate the authors whose work is included herein; however, *Idiom*—like any undergraduate journal and, indeed, all of scholarship—is a collective effort. We extend profound thanks to all those without whom our journal would simply not exist: our generous and supportive sponsors, the many who have offered their advice and assistance, and every student who shared their work with us. I would especially like to thank the brilliant members of *Idiom*'s dedicated Editorial Board for their invaluable insights and commitment over the past months.

Reflecting on the year, it seems to me that our journal has in some ways fulfilled a peculiar inevitability in light of its name. The word *idiom* is perhaps most familiar to us with its sense of “a characteristic mode of expression”; however, the word's first appearances in English (based on the Greek *idioma*, via Latin) originally denoted “language” or, as Sir Thomas Elyot tells us in his 1538 dictionary, “a propre forme of speche.” In this past year, our *Idiom* has come to reflect not only the unique styles of literary writers and the young scholars who study them, but also the different languages through which they communicate: a curious fate indeed.

However, to take a step deeper into etymology and return to the Greek *idioma*, we see its foundation in the meaning of “to make one’s own, to appropriate.” This, I think, resonates profoundly for students of literature: “to make one’s own.” Isn’t that after all what we do with texts? Works of literature might exist independently but, when we approach them, when we actively read them, we are making them our own. Certainly, what the authors of the essays included in this volume have done is just that: they have made texts their own in exciting ways and shared their illuminating findings with us. And when you read these essays, you will, no doubt, make them your own as well. They may educate you, stimulate you, challenge you, infuriate you, inspire you, or do all of these things. And that’s just the point.

Read this journal. Engage with it. Make it your own.

MISHA TERAMURA, Editor-in-Chief  
*April 2009*

## NEGATIVITY IN ALAIN ROBBE-GRILLET’S *JEALOUSY* AND PAUL CELAN’S “DEATHFUGUE” AND “STREAK”

ROSEEN GILES

In his speech “The Meridian,” Paul Celan suggests that art creates ‘I-distantness,’ that is, it demands a remoteness from what is familiar and what is comfortable: “perhaps poetry, like art, is going with a self-forgotten I toward the uncanny and the strange, and is again—but where? but in what place? but with what? but as what?—setting itself free?” (406). Representing facets of our existence that are beyond our grasp is a slippery and unstable endeavour. This instability is because trying to conceive of the idea that there may be spaces outside the confines of our perception is overwhelming and frightening. How can we represent—or at least learn to acknowledge—the idea of the infinite beyond us, which is fundamentally unknowable? This is the paradox that negativity in art tries to tackle.

The artist’s reality, as will be discussed in the works of Paul Celan and Alain Robbe-Grillet, can be understood as the negation of the world they highlight; the very fact that the artist insists on weaving a ‘human-less’ world draws attention to the fundamental ‘humanness’ of art. This happens via a hermeneutic process: the reader’s active role in reading completes the author’s artistic circuit to bring about his reality. The ‘negativity’ of both Celan’s poetry and Robbe-Grillet’s novella *Jealousy* include the reader and author in a dialogue because they address the core issue of human perceptions and, more importantly, the limits of these inescapable perceptive abilities.

In his poetry, Paul Celan makes an attempt to take the reader ‘outside oneself’ by representing *das Unheimliche*, or “the uncanny,” something that is familiar yet unfamiliar or other-like (see Freud’s work). It is in this way, Celan

suggests, that we will come back into ourselves to be better acquainted with our existence. In order to bring this about, the poet essentially attempts the impossible: to use language to ‘leave ourselves.’ It is, of course, impossible to transcend the confines of our own senses into ‘inhuman’ realms; what we find instead is this idea of the uncanny, of the illusion of impartiality. This is by no means a failure at the ‘distantness’ that Celan says poetry must create. It is through this attempt that we can begin to understand and see the bars, or *grille*, that keep us bound to our perceptive abilities; the uncanny gives us a moment of temporary openness or clarity in understanding our own situation and the impossibility of transcendence above it. This is what Celan means when he says in his “Meridian” speech: “Ladies and gentlemen, I find something that comforts me a little at having taken, in your presence, this impossible path, this path of the impossible” (413). The ultimate goal, then, is not the tension and unease that comes with the uncanny but rather the acknowledgement of the limits of our finite existence through a glimpse of the infinite.

Celan’s attempt at the impossible in order to draw attention to its very impossibility is shared by Alain Robbe-Grillet in his novella *Jealousy*. The narrative in *Jealousy* is geometric, static, and seemingly devoid of humanity. Objects are described in an excessively thorough way in terms of their position and location relative to the narrator. In contrast with the nineteenth-century conception of the novel, in which objects are described in human contexts, objects in the *nouveau roman Jealousy* exist solely for themselves and are never, at least explicitly, implicated in any human situation. A good example of this in Robbe-Grillet’s novella occurs in a peculiar passage about a hanging photograph (94-95). The reader does not get a description of the unnamed character A... who is presumably the centrepiece of this photograph but rather an intensely elaborate description of the wire table that happens to be behind her.

What Robbe-Grillet attempts in the narrative of *Jealousy* is a human-less perception, a way of looking at the world that is free of the imposed meanings that humans attach to objects in order to give them a comprehensible function. However, instead of suggesting that this way of writing paves the path to truths, Robbe-Grillet is in fact suggesting that a ‘negative image’ of this text, created by the reader, is what is real. He does this by constructing a narrative that, precisely because of its lack of human psychology, invites

us to add this human psychology in and to artificially create connections. The reader finds himself or herself flipping frantically back and forth in the text, becoming more and more frustrated while trying to create a reasonable chronology and to see how each spatial description fits into it. Robbe-Grillet is intentionally pointing out the unbearable human need to comprehend and to categorize what we see and hear. If this is blurred or made difficult, as it is in *Jealousy*, the reader is overcome with a tenseness and irritation. A ‘human-less’ perception is impossible: we may try to strip down our observation and perspective to the bare minimum, as is attempted in the text of *Jealousy*, but we will never overcome the limits of our own senses in order to have a perception that is truly ‘outside ourselves.’ The following examination will attempt to show how negativity functions in Celan’s and Robbe-Grillet’s writing. In addition to excerpts from his speeches, two of Celan’s poems will be used as examples: “Deathfugue” and “Streak.”

Negativity in Celan’s poetry has to do with speech and silence. By taking the reader into the realm of the uncanny and of silence, Celan propels us into speech and into the realisation that the only thing that is real and graspable, as far as humanity is concerned, is language itself. In his speech given upon receiving the Literature Prize of Bremen, Celan said:

Reachable, near and not lost, there remained in the midst of the losses this one thing: language.

It, the language, remained, not lost, yes in spite of everything. But it had to pass through its own answerlessness, pass through frightful muting, pass through the thousand darknesses of deathbringing speech. It passed through and gave back no words for that which happened; yet it passed through this happening. Passed through and could come to light again, “enriched” by all this. (395)

It is true that what Celan is referring to when he speaks of “the thousand darknesses” and the “frightful muting” is the Holocaust and the propaganda campaigns surrounding it; however, the way he addresses this attack on speech and language potentially has an even more universal meaning: language, in trying to transcend itself beyond its fundamental attachment to all that is human, makes itself mute. By thinning language out to its ends, into silence and the end of communication, Celan in fact sparks speech or dialogue in a kind of renewed hope.

To finally delve into the more specific, Celan's poem "Deathfugue" is a strong example of a representation of *das Unheimliche*. The poem is mechanical and rhythmic with its recurring sentences and fragments. There is a sense of ritual and repetition in the metre and the text itself, such as with the references to dancing. These are in reality the forced labour 'dances' of the Nazi concentration camps, which progress like clockwork to an inevitable demise. Passages such as "we drink it at evening / we drink it at midday and morning we drink it at night / we drink and we drink" have a rhythmic pounding to them, especially in their original German: "trinken und trinken" (30-31). What Celan does in this poem, with a mechanical and almost artificial approach, is to quite literally 'thin' the language out by the end of the poem using striking musico-literary techniques. The tension created, and heightened, by the rhythm and the repeating words and groups of words take the reader into this unnerving place that he calls "the uncanny."

The mechanical and rhythmic nature of the "Deathfugue" is best described in reference to its 'fugal' structure. A fugue is a musical form which treats a subject in constant imitation in several 'voices,' or lines of music. The subject is repeated in succession by each of the voices: once the first voice has finished stating the subject, the next voice begins it, and so on. While each voice is completing its statement of the subject, the other voices play what are called 'countersubjects,' lines of music that follow the harmonies of the subject. After each voice has stated the subject, the composer may choose to write one or several 'episodes' as transition material before returning to the subject. These episodes do not have complete statements of the subject but often draw on fragments of musical material from either the subject or the countersubject. If "Deathfugue" is considered as an actual literary fugue, the passages that begin with "Black milk of daybreak we drink" could be labelled as the subject since it opens the poem and is restated, with some variation, in the second, fourth, and sixth stanzas; the third and fifth stanzas, then, could be considered as episodes since they do not contain the subject.

Celan structures his poem fugally. In the last two lines of the fourth stanza, "a man lives in the house your goldenes Haar Margareta / your aschenes Haar Shulamith he plays with his vipers," Celan has rearranged the original two lines, "A man lives in the house he plays with his vipers" and "he writes when it grows dark to Deutschland your golden hair Margareta / Your aschen hair Shulamith," from the second stanza (31). In addition to this, the

translator has juxtaposed the English and German versions of the poem, a technique further developed later in the poem. This kind of rearranging is a common musical technique, creating various links between subjects, countersubjects, and episodes in fugues and other forms, since music must be arranged spatially and temporally: it has no tangible referent. Invertible counterpoint allows the same musical material to take on new meanings by virtue of its arrangement. In literature, this remains striking as it does not address the meanings of the words directly: the stressing of certain words comes from their placement and, through this, their meaning is accentuated.

Perhaps the most important aspect of Celan's fugal poem is the idea of *stretto*. Like the German word *eng*, *stretto* is an Italian word meaning a kind of thinning or stripping to the essentials. In fugue terminology, a *stretto* is what refers to overlapping subject entrances: a different voice begins presenting the subject before an ongoing statement by some other voice finishes. *Stretto* sections are usually found in the second half or towards the end of a fugue. This is because they shorten the duration of successive subject statements and create a building tension in their overlapping and layering. The tension continues building and is often accompanied by an accelerating harmonic rhythm until the cadence, often finishing the fugue.

In the last stanza of "Deathfugue," Celan writes a kind of poetic *stretto* where lines from different parts of the poem interject and overlap each other as I have illustrated in the following paragraph:

*Black milk of daybreak we drink you at night*  
*we drink you at midday* **Death is a master aus Deutschland**  
*we drink you at evening and morning we drink and we drink*  
**this Death is ein Meister aus Deutschland** *his eye it is blue*  
 he shoots you with shot made of lead shoots you level and true  
a man lives in the house **your goldenes Haar Margarete**  
he looses his hounds on us *grants us a grave in the air*  
he plays with his vipers and daydreams **der Tod ist ein Meister aus**  
**Deutschland**<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>The italicized text is the 'subject' from stanza one. Notice the rearrangement of times of day (morning, midday, night or evening) in each successive statement of the subject in each of the stanzas of the poem. This represents not only a deliberately confused chronology but is also an allusion to the technique of invertible counterpoint

Through his chosen fugal structure, Celan is thinning the poetic language to a minimum, concluding with the chilling two-line cadence: “dein goldenes Haar Margarete / dien aschenes Haar Sulamith” (33). The goal is not however to plunge the reader into silence forever, but to take us, with the mechanics of the poem and its disturbing content, through an unnatural, frightening silence and into an enlightened speech, which is prompted by a representation of its reverse. This idea is further developed in another of Celan’s poems, “Streak”:

Streak in the eye:  
 so as to guard  
 a sign dragged through the dark,  
 quickened by the sand (or ice?) of a  
 strange time for a stranger Ever  
 and tuned as a  
 mutely vibrating consonant (101)

This dense last section of “Streak” touches on many of the same ideas and themes as “Deathfugue” and Celan’s speeches. The idea of language being plunged into silence, “a sign dragged through the dark,” yet enduring, parallels what Celan said in his Bremen speech quoted earlier. Language must pass through this ‘answerlessness,’ silence or lack of dialogue, in order for it to emerge enriched by the “streak in the eye.” This “streak,” the *grille* through which we all perceive the world, is permanently there, but as long as we are aware of it language need not fall into a silent abyss; the conversation may continue: “a / mutely vibrating consonant.” In his poems, Celan provides that spark and hope to continue, even from the depths. We are marked by our human “streak,” yet we must suffer through it to seek reality, not trying to transcend it. Celan ends his Bremen speech describing the poet’s work as “the efforts of someone who, overarced by stars that are human handiwork, and who, shelterless in this till now undreamt-of sense and this most uncannily

---

mentioned above. The bold text is from stanza four. Note the translator’s choice to phase the fragment back into the German as the stanza progresses. The underlined italicized text is from stanza three and can be identified as an ‘episode’ since it does not contain the subject. The underlined text is from stanza two and the underlined bold text from nearly all the stanzas however only found in German in the fourth.

in the open, goes with his very being to language, stricken by and seeking reality” (396).

As discussed above, this idea of literary negativity and the uncanny is also present in Robbe-Grillet’s novella *Jealousy*. Similar to what we find in Celan’s poetry, Robbe-Grillet makes the attempt to create a distance between the reader and the real world, a sort of ‘coming out of oneself,’ in order to come back in with a different perspective. He weaves an ‘inhuman’ world that lures the reader to find links, attach meanings, and categorize the text into logical pieces in order to show that many of these ‘organizations’ are illusory simplifications. Robbe-Grillet is pointing out that ‘the world does not look back at us,’ that it does not acquiesce to exist like a human mind will organize it. Using the examples of the centipede and the character of A... from *Jealousy*, the following will discuss how Robbe-Grillet draws attention to flawed human senses by driving readers into a frenzy trying to understand what is going on within the text.

The recurring episodes involving the centipede on the wall represent much irritation and nervousness for the reader due to their lack of chronology. The whole series of events in the novella is out of order, making for much frustration and confusion; however, the centipede is a particularly striking case. The first encounter with the infamous centipede occurs when A..., the narrator, and Franck are sitting down to dinner. Straight ahead of A... on the wall is a centipede stain which appeared there at some unknown time: “a blackish spot marks the place where a centipede was squashed last week, at the beginning of the month, perhaps the month before, or later” (47). This lack of clarity is particularly irritating because the next time the centipede is hinted at, it seems as if the narrator is mocking the reader: “From the pantry door, the dining-room wall seems to have no spot on it” (59). Not only has the chronology been blurred but now the narrator mentions a stain that does not exist and has yet to appear.

An excessive description of the centipede, which follows a few pages later (62), convinces the reader that this creature is somehow important, thus luring us in to track its short and brutal life. Over a discussion of A...’s and Franck’s possible trip to the port, Franck kills the centipede with a napkin and by stepping on it on the baseboard (64). Later, after A... has apparently gone and returned from her trip, the centipede miraculously returns, and the episode with Franck is replayed (81).



In the next centipede episode, during the time of A...’s absence, the insect returns once again, mysteriously dies, and then the text goes on a long-winded description of how the narrator removes the stain off the wall. How did the centipede die if Franck was not there? Did the narrator kill it? When is this stain being removed? Nothing is clear. To further complicate things, the centipede is apparently growing. The stain described by the narrator during Franck and A...’s trip is larger than before and the insect no longer a mere centipede but a *Scutigera* (104).

The pinnacle of the centipede saga comes with the last escapade, in which the centipede is now the size of a dinner plate. Franck appears out of nowhere to kill it and suddenly, almost violently, there is a change of setting. The dining room becomes the hotel room where A... and Franck stayed, the napkin that A... clenches during the killing becomes the bed sheet, and the *Scutigera* is killed once again on the baseboard of the hotel room (113). Obviously, none of these events line up in a neat chronology: there are repetitions, omissions, and additions yet because it is repeated so many times, and in such an irritating way, the reader is convinced that it is important to figure out exactly when and where each instance happens in chronological order.

In addition to the centipede, A..., who cannot even be named, personifies the human desire to understand and find order in chaos. The fact that she is called A..., the first letter of the alphabet that could stand for anything, followed by an ellipsis, gives the reader the sense that she is incomplete, unfinished, or even dynamic. The narrator cannot bring himself to look at her straight in the eyes for most of the novella, neither can he give the reader any sense of who she is, even though he is presumably her husband. When A... leans out of the window one morning and says “Hello,” the explanations the narrator provides cancel each other out and, in the end, there is nothing more than that simple “Hello”:

She says “Hello” in the playful tone of someone who has slept well and awakened in a good mood; or of someone who prefers not to show what she is thinking about—if anything—and always flashes the same smile, on principle; the same smile, which can be interpreted as derision just as well as affection, of the total absence of any feeling whatever. (55)

She is completely unknowable, so much so that the narrator communicates that she has eaten soup, not because he saw her eat it, but because her empty plate indicates that “she has not neglected to serve herself” (46). Her actions and presence always seem to be accompanied by this haunting, static silence because she is at a distance. In fact, because of its ‘inhuman’ descriptions, the whole novella tends to shut out the reader. Regardless, the reader will force himself or herself upon the text, trying to make sense of it.

Perhaps the crackling of A...’s hair as she brushes it is linked to the crackling of the centipede’s body? These types of connections are suggested, but there is no confirmation, no acknowledgment that they are meaningful. The sentence strings lure the reader into thinking there will be a logical narrative, or at least a succession of ideas, even on the first page (39): “Now...,” “Since...,” and “So...” begin successive sentences, yet there is no grounding relationship that can be grasped between them, even as the chapter progresses.

As with Celan, Robbe-Grillet means to construct narrative in such a way as to make the reader understand and acknowledge the limits of our perceptions through *active* engagement with the text. In an essay on Robbe-Grillet, Roland Barthes writes that his “silence about the ‘romantic’ heart of the matter is neither allusive nor ritual, but *limiting*: forcibly determining the boundaries of a thing, not searching for what lies beyond them” (Barthes 13-14). The so-called ‘human-less’ descriptions can never be free of humanity simply because they are written and read by humans, and are therefore in every way ‘human.’

In *Jealousy*, Robbe-Grillet attempts to create a ‘human-less’ perspective and induces an obsessive mania that draws attention to the negation of this perspective. Similarly, Celan attempts to mute language precisely in order to spark a renewal of language in his poetry. With both writers, negativity plays a key role in interpreting and understanding their work. They both take the reader into the unnerving realm of the uncanny, a realm through which we must pass in order to orient ourselves in a fractured, disjointed reality. This process leads to the realisation of our perceptive shortcomings and our inability to transcend them.



## WORKS CITED

- Barthes, Roland. "Objective Literature: Alain Robbe-Grillet." Trans. Richard Howard. *Two Novels by Robbe-Grillet*. New York: Grove, 1965. 11-26.
- Celan, Paul. "Deathfugue." Trans. John Felstiner. *Selected Poems and Prose of Paul Celan*. Ed. John Felstiner. New York: Norton, 2001. 30-33.
- . "The Meridian. Speech on the Occasion of the Award of the Georg Büchner Prize." 1961. Trans. John Felstiner. *Selected Poems and Prose of Paul Celan*. Ed. John Felstiner. New York: Norton, 2001. 401-13.
- . "Speech on the Occasion of Receiving the Literature Prize of the Free Hanseatic City of Bremen." 1958. Trans. John Felstiner. *Selected Poems and Prose of Paul Celan*. Ed. John Felstiner. New York: Norton, 2001. 395-96.
- . "Streak." Trans. John Felstiner. *Selected Poems and Prose of Paul Celan*. Ed. John Felstiner. New York: Norton, 2001. 100-01.
- Freud, Sigmund. *The Uncanny*. Trans. David McLintock. London: Penguin, 2003.
- Robbe-Grillet, Alain. *Jealousy*. Trans. Richard Howard. *Two Novels by Robbe-Grillet*. New York: Grove, 1965. 33-138.

## TRIVIA: AMBIGUITY AND THE CONVERGENCE OF AUTHORITY

ALISON CHAPMAN

### I

"Duplicitous" and "ambiguous" have been the key words most often used in critical analyses of Book III of John Gay's *Trivia: or, the Art of Walking the Streets of London*. The words reveal the difficulty we have in arriving at a single interpretation of the poem, something that is largely due to the diminished authority that Gay gives to the narrator, or guide. Rather than place him in an advantaged perspective, Gay makes his literary persona into a self-conscious walker who, despite his attempts to master the teeming London streets, is constantly doomed to collide with obstacles beyond his control. As a result, the notion of authorial control assumes a different and more ambiguous status in *Trivia*.

Pat Rogers asserts that *Trivia* "employs social observation to make a permanent moral comment" (162). This may be, but, because of the ambiguities of authorial control, the most memorable episodes in the poem resist the permanence that a fixed or authoritative moral interpretation might provide. In *Trivia*, any interpretation of the city and its problems must depend upon the perspective from which the city is approached. Gay's London is in fact approached by three different perspectives (as the title of this poem "Trivia," where three roads meet, suggests): that of the walker (to be discussed in section II), that of the reader who the walker envisions as reading his poem (section III), and that of a careful reader, a perspective the walker never quite manages to repress (section IV). What Gay creates as a result is not only a complicated view of London, but a complicated sense of authorship as well,

in that any “permanent moral comment” on the city necessarily cannot be located within the perspective of a single authoritative speaker, but rather must be sifted out of these three different, and often colliding, perspectives.

## II

Unlike Swift’s *A Description of a City Shower* or *A Description of the Morning*, *Trivia* cannot, despite the sensational and visceral images of London’s city streets, be read as an exclusively descriptive poem. Rather, Gay first creates a literary persona, the walker, who in turn passively perceives and actively constructs the city of London, and (at least in the fictional universe of the poem) authors *Trivia* itself. If, as Rogers suggests, the poem is written to assess the morals of the city, or to take account of its sins, the choice of the walker as narrator complicates this reading. Unlike Swift, who seems to attempt authorial abstraction from his city by titling his poem as an objective “Description of . . .,” Gay locates his walker physically in both the city and the poem. As an individual, he is in persistent opposition to the city’s nightly obstacles, and, what’s more, faces constant danger of being overrun by what he is attempting to describe.

Yet the walker considers other less dangerous methods of moving around the city streets and rhetorically asks, “Who then through Night would hire the harnessed Steed, / And who would choose the rattling Wheel for Speed?” (351-52). So, the walker seems to have a moment to stand apart from his own decision to walk and consider it with a lofty sense of deliberateness (Haywood 73). Walking, at least in theory, becomes a method for him to comment as an outsider on the decadence of his society and, in a way, his colliding with coaches is ideologically superior to his being inside them. Consequently, the walker is not “participating” as a mere equal in the society he confronts and describes; rather his perspective as a walker provides him with a heightened, principled advantage.

Thus, it appears that the walker as a persona is employed to carry out a moral demonstration; he confronts the filth of the city as an untainted, ideologically pure man (Woodman 85-89). The walker certainly endorses such a reading, and this view would clearly support Pat Rogers’s theory that the poem engages in social commentary with a “permanent moral comment” in mind. When walking, the narrator warns his reader of the whores, death, thievery, filth, sewage, abuse, violence, and robbery one is likely to encounter

in a typical walk through the city streets at night. The walker gives advice to those who would become victims of the night’s dangers if they were not aware of them, and does so by offering a careful (and sometimes neurotically precise) account of the perils of the city streets.

Yet, because the social commentary that is typical of *Trivia* is so ambiguous, it is unclear whether these ‘dangers’ are finally to be construed as vices. The case of the pickpocket (55-75) provides a good example. After grabbing some fop’s “Flaxen Wig,” the young boy tears down the street in the hope of escaping his pursuers, described by the walker as “Hounds.” It is an interesting episode, as it is not the thief who is criticized, but rather the fashionable fop and the maddened crowd who pursues the pickpocket. The boy’s theft is made deeply pathetic as the walker describes his act as akin to a fox “Who lately filched the Turkey’s callow care,” reminding the reader that the boy must steal in order to eat and survive (68). Yet, despite the walker’s apparent sympathy, he comments only once on the situation, asking “Why did not honest Work thy Youth employ?” (72). Even if we read this question as poignantly rhetorical (instead of poignantly naïve), pointing to the failure of the city to support its inhabitants, this comment hardly seems to have the bite of a firm moral denunciation. Indeed, when it comes to the actual (and painfully brutal) beating of the boy, the walker stays mute and moves on to other things. In a moment when a “moral comment” would have been apt, the walker’s editorializing voice disappears. If the walker does attempt a “moral comment” in this episode, it is very obliquely made, through a cautious rhetorical question, and a meaningful silence.

It is this kind of ambiguity in *Trivia* that makes any straightforward interpretation of it as a moralizing poem, offering a negative view of London, too reductive or even incorrect. Recently, critics have been inclined to read *Trivia* as a poem invested as much in celebrating the supposed “vices” of the city as it is in damning them. What these critics take as their point of departure is the way that the city’s filth, mud, and sewage are dealt with in the poem. While the walker apparently presents the rushing kennels, the muddy streets, and the general filth of the city as yet more obstacles to be avoided, it is equally clear that these images provide much of the poem’s energy (Haywood 66). Interestingly, the walker never acknowledges his work’s indebtedness to the city’s filth, and we begin to see a certain ironic distancing between the walker-poet’s intended work and the actual achievements of the poem.

### III

Perhaps the walker's inability to produce a biting moral commentary on the episode described above has something to do with the position of the walker's intended reader. Indeed, from the great risks neurotically delineated in this poem, we get a sense of whom the poem is being written for. The reader is at risk of becoming dirty, of having to confront the filthy poor, and of having his illustrious "trinkets" stolen: "thy flaxen wig," "thy late snuff-box," and his handkerchief from India (55, 62, 259). The audience our walker envisions for this poem seems to be a hopeless, hapless fop. Thus, unlike similar mock-georgics of the day (such as those by Swift and Pope), *Trivia* cannot relate the city's base vices to any higher social issues without casting some of the blame upon his audience. In the mock-georgics of Pope and Swift, there is no apparent awareness that those who would be able to read their poems are in fact the same people they condemn, and that the act of publishing their poems is as commercial as any other trade. *Trivia* seems to be questioning the inherent limitations of the mock-georgic as a genre, so that we may even venture to call *Trivia* a mock-mock-georgic. Thus, the walker strives to satisfy the perceptions of his foppish readership, and in fact struggles to repress any "permanent moral comment" which may reflect negatively upon his audience.

However, the befuddled and faulty walker occasionally fails to achieve his complex aim. The episode of the prostitute exposes the extent to which the walker can be confused by his own artistic and moralizing ambitions. Rather than interpreting prostitution as metonymical of the city's immoral commercialism, or even as symptomatic of his society's ambivalence towards the poor, the walker can provide no loftier interpretation of the prostitute's moral status than his appealing to a personal anecdote about a "Yeoman" he once knew (285). The walker reverts to nostalgic and pastoral language to describe the poor downfall of a shepherd in the big city. Typically, the "mock-georgic" is employed to contrast the pastoral tradition with the decadent and unnatural urban universe. This seems to be the walker's intent too, as he sees his "walking" as having an organic purity. Yet here the walker instead mixes the pastoral tradition with urban sin, describing the prostitute as a perverse sort of nymph herself, as though he can perceive no contradiction in the relation of one to the other. The tragic tale of the yeoman and the "fraudful Nymph" (289) tries more to appeal to the reader's fashionable kind

of sentiment rather than to expose the wrong of prostitution in terms of rational principles. Such rational principles must be avoided, lest he alienate his reader by finding in prostitution a similarity with the city's consumption, decadence, and sickness as a whole.

It is interesting to note how the walker deals with the city's lower classes in *Trivia*. I have suggested before that the walker unwittingly exposes his sympathy with certain characters on the London streets, especially the pickpocket. To appeal to his audience, however, this sympathy must be repressed. The way the walker silences his compassion for these figures is remarkable—he literally takes away their voices. The wretch who is caught in the turnstiles is beaten "half breathless to the ground" (110) and the pickpocket, also "breathless" (71) is drowned until "Mud chokes his Mouth" (76). Without voices, these characters are unable to contribute to the poem's message. Yet what unfortunately emerges from these violent attempts at stifling the city's poor is, ironically, more sympathy for them.

### IV

*Trivia* is in this way a very modern poem: the walker-poet is deliberately created as a failure in relation to his own lofty aims. However, as the walker provides the only voiced perspective in the poem, there is little opportunity to evaluate his failings within the content of the text. And yet there seem to be instances within the poem which, unbeknownst to our walker, directly mock the would-be poet. These moments tend to stem from the walker's own inadequacies as a writer, particularly his failure to master his own language; often his symbols and his words betray him. These instances unwittingly reveal the walker's inadequacies as a wielder of artistic control and a source of moral guidance. The concluding lines of the poem declare the walker's ultimate intention for his work, namely that as a poem it will "shine" for all walkers through London (416). The symbol of light and, more precisely, artificial light plays a huge role in the final book of *Trivia*. In a way this is consistent with the walker's intentions, as he professes to illuminate potential dangers for a walker through the dark city streets. However, the manner in which light is repeatedly used as a symbol consistently undermines the walker's authority in a way that generates a sense of there being a meta-poetical, authorial position (perhaps the position of the poem's ultimate author, John Gay) which criticizes the walker's objective for his poem.

The image of an impure, falsifying light is repeatedly used throughout Book III of *Trivia* and right up to the point of its complicated closing lines. At the collapse of one of the carriages the walker erupts into a recollection of the destruction of the Eddystone lighthouse. Once a beacon of guidance, the collapse of the lighthouse brought about the wreckage of many ships that had previously been dependent on its cautionary ray. We must give serious consideration to the point of such a digression from the poem's narration, as it can be no accident that it is offered so incongruously in the context of a collapsed carriage. The analogy of the lighthouse is perhaps accurate in its relation to the purpose of the walker's own poem: the walker also intends to illuminate the city's perils so that the reader may avoid them. Yet the passage deals with the destruction of the lighthouse, not its success, and thus we are once again left with a sense that light in this poem and, indeed, the light of this poem, somehow fails to achieve its noble purpose.

However, the walker is betrayed by something yet more obvious in his delivery of these concluding lines. Given the walker's moral pretensions, it is impossible to ignore the glaring irony that his poem will ultimately "shine" on a "*Fleetstreet Post*" (415-16). In his conclusion to the poem the walker is completely subsumed by the world he attempted to describe and judge morally. His attempts at a "permanent moral comment" are mediated by his awareness that his poem must in the end be marketable to a consumer. Unbeknownst to the walker, the satire in this poem is as much directed towards those who write in an attempt to reject the city morally as it is towards the city itself. To confirm this point we can look to how artists are related in *Trivia*. While the walker does not often directly address his role as a poet, the poem does present other kinds of "subtle-artists" (54) and "ballad-singers" (77) in the forms of thieves and their deceitful confederates respectively. The prostitute also "with flatt'ring Sounds ... soothes the cred'lous ear" (273). This characterization lends itself to multiple interpretations. Primarily it serves to lodge our particular poet, the walker, firmly within the sin of London streets, despite his heightened sense of self-importance. It also, however, points to our walker-poet's inability to control and master the literary symbols he deploys. Thus he is prone to accidentally trapping himself in his own language. Moreover, it hints that our walker-poet may be (unwittingly) engaged in a similar kind of trickery. If the foppish reader believes that this poem is simply a faithful description of London's streets at night and does

not register that *Trivia* is equally engaged in "flattery" (like the prostitute) then he has fallen prey to its ultimate satire.

The confusion which arises from these clashing perspectives is suggested by the title: *Trivia* is indeed a poem about collisions and intersections, not only between physical objects, but also between literary genres. Our walker frequently appeals to other textual authority in an attempt to comment on his encounters on the London streets. His interpretation of the city of London seems largely informed by his reading of Homer, Virgil, Sophocles, and Juvenal, and he reaches out to these classical writers repeatedly throughout *Trivia*. In eighteenth-century georgics this was a way of flaunting one's education, of asserting one's right to literary and moral authority. It would also have appealed to his fashionable reader. Perhaps not surprisingly, the overwhelming majority of classical allusions in *Trivia* are comically incongruous with what the walker is in fact encountering. Likening the crossing of a street to Odysseus's choice between Scylla and Charybdis (183-84), and comparing losing a friend in this crossing to Nisus's loss of Euryalus, are evidently absurd and inappropriate comparisons—for as he says himself, "*Euryalus*, alas! is now no more" (91-100). The walker is thus unsuccessful in collating his text under the authority of the ancients. Rather than meaningfully relating to the city, these moments of epic simile expose only the walker's own aim at self-aggrandizement.

The tragic references are similarly construed. Given that the title of this poem is *Trivia*, or a place where three roads cross, the Oedipal myth is forced upon the poem from its beginning. The moment when this tragic figure is invoked occurs when the walker addresses the perils of losing the wall and being swept into a brawl in the streets (205-24). In many ways this connection is much more justifiable than his other attempts at invoking classical literature. The tragedy of Oedipus does begin at a crossroads, and the king's ultimate fate of walking the streets of Thebes blind is precisely what the walker fears for his reader. However, there is an overwhelming amount of the Oedipus tragedy which cannot be filtered into this minimal connection, and thus the reference succeeds only in further elucidating the psychology of the walker-poet. The walker attempts to elevate the act of walking the streets to a heroic pursuit in order to prove that his poem serves as protection against dire tragedy. Yet he is betrayed by the alternate meaning of his poem's title: it is just all too trivial.

However, before we may dismiss the walker's use of intertextual references entirely, it is important to state that there is one moment when the epic simile is undeniably successful. Gay's poem ends with a fire and, for one flickering moment, the walker lands on a correlation between classical myth and his depiction of the city that is perfectly apt. It occurs when the walker observes a fireman who bears an infant out of a flaming building (362-63). At this point the walker extols the fireman's heroism, who "With no less Virtue, than through hostile Fire / The Dardan Hero bore his aged sire" (367-68). This use of the epic simile clearly corresponds to what it is describing, namely, Aeneas carrying his father out of the flaming battlements of Troy. Furthermore, the simile enriches the walker's observation, as it expands upon the nature of the fireman's virtue without losing sight of its subject. It seems, finally, that the walker is acting as a successful commentator as well as a successful poet. This moment of abstraction from the walker's observation appears to gain a kind of authorial legitimacy by virtue of its uniformity with the other text he invokes. If there is a "permanent moral comment" to be found in this poem, it is unlikely we will find it in the majority of the walker's confused perceptions and forced correlations. However, there is undeniably a sense of positive virtue in the city which comes from this one successful exit from the skewed universe of the poem. The episode of the fireman escapes the individual perspective of the walker in that it is supported by an accurate intertextual relationship. Thus, we finally have a moment in the poem when all three perspectives—the walker-poet, the fop-reader, and the critical reader—finally agree upon, or "converge," over an interpretation of events. "Tri-via" has been achieved.

## V

I would like to suggest that, as critical readers, we are not meant to dislike our walker as a guide or as a poet. He is a profoundly sympathetic character who is unable to conceal his sympathy for the figures that flood London's streets at night, and who is also trying to produce a marketable poem. Gay's walker is the only voice in the poem, but, ironically, his is also just another voice in the teeming streets of London. This is a poet who is in every sense actively engaged in what he is writing, both with the subject of his poem, and with the writing process. Gay does not think that it is appropriate that the city be approached with a disembodied, moralizing voice, but rather

through the medium of a literary persona, himself implicated in what he attempts to describe as a non-participant. By uniting a description of London with an obviously flawed poet, Gay forces the reader to see the faultiness in authors, and in readers, who claim to have an ideological abstraction from their subject. Not only is the walker connected to his city through the book trade, or through the language he must use to describe the city, but the two are also remarkably similar in character. Both walker and city are morally ambiguous and apparently contradictory. But neither, ultimately, is negatively construed in the greater universe of the poem.

## WORKS CITED & CONSULTED

- Burke, Sean. *The Death and Return of the Author*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 1998.
- Copley, Stephen and Ian Haywood. "Luxury, Refuse and Poetry: John Gay's *Trivia*." *John Gay and the Scriblerians*. Ed. Peter Lewis and Nigel Wood. New York: Vision, 1989. 62-82.
- Dugaw, Dianne. "*Deep Play*": *John Gay and the Invention of Modernity*. Newark: U of Delaware P, 2001.
- Gay, John. "Trivia: or, the Art of Walking the Streets of London. Book III: Of Walking the Streets by Night." *British Literature 1640-1789: An Anthology*. Ed. Robert DeMaria. 2nd ed. Oxford: Blackwell, 2001. 513-22.
- Nokes, David. *John Gay: A Profession of Friendship*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1995.
- Rogers, Pat. *Grub Street: Studies in a Subculture*. London: Methuen, 1972.
- Spacks, Patricia. *John Gay*. New York: Twayne, 1965.
- Woodman, Tom. "'Vulgar Circumstances' and 'Due Civilities': Gay's Art of Polite Living in Town." *John Gay and the Scriblerians*. Ed. Peter Lewis and Nigel Wood. New York: Vision, 1989. 83-93.



## THE DRAMATURGY OF VOMIT IN *CYMBELINE* AND *RAM ALLEY*

DAVID BOWDEN

In early modern drama, dramatists reveal a character's interiority chiefly through the words that character says. Characters are faced, through the circumstances in a play, with situations and confrontations that allow for this expression of internal reactions to external situations. However, the means available for theatrical expression can never completely circumscribe the interior emotion. Hamlet, a character famous for his expression of conflicting internal emotions, is scornful of the limited means of outward expression available to him; he is astonished "That I, the son of a dear father murdered, / Prompted to my revenge by heaven and hell, / Must like a whore unpack my heart with words, / And fall a-cursing like a very drab" (*Hamlet* 2.2.572-75). Hamlet can neither resist the impulse to reveal his interiority, nor can he respond to that impulse in any way but to produce words. Stanley Fish notices similar characteristics in the poetry of John Donne, which he describes as "bulimic." He claims that "the object of [both Donne and his speaker's] desire and of his abhorrence is not food, but words, and more specifically, the power words can exert" (223). I would argue that this compulsive production of words and "the power words can exert" in Donne and *Hamlet* is a primary mode of theatrical expression. Indeed, the use of vomit as a metaphor for the dramatic expression of interiority is present throughout the literature of period. Taking *Ram Alley* and *Cymbeline* as a case study in this mode of expression, it can be shown that characters interact with their fictional situations chiefly through the processes of digestion and regurgitation.



Fish's explanation of the nature of this "bulimic" language finds an interesting resonance in the medium of drama. He claims the runaway production of language "cannot be stopped because there is nothing to stop it, no extralinguistic resistance to its inscribing power" (228). Fish then references "Signature Event Context," in which he introduces Derrida's idea of "essential drift," as "the capacity of every signifier to 'Break with every given context, engendering an infinity of new contexts in a manner that is illimitable'" (228). But the dialogic structure of drama complicates this idea of an individual's illimitable inscriptive power and, in a way, amplifies the implications of essential drift. Within dramatic dialogue, a character's power of inscription is limited by the presence of multiple speakers, each capable of themselves grafting chains of signifiers onto the speech others.

Even outside of the fictional circumstances of the play, the speaker's production of a chain of signifiers performs more than an individual manipulative impulse. Drama is a medium that must be performed for the benefit of an audience, and it is therefore additionally subject to the "extralinguistic resistance" of audience reception. When Hamlet exclaims, "Bloody, bawdy villain! / Remorseless, treacherous, lecherous, kindless villain! / O, vengeance!" (*Hamlet* 2.2.568-70), he is not merely expressing the intensity of his interior identity as a revenging son, he is also performing that identity, both for himself and the audience. An act of revenge must be performed not just as a means to discharge an ethical responsibility, but also as a means of *constituting* the identity Hamlet believes he should inhabit. This identity is performed both for Hamlet himself within the fiction and the audience that observes *Hamlet* outside of the fiction. These runaway chains of signifiers are then not simply a way in which a particular type of poetic force operates within its own fictional constraints. Rather, this form of impulsive, runaway language is based on a particular materialistic understanding of human behavior: one in which individuals are simply vessels filled with cultural contexts and sexual desires that, when agitated by a set of fictional stimuli, will endlessly empty out those things with which they have been filled.

Expulsive language is featured prominently in both *Ram Alley* and *Cymbeline*. These two works share the important contexts of time, place, and medium, but at first glance it would seem that they share little else. *Cymbeline* is a romance, written by a successful and mature William Shakespeare. *Ram Alley* is a city-comedy written by Lording Barry, a hack writer producing

generic smut for an ill-fated company of boy actors. Whereas Shakespeare culminated one of the most respected literary careers by peacefully retiring to his boyhood home of Stratford, Barry culminated his literary career by becoming a pirate on the Irish seas (Kathman). Nevertheless, these two writers are subject to the same necessity, a need to produce verbal meaning in response to an external situation: a need to make their characters vomit up something indicative of their internal structure.

This similarity does by no means suggest that the two plays are equally vulgar; whereas *Cymbeline* examines internalized narratives of the pastoral, the ontological superiority of the nobility, and the corrupting influences of the court, the interiority expressed by characters in *Ram Alley* is much more simplistic. For instance, when the Widow Taffata offers herself sexually to Boutcher, she does so as a "pie thrust to the lower end," arguing "For though the pie be broken up before, / Yet, says the proverb, the deeper is the sweeter" (*Ram Alley* 283). Most of the dialogue in *Ram Alley* consists of sex jokes of this type. In the incredibly dense sex jokes that compose most of the play, the characters seem frantic to express their sexual desire, and to do so in ways that underscore their lifestyle. The Widow Taffata's expression of sexual receptiveness comes in the image of a pie, and through the use of this image she positions her sexual impulse within the feminized, domestic sphere of the preparation of food.

For *Ram Alley*, bawdy, insatiable lust framed in terms of profession and social status forms the driving force of all language and action. The very title introduces the idea of forcing something into the body, and this concern for what enters or exits a person generates endless expulsions of dirty puns. The full title, *Ram Alley; Or Merrie Trickes*, exemplifies this "runaway chain" of sexual signifiers. Not content with the first sex pun, the writer added "Merrie Trickes," a play on the Latin *meretrix*, for "prostitute." The sexual puns, far from satisfying perversity, instead spur it forward, producing more of the sexual energy they seek to satisfy. Yet to effectively represent the language of the inhabitants of a particular city, the characters in *Ram Alley* incessantly cough up the culturally specific types of philosophical, technical, and dramatic speech to which the audience would already be exposed. An example of this unrestrained bulimia of sexualized and contextualized speech occurs when Dash the law clerk attempts to get Frances, a whore posing as an heiress, out of jail, assuring the sergeant that



these metaphors to anything heroic, so instead he applies them back upon themselves, trapped within the framework of his naturalized world. The analogized figures of the fox and the wolf act not as naturalizations of heroic martial acts, but instead emphasize the bestial quality of the twins' existence. These similes are therefore unable to perform the function of similes in such heroic epics as *The Illiad*, in which the two spheres of martial action and natural phenomena are figured in terms of each other, such as:

As a heavy surf assaults some roaring coast,  
Piling breaker on breaker whipped by the West Wind,  
And out on the open sea a crest first rears its head  
Then pounds down on the shore with hoarse, rumbling thunder  
And in come more shouldering crests, arching up and breaking  
Against some rocky spit, exploding salt foam to the skies –  
So wave on wave they came, Achaean battalions ceaseless,  
Surging on to war. (*The Illiad* 4.489-96)

The description of battle is framed here in terms of the natural world. The “heavy surf *assaults*” (emphasis mine) the shore, and the waves appear like horses in and soldiers attacking on the field of battle. Not only are the “Achaean battalions” like the waves, the waves themselves work within the heroic framework, suggesting an interplay between the two available spheres of human experience. But instead of supplying these kinds of heroic metaphors, Arviragus and Guiderius are only capable of supplying terms of the natural world. This restriction deprives the metaphor of its very ability to act like a metaphor, that is to say, the ability to expand meanings and draw connections through the juxtaposition of two different images. In other words, his speech is full of readily available, urgent tenors due to his experience of the natural world, but all of those tenors are missing a ground.

In these examples, a character's lifestyle crucially determines the composition of his or her language. Yet a character's expressions can also result from the representation or configuration of him or her through the framework of literary conventions. Boutcher continually struggles with which convention he can properly represent himself; he resists temptation by the widow Taffata at first through an appeal to classical, Platonic conceptions of the construction of the soul (*Ram Alley* 281). This intellectual idea becomes a dead end and is soon abandoned, as it only serves to generate more language

concerned with the satisfaction of sexual desire. Even given his previous appeal to misplaced intellectualism, the bizarre claim that follows, that “By one more skill'd in unknown fate than was / The blind Achaian Prophet, 'twas foretold / A widow should endanger both my life, / My soul, my lands, and reputation” (*Ram Alley* 283-84), appears shocking to an audience who, up to this point, has been watching a city comedy. At first, the widow Taffata aligns herself within the relatively realistic confines of the play and dismisses his superstition, framing such a soothsayer as “A petty rogue, / That never saw five shillings in a heap, / [Who w]ill take upon him to divine men's fate” (*Ram Alley* 284). However, this predictable response is soon coupled with another dismissal that, strangely enough, works *within* the fiction Boutcher has introduced, laying such credulity to the existence of prophetic ability as to assert that “What is within the everlasting book / Of destiny decreed, cannot by wit / Or man's invention be dissolv'd or shunn'd” (*Ram Alley* 284). In this case, the fictional lifestyle of the respective characters seems less responsible for their contextualizing framework than the mere fact that they are fictional characters. Boutcher can claim divine wisdom from a Greek oracle because that is the kind of thing a character in a play sometimes does. But far from the appeal resting as some special case, the widow seems more than willing to work within whatever narrative is provided, so long as it gives her license to fully express her irrepressible impulses towards the satisfaction of her sexual desires. The Widow Taffata is playing with the “essential drift” of language, and demonstrates that sexual interiority (the always privileged component of interiority of *Ram Alley*) can work through whichever framework presents itself. Like Arviragus and Guiderius, Boutcher has an internal characteristic that will be expressed, no matter how restrictive the framework he supplies may appear. He must purge what he has digested.

Indeed, language and narratives that do not admit of this simplistic satisfaction of desire are, throughout *Ram Alley*, framed as foolishness. For instance, the answer to all of Beard's questions, “is all the world in arms? / More tumults, brawls, and insurrections? / Is blood the theme, whereon our time must treat?” (*Ram Alley* 358) is an obvious “no.” Beard is a fool because the tragic narrative of total war he has adopted does not correspond to how he is framed by the rest of the play. Beard is instead a barber, charged with looking after a whore disguised as a noble woman. That she is abducted from his custody is a further result of the misperceptions of her made by other

characters in the play. The audience is aware of all this information, and their interpretation of Beard is framed by this tragic irony: he is not a defender of virtue, and the loss of Frances is no loss at all. But his avenging claim, “Blood! To be thus o’erreach’d, / In pate and wench! revenge! revenge! Come up, / And with thy curled locks cling to my beard!” (*Ram Alley* 353), like Boutcher’s citation of a Greek oracle, is not unusual in a theatrical context. Although it does not correspond to the lifestyle Beard is shown to have, it is a convention an audience is used to seeing, as in the case of the soliloquy from *Hamlet* with which I began this essay. The major difference between Beard’s performance as a revenger and that of Hamlet is that nothing else in the content of the play supports Beard’s identity. Yet the fact that Beard can frame himself in this manner underscores the arbitrary nature of any theatrical identity. The only basis of legitimacy of any performed identity is the extent to which it can satisfy one’s place within the drama. But what makes the character of Beard a figure of parody is that the interiority he expresses is not one he could plausibly have. *Ram Alley* allows for only one legitimate form of interiority: insatiable sexual desire. Beard’s expressions are incongruent with this mode of expression.

But Beard is not alone in this emptiness of expression. He signals the arbitrary nature of any adopted theatrical persona. This depiction of humanity as merely layers of theatrical convention with no underlying substance leads to the Widow Taffata’s assessment of William Smallshanks as “A fellow that has no inside, but prates / By rote, as players and parrots use to do, / And, to define a complete gallant right, / A mercer form’d him, a tailor makes him, / A player gives him spirit” (*Ram Alley* 340). This description could be directed towards anyone in the play. The people in *Ram Alley* are, of course, the players the Widow Taffata describes. But even within the fiction, characters can only “parrot” language available to them through theatrical convention or lifestyle context to interact with the over-sexualized world in which they exist. They do so by frequently modifying their language in order to rapidly assume and discard theatrical conventions, tossing out various configurations that (they hope) may express their interior sexual desires.

*Cymbeline* is of a different spirit altogether. In contrast to a use of literary convention to expedite sexual satisfaction, literary conventions in *Cymbeline* point to an immaterial, ontological truth. A person’s insides in *Cymbeline* are determined by a divinely ordained, hereditarily determined

hierarchy of which theatrical conventions act as justifications. These narratives of natural nobility lead to many instances depicting a natural correspondence between pre-established identity and action. The court is characterized by exactly the lack of this correspondence between interior and exterior: the play opens with two gentlemen noting how “not a courtier, / Although they wear their faces to the bent / Of the King’s looks, hath a heart that is not / Glad at the thing they scowl at” (*Cymbeline* 1.1.11-14). Arviragus and Guiderius, though unaware of their noble origins, constantly surprise Belarius with their correspondence to this inner noble identity. In one such astonished exclamation, he marvels at their natural gentility, saying, “O noble strain! / O worthiness of nature, breed of greatness! / Cowards father cowards, and base things sire base” (*Cymbeline* 4.2.24-26). A character’s interior composition is depicted here as genealogically determined. But just like Boutcher’s Greek oracle and Beard’s tragic declarations, these narratives of inherent, hereditary nobility are themselves cultural and literary fictions. The structural principle that generates language in *Cymbeline* can be seen as the opposite of that in *Ram Alley*. Instead of indiscriminate desire that receives constant opportunities to perform itself, an urgent drive towards a realization of the hereditarily predetermined constitution of the soul seems at a loss to perform itself at all. The setting of Belarius and the brothers within a country environment, far from court, allows for the naturalization of the “royal” behavior of the boys, as when Belarius muses “That an invisible instinct should frame them / To royalty unlearned, honour untaught / ...but yields a crop / As if it had been sowed” (*Cymbeline* 4.2.178-82). In order to portray Arviragus and Guiderius as naturally noble, all elements of courtly life have been exorcised from existence.

However, this exclusion from the corruptive influences of court causes a major problem of its own. When Arviragus claims, “I am ashamed / To look upon the holy sun, to have / The benefit of his blest beams, remaining / So long a poor unknown” (*Cymbeline* 4.4.40-43), he reveals an urgent need to encounter those very difficulties that consume Cymbeline’s court, and in so doing prove an interior heroicness that has been hitherto unprovoked. Whatever the immaterial truth may be, it is still subject to expression as material words or action. But this world, despite its preeminence as a medium to demonstrate these concepts of natural nobility, gives insufficient means for this very expression. Arviragus and Guiderius continually express their



urgent frustration with this pastoral inaction throughout the play, starting with his complaint at 3.3.40-44 (see above). But this desire is most explicitly framed as expulsive when Belarius comments on their willingness to rush into battle: “The time seems long, their blood thinks scorn / Till it fly out and show them princes born” (*Cymbeline* 4.4.53-54). But this example is even more explicit: the strength of the truth assigned to this cultural belief in “divine right” becomes so strongly emphasized in Belarius’s speech that we are left with the image of a noble interior (i.e., “their blood”) shooting out of the body that confines it, to “fly out and show them princes born,” and to desperately meet this compulsive demand to express their interiority. But paradoxically, this natural nobility can only be expressed when it encounters the polluted world of the court. It is the sick world of money and political impulse that provides the right purgative for Arviragus and Guiderius.

Whether generating meaning based on sexual desire or political fiction, this provoked jettison of a character’s internal makeup forms one solution to a persistent problem of dramatic representation: how to show a character’s interiority. Left with so many insufficient options for expression, it is no wonder writers find it useful to cycle through various speech patterns and conventions, producing large amounts of text that never quite expurgate (and, on the contrary, often substantiate) the persistent force of the desire. Envisioning speech as vomit resonates throughout the drama of the period. This essay, in restricting its consideration to two plays, has not even begun to consider instances of actual vomit present in early modern drama. Ben Jonson’s *Poetaster* features a character representing John Marston, who is given a purgative and vomits up all of the ridiculous words he has inserted into his plays. At the beginning of John Webster’s *The White Devil*, Gasparo says to Count Lodovico, explaining the Count’s former flatterers’ sudden condemnation, “Your followers / Have swallowed you up like mummia, and being sick / With such unnatural and horrid phisic, / Vomit you up i’t’h’kennel” (1.1.16-19). The list of examples stretches on, and in each instance recognizes vomit as a form of expression. But even when not dealing with vomit explicitly, the dramaturgical practices of the time show vomit to be remarkably analogous to theatrical expression. Although this “you are what you eat” mentality may at first seem reductive, it allows characters within a play to act as microcosms of the culture in which they exist, as separate yet reflective entities that digest and interpret prevalent beliefs and then reveal the conclusions to the public.

#### WORKS CITED

- Barry, Lording. *Ram Alley; Or, Merrie Trickes. A Select Collection of Old English Plays*. 4th ed. Ed. Robert Dodsley and W. Carew Hazlitt. London, 1875. 271-380.
- Fish, Stanley. “Masculine Persuasive Force: Donne and Verbal Power.” *Soliciting Interpretation: Literary Theory and Seventeenth-Century English Poetry*. Ed. Elizabeth D. Harvey and Katharine Eisaman Maus. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1990. 223-52.
- Homer. *The Iliad*. Trans. Robert Fagles. New York: Penguin, 1991.
- Kathman, David. “Barry, Lording (bap. 1580, d. 1629).” *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Oxford UP, 2004. Web. 9 Nov. 2008.
- Shakespeare, William. *Cymbeline*. Ed. Roger Warren. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1998.
- . *Hamlet*. Ed. G.R. Hibbard. Oxford: Clarendon, 1987.
- Webster, John. *The White Devil. A Norton Anthology: English Renaissance Drama*. General Ed. David Bevington. New York: Norton, 2002. 1659-748.

## A FORTUNATE DIALECT: CLASS, LANGUAGE, AND SURVIVAL IN DEFOE'S *MOLL FLANDERS*

JENNIFER CHASKAVICH

In Daniel Defoe's novel *The Fortunes and Misfortunes of the Famous Moll Flanders*, the eponymous protagonist is born into the lower class but spends her adolescence living with upper-class benefactors, almost as family. This transition during Moll's formative years allows her the opportunity to absorb and emulate the language and behaviour of gentility, transforming her into a hybrid of lower- and upper-class mentalities within the otherwise highly polarized social hierarchy of eighteenth-century England. One side of her personality aspires to the virtuous and private nature of the upper-class sphere, while the other is heavily influenced by the ambiguous morality and public nature associated with the survivalist impulse of her lower-class origins as understood by her contemporaries (Porter 48-97).<sup>1</sup> The dichotomy between these two spheres becomes evident in Moll's hybridized use of language. Her access to each dialect allows her to survive both physically and psychologically through her circumstances. Moll aspires to the mentality of a gentlewoman, but acknowledges the low-class equivalent when dictated by practicality, and appeals to the higher moral meaning of an upper-class mentality to justify her immoral actions. Moll's utilization of social dialect facilitates her self-preservation and reconciles her means of survival with her

<sup>1</sup> The use of "low-class" throughout this essay is meant to reflect contemporaneous understandings of class associations, however politically unpalatable they may seem today.



personal interests in a world where survival and morality conflict.

Moll expresses her own sense of gentility to the reader by using the language of the upper class, but then, in the same breath, translates the implications and semantics to those of the lower class. She uses this adaptability as a survival tool. Prior to her first marriage, Moll's place within the family is threatened by Robin's open affection for her; she comments that "his mother had let fall some speeches, as if she intended to put me out of the family; that is, in English, to turn me out of doors" (53). In this statement, Moll acknowledges two different contexts of the situation. She first uses a genteel euphemism that conveys the fact that Robin's mother is concerned with doing what she considers best for her family by attempting to preserve their propriety and reputation; then, Moll translates the same situation into a low-status context by describing it as it applies to her physical safety. What Robin's mother sees as protecting her family, Moll sees as potential homelessness. Although Moll aspires to be a gentlewoman and understands the language of gentility, she chooses to impose matters of the private sphere upon the realm of the public sphere; she appeals to the pragmatic language of her low-class upbringing to preserve her basic physical safety. Simultaneously, Moll's initial reference, indicative of her understanding of the genteel perspective, is an attempt to portray herself as part of that class. While Moll emulates the language and understanding of the upper class, it is easy for her to forget that her actions have attested to the opposite. Had Moll possessed the qualities of the class with which she wished to assimilate, she would not have allowed herself to be undone with no resistance, and would have sacrificed her personal interest, in this case her sexual relationship with Robin's brother, for the harmony of her benefactors from the onset.

Moll's appeal to straightforward language is again evident when she encounters the midwife, known as her "governess." Moll describes how the former made no profit from her lodgers, "but that her profit lay in the other articles of her management... upon the private account, or, in plain English, the whoring account" (170). This reference to "plain English" further emphasizes Moll's understanding that practicality and the preservation of her interests are best found in lower-class language. Moll places herself above prostitution by first alluding to it genteelly, but she is as familiar with the "whoring account" as her governess and, consequently, is able to express it through "plain English." She takes a similar approach to the subject of

abortion. Moll tells the reader that the midwife "said something that looked as if she could help me off with my burthen sooner, if I was willing; or, in English, that she could give me something to make me miscarry" (170). Moll's description at first is one that belongs to the realm of genteel, private mentality: the language is evasive, making it difficult to pinpoint the exact meaning or consequently accuse the governess of immorality. This again deals with a euphemism through which the issue is handled delicately and taken care of behind closed doors. The matter at stake here is more complicated than the last: Moll is still aiming to achieve what she considers necessary to her physical survival. Pregnant and abandoned by her last lover, she seeks new money in the form of a banker but "knew there was no marrying without concealing that [she] had had a child" (173). To maintain her wealthy lifestyle, Moll must be rid of her child and, while recognizing this as immoral, she approaches it as a necessity to her own survival. To gloss over this aspect of her situation, Moll emphasizes the immorality of abortion and her high moral virtue in opposing it. To do so, she translates the situation into base, low language that firmly points at the governess as a character who proposes evil expedients, and is blunt in denoting the association between prostitution and shameless abortion: "I could never be brought to entertain so much as a thought of endeavouring to miscarry... I abhorred, I say, so much as the thought of it" (163). In this example, Moll's translation aligns her with the high moral aspirations associated with the gentility—too high to be considered by low-class prostitutes—to justify her actions. She displaces the immorality of disposing of her child by emphasizing the importance of the assertion that she is far too moral to consider something as sinful as induced miscarriage. Moll uses her knowledge of both high- and low-class language to justify her own actions as necessary for her survival, intending her claim to morality on one subject to overshadow her lack of another, and thus maintain her personal interests as they relate to her "survival."

In several situations, Moll's knowledge of the upper-class discourse of morality enables her to justify any actions she feels are necessary for her survival by displacing the blame, and thereby preserving her sense of goodness, her place in the world, and, thus, her will to live. When Moll turns to stealing, she describes it as necessity and puts blame on the devil. She tells the reader that when "poverty presses, the soul is made desperate by distress" and describes how the devil "readily prompted [her] as if he had spoke"

(189). Moll's eloquent description emphasizes with preachy clarity that she feels she had no other choice but to steal.

The second time Moll steals, she takes a necklace from a child she found walking home alone, justifying it by blaming anyone but herself. She tells the reader: "I had given the parents a just reproof for their negligence in leaving the poor little lamb to come home by itself" and refers to the "vanity of the mother" for letting the child wear such a necklace in the first place, even accusing the presumed maid, who may have been meant to accompany the child, of being a "careless jade" who was probably "taken up with some fellow that had met her by the way" (192). Moll commits a patently immoral act, but displaces blame onto the parents and the maid, going so far as to portray herself as a moralizer who has improved the life of the child by teaching the parents to stay vigilant and to check their vanity. Furthermore, she continues to paint herself as innocent and saintly by describing the child as a "poor little lamb" and "poor little baby" (192) as though she felt great maternal affection for it, further removing any sense of her own immorality from the situation. Moll's familiarity with both lower-class and genteel language enables her to transfigure the immorality of her "low-class" actions and feel justified in stealing to survive.

Similarly, Moll later allows herself to be seduced by an intoxicated gentleman and, once he has fallen asleep in his carriage, steals his valuables. Her first means of justification is to raise herself morally by sermonizing against the evils of this man's behaviour: she says that "such a man is worse than a lunatic; prompted by his vicious, corrupted head" (218). She attempts to remove the responsibility from herself by implying that she is a deliverer of justice. Her tone immediately switches to one that portrays her as caring and tender, saying that "he was really to be pitied" and "seemed to be a good sort of man," and that she would have "sent him safe home to his house and to his family" if she had been able (219). While the impression of her initial moral speech remains, she contradicts it as if to portray her own virtues of forgiveness and kindness, and thereby convey her goodness and innocence. Furthermore, she implies that, after this incident, the man will have learned his lesson and will thus not repeat it, and that she, from whom he "was in no danger," has done him an edifying favour, instead of leaving him to one who would give him a disease. She has thus prevented him from "sowing the contagion in the life-blood of his posterity" (219). Moll has once again used

her hybrid concept of high and low mentalities, as well as the languages that accompany them, to circumvent her own sinfulness and means of survival: by the end of the scenario, both the reader and Moll herself hardly remember that she is a criminal.

Moll uses similar strategies to justify her participation in crime, which she considers implicit to her survival, as more moral than physical. Upon the revelation that her husband in Virginia is, in fact, her brother, she does not inform him or leave him for over three years. The best answer to the moral objections raised in the reader is that she was comfortable with the wealth that her marriage brought her and unwilling to abandon it. She justifies her position by referring to him as "my husband, as he thought himself" (102) and "my husband (as he was called)" (104). Through this complex and clever usage of language, Moll is employing her upper-class education as a means to conceive of a way to justify staying with him despite her discovery. Her qualifications convey that despite their marriage, she does not consider the man her husband, and thus cannot be accused of consciously engaging in incest. She emphasizes that she "loathed the thought of bedding with him, and used a thousand pretences of illness and humour to prevent his touching me" (103). Although revealing that she has caused her husband years of emotional strain on top of the eventual shocking disclosure of the truth, her purpose is to convey her own virtue by expressing incest as loathsome and in working strenuously to prevent it. Her concern is with the physical and downplays the immorality of her dishonesty and prolonged incestuous marriage. To abandon the marriage would be to abandon her material security and subject herself once again to an indeterminate future; thus, Moll contrives her language to remove herself from visible guilt.

In each of these examples, Moll engages in low-class behaviour and uses high-class euphemism to justify her participation. A flaw in this device which cannot be ignored is that, although Moll considers her actions necessary to her own survival, she is not interested in surviving through merely modest means. During Moll's childhood, ladies "brought [her] work to do for them ... and not only paid [her] for doing them, but even taught [her] how to do them" so that she both "paid [her] nurse for [her] keeping, but got money in [her] pocket too" (39-40). Moll is perfectly capable of supporting herself through honest work, but her vanity and ambition cause her to see survival defined by wealth. Through the cunning language facilitated by her mixed-

class upbringing, Moll creates her own definitions of need, morality, and meaning, doing what is necessary to have them met.

Defoe's Moll Flanders consistently wishes to be a "gentlewoman" and emulates educated genteel language, especially in voicing moral aspirations; however, she employs this language as a justification for "low-class" behaviour. In the struggle to achieve her goals in the morally ambiguous environment of eighteenth-century London, Moll exploits the language of both low- and high-class mentalities to survive and to legitimate her means of survival. She employs whichever mentality will best suit her needs and uses specific language to justify her disposal of children, her marriages, and her crimes. Although Moll's overarching purpose is flawed in its rejection of modest living, her use of language adapts to justify her own personal definition and pursuit of "survival." In her words: "the soul is made desperate by distress; and what can be done?" (189). Indeed, who cannot admire Moll for doing what she thought needed to be done in her pursuit of synonymous survival and happiness? Moll may not be a morally admirable character, but her cunning and circular manipulations of language are adept beyond expectation.

#### WORKS CITED

Defoe, Daniel. *The Fortunes and Misfortunes of the Famous Moll Flanders*. Ed. Juliet Mitchell. London: Penguin, 1978.

Porter, Roy. *English Society in the Eighteenth Century*. Rev. ed. London: Penguin, 1991.

## “ORA PRO NOBIS”: THE PUBLIC EXPANSION OF THE PRIVATE PORTUGUESE VOYAGE IN *OS LUSÍADAS*

RODRIGO TOROMORENO

A Camonian voyage can be understood in terms of its range. The various places the Portuguese navigate, and the several latent journeys, uncovered through a hermeneutic of the epic, each mark a distinct traversal through space—diegetic or otherwise. Although the central trip to India may appear to be the immediate cynosure of Luís Vaz de Camões's poem due to its length, those it eclipses are equally, if not more, protracted in nature. Moreover, the teleological value of these treks makes the preponderance of Vasco da Gama's nautical exploit suspect, insofar as the criterion responsible for bestowing importance on the physical travel is called into question when the 'minor' expeditions illustrate exactly *what* they are voyaging through. The scale of the *personal* expedition, amongst the 'minor' exploits in Camões's work, merits attention because its course distends and ruptures the delimitations of the text. Intelligible in conjunction to a similar text, reading *Os Lusíadas* through an exegesis of Psalm 130 reveals, as their structures assist in demonstrating, that the voyage beginning inwards and moving outwards is the exemplary, albeit overlooked, manifestation of depth's direct relation to a narrative of nationhood.

Characterized by its private nature, the trajectory of the personal excursion originates upon defining the role of the self. Vasco da Gama, as the captain of the Portuguese fleet, posits that the endeavour must begin from an inward source. Where Camões makes this patent is during the navigator's moment of introspection before he recounts Portuguese history: "All those

present were waiting eagerly / For what the great da Gama would say, / When, losing himself a little in thought, he raised his eyes and spoke...” (III.3.i-iv).<sup>1</sup> The salient aspect of this instance is the need for da Gama to *reflect* on the task he is about to assume before it begins; that is, he realizes what *his* role as a narrator involves, prior to acknowledging the presence of others with the ‘raising of his eyes.’ It is in this context that the captain admits, “And I know that whatever time I take / Will be all too short to tell you all” (III.4.v-vi). The relationship between the enunciator (da Gama) and the enounced (the Portuguese feats), as these verses reveal, is one that posits the narrative in a sphere beyond the reach of human dialectics. For this reason, the humility displayed by da Gama communicates the position of inadequacy that is indispensable for commencing the definition of the self as it is one that considers its shortcomings. Accordingly, the effacement of an *a priori* solipsism that da Gama’s ineffability evinces becomes the metaphorical ‘sea port’ from which the expedition begins.

Nevertheless, this identification is merely a point of departure, and not the totalizing understanding of the self, because the dimensions of *depth* extend beyond a linear dichotomy of narrator and text and into the form of a plea. Whilst the position of da Gama in canto III is one that is figuratively below something greater, it is the author’s description of Adamastor that exteriorizes the abyssal quality of the self: “It spoke with a coarse, gravelly voice / Booming from the ocean’s depths...” (V.40.v-vi). In this case, Adamastor’s speech is one which originates from the nether regions of the ocean. This point stipulates that the only form of communication possible for the enigmatic monster inherently derives its force from a depth. Precisely because it is communicated through this voice, it stands to be understood that Adamastor’s melancholy, declared to the Portuguese sailors, is therefore a personal narrative originating from a depth. In this adjoining of profundity with plight, not only is a link forged between posterior ‘I’s of da Gama and the fiendish elocutionist, but an intertextual parallel is also brought forth between *Os Lusíadas* and Psalm 130. The incipit of the psalm found in the *Biblia Sacra Vulgata* is as follows: “De profundis clamavi ad te, Domine...” ‘From the depths I cry to you, Lord’ (Psalm 129:1). Within this verse one

<sup>1</sup> For the purpose of this paper, Landeg White’s edition of *Os Lusíadas* will be used and Frank Pierce’s text will explicitly be referred to as “the original Portuguese” whenever cited.

finds the psalmist asserting his position of spatial and spiritual inferiority to God as he ‘cries from the depths.’<sup>2</sup> What this indicates is that a supplication rising from below is a distinctive attribute of the pleading voice. Turning to the commentary provided by Manuel de Faria e Sousa on the previously cited episode of Adamastor, the connection can be made between the Psalm and the monster’s melancholic voice: “Hasta la misma de[s]cripción dessa voz está atroná[n]do los oídos; i el efecto q[ue] luego se sigue causando otro semejante al leerse: i todo parece a imitaci[ó]n del versículo 10. del c. 3. de Habacuc. *Dedit abyffus vocem suam: altitudo manus suas levavit*” ‘Even the description of that voice thunders in one’s ears; and the effect intensifies upon being read aloud: everything seems to imitate verse 10. of chap. 3. of Habakkuk. *The abyss raised its voice: and towards the heavens it lifted its hands*’ (V.1.520).<sup>3</sup> Faria e Sousa draws a correlation between the creature’s lament and that of the prophet Habakkuk, indicating that the plea is something that moves upwards beyond the depths of one’s current position, even surpassing a hermeneutic effect on the reader to a sensorial one that “atron[a] los oídos”. Therefore, declaring that the ‘lowered’ supplicant is able to be raised by his voice elevates this oral tool to the level of a conduit through which change or movement is possible. In essence, Adamastor, da Gama, and the *De Profundis* collectively position the void as the place from which the ‘cry’ operates, and this ‘cry,’ as one that is not consigned to remain there, performs the function of a catalyst for moving outwards.

Accentuating the *cognitive* element involved in the *recognizing* of the self, the aforementioned outwards movement becomes plausible only through another type of distancing that the epic poem creates — the ontological retrocession. Camões conceives of the ‘I’ of the abyss as the self-conscious ‘I,’ the ‘I’ which extends beyond the simple relationship with the narrative that da Gama details in the third canto and into a relationship with the *space* of the depth. One commentator who articulates this notion in his study of the *De Profundis* is Saint Augustine:

For this is the voice of one ascending, belonging to the ‘Song of Degrees.’ Each of us ought therefore to see in what deep he is,

<sup>2</sup> The translation is mine here and elsewhere in this paper when no English translation is cited.

<sup>3</sup> The columns in the text are used to reference Faria e Sousa’s work.

out of which he crieth unto the Lord. . . . For this mortal life is our deep. Whoever hath understood himself to be in the deep, crieth out . . . until he be delivered from the deep... (61)

What underlies the apparently Christian stance of assigning ‘the deep’ a post-lapsarian quality is the cognisance of *where* this deep is located. In the case of the Latin scholar, it is found within one’s quotidian life, whilst Camões situates it in the depths of the mind; more specifically, to be in ‘the deep’ is to be able to not simply call, but *recall*. Memory is what propels the Portuguese protagonist and the mercurial beast, in cantos three and five respectively, to realize their position in terms of the greater narrative of *Os Lusíadas*. Adamastor, on one hand, uses his ‘aquatic’ voice to express his personal lament, which derives precisely from being aware that he was tricked or, as it is put in the Portuguese text, *enganado* (V.54.v). His consciousness of Thetis’s scheme is also the consciousness that her repudiation places him below her aesthetically and literally because knowing the cause of one’s fall is to know that one has fallen. Vasco da Gama, in contrast, recognizes that his memory is not private, but public; however, he is likened to Adamastor as his recollection is also constructed by comparing himself to others. That is to say, when da Gama states that it is much more desirable to praise the feats of others (III.4.i-ii), he is establishing a touchstone between the conventional duty of remembrance and the one he is asked to undertake. Effectively, a movement away from his dual relationship with the narrative is initiated as this third facet is included in the act of remembering. Historicity in the epic poem thus becomes unorthodox as it strays from what is ‘normally’ done. It appears that the same entreaty that allows them to leave the depth begins to carry the characters outwards only once the recognition of their position within the depths is initiated, and this drift away from the concentric self—witnessed in Thetis’s *engano* of Adamastor and the conventions through which da Gama compares and understands his duty—is achieved through private or public memory that lets the individuals look at the past in order to define their location in the present.

Yet the backward movement that remembering provokes does not remain restricted in the recesses of the mind, but rather uses the awareness of the presence of others to construct inclusive layers that drive the narrative forward. Part of Camões’s movement away from the space of the deep, from which the singular person exclaims, consists in moving towards a collective

exclamation. Namely, the central ‘I’ must now account for those who have allowed it to notice its spatial position. Where this is most pronounced is during the cataclysmic storm goaded by Bacchus in which da Gama desperately begins to pray:

Must I endure another Scylla  
And Charybdis like those we have passed,  
More gulfs like Syrtes with its quicksands,  
More rocks like the Acroceraunia?  
At the climax of so many travails,  
Why, O God, do you now forsake us?  
Where is the offence? How are we to blame  
For this service undertaken in Thy name? (VI.82)

Upon analyzing the pronouns employed in this prayer, one detects a progress from the single ‘I’ that must “endure” the tempest to the “we” that is faultlessly castigated. As the plea travels from the self to the communal in order to reach God, there is a penetration of layers from the personal to that of the mutual during the process. Interestingly enough, this traversal is found in a prayer performed “from the depths of despair” (80, vii). Landeg White’s insertion of this comment in his translation is an apt deviation from the original Portuguese in as much as it indicates the spatial source of the supplicant’s ‘despair.’ Furthermore, it epitomizes the spatial stratification illustrated in the aforementioned progression of the prayer’s pronouns. White’s selection of words resonates with the logic that guides Franz Delitzsch’s exegesis of the *De Profundis*: “The depths . . . are not the depths of the soul, but the deep outward and inward distress in which the poet is sunk as in deep waters. . . . In this sense the poet prays that His ears may be turned . . . , with strained attention, to his loud and urgent petition...” (302-03). As he attempts to explicate the clemency of God for the poet of the psalm, Delitzsch, drawing on the germane analogy of a shipwreck, emphasizes the importance of being heard as the voice must travel from the ‘sub-aquatic’ depths to reach “His ears.” Aural layers are also prominent in Saint Augustine’s interpretation of the psalm as he mentions through an intertextual example that the gravitas of the petition was what allowed Jonas to escape his depth: “It penetrated all things, it burst through all things, it reached the ears of God” (61). When these words are read in juxtaposition to *Os Lusíadas*, the ‘bursting’ motif



of Saint Augustine expresses a type of struggle inherent to the movement between layers, simultaneously suggesting that the movement outwards is a type of expansion that breaks through boundaries. Hence, Camões's traversal from a personal profundity to the recognition of an existing collective (which da Gama refers to as "os meus próprios" 'My own' [III.4.iii]) is fundamentally a *voyage* away from the 'I.'

Amidst the travel from the centripetal to the centrifugal, the pivotal self within these layers becomes inevitably ensconced. Adamastor, for example, ultimately utilizes his voice to set a perimeter to the journey of the Portuguese vessel, as his foreboding prevents an incursion into his personal ambit (V.43). Since his depth is expressed by a self-consciousness of his physical monstrosity, and, since due to his corporeal idiosyncrasy Adamastor cannot associate himself with any greater collective, his expedition out of the depth is eventually curtailed by merely becoming *uroboric* melancholy. This is why he is adamant on guarding the sea, as this, being his ontological representation, is the crux of his existence. Returning to the *De Profundis*, protection is also what the poet strives for in his wait for salvation: "Mi alma aguarda al Señor más que los sentinelas la aurora" 'My spirit awaits the Lord more than sentinels await the dawn' (*Biblia de Jerusalén*, Psalm 130:6). This Spanish edition of the psalm, based on the original Greek scriptures, uses the figure of the sentinel, lost in most translations, to convey the idea of a guard anxiously anticipating an external force to loom like the crepuscule of the morning. Within this context, the external force is Salvation; within Camões's work, conversely, the intrinsic benevolence associated with an 'approaching entity' is lost and its significance changes to that of an intruder. Revisiting Adamastor's endeavour, the sole preoccupation of the creature is to guard the self from trespassers. The Portuguese, on the other hand, are directed by a commander who is devoted to representing his countrymen in a 'self-less' manner. Contrasting both situations, the Portuguese protect the 'I' but, unlike the inscrutable creature, they do not make this their *telos* as they move on in their journey to attain a holistic understanding of the self.

Ultimately, what is under this aegis of the 'self,' and what can be defined as the final destination of the 'deep' voyage, is, in fact, the very expansion of nationhood. The praying and historical recounting of da Gama amalgamates the 'I' with the nation of Portugal in order to bestow upon it a persona. Consequently, the country becomes a protagonist with memory,

self-awareness, and, more importantly, a voice. Through this voice it is capable of telling *its* stories and, as the captain does with the king of Melinde, disseminating a particular narrative. The *De Profundis* culminates exactly with this idea, as it is no longer the psalmist that waits for Salvation, but the whole of Israel (*Biblia Sacra*, Psalm 129:6). Above all, it is the bevy of Israelites that joins with the individual to create a univocal voice through which both the 'I' and the 'us' can be redeemed. Bacchus, aware from the very first canto of the imminent peril of the expansionist Portuguese voice, decides to replicate the 'voice of the deep' in order to protect his own narrative and seeks the help of Neptune. When the attack on the Portuguese ship begins, Camões writes about the impulsion of the calamity using words that reverberate with those of previous sections in the poem: "Agora sobre as nuvens os subiam / As ondas de Neptuno furibundo, / Agora a ver parece que deciam / As íntimas entranhas do Profundo..." 'Now they were above the clouds / Those furious waves of Neptune, / Seeing them now they seemed / To come from the bowels of the Deep' (VI.76.i-iv).<sup>4</sup> The strength of Neptune's wrath comes from "do Profundo" of his entrails, creating a voyage of destruction similar in origins to the Portuguese voyage of edification. Camões now has Neptune's, and by extension Bacchus's, counter-expansion rivalling the Portuguese expansion. As if the winds mentioned in subsequent lines represented this conflict in its most literal form, the storm qua storm in White's translation suggests a turbulent use of *pneuma* in an effort to *silence* the voices of the supplicating sailors (VI.76.v-vi). It is here that the voice of the deities tries to overpower the human voice in a quintessentially imperialist action of outspeaking the other. Yet, whereas the ruler of the maritime depths wishes to preserve the honour of his kingdom (VI.31), the hedonistic god aims to recover his own (VI.7). It is therefore via this division that the pair lacks the potency of the single voice that characterizes the inexorable nature of the Portuguese trek. Thus, the paradigmatic episode of canto six invites one to reason that the storm is principally an imperialist battle between two depths in search of an overpowering voice.

In synthesis, the construction of a nation originates from the self but requires navigation 'out of this depth' and towards a collective identity in order for a journey of expansion to take effect. Beyond a metaphysical voyage, this egress represents the coalescence of *pessoa* and *pátria* because

<sup>4</sup> The translation is mine, not White's.



*being* in the depths and *speaking* from this position allows the inscription of a personal narrative to remain engraved as the history of a specific space; as a profound inscription for posterity, this national narrative inevitably becomes indelible. Furthermore, to place the voice that propagates this narrative on a roaming craft is Camões's suggestion that borders, such as those delineated by Adamastor, become transmutable when proliferation is involved. It is apposite to finally conclude that, tantamount to the shared eye amongst the Gorgons (V.11.i-iv), the condensing of more than one perspective under a single optic, whilst being a uniting force that removes national discrepancy, has the potential to also be hegemony in its most inchoate state.

#### WORKS CITED

- Saint Augustine. "Psalm CXXX." *Expositions on The Book of Psalms*. Trans. J. Tweed, et al. Vol. VI. London, 1857. 61-72.
- Biblia de Jerusalén*. Bilbao: Desclée De Brouwer, 1998.
- Biblia Sacra Vulgatae editionis*. Paris: Garnier, 1923.
- Camões, Luís de. *The Lusíads*. Trans. Landeg White. New York: Oxford UP, 2008.
- . *Os Lusíadas*. Ed. Frank Pierce. Oxford: Clarendon, 1973.
- . *Lusíadas de Luís de Camões: Comentadas por Manuel de Faria e Sousa*. Vol. 1. Lisbon: Casa da Moeda, 1972.
- Delitzsch, Franz. *Commentary on the Old Testament in Ten Volumes: Psalms*. Trans. James Martin. Vol. V. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1982.

#### CONTRIBUTORS

DAVID BOWDEN is a fourth-year English student at Trinity College at the University of Toronto. Although his experience with drama is mainly academic, this year he took his first shot at performance, directing *Doctor Faustus* for the Trinity College Dramatic Society's winter production. His other interests include cartoons, poetry, and Stilton.

ALISON CHAPMAN is a fourth-year English Specialist at Trinity College. Her special interests include Renaissance and eighteenth-century poetry, and early modern drama. She has also pursued her interest in the theatre by acting in several plays at the college level. In the future, Alison hopes to attend graduate school.

JENNIFER CHASKAVICH is a fourth-year student studying English, History, and Music History at the University of Toronto (Innis College). She plans to continue on to graduate school, though as of yet is unsure of her career aspirations. She plays the clarinet and alto/tenor saxophone in several ensembles and horse-back rides competitively.

ROSEEN GILES is currently pursuing a Bachelor of Music degree at the University of Toronto's Faculty of Music studying flute performance. She is a member of the University of Toronto Symphony Orchestra and the York Symphony Orchestra. While eclectic in academic pursuits, her main area of interest is in medieval musicology, a field in which she hopes to continue after her undergraduate degree. Her essay was written for a course in the Literary Studies program offered by Victoria College.

RODRIGO TOROMORENO is a fourth-year student of Spanish and Comparative Literature who will be graduating from St. Michael's College and beginning his graduate studies at the University of Michigan. His academic interest lies in the transcultural analysis of Latin American texts (particularly between Ecuadorian and Brazilian literature). As a Jackman Humanities Undergraduate Fellow, he is currently studying literary influences in the celebrations of Andean and Brazilian *carnaval*.

## SPONSORS

### FACULTY OF ARTS & SCIENCE

*Dean's Student Initiatives Fund*

### DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

*special thanks to  
Chair Alan Bewell*

### INNIS COLLEGE

*special thanks to  
Principal Janet Paterson*



### NEW COLLEGE

*special thanks to  
Principal Rick Halpern*



### ST. MICHAEL'S COLLEGE

*special thanks to  
Principal Mark McGowan*



### TRINITY COLLEGE

*special thanks to  
Provost Andy Orchard*



### UNIVERSITY COLLEGE

*special thanks to  
Principal Sylvia Bashevkin*



### VICTORIA COLLEGE

*special thanks to  
Principal David Cook*



### ARTS & SCIENCE STUDENTS' UNION

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

*Professor Josiah Blackmore  
Macy Siu  
Sarah Yin*

*Every existence has its idiom*

WALT WHITMAN

**IMAGE CREDITS**

*outside cover:* printer's mark on a 1716 edition of *Trivia*.

*inside cover:* William Hogarth, *A Rake's Progress* (plate 4), 1735. © the Trustees of the British Museum.