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Metaphor and Metanoia: Linguistic Transfer and Cognitive Transformation in British and Irish Modernism

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy degree in English
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Metaphor and Metanoia: Linguistic Transfer and Cognitive
Transformation in British and Irish Modernism

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by

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Graduate Program in English

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of the requirements for the degree of
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ABSTRACT

This dissertation contributes to the critical expansions now occurring in what Douglas Mao and Rebecca L. Walkowitz have termed New Modernist Studies. This expansion is temporal, spatial, and vertical. I engage with the latter in a literal way: what effects can Modernist texts have on lived experience, the extra-diegetic space of the reader that rests "above" the page. My study analyzes the structural similarity of linguistic metaphor and the mind as considered by cognitive scientists. Working from the conceit that the human mind is linguistic and that language is an artifact of the human mind, my research extrapolates upon what I call the "psycho-ecology" of reading, a knot of reflexive level-crossing between text and mind as the constituent of lived experience. Far from being a remote, abstract process, psycho-ecology is concrete and the closest of presences: unique textual engagement is equated with a transformation in perception. The project opens with an introductory chapter tracing a lineage between modernist aesthetics, phenomenology, and the appearance of the cognitive sciences. The first chapter considers the relationship between two narrative levels in Oscar Wilde's novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890). The logic of this diegetic relationship is monstrous yet proceeds elegantly. The second chapter is a reading of Virginia Woolf's experimental treatment of temporality in her novel *To the Lighthouse* (1927). By considering Woolf's temporal experimentation in relation to Martin Heidegger's formulation of being-in-the-world and being-as-time I suggest that both the novel and Heidegger's philosophy act to disclose our experience with language as temporal and uniquely finite. Ultimately, our experience with Woolf's narrative is predicated upon an intimacy between reader and text whereby the reader extends a kind of physicality into the text itself effectively making manifest the singular importance of being-as-time and being-as-text. The third chapter examines the "sentimental information" of James Joyce's *Finnegans Wake* (1939) from a phenomenological approach to information theory as a response to Robert Scholes' reprinting of Clive Hart's call for investigation into this mode in Joyce's work. With Joyce's self-negating sentimentality, experience is dynamically mutative and such metamorphoses reveal to the agent that they proceed by themselves. The final chapter analyzes Samuel Beckett's *Endgame* (1957) as a zero-player game: a computerized game that proceeds by code without the input of human players. Meditating upon Beckett's utterance, "something is taking its course," I suggest that this multi-diegetic architecture reveals the finitude of extra-diegetic experience. The dissertation follows a trajectory beginning with the intimacy a reader has with text towards the increasing experience of exclusion, or illiteracy, when encountering digital code. The movement of the analysis is metonymical for a shift from textual, alphanumeric narratives to digital narratives. Finally, new languages of code and programming suggest the dawn of new arts.

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Prologue

Metaphor and Metanoia

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To study metaphor is to be confronted with hidden aspects of one's own mind and one's own culture.
-George Lakoff and Mark Turner

Disappear and reappear at another place. Disappear again and reappear again at another place again. Or at the same. Nothing to show not the same…As one in his right mind when at last out again he knew not how he was not long out again when he began to wonder if he was in his right mind.
-Samuel Beckett

Where word breaks off no thing may be.
-Stefan George

   The following analysis is a study of Modernist texts via the structural self-

similarity between linguistic metaphor as conceived in cognitive linguistics and the

mind as considered by cognitive science. I unite this lineage with the philosophical

school that is in explicit conversation with both: phenomenology. A leading feature

of Modernist literature is the marked emphasis on how we perceive our surroundings

over what that environment may objectively be; this preoccupation tends towards

reflexivity so that literature inquires into its own function to such a degree that these

literary experiments in perception may transform the representation of objective

environments. Emerging in the 1980s, the field of cognitive linguistics and its

literary branch, cognitive poetics, takes the premise that the conceptual structures

constituted by the affective materiality of the brain are determined by language; the

reverse simultaneously operates. This conceit is shared by phenomenologists of the

early twentieth century, notably in the work of Martin Heidegger. Rather than the

paradox of infinite regress, a vocal phenomenological criticism of self-representation,

this process offers a variety of diegetic level-crossings—between vehicle and tenor,

object and percept, language and mind, levels of narrative—that characterize a metamorphosis. I call this knot a "psycho-ecology." Concepts are possible because they are systemically linguistic; language is possible because it is systemically conceptual. A variety of diegetic level-crossings—between vehicle and tenor, object and percept, language and mind—characterize this kind of metamorphosis. Self-reflexive literary experiments are possible, in this sense, because they transform language in a structurally self-similar manner to a transformation in the conceptual system of the mind; or, creative use of metaphor, to speak of one thing using the terms of another, results in metanoia, a change of mind. Here, there is a kind of structural and conceptual self-similarity between the reflexivity of Modernist literature, phenomenology, and cognitive linguistics in the sense that a transformation of language is equated with a transformation not only in perception, but in the way one affectively experiences everyday living. That is, language engagement is, at its root, an affective enterprise. In this way, I suggest that Modernist literature, phenomenology, and the cognitive sciences share the feature of being self-representational theories; a consequence of this, is that these processes are manifest in our everyday experience.

As a result, establishing a literary interpretive mode based on diegetic level-crossing between a work of literature and other self-reflexive conceptual systems should produce interpretations. This project emphasizes that the human mind is linguistic and yet language is a product of the human mind. The underlying logic behind this self-reflexive conceit—that we can learn much about the mind by speculating upon language and *vice versa*—extends itself to interpretive experiments.

That is, if the self-similar structures of mind and language reveal much about one another, then it stands to reason that an interpretive recombination of language and literature with other self-reflexive conceptual systems may yield productive results. The interpretive mode here is paratactic and synthetic more than it is reductionistic and analytic. This methodology aims at synthesizing two structurally self-similar systems without claiming any conjunctive permanence. That is, the project does not aim to express that, for example, mathematics *and* language operate according to self-similar grammars or conceptual structures at the smallest level suggesting that the two systems share a kind of syntactic relation. Rather, the method involves structurally self-similar systems that are juxtaposed—not unlike a collage—upon which one can then meditate and comment. In a sense, it takes for its philosophy the Deleuzoguattarian maxim to make "use of everything that [comes] within range, what [is] closest as well as farthest away" (Deleuze and Guattari 3).

The Flower's Coleridge: Platonism and Cognitive Linguistics

In 1945, Jorge Luis Borges wrote a short essay, "Coleridge's Flower," that examines the real and its relation to the imaginary. The piece suggests, though without strictness, Platonism: the intellect and imaginative reign over the empirical. Thought belongs to a realm of archetypes; imagination accesses this realm and intelligibility results from accurate translation. For Borges, fine thoughts may be those beautiful expressions that recur in disparate time, location, and media. His interest in the piece is with the possibility that reality may be a reflection of the imaginative. This overturns the more orthodox Aristotelian response to the conundrum: that the imagination is the ornamentation of the real, thought is the effect

of sense stimuli. The piece opens with Paul Valéry's consideration: that the history

of literature should be "the history of the Spirit as the producer and consumer of

literature" (Borges 240). This position is echoed by Percy Bysshe Shelley and takes

the following shape: "that all the poems of the past, present, and future were episodes

or fragments of a single infinite poem, written by all the poets on earth" (240).

Martin Heidegger intimates something similar in his 1936 lecture course on

Nietzsche: "all great thinkers think the same. Yet this 'same' is so essential and so

rich that no single thinker exhausts it" (Heidegger *The Will to Power as Art* 36). It

recurs twenty years later across the Atlantic in Emerson's "Nominalist and Realist":

"I am very much struck in literature by the appearance that one person wrote all the

books" (Borges 240). Borges' speculative project is to carry out a "history of the

evolution of an idea through the diverse texts of three authors" (240). He begins with

the great poet and aesthete, Samuel Taylor Coleridge.

The recurring idea has its first appearance in Coleridge's famous reflection: "If a

man could pass through Paradise in a dream, and have a flower presented to him as a

pledge that his soul had really been there, and if he found that flower in his hand

when he awoke—Ay!—and what then?" (240). The next appearance of Coleridge's

flower is in H.G. Wells' *The Time Machine* (1895) in the guise of a wilted flower

brought back from a journey into the distant future, a "future flower, the contradictory

flower whose atoms, not yet assembled, now occupy other spaces" (241). The flower

appears a third time, this time in the work of Henry James. In the unfinished novel,

The Sense of the Past (1917), James establishes a fantasy that symbolically links the

real and imaginary as the present and the past. The flower here has evolved, like the

Eloi in Wells' novel, beyond immediate sensibility, yet it remains the flower rationally and imaginatively; now, the flower is an eighteenth-century portrait that puzzlingly has the twentieth-century protagonist as its subject. The hero journeys back in time; he meets the artist, who then paints the subject from the future. What is interesting here is that the protagonist visits the eighteenth-century because he is fascinated by the portrait; yet, without his return to the past, the portrait could not exist. So, James—like Coleridge and Wells—reverses the intuitive logic that stimulus precedes imaginative expression; or, as Borges comments, "the cause follows the effect, or the reason for the journey is a consequence of the journey" (242). Significant here, is that the quasi-Platonic reason as imaginative archetype enters the world in some form: that Coleridge's flower appears as multiple kinds, in various media, and is relayed recurrently from the imaginative to the real. Rather than an emphasis on the self-reflexivity of text and intertexts—or, the failure of language to represent anything outside itself—this dialogue between the two realms proves to be self-reflexive in that the two-directionality of intellect and world engages in a kind of diegetic level crossing. That is, like Coleridge's dreamer, aesthetic engagements require a movement, in conceptual and narrative terms, between the diegetic space of imagination and an alternate diegetic space of world.

This self-reflexive dialogic operates in language itself. Such level-crossing is an inherent quality of the phenomena of self-reference and self-reflexivity. From the work of physicist and professor of cognitive science and comparative literature, Douglas R. Hofstadter, stems some observations on the self-reference in language. The first four essays in Hofstadter's collection, *Metamagical Themas: Questing for*

the Essence of Mind and Pattern (1985), examine self-referential sentences, viral

sentences, and self-replicating linguistic structures. For Hofstadter, "self-reference is

ubiquitous…it happens every time anyone says 'I' or 'me' or 'word' or 'speak' or

'mouth'…writes a book about writing, designs a book about book design, makes a

movie about movies, or writes an article about self-reference" (Hofstadter 7). Many

systems inherently represent themselves or refer to themselves within the parameters

of their own symbolism. Some instances of linguistic self-reference are paradoxical

as in the case of the Epimenides paradox: this sentence is false. However, the quality

of paradox here is not axiomatic. Hofstadter provides a series of examples of self-

referential and self-replicating sentences, some paradoxical, others not: "I am

simultaneously writing and being written (11); "I am the meaning of this sentence"

(11); "Say, haven't I written you somewhere else before?" (12); "I am going two-

level with you" (17); or, "This inert sentence is my body, but my soul is alive,

dancing in the sparks of your brain" (11). Hofstadter offers a structure to aid in

conceptualizing self-reflexivity and self-reference—he calls it the strange loop—in

Gödel, Escher, Bach (1979). Hofstadter remarks that the "'Strange Loop'

phenomenon occurs whenever, by moving upwards (or downwards) through the

levels of some hierarchical system, we unexpectedly find ourselves back where we

started" (Hofstadter 10). He elucidates this abstraction in *I am a Strange Loop*

(2007): with the logic of a strange loop, "despite one's sense of departing ever further

from one's origin, one winds up, to one's shock, exactly where one had started out.

In short, a strange loop is a paradoxical level-crossing feedback loop" (101-102).

Ultimately, Hofstadter makes the reader ask amusing questions of the following

variety: what is a signifier that can serve as its own referent? What is a destination that can serve as its own departure? What is an effect than can serve as its own cause?

This way of regarding language has fascinating implications. If language and ideas are implicated in a bidirectional, level-crossing loop, the reader is in the territory of, not formalism, but functionalist semantics and linguistic determinism. In the 1920s and 1930s, Polish-American philosopher Alfred Korzybski pioneered the theory of general semantics with the publication of two major works, *Manhood of Humanity* (1921) and *Science and Sanity* (1933). Korzybski's system is a "discipline which explains and trains us how to use our nervous systems most efficiently…In brief, it is the formulation of a new non-aristotelian system of orientation which affects every branch of science and life" (Korzybski 7). At the heart of his anti-essentialist project is Korzybski's insistence that structure is the only content of knowledge; that is, we cannot know things in themselves, the human mind—the brain, an organ that abstracts—cannot transcend itself. Language derives from functions of the brain, Korzybski suggests; reciprocally, the brain is a function of language. The following three maxims are most effective for expressing Korzybski's general semantics: the map is not the territory, no map can represent all of its presumed territory, and maps are self-reflexive and can be mapped indefinitely (Pula ix). General semantics is a system of uncertainty that promotes habitual non-elementalism, anti-essentialism, and non-aristotelian modes of thought. Korzybski's concern is not aesthetic so much as it is the formulation of non-essentialist language use: he wishes to eliminate from education the "inadequate aristotelian types of

evaluation" (Korzybski 181). By systematically changing habitual thought and language patterns, general semantics suggests that humans can actively resist the linguistic determinism of an *a priori* epistemology by actively engaging with the parameters of language use.

Though Korzybski was to have an influence on some twentieth-century thinkers and artists, the writings of Benjamin Lee Whorf popularized the idea of linguistic determinism and linguistic relativity in the 1940s. Yet, while the hugely influential work of Ferdinand de Saussure—and from Saussure, the work of Roland Barthes and Jacques Derrida, and the psychoanalysis of Jacques Lacan—suggest that there is a historical *a priori* of language that determines and constitutes thought from within language, what makes Whorfian linguistics striking is its apparent absolutism. In its strong version, the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis—which integrates Whorfian functionalism with the linguistic theories of Edward Sapir—claims that language determines thought totally. Perhaps its most controversial suggestion is that of cultural relativism, which argues that communication between different cultures is uncertain due to difficulties in finding common ground through translation. The following is from Edward Sapir, and is characteristic of the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis: "Human beings do not live in the objective world alone…We see and hear and otherwise experience very largely as we do because the language habits of our community predispose certain choices of interpretation" (Whorf "The Relation of Habitual Thought and Behavior to Language" 134). Whorf, like Korzybski, was a non-aristotelian: for traditional Western thought belongs to "materialism, psychophysical parallelism, [Newtonian] physics…and dualistic views of the

universe in general" (152). Whorf is writing in a post-Einsteinian epistemology; he is

concerned with how monistic, holistic, and relativistic interpretations of reality "must

be talked about in what amounts to a new language" (152). Speech habits are not

personal or subjective, but are rather "systematic, so that we are justified in calling

them a system of natural logic" ("Science and Linguistics" 207). Though

provocative, Whorf is certainly productive in his implications: "We dissect nature

along lines laid down by our native languages. The categories and types that we

isolate from the world of phenomena we do not find there because they stare every

observer in the face; on the contrary, the world is presented in a kaleidoscopic flux of

impressions which has to be organized by our minds" (213). The Korzybskian and

Whorfian self-reflexive loops may be that language determines thought through a

system of natural logic while thought expresses itself within and through that logic,

determining language habits. The implications for reading literature are fascinating:

we simultaneously bring back Coleridge's flower from the dream and create Wells'

"flower whose atoms, not yet assembled, now occupy other spaces." Perhaps James'

painting is the finest metaphor for the act of reading.

   The influence of functionalism of this variety waned with the rise of formalist and

poststructuralist modes of analysis in the 1950s and 1960s. One notable and

influential exception is the work of Michel Foucault, particularly in the early work

The Order of Things (1966). In *Foucault* (1986), Gilles Deleuze describes aspects of

Foucault's work as "new functionalism" (Deleuze 24). In the preface to *The Order of

Things*, Foucault discusses linguistic and cultural relativity; appropriately enough, he

writes that *The Order of Things* "arose out of a passage in Borges, out of the laughter

that shattered…all the familiar landmarks of…*our* thought, the thought that bears the stamp of our age" (Foucault xv). To demarcate these familiar landmarks of thought, Foucault introduces the *episteme*, an analytical tool for historically demarcating shifts in the constitutive rules of thought. It concerns the historically specific epistemological environments that inform, if not determine, modes of inquiry; or, in his own words: "the total set of relations that unite, at a given period, the discursive practices that give rise to epistemological figures, sciences, and possibly formalized systems" (Foucault *Archeology of Knowledge* 211). What the Borges tale offered to Foucault was a kind of wonderment that recalls Whorf's way of thinking "in what amounts to a new language" and Borges' introduction of a new idea: "the thing we apprehend in one great leap, the thing that, by means of the fable, is demonstrated as the exotic charm of another system of thought, is the limitation of our own, the stark impossibility of thinking *that*" (Foucault *The Order of Things* xv). The determinism here is not, of course, bleak; rather, it is productive.

In Greek, the term metaphor means "transfer." Aristotle's definition is descriptive rather than operative: "metaphor is the application of an alien name by transference either from genus to species, or from species to genus, or from species to species, or by analogy, that is, proportion" (Aristotle *Poetics* 41). Metaphors consist of two parts, one of which is momentarily transformed into the other. Simply put, a metaphor is to speak of one thing using the terms of another; it suggests the separation between demonstration and truth. Thus the terms fuse, and then separate according to a kind of oscillating movement of perpetual transformation. In this sense, a metaphor is the aggregate of a paradoxical and unending operation: one that

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is self-negating while simultaneously self-propagating through a process of self-reflexive transfer. In short, a metaphor cannot master its reference, yet it operates effectively. This tension is what makes the metaphor a notably fecund analytical model. As a unit of meaning, a metaphor is a closed system that balances itself through the logical recursion of a paradoxical process, yet it is also engaged in systemic level-crossing: the tenor is transformed into the vehicle, which, in turn, is transformed back into the tenor, *ad infinitum.*

Metaphor is a self-reflexive linguistic unit. The transfer of one conceptual category to another, a kind of oscillating transformation or mutation of meaning, is the semantic trajectory of a metaphor. Its function is not simply ornate, however, but one that is productive in reconfiguring the way we think about and perceive the world. Over the past few decades the emerging field of cognitive linguistics has been instrumental in new ways of studying the level-crossing between language and the mind. In cognitive linguistics, there is particular emphasis placed on the function and operations of meaning, conceptual processes, and experience. Karol Janicki, in *Toward Non-Essentialist Sociolinguistics* (1990) provides an excellent discussion of the work of both Whorf and Korzybski, with emphasis on the latter, as prototypes for the contemporary scene of non-essentialist linguistics. Concepts, here, are the primary unit of understanding; concepts aid in comprehension and knowledge through systemic modes of categorizing and conceptualizing. Influential within cognitive linguistics is conceptual metaphor theory. Conceptual metaphors are metaphors because their structural logic is based on the association of one domain with another. Rather than being purely linguistic, metaphor is conceptual because the

"motivation for the metaphor resides at the level of conceptual domains" (Evans and Green 295). Proposed by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson in *Metaphors We Live By* (1980), the fundamental premise of conceptual metaphor theory is that "metaphor is pervasive in everyday life, not just in language but in thought and action. Our ordinary conceptual system, in terms of which we both think and act, is fundamentally metaphorical in nature" (Lakoff and Johnson 3). In short, Lakoff and Johnson suggest that "metaphors as linguistic expressions are possible precisely because there are metaphors in a person's conceptual system" (6). In this sense, linguistic expressions that are metaphorical are "reflections of an underlying conceptual association" (Evans and Green 295).

   Lakoff and Johnson wish to express that conceptual metaphor theory is primarily concerned with regular use of language. So, much of the research in this area is more concerned with common modes of expression rather than with poetic metaphor. The study of poetic metaphor, instead, constitutes a particular trajectory of cognitive linguistics: cognitive poetics. In *More than Cool Reason: A Field Guide to Poetic Metaphor* (1989) Lakoff and Mark Turner examine a series of poetic metaphors. These kinds of metaphors are understood through "The Grounding Hypothesis;" here, "metaphorical understanding is grounded in nonmetaphorical understanding" (Lakoff and Turner 113). The source term of the metaphor is not understood metaphorically but experientially; that is, the source term is "grounded in the habitual and routine bodily and social patterns we experience" (113). In short, poetic metaphor is not an inaccessible manner of elite expression, but is deictic in the sense that its logical substratum is grounded in common cognitive structures of understanding phenomena;

furthermore, poetic metaphor "exercises our mind so that we can extend our normal powers of comprehension beyond the range of metaphors we are brought up to see the world through" (214). In 2002, Peter Stockwell published *Cognitive Poetics: An Introduction* as an introductory textbook to cognitive poetics. The general aim of the book is pedagogical: to establish modes of association between the study of literature and the study of cognitive linguistics thus situating literary discourse within contemporary linguistic theories concerned with broad modes of meaning construction. The following year, editors Joanna Gavins and Gerard Steen compiled *Cognitive Poetics in Practice* (2003). A companion piece to Stockwell's introduction, the collection includes a series of ten essays that demonstrate the scope of the field. Perhaps the theme behind cognitive poetics and poetic metaphor can be revealed in the following statement about cognitive linguistics: "language not only *reflects* conceptual structure, but can also *give rise to* conceptualization" (Evans and Green 101).

    Incidentally, conceptual metaphor theory complicates the myths of objectivism and subjectivism; these two ways, one typically absolutist while the latter typically Romantic, constitutes a conceptual structure that limits categorical modes of knowledge to two constructed ontological polarities. The theory offers a third choice that of "an experientialist synthesis." Lakoff and Johnson remark that metaphor unites reason and imagination:

> Reason…involves categorization, entailment, and inference.
>
> Imagination…involves seeing one kind of thing in terms of another kind of
>
> thing…Metaphor is thus *imaginative rationality*. Since the categories of our

everyday thought are largely metaphorical and our everyday reasoning

involves metaphorical entailments and inference, ordinary rationality is

therefore imaginative by its very nature. (*Metaphors We Live By* 193)

This is a particularly exciting proposition for the study of literature as it suggests the

level-crossing of two diegetic domains, that of language and mind. What is

interesting here is how this logic operates when the transfer from the aesthetically

treated language is directed to the level of the mind. This logic is semantically

accessible and linguistically rational, yet the imaginative dimensions are certainly

excessive for artistic effect. The significance here is that, in this self-reflexive loop,

literary language can change the very way we perceive and experience the world.

The diegetic level-crossing of metaphor is that transformation in language is a

transformation of mind; or, metaphor allows the flower to be held in the reader's

hand.

One virtue of the work of Hofstadter, Korzybski, Whorf, and cognitive linguistics

is that each, in some way, insist that metaphors as linguistic expressions are possible

because there are metaphors in the conceptual system of the mind. This suggests that

in any symbolic system the cause of the system follows its effects; self-reflexive

systems operate according to laws of self-similarity. Certainly, the language of

literature is not the same as the language of painting or the language of mathematics.

Yet, the logic operates according to laws of structural approximation. As a result, the

juxtaposition of one language with another—since both languages must operate

according to laws of the mind—should yield productive, if not amusing, results. In

2001, Vladimir Tasić published the book *Mathematics and the Roots of Postmodern*

Thought; the study's objective is to intervene in the colloquial antagonism between two entities, vaguely labeled "science" and "postmodernism." Tasić avoids broad categories of definition and rather looks into "the possibility of *re*constructing some aspects of postmodern thought…from a mathematical point of view" (4). What Tasić achieves is a lucid comparison between mathematical developments and the trajectory of thought in the humanities. His principal concern is to suggest that mathematics "*could* have been a formative factor in the rise of postmodern theory" (6). In this speculative examination, Tasić raises notable similarities and discursive cross-currents between mathematics and the major theoretical projects of structuralism, functionalism, and deconstruction. However, there are two points in Tasić's book that are of particular interest here. The first is with Kurt Gödel's self-referential mathematics and incompleteness theorem; the second with the epistemological intimations that chaos and information theory have on the study of language and literature. These two systems reaffirm the logic of functionalism. Gödel had a considerable influence on the musings of Hofstadter, so it is no shock that the incompleteness theorem is itself a mathematical version of a strange loop and self-reflexive grammar; for Gödel, it was not possible "to establish the truth or falsity of the statement 'this statement is false' in terms of computations" (75). The result is an apparent paradox: either mathematics is a contradiction, or the concept of truth cannot be defined mathematically. Unlike truth, Gödel notes, demonstration or mathematical proof, can be defined formally. Gödel's conclusion, however, is remarkable: he writes, the "concept of truth of sentences of [a language] cannot be defined in [that language]" (76). Rather than eschewing objective truth and intuition in the formalist

fashion, Gödel concludes that mathematical truth is objective and even intuitively knowable, but cannot be fully expressed in language. Tasić's take on this observation is fascinating: "it seems that Gödel defended a strongly Platonist understanding of mathematics, that is, regarded abstract mathematical objects and objectively existing things and mathematical theorems as expressing objective truths about them" (76). A similar conclusion is made from the point of view of conceptual metaphor theory. Raphael Núñez, in "Conceptual Metaphor, Human Cognition, and the Nature of Mathematics," writes that "the most abstract conceptual system we can think of, mathematics(!), is ultimately embodied in the nature of our bodies, language, and cognition" (Núñez 356); and mathematics "is one of the greatest products of the collective human imagination" (359). Whatever truth is, it is not the direct referent of mathematics or any other linguistic system.

Much of what formalism and postmodern theory have in common is a denunciation of the Enlightenment conceit that rules are universal. Gödel's findings complicate this dismissal; more recent mathematical developments in chaos theory and information theory disrupt this project to an even more pronounced degree. Chaos theory has been misleadingly labeled as a "postmodern mathematics;" N. Katherine Hayles points out this false label in her work on chaos theory and its permeation into literary studies in the 1990s, notably in *Chaos Bound* (1990) and *How We Became Posthuman* (1999). In *Chaos Bound*, for example, Hayles is both descriptive and prescriptive in her application of the fundamental concepts of chaos theory to the study of literature. The most admirable aspect of Hayles' critique lies in the differentiation between how postmodernist theory and chaos/information theory

understand meaning: postmodernism wishes to deconstruct semantic value assumptions inherent in language while chaos and information highlight the asemic nature and structure of language. Hayles is always sober in her analysis and is never tempted by overdetermined wishful thinking. Warren Weaver, in "Recent Contribution to the Mathematical Theory of Communication" (1949), remarks that "*information* must not be confused with meaning. In fact, two messages, one of which is heavily loaded with meaning and the other which is pure nonsense, can be exactly equivalent" (Weaver 8). James Gleick's *The Information: A History, A Theory, A Flood* (2011) examines the theory and history of information theory in lucid depth for the non-specialist; he is, however, not overly concerned with the implications of information on literary studies. Philip Kuberski in *Chaosmos: Literature, Science, and Theory* (1994), like Hayles, is fascinated by the larger epistemological effects of chaos and information theory on the humanities. Kuberski's study is excellent in its emphasis on the simultaneity of aberrant and deterministic tenets of much postmodernist thought. Like Hayles and Tasić, he traces the paratactic formation of deconstruction and post-Einsteinian science. Kuberski notes a tendency in Modernist literature he identifies as chaosmos: a paradoxical venture to achieve a kind of transcendent order by writing intense complexities. Núñez correctly remarks that mathematics, like all conceptual systems, is "not monolithic...[and] is every bit as conceptually rich as any other part of the human conceptual system" (360). In this sense, the juxtaposition of one conceptual system with another is speculative and imaginatively productive.

Indeed, chaos and information offer an explicit complication for postmodern thought: points, systems, sets, structures, quasi-teleological infinite limit, and "system states that are described as Platonist points in a Platonist infinite-dimensional universe" (Tasić 156) are some of the metaphysical idealizations that chaos and information theory pose as major challenges to postmodernist and formalist thought. And with these metaphysical conceits come abstract functions, totalizing logic of identity and grounds of justification, and a multitude of dichotomies. Tasić suggests that the most common version of postmodern thought, as it circulates in both cultural and academic discourse, appears to be a series of permutations on the famous logocentric maxim: "To be is to be the value of a variable" (156). While this play on *copulae* is now random and chaotic, the axiom remains: "Languages speak, structures mean, and changes occur courtesy of a mysterious 'power-in-general' that belongs to no one in particular, which is to say that we are dealing with a kind of functionalism" (156).

This complication intimates a certain heritage of Foucault's work closely linked to his "new functionalism" that, Mark G.E. Kelly suggests, largely goes overlooked: that of his "happy positivism." If reality is chaotic, historical habit would tell us that this would be epistemologically incompatible with scientific positivism. Vincent Descombes writes that "on the one hand, Foucault's approach is that of a positivist…Yet, on the other hand, Foucault as a reader of Nietzsche does not believe in the positive notion of *fact*" (Kelly 27). So, Descombes condemns Foucault's work as no more than "a seductive construct, whose play of erudite cross-reference lends it

an air of verisimilitude" (27). The accusation that Descombes directs at Foucault's

work is that of the classic relativist paradox. Kelly writes,

> the relativist says truth is relative, but then this statement is itself relative—so
>
> he cannot be sure of it. Happy positivism avoids this criticism…because it
>
> asserts the necessity of putting forward underdetermined statement in view of
>
> the impossibility of full determination. There is no need for provisos that this
>
> is not *really* how things are, since there can be no description which does
>
> cleave to how things actually are. (27)

Of course, the relativist paradox is a translation of the Epimenides/liar's paradox;

Gödel's incompleteness theorem is brought to mind. Or, as Hofstadter writes,

"Gödel's famous Incompleteness Theorem in metamathematics can be thought of as

arising from his attempt to replicate as closely as possible the liar paradox in purely

mathematical terms" (Hofstadter "On Self-Referential Sentences" 7). For Gödel,

demonstration and mathematical proof can be formally expressed, truth cannot. For

Foucault's "happy positivism," demonstrations, likewise can be defined formally, but

do not constitute truth. So, language speaks and structures mean; self-reflexive

structures eschew truth statements, yet necessitate diegetic level transfer between

subject and object, statement and reference, etc., as a means to demonstrate operative

semantic possibilities. If to be is to be the value of a chaotic variable within the

parameters of a determined system, then the cause and effect of the conceptual system

is chaotic. To address this, a return to Borges and metaphor.

In 1951, Borges composed a short piece titled "Pascal's Sphere." He frames the

essay with the repetition of a Platonic proposition: "Perhaps universal history is the

history of a few metaphors" (351). Borges remarks that this metaphor is variously repeated throughout history: the metaphor is an infinite sphere whose center is everywhere and whose circumference is nowhere. Indeed, Borges aestheticizes self-reflexive conceptual systems of metaphor and language; emphasis is placed on two major historical figures and their use and response to the metaphor. For Giordano Bruno, the universe thus became "all center," or "the centre of the universe is everywhere and the circumference nowhere." This was a great intellectual and imaginative liberation; the paradox, for Bruno, expressed ecstasy. Yet what proved blissful to Bruno was for Blaise Pascal an abyss of anxiety. Facing the changing understanding of the cosmos, Pascal felt confusion, anxiety, and isolation. He expressed it as follows: "Nature is a frightful sphere, the center of which is everywhere, and the circumference nowhere." The statement is complex; the concrete subject is an abstract, which, in turn, is concrete, *ad infinitum*. That is, a history of a single metaphor expressing a "mysterious power-in-general"; or, the single metaphor is the conceptual system itself.

By making the language user the tenor of the metaphor, one finds a remarkably unique analytical mode with which to examine construction/interpretation self-reflexively. So, the working definition of reading here: the language user is an infinite sphere, the centre of which is everywhere, and the circumference nowhere. In this sense, the language user, a definite and concretized noun is abstract, a paradoxical sphere unending its constant force moving outwards in any direction, and yet occupying neither space nor time. So, a concrete is an abstract which is, self-reflexively concrete. That is, the subject and the predicate, the vehicle and the tenor,

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negate one another. Whether the subject is the cosmos, Nature, or language user, the

formulation establishes a structural conundrum in which the subject and predicate,

tenor and vehicle, concrete and abstract cyclically affirm their constitutive potency

through their negation: this statement is false. Thus the subject is at once present and

absent. So, the reading subject is in each of its constituent parts, but cannot be

reduced by any one of them. Language constitutes the reading subject and the

reading subject constitutes language.

Self-reference and self-replication is thus the nature of metaphor, but so is

transformation; the corresponding conceit is that the mind operates accordingly.

Language is at the centre of the mind, yet its circumference is nowhere; the mind is at

the centre of language, yet its circumference is nowhere. Linguistic metaphors for

conceptual systems are possible because they are structurally self-similar to the

conceptual system of the mind. As a result, establishing a literary interpretive mode

based on strange loop relations—level-crossing transfer—between a work of

literature and another self-reflexive conceptual system should produce interesting

speculations. This logic offers unique speculations through its eccentricity, yet is

made possible because the interrelation between one reflexive system (mode of

critique) and another (literary work) itself is that of an extended and extending

strange loop. Or, as Hayles remarks, such reflexivity is "the movement whereby that

which has been used to generate a system is made, through a changed perspective, to

become part of the system it generates" (Hayles *How We Became Posthuman* 8).

Hofstadter, likewise, writes that indirect self-reference, that which involves a kind of

transformation, "suggests the idea of *indirect self-replication*, in which a viral entity

[the self-reflexive unit], instead of replicating itself exactly, brings into being another entity that plays the same role as it does, but in some other system" (Hofstadter 60). Such odd combinations, made possible through merging reflexive systems, yield interesting speculative results. This mode of analysis reveals how unusual words, syntax, and diegetic structures in literature are made possible by self-similar structures of the mind; simultaneously, it reveals how the self-reflexive transfer of these unusual structural units involve a transformation of mind. In short, new and unusual language yields new ways of perceiving the world.

Coleridge's Flower: Phenomenological Engagement

The shift from the embedded Platonism in cognitive linguistics and its predecessors to phenomenology may seem abrupt. Yet, as we have noted, metaphor is a self-reflexive linguistic unit. The movement of metaphor is the transfer of one conceptual category to another: from one level of diegesis to another. Metaphor in its very emphasis on level-crossing demands an analogous mode of analysis. We cannot simply assert that language structures mind; we must also approach this conundrum from the perspective of the site of these processes: the body. The operation of this paradoxical interaction is more than structurally elaborate in its strange loopiness; that is, it establishes the strange and tangled path to looking at modernist literature as that which explicitly reconfigures the way we understand the world. This process, then, is one that is active on behalf of the reader—as opposed to the linguistic determinism that seems to lurk not very far beneath the surface of cognitive linguistics—and is intimately bound with the conviction that phenomenological

approaches to reading and language engagement foster collaborative, dynamic partnerships about learning itself.

Indeed, etymologically, phenomenology derives from the Greek *phainomenon*, to show, and *logos*, reason or study. So, phenomenological investigation is the study of things shown; and, it can also be the study of things set before us. From this premise, reading unusual modes of literature establishes is a dynamic learning experience founded upon authentic participation. More generally, an authentic mode of phenomenological engagement is that in which the external (another level of diegesis) is observed in such a way as to make one's own consciousness emerge as consciousness before oneself. Dan Zahavi writes that the phenomenological line of thought on self-representational consciousness is

> Not merely something that comes about the moment one scrutinizes one's experience attentively…Rather, self-consciousness comes in many forms and degrees. It makes perfect sense to speak of self-consciousness as soon as I am not simply conscious of an external object—a chair, a chestnut tree, or a rising sun—but acquainted with the experience of the object as well, for in such a case my consciousness reveals itself to me. (Zahavi 274-275)

In our discussion, then, we must note the distinction between language or an external object being given and where consciousness itself is set before us as a result of language engagement. "In its most primitive (and fundamental form)," Zahavi suggests, "self-consciousness is taken to be a question of having first-personal access to one's own consciousness; it is a question of the first-personal givenness or manifestation of experiential life" (275). And, since we are limiting our discussion to

language, we may add that this first-personal access follows a conceptual movement that is structurally similar to metaphor: one thing is transformed into another, which, in turn, is transformed back into its original (though now different) state making itself manifest as itself. One virtue of this trajectory of thought is that it insists that metaphor is a fundamental structure that repeats itself, or operates as an effective analogue, to the role language and consciousness are distinct and yet the same as diegetic levels. Tim Murphy suggests of Nietzsche's metaphor, *Übertragung* "is not understood as one trope amongst the other traditional tropes…*übertragen* is the figure of tropology itself" (Murphy 2). Again, in a symbolic system such as this the cause of the system follows its effects; the self-reflexive system functions according to analogy and self-similarity. That is, "unusual impressions…produce unusual brain-changes; hence their summary…is of unusual kind." In this sense, in examining the texts that follow, it is both fitting that Lakoff and Turner suggest that "to study metaphor is to be confronted with hidden aspects of one's own mind and one's own culture" (Lakoff and Turner 214). Indeed, it is, for phenomenologists, this confrontation with that which is hidden that is the source of, not only self-representational consciousness, but the diegetic level crossing between mind and language that makes this self-manifestation possible.

This shift to an agential engagement with language—a shift that posits the body as the mover of interpretation—is as much an engagement with skeptical relativism as it is with phenomenology. Truth or interpretive positivism as an analytical goal is itself a constructed cultural narrative and therefore, like literature, is subject to engaged reconfiguration. Furthermore, Modernist skepticism towards both eccentric modes of

thought as well as those of the dominant industrial capitalist or military culture of the

early twentieth century is integral to the concept of a plastic, agential reader. Indeed,

the Platonic desire to subsume the anatomical self to the mind by extending the

central nervous system beyond the body finds a parallel in one of Nietzsche's most

famous concepts: the Will to Power. In *Beyond Good and Evil* (1886), Nietzsche

writes,

> My idea is that every specific body strives to become master over all space
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> and to extend its force (-its will to power) and to thrust back all that resists its
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> extension. But it continually encounters similar efforts on the part of other
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> bodies and ends by coming to an arrangement…with those of them that are
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> sufficiently related to it: thus they then conspire together for power. And the
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> process goes on. (Nietzsche s.636)

For Nietzsche, the Will to Power suggests the fundamental execution of creative

forces that drive the individual to their potential greatness. The individual driven by

the Will to Power, therefore, may "thrust back all that resists" its progress.

Ultimately, when various individuals encounter one another in the Will to Power,

they come to an "arrangement" and "conspire together for power" whereby all

resistance is overruled. For Nietzsche the Will to Power implies that one must

transcend good and evil and proceed resolutely without any heed to ambivalent moral

convention. However, we are not concerned with morality here. Rather, what is of

note here is how Nietzsche emphasizes the extension of the self into all space. Here,

we see the Will to Power as a counter-force not only against dominant cultural

systems but that which moves upward in a paradoxical hierarchy against the means of

dominant cultural narrative: language itself. Though it is implied by Nietzsche that

not all people acknowledge the Will to Power the result of those who do acknowledge

and proceed with the concepts should not find themselves at odds with one another:

they strive for uniqueness and an authenticity of experience. Therefore, Nietzsche's

philosophical concept gestures towards an expression of order and unity, though one

that is bi-directional, loopy, and tangled. That is, Nietzsche intended his concept of

the Will to Power to ultimately act as a theory for everything, such as an explanation

for the laws of nature (and, thus, the nature of language). Yet, the Will to Power

itself is a metaphor, or, *Übertragen*. And if *Übertragen* is the figure of tropology

itself, we may remark that metaphor is also the figure of tropology. The tropology

here—a multi-diegetic one between two levels—is reflexive: the linguistic or

narrative space over which the Will to Power wishes to be dominant is that which is

simultaneously already embedded within the body (the central nervous system); that

is, the movement of the Will to Power-as-extension begins and ends in the same

conceptual locale yet is semantically transformed. What is worth stressing here,

however, is that the extension here—unlike that in linguistic determinism—is one

founded upon the Will—that is, agency—of an individual.

One of the major criticisms of linguistic determinism is that the field succumbs to

the unqualifiable claim that the role of human agency in thought is secondary and that

the thought of an individual is a vehicle animated by language. There is a kind of

objectification at work here; that is, linguistic determinism in this sense understands

the thinking human being as that which exists as an object galvanized by an *a priori*

linguistic system. Both Whorf and Korzybski, as well as later cognitive linguists of

the Platonic tendency, suggest that our engagement with language is typically habitual, uncreative, and uncritical. Their solution, in a nutshell, is to learn more languages (alternative grammar and enhanced vocabulary extend the parameters of the determinism) or to at least self-reflexively recognize that the system we use to structure our thoughts is the system that allows such recognition to take place. The drama here, however, is one of the mind: we can extend the mind but the mind must always be linguistic. The human being in this mode of thought is fundamentally inanimate and is only animated by linguistic systems. The embodied extension of the Will into the space surrounding it—whether physically or intellectual—is, at best, largely not the concern of linguistic determinists. So, the human being here exists much in the same way as any other object. Yet, the physical presence of the body existing in the world is an undeniable fact of perception. After all, even the mind-as-brain is, in the most basic sense, a physical structure situated in the material here and now.

This is where we must turn to the work of Martin Heidegger since his thought permeates this study both implicitly and explicitly. First, for Heidegger, the human being exists here. His famous term *Dasein* literally means being here/there or being in the world. For Heidegger, because we are worldly-tuned, self-consciousness or self-acquaintance is that of a self both immersed and embedded in the world. "I neither experience myself as a bundle of experiences and processes," writes Zahavi, "nor as a detached I-object, rather I experience myself in what I do and suffer, in what confronts me and in what I accomplish, in my concerns and disregards. Self-acquaintance is indeed only to be found in our immersion in the world" (283-284).

Human beings, like inanimate objects, exist. However, existing and being are not

synonymous. Inanimate objects exist but they cannot *be*. Individual humans both

have both existence and being. What makes the human being unique is that, as that

which exists, it also has the capability to be; or, the human being is able to recognize

being and to engage with what that means. The human being has an existential

choice in its being in that he or she is able to recognize that at some time in the past

their existence was *not yet* and that at some point in the future they will no longer be.

The finitude of existence is, then, critical to the condition of being able to recognize

what it means to be. This process is made possible by thought. Thought, for

Heidegger, is intimately embedded within language. Thought makes knowledge

possible and so the human must know what he or she is, what possibilities he or she

has for action, and how one may be directly engaged in making choices as a means of

affecting reality. Indeed, while Heidegger also suggests that the thought and the mind

are both largely linguistic, what makes his oeuvre in contradistinction to linguistic

determinism is the marked emphasis on agency and choice. To be self-reflexively

concerned with the possibility of choice and the actual choices one makes is to be

actively involved in one's being.

The ability to choose, for Heidegger, is more than an instance of selection. Choice

is to consider something absolutely. So, the choice to consider being demands that

we understand being as a whole. Yet, being is temporal: it once was not and will

some day not be. So long as one is alive to consider—to think linguistically—being,

one's being is not complete. We are thrown into the world and we are never

completely manifest before ourselves. Instead, we exist as an opening towards

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existential possibility. This is where temporal directionality comes in: as long as one *is* one must succumb to the possibility of futurity. That is, as long as one is capable of choice and thought, one is in the strange position of being something that is not yet manifest and therefore is incapable of recognizing being as a whole. The paradox is that to know, to make a choice to know what it means to be, can only be made possible after the moment of death, the point at which being as a whole attests to its finitude. To consider being as a whole, this suggests, can only be understood by others. The problem, then, is that we are tempted to understand ourselves from the perspective of others. From this logic, we also understand the finitude of existence as that which takes place for other people and so we are again tempted to treat death as an abstraction from lived experience. And this logic has its analogues: we may also treat language as something abstract from ourselves. That is, this mode of thinking directs human beings towards the acceptance that we are animated and made meaningful only from the perspective of other things whether people and language. And so existence is not unique but typical: one analogous example among many. So, this assumption of typicality is what seduces the individual into habitual ways of behaving and being. However, Heidegger claims that our temporality directs us to be concerned and to care for our own being: our mode of being is, then, that which must be concerned with our individual being. Like linguistic determinists, Heidegger suggests that the individual must confront unconscious habit. However, unlike the linguistic determinists, he believes that being can be actively engaged and, rather than being understood as something of varying degrees of typicality, is something radically singular. To live habitually—to understand being from the perspective of

others—is what Heidegger calls inauthentic.[1] There is a way to live authentically,

however, Heidegger claims. That is, there is a way to possess the flower rather than

being its possession. To do so is to live towards, to project into the possibility, of

nothingness.

So, the possibility for this authentic understanding of being is intricately

embedded within the relation between nonexistence (death) and temporality. Because

we are always *not yet*, in Heidegger's thought we are determined not by language but

through the possibilities that are set before us in the future. Being is, in a sense,

always becoming until the moment of nothingness; at this moment of nothingness,

being can be—though paradoxically—understood in its wholeness. In order to live

authentically, then, one needs to understand oneself as temporal, impermanent, and

fundamentally transient. In this sense, the past and future take on specific

meaningfulness: the past determines what one is. Rather, it is our projection of

thought and desires into the future that denotes being in relation to the present. The

relation between being and time is not one of linear abstraction, of clocks, or lives of

others, but a tangible and literal transience of our own existence from birth until death

and this singular concrete temporality establishes how an individual is radically

unique. Death is where experience breaks off. It is strange and unique because it is

for the individual the possibility of impossibility: the end of possibility as an absolute

negation. In this sense, death is both the limit and the source of possibility. Like

Hofstadter's strange loop, we move towards something only to end up at its source: a

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[1] Inauthenticity in Heidegger's work does not carry any negative moral assumptions, however.
Linguistic determinism, we may suggest, from this point of analysis would be considered inauthentic
since it implies that something other than the human being itself provides the possibility for
knowledge.

body without life, a thing without the ability to be. In short, our strange loopy

existence is being-as-time, or, being-for-death.

It is in this context that we understand Heidegger's link between mind and

language. To be more specific, the relation of concern here is between thought and

language. Just as being is to be fully understood only through the recognition of

death—being-towards-nothingness—language becomes a kind of tool for striving for

authenticity in being. To be brief, Heidegger claims that we need to learn to think, to

let ourselves and others learn. Heidegger suggests that we must encourage ourselves

to interrogate those instances of language that he identifies as causing explicit angst:

that which tears one from common experience and lays bare one's concerns and

prejudices. This experience unveils a new context-specific space of discussion

characterized by negotiation and dissent; ultimately, this space is what makes critical

investigation possible for both thought and language. Authentic thought, for

Heidegger, is that which has yet to be thought in the sense that it allows thought to

arrive. This mode of thought is also future directed: towards that which is yet to

exist. Yet, the temporal locale of this possibility is, at present, nothing. To think is to

think in a kind of openness, to think in nothingness, to think in an abyss. Thoughts

come to us, just as the future offers itself to us. Tellingly, Heidegger asks "what

could be more worthy of thought for the saying one than the word's being veiling

itself, than the fading word for the word?" (Heidegger "Words" 155). The fading

word for the word is, here, poetry. It is primarily through poetry that the link between

language and thinking-in-nothingness be bridged. It is with poetry that we "let

ourselves be told what is worthy of thinking" (155) and so we are able to think in a

future-directed void: to think with disregard to habitual use of language and to think possibility. Indeed, he writes that "poetry and thinking belong together. Their coming together has come about long ago. As we think back to that origin, we come face to face with what is primevally worthy of thought, and which we can never ponder sufficiently" (155). Our striving towards the future is, then, also a loop into the past: both are, however, concretely inaccessible. Indeed, a change in language ultimately metamorphoses the way we understand and experience the world: "the word's rule springs to light as that which makes the thing be a thing. The word begins to shine as the gathering which first brings what presences to its presence" (155). So poetic articulation—or what Heidegger calls "saying"—is the key to existing authentically. "The same word," he writes, "that word for saying, is also the word for *Being*, that is, for the presencing of beings. Saying and Being, word and thing, belong to each other in a veiled way, a way which has hardly been thought and is not to be thought out to the end" (155).   Indeed, for Heidegger, agency is rather different from Nietzsche's will to power. Yet, there is again a kind of extension of the mind into other spaces. Heidegger, rather than forcing the self to make space for the Will, suggests that we submit and allow thoughts to strike us. We become almost as if we are a medium for poetry and thought. Our extension into unknowable horizons comes to us rather than the other way around. He continues:

> In order that we may in our thinking fittingly follow and lead this element
> worthy of thought as it gives itself to poetry, we abandon everything which we
> have now said to oblivion. We listen to the poem. We grow still more

> thoughtful now regarding the possibility that the more simply the poem sings
>
> in the mode of song, the more readily our hearing may err. (155)

We are asked to wait: being-as-patience, being-as-nothingness, being-towards-death, being-as-clearing that accepts and welcomes the radiance of new thought to the openness of authentic existence. So, again in contradistinction to linguistic determinism, Heidegger asks us to submit and succumb to language towards the end of thinking that which cannot be thought in the present because it is always yet to be thought. It is language towards possibility in an existential state of openness and nothingness. Coleridge's flower comes to us and we endure it; it changes us as an instance of simultaneous submission and choice.

What Heidegger does not discuss, however, is alternative modes of poetry. That is, how does being-as-openness towards poetry endure itself when confronted with an alternative mode of grammar that does not lend itself temporally and cognitively to the primeval reaching-back and stretching-towards futurity? Perhaps Coleridge's flower is of multiple genera. Czech phenomenologist and media theorist, Vilém Flusser, interrogates this possibility most fully in his provocative 1987 book *Does Writing have a Future?*, only recently published in English. The book engages with methodologies that aim to move beyond teleological approaches to science[2] from the perspective of the humanities. The work is complex, enigmatic, and provocative and, so, it is also controversial. Here, I wish to simply focus on a single, though major, argument from Flusser's study. To Flusser, a major shift in the horizon of reading

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[2] Similar to Paul Feyerabend's famous *Against Method* (1975), Flusser is highly critical of the teleological claims of science; that is, he is skeptical over the enterprise as one of progress. Furthermore, Flusser's critique aims to identify science as equally a flexible "fiction" or a cultural narrative as it is a methodology of inquiry.

and organizing thought will take place with the gradual dominance of digital code over alphanumeric code: that is between digital code and writing. This transition will revolutionize critique, he argues, by gesturing towards more intense modes of interdisciplinary inquiry. Moreover, it will radically change the way the mind and thought are reflexively structured. "Writing seeks a way out of dizzying circular thinking," he writes, "and into a thinking arranged in lines." He continues:

> Now this can become: out of the magic circles of prehistoric thinking into linear, historical thinking. Writing is a transcoding of thought, a translation from the two-dimensional surface of images into a one-dimensional linear code: out of compact, blurred pictorial codes into clear, distinct written codes; out of the imaginary into the conceptual; out of the scenes into processes; out of contexts into texts. Writing is a method of tearing imaginary things apart and making them clear. (Flusser *Does Writing Have a Future?* 15).

This transcoding of thought is also thought transcoding. Writing fundamentally structures the mind; it is what ultimately leads to fallacies in interpreting the teleological trajectory of methodologies of inquiry like the scientific method. Writing, on the page, is read in linear sequence: it is set before us and we follow it. It stands to reason, then, that this directionality of the page aims towards an end: the end of a clause, a sentence, a paragraph, a line of argument. In making thought clear, writing is also a great illusionist: the magic circles of prehistoric thought are noumenally still there, hidden behind an artificial system of transcoding.

> The further writing advances, the more deeply the writing incisor penetrates into the abysses of imaginary things stored in our memory, tearing them apart,

to "describe," to "explain," to recode them into concept. This advance of
writing along lines toward the abysses of memories…and toward an objective
world, stripped of imaginary things, is what we call "history." It is
progressive understanding. (15)

Writing fools us into experiencing progress as something inherent to the nature of
thought and knowledge.

Yet, Flusser, like Heidegger, is intent to demonstrate that our engagement with
language—or codes—is one of active agency so long as we are able to learn to think
in new ways by using codes towards new avenues. These avenues, for Flusser, are bi-
directional and tangled, however. The means to new thought, he suggests, will be a
result of the predominant cultural code shifting from alphanumeric (writing) to digital
code. While writing moulds the plasticity of thought patterns towards linearity and
progressiveness digital code, Flusser argues, urges the thinker to interpret in images
and non-linear patterns. He explains that digital code "can proceed in multiple
directions" (146) and that we do not read code or mathematical equation in a linear
fashion but in a looping, multidirectional directionality as we interpret quanta, parts,
sub-parts, and whole.[3] In a sense, digital code allows us to think what is unthought; it
permits us to stand on the horizon of nothingness so we may now, not simply learn to
think, but learn to think differently. In his very emphasis on non-teleological modes

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[3] One thing Flusser neglects to examine is digital information illiteracy. That is, nearly a few decades
after Flusser wrote his study, digital media has proliferated almost exponentially. While vast number
of people use digital interfaces—that operate on digital code—relatively few people are literate in
coding and programming. In a sense, the population is being used, coded, and programmed more than
they are using, coding, and programming. In recent years, this has become a more pressing concern in
media studies, cultural studies, and pedagogy; that is, there is more direct emphasis on making the
population of the digital age turn literate in code and programming. Douglas Rushkoff's book,
Program or be Programmed (2011) is the most concise and penetrating study forcefully and lucidly
confronting this conundrum.

of thought, however, Flusser is certainly not gesturing towards some kind of utopia of thinking. Instead, while he recognizes the shift from writing to digital code as something profoundly significant, he also identifies this shift as that which will, though different, lead to similar biased distortions of experience that we see with writing. He writes, in a comment that confronts all systems of thought that deal with the reflexive relation between mind and representational codes, that "projecting brain function onto apparatuses raises exactly this question, whether this ontological distinction between real and fictional…is possible at all, and if it is possible, whether it is meaningful" (147). That is, thought is a simulation of language (or, perhaps in the future, digital codes) and yet language and codes are simulations of brain function. But "simulation is a kind of caricature," Flusser writes, because "it simplifies what is being imitated and exaggerates a few aspects of it" (147). So, if writing exaggerates linearity, then code may not only exaggerate multi-directional modes of thinking but also a new kind of rigidity that is remarkably unlike the poetry that Heidegger suggests is the path to existentially responsible thought.

Coding apparatuses are, nevertheless, explicit in the way they address the self-reflexive loops that establish the relation between mind/brain and systems of representation. "Apparatuses incorporate the 1-0 structure because they simulate the structure of our nervous system," Flusser writes, "there, too, we are dealing with a mechanical (and chemical) turning on and off of streams of electrons between the nerve synapses. From this standpoint, digital codes are a method…of giving meaning to quantum leaps in the brain from the outside. We are faced with a self-concealing loop" (145). The self-concealing loops are, indeed, strange loops. They are also

indicative of the relation between the mind and any mode of representation—here we are concerned primarily with aesthetic and literary work—and the accuracy or fidelity an apparatus has in relation to thought itself. For Flusser, though, new computer codes are unique "because they are using simulated brains [computers] to simulate the meaning-giving function of the brain" (145). In a way, digital code, as rigid as it is at this moment in history, is also more analogous to the operations of the brain, Flusser suggests. The brain is an apparatus that allows quantum leaps to occurs as a means of meaning-making and the non-linearity of digital code operates analogously. As a result, code "is about to turn this meaning-giving function over to apparatuses of its own accord, then to reabsorb what they project" (145). That is, code allows for a more effective reflexivity. Code is here, yet it is radiant on the horizon. Digital code is set before us and offers itself to us to engage in new modes of thinking. It is not unreasonable to suggest that code itself offers narratives unique to its own logic, as does writing. Indeed, just as the fading word for the word gives us an apt metaphor for poetry and thought on the edge of the abyss, the fading of code for the code allows us to project a kind of speculation on a new kind of poetry based on digital code. The self-concealing loop here suggests that embedded in Coleridge is the flower and, simultaneously, embedded in the flower is the dreamer; that is, thought and language are embodied as a means to embody thought and language.

Psycho-Ecology

So, our relationship to language is language's relation to ourselves. To say this relation is bi-directional is to simplify the conceptual structure. Instead, we may consider the structure what I am here calling psycho-ecology: a multi-directional and

tangled series of interactions amongst thought and linguistic systems of representation

that determines the necessity that the totality of the mind lies unpredictably within

and without. Psycho-ecologies, like natural ecologies, are remarkable both in their

fecundity and in their complexity. And our relationship to these tangled

environments is a self-representational relationship. This relationship is, like a

natural ecology, also equally intricate in its delicacy. "The environment is that which

we experience and we, in turn, are that in which the environment is experienced,"

writes Flusser. He continues:

> Reality is a web of concrete relations. The entities of the environment are
>
> nothing but knots in this web, and we ourselves are knots of the same sort. We
>
> are linked to these entities; they are there for us. And the entities are linked to
>
> us; we are there for them. Both the environment and the organism are abstract
>
> extrapolations from the actuality of their entwined relations. An organism
>
> mirrors its environment; an environment mirrors its organisms; and if the
>
> arena of their relations is altered in some way, neither the environment nor the
>
> organism will be left unchanged. (Flusser and Bec *Vampyroteuthis Infernalis*
>
> 31)

And so by considering a psycho-ecology we may add that a reader mimics its texts

and the texts its reader; we are linked to text because the text is there for us. The two

levels adapt to one another and, as a result, transform and mutate one another: that is,

this double, feedbacking mimesis lends itself to poesis. Indeed, poetry, as Flusser

remarks, "is usually understood as a language game whose strategy is to creatively

enlarge the universe of language" (Flusser *Does Writing have a Future?* 71). If

mimesis is imitation and representation then self-representation is creative and mutative. "Poetry in this sense," Flusser continues, "is that source from which language always springs anew and, in fact, overall in literature, even in scientific, philosophical, or political texts, not only in poetic ones" (71). So, the entwined relations that establish mutations between a reader and texts are remarkably ubiquitous though poetry discloses itself only when language and thought spring anew. If we are to recognize that, like language, "the agenda of life is inexhaustible," then what "we are appreciating is the blind chance of the 'game of life'" (*Vampyroteuthis Infernalis* 25) a game that is both biological and poetic. Psycho-ecology is the lived experience of reading, the experience of the processes that constitute the mutative plasticity. Such experience discloses itself as temporally finite, yet semantically infinite in possibility: it is paradoxically inward and outward, within and without. Psycho-ecology is what makes the relation between thought, poetry, and possibility possible.

The Chapters

The first chapter examines the diegetic level-crossing in Oscar Wilde's novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890). The relationship between the narrative level of Victorian London and that of Dorian's painting is examined against the backdrop of the self-reflexive, hierarchy defying conceptual structure that physicist and cognitive scientist Douglas Hofstadter calls a "strange loop." This diegetic relationship is then considered in terms of its narcissistic qualities—that of narcosis and numbness—as a means of interrogating the affective quality of multi-diegetic narrative structures. The second chapter analyzes Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse* (1927) through the lens

of Martin Heidegger's claim that human existence is that which is agential in its ability to be. Furthermore, this able to be-ness is, above all else, temporal. While Woolf scholars have intimated Heideggerian readings of her fiction, there is yet to appear an extended analysis in this mode. I suggest that the reader extends an affective physicality into the text and becomes both the prime mover and the vicious cycle that animates the novel's narrative directionality thus establishing an analogue to the reader's lived experience as directional, finite, and temporal. In my argument, the reader extends an affective physicality into the text and becomes both the prime mover and the vicious cycle galvanizing the novel, thus making manifest the reader's lived experience as temporal. The third chapter shifts the critical lens to the "Nuvoletta" episode of James Joyce's *Finnegans Wake*. Responding directly to the recent reprint of Clive Hart's 1967 article, "James Joyce's Sentimentality," in the *James Joyce Quarterly*, this chapter examines the ambient and ambivalent sentimentality via information theory, Linda Hutcheon's memetic theory of adaptation, and language as the phenomenological center of being. Ultimately, I suggest that both Nuvoletta's and the reader's transformation is, to borrow Joyce's word, "motamourfully" successful in the work: both undergo a metamorphosis of the word (*mot*)—and thus perception—through sentimentality (*amour*). Theodor Adorno comments that in the work of Samuel Beckett "poetic procedure surrenders…without intention." The final chapter examines Beckett's *Endgame* (1957) as a zero-player game: a simulation or game that plays itself without interaction with a gamer. Taking Beckett's phrase, "something is taking its course," as its central conceit, this chapter is a meditation on the status of the extra-diegetic—the reader—as not simply finite,

but nonexistent. Ultimately, I trace a trajectory in how these texts (and other twentieth-century texts) may offer themselves to us as a means to meditate on the encroaching shift in what is becoming the predominant cultural narrative code in the developed world: the increasing dominance of programming and digital code over the narratives of alphanumeric code.

Chapter One

monstrorum artifex: Diegetic Level-Crossing and

Uncanny Narrative Contexture in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*

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Among the sacred objects belonging to a sultan of Menangcabow named Gaggar Allum was the cloth *sansistah Kallah*, which weaves itself, and adds one thread yearly of fine pearls, and when that cloth shall be finished the world will be no more.
-W. W. Skeat

This disturbing, full-length portrait of a Dorian Gray will haunt me, as writing, having become the book itself.
-Stephan Mallarmé

   The relationship between the mutating painting as a narrative and the fictional

world of Victorian London raises particularly interesting questions regarding multiple

ontological levels of diegesis in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. The novel's created

world and the parallel narrative that is revealed through Dorian's metamorphosing

portrait constitute two levels of diegetic reality. The association these different levels

share with one another radically disrupts a reading that privileges one narrative reality

over another; consequently, such a structure upsets the stability of representing a

consensus reality. The different ontological levels in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*

relate to one another according to a tangled hierarchical form; that is, a structural

relationship of reflexivity and metonymy. This relationship governing the complex

structural logic of the novel's diegesis establishes the ambivalent and ambiguous

relationship between the narrative divisions of Wilde's novel. In other words, the

inherent conceptual instability of any given ontological level of diegesis

simultaneously establishes, and becomes part of, the aggregate of multiple diegetic

levels. Yet, despite the oddity of this structural conundrum that links multiple planes of narrative, the diegetic eloquence of Wilde's novel suggests that its strange form can be examined as being in a state of structural homeostasis. In other words, there is an inclination in the relationship between the multiple diegetic levels of the novel to gesture towards a complex kind of textual stability through constant reorganization and loopy level-crossing of alternative narrative spaces.

The novel's diegetic structure strives for internal equilibrium despite its constant state of conceptual reorganization. Such a metonymic metamorphosis of the differing diegetic levels establishes preexisting conditions of quirky logic which, in turn, generates those logical conditions for the foundation structuring the novel. Following this chain of structural metonymy leads to an examination of the metonymical relationship between the "living" painting and the novel itself. In 1946, Jorge Luis Borges wrote, "to speak Wilde's name is to speak of a dandy who was also a poet; it is to evoke the image of a gentleman dedicated to the meager proposition of shocking by means of cravats and metaphors. It is also to evoke the notion of art as an elite or occult game…and the poet as a laborious '*monstrorum artifex*' [maker of monsters]" (Borges 314). If the novel itself is governed by reflexive internal textual forces and processes—the looping homeostatic relationship between different ontological levels of diegesis—it may be simulating a kind of textual organism. That is, since the structural eccentricity of the novel is metaphorically akin to the autonomic, internal dynamics of an organism, the reflexive relationships that constitute the novel's diegesis may operate as a literary proxy for the processes associated with affective responses normally associated with the biological. As such, the internal textual-

dynamics relating the multiple ontological levels of diegesis in Wilde's novel, certainly in an abstract sense, give birth to a monstrosity.

However, the monstrous nature of the text may not be immediately acknowledged. There is a remarkable difficulty associated with the study of Wilde's novel. Jerusha McCormack aptly remarks that "it is hard to say anything original about *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, largely because there is so little that is original in it. As if in two facing mirrors, the novel and its analogues seem to multiply towards a possible infinite, in a kind of self-perpetuating critical machine" (McMormack 110). He further suggests that "Wilde has tapped a root of Western folklore so deep and ubiquitous that the story has escaped the literary and returned to its origins in the oral tale" (McCormack 111); that is, Wilde's narrative crosses from one diegetic level, print, to another, that of the storyteller and listener. This, an instance of those analogues that multiply towards infinity, also operates in the opposite direction. The novel itself *contains* this process. Not only is the novel like two facing mirrors, it is a diegetic expression of the phenomenon of such iterative mimesis. The novel in both form and content escapes from one mirror into the other, back again, and so on, oscillating *ad infinitum*. This split, for McCormack, between the literary and the oral, "explores the fault line that, in itself, defines modernity" (111). He continues: "modernity…entails the blurring of the boundary between the human and the artifact" (111). It is this blurring, this reiterative analogue of analogue itself that constitutes Wilde as a maker of monsters. Furthermore, it is the artifact that makes the human and the human who makes the artifact. "Wilde saw that the 'self' was not inevitably indubitable, rational and progressive," writes Reginia Gagnier, "but was socially

constructed. It was constructed through language, which is why he waged a life-long subversion of conventional speech patterns. It was constructed through social institutions, which was why the school, marriage and family, medicine, the law and the prison…so exercised his critical faculties" (Gagnier 20). That is, the self is a product of society; the self is formed according to social artifact. Because, the constructed individual also constructs according to his or her reflection, the construct already determines his or her constitutive environment. Both artifact and individual are self-perpetuating critical machines. Or, as Wilde himself suggests, such criticism "treats the work of art simply as a starting-point for a new creation" (Wilde "The Critic as Artist" 1029); that is, the artifact and the individual are equally creative entities. Wilde thus "draws on the deep structure of a kind of tale which pretends to order sequentially, in a narrative, what is actually the destruction of all sequence" (McCormack 111). That is, Wilde's narrative, as a conceptual architecture or structure, is that which defies linearity, directionality, and sequence. It is, as a self-perpetuating critical machine in the logical sense, a kind of monstrosity.

McCormack's argument, however, gestures towards the exterior, to the diegetic level of the reader and storyteller, and to the oral and the mythological. Indeed, there is even a biographical element to this gesture, he suggests, in that, with the novel "Wilde makes and unmakes himself in the imagine of three aesthetes [Hallward, Wotton, and Gray] who are themselves incorporated into a picture" (114). Moreover, Russell Jackson writes that Wilde's "Stance as a dandy, a performer and (as an Irishman) and an outsider gave him a particular use for the machinery and connections both of the social world and of the society drama of the theatre" (Jackson

45

169). Here, however, we are not interested in biography. Rather, we are interested

the monstrous self-perpetuating logic internal to the novel's multi-diegetic knots; that

is, between Dorian Gray's environment—London, England—and the diegetic level of

the portrait embedded within the novel. If Lord Wotton is "what the world thought

him: one of the new aristocracy, a dandy who lives by his wits, mocked as 'Prince

Paradox'" (McCormack 112) then the novel and its tangled diegetic architecture is the

paradoxical palace appropriate for its tenants.

   The abstract nature of mediating between unstable parts of a plural structure of this

kind demands some sort of conceptual spatiality.   That is, establishing a spatial

construct as a means of provisionally imposing order upon an abstract system can

serve to make it meaningful. Tom Lloyd, in *Crises of Realism* (1997), makes

wonderful use of spatial metaphor in his analysis of representation in nineteenth-

century realist fiction. "Novelists," Lloyd remarks, "create the realistic middle space

generated by what Michel de Certeau…terms the two poles of the 'real,' the

'productive *activity* and the period *known.*' This middle space is fluid, its tropal

structures not so confining that open-ended suggestiveness is closed off by abstract

and other transfixions, or by mere escapes into idyllic univocalities" (9). In Lloyd's

analysis, the middle space marks a spatial conceptualization in which modes of

representation and mimesis mediate between history—which "is messy, chaotic, and

not easily given to organization" (11)—and idealism. Ultimately, such middle space

accommodates the chaotic representation of the inherent disorderliness of history.

However, it is in Wilde's novel, Lloyd suggests, where realism's middle space

dissolves and the accommodation of chaotic history disappears with it: "the

possibility of verbal stability collapses into metaphorical-allegorical…and ironic…alternatives, verbal enemies of the middle space where realism thrives at the intersection of visual field, written word, and concept" (157). Perhaps what is most interesting about Lloyd's argument is not how Wilde's novel instigates the demise of the representational schematics of the Realists but in the very notion of the collapse or dissolution of the middle space. This phenomenon of collapse observed in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* signals the need to reconceptualize, not only the representational and mimetic apparatus at play in the novel, but also the narrative and diegetic structure. On the level of representation, the dissipation of the middle space signifies the impossibility of reconciling Dorian's idealism with historical flux—and historical consciousness ultimately gets the better of the idealized sitter. However, Lloyd's analysis does not demonstrate an interest in the rhetorical and diegetic implications of such a collapse in the novel.

The result of this collapse necessitates a spatial conceptualization that may account for the phenomenon of the embedding of one ontological level of diegesis within another. The relational tangle of alternate narratives of the painting and the fictional world in Wilde's novel does not assert itself through mediation—as in the complexities of representation upon which Lloyd comments—but is, instead, best conceptualized as a radically interwoven contexture, a "novel…as lovely as a Persian carpet, and as unreal" (Wilde 45). Furthermore, it is tempting to analyze this knotted structure hierarchically by privileging the diegetic level of the fictional Victorian world over the fantastic narrative in the metamorphosing painting. Michael Patrick Gillespie attests:

This willingness to acknowledge multiplicity without succumbing to diffusiveness reflects a particular cultural/historical context that has led to the ontological duality facing contemporary readers of Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray*: the novel clearly situates itself in a deterministic Victorian context. At the same time in a decidedly postmodern fashion it repeatedly introduces elements into its discourse that disrupt prescriptive interpretive impulses without clearly signaling the primacy of any alternative point of view. (Gillespie 44)

Refocusing Gillespie's observation, which concerns both Wilde's Irishness and his homosexuality, to the perspective of interrelated and embedded narratives, the significance of tangled hierarchical relations among narrative levels in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* is more readily pertinent. The problem here is due to the difficulty of uniting multiple levels of diegesis that are characterized, paradoxically, by simultaneously being separated by different ontological levels yet reflexively occupying the same textual space.

What may be called the "originary" ontological level of narrative is the fictional created world of late Victorian England that occupies the majority of the novel's diegetic space. This is the world—the "deterministic Victorian context"—which opens the book: "The studio was filled with the rich odor of roses, and when the light summer wind stirred amidst the trees of the garden there came through the open door the heavy scent of the lilac, or the more delicate perfume of the pink-flowering thorn" (Wilde 18). Here

the fantastic shadows of birds in flight flitted across the long tussore-silk

curtains that were stretched in front of the huge window, producing a kind of

momentary Japanese effect, and making [Lord Henry Wotton] think of those

pallid jade-faced painters of Tokio who, through the medium of an art that is

necessarily immobile, seek to convey the sense of swiftness and motion. The

sullen murmur of the bees shouldering their way through the long unmown

grass, or circling with monotonous insistence round the dusty gilt horns of the

straggling woodbine, seemed to make the stillness more oppressive. The dim

roar of London was like the bourdon note of a distant organ. (18)

This is the ontological plane which bored men experience "through the thin blue

wreaths of smoke that curled up in such fanciful whirls from…heavy opium tainted

[cigarettes]" (18-19) as they lie on couches; where Basil Hallward paints his

magnificent "full-length portrait of a young man of extraordinary personal beauty"

(18); in which the young and beautiful Sibyl Vane is found "lying dead on the floor of

her dressing-room" after swallowing "some dreadful thing they use at theatres"

composed of "prussic acid or white lead" (83); where "the wretched boy in the

Guards" and Alan Campbell each commit suicide (117, 159) and where Sir Henry

Ashton, Adrian Singleton, Lord Ken, the Duke of Perth, and Lady Gwendolen are

shamed, broken, and scandalized as a result of their association with Dorian (117-

118); and where Dorian murders Basil by digging a "knife into the great vein that is

behind the ear, crushing the man's head down on the table, and stabbing again and

again" (123). Indeed, this ontological level is where Dorian puts his new hedonism

into practice with neither—until the novel's conclusion—the physical consequences

of a life of excess nor of the ravages of time. This is the ontological level of diegesis in which a fictional London is hyperbolically and ornamentally represented, created, and established as a literary proxy for the extra-diegetic London; in short, this narrated world is where the characters of *The Picture of Dorian Gray* exist.

Yet, embedded within, and directly affected by and effecting, this ontological level of diegesis is another narrative plane: Hallward's mutating portrait of Dorian. Because the portrait itself reports according to its own narrative level, it involves a manifestation of Dorian as its sole character and progresses and mutates in accordance to changing sequence of events—though affected from a different ontological plane of diegesis—it should be characterized as a narrative in its own right. The portrait, however, is embedded within the originary diegetic plane—of London in which Basil, Lord Henry, Dorian, etc. exist—which is itself inserted into the extra-diegetic level occupied by the reader in the form of a material book. However, unlike the originary and extra-diegetic planes in which sequences of events presumably precede and then proceed with the experience of the text itself, the narrative nature of the painting exists *ab ovo*. Indeed, the moment of the portrait's completion marks a diegetic fissure:

> The sweep and dash of the brush on the canvas made the only sound that
> broke the stillness, except when, now and then, Hallward stepped back to look
> at his work from a distance. In the slanting beams that streamed through the
> open door-way the dust danced and was golden. The heavy scent of the roses
> seemed to brood over everything… Hallward stopped painting, looked for a
> long time at Dorian Gray, and then for a long time at the picture, biting the

end of one of his huge brushes, and frowning. 'It is quite finished,' he cried, at

last, and stooping down he wrote his name in long vermilion letters on the

left-hand corner of the canvas. (33)

Wilde's tropally ornate style here is reminiscent of Christian teleology; that is, after

tasting the vinegar, Jesus utters his final words on the cross: "It is finished: and he

bowed his head, and gave up the ghost" (KJV, John 19:30). Yet, this also expresses a

kind of creation mythology. A primordial act of painting establishes "the only sound

that broke the stillness" while "slanting beams" of light stream into the room to reveal

golden dust dancing in the air: an abyss is filled, a new narrative world comes into

being, a grammatical ghost or structural double materializes and haunts. The act of

producing new worlds through art, for Dorian "as if awakened from some dream"

(Wilde 33), is an act of both aesthetic and ontological magnitude:

It was the creation of such worlds…that seemed to Dorian Gray to be the true

object, or amongst the true objects, of life; and in his search for sensations that

would be at once new and delightful, and possess that element of strangeness

that is so essential to romance, he would often adopt certain modes of thought

that he knew to be really alien to his nature. (105)

First, Dorian's recognition that these worlds—those created aesthetically—are "true

objects" suggests a conceptual collapse of the ontological level of the artist and the

work of art; indeed, this logic extends its relation to that which links mind and

language. Secondly, and perhaps more significantly, this recognition signifies the

blurring between multiple diegetic levels that compose the novel itself.

The narrative status of the portrait, however, is not necessarily firmly established until Dorian first notices a physical change it its composition. Dorian, after Sibyl Vane's disastrous performance at the theatre, grossly and irrationally mistreats the young actress and thus instigates the vertiginous ontological level-crossings that propel the supernatural intrigue of the remainder of the novel. Leaving the theatre, and the weeping actress, Dorian returns to his home:

> As he was turning the handle of the door, his eye fell upon the portrait Basil
> Hallward had painted of him. He started back as if in surprise. Then he went
> on into his own room, looking somewhat puzzled. After he had taken the
> buttonhole out of his coat, he seemed to hesitate. Finally he came back, went
> over to the picture and examined it. In the dim arrested light that struggled
> through the cream-coloured silk blinds, the face appeared to him to be a little
> changed. The expression looked different. One would have said that there
> was a touch of cruelty in the mouth. It was certainly strange…the strange
> expression that he had noticed in the face of the portrait seemed to linger
> there, to be more intensified even. The quivering, ardent sunlight showed him
> the lines of a cruelty round the mouth as clearly as if he had been looking into
> a mirror after he had done some dreadful thing. (77)

That the "portrait had altered" (80) signifies the confusing shifts between ontological planes: although the "great events of the world take place in the brain" (29), the actions of one narrative level manifest their effects in another ontological plane. For Dorian, "This portrait would be to him the most magical of mirrors. As it had revealed to him his own body, so it would reveal to him his own soul" (88).

However, Dorian must keep this magical mirror—this object that signifies the level-crossing of traditionally Cartesian ontological divisions of the body and soul—as he feels the portrait will "bear the burden of his shame" (88).

As Dorian's excesses become increasingly extreme so too do the effects on the narrative of the painting. The collapse and blurring of these different ontological levels is intensely experienced by a reaction of surprise and shock, not solely by Dorian, but also by Basil, the creator of the narrative world manifest in the painting: "The surface [of the portrait] seemed to be quite undisturbed, and as [Basil] had left it. It was from within, apparently, that the foulness and horror had come. Through some strange quickening of inner life the leprosies of sin were slowly eating the thing away. The rotting of a corpse in a watery grave was not so fearful" (122). Basil's experience of the ontological level of the painting—and his curious understanding of its reflexive relationship with his own level of narrative—ultimately prompts Dorian to murder the portraitist. That is, because the two ontological planes are confused, Dorian's reaction is not altogether an unfitting passionate act of a paranoiac since the incriminating evidence of his behavior in either the painting or the fictional London holds equal ontological status within the novel's diegetic knot. The assumed unidirectional relationship between the two planes—the consequence of Dorian's actions marking change in the portrait—ultimately undergoes a strange reversal at the novel's conclusion. Dorian, determined to free his conscience and "kill the past" (167), reasons to destroy the painting: "He looked round, and saw the knife that had stabbed Basil Hallward. He had cleaned it many times, till there was no stain left upon it. It was bright, and glistened. As it had killed the painter, so it would kill the

painter's work, and all that it meant" (166-167). Yet, the attempted destruction of the painting famously leads instead to Dorian's death. The diegetic level of the painting remains intact, looping back to its original unsullied state: "hanging upon the wall, a splendid portrait of their master as [others] had last seen him, in all the wonder of its exquisite youth and beauty" (167). The mutations the painting underwent abruptly relocate into the originary ontological level leaving Dorian "lying on the floor…in evening dress, with a knife in his heart…withered, wrinkled, and loathsome of visage" (167). It is this startling shift at the novel's conclusion that absolutely disrupts the ontological status of a sole consensus reality.

Indeed, the sentence "the terrible portrait whose changing features showed [Dorian] the real degradation of his life" (111) emphasizes the collapsing of the diegetic reality of the portrait into that of a consensus reality. The "real degradation" committed in one level of narrative is, paradoxically, manifest in another. The reader may presuppose that the diegetic level of Victorian London—composed of a sequential network of signifiers and representational strategies—to be constant, consistent, and analogous to the extra-diegetic world. Yet, the logical reorganization of the manifestation of cause and effect—by having the destruction of the painting lead to Dorian's unintentional suicide—disorders the spatial logic connecting the two narratives by asserting a multi-diegetic continuity.

Because the correlation between the diegetic level of the painting and the narrative world inhabited by the characters is a continuum of ontological level-crossings rather than one of mediation, the surprising relational reconfiguration of the two levels of narrative at the end of the novel raises particular difficulties in envisioning such a

quirky spatial relationship. Brian McHale, in *Constructing Postmodernism* (1992), writes that many narrative strategies associated with creating multiple diegetic worlds involve

> juxtaposition among microworlds occupying the same ontological plane and [are arranged] along the same horizontal axis. It is also possible, however, to foreground the "worldness" of world by juxtaposing worlds not…in series, on a horizontal axis, but rather *in parallel*, on a *vertical* axis; that is, it is possible to juxtapose worlds occupying *different* ontological planes—worlds and meta-worlds, or world and inset world (worlds-within-worlds). (McHale 251)

McHale is forced into the difficulty of spatially conceptualizing these diegetic abstract assemblages. Wilde's novel, however, complicates the horizontal relation as well as the vertical relation of different ontological levels of diegesis in that the effects of what occurs on one level are spontaneously displaced, ultimately affecting another level. As Dorian's excesses on one ontological level of narrative increase in intensity, the effects are manifest in another level according to a logic that is not one of predictable oscillation but one more akin to a complex tangle. Consequently, the relationship between the ontological level occupied by Dorian and that occupied by his portrait is not one that can be satisfactorily interpreted as either horizontal or vertical. That is, the spatial conceptualization of the tangled relationship between these two levels must accommodate the logic of reflexivity and metonymy.

   This reflexive structure found in the relationship of multi-diegetic levels in the novel may be best examined according to the structural phenomenon of reflexivity called a "strange loop." The concept of the strange loop was created by Douglas

Hofstadter in *Gödel, Escher, Bach: An Eternal Golden Braid* (1979), a fascinating

meditation on the self-referential logic underlying structures of consciousness,

artificial intelligence, Zen Buddhism, nonsense, mathematics, genetics, and music.

Indeed, the subtitle to Hofstadter's book reads "A Metaphorical Fugue on Minds and

Machines in The Spirit of Lewis Carroll"; the book's aesthetic zaniness and delight in

paradox certainly appeals to the Wildean sentiment. While Hofstadter does not

address literature itself, the study offers a playful indication that the book itself is

representative of how the strange loop phenomenon is metonymically and reflexively

manifest in writing. The relationship between the multiple ontological levels of

diegesis as it is represented in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* is, as a tangled hierarchy,

ripe with apparent spatial paradox: the embedded presence of one level of diegesis

that becomes part of another level of diegesis—while either level of narrative may be

representative of the whole structure.

As a spatial concept a strange loop is, though certainly an example of reflexivity,

rather more abstract.   Yet, the structural phenomenon is also a fruitful way of

examining the relationship between multiple ontological levels of diegesis that cannot

be worked out as relating to one another according to vertical or horizontal

conceptualizations. Hofstadter writes in *Gödel, Escher, Bach* that

> [t]he "Strange Loop" phenomenon occurs whenever, by moving upwards (or
>
> downwards) through the levels of some hierarchical system, we unexpectedly
>
> find ourselves back where we started…Sometimes [a strange loop] will be
>
> hidden, other times it will be out in the open; sometimes it will be right side
>
> up, other times it will be upside down, or backwards. (Hofstadter 10)

Hofstadter revisits the concept in his later work *I Am a Strange Loop* (2007) partly with the agenda of clarifying the elusive concept. Here, he elaborates upon his earlier definition:

> What I mean by "strange loop" is…not a physical circuit but an abstract loop in which, in the series of stages that constitute the cycling-around, there is a shift from one level of abstraction (or structure) to another, which feels like an upwards movement in a hierarchy, and yet somehow the successive "upward" shifts turn out to give rise to a closed cycle. (101-102)

In *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, the sense of movement from one diegetic level to another may feel like movement in a well-defined spatial hierarchy but is ultimately deceptive: "soul and body, body and soul—how mystersious they were…The senses could refine, and the intellect could degrade. Who could say where the fleshy impulse ceased, or the physical impulse began?" (Wilde 56). Rather, the relationship between the diegetic ontology of the characters and that of the painting gives rise to a fluctuating and tangled closed cycle: the relationship between the multiple levels of narrative are representative of the text's internal dynamics. "What bothers us," Hofstadter writes, "is perhaps an ill-defined sense of topological wrongness: the inside-outside distinction is being blurred…Even though the system is an abstraction, our minds use spatial imagery with a sort of mental topology" (*Gödel, Escher, Bach* 691); apparently, Hofstadter's inclusive "us" includes Wilde's narrator and the latter's fascination with the inside-outside distinction: "Was the soul a shadow seated in the house of sin? Or was the body really in the soul, as Giordano Bruno thought? The separation of spirit from matter was a mystery, and the union of spirit with matter

was a mystery also" (Wilde 56). With such self-reflexive systems, the movement

along a continuum composed of multiple narrative levels conforms to the peculiar

spatial pattern of the strange loop: "Despite one's sense of departing ever further from

one's origin, one winds up, to one's shock, exactly where one had started out. In

short, a strange loop is a paradoxical level-crossing feedback loop" (*I Am a Strange

Loop* 102). That is, the diegetic level of the painting is embedded within the diegetic

level of Victorian London; yet, the narrative level of the latter is simultaneously, in

what seems to conceptually be a topological absurdity, embedded within the narrative

level of the portrait. The narrative contexture is, to borrow Hofstadter's phrase,

precisely a paradoxical level-crossing feedback loop.

The significance of the strange loop phenomenon to narrative is examined by

McHale in *Postmodernist Fiction* (1987); however, McHale prefers Gérard Genette's

use of the term "metalepsis" to Hofstadter's terminology. Metalepsis is simply

defined as "the violation of narrative levels" (McHale 120) or as a kind of "recursive

embedding" of ontological dimensions; in short, metalepsis is a narratological term

not unlike Hofstadter's strange loops and tangled hierarchies. McHale lists Alain

Robbe-Grillet's *Topologies d'une cité fantôme* (1976) and *Maison de rendez-vous*

(1965), Julio Cortázar's short story "Continuity of Parks" (1978), Claude Simon's

Triptych (1973), and Christine Brooke-Rose's *Thru* (1975) as works emblematic of

metalepsis though of differing degrees of complexity. Certainly these narrative

structures are ripe in postmodern fiction. The appearance of metalepsis occurs even

earlier in the twentieth-century in drama. This should not be surprising since, as

McHale remarks,

the fundamental ontological boundary in theatre is a literal, physical threshold,

equally visible to the audience and (if they are permitted to recognize it) the

characters: namely, the footlights, the edge of the stage. As theatre develops

self-consciousness in the modernist period, this ontological threshold becomes

and obvious resource for aesthetic exploitation, much more so than the

equivalent boundaries (between narrative levels, for instance) in prose texts,

which must be made visible, palpable, before they can be exploited. (121)

That Wilde's novel is situated outside this timeline is interesting; perhaps what marks

The Picture of Dorian Gray as unique is that its loopiness seems to gesture towards a

kind of organicism. While Genette's metalepsis is most effective as a narratological

tool, Hofstadter's strange loops and tangled hierarchies have connotations of both

ontological hesitancy and of biological processes. So Hofstadter's terminology here

is perhaps more appropriate since not only does Wilde's text tangle different

narratives together but these narratives are remarkable in that they are, in an

amusingly Wildean sense, living.

This conceit, however, should not necessarily come as a surprise. There is good

reason that Hofstadter's strange loop conjures a sense of fascinating unease and

familiarity: he suggests that the strange loop is an apt conceptual structure for

thinking about consciousness itself. It is important, however, to not take Hofstadter

too literally here; that is, this meditation is not a totalizing analysis but is rather an

intervention into a particular trajectory of artificial intelligence research. Stefano

Franchi and Güven Güzeldere rightly remark that

because of its historical roots in the logical and mathematical tradition…AI

research has traditionally interpreted thinking as a manipulation of

propositions, and has more or less systematically disregarded the complex

activities involved in the recognition of a sentence's constituent elements—

words, syllables, letters—as essentially nonintelligent…the quest for truth

exemplified by mathematical theorem proving represents just a small, not

quite characteristic, subject of human cognitive abilities. (Franchi and

Güzeldere 9)

So, Hofstadter's aim is to consider the mechanics of the mind as including to a large

degree processes perhaps best characterized as fluid, plastic, and self-regulating. The

phenomena of our minds for Hofstadter are based on the structural concept of the

strange loop in that there are interactions between different levels of the physical

structure of the brain "in which the top level reaches back down towards the bottom

level…while at the same time being itself determined by the bottom level"

(Hofstadter *GEB* 709). Like autological language or self-referential sentences, the

"self comes into being at the moment it has the power to reflect itself" (709) upon

itself.

Considering this on the narrative level of *Dorian Gray* a diegetic world comes into

being—a true object of life—the moment it has the power to reflect itself. The

establishment of the two embedded diegetic realms in the novel, reflecting and

influencing one another according to "various types of 'causality'" (709), implicates

according to a structural analogue narrative architecture with mental processes. The

narrative structure of *Dorian Gray*, a strange loop, is a representational analogue of

the structural processes governing consciousness itself thus invoking a sense of

unease and fascination at both the highest and deepest levels of causality. In his

discussion of cyberpunk fiction, David Porush suggests a lineage of aesthetic

expression that is a "*consequence of the human nervous system itself; the impulse to

invent a hyperreality and then live there is hardwired in our cognitive habits by the

genetic code*" (Porush 331 emphasis in original). Though certainly a familiar

sentiment among cyberpunk enthusiasts, Porush's statement remains provocative. It

is a cognitive habit, determined by genetics and the "inherited disease" of language

(331), for human beings to map and extend consciousness beyond itself:

> There is a war fought in the gap between every nerve. On one side is the
>
> endocrine system, which creates the hormonal homeostatic ecology for the
>
> transmission of signals across the synapse. On the other side is the nerve net
>
> itself, with its imperial manifest destiny to extend itself in the form of
>
> cybernetic media, communication, and control. (331)

For Basil, the nerve net onto which he makes visible the extension of his desire is the

painting itself. This act is, however, more complex as it acts as more than simply a

material proxy of Basil's longing in both the sense of desire and media elongation, "I

am afraid," writes the painter, "that I have shown in it the secret of my own soul"

(Wilde 21); rather, in the very impulse to both inhabit and "invent a hyperreality" he

creates an alternative diegetic realm that is inextricably and circularly linked to that of

his own. Porush, citing cyberneticist and neurophysiologist Humberto Maturana,

suggests that "the urgent biological grown vector of the CNS [central nervous system]

is in the direction of *autopoeisis*, growing feedback loops of self-organization and

complexity…the natural, biological necessity of the human nerve net is to imperialize

nature through artifice" (Porush 332). David Punter provides an excellent comment

on Hallward's surprising quip about marriage: [the married couple] "are forced to

have more than one life. They become more highly organised, and to be highly

organised is, I should fancy, the object of man's existence" (Wilde 66). For Punter,

this witticism becomes an eloquent meditation upon the emergence of modernity.

"Absorbed into the silence of the portrait, Basil exemplifies the unutterable longing

which saturates the book—the longing for beauty, for youth, for immortality," writes

McCormack, "it is the quality of that desire which lends the book greatness; but it is

the strategy by which that desire is accomplished that makes it modern" (McCormack

112). Punter, moreover, suggests that Wilde's organization should be thought of in

terms of the cyborg: "the evolution of the human into some further creature which can

manage a more complex interaction with the world around, an interaction of the

'self', as traditionally conceived, is not fully in control" (Punter 157). Moreover, the

idea of becoming more highly organized, like that of autopoesis, engages in "a higher

level of technology, and at the same time the paradoxical removal of the self from the

realm of transparency and behind a veil of secrecy, such that the information which

would be needed to decode human interrelationship becomes ever more difficult to

obtain or disentangle" (157). Indeed, the difficulty of disentangling the relationship

between the self/mind and the art/grammar is a central concern of the structural

narrative peculiarity of the novel. As Hofstadter notes, the logic of such autopoesis—

feedback loops of self-organization and complexity—is not simply that of human

colonization of nature through art, but also the reverse: "But you don't mean to say

that you seriously believe that Life imitates Art, that Life in fact is the mirror, and Art the reality?" (Wilde "The Decay of Lying" 982).

Two particular and related aspects of the strange loop phenomenon are, first, the element of surprise and, second, unpredictable changes in the direction of the cycle's movement. Dorian's reaction—he "started back in surprise"—to the slight changes in the portrait, after his mistreatment of Sibyl, is indicative of this feature of the strange loop. Here, Dorian's shock is in response to the sudden "shift from one level of abstraction (or structure) to another;" that is, the sudden shift from the consensus reality of Dorian's level of diegetic reality to the level of the portrait. While Dorian's own face should display "a touch of cruelty in the mouth," these features are bizarrely shifted to another level of diegesis thus affecting the portrait. Dorian's misbehavior in one ontological level of diegesis produces an upwards movement that effects another level of diegesis; the diegetic level of the portrait then loops back giving rise to the closed cycle, and the aesthete is physically unaffected, exactly where he "had started out." Hofstadter writes that "a Tangled Hierarchy occurs when what you presume are clean hierarchical levels take you by surprise and fold back in a hierarchy-violating way. The surprise element is important; it is the reason I call Strange Loops 'strange.' A simple tangle, like feedback, doesn't involve violations of presumed level distinctions" (*Gödel, Escher, Bach* 691). Dorian's recognition that the hierarchical relationship between the ontological level of the painting and that in which he situates himself operates according to hierarchy-violating principles that prove, however, to be fatally imperfect.

Hofstadter's remark that sometimes a strange loop "will be hidden, other times it will be out in the open; sometimes it will be right side up, other times it will be upside down, or backwards" is an ardent reminder that hierarchy-violating principles may violate absolutely. Among the many flaws Dorian harbors, one of particular importance here is his misunderstanding of the logic relating the mutating painting to his own level of reality:

> when winter came upon [the portrait], [Dorian] would still be standing where spring trembles on the verge of summer. When the blood crept from its face, and left behind a pallid mask of chalk with leaden eyes, he would keep the glamour of boyhood. Not one blossom of his loveliness would ever fade. Not one pulse of his life would ever weaken. Like the gods of the Greeks, he would be strong, and fleet, and joyous. What did it matter what happened to the coloured image on the canvas? He would be safe. That was everything. (Wilde 88)

Dorian's theory that he will be safe so long as his excesses are manifest in the painting through a mysterious displacement of cause and effect through ontological level-crossing rests largely on his assumption that the loopy hierarchical relationship is unidirectional. This is, of course, false in the diegetic worlds of *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. "Language does create strange loops," Hofstadter writes, "when it talks about itself, whether directly or indirectly. Here, something *in* the system jumps out and acts *on* the system, as if it were *outside* the system" (Hofstadter 691). The system, in this case, is a multi-diegetic aggregate. Dorian, as a representational construct from within the system, "jumps out" and attempts to tame the system as if

he can maintain an objective point of observation from without. His gross misunderstanding is that the structure itself can, unexpectedly, reverse or change configuration; indeed, the most significant change in the strange loop structure of the text ultimately leads to Dorian's self-murder.

What is rather remarkable about the conceptual configuration of the multi-diegetic structure of *The Picture of Dorian Gray* is how, despite the chaotic and unpredictable nature of the structure, the tangled narrative levels maintain a kind of eloquent stability. The reflexive strange loop relating the different ontological levels of diegesis in the novel establishes a structural feature that is indicative of a kind of internal textual equilibrium. To recapitulate the reflexive logic of the novel's multi-diegetic structure, the diegetic level of the painting is, after all, embedded within the diegetic level of Victorian London—simultaneously, the narrative world of Victorian London is, paradoxically, embedded within the narrative world of the portrait. The consequence of an action enacted in one diegetic level is discarded and displaced while its logical cause is resurrected in another narrative space. Indeed, the manner in which these two diegetic levels may reflexively occupy the same textual space is not unlike the biological processes organisms use to achieve states of homeostasis through metabolism.

In her book *How We Became Posthuman* (1999), N. Katherine Hayles writes "homeostasis had been understood as the ability of organisms to maintain steady states when they are buffeted by fickle environments. When the temperature soars, sweat pours out of the human body so that its internal temperature can remain relatively stable" (Hayles 8). Indeed, according to the logic of reflexive systems, an

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organism can maintain homeostasis with feedback loops. As such, organisms maintain a state of equilibrium by mutual exchange of certain elements with their environment; in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* one diegetic level maintains stability "metabolically" by casting off certain narrative elements and redistributing them, through ontological level-crossing, in another diegetic level thus maintaining a state of textual equilibrium: "What the worm was to the corpse, his sins would be to the painted image on the canvas. They would mar its beauty, and eat away its grace. They would defile it, and make it shameful. And yet the thing would still live on. It would be always alive" (Wilde 97). However, the portrait itself is not alive, though it appears to have "a life of its own" (95), it is the metabolic and homeostatic relationship—the strange loopiness—between these different ontological levels of diegesis that metonymically stands in as a surrogate for the internal dynamics of the text that signify basic biological processes.

What homeostasis suggests, however, is a complete reconsideration of the very idea of hierarchy. The strange loop or tangled hierarchy serves as a conceptual structure or metaphor to make understandable abstract relations that exist amongst two topoi. At first glance, these two locales appear to be separate but, at a closer examination, become increasingly perceptible as a complex reconfiguring whole. In the novel one narrative activates the other narrative; both interact with one another in a heterarchical fashion. Heterarchy is perhaps a more precise word for a tangled hierarchy. The term makes its first appearance in the *Bulletin of Mathematical Biophysics* with cyberneticist Warren McCulloch's short 1945 paper "A Heterarchy of Values Determined by the Topology of Nervous Nets." What makes McCulloch's

term noteworthy to the study of Modernist fiction is that he offers a structure that

procures the opportunity of conceptualizing structural models with alternative

patterns of organization. The heterarchy of which McCulloch speaks is that of the

organizational structure of the human brain; in short, that the brain is not organized

hierarchically.

In the paper, McCulloch simulates choice and circularities of preference in which

a mind must choose—make a value judgment—between three ends. He begins by

mapping a hypothetical neuron circuit without any level-crossing. This results in a

hierarchical structure in which there appears an order where one end is preferred over

others. In short, "if a first is preferred to a second and a second to a third, then the

first is preferred to the third" (McCulloch 92); the substratum of this logic,

McCulloch suggests, is that this mode of analysis asserts a "hierarchy of values" (92)

and that values can be measured according to some recognizable magnitude.

McCulloch is intent to demonstrate that there is, instead, "no common scale" with

which to measure values of this kind. So, next, McCulloch offers a more complex

simulation to establish a heterarchical topology of the nervous system: "Consider the

case of three choices, *A* or *B*, *B* or *C*, and *A* or *C* in which *A* is preferred to *B, B* to *C*,

and *C* to *A*" (92). What is taking place in this simulation is a kind of level-crossing

not dissimilar to the narrative loopiness in *Dorian Gray*. While "paradoxes are all

very well in their way" (Wilde 43), McCulloch suggests, this is not paradoxical;

instead, "Circularities in preference, instead of inconsistencies, actually demonstrate

consistency of a higher order than had been dreamed of in our philosophy"

(McCulloch 93); that is, "to test Reality we must see it on the tight-rope. When the

Verities become acrobats we can judge them" (Wilde 43). McCulloch continues: an "organism possessed of this nervous system—six neurons—is sufficiently endowed to be unpredictable from any theory founded on a scale of values. It has a heterarchy of values, and is thus interconnectively too rich to submit to a *summum bonum* [highest good]" (McCulloch 93). Hofstadter suggests that a heterarchical system of this sort is a "program which has…a structure in which there is no single 'highest level'" (*GEB* 134). Verity is certainly tested on the tight-rope here, yet it also redefines the processes of value judgment. Because of this and other reasons, the idea of heterarchy garnered much attention in the scientific community. David Stark writes that McCulloch's work

> led to the development of artificial networks as a new computing technology, which, in turn, fed back to the computational modeling of the brain. His idea of redundant network ties was important for the conception of reliable organization built from unreliable parts, laid the basis for the new field of "automata theory," and contributed to the fertile concept of "self-organization." "A Heterarchy of Values" is cited as an inspiration for non-Turing, or non-Euclidean, computing, most recently in efforts to develop biology-based computing. (Stark 29-30)

Yet, what makes the conceptual structure of the heterarchy particularly fecund is how it offers alternative modes of conceptualizing interrelationships of different levels in complex systems while maintaining neutrality with regards to the status of each level. In the humanities, speculation upon heterarchical organizational principles remains notably sparse, though there are exceptions.

Anthropologist Carole L. Crumley and economic sociologist David Stark give two separate accounts of how the concept of heterarchy may be theorized in their respective fields. In her essay, "A Dialectical Critique of Hierarchy" (1987), Crumley offers an analysis of the underlying assumptions that govern typical understanding of structure in state societies. As an anthropologist, she is concerned with certain linguistic abstractions based on the binary opposition—between chaos and order, for example—that inform and, as a result, mentally configure our perception of social patterns of organization. Binary opposition typically lends itself to privileging one semantic pole over the other; in short, binaries establish semantic hierarchies predicated upon by both subjective and socially negotiated value judgments. Crumley suggests that these hierarchical structures are deformations of complex and abstract patterns, habitually reiterated via the repetition of metaphors. Her analytical mode is poststructural; not only does Crumley wish to reveal the hidden metaphysics and metaphors behind these binaries towards a kind of denaturalization, she also offers a new conceptual structure, that of the heterarchy, as a possible entry point into thinking differently about social levels of organization. For Crumley, "structures are heterarchical when each element is either unranked relative to other elements or possesses the potential for being ranked in a number of different ways" (Crumley 158). Climate, vegetation, topography, and geology, she suggests, are possible physical structures that may be easily studied as non-hierarchical. It is common in ecocriticism to refer to, for example, the "patchiness" or "patterned mosaics of vegetations" found in nature (158). It is more difficult, however, for a historian to break with the traditional metaphor regarding the Western

European Dark Age, after the fall of the Roman Empire, as a "descent into hell" (158). The ultimate concern of Crumley's paper is appropriate for the study of complex society: that "hierarchy is a controlling model in complex society" (159). Indeed, this algorithm can quickly adapt into any variety of species: hierarchy is a controlling model in any complex system. Heterarchy, on the other hand, is a reconfiguring model with no highest or lowest level that operates according to shifting level-crossing principles in complex systems.

Stark's recent book, *The Sense of Dissonance* (2009), employs the concept of heterarchy in the context of economic and organizational sociology. Here, Stark employs heterarchy as an organizational principle that prioritizes the production of perpetual innovation so as to remain relevant in the information age. Whether Hungarian tool manufacturers in the 1980s, the establishment of new-media business in New York's Silicon Alley in the late 1990s, or amongst arbitrage traders at an international investment bank on Wall Street—these are the three major studies with which Stark and his colleagues engage—each profession flourished as a result of their disregard for hierarchy. Or, the workers consulted amongst themselves for increased success rather than with those who ranked above them in the professional hierarchy. This heterarchical mode of organization is becoming the basis of business organization in the late-twentieth and early twenty-first century. For Stark, heterarchy "represents an organizational form of distributed intelligence in which units are laterally accountable according to diverse principles of evaluation" (Stark 19). He notes two key features at play: first, "heterarchies are characterized by more crosscutting network structures, reflecting the greater interdependences of complex

collaboration. They are heterarchical, moreover, because there is no hierarchical

ordering of the competing evaluative principles" (19). The second feature is what he

terms the "organization of diversity enacted through the friction of competing

performance principles" (19). In short, Stark suggests that heterarchies "flatten

hierarchy." Yet, he is careful not to simply label heterarchies nonhierarchical; rather,

such

> new organizational forms are heterarchical not only because they have
>
> flattened reporting structures but also because they are the sites of
>
> heterogeneous systems of accounting for worth. A robust, lateral
>
> collaboration flattens hierarchy while promoting diversity of evaluative
>
> principles. Heterarchies are complex adaptive systems because they
>
> interweave a multiplicity of performance principles. They are heterarchies of
>
> worth. (25)

Beyond the leveling of value or worth based on a multi-tiered model, Stark suggests

that heterarchy may prove to be the organizational metaphor for the twenty-first

century. Finding its root in Dionysius the Areopagite's fifth-century work, *Celestial

Hierarchy*—the work describes celestial and ecclesiastical hierarchy (28)—the

hierarchical model of organizational principles has simply ran its course. Stark

suggests that "as a metaphor for organization in the twenty-first century, heterarchy

has its provenance at the intersection of extraordinarily generative sciences" (31).

McCulloch's organizational mode has remarkable applicability over a large array of

disciplines from computer science, biology, organizational analysis, and informatics.

In the case of Wilde's novel, hierarchy as a controlling model in the complex relation between a model and his painted image—between a mind and a grammar—is acutely challenged. The narrative level-crossings that structure the novel's complex diegesis allow the possible worlds in the novel to be simultaneously the cause and the effect of the other. What the diegetic peculiarity of *The Picture of Dorian Gray* enacts is a reconfiguration of both linguistic and spatial abstractions that allow an interpretation of a hierarchical relationship between the individual spectator and a work of art. This act of reconfiguration is one that makes the spatial and linguistic abstraction of the strange loop as a conceptual structure as concrete as possible towards the end of resituating two apparently distinct locales—mind and art—in a tangled, non-hierarchical relation. What Wilde establishes here is a kind of narrative structure that lends itself to alternative inferences and a kind of dissonance between levels of narrative. "Heterarchy," Stark writes, "is neither harmony nor cacophony but an organized dissonance" (27). He continues:

> Dissonance occurs when diverse, even antagonistic, performance principles overlap. The manifest, or proximate, result of this rivalry is a noisy clash, as the proponents of different conceptions of value contend with each other. The latent consequence of this dissonance is that the diversity of value-frames generates new combinations…Because there is not one best way or single metric but several mutually coevolving yet not converging paths, the organization is systemically unable to take its routines or its knowledge for granted. (27)

The heterarchical, strange loop conceptual structure of the novel's narrative carries with it a kind of indeterminacy in which processes move in all directions simultaneously: the spectator apprehends art because he creates the art while art apprehends the spectator because it creates the spectator. Or, nothing on behalf of the status of a perceiver or percept can be taken for granted. Speculating upon the multi-leveled diegesis of the novel in terms of strange loops, tangled hierarchies, or heterarchy is certainly valuable in that it challenges the hierarchical assumption that holds certain diegetic levels as precious over others. If one diegetic level—say, that of Dorian and Victorian England—is sought after as having a more concrete reality status than that of the shifting colors and figures in the painting, it is because the habitual process of value judgment here is that the individual is somehow in control. Strange loops, tangled hierarchies and heterarchies, however, can be regarded as thought modalities that rupture habitual modes of thinking. Stark writes that heterarchy "refers to an organizational structure in which a given element…is simultaneously expressed in multiple crosscutting networks" (31); resultantly, such crosscutting networks disrupt linear or hierarchical modes of examining multi-leveled narrative. This results in a kind of wishful thinking that eschews the possibility of bi-directional necessity of representation; that is, both narrative levels are mutually coevolving simultaneously crossing and converging. That is, here there is an urge to supplement a kind of chronology or historicity to the multi-leveled narratives as crosscutting networks in that the painting is simply a shifting representation of Dorian. To suggest that Dorian is also a shifting representation, effectively mucking

about with crisp chronology, is simply too monstrous; however, this is precisely what Wilde's narrative enacts.

   This peculiar loopiness that establishes the relationship between the two diegetic levels of the novel ultimately demands a reconsideration regarding the operational mode of traditional representation. For Hofstadter, a strange loop is "the lifelong loop of a human being's self-representation" (193); yet, by extension, a strange loop may also be the loop of a multi-leveled narrative's self-representation. The brain, according to Hofstader's model, consists of multiple levels: at its most base it is a conglomeration of cells and chemicals; at its most complex level, the brain is an elegant dance of symbols in which the pattern and production of semantics continuously loops back upon itself. Furthermore, "it is almost impossible to imagine moving down, down, down," Hofstadter suggests, "to the neuronal level of our brains, and slowing down, down, down, so that we can see…each and every chemical squirting in each and every synaptic cleft" since no meaning resides at this level, there is no "sticky semantic juice" (202). It is the higher level on which he suggests humans must focus in order to meaningfully discuss matters of the mind. Yet, there is something topsy-turvy about this: "we *automatically*," Hofstadter remarks, "see our brains' activity as entirely symbolic" (196). Symbolism, being a grammatical product, again reaffirms the difficulty of such a model: that we automatically understand our mind with the selfsame systemic mode. This kind of symbolism/grammar is not recognizably present. Consider Chomsky's deep structures: the speaker of a natural language is not immediately aware of the linguistic and grammatical system on which any given utterance depends. Hofstadter's

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symbolism operates in a similar way. Dorian himself becomes intrigued by the topsy-turvy relation between chemicals and the non-chemical:

> he found himself at first gazing at the portrait with a feeling of almost scientific interest. That such a change should have taken place was incredible to him. And yet it was a fact. Was there some subtle affinity between the chemical atoms, that shaped themselves into form and colour on the canvas, and the soul that was within him? Could it be that what the soul thought, they realized? (Wilde 81)

Yet all these levels of symbolism may be regarded with a different, and more accurate, terminology: rather than talking about a system that has a symbol level, Hofstadter suggests that "we might instead say, 'it is a representational system'" (*The Mind's I* 192). What Hofstadter means by representational system here is "an active, self-updating collection of structures organized to 'mirror' the world as it evolves" (192). Self-regulating and dynamic, a representational system is distinguished from traditional mimesis in that the latter does not mutate in regard to that which it represents but is rather a static and passive pattern; in short, representational systems operate much the same as Maturana's autopoesis. Hofstadter notes that "a painting, no matter how representational, would thus be excluded, since it is static" (192). Of course, the portrait in Wilde's novel is a notable exception in that it indeed is a representational system: what the soul thinks, the canvas realizes.

The activity of a system "mirroring" the world as it adapts begs whether the mirror itself is a site of mimesis or systemic representation. There resides a further complication in this logic: if the feedback loop between language and mind is a

kinetic pattern that results in self-reference and the concept of "I," should not this

movement also create a kind of simulation of conscious self-reference in non-living

feedback loops? Hofstadter remarks that an electronic feedback system, such as

video feedback, "no matter how swirly or intricate or deeply nested...no matter how

many pixels or colors it has, *develops no symbols at all*, because a video system does

not *perceive* anything. Nowhere along the cyclic pathway of a video loop are there

any symbols to be triggered—no concepts, no categories, no meanings—not a tad

more than in the shrill screech of an audio feedback loop" (*I Am a Strange Loop* 203).

Consider Hofstadter's self-referential sentences: "I am simultaneously writing and

being written," "I am going two-level with you," and "I am the meaning of this

sentence." Such sentences in themselves may simulate a nonliving conceptual logic

that unsettlingly wiggles about stable understanding; Wilde's novel, a structural

analogue to these sentences, rehearses a kind of monstrous narrative logic that will

simply not sit still. What makes the brain able to develop an "I" and not an electronic

feedback loop such as video feedback, is that the brain is able to think via self-

perception. Yet, at the higher levels of the mind in which we automatically perceive,

we think with and through symbols. The cause (the mind) of perception follows the

effect (language); in other words, the problem is where the ability to think and

perceive resides, or in language itself which must be activated and semantically

infused by the mind. Once Dorian has gone "two-level"—"the terrible pleasure of a

double life" (Wilde 134)—we recognize this problem of the conceptual locale of a

kind of monstrous narrative animation. Dorian acts and perceives; this is what largely

propels the plot. Yet, his perceptual, psychological, and physical experience

accumulates in another diegetic locale. In short, these two diegetic spaces, at once

distinct, are intertwined in a kind of immanent loopy whole as a homeostatic

representational system. In this sense, Dorian's relationship with the painting enacts

in fantastical terms the human relationship with, and is indistinguishable from,

systems of representation. To smash the self-reflecting mirrors and jar the feedback

loop—to deny the materiality of the mind from the grammar of representational

system—leads only to the abyss, non-system, Dorian's death, absolute non-

representation. Or, as Basil remarks, "there is a fatality about all physical and

intellectual distinction" (Wilde 19).

Hofstadter notes two reasons why a mirror itself cannot be a representational

system. First, like a static painting, a mirror cannot make any distinction between

reflections of differing objects; that is, a mirror reflects "the universe, but sees no

categories" (*The Mind's I* 192). A mirror simply reflects one image, the

differentiation and categorization of objects from that image can be said to take place

in an individual who perceives those object distinctions; simply, a mirror is not an

"active, self-updating collection of structures" (192), instead it is a reflecting surface.

Secondly, the reflection or image upon the surface of the mirror is not an

"autonomous structure with its own 'life'" (192). The reflection depends entirely

upon the external world. If the mirror is denied a light source, the reflection ceases to

exist. Just as Wilde's portrait is a challenge to the static mimetic property of painting,

so is his mirror/portrait a challenge to the impossibility of a reflection as an

autonomous structure. Even as Dorian draws "a large screen right in front of the

portrait, shuddering as he glanced at it" (Wilde 79), the portrait proceeds as a

representational system, it would be always alive.

In this function, there is no passing through the looking glass into a fantastical

fiction; rather, two looking glasses—Dorian/mind and the painting/language—are set

facing one another, dynamically reflecting and establishing one another while

simultaneously generating the image of infinitely recursive spiral corridors. The

reflection that these two surfaces provide for and of one another is, in a sense, a kind

of an ostensive or recursive definition; that is, it appears to be the case that language

and mind are being defined in terms of language and mind. Hofstadter remarks that

this phenomenon is, however, not necessarily a case of paradoxical circular logic and

infinite regress. "A recursive definition (when properly formulated)," argues

Hofstadter, "never leads to infinite regress or paradox. This is because a recursive

definition never defines something in terms of itself, but always in terms of *simpler*

versions of itself" (*GEB* 127). Language is made up of levels of grammar and

linguistic procedures, the body of cells and chemical processes; likewise, Dorian's

portrait is an aggregate of color, line, and shape while Dorian the man is, at least on

his diegetic level, presumably a body made up of tissues, fluids, and squirting

chemicals. Yet, in the loopy organizational principles that constitute the novel's

narrative both the portrait and the body are dynamic representations of one another.

A representational system being a dynamic and self-updating proxy—a simpler

version—of its referent, while simultaneously being constituted by that mutating

system which is signified. At the higher level of self-representation via a

representational system one finds that no matter how far one goes down the corridor

of spiraling reflections, one is inevitably back at the point of departure: the looking glass of language and the mind, between Dorian and the picture, is everywhere and nowhere; that is, ambient and anesthetized.

All this complicates the discussion regarding Dorian's narcissism, a discussion largely dominated by psychoanalysis and stemming from Freud's foundational 1914 paper "On Narcissism: An Introduction." Marshall McLuhan's discussion of the Grecian Narcissus story offers an alternative interpretation that is more explicitly concerned with homeostasis, level-transfer, and self-regulating dynamics. The word Narcissus, he notes, is from the Greek word "*narcosis*, or numbness" (McLuhan 63). McLuhan is pointing attention to the common misrepresentation of the Narcissus story in which Narcissus is said to have fallen in love with himself by admiring his own reflection in the water. Indeed, it is this focus on the idea and activity of vanity which plays out in some ways between Dorian and his portrait. But the fact of human experience that constitutes Dorian's engagement in the novel is that which is at the centre of the myth: narcosis and numbness. The tale of Narcissus, like Wilde's novel, is not one primarily concerned with vanity. Indeed, Narcissus, in seeing his own reflection, took this image to be another person. This reflection is, for McLuhan, a medium, an extension; the reflected image effectively numbed Narcissus' perceptions until he "became the servomechanism of his own extended or repeated image" (63). Now, Narcissus can no longer hear the voice of Echo because he, by becoming servile to the medium (his reflection), is anesthetized. Adapting to this extension of himself, Narcissus becomes a closed system. In other words, the reflection as a medium/technology becomes an extension of his body, he adapts and

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mutates in the way he experiences his own body and his environment as a result of his extension; Narcissus is numb because his experience of his own body is transferred into the reflected image. Because the transfer between body and extension in this myth is complete, Narcissus becomes completely anesthetized: this act of transfer and level-crossing maintains the equilibrium within the closed system: "Art has no influence on action. It annihilates the desire to act. It is superbly sterile" (Wilde 163). Any extension of the body, for McLuhan, can be regarded as a kind of "autoamputation" (McLuhan 63). Like Narcissus, whose mind and senses are numbed through their extension and reconfiguration as alternative levels of organization, Dorian "watched with listless eyes the sordid shame of the great city, and now and then he repeated to himself the words...'To cure the soul by means of the senses, and the senses by means of the soul.' Yes, that was the secret. He had often tried it, and would try it again now. There were opium-dens, where one could buy oblivion" (Wilde 140). So, in this sense, Narcissus amputates his whole body and Dorian seeks oblivion by being transferred completely to the extension; yet, the extension itself is entirely dependent upon the body. The story of Narcissus and his narcosis is, then, about human fascination with new extensions of human wetware. It is also a meditation upon art and mind as self-updating and dynamic systems of representation.

"When Dorian Gray," writes Christopher Craft, "stands before his portrait, therein to consider both himself and his difference from himself, he requires a prosthesis" (Craft 109). A response to absolute autoamputation, the prosthetic in question here is that of a complete double of Dorian's body. The prosthesis Dorian requires is, Craft

writes, "so familiar it hardly seems like one. Dorian requires a mirror" (109). Craft

analyses the significance of two mirrors—that of mirrors proper and the portrait—

since this dipartite reflection is the only way Dorian can place his enduring beauty

and developing monstrousness in contradistinction. The "Gothic technology" (114)

or medium that Wilde implements here, that of a supernatural mirror/portrait, is for

Craft a formal meditation upon the alienation-effects experienced by the individual

when encountering his own reflection. Like McLuhan's Narcissus, Craft comments

on Dorian's "silent delirium" (114) upon his first encounter with Basil's painting.

Craft's Dorian is an exemplar of Lacanian psychoanalysis: while "Wilde insists that

disclosive moments of self-recognition entail a complex semiotic interchange

between the one who apprehends himself in an image and the visual image that has

already apprehended the 'same' him over there" (113). However, Wilde insists, Craft

adds, on focusing extensive attention upon the "visual technology [the portrait, rather

than Dorian the character] that generates the flux (and reflux) of information" (113).

Furthermore, this logic of flux and reflux places a marked emphasis upon, not simply

the technology or the character, but upon the loopy dynamics of reflection. "As that

'most magical of mirrors,'" Craft suggests,

> the portrait effectively conjoins Wilde's lazy gothic plot with the formal
>
> dynamics of self-regard. This, in turn, enables Wilde to map the saturated,
>
> irreal space that intervenes between a self-apprehending subject and the
>
> mimetic apparatus that returns this subject to himself, but always in the guise
>
> of objectal or phantasmal other. (114)

A viewing subject when reflected in a mirror may, according to the circular momentum of reflection, return from the reflection to where one began. However, upon this return the viewing subject is not the same as where one began. Beginning as a complete and present human being, the viewing subject returns from the reflection as an "image-being devoid of precisely *this* presence" (110). The complication of Narcissism is that it simultaneously provides an image of the viewing subject and all that the viewing subject is not. In short, as Manganiello suggests, Narcissism "distorts as it reflects" (Manganiello 31). The return effect establishes an illusion of unity yet simultaneously provides processes of "perpetual disintegration" (Craft 110). In short, this complex process of spatio-temporal dislocation between the subject and the image of the other—the reflection or imago—results in alienation. Such a reading brilliantly engages with concerns of the subject and an "erotics of self-identification" (114); however, if speculating upon the loopy possibilities of multi-diegetic level-crossing from the perspective of narrative systemics, the logic of self-reference operates somewhat differently. That is, while Lacanian identification with the imago leads to alienation and the "perpetual disintegration" of the subject, Hofstadter's heterarchical strange loops do, indeed, bring one back precisely to one's departure. That is, rather than analyzing the misidentification between two spatio-temporal topoi, the multi-leveled diegesis of the novel upsets the habitual assumption regarding the directionality and temporality that link two locales by effectively making these apparent opposites a single unit. Certainly, Gothic doubling and the complication of the viewing subject with the other occurs time and again in the novel;

however, this case of the uncanny also takes place on the level of narrative itself via the logical monstrosity constituting the loopy structure of the novel.

The monstrosity of the novel's structural diegetic paradox, between maker and artifact, individual and object, is an instance of familiarity and the strange. "From the moment he speaks of his desire" McCormack suggests, "Dorian himself becomes an artefact, neither alive nor dead: one of the fabulous undead, such as Dracula, who must draw life from others" (113). But Dorian's victims are not only the obvious ones—the scandalous events beyond the periphery of the plot—but that of another diegetic level: the painting takes from Dorian, and thus gives to Dorian. Dorian takes from the painting, and thus gives to the painting. The economy here is homeostatic. Again anesthesia: "Dorian anaesthesises himself with things," McCormack writes, "inventing himself by means of his own collections. His relationship with himself, as with others, is dictated by an object; but which Dorian is now the artefact?" That is, a *doppelgänger* without a primal individual of whom to copy; or, two *doppelgangers*, like mirrors, reflecting one another, multiplying to infinity. Declan Kiberd suggests that "the self and the *doppelgänger* have the makings of a whole person" (Kiberd 292), and, so it seems, the novel supports this claim fully both as it is and in its reverse.

Freud's "The Uncanny" is a fascinating piece largely because it does not succeed in satisfying the reader's expectation for a precise definition of the "conceptual term" (Freud 930), *uncanny*, while simultaneously establishing a semantic and structural matrix which justifies this failure. A peculiar aspect of the work is the implication of the first of the three parts of Freud's essay: the denotative and etymological

elucidation of the strange relationship between the words *heimlich* and *unheimlich*. *Heimlich* denotes both one thing and its opposite; if we follow this logic, the morphological negation of that word, *unheimlich*, establishes an oscillating semantic relationship between these two terms. This semantic matrix governing the complex logic of the essay's subject functions metonymically establishing the ambivalent relationship between the three divisions of Freud's essay. In other words, the inherent conceptual instability of the subject of Freud's essay—the uncanny— establishes, and becomes part of, the form. Indeed, Freud, like Basil, projects the content "into some gracious form, and [lets] it tarry there for a moment" (Wilde 41). While Freud purports to describe "the uncanny" in the psychoanalytic experience, he rather succeeds in representing it in the structure of his analysis.

The etymological examination that opens Freud's analysis is, not only fascinating in itself, but also leads to a conclusion that is remarkable in that it is innately inconclusive. Freud's investigation into the word *heimlich* in Daniel Sanders' *Wörterbuch der Deutschen Sprache* introduces the reader to the inbuilt strangeness of the term. While, Freud demonstrates, *heimlich* denotes "belonging to the house, not strange, familiar, tame, intimate, friendly" (931), its secondary definition is, "Concealed, kept from sight, so that others do not get to know of or about it, withheld from others" (Freud 933). Freud concludes:

> What interests us most…is to find that among its different shades of meaning
> the word '*heimlich*' exhibits one which is identical with its opposite,
> '*unheimlich*.' What is *heimlich* thus comes to be *unheimlich*…In general we

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are reminded that the word '*heimlich*' is not unambiguous, but belongs to two

sets of ideas, which, without being contradictory, are yet very different. (933)

Freud links this strange etymological relationship with the psychoanalytic experience

through Schelling's suggestion that "everything is *unheimlich* that ought to have

remained secret and hidden but has come to light" (934) and is the pressing anxiety

that forces Dorian to keep the portrait "hidden away at all costs" (Wilde 96) while, at

the same time,

> Creep upstairs to the locked room, open the door with the key that never left
>
> him now, and stand, with a mirror, in front of the portrait that Basil Hallward
>
> had painted of him, looking now at the evil and ageing face on the canvas, and
>
> now at the fair young face that laughed back at him from the polished glass.
>
> The very sharpness of the contrast used to quicken his sense of pleasure. He
>
> grew more and more enamoured by his own beauty, more and more interested
>
> in the corruption of his own soul. (102-103)

That is, the uncanny, for Freud, supports the psychoanalytic theory regarding the

return of the repressed, while, for Wilde, the uncanny supports the strange loop

structure of multi-diegetic haunting.

   Psychoanalytic concerns aside, however, it is the complex relationship between

the content and structure of Freud's essay that is of immediate interest. If the knotted

relationship between the two words, as Freud suggests, is as follows: "*heimlich* is a

word the meaning of which develops in the direction of ambivalence, until it finally

coincides with its opposite, *unheimlich*" (Freud 934) then it is precisely the unsettling

semantic implication of this ambivalent logic that both establishes and constitutes the

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structure of the rest of the analysis. The form of Freud's argument, though the whole

is framed within "the specialist literature of aesthetics" (930), is tripartite: a thorough

etymological study of the word *unheimlich*, a psychoanalytic reading of Hoffmann's

story "The Sandman," and finally a differentiation "between the uncanny that we

actually experience and the uncanny that we merely picture or read about" (948).

What is striking about the latter two parts of the essay—Freud's reading of

Hoffmann's story and the incongruity between the aesthetic uncanny and the uncanny

of actual experience—is that these sections do not seem to follow the etymological

study by means of causal logic.

   Rather, these arguments are more like permutated variations upon the significance

of the term; in other words, variations on a concept that do not tell the reader anything

new about "the uncanny" but, instead, become—more akin to Wilde's narrative

structure than to the three works he examines—a specialist literature of aesthetics

itself. The logical relationship between these three sections seems *hidden* from the

reader, yet all three divisions of the argument simultaneously *reveal* the unsettling

nature of attempting to deal with the concept. The implications of the uncanny build

in intensity by having the term loop back upon itself. Becoming self-updating

reflections of itself, the argument operates by forcing the reader to ask "which

uncanny?" much in the same way the reader of Wilde's novel is constantly asking

"which Dorian? The one who is pouring out tea for us, or the one in the picture?"

(Wilde 36). But never is the concept brought to rest in a stable and conclusive way.

If the meaning of *heimlich* "develops in the direction of ambivalence" until it is

indistinguishable from *unheimlich*, the same process must apply if we begin with

unheimlich. In this sense, the subject of the essay is absolutely ambivalent and is therefore a convenient metonymy to justify the disjointed and inelegant structure of Freud's argument. And what becomes even more captivating about this essay is the way in which both the conceptual term and the constituted structure of the essay simultaneously both peak, like Wilde's narrative, in a state of homeostasis and of reflexivity.

The denotative ambiguity of the word *heimlich* suggests that its meaning, like the structural narrative peculiarity of Wilde's novel, can be examined as being in a state of semantic homeostasis. In other words, there is a tendency in the semantics of this term to gesture toward a complex kind of stability through constant oscillation and feedback between its two conflicting meanings. The term attempts an internal equilibrium despite the fact that it is in a state of constant conceptual reorganization. *Heimlich* may be used to signify one of either two opposing signifiers, yet this internal semantic structure of the word asserts that it covertly constitutes both one thing and its opposite. To think about this logic as metonymic for the form of Freud's essay is of particular interest: that the denotation of the term uncanny is subject to two ambiguous meanings simultaneously thereby demanding a structural analysis appropriate in representing this strange phenomenon. Again, like the metonymical strange loop structure of Wilde's novel, Freud's mode of writing seems "to be able to give a plastic form to formless things" (Wilde 30).

Homeostasis, however, as a metaphor for the function of the word *heimlich* is not entirely satisfactory on its own. It is to what homeostasis gives rise which is critical in understanding the metonymic function of the term in relation to the essay structure

as a whole and that is particularly intriguing; that is, self-reference. In this sense, the constantly oscillating logic of the relationship between the conceptual terms *heimlich* an *unheimlich* is used by Freud to generate a representational system, yet also becomes representative of both part and the whole of the argument. The intriguing status of *heimlich* and *unheimlich* in Freud's paper, consequently, functions as an indicator of how the overall analysis operates.   In other words, the metonymic function of the etymological study establishes preexisting conditions of vertiginous logic which, in turn, generates those logical conditions for the foundation structuring the essay.

If the conceptual term, *heimlich*, is inherently semantically ambivalent, then any formal investigation into it is subject to representing a similar effect. Freud attempts to explain the uncanny in terms of the psychoanalytic experience, Wilde in terms of an aesthetic experience; yet in some ways both seem to, rather than describe the concept, represent it in both the structure and content of their respective works. It is in this sense that Freud's essay itself is uncanny; in the same way, this is the structural logic, as much as the content itself, that makes Wilde's novel an essentially uncanny experience. If "The Uncanny" seems to provide an unsettling—even unsatisfactory—study that is more akin to variations and permutations on an ambivalent conceptual theme than a formal argument proceeding by logical consequence, this is perhaps the brilliant point of both Freud's essay and Wilde's two Dorians. Perhaps, however, Hofstadter and McCulloch are correct to remark that strange loops and heterarchy are indeed pertinent models of that structure which constitutes the processes of the reader's own mind; in this sense, the reader

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experiences the structure governing his or her own mind embedded within narrative forms of this kind. This is why a narrative of this form "has a life of its own" (Wilde 95); it mimics autopoetically as a representational system and becomes the invented hyperreal extension of the structural peculiarity of a mind itself. A strange loop is strange because it is the quasi-perceptible, quasi-familiar structure of the mind itself; the "idea [is] monstrous" (121).

Needless to say, like the portrait, the text itself is not an organism; however, the quirky structural apparatus governing the relationship between the multiple levels of diegesis in the novel does share some similarities with the most basic functions of a life form. Constantly fluxing and reorganizing itself through internal textual dynamics, the multi-leveled diegesis of Wilde's novel, as it is governed by the topographical conceptualization of the strange loop, paradoxically maintains and equalizes itself. The multiple ontological levels of diegesis, through the strange logic, refuse to remain stable and fixed—rather, the textual aggregate consists of an ever-moving tangled hierarchy in which any diegetic locale paradoxically occupies the same textual space as an alternative narrative space. These features may constitute the rules—the aesthetic principles and regulations—behind the "elite or occult game" through which Wilde animates the multi-diegetic contexture of his novel. Indeed, perhaps Borges is eloquent in describing Wilde as a laborious *monstrorum artifex*.

Chapter Two

"Something Profoundly Intimate": The Reader as Time,

Heidegger, and Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse*

Poetry, as the institution of Being, is the grounding manifestation of intimacy.
-Martin Heidegger

Life can only be understood backwards; but it must be lived forwards.
-Søren Kierkegaard

The sentences you are reading seem to have the job of dissolving more than of indicating…this is why the author piles supposition on supposition in long paragraphs without dialogue, a thick, opaque layer of lead where I may pass unnoticed, disappear.
-Italo Calvino

In this chapter, I evaluate Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse* (1927) amidst an assemblage of Martin Heidegger's early speculations on the temporality of being. It is Heidegger who "unearthed and examined the metaphysical roots of being," notes Heidi Storl, while "Woolf illustrated the nature and implications of being" (Storl 303). Heidegger's project is massive; the focus of this chapter, however, is on temporality. For Heidegger, time is a fundamental quality of being, while for Woolf time is an essential aesthetic mode that observes the temporal metamorphoses that make daily experience possible. The amalgamation of these two conceits permits for an intense, yet strange, intimacy for the act of reading Woolf's *To the Lighthouse*. Indeed, this process is indicative of a psycho-ecological reading. The novel is famous for offering insight into the author's life experience and yet it is the author's life that sets such *poesis* in motion. In her 1932 essay, "How Should One Read a Book?," Woolf asks the following question: "We can watch the famous dead in their familiar

habits and fancy sometimes that we are very close and can surprise their secrets…How far, we must ask ourselves, is a book influenced by its writer's life?" With the very act of reading *To the Lighthouse*, the reader extends an affective physicality into the text and becomes an organic activator, that which moves and animates language. One does not decode Woolf, rather one encodes and is encoded, experiencing the past and the future, temporality itself. This extension makes manifest Heidegger's claim that being *is* temporality. Here, the reader becomes *primum movens* and *circulus vitiosus* simultaneously by acting as the sole agent galvanizing the novel without significant impetus from the diegetic level of character.[4] The intense intimacy of this kind of activity lies in the ontological merger of reader and text. The reader energizes the text thus agitating a kind of interpretive and semantic movement while the text animates the reader by making manifest the immanence of diegetic boundaries yet simultaneously enacting and defining these narrative limits. Or, "a thing must offer itself to our representation if our representation is to conform to it," writes Christopher Fynsk (Fynsk 146). From such a formulation, *To the Lighthouse* informs the reader *in* time and transforms the reader *as* time, an act of reading as movement and change, of backwards and forwards chronological movement, of loops and knots. How far, we must ask ourselves more urgently, is a book influenced by—and, as language, an *a priori* influence upon—its reader's lived experience including the possible configurations that extend, and loop back, as the reader's future.

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[4] This is intensified in "Time Passes" where the diegetic level of the novel and the traditional role of character is abstract.

As the diegetic in-between of a tripartite narrative configuration, "Time Passes" operates as a kind of ecstatic extension: that which crosses the diegetic level perpetuated from the interiorization of the level of character and setting towards that which proceeds via processes of change and movement without agential intervention. This diegetic displacement is at once one of expansion and implosion. Borges notes this tendency in Woolf's fiction as early as *Jacob's Room* (1922), where "there is no plot, in the narrative sense of the word; the subject is a man's character, studied not in the man himself, but indirectly in the objects and people around him" (Borges 173-174). Borges aptly notes that this effect is intensified in *To the Lighthouse*: the novel "depicts a few hours in several peoples' lives, so that in those hours we see their past and future" (175). Moving away from the narrative level of, say, Mrs. Ramsay or the lighthouse as an architectural object, the diegetic locus of "Time Passes" moves beyond the realm of phenomenal everydayness into a kind of account by an unknowable narrator. This movement metonymically acts as the compression of movement, change, and eventful pulsation; or, a narrator that is temporality itself, that thing that is "around," operates as the quality that constitutes pasts and futures. Movement from one narrative level to another is not only a radical change in perspective, but a negation of the locus of perspective through the demonstration of motion and change as both the content and the affect of "Time Passes." Here, "Time Passes" fulfills the role of change and transformation in the text and it radiates both forward and backwards: such temporal logic arrives at and enlaces the novel as a whole. The movement towards exteriorization and transcendence as the diegetic gesture of the novel proves limited; the section's epistemological and ontological

depersonalization—that is, time as narrator and narrator as temporality—ultimately lends itself to a more intimate engagement with the text on behalf of the extra-diegetic reader.

In dealing with these processes, the novel is saturated with philosophical musing both satirical and profound. That is, somewhat caustically, Mr. Ramsay remarks that "Z is only reached once by one man in a generation" (39); unlike Mr. Ramsay, however, Heidegger is a man who reaches Z likely because the latter does not consider knowledge as linear as an alphabet, but rather as that which constellates around a central abyss, a position more akin to Woolf's: "'What am I?' 'What is this?' and suddenly an answer was vouchsafed them (what it was they could not say)" (Woolf 143). In this sense, the manner in which the reader may prove to be the source of this motion and change in the novel is complex and finds a fruitful examination in Heidegger's existential phenomenology.   In the same year Woolf's novel appeared, Heidegger published the paradigm shifting *Being and Time* (1927). Storl remarks that the publication of these two masterworks in the same year—and that they share some remarkable conceptual qualities—is not necessarily surprising:

> Both writers were reacting to the commitments and costs of modernity: the separation of subject and object that enabled the rise of scientific materialism and various forms of philosophical realism, yet at the same time caused the formation of an ever-deepening normative void. A clarification of the presuppositions underlying the modern understanding of human being and doing served as a focal point for Heidegger and Woolfs' respective writings. (Storl 303)

That said, Heidegger's intellectual lineage differs from that of Woolf.[5] Equally indebted to Kierkegaard's existentialism as it is to the phenomenology of Heidegger's teacher, Husserl,[6] *Being and Time* urges a shift from objects of knowledge to the question of being. In a sense, Heidegger makes a major move from knowledge, or that which we know, to the modes and motions that underlie the possibility of knowledge; that is, his work shifts philosophical focus to thought itself as the very pathway to the question of being. Much of the stylistic difficulty of Heidegger's text is in the manner through which it enacts his philosophical gesture by establishing something akin to a new vocabulary through grammatical innovation. Rarely does the inquiry stand still; rarer is the emergence of conclusive statements. The mode of enquiry is intensely conflated with the subject of enquiry: argument and thought situated in opposition to logical immutability. All is in a process of becoming; all is in various modes of motion and change. Like Woolf's fiction, Heidegger's philosophy is "about" knowledge insomuch as it is "around" knowledge: that which patterns via circumscription. In this sense, *Being and Time*, by its style and subject matter as we will see, situates itself temporally.

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[5] Borges sums up Woolf's education eloquently: "From infancy, she was raised not to speak if she had nothing to say. She was never sent to school, but her domestic training included study in Greek. Sundays at the house were crowded: Meredith, Ruskin, Stevenson, John Morley, Gosse, and Hardy were all frequently in attendance" (Borges 173). For more extensive discussion on Woolf's biography, see Quentin Bell's *Virginia Woolf: A Biography, 2 Vols.* (1972); Julia Briggs' *Virginia Woolf: An Inner Life* (2005); Hermione Lee's *Virginia Woolf* (1996); and Panthea Reid's *Art and Affection: A Life of Virginia Woolf* (1996).

[6] Despite its severity, Heidegger's infamous association with the Nazis will not be discussed here. However, regarding the complexities of judging Heidegger's political affiliations, Paul Virilio, in conversation with Sylvère Lotringer, sums us this contentious issue accurately and eloquently: "Caravaggio was a murderer, and this didn't prevent him from being a great painter. You can be a great philosopher and a real bastard too" (Virilio *Pure War* 234). For more on this debate, see *The Heidegger Controversy: A Critical Reader* (1991), ed. Richard Wolin. Also, see Martin Heidegger's "Only a God Can Save Us": The *Spiegel* Interview (1966) in *Heidegger: The Man and the Thinker*. Ed. T. Sheenan. Chicago: Precedent, 1981. Print. 45-67.

Critics identify much of the connection between thought, perception, and time in Woolf's writing through the lens of Henri Bergson. Indeed, Woolf's distinction between everyday modalities of experience and those moments of epiphanic consciousness is perhaps more indicative of Bergson's influence on modernist critics than on Woolf herself;[7] "Virginia Woolf," writes James Hafley, "evidently never read Bergson" (Hafley 174).[8] With the existential phenomenology of Heidegger, the mind "does not and cannot exist without its world, for the intelligibility of the world *is* its essential feature. Thus it requires neither proof of nor bridge to the outer world because it has no inner-outer dichotomy to start with" (Auyang 82); indeed, Kathleen Wider writes that "Heidegger uses the German term *Befindlichkeit*, which is often translated as "the state of mind in which one may be found," although some scholars[9] prefer to translate the German as 'affectivity' to avoid the connotation that a mood is a characteristic of a disembodied mind, since Heidegger rejects such a Cartesian view" (Wider 67-68). While Bergson is also in opposition to the "common cause against that fluidity out there" (Woolf 106), he felt more specifically that mathematicians had deformed the continuity of time by separating it into individual pulsations or units, by giving a spatial conceptualization to time. For Bergson, time is not a series of pulsations as moments, but instead he uses the concept of "duration" to denote a flow of temporal indivisibility, of interpenetrating memories and experiences. Bergson considered his mode of thought a "true empiricism" (Bergson

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[7] See Goldman, Kumar, Hafley
[8] Hafley continues, "If she did not read Bergson himself, she must certainly have read Proust; and Bergson's ideas were so polular as to be everywhere around her at second and third hand" (Hafley 174). Of course, this is no stain upon these readings; Woolf did not read Heidegger.
[9] See Eugene Francis Kaelin's *Heidegger's Being and Time: A Reading for Readers* (1988) and Graeme Nicholson's "Ecstatic Temporality in *Sein Und Zeit*." in *A Companion to Martin Heidegger's "Being and Time."* ed. Joseph J. Kockelmans (1986).

The Creative Mind 175), and thus his thought may remind us of the instance of the "table when you're not there" (Woolf 28). Bergson's empiricism is, however, distinct from that of the Enlightenment project. As one more concerned with becoming, metamorphosis, memory, the irrational, Bergson focuses upon experience and change rather than rationality to establish the timbre of his enquiry. For Bergson, both the intuitions of space and time were fundamentally different (a critique of Kant's stance[10] that both are experienced as *a priori* qualities). Space, for Bergson, qualifies and quantifies rationality; its conceptual and geometric shape can undergo the autopsies and disassemblies of the natural sciences without losing the essential qualities of the whole. Time, on the other hand, "is becoming and living duration…Time, according to Bergson, is not accessible to rationality, Rationality dissects, divides, counts and measure. Time as the realm of novelty and creation, of the unique and the irreversible, of unbroken flow is not amenable to such division…becoming was accessible only as a *lived* reality" (Adam 55-56), that which needs to be intuited by everyday familiarities rather than by scientific analysis. Gillian Beer writes that "Woolf's preoccupations chimed in with those physicists who emphasized the universe as waves, the porousness of matter…Yet is that abstracted insubstantial world *enough* for a novelist? How to find and sustain story? emotion? ordinary living without falling into the realist trap?" (Beer 118). Ann Banfield, in *The Phantom Table* (2000), discusses the formalism of G.E. Moore and Bertrand Russell as having a major influence upon the Bloomsbury aesthetic, thus establishing

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[10] For Kant, space and time are subjective experiences at the level of an individual's sensory cognitive faculties rather than objective realities. That is, space and time are phenomena rather than noumena: tools organized and categorized by language towards the end of systematizing and arranging sensory experience but not things-in-themselves. Space and time are, then, categorical means of making sense of the raw data of sensory experience.

Woolf's fiction as informed by Cambridge philosophy in addition to the more traditional claims for the influence of the aesthetic formalism of Roger Fry and Clive Bell.[11] Here, she comments on Russell's critique of Bergson's indivisible flow of time on the grounds that "Bergson's objections that physical, spatialized time fails to explain how time passes…show a misunderstanding of the theory of continuity" (Banfield 102). Banfield is certainly correct, and *The Phantom Table* is the strongest study currently available that extends the discussion beyond the critical bias towards a Bergsonian interpretation of modernist conceptualization of time in Woolf's fiction. "For Russell," Banfield writes, "the experience of continuity is 'easier to feel than to define'" (102); and it is here that we pickpocket Russell and more or less leave him behind.[12] Time here, is indivisible, not from Bergson's spatialization, but from being.

So, with this examination, we are concerned with both epistemology and ontology. "Whence comes the perspective's subjectivity if not from the subject?" asks Banfield, "The answer is from its geometry. It is first of all bounded, its limits dividing it absolutely from all others, creating thereby an outside and an inside. Without, its boundaries form a circumference" (Banfield *The Phantom Table* 75). While Russell suggests that the combination of temporality to spatiality of perspective as a modern amendment of Leibniz' monadism, his logic implicitly denies the loopy relation, the hierarchy defying knots, that irrationalize the inside from the outside. From this, Russell notes in *Human Knowledge* that "not only is a man private from other people,

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[11] See Jane Goldman's "Modernist Studies" in *Palvrage Advances in Virginia Woolf Studies* (2007) ed. Anna Snaith; Frank Gloversmith's "Autonomy Theory: Ortega, Roger Fry, Virginia Woolf" in *The Theory of Reading* (1984); Brani Koppen's "Embodied Form: Art and Life in Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse*" in *New Literary History: A journal of Theory and Interpretation* (2001); Allen McLauren's *Virginia Woolf: The Echoes Enslaved* (1973); John Hawkley Roberts' "Vision and Design in Virginia Woolf" in PMLA 61 (1946); and Marianna Torgovnick's *The Visual Arts, Pictorialism, and the Novel: James, Lawrence, and Woolf* (1985).
[12] Perhaps for the best, since Russell is famously uncomfortable with paradox.

but he is also private from his past and future selves" (Russell qtd. in Banfield *The Phantom Table* 76). In our reading, however, we wish to unveil how *To the Lighthouse* makes explicit the connection between ontological temporality and existential locality. Existential philosophy concedes that there is no inside-outside dichotomy; "Heidegger abolished the whole Cartesian scheme with its wordless subject inside and unintelligible things outside" writes Sunny Y. Auyang. "He scorned the notion of a mind inside the 'cabinet of consciousness' and refused even to talk about consciousness, which he took to be something hiding inside" (Auyang 81). Furthermore, Emily Dalgarno identifies "Time Passes" as a section of the book that addresses the philosophical chances in the discussion of the nature of perception; she aptly notes that the language of "Time Passes" is evocative of a formulation made by Maurice Merleau-Ponty in *The Visible and the Invisible*:

> Today we no longer believe nature to be a continuous system…*a fortiori* we are far removed from thinking that the islets of "psychism" that float over it are secretly connected to one another through the continuous ground of nature. We have then imposed upon us the task of understanding whether, and in what sense, what is not nature forms a "world," and first what a "world" is, and finally, if world there is, what can be the relations between the visible world and the invisible world. (Merleau-Ponty 27)

Time is felt, and this affective experience is at the heart of one's responsibility to define, not the constitutive quality of time itself, but one's potentiality in everyday life. Here we see that Merleau-Ponty, writing after Heidegger, agrees with Russell on the point of rejecting the continuity of nature. For Merleau-Ponty, Heidegger, and

Woolf—but not Russell—we are pressed to experience the intimate affectivity of ourselves in a world that is not nature. "There is no inner man," writes Merleau-Ponty, "man is in the world, and only in the world does he know himself" (Merleau-Ponty xi). For Heidegger, as we will see, experience is not private. "Being open to the world is the essential and most obvious characteristic of our mentality," notes Auyang: "It is impossible to characterize mental properties adequately without invoking the world with which our mind is inextricably concerned. This is Heidegger's point" (Auyang 82). Rather than understanding experience as an immediate matter, Heidegger suggests that experience is formulated both from the past and the future self. Yet each temporal locale is embedded in a kind of tangle that denotes something more akin to lived affectivity for the simultaneity of existential inheritance and the possibility of futurity. In 1925, perhaps as a will to establish or revisit a literary form capable of expressing such complexities of experience, Woolf writes: "I will invent a new name for my books to supplant 'novel.' A new _____ by Virginia Woolf. But what? Elegy?" (Woolf *The Diary of Virginia Woolf* 34). Certainly, Woolf's novel is effectively an elegy and a remarkably innovative one. "In elegy there is a repetition of mourning and an allaying of mourning," writes Beer. "Elegy lets go of the past, formally transferring it into language, laying ghosts by confining them to a text and giving them its freedom" (Beer 31). Woolf's elegy, however, is about the future as much as it is about the past. This tangling of memory with potentiality is how Woolf may effectively find and sustain her story. Time is felt and such intimate affectivity is activated by the reader. That is, the tangling of the diegetic level of the reader with that of the novel is what gives the novel its quality of

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ordinary living as strange as it may seem. *To the Lighthouse* makes manifest our living in the world; it is also an act of mourning, and so operates as both memory and *momento mori*, between an elusive visible experience of the past and the pending invisibility of possibility.

In his 1979 article, "Virginia Woolf and our Knowledge of the External World," Jaakko Hintikka addresses the "failure of almost all scholars to study in any real depth the interplay of philosophical and literary methods, values, and doctrines in the Bloomsbury group" (Hintikka 5). Hintikka's assessment is one that suggests an effective reading of Woolf's fiction cannot be complete without recognizing that her novels are largely "fictionalized epistemology" (6). Above all else, he calls for a more profound reading of Woolf's novels with particular consideration of Bertrand Russell and G.E. Moore's influence upon the intellectual landscape occupied by the Bloomsbury group. "Russell, Moore, and Keynes," and to a lesser extent, Wittgenstein, Hintikka writes,

> were subject to influences so similar to those that helped to shape the writers
> and artists of the group and had so many opportunities to convey these
> influences to their neighbors in Bloomsbury that comparisons between these
> philosophers and the Bloomsbury group will be highly interesting to any
> historian or other scholar who is looking for the general factors which shaped
> all of them and which have shaped much of the rest of the intellectual history
> of our century. (5)

Hintikka remains clear, however, to distinguish Woolf's work from the novel of ideas; while her novels contribute and promote certain philosophical doctrines, her

work is equally dedicated to raising certain philosophical problems at times by the characters, at other times by the author, "and sometimes indirectly by the author through those subtle means she uses to induce us to take fewer things for granted than we have done in the past" (6). Banfield's study of the influence of impressionism and the philosophy of Russell and Moore in "Time Passes: Virginia Woolf, Post-Impressionism, and Cambridge Time"[13] and the aforementioned *The Phantom Table* address Hintikka's critique and the two are certainly the most extensive studies in this area of consideration. Banfield's work also gestures away from the too oft repeated and reductionistic claim that typically take the following form: in "Time Passes," a "brilliant subversion of realism is sustained throughout the passage, in which 'history' and 'events' (the First World War, deaths, and worldly achievements) are relegated to brief addenda to the subjective passage of time in the consciousness of the abandoned house" (Livesey 141). Yet, Livesey aptly remarks that

> By 1931 Woolf's aesthetic was no longer about marshalling six or six
>
> thousand characters to walk in her authorial step, or constructing a web of
>
> sympathy between characters and the implied reader, but flashing light out
>
> through the desires and imaginations of her subjects in order to explore
>
> individuation. In the "Time Passes" section of *To the Lighthouse* (1927), the
>
> radical rejection of nineteenth-century sentimental narrative and temporal

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[13] The article describes the significance of "Time Passes" in terms of how the fragmented scenes function to create the sense of a time continuum, a literary equivalent to the process used by the impressionist painters to create a meaningful spatial continuum. Ultimately, "Time Passes" functions, according to Banfield, as an "interlude" (employing Woolf's own term) between "The Window" and "The Lighthouse" to create a conceptual relationship between temporal moments thus transforming scenes or short stories in a larger comprehensible time continuum; the aesthetic result, according to Banfield, is a modern novel. However, its scope is one, like much professional academic studies, that gestures inward as its significance is fundamentally important to the study of the modern novel and the literary history of modernist fiction. Banfield's essay is excellent and is highly recommended reading for those interested in reading criticism regarding "Time Passes."

structure is paired with the sturdy constant of the charlady, Mrs McNab. The

death of Mrs Ramsay is famously bracketed off as an aside in this section,

imploding the nineteenth century literary convention of the deathbed scene.

(Livesey 141)

Woolf was, certainly, more concerned with the nature of social reality than with

metaphysical realities; however, Hintikka notes that "the two are inextricably

intermingled" in her fictional universe (Hintikka 6). Speaking after, rather than in

contrast to Hintikka, Banfield, and the mode expressed above by Livesey, here we

consider the passage of time in the novel as that of temporality itself: time as narrator.

Ultimately, however, Woolf's *To the Lighthouse* is a fictionalization of

epistemologies that promotes as many philosophical ideas as it raises philosophical

conundrums. Here, the philosophical problems are raised indirectly by the author

and, simultaneously, induced in and by the implied reader through reflexive

heterarchical tangling of diegetic levels. "Philosophical ideas are not the subject

matter of her novels," Hintikka writes, "but they are part of the parcel of their

texture" (6). The weaving from one diegetic level to another, from the level of the

reader, into the level of the text; the tangling of the reader as narrating agent with the

reader *as time* narrating itself, this is the precise parcel of the novel's texture. In

short, the novel expresses both the ontological and the temporal since the two are

inseparable. As Woolf remarks, "all one's perceptions, half-way to truth, were

tangled in a golden mesh…could the body achieve it, or the mind, subtly mingling in

the intricate passages of the brain?" (Woolf 57).

Indeed, philosophical conundrums are the texture, the tangled golden mesh, that constructs *To the Lighthouse*. What Woolf and Heidegger have in common is the assurance that everyday life and existence are topics that merit explicit discussion. "Heidegger's…philosophy, as well as Woolf's fiction…have at their core an original direct and person existential experience which is in equal measures intellectual and emotional" writes A. O. Frank, "Their contribution to philosophy may be seen as but an introduction of this personal and intimate, yet fresh and typically modernistic perception into the body of knowledge amassed by the tradition, by filtering it through and comparing it to this body and translating it into a language which at least communicates with the language of that corpus" (Frank 81). From this, the knowledge concerning life and existence operates both as something of a foundation of the discussion and that which will consequently be gained by such discussion. "Woolf and Heidegger," Frank remarks, "are connected by an interest in the aspect of philosophy which concerns life and by the requirement that life be brought back to philosophy and philosophy guided back to the questions regarding life" (Frank 80). Again, one difficulty in connecting the thought of Woolf and that of Heidegger is that the former is much less concerned with metaphysics than with epistemology. For the latter "epistemology is of secondary emphasis, implied or subordinated rather than highlighted" (Frank 80); furthermore, for Heidegger, existential knowledge is the substratum of knowledge itself. While Woolf may not herald this tangled logic in an overt way, Lily's revelation at the novel's close proves noteworthy as an affirmative statement both ontological and existential as she finishes her painting: "With a sudden intensity, as if she saw it clear for a second, she drew a line there in the centre. It was

done; it was finished. Yes, she thought, laying down her brush in extreme fatigue, I have had my vision" (226). Lily's epistemological admission operates not only as deliverance from the tyranny of Mr. Ramsay's Enlightenment modality but also as an affirmative motion into a more affective source of knowledge. The extreme fatigue that Lily experiences situates her knowledge in the very site of knowledge. Lily's painting is metonymical for the novel: the painting is finished, the novel is finished. Of course, there's more: Lily's accomplishment is the feat of the reader; that is, her intimate ontological connection to the painting begins much in the way the reader's hierarchy defying relationship to the novel operates. Frank suggests that "knowledge which is unaware of its ontological foundation runs a risk of misconceiving its epistemological foundation, its potentials, the types of utterance available to it, the positioning and implications of the questions that it is asking and the answers it is giving" (Frank 80). Just as Lily's affirmative pronouncement, "Yes," establishes her recognition of the intense connection between ontology and epistemology, her own critique of the metaphysics emblematized by Mr. Ramsay, the act of reading *To the Lighthouse* as narrative level crossing, the movement from the extradiegetic to the intradiegetic, activates the affirmative declaration of the reader. The reader then integrates ontological assumptions, analytical positioning of experience in relation to text, and the affective engagement with language as a means of reforming the processes of speculation.

The process of knowledge and thought towards being correspondingly situates being as temporal. Essential to Heidegger's work is the concept of Dasein, being in

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the world;[14] or, as Woolf remarks, "the lawn [is] very rough. Here sitting on the

world" (Woolf 210). Here, we employ Dasein in such a way that one may often

replace it with the term "self" or "I" without significant deformation of the syntactic

gesture of his sentence. On the level of syntax, however, Dasein is specific in its

meaning. "When properly understood," writes Timothy Stapleton, Dasein

> captures the unique being of the "I am", one that gets misconstrued by such
>
> terms, for example, as "self," "ego," "soul," "subjectivity" or "person." For
>
> Heidegger, what constitutes the very "am" of the "I am" is that being is an
>
> issue for it: is a question and a matter about which it cares. This entity that I
>
> am understands this implicitly. More radically, it *is* this understanding, or the
>
> place where this understanding of being occurs. Hence "Dasein" means the
>
> self *as* the there (*Da*) of being (*Sein*), the place where an understanding of
>
> being erupts into being. (Stapleton 44)

The concept is irreducible to a simple instance of reflexivity yet it is peculiar in its

strange loopiness—"it [is] awfully strange" (Woolf 18)—and as an analogue to a kind

of tangled hierarchy. "It [seems] to me…that the slippability of a feature or some

event (or circumstance) depends on a set of nested contexts in which the event (or

circumstance) is perceived to occur" writes Hofstadter:

> We build up our mental representation of a situation layer by layer. The
>
> lowest layer establishes the deepest aspect of the context—sometimes being

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[14] Kockelmans remarks that the world is also a site for a kind of existential semantics: "In Heidegger's view, world is the total meaningfulness into which a man with his contemporaries finds himself thrown in each epoch of history. World is the concrete totality of meaning as which Being's truth comes-to-pass to him as the '*Da*' of Being in a given epoch, and which has its own destination, common to all living in that epoch. What is called earth here is the totality of all that *of* which the totality of meaning is the meaning" (Kockelmans 153).

so low that it cannot vary at all. For instance, the three-dimensionality of our

world is so ingrained that most of us never would imagine letting it slip

mentally. It is a *constant* constant. Then there are layers which establish

temporarily, though not permanently, fixed aspects of situations, which could

be called *background assumptions*—things which, in the back of your mind,

you know can vary, but which most of the time you unquestioningly accept as

unchanging aspects. These could still be called "constants"…Finally, we

reach the "shakiest" aspect of your mental representation of the situation—the

variables. These are things…stepping out of bounds, which are mentally

"loose" and which you don't mind letting slip away from their real values, for

a short moment. (Hofstadter *GEB* 643-644).

The entity, *I am*, is at once the understanding and the locus where this understanding

of being takes place: *I am* is a kind of variable and certainly mentally loose.

Allowing *I am* to slip away from its real value towards quantifiable and datable

presence establishes the possibility of being in the novel. Dasein can be grasped

immediately yet must "*be mediated* by explanation and interpretation…*Dasein* is in

such a way that it is capable of understanding its own Being; yet it has the tendency

to do so in terms of those beings towards which it comports itself proximally"

(Kockelmans 91). That is, Dasein is not so much a closed system so much as a

tangled system in which we understand ourselves in relation to others, that is, the

They, as an integral part of the world, are the "existential structure of Dasein, because

the world that opens up in daily existence does not derive its meaning from you or

from me…it already has the meanings that They take it to have" (Philipse 26).

"According to Heidegger you and I are not the real actors of our daily existence-in-the-world," Philipse notes. "The one who leads every life, Heidegger claims, is what he calls *das Man* (the They, the One, the Anyone Self, or Everyman)" (Philipse 26). Effectively, absent of the present, absent of the self but in relation to the They, always looping between the past and prospective possibility of the future: being *is* time itself. Building up representation or understanding layer by layer establishes the contentious possibility of confusing within which layer of a tangled hierarchy one is positioned: "Such [is] the complexity of things" (Woolf 111). Heidegger's thought would situate being at the multi-leveled layers that constitute the situation itself: time. Mrs. Ramsay declares that "strife, divisions, difference of opinion, prejudices [are] twisted into the very fibre of being" (12); the qualities here seem accurate enough, definitely given the novel itself, yet the most informative declaration in the passage is that of the temporal twisting of being from and into being; that is, reading takes place at the mental level of variables: diegetic level crossing, stepping out of bounds, mental looseness, slipping away from perception's familiar values, for a short moment, *as* a moment. The temporality of level crossing in *To the Lighthouse* is that which makes bare the strife, divisions, prejudices as unities of Dasein. That is, these qualities that are "twisted into the very fibre of being" are revealed by what Heidegger would call explicit angst: that which "reveals Dasein in its unity" and that which—whether the philosopher, writer, or reader—"detaches [one] from worldly concerns and prejudices, making philosophy possible" (Inwood 17). This fibre of being, Dasein, is temporal; and this temporality twists different levels of experience into a unity thus revealing constitutive processes simply because, "the being of Dasein," writes

Heidegger, "finds its meaning in temporality" (Heidegger *Being and Time* 19). That

is, "persistency itself, trodden down but springing up again" (Woolf 142): no matter

how far the upward or downward shift may feel, Being (*Sein*) always ends up, to

one's surprise, where one begins (*Da*).

Heidegger claims that his project can only be accomplished effectively by

establishing a concept of time that is "distinguished from the common understanding

of [time]" (Heidegger *Being and Time* 17). A commission such as this requires a shift

away from the "interpretation of time which reflects the traditional concept that has

persisted since Aristotle and beyond Bergson," writes Heidegger. "We must thereby

make clear that, and what way, this concept of time and the common understanding of

time in general originate from temporality," he continues: "in this way the common

concept of time receives again its rightful autonomy—contrary to Bergson's thesis

that time understood in the common way is really space" (17). So, Heidegger, like

Woolf in "Time Passes," complicates the distinction between temporal beings—

"natural processes and historical events" (18)—from atemporal beings—"spatial and

numerical relationships" (18). Ultimately, this common mode of thinking claims a

notable division: "the 'timeless' meaning of propositions from the 'temporal' course

of propositional statements" (18). Temporal, in Heidegger's study, gestures towards

being *in* time: "the fact remains that time in the sense of 'being in time' serves as a

criterion for separating the regions of being" (18). He continues, suggesting a

contrast:

> If being is to be conceived in terms of time, and if the various modes and
>
> derivatives of being in their modifications and derivations are in fact to

become intelligible through a consideration of time, then being itself—and not only being that are "in time"—is made visible in its "temporal" ["zeitlich"] character. But then "temporal" can no longer mean only "being in time" ["in der Zeit seined"]." The "atemporal" and the "supratemporal" are also "temporal" with respect to their being; this not only by way of privation when compared to "temporal" beings, which are "in time," but in a *positive* way which, of course, must first be clarified. (18)

So, in Heidegger's paradigm, temporality is an imperative of being: "the fundamental ontological task of the interpretation of being as such thus seals the elaboration of the *temporality of being* [*Temporalität des Sein*]" (18). In short, being is temporal; in the context here, and more urgently for the reader of *To the Lighthouse*, there is a critical turn from the intentionally willed conception of diegetic duality stemming from the logic of *cogito* formulated as "being *in* time" to Heidegger and Woolf's intensely intimate "being *as* time."

The inquiry into being is itself a process: recognition of being "understands its own being as well," writes Stapleton (45). Stapleton illustrates this contentious process in lucid terms:

> While gazing across the garden at the red leaves of the maple, I am at the same time aware that *I am seeing* this. This self-awareness is not something that emerges only when an explicit act of reflection takes place. A pre-thematic self-consciousness is an essential dimension of lived awareness. The crucial question is: what sort of understanding of being accompanies or "determines" this lived self-awareness as the sort of thing that it is?

Heidegger claims that all too often the understanding of being that frees

objects within the world for their being gets reflected back on the being of the

experience itself. The "I" gets taken as a substance, although perhaps of some

special sort (ego, mind, *res cogitans*, soul), and the "seeing" as an activity of

this I-thing. (45)

That the "I" takes on a kind of substance via these processes is the ontological

conundrum with which Heidegger is concerned. Presence is thus assumed as a result

of the conceit of the essence of selfhood as a kind of substance. Dependent upon the

notion of the "I" as substance is the ontological position that this I-substance operates

as a temporal locus: the present. This, in part, establishes, not entirely unlike a level-

crossing strange loop, the *circulus vitiosus* from which there is no escape, the

"etcetera, etcetera, etcetera" (Woolf 63). That is, the understanding of being,

reflected back upon the "I" of experience marks the strange locus of knowledge that

proves paradoxical: the observer's tendency for transcendence, going beyond in order

to get an objective view of both oneself and one's theoretical apparatus, rests upon

the assumption of a temporally stable self in the present moment and as an I-thing

that can, as a kind of substance, critically observe. "Among the guiding ideas in the

Western tradition," Stapleton notes, "is that the movement from seeming to being,

from appearance to reality, requires the assumption of the theoretical attitude. But

this move entails positing that understanding of being which is necessary for theory

itself" (Stapleton 46). In short, the recognition of knowledge of being in this tradition

is, as understanding, a thing. Dasein, in contrast, resists the *circulus vitiosus* that

permits the enlightenment and Romantic self by positing being in society, time, and

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history. Traditionally, one wants, as Lily thinks to herself "to be on a level with ordinary experience, to feel simply that's a chair, that's a table, and yet at the same time, It's a miracle, it's an ecstasy" (Woolf 218). Lily is yet to accept that the ecstasy is not a move of conventional transcendence and objectivity, but an immanent extension into the level of ordinary experience. As a tangled system, Dasein is engaged in complex modes of level-crossing: the reflexivity, strange loopiness, or tangled hierarchy in this case lies in the circular, heterarchical logic that gestures to a mode of being that *is* social, historical, and temporal. It is the latter of these three that is of immediate interest in the level-crossing processes of reading "Time Passes" and positing the reader's disappearance *as* a metamorphosis into time. "Nothing [makes] up for the loss" (65) except the past and the prospect.

So, the reader of the novel *is* temporal; the reader *is* intimate with time. The relationship between time and being, for Heidegger, is one of embedding: time is situated within existence and existence is situated within temporality. For Heidegger, time is not the arena for perceiving change and motion, rather change and motion are the essence of being. His treatment of the embedded relationship between being and time is one that aims to delimit an ontological privileging of the present. Concerned with who we may wish to become, Heidegger's logic of ontological temporality implicates the primacy—and interconnected and interpenetrating, or, looping—of the past and futurity. "The future [for Heidegger]—not simply a set of events that have not yet been realized, but as the need to come to grips with our own existence—generates time and, along with it, generates our interpretations of the world and all that is in it" writes Richard Polt (69-70). It is from this stance that a being's

extension into the tripartite future, past, and present is primary to an ontological

dominance and primacy of objects and entities in the present. In short, Heidegger's

enquiry is motion, change, and becoming.   "Something," Mrs. Ramsay wishes in

vain, "is immune from change, and shines out…in the face of the flowing, the

fleeting, the spectral, like a ruby; so that again to-night she had the feeling she had

had once to-day already, of peace, of rest. Of such moments, she thought, the thing is

made that remains for ever after. This would remain" (Woolf 114). That this

remainder is, unlike an eternal unchanging ruby, in fact the spectral past looping to

the night, looping forward to the day, always fleeting into the possible future.

Heidegger, like Woolf's text, does not privilege the present or eternal as the locus of

knowledge, but rather establishes the embeddedness of being in temporality; or

Dasein as time. Again, to be is to be temporal.

   "Time Passes," as a diegetic locus connecting "The Window" and "The

Lighthouse" and, simultaneously, as a diegetic level-crossing proxy for the reader as

time, may be examined as that which is situated, not in terms of the reader as an

intimate presence, but rather as that which is located in-between and embedded

within the past ("The Window") and the future ("The Lighthouse"). By situating

"Time Passes" as the central locus of this reading, "The Window" plays the role of

the past, the time in which James once sat "on the floor cutting out pictures from the

illustrated catalogue of the Army and Navy Stores, endowed the picture of a

refrigerator as his mother spoke with heavenly bliss" (Woolf 7); where Mr. Ramsay

questions whether "Shakespeare had never existed…would the world have differed

much from what it is to-day?" and, even though, "Ramsay is one of those men who

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do their best work before they are forty" (28)—and now "he was over sixty" (77)—concludes "possibly not" (Woolf 48,49); the temporal realm where Mr. Bankes claims that "the vegetable salts are lost" (55); where it is concluded that they "are not going to the lighthouse to-morrow," a denial James will "remember…all his life" since "children don't forget" (68, 70); where, like the stocking Mrs. Ramsay knits, the concept and prospect of non-existence makes manifest that life is "ever so much too short" (33). In other words, the tripartite structure of being as temporality in Heidegger's early thought offers a point of entry for a study of the analogous structure of *To the Lighthouse* in which "Time Passes," being the most difficult and elusive section of the novel, operates as a proxy for the non-presence of being as time on the level of the reader. Like "the residue of [Lily's] thirty-three years, the deposit of each day's living, mixed with something more secret than she had ever spoken or shown in the course of all those days was an agony" (Woolf 58), this residue of the past informs and is intensely informed, "at the same time" by the "immensely exciting" (58) prospective of future possibility. In order to effectively approach "Time Passes" in this way, however, a consideration of both "The Window" as past and "The Lighthouse" as futurity is in order. "To be human is to be temporal and historical," writes Polt; to be human is also to temporally carry along with it the deposits and secret residues of history. "Conversely," Polt continues, "time and history can be understood only with reference to ourselves" (Polt 70). In framing the reading in this way, an extrapolation of the reader as temporality becomes more meaningful. In other words, in order to examine "Time Passes" in this way, one may wish to examine the novel non-chronologically, beginning first with the past, moving

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to the future/possibility, and then, with this loopy framing technique, the non-presence of the present.

So, the temporality of being, or the reader as time as posited in "Time Passes," relies heavily on both the past and the future. It is here, in the in-between of these two temporal segregates, where the most intimate kind of diegetic level crossing—both readerly and writerly identifications—transpires. The terms "readerly" and "writerly," here, are borrowed from Roland Barthes' usage in his distinction between "readerly" texts from the former in *S/Z* (1970):

> The writerly text is a perpetual present, upon which no *consequent* language (which would inevitably make it past) can be superimposed; the writerly text is *ourselves writing*, before the infinite play of the world (the world as function) is traversed, intersected, stopped, plasticized by some singular system (Ideology, Genus, Criticism) which reduces the plurality of entrances, the opening of networks, the infinity of languages. (*S/Z* 5)

The distinction Barthes makes is, however, too politicized and, consequently, rather too reductionistic to apply effectively to the complexity of the formulation that arises in Woolf's writing. The readerly text, for Barthes, operates according to the deterministic logic of the reader as that which is being constructed by the tradition of language and writing—here, the tradition of the classical and traditional work is the *premium movens*—and accords a perpetual present in which the very possibility of reader's agency is eclipsed. The writerly text, on the other hand, operates according to a different conceptual architecture: the reader actively and freely creates the text, as opposed to being the product of *a priori* language, and thus allows for a direct

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agential engagement. What Woolf's novel achieves, in its unusual temporality and

what we may call Heideggerian temporality of the reader *as* time, conflates these two

terms: *To the Lighthouse* is, in a word, a readerly/writerly text. The reader is the

premium movens yet part of the readerly/writerly *circulus vitiosus*; concurrently,

"Time Passes" is the reader at the most profound kind of tangled diegetic intimacy.

The value of Barthes' reading in this context is simply one of temporal emphasis: a

gesture away from the primacy of the reader existing in the present through the

reader's re-situation in alternate temporal locales. The freedom of writerly texts

Barthes attests to is, for a reading of Woolf's novel, partially illusory: the reader *as*

time ("Time Passes") finds him/herself in a situation where texts and language

precede one's coming into existence ("The Window") and is predicated upon the

musing of future possibility ("The Lighthouse"). The embeddedness of non-being in

being is, through this paradigm, intensified, as Woolf expresses it:

> a ghostly roll of drums remorselessly beat the measure of life, made one think
>
> of the destruction of the island and its engulfment in the sea, and warned her
>
> whose day had slipped past in one quick doing after another that it was all
>
> ephemeral as a rainbow—this sound which had been obscured and concealed
>
> under the other sounds suddenly thundered hollow in her ears and made her
>
> look up with an impulse of terror. (Woolf 20)

Again, there is the melding of diegetic loci, the island and the sea, and the ephemeral

refraction of light expresses a kind of limit to the aestheticised paradigm of being.

Tradition precedes the reader and the future, and potential freedom, of possibility is

made meaningful only through the ineluctable fact of non-existence, the thundering in

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the hollow of the ears and the impulse of terror, the realization that "we perished, each alone" (207), ultimately demonstrated by the sudden and almost distant death of Mrs. Ramsay.

The interplay between past and future is implied in the structure of *To the Lighthouse* in that the two are in collaboration in unintuitive ways. This preparation calls for further examination into how the past and the present operate on the diegetic level of the reader in both the tripartite structure of Woolf's novel and in Heidegger's schema for being as time. For Heidegger, Dasein/being is past:

> in its factical being Dasein always is how and 'what' it already was. Whether explicitly or not it *is* its past. It is its own past not only in such a way that its past, as it were, pushes itself along 'behind' it, and that it possesses what is past as a property that is still objectively present and at times has an effect on it. Dasein 'is' its past in the manner of its being which, roughly expressed, on each occasion 'occurs' out of its future" (*Being and Time* 19).

The logical movement here is loopy in much the same sense as Hofstadter defines it. Indeed, as Bret W. Davis remarks, Heidegger's mode of thought may be best characterized "in terms of a deepening spiral rather than a linear progression, a spiral that always circles around the central question of being and its proper relation with human being" (Davis 10). The contours of this deepening spiral are the past and futurity. The past, here, includes that in which the individual already finds his or herself to be; that is, the individual drags his or her past "along behind" him or herself and is, in this sense, temporally "from the former." Because, as Polt suggests, "Heidegger insists that there is more at stake in time than the observation of passing

events" and that "our very self is ineluctably temporal, because it is in time that we discover or create who we are and where we stand" (Polt 80), "The Window" and "The Lighthouse" serve as temporal demarcations—inherited experience and the haunting of possibility—between which is situated a kind of being as reader, and reader as time, in an aesthetically and experientially profound way.

While a reading of *To the Lighthouse* may suppose moving through the novel's sections in chronological order—the order through which Woolf chooses to express the work—seems a productive way to approach the text, in this case, the imperative shifts from the past to the future setting the present aside as a non-linear, ever-becoming locus. As a result, for this reading, one must swing from a discussion on the past and "The Window" to a brief examination of futurity and "The Lighthouse." Here, the reader enters "rooms where mourners [sit]" (Woolf 47). In this sense, there is an intense temporal reflexive relation between the denial of the voyage to the lighthouse in "The Window" and its eventual, at least apparent, fulfillment in the final section of the novel. "There'll be no landing at the Lighthouse to-morrow," said Charles Tansley, clapping his hands together as he stood at the window with her husband" (11). Yet the future is characterized by possibility—"even if it isn't fine tomorrow…it will be another day" (31)—and such possibility is largely what establishes being, and being as time, as instantaneously urgent. Though the stretching out and looping into what the future entails is not an ontological concretization, it is the logic of "the hoary Lighthouse, distant, austere, in the midst" (17) that establishes the paradigm at hand. Mr. Ramsay's refusal, pragmatically correct yet symbolically oppressive, is embedded with the fulfillment of possibility, "they were going to the

Lighthouse, Mr. Ramsay, Cam, and James" (159). This "extraordinary unreality" as

the fulfillment of the embeddedness of prospect and possibility "was frightening" yet

it is "also exciting" this "going to the Lighthouse" (161). The future in Heidegger's

paradigm of being is intensely involved in the existential status of the individual. It is

in this sense that being is always extending toward the possibilities of what is yet to

be. This progression outwards—*towards* the future—is where the vagueness of

possibility is conceptually structured by agency. In short, being-as-time is also being-

as-possibility, or as Heidegger puts it,

> Dasein *is* always its possibility. It does not "have" that possibility only as a
>
> mere attribute of something objectively present. And because Dasein is
>
> always essentially its possibility, it *can* "choose" itself in its being, it can win
>
> itself, it can lose itself, or it can never and only "apparently" win itself. It can
>
> only have lost itself and it can only have not yet gained itself because it is
>
> essentially possible as authentic, that is, it belongs to itself. (Heidegger *Being*
>
> *and Time* 42)

The conflation of possibility and being ultimately attests to the potency of futurity in

the formulation of being. Being loops back upon itself, yet, it also loops forward into

itself: the task of being is the "interpretation of its being and the possibilities of that

being or…of the meaning of being in general" (Heidegger 85). This looping forward

into the essentially possible, as well as a series of loops from the past and towards

perpetual becoming, intensifies the status of being and a being's recognition of being:

> As a being, Dasein always defines itself in terms of a possibility which it *is*,
>
> and that means at the same time that it somehow understands itself in its

being. That is the formal meaning of the constitution of the existence of

Dasein. But for the *ontological* interpretation of this being, this means that

the problematic of its being is to be developed out of the existentiality of its

existence. However, this cannot mean that Dasein is to be construed in terms

of a concrete possible idea of existence. (Heidegger *Being and Time* 43)

That is, Dasein is not a precise or scientific concept; rather, it spirals around and

about. Also evident is the variations of reflexive iterations that constitute the

multifaceted denotation of being. That Heidegger's paradigm cannot be "construed in

terms of a concrete possible idea of existence" is significant in the sense that it

gestures more towards a conceptual abstract topology rather than a perceptual

concretion. The future is not a space so much as it is temporal. In a large sense, the

lighthouse itself is not a concrete locale so much as it is a metaphor for possibility,

the possibility of eventually catching up with it and making it manifest while, at and

as the same moment, one is in the world: "[Lily] felt curiously divided, as if one part

of her were drawn out there—it was a still day, hazy; the Lighthouse looked this

morning at an immense distance; the other had fixed itself doggedly, solidly, here on

the lawn" (Woolf 171). Because Heidegger's formulation is non-Cartesian, the

movement between consciousness and the world, or between the reader and "Time

Passes," is one of level-crossing diegetic hierarchies and strange loops. Hofstadter

writes that "unlike a mere round trip, a strange loop feels like a paradoxical voyage in

an abstract space" (Hofstadter "What is it Like to Be a Strange Loop" 494) and thus

being and self-recognition is always already "[woven] into itself" (Woolf 141)

situated in a non-concrete possible idea of existence. Being is time and being is in the

world; for Woolf's text, the reader is time and the reader is in (thus animating and animated by) the text. However, futurity of being, and the futurity of reading Woolf's novel involves a stretching out into possibility.

Consider Mr. Ramsay's stretched out arms: not only do they operate as structural metaphors for that which links minds in the first and third part of the novel, and that which acts as corridors linking the sections proper, but Mr. Ramsay's arms become a demonstration for possibility itself under the anxiety of death, the alarm that we too "shall be cut off" (Woolf 84). That is, being *as* text/being *as* time is largely predicated upon the absence of being. Woolf articulates this best: the "sound which had been obscured and concealed under the other sounds suddenly thundered hollow in [Mrs. Ramsay's] ears and made her look up with an impulse of terror. They had ceased talking; that was the explanation" (Woolf 20). Remarkable is the manner through which Woolf "poeticizes" (Roger Fry qtd. in Haule 272) "in an effort to reach a statement about human achievement" (Haule 272) in the world that are stylistically as potent as the affective and lived fears of existential or "intellectual oblivion" (272) that make manifest the anxiety of such achievement. The nature of Woolf's poetic prose is integral to the project at hand. "Poetry is the act of establishing by the word and in the word," Heidegger remarks. "What is established in this manner?" he continues: "The permanent…That which supports and dominates the existent in its entirety must become manifest. Being must be opened out, so that the existent may appear. But this very permanent is the transitory" (Heidegger "Hölderlin and the Essence of Poetry 304). The recognition of absolute negation makes manifest a striking impulse of terror that completes the formula. Poetry makes

possible being in the world and the negation of the word is the negation of the world: a cessation of talking. Roberta Rubenstein calls Woolf's negative diction the "poetics of negation," a series of linguistic cues that establish the substratum of the thematic concerns of *To the Lighthouse*. "What I term the poetics of negation," she writes, "may be understood in semantic psychological, historical and formal senses, not only exemplifying Woolf's close acquaintance with negation but further securing her semantic links to modernist preoccupations" (Rubenstein 36). She continues by suggesting that

> such words as *no, not, never,* and, particularly, *nothing*—often clustered in a
> series of phrases in close proximity—saturate the narrative…through such
> saturation, negative locution delineate and, paradoxically, illuminated the
> novel's darker subtext. They also reinforce a central element of the narrative:
> the "presence of absence," figured as the recognition of someone lost or
> absent, usually through death. (37)

Being gestures backwards in time as much as it does forward, it is a "voyage in an abstract space," that, in this case, manifests the possibility of future non-existence. In other words, the presence of absence is a paradigmatic, though paradoxical, structure that may be reformulated as the embeddedness of absence in presence. Like the absence at which Mr. Ramsay grasps, the reader as time is made manifest more absolutely by the gesture in question: the absence "[stays] in the mind almost like a work of art" (Woolf 175). The reader in/as the novel may reach out towards the possibility of not-being-there and thus, in the surprising loop backwards in the cycling around becomes as imminent to him or herself as the imminence of the end of

being. "Death is a possibility of being that Dasein always has to take upon itself,"
writes Heidegger. "With death," he continues, "Dasein stands before itself in its
ownmost potentiality-of-being. In this possibility, Dasein is concerned about its
being-in-the-world absolutely [schlechthin]. Its death is the possibility of no-longer-
being-able-to-be-there. When Dasein is imminent to itself as this possibility, it is
completely thrown back upon its ownmost potentiality-of-being" (Heidegger *Being
and Time* 241). In short, "Death is the possibility of the absolute impossibility of
Dasein" (241); and, "what is striking," Rubenstein notes, "is how central *nothing* is to
the novel" (Rubenstein 39). Being is revealed before itself through its absolute
concealment: the possibility of non-being. Likewise, the reader as time in "Time
Passes" is made manifest to itself by these looping possibilities. Mrs. Ramsay's
absence is at its most intimate—variously more intimate than the stream of
consciousness narrative in "The Window"—when her presence ceases to be: "here
you can neither touch nor destroy. Upon which, wearily, ghostily as if they had
feather-light fingers and the light persistency of feathers, they would look, once, on
the shut eyes and the loosely clasping fingers, and fold their garments wearily and
disappear" (Woolf 138). This is made possible through the strange loopiness of being
as time and reader as time: the strange loop "is a kind of feedback loop in which, in a
series of stages that constitute the cycling-around, there is a *shift in levels* that feels
like an upward movement in a hierarchy, and yet, when the cycle closes, it turns out
that one winds up where one had started, in violation of the seeming hierarchy"
(Hofstadter 494). Such is Woolf's golden mesh, the parcel of texture.

This paradoxical movement amidst the golden mesh—or the "eternal golden braid" as Hofstadter calls it—occurs in two ways in *To the Lighthouse*: first from the diegetic level of the reader into the diegetic level of the text and, second, from the temporal position of the reader as time into the reader, like Mrs. Ramsay, as a simulation of non-existence. In this way, the intimate identification with both Mr. Ramsay and Mrs. Ramsay is intensified. Not only is the reader as time stretching out into future possibility only to grasp, in this case, a simulation of nothingness, but is also stretching into the text and experiencing the negation immanently yet simultaneously cycling back to the extra-diegetic level in violation of the hierarchy to the apparent source of knowledge. In both cases, however, being as time in "Time Passes" is made more severe by stretching out into emptiness: "a curious physical sensation, as if [one] were urged forward and at the same time must hold [oneself] back" (Woolf 172). The sensation is affective, a physical sensation, of being in multiple narrative loci in a topos that is at once abstract and concrete. The tangling of distinctions between temporal coordinates and orientational physicality is not so much confusing as it is lived and experienced in a fluid kind of way. "We must wait for the future to show" (137), as Mr. Bankes notes; "It's almost too dark to see," Andrew adds; while Prue's recognition is one more conclusive, that which performs the final movement away from stream of consciousness towards the establishment of differing conceptual locals blurring into on: time as the narrator and, in turn, the reader as time; that is, "one can hardly tell which is the sea and which is the land" (137) and, ultimately, "night and day, month and year ran shapelessly together" (147). This gradual tangling of sea and land, of night and day, month and year, attests to the

gradual descent/ascent into the text and, ultimately, posits the reader as time itself.

Though Mr. Bankes suggests that we must wait for the future to show—more

specifically, we must distinguish this waiting from Prue's tangling—our waiting is, in

fact, a looping into and back from possibility. Such looping is one into a most

intimate association with the text itself: the reader's movement through the golden

mesh, into and as the temporal logistics animating the novel. Indeed, the movement

feels as if it "is unfathomably deep" (69).

This formulation ultimately continues Heidegger's gesture away from Cartesian

paradigm—a radical move, for Heidegger, away from the phenomenological project

of his teacher, Husserl—towards a more temporal and historically oriented concept of

being. At the same time, the same shift takes place on the level of the reader of

Woolf's novel: from the transcendent subject on the extra-diegetic reader to the intra-

diegetic level of reader as time. This shift Heidegger calls thrownness or the

thrownness of being. "The expression thrownness is meant to suggest the *facticity of

its being delivered over*," writes Heidegger (Heidegger *Being and Time* 131-132).

This characteristic of the past of one's being is one that throws "this being into its

there; it is thrown in such a way that it is the there as being-in-the-world" (131). Not

unlike Hintikka's observation that in Woolf's work the nature of the social and the

metaphysical are inextricably intermingled, Harold Fromm remarks that

> Heidegger is little concerned with nature, society, politics, and other people,
>
> the mass of whom he characterizes as the "They," the *mobile vulgus* (not his
>
> term) manipulated by popular culture, politics, and orthodox opinions.
>
> "Thrown" into the world at birth, each individual experiences "anxiety" about

meaning and death, which drives him to connect with the "They" for solace

while ignoring those "moments of being" (familiar as well from Nietzsche,

Proust, and Virginia Woolf) that reveal the essence of what it feels like truly

to exist, to *be* authentically in the world. "Everyone is the other, and no one is

himself," writes Heidegger. (Fromm 684)

For the reader of *To the Lighthouse*, the gesture of thrownness of being, urgently

asserts itself most explicitly in "Time Passes;" in Heidegger's sense of the term, the

individual finds him or herself, to their surprise, "thrown" into a situation/life/world

that they did not actively create, will, or even necessarily desire: being as temporality.

The notion of thrownness is particularly apt regarding the consideration of "Time

Passes" in question; Rubenstein remarks that Woolf thought of this section of the

novel as "the most difficult abstract piece of writing—I have to give an empty house,

no people's characters, the passage of time, all eyeless & featureless with nothing to

cling to" (*The Diary of Virginia Woolf* 76). The section is indeed an abstract piece of

writing as well as an abstract act of level crossing thus conflating the reader with

temporality itself; certainly, the reader is thrown into a diegetic locale with "nothing

to cling to." Through this strange positioning, the reader simultaneously animates not

only negativity and absence but physical objects in "Time Passes" and, furthermore,

the lives of characters, their deaths, the dramatization of class and social inequality,

and, ultimately, the failures and achievements of all that is involved in the section.

The shift from "The Window" to "Time Passes" marks a similar startling shift in

realization for the reader: a process from that of the dualistic—upon Cartesian

presumptions—diegetic separation of novel and reader to the reader being delivered

over to the text itself, animating the text, and, yet, being animated by the language of the text itself.

Process itself is essential to Heidegger's reform of the manner in which we think of being and knowledge. That is, being is temporal: "The meaning of being [Sein] of that being [Seienden] we call Dasein will prove to be *temporality* [*Zeitlichkeit*]. In order to demonstrate this we must repeat our interpretation of those structures of Dasein that shall have been indicated in a preliminary way—this time as modes of temporality," he writes:

> While it is true that with this interpretation of Dasein as temporality the answer to the guiding question about the meaning of being in general is not already given, the soil from which we may reap it will nevertheless be prepared…Dasein *is* in such a way that, by being [*seined*], it understands something like being…we must show that *time* is that from which Dasein tacitly understands and interprets something like being at all. Time must be brought to light and genuinely grasped as the horizon of every understanding and interpretation of being. (Heidegger *Being and Time* 17)

Thus time, an essential quality of ontology, here, is conflated with epistemology. To *be* is perpetually temporal; to know resists the inside-outside conceptualization of time. This is the logic underlying Lily's vision and that which acts as the logical substratum of the reader's descent into the text. Not only does the reader *as* time now animate "the nights [that] are full of wind and destruction; the trees [that] plunge and bend and their leaves fly helter skelter until the lawn is plastered with them and they lie packed in gutters and choke rain pipes and scatter damp paths" but also the reader

is that animation, the reader *is* "the sea [that] tosses itself and breaks itself" (Woolf 140). That the temporal reader is the prime animator of the text, he/she carries along with him a strange responsibility, burden, and complicity in the deaths of Prue who "died that summer in some illness connected with childbirth, which was indeed a tragedy" (Woolf 144) and Andrew who, along with twenty or thirty young men, "was blown up in France…whose death, mercifully, was instantaneous" (145). Concurrently, the reader is also the victim, part of a vicious cycle that both moves and is moved by the strange loopiness of time, being, and the heterarchy of textual fluency. As a culprit, we are also the mourner; without animating the text, we are un-animated, yet the processes of the world continues to run its course: a play upon *res extensa*, "subject and object and the nature of reality…think of a kitchen table then…when you're not there" (28). "There [is] a force working" (Woolf 151) in both the text and the reader, "something not highly conscious; something that leered, something that lurched; something not inspired to go about its work with dignified ritual or solemn chanting" (Woolf 151). That hardly conscious force is both the world and temporality, the implicit quality that grants the coalescence of diegetic level crossing: "In the dark there is emphatically 'nothing' to see, although the world is *still* 'there' *more obtrusively*" (Heidegger 183). As such, the reader limits the interstice between the inner- and outer-narrative, moving into the text as the temporal quality that animates the "ominous sounds like the measured blows of hammers dulled on felt, which, with their repeated shocks still further loosened the shawl and cracked the tea-cups" (Woolf 145). With this level crossing, the extradiegetic remains somewhere else, under the assault of disappearance, the reader becomes the

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text, both constituted by waves of multi-directional change. The distinction between reader and text amalgamates into time and thus Cartesian metaphysical biases fall silent, "this silence this indifference, this integrity, the thud of something falling" (Woolf 145). With this movement, time is brought to light as the reader/text distinction soundlessly reveals that which underlies both knowledge and the interpretation of being. Thus, process as temporality is as essential to ontology as it is to epistemology. One comes to know the text as oneself; simultaneously, one knows being because "it changed, it shaped itself differently; it had become… already the past" (Woolf 121). And so, disappearance discloses process more obtrusively.

The title "Time Passes" proves fascinating in and of itself due to its polysemy; and its polysemy, like the temporal process it expresses, affirms itself most obtrusively. Expressing a kind of movement of time beyond human perception, "Time Passes" is the "interlude" that establishes the sense of a continuum not unlike the brush techniques of impressionist painters, as Banfield remarks. What is of specific interest here, however, is how time itself "passes" from one diegetic level to another thus merging with and making manifest the ontological quality of the reader as temporality. That is, for Heidegger, lexical concepts perform the task of being *reaching out* towards itself, the linguistic quality of "Time Passes"—both its title and content since the two are metonymical for one another—is worth a moment of consideration. Cognitive linguists Vyvyan Evans and Melanie Green suggest that time is always mediated as a lexical concept that varies from language to language. In English, the lexical concept is encoded through the schemas of four different contexts: duration, moment, event, and instance (Evans and Green 79). Conceptually,

duration has two main variants. The first is that of protracted duration, in which "time drags" (79-80). "Protracted duration," Evans and Green suggest, "is caused by a heightened awareness of a particular stimulus array, either because the interval experience is 'empty'…or because the interval is very 'full' due to a great deal being experienced in a short space of time" (80). Protracted duration is certainly the temporal quality of Woolf's stream of consciousness narrative in "The Window" and "The Lighthouse." Here we have a kind of anti-plot which is remarkably full of experience; hours of reading on the extra-diegetic level of the reader constitute seconds in the temporal paradigm of the novel. The second variant of duration is that which is more appropriate for "Time Passes": temporal compression. Here "time has sped/whizzed by" (80), we ask where the time has "gone," or clichés like "Time flies when you're having fun" (80). Temporal compression is when "we experience time proceeding more quickly than usual, and is most often associated with our experience of routine behaviours which we carry out effortlessly without much attention to the task at hand" (80). Yet, temporal compression is also remarkable for its ability to situate being itself as temporal. Like the knit stocking with which Mrs. Ramsay busies herself, temporal compression makes urgently manifest that life is "too short…ever so much too short" (Woolf 33). Time passes at variable durations, not objectively of course, but as determined by lexical concepts that are, in turn, determined by lived experience.

The lexical concept of *moment* constitutes the second mode of encoding time through language as outlined by Evans and Green. This constitutes our "ability to assess time in terms of discrete moments" (80). Not unlike the brushstrokes of the

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impressionists that establish a kind of logical continuum, moment establishes when

"the time for a decision has come" (80) or that "now is the time to address irreversible

environmental decay" (80). In short, time is conceptualized "not in terms of an

interval, whose duration can be assessed, but instead as a discrete point" (80). Third,

is the lexical concept of event. Though this term is intensely charged in critical and

literary theory, Evans and Green simply mean that which signifies an "occurrence of

some kind" (80). Summarizing Evans' argument in *The Structure of Time:*

Language, Meaning and Temporal Cognition (2004), events "derive, at the perceptual

level, from temporal processing, which binds particular occurrences into a temporally

framed unity: a 'window' or 'time slot'" (80-81). Evans and Greene use the

following examples: "with the first contraction, the young woman knew her time had

come" (81) and "the man had every caution given him not a minute before to be

careful with the gun, but his time was come as his poor shipmates say and with that

they console themselves" (81). Respectively, the events outlined here are birth and

death. Woolf's manipulation of the "window" of time is more nuanced. Consider the

following as a temporal metaphor of event: "The drawing-room door was open; the

hall door was open; it sounded as if the bedroom doors were open; and certainly the

window on the landing was open, for that she had opened herself. That windows

should be open, and doors shut" (Woolf 31-32). Mrs. Ramsay is intent to order the

chaotics of temporality. A door of time is certainly a metaphor for event just as a

window may be; yet, the window of time—as the first section of the book is titled—is

that which is opened. That Mrs. Ramsay wishes windows to be open and doors shut

expresses a conceptual desire for language to conceal the valueless and asemic quality

of pure temporality as much as it expresses her preference to govern how time will "pass" for her, her family, and those lodging together. That windows should be open and doors shut signifies the desire inherent in language use; the illusory domination of lexical force—that of windows rather than doors—for the control of temporal experience is as profoundly absurd as it is anxious; yet, it is also deeply compassionate: "only the Lighthouse beam entered the rooms for a moment, sent its sudden stare over bed and wall in the darkness of winter, looked with equanimity at the thistle and the swallow, the rat and the straw. Nothing now withstood them; nothing said no to them" (Woolf 150). Roberta Rubenstein notes that in May 1927, Woolf received a letter from Roger Fry; in the letter, Fry congratulates Woolf on the novel, and while expressing his admiration for the work, claims that he did not understand it: "arriving at the Lighthouse has a symbolic meaning which escapes me" (Woolf *The Letters of Virginia Woolf Vol. 3* 385n2). Woolf's reply: "I meant *nothing* by The Lighthouse. One has to have a central line down the middle of the book to hold the design together. I saw that all sorts of feelings would accrue to this, but I refused to think them out, and trusted that people would make it the deposit for their own emotions" (385; emphasis Woolf's). Whether doors or windows as temporal lexical concepts, temporality as possibility—the lighthouse as metaphor and textual level into which the reader may become consciously and affectively deposited—is as ambient and absolute as it is semantically abysmal; here, nothing withstands and nothing affirms, nor can anything negate: temporality and being with the utmost equanimity.

Next, *instance* as a lexical concept is that which "underlies the fact that temporal events can be enumerated, which entails that distinct events can be seen as instances or examples of the 'same' event" (Evans and Green 81). This "concept underlies the fact that temporal events can be enumerated, which entails that distinct events can be seen as instances or examples of the 'same' event" (81). They provide the following example: "with that 100m race the sprinter had improved for the fourth time in the same season" (81). In this case, time does not signify four distinct moments, they argue, "but to a fourth instance of the 'improvement' event" (81). Ultimately, they suggest that such an example of instance "provides linguistic evidence the separate temporal events can be related to one another and 'counted' as distinct instances of a single event type" (81). Instance, however, is the lexical concept underlying the uncanny and that of haunting; that is, the simultaneous event repeating itself spectrally in different pulsations of time yet, somehow, indicative of a single event type:

> Oh Mrs. Ramsay! [Lily] called out silently, to that essence which sat by the boat, that abstract one made of her, that woman in grey, as if to abuse her for having gone, and then having gone, come back again. It had seemed so safe, thinking of her. Ghost, air, nothingness, a thing you could play with easily and safely at any time of the day or night, she had been that, and then suddenly she put her hand out and wrung the heart thus. (Woolf 194)

Instance, in Evans and Green's sense, makes the uncanny lexically simplistic in the sense that a kind distressing emotional affectivity proves that the improbable is linguistically palatable. "Really [Lily] was angry with Mrs. Ramsay. With the brush

slightly trembling in her fingers she looked at the hedge, the step, the wall. It was all

Mrs. Ramsay's doing. She was dead. Here was Lily, at forty-four." (Woolf 163).

And while Mrs. Ramsay, finishing her recitation of a story to James, claims "'and

that's the end'…the interest of the story died away in them" (Woolf 68), we find, as

does Lily, that "something else take its place; something wondering, pale, like the

reflection of a light, which at once [makes us] gaze and marvel" (68). The ubiquity of

the ghostly air and nothingness that signifies Mrs. Ramsay after her death attests to

the instance; the conflation of a single event type that assures the primacy and

familiarity of the past and the future over that of strangeness, the present itself.

The manner in which "time passes" in the novel is ultimately that which engages

with these four lexical concepts in a more profoundly intimate way. In this section,

as opposed to "The Window" and "The Lighthouse," temporality is compressed.

That this compression is expressed as a kind of discrete series of narrowing points

demonstrates that our temporal conceptions both challenge and confirm our temporal

perceptions. Furthermore, this uncanny instance of compression suggests that

multiple perceptions of a temporal event can be conflated into a single event type.

Duration, moment, event, and instance all gesture to the manner in which language

makes experience itself ordinary. Heidegger suggests that

Language[15] is not only the danger of dangers, but necessarily conceals in itself

a continual danger for itself. Language has the task of making manifest in its

work the existent, and of preserving it as much. In it, what is purest and what

is most concealed, and likewise what is complex and ordinary, can be

expressed in words. Even the essential word, if it is to be understood and so

become a possession in common, must make itself ordinary. (Heidegger

"Hölderlin and the Essence of Poetry" 298-299)

In short, language—and thus lexical concepts—perform the task of preserving the

existent insomuch as it conceals itself from within its very schematic logic. Lexical

concepts, in their fundamental treachery, express temporality as something both

hidden and revealed, that which is strange and common. "Language is not a mere

tool" Heidegger continues,

on the contrary, it is only language that affords the very possibility of standing

in the openness of the existent. Only where there is language, is there world,

i.e. the perpetually altering circuit of decision and production, of action and

responsibility, but also of commotion and arbitrariness, of decay and

confusion. (299-300)

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[15] Fóti remarks upon Heidegger's complex views on the reflexive quality between being and language: "Heidegger insists that language is no human doing, nor the representation or expression of thought and feeling, but that man himself appears, within the 'speaking of language'…, as a *Versprechen*, which is to say, as both a promise or commitment and a mis-speaking. This ambiguity is the very ambiguity of *poiēsis* or bringing forth into un-concealment…instead of understanding technicity in its own terms (as a means, or as neutral power), one will then understand it in its ambiguity which bespeaks the ambiguous nature of un-concealment" (Fóti 23). Inwood, furthermore, remarks that, for Heidegger, "Language is not a free-floating thing in which we all share. It seems to float freely, since it belongs to no particular Dasein, it belongs initially to the They. But we do not have to speak only as They speak. One can, by a mastery of words or by a fresh understanding of one's subject-matter, appropriate language in an original way" (Inwood 114). The appropriation of language in a novel way makes a language live, placing it in conjunction with the change and metamorphosis of everyday life and historicity; we may safely say that Woolf's language is living in more than one sense. In later Heidegger, Inwood remarks quite lucidly that "we do not so much have a language, as a language has us" (115).

If time is a lexical concept, it is the bridge that connects diegetic levels between text and the being of an individual. "The being of men is founded in language," he writes (301) and language is experienced as both strange and ordinary. Claiming that this is only actualized in conversation, Heidegger means that the being of humans is founded in language when people are engaged in "the act of speaking with others about something" (301). Yet, a similar case may be true if the conversation at hand is with language itself: "The appearance of the world [is] not merely a consequence of the actualisation of language, it is contemporaneous with it. And this to the extent that it is…in the transmutation of the world into word, that the real conversation, which we ourselves are, consists" (303). Speaking with others is a form of intimacy; that is, that which establishes closeness between two separate ontological loci or beings. For Heidegger,

> we are a conversation, that always means at the same time: we are a *single* conversation. But the unity of a conversation consists in the fact that in the essential word there is always manifest that one and the same thing on which we agree, and on the basis of which we are united and so are essentially ourselves. Conversation and its unity support our existence. (301)

In the end, however, since "language really became actual as conversation…a world has appeared" (302). For Woolf's novel, exemplified in "Time Passes," this intimacy is not one of conversation between individuals so much as it is an intimate coming together of the diegetic reader and the novel itself as a means of making manifest the reader as the narrator; since the narrator of "Time Passes" *is* temporality, this reveals the reader *as* time, a process that is experienced as profoundly uncanny.

So, the concurrent upward and downward diegetic shifts from stream of consciousness to the abstraction of time as narrator—from "The Window" to "Time Passes"—establishes an idiosyncratic kind of reflexivity. Here, there is an illusory transfer from what is perceived as narratively interior to a narrative space that corresponds with what is exterior. Mrs. Ramsay ponders this strange phenomenon in direct relation to ontology and temporality: "how life, from being made up of little separate incidents which one lived one by one," she considers, "became curled and whole like a wave which bore one up with it and threw one down with it, there, with a dash on the beach" (Woolf 53). The separate incidents here are not so much the points or pulsations of impressionism as they are illusory separations of the temporality of seemingly distinct diegetic levels. From inside the mind of Mrs. Ramsay towards the curling ocean itself—an apt metaphor for the process at hand—the motion here is deceptively upward and downward, interior and exterior; it is, in a word, strange. This narrative peculiarity in *To the Lighthouse* is stratified in such a way as to construct a kind of hierarchy, not of value, but of psycho-ecological patterning. In short, the reader and the text "stay there like a smoke, like a fume rising upwards, holding them safe together" (Woolf 114). Suzanne Raitt, in *May Sinclair: A Modern Victorian* (2000), remarks on the pre-literary usage of the term "stream of consciousness" in the work of psychologist William McDougall that offers a possible *topos* for thinking about Woolf's multi-tiered diegesis. McDougall muses upon consciousness "as a kind of perpetual flowing together of minds, a network of streams constantly joining and separating from one another" (Raitt 220). The use of variations upon the stream of consciousness narrative technique is, of course, famous

amongst Modernist writers; the matter here rests in the conceptual and spatial

formations that bloom from McDougall's speculations. The network of streams

presumably extends in near infinite configurations within certain spatial limits: that of

consciousness. These networks are remarkable metaphors for artists working in the

early twentieth century furiously grappling with the rapid shifts in everything from

physics to psychoanalysis, from history and writing, mathematics and logic, etc.

"Woolf, unlike Jane Austen," for example, write David Daiches, "was writing in a

world in which there was no consensus of opinion concerning what 'reality' was, and,

unlike some of her contemporaries, she was very much aware of that lack of

agreement" (Daiches 38-39), she is aware of the difficulty of the possibility of being a

single conversation. Where there is no consciousness, there are no more networks of

conscious streams; where there are networks, there is dissonance, confusion,

alienation but also intimacy, a profound sense of both closeness and loss. What

proves fascinating about "Time Passes" is that the section not only operates as a

temporally compressed corridor connecting "The Window" and "The Lighthouse;" in

addition, "Time Passes" founds a self-similar configuration to the veins or filaments

making a network of streams—or any network, for that matter—conceivable. That is,

the three part novel as a whole is itself emblematic of McDougall's network: from

mind ("The Window") to in-between minds—or level crossing between text and

reader—("Time Passes") to mind ("The Lighthouse"). Yet, the discussion here is not

so much concerned with an examination of the interconnectedness of minds or of the

aesthetics of stream of consciousness. Rather, the tripartite structure of *To the*

Lighthouse offers an architecture for considering the reader's descent into the diegetic

level of the text—and the text's ascent into the reader—through the consideration of Heidegger's conceptualization of the temporality of being.

The logic here may suggest that "Time Passes" is that which departs from mind and thus limits the psychological intimacy of the passage since the narrative throws the reader from the experiences within to a reality without. Yet, the thoughts of Mrs. Ramsay in "The Window" prove less affectively profound, and less emotionally proximate, than the account of her death—always and perpetually receding from the present—in the novel's most startling sentence: "[Mr. Ramsay, stumbling along a passage one dark morning, stretched his arms out, by Mrs. Ramsay having died rather suddenly the night before, his arms, though stretched out, remained empty]" (Woolf 140). Janine Utell suggests that Mrs. Ramsay's "death occurs early in the second part of the novel, "Time Passes," itself devoted to the symbolic exploration of the insignificance of the individual when situated within the inexorable cosmic forces of time and nature" (Utell 4). This presumed insignificance of the individual is rendered inside out when we consider the ontological position of the reader, an individual, as the animating force moving the diegetically constituted cosmic forces. Mr. Ramsay's arms, like the filaments that connect both the minds and the sections of Woolf's triptych are less corridors than couloirs: an anxious series of pathways as deficiencies that make manifest the contingency of the reader as the direct foundation upon which the reader simultaneously attempts to cling. The diegetic status of "Time Passes" as in-between is thus analogous to the ontologic and topological status of the reader-as-stretched-out-arms. The psychological interiorization of "The Window" and "The Lighthouse" are intimate in a limited sense: the reader is both the prime mover of the

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diegesis yet accepts the conceit as observer thus establishing a kind of pseudo-intimacy. With "Time Passes," the reader, however, accompanies solely himself as the agent for both diegetic movement and change while this narrative flowing and transformation operates as the medium that affects the reader. The distinction is one of diegetic relativity. That is, the novel posits the reader in a position where they claim "but this is what I see; this is what I see" (Woolf 24) and, simultaneously, sing "damn your eyes, damn your eyes" (82). Reflect upon Lily's mourning for Mrs. Ramsay as an example of temporal and ontological proximity on the diegetic level of the text itself: "Oh the dead! She murmured, one pitied them, one brushed them aside, one had even a little contempt for them. They are at our mercy. Mrs. Ramsay has faded and gone, she thought. We can over-ride her wishes, improve away her limited, old fashioned ideas. She recedes further and further from us" (190). Counter intuitively, however, "Time Passes," proves the most intimate section of *To the Lighthouse*; the reader, by being revealed as the narrative mover and changer—as time—is thus situated both without the characters and within them. While Mr Ramsay's arms remain empty and Mrs. Ramsay, along with her ideas and beliefs, seems to perpetually recede from those who mourn her on the textual level of narrative, to the reader—ascended/descended into multiple levels of diegesis—the spectral Mrs. Ramsay remains hauntingly affective regardless of her existence or non-existence. For Lily, "the faint thought she was thinking of Mrs. Ramsay seemed in consonance with this quiet house; this smoke; this fine early morning air" (Woolf 176); yet, the reader is occupying different temporal and spatial locations, the reader

is the smoke "like a fume rising upwards" holding diegetic levels and temporal loops safe together.

That is, Woolf's *To the Lighthouse*, and specifically "Time Passes," is the locus for fascinating and idiosyncratic modes of reflexivity. The intimacy achieved in "Time Passes" is the result of this reflexivity: the reader is at once the mover and changer of language and yet language is the self-implicating category and precondition of cognitive discourse that allows this process to proceed. Like Mrs. Ramsay's observation that little Prue is "just beginning, just moving, just descending" (Woolf 118-119) into adulthood, the reader descends—the use of the relative descent, rather than ascent, attests to the strange loopiness of this temporality—into the text, the text rising up into the reader—we are "filled…with words" (44)—establishing a kind of homeostatic and looping heterarchy of ontological cause and effect: "the words…sounded as if they were floating like flowers on water out there, cut off from them all, as if no one had said them, but they had come into existence of themselves" (120). The nature of movement and change in this kind of language occurs on multiple levels, from the morphological to the syntactical to the semantic yet these levels presuppose the reader as *primum movens*. "Proof must not already presuppose what its task is to found," writes Heidegger,

> [but] if interpretation always already has to operate within what is understood and nurtures itself from this, how should it then produce...results without going in a circle, especially when the presupposed understanding still operates in the common knowledge of human being and world? But according to the

most elementary rules of logic, the circle is a *circulus vitiosus*. (Heidegger

Being and Time 147-148)

Heidegger's point is well taken, and an effective assessment of the paradox of the

vicious circle of self-reflexivity. This presupposition also attests to Prue's descent

into the future or the reader's descent into the novel. Yet, this self-reflexive reduction

proves counter intuitively productive: an awareness of a proof—a unique and isolated

diegetic topos—necessitates the presupposition of the very concept of that proof. The

means of recognizing this logic is also the effect of the logic; permeating and

embedding one diegetic topology is the negation of that very topos in the conventions

of literary narrative, and Woolf achieves this successfully in "Time Passes." By

placing the reader in the same ontological position as Mr. Ramsay's outstretched

arms, the reader, as if not an *a priori* utterance, is manifest as, and intensely situated

within, time; one is floating like flowers on water, out there, as if coming into, and

descending into, the temporal existence of oneself.

Again, *To the Lighthouse* is a novel of mourning, of elusive beginnings and

evasive ends; consequently, the reader, being both prime mover and one obliterated

into a vicious cycle is also posited in a topos of phantom origins and spectral closure.

Reflexivity, whether literary or otherwise, does ultimately "begin at home," suggests

Steven J. Bartlett, "in individual mental space: it is something best understood

informally by its experience, rather than by stipulated or hypothetical definition"

(Bartlett 7). Appropriately, Woolf's project establishes "Time Passes" at home in

multiple ways: biographical, at the level of character, and at the extra-diegetic level of

the "splendid mind" (Woolf 39) of the extra-diegetic. "If this is so," writes

Heidegger,

> then the business of historical interpretation is thus banned *a priori* from the
>
> realm of rigorous knowledge. If the fact of the circle in understanding is not
>
> eliminated, historiography must be content with less rigorous possibilities of
>
> knowledge…But even according to the opinion of historiographers
>
> themselves, it would be more ideal if the circle could be avoided and if there
>
> were the hope of finally creating a historiography which is as independent of
>
> the standpoint of the observer as the knowledge of nature is supposed to be.
>
> (*Being and Time* 148)

This remove of reflexivity from rigorous knowledge, however, is fundamentally a

feature of literature and the creative arts in general. Deleuze and Guattari suggest that

Heidegger remains a historicist to the degree that he "[posits] history as a form of

interiority in which the concept necessarily develops or unveils its destiny. The

necessity rests on the abstraction of the historical element rendered circular. The

unforeseeable creation of concepts is thus poorly understood" (Deleuze and Guattari

95). Similarly, Logician Paul Lorenzen suggests that "it does not make sense to ask

for an 'explanation,' or to ask for a 'reason'…If you ask such questions…you have

already accepted at least the use of elementary sentences" (Lorenzen qtd. in Bartlett

6). Yet, as Bartlett suggests in his comment on reflexivity and psychotherapy, "it

appears that it is just this reflexive capacity to initiate self-change which characterizes

much of creative thought" (Bartlett 6). In short, there is no historiography, or any

writing, that can be extracted from the logic—or conceptual topos—of an observer.

Nature, or "flesh turned to atoms which drove before the wind, of stars flashing in their hearts, of cliff, sea, cloud, and sky brought purposely together to assemble outwardly the scattered parts of the vision within" (Woolf 144) are "imaginations of the strangest kind" (144) and are not simply mediated by the observer but are reflexively embedded in multiple layers of diegesis. Or, "there is not a single thing on earth that oblivion does not erase or memory change," Borges remarks, "no one knows into what images he himself will be transmuted by the future" (Borges "Mutations" 41).

That we are filled with words and words are full of imaginations, posits a difficult relation to the sound truth of such an analytical position as this. "What [Mr. Ramsay the logician] said was true [to James]. It was always true. He was incapable of untruth" (Woolf 8), though Mrs. Ramsay is more acute to note that the incapability of truth is "absurd" and "impossible" (24) since, at best, "one could not say what one meant;" more loopy, however, is that while this is accurate, one *is* constituted by this mismatching signification. Later, Mrs. Ramsay, "starting from her musing" (35) realizes the reality of such logical reversals: "she gave meaning to words which she had held meaningless in her mind for a long stretch of time" (35). From the diegetic level of the reader, it is this capacity to initiate transformation that corresponds to the in-between status of "Time Passes" and proves productive on both the level of narrative and reader. Situated in the non-space of knotted reflexivity and posited by the novel as a proxy for time, the reader is, forced into a position of thinking towards the question of becoming the text itself and, at the same time, recognizing how the text becomes the reader. All this posits the reader as diegetic movement and change

and therefore as a diegetic configuration of time itself. The reader is the source of the narrative motion and diegetic change but is never an end in itself. "They must find a way out of it all," we might say about the viscous circle, "there might be some simple way, some less laborious way" (Woolf 10). How far, then, is a book influenced by its reader's life? Perhaps there is a way out of it all, but we always start from our own musings; resultantly, everyday lived experience is all the more startling.

Chapter Three

Babelian Act of Fecundity: Ineluctable Modalities

and Joyce's Sentimental Information

_____

This water, this movement keep people's minds open…high tide
bring the space, the temptation, the consolation of possibility.
-Robbe-Grillet

River running free you know how I feel…
Stars when you shine you know how I feel…
-Anthony Newley and Leslie Bricusse

Robert Scholes, in his 2003 introduction to Clive Hart's essay "James Joyce's

Sentimentality" (1967), suggests that the "modernist critics, from I. A. Richards

through all the New Critics, had an almost pathological fear of sentimentality" (Hart

26). Scholes notes that "there are things about modernism that are not visible clearly

without a proper appreciation of the sentimental" and it is first with Hart's essay that

meaningful discussion of Joyce's sentimentalism may be properly discussed. Hart

claims that "Joycean modes of sentimentality require closer and more careful scrutiny

than they have hitherto received" (26). Noting that "[Joyce] was out of touch with the

work of his contemporaries and wrote, despite his surface brilliance, in an

unsophisticated, even naïve manner," Hart remarks that when "Joyce is over-

emotional toward his subject, as is the case of parts of 'Anna Livia,' he reveals some

of the sentimentality of the proletarian writer who gives undue emphasis to the

cultivation of 'feeling' for his subject" (Hart 27). Sentimentalism itself is notable for

its ability to transfer emotion to the neutral and to metamorphose the objective topos

of interpretation into a looping kind of emotionally driven constructivism. Indeed,

the psycho-ecological relationship between language and text is one that is not simply

felt in the body but is also experienced emotionally. Is it not appropriate that the

great artificer understands the potentiality of the creative and constructive dimensions

of feeling? Peter Mahon suggests that *Finnegans Wake* is not a mimetic text; that is,

the work does not aim to imitate reality as a thing or as an idea. Instead, he writes

that in place of mimetic processes "*Finnegans Wake* proposes the problematic of the

'immargination' (4.19)—a sort of unlimited imagination—which tries to picture the

ever-receding figure of Finnegan, who is lost in a past that has never been present or a

future that never arrives" (Mahon 3). What is of concern here is the idea of an

unlimited imagination as a form of psycho-ecology that functions as an alternative to

mimesis. Rather than representation, the informational mode of *Finnegans Wake* is

reconstructive and poetic. It offers possibilities and does so through an intensely

intimate process. In order to examine this, in this chapter we turn to the "Nuvoletta"

episode (*FW* 157.8-159.18) to analyze the strange logic of chaos and information

theory and Linda Hutcheon's theory of cross-media adaptation as a means of

demonstrating how complexity lends itself to order and how texts that appear

limitless are, in fact, not expansive but inwardly infinite. Finally, I suggest that these

dynamic and chaotic patterns of engagement lend themselves to the mutual cognitive

and emotional transformation of both text and reader.

"Proteus," the third episode of Joyce's *Ulysses*, is an exhilarating prose experiment

in interior monologue and stream of consciousness in which the reader is granted

access to the rapid semantic associations and dislocations that take place in the mind

of Stephen Dedalus. The narrative motion of "Proteus" is aberrant and elegant,

chaotic and intricately crafted. This episode also represents an example of structural reflexivity. Reflexivity, here, is the textual flow, or movement, that generates a diegetic system, that, by a switch to another narrative perspective proves to be part of the diegetic system it alleges to create. It is the aberrant meandering of Stephen's intellection which constitutes the structure of "Proteus:" as Stephen thinks— according to logical and syntactic structures as unpredictable, shifting, and vast as the sea—the structure of a syntactic and semantic labyrinth is built. In short, through the act of thought Stephen constructs an intellectual labyrinth, while his consciousness simultaneously becomes part of the developing structure. The structure of "Proteus" is not simply mimetic of Stephen's consciousness and thought patterns; it is also exemplary of a reflexive self-generating labyrinth.

Stephen's thought processes are liquid, irregular, and oscillating; consequently, so is the labyrinthine structure of the episode. In "Proteus," language and its referent, perceiver and percept, the architect and the labyrinth are equally protean as they are all constituted within a self-reflexive system. The progression of "Proteus" gives the sense of a fluid dynamic, or of unpredictable movements in divergent and looping patterns, and thus the reader, like Stephen, becomes lost in a protean labyrinth from which there is no escape. Joseph Campbell's reading of "Proteus" reminds the reader of the structural implications of the episode: "it is [in 'Proteus'] that [Stephen] realizes his problem is…to escape from his own ego" (67). That is, Stephen's desire to escape his own ego can be equated with the desire to escape from the labyrinth of his own construction. However, the only hope Stephen can entertain in terms of elluding the self-reflexive labyrinth is analogous to the tragic fate met by Icarus—

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symbolized in the episode by the drowned man. Death or non-consciousness, in this

sense, would be Stephen's only escape from the labyrinth, yet he can only think of the

drowned man in association with "another literary drowning, that of Edward King, a

symbol of untimely death in Milton's 'Lycidas'" (Fairhall 185). So long as Stephen

is conscious, he will find himself—no matter how vast his intellectual excursions—

within the same system of his creation via language; or, simultaneously, within the

self reflexive system that creates him. The printed word, according to McLuhan,

carries with it the "power to create what [Joyce] throughout *Finnegans Wake*

designates as 'the ABCED-minded,' which can be taken as 'ab-said' or 'ab-sent,' or

just alphabetically controlled" (McLuhan *Understanding Media* 383-384). In short,

Stephen and the labyrinth are both simultaneously cunning artificers and

alphabetically controlled.

   This labyrinthine structure of "Proteus" shares fascinating parallels to a structural

phenomenon of Hofstadter's "strange loop." As the most influential idea to arise

from Hofstadter's book the strange loop is perhaps also of significant interest in

thinking about "Proteus" in terms of the relationship between the structure of the text

and Stephen's consciousness: a structural analogue to the relationship between

metaphorical language and metanoiac response of the language user. Craig Werner

writes, in his 1980 review of *Gödel, Escher, Bach* in the *James Joyce Quarterly* that

> Like *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake*, Douglas R. Hofstadter's *Gödel, Escher,*
>
> *Bach: An Eternal Golden Braid* is a book of strange loops and tangled
>
> hierarchies, systems and metasystems, elusive figures on shifting grounds.
>
> Although it never alludes directly to Joyce, *Gödel, Escher, Bach*…radiates a

Joycean delight in resolving seeming incongruities and paradoxes into

intellectual and esthetic unities. (Werner 223)

Indeed, Stephen's consciousness as it is represented in "Proteus" is a tangled

hierarchy teeming with paradox: the representation of a thought process that becomes

part of the system of representation. In "Proteus," the sense of semantic

progression—or following one concept to the next toward some meaningful

conclusion—may feel like movement in a hierarchy but is, after all, illusory; the

movement of Stephen's thoughts simply gives rise to a fluctuating closed cycle.

Hugh Kenner suggests that "every theme in the entire lifework of James Joyce is

stated on the first two pages of the *Portrait*" (Kenner "The *Portrait* in Perspective"

33). Alternatively, the first two words of "Proteus," "Ineluctable modality" (Joyce

31), may also shed new light on the entirety of *Finnegans Wake*: an ever-mutating

dynamic strange loop structure characteristic of perpetual semantic and informational

reconfiguration. Within this self-reflexive system, Stephen's labyrinthine

consciousness is constituted by an inescapable tendency to conform to a particular

pattern. That is, the ineluctable modality as a structure is a strange loop. Despite the

fluid motion of the episode, there remains a haunting sense of structural determinism

amidst the dynamism.

In other words, the structure of "Proteus" is constantly in the paradoxical process

of level-crossing—the levels being the tangential pathways of thought Stephen takes,

the metamorphosis of the meaning of words, Stephen's perception of the phenomenal

world, and the reader's experience of reading "Proteus"—thus leading the reader

further into the protean labyrinth. In reading the episode, these varying levels of the

narrative are paradoxically in relation to one another according to a whirling singular

structure. As Stephen struggles with the mutation of words and the divergent

pathways of the thoughts he experiences, with the reader, the disorientation of a

protean labyrinth, the phenomenon of the strange loop, and an ineluctable modality.

So, in engaging the structure of "Proteus," returning to Hofstadter's phrase, "despite

one's sense of departing ever further from one's origin, one winds up, to one's shock,

exactly where one had started out."

    In a sense, the prospective impulse of "Proteus" is embedded within these two

opening words: ineluctable modality. Hofstadter's speculations upon the relationship

between multiple levels of reality—or in this case, levels of diegesis—are emblematic

of a kind of ineluctable modality; that is, the strange loop and its meandering level-

crossing dynamics is, despite its closed-system determinism, ultimately a remarkably

proliferating process of linguistic transformation in itself. Werner suggests that

Hofstadter's investigations are perhaps most appropriate for a reading of the *Wake*

since the latter is concerned with the "relationship between the levels of 'reality'

within intellectual and esthetic systems" that "touch directly on issues of central

concern to Joyceans" (Werner 223). Hofstadter's work, according to Werner, may

offer new ways of looking at Joycean scholarship itself in a kind of heterarchical

manner. Hofstadter's examination of human brain activity on both the reductionist

level of neuronal chemical squirts to the more ubiquitous level of the "abstract mind"

(224) may itself provide a way in which scholars may satisfy provisional connections

"between work on individual words and phonemes (the lexicons), external contexts

(Atherton), plot and character (Eckley, McHugh), themes (Benstock), and

encompassing structural patterns (Begnal, Norris, Hart)" (224). That is, the difficultly of integrating diverse yet individually effective studies may simply "reflect a basic human incapacity for reconciling the various levels of operation of the human brain" (224). Hofstadter's response may be to begin thinking of the relationship between different modes of interpretation by means of heterarchical or non-hierarchical relationships. "Each description remains valid on its own level," suggests Werner in his discussion of major moves in *Wake* criticism, "but there is not, and perhaps cannot be, an inclusive system which clarifies the interaction of the various levels in the mind of the intuitive reader" (224). In short, Hofstadter's work is relevant to Joycean criticism, particularly in relation to the *Wake* because it is concerned with the connections and disjunctions that are established between systems and perceived realities. Like Joyce, Hofstadter is also concerned with ineluctable modalities.

Grappling with the tangled hierarchies of language and semantics of the *Wake* as well as the critical work on the piece—engaging with the various semantic and diegetic levels that constitute such interpretive activity—ultimately complicates the possibility of observing the text from an ontologically privileged position. Like Stephen's predicament, the extra-diegetic level of the reader conforms to a loopy, hierarchy-defying pattern. This is not to assert that there is overt self-similarity between, for example, the processes at play on micro levels (say, morphology or neural chemistry) and macro-level (the *Wake* as a whole and narratological interpretation); instead, the ineluctable modality determines that these different levels are frequently occupied simultaneously, looping from one level to another or multiple

levels at the same time—"'Simultaneously,'" Hugh Kenner suggests, "gives us

Finnegans Wake" (Kenner *Joyce's Voices* 90)—thus conforming to rapidly

reconfiguring patterns suggesting diegetic level-crossing. Again, Werner:

> Gödel demonstrated that there will always be true statements concerning a
> system which cannot be proved using the procedures defined into the system.
> Hofstadter, who cautions against simplistic metaphorical extensions of
> Gödel's theorem, observes that incompleteness forces us to "leap out of the
> system" if we wish to reach the most profound levels of understanding. We
> must be willing to employ intuitive, as well as mechanical, modes of thought.
> (Werner 223)

The irony here is that once one leaps out of the system, one extends the system; at the

exit of the labyrinth is another corridor. The system, a kind of ubiquitous series of

different diegetic levels conforming to determined patterns, is an extension of the

human mind and the human mind is an extension of the system. The immanent

contours of the ineluctable modality ensures that the possibility of transcending the

liminal borders of the system itself. Media theorist, Douglas Rushkoff, suggests "the

purpose of reductionism is to contain and manage nature. To reduce something to a

category puts it in a convenient, if unreal, box" (Rushkoff *Screenagers* 18). Gödel's

gesture is one which, in a sense, attempts to establish a privileged position whereby

one may observe, contain, and manage the loopy paradox from afar. The gesture of

moving towards a meta-position, or an ontological space from which one can achieve

an intense and objective locale of interpretation is thus thwarted in favor of a

movement towards an ever-expanding interior that mutates and shifts according to the

shifting sense-ratios of the perceiver's nervous system. Or, to leap out of the system

simply means to construct a new level of the system. In the "Scylla and Charybdis"

episode of *Ulysses*, Stephen famously claims that "A man of genius makes no

mistakes. His errors are volitional and are the portals of discovery" (*Ulysses* 9.228-

29); such portals are the entrances to further labyrinthine corridors. The ubiquitous

quality of the *Wake* —that of being engulfed within a text that is, on multiple levels,

engaged in expanding feedback loops and multileveled diegesis—thus establishes a

difficult topology for interpretation. The reader, like Stephen's man of genius, can

make no mistakes since any errors become extensions of the mind and prove to

induce further discoveries, further levels that may or may not prove fruitful. Instead

the system "seems to uncoil spirally and swell lacertinelazily before our eyes under

pressure of the writer's hand" (*FW* 121.24-25). So, similar to Woolf's *To the

Lighthouse*, the work is intimate in an intense way.

And such intimacy plays out in controversial ways in discussions of High

Modernist texts. It is here that we return to Hart. Hart's definition of sentimentality

is in line with that of I. A. Richards' *Practical Criticism* (1929):

> Literary sentimentality…means, first, the attribution by the author of more
>
> emotion than is warranted by his subject (excessive "feeling") and, as a
>
> corollary, seeking from the reader a similar overplus of emotion; second, the
>
> dissociation of subject from emotion and the presentation of the latter
>
> divorced from the former (with, as a corollary, the valuing of emotion for its
>
> own sake); third, a distortion of reality in order to make possible an emotional
>
> response which would not otherwise appear to be relevant; fourth, an evident

desire to maintain an illusory state of affairs because this is felt to be more pleasing than reality. (Hart 26-27)

What is immediately evident in both Hart's and Richards' engagement with sentimentality is the value status separating emotion from "reality;" that is, a distinction in this formulation of literary sentimentality between ontological levels; that is, they ignore the operations of the ineluctable modality. Yet, Joyce's engagement with sentimentality is more ambivalent. Hart discusses Sven Fagerberg's suggestion that Joyce was situated between two extreme tendencies when confronted with objects or persons who represented, for the author, some kind of heightened emotion. This ambivalence is formulated as follows: "the love-object is treated either with gross obscenity or with its opposite: sentimentality" (Hart 29). For the former, Hart discusses Shaun's coarse approach of the girls in Book III (*FW* 433.22-28) and (*FW* 466.13-17). Hart also remarks on the "repudiation of the sentimental attitude to women" (30) by commenting on Joyce's portrait of Issy: "What exquisite hands you have, you angiol, if you didn't gnaw your nails, isn't it a wonder you're [not] achamed of me, you pig, you perfect little pigaleen! I'll nudge you in a minute! I bet you use her best Perisian smear off her vanity table to make them look so rosetop glowstop nostop" (*FW* 143.33-144). The gesture here is one that rapidly shifts towards grossness from sentimentality. From the compliment of "exquisite hands" to the insult of a calling Issy a "perfect little pigaleen," Joyce establishes the functional spectrum for emotional ambivalence.

On the opposite end of this ambivalence, however, are Joyce's many descriptions of Anna Livia and the fable of Issy in her manifestation as Nuvoletta. The Nuvoletta

episode may have its root in biographical emotionalism. Finn Fordham identifies

evidence in the third volume of Richard Ellmann's edition of the *Letters of James*

Joyce that "Issy is in part modeled on Lucia" and that "Joyce may be incorporating

his own and Lucia's grief over her breakdown. When she broke out of her hospital

near Geneva (Les Prangins), and tried swimming across the enormous Lac Leman,

she was thought to be attempting suicide" (Fordham 201). Yet, if the Nuvoletta

episode is an expression of grief, it is not meant to serve solely as an imitation of

mourning. Instead, the Nuvoletta episode is—like the mode of the rest of work—

poetic, constructive, and imaginative; it is, at once, an expression of grief and a joyful

declaration of possibility. Perhaps at his best in the *Wake*, Joyce achieves this

ambivalence, that of writing in both manners simultaneously, when engaged in both

the sentimentalized and abstract—that is, quasi-religious if not occult—treatment of

Anna Livia. As both archetypal woman (sentimentality) and a more explicit

abstraction (goddess), Joyce achieves a kind of sentimentality

> by means of incantation of rhetorical naming: "O tell me all about Anna
>
> Livia! I want to hear all about Anna Livia. Well, you know Anna Livia? Yes,
>
> of course, we all know Anna Livia" (*FW* 196.01-05). The goddess-like nature
>
> is stated, without its being in any real sense evoked for the reader. The
>
> concluding monologue, on the other hand, though more sentimental in the
>
> popular sense—more lush, more emotional—attaches its emotion to a more
>
> vividly realized character whose touches of divinity derive in a more direct
>
> and vital way from the woman herself and her situation (Hart 30).

Next, for Hart, the Nuvoletta scene is more or less immune to "false sentimentalism" (30) by the "sharpness of definition of the value-bearing things" (30) which ornament the description of the girl: "Nuvoletta in her lightdress, spunn of sisteen shimmers, was looking down on them, leaning over the bannistars and listening all she childishly could" (*FW* 157.8-10). When we note that the sixteen "shimmers" are transmuted into a concretization by the "bannistars" and the Sistine chapel mutates the gazing young girl into a "specific sort of angel with genuine theological reference" (30), Joyce ultimately employs sentimentality as a means of countering his use of sentimentality. In short, Hart suggests that Joyce's complex use of sentimentality in his fiction is a means of making both ends of the spectrum work simultaneously: "to indulge his sentimentality and yet save himself from it" (Hart 30). This identification of the logic of ambivalence in Joyce's sentimentality seems an elaboration on a brief comment by B.F. Skinner nearly a decade earlier. Discussing the Nuvoletta fable, Skinner remarks that "An inferred intraverbal *crying* appears to be displaced by *lapping* as a distortion of *laughing*. A river which laughs is acting as if it had the heart of a child—that is to say, of the child river or *brook*. The hysterical mixture of laughing and crying, of being both old and young, is appropriate to the whole passage" (Skinner 309).[16] Both Hart and Skinner are making valuable observations

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[16] George Cinclair Gibson in *Wake Rites: The Ancient Irish Rituals of* Finnegans Wake (2005) identifies Isabel/Nuvoletta as a upper emanation of "the ancient Triple Goddess of the pagan Irish" (Gibson 49) and says that "readers of the *Wake* have sensed that the three main protagonists—Isabel, Anna, and Kate—are all aspects of one individual" and that "Anna's triune manifestation bears a remarkable resemblance to that of the pagan Triple Goddess of Ireland" (49). He notes that Issy is identified with the stars and the sky, Anna with the middle realm of earth and water, and Kate with the lower realms, one who "spends much of her time in [the house's] basement" (50). Yet, all three are embedded in one another and shift between realms in both delightful and confusing ways. Syncretism, or mixing of this kind, is indicative of what Edmund Lloyd Epstein identifies as Joyce's "source of linguistic creativity" (Epstein 77). The argument between Shem and Shaun is indicative of the way these forces compete. "The genitalia, the instinctual centres of the being that are the power of Shem,

regarding an unusual mode of writing for a High Modernist figure; however, what they do not fully address is the dynamic logic of what Hart considers Joyce's employment of sentimentality. What Hart and Skinner recognize as an ambivalent implementation of the sentimental mode in the *Wake* operates as a rhetorical gesture establishing the dynamic non-space of language as the extension—and means of mutation—of the mind.

First, Hart remarks that Joyce's use of sentimentality is one in which the author attributes more "emotion than is warranted by his subject." This claim is balanced, in a way, by suggesting that this rhetorical gesture expects "from the reader a similar overplus of emotion." The relationship established here is reasonable: the author crafts language in unusual ways to achieve an unusual response from the reader; that is, this represents a procedure that is essentially without value in the sense that, despite the emphasis on emotions, what is at stake is a readjustment of the sense-ratios via an unusual use of language. Hart's second claim—"the dissociation of subject from emotion and the presentation of the latter divorced from the former"—may be, if meaningful at all, a claim for the procedure of linguistic transfer and cognitive transformation itself. That is, "emotion for its own sake" is a fanciful conceit at best. Alain Robbe-Grillet, in his introduction to the screenplay of *Last Year at Marienbad*—a film that is balances its radicalism with sentimentality in an extremely effective way—comments on a sentimental effect that may be similar to the ambivalent sentimentalism employs by Joyce. For Robbe-Grillet, this effect is

are also the source of all language" (77) Epstein continues. Shaun is suspicious and anxious about the power of the genitals and creative language. It is Nuvoletta, however, who wishes to "reconcile the two brothers" (78) but with no success. Indeed, the manner in which paradoxical identities are at once metonymical for, and in conflict with, one another adds to the shifting ambiguity of how the characters—and their corresponding imaginative effects—affect the reader emotionally.

one of persuasion: "[it] deals with a reality that the hero creates out of his own vision, out of his own words. And if his persistence, his secret conviction, finally prevail, they do so among a perfect labyrinth of false trains, variants, failures, and repetitions" (Robbe-Grillet "Introduction to the Screenplay" 26). Emotion via sentimentality is both the set of aesthetic actions and the cognitive response of a reader; of course, such iterations are easily reversed once set in motion. The claim for dissociation of the subject from emotion ignores the self-reflexive conceit that the subject is emotional and emotion is the subject; and the whole algorithm is a dynamic bidirectional feedback loop in which valueless procedures and semantic possibilities are rapidly developing within a kind of ineluctable modality. Hart's third and fourth definitions of the function of sentimentality—"a distortion of reality in order to make possible an emotional response" and a "desire to maintain an illusory state of affairs because this is felt to be more pleasing than reality," respectively—prove illustrative of the embedded logic of unusually crafted language and that of a transformation of the mind of the reader. "Segmentation equals sentimentality. The isolation of the sense of sight quickly led to the isolation of one emotion from another, which is sentimentality," writes McLuhan, "'Sophistication' today is a negative version of sentimentality, in which conventionally appropriate feelings are simply anesthetized. But the due interplay of the emotions is not unrelated to synesthesia or interplay of the senses" (McLuhan *The Gutenberg Galaxy* 157). In short, the invocation of emotion does not yield a reality based on distortion but rather the distortion itself becomes the extension of reality making via a reorganized use of the "appropriate" senses. Furthermore, the hierarchy between reality and illusion becomes effectively

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heterarchical in the sense that reality is the mediation of language; or, the cognitive perception of the individual is continuously mutated, reconfigured, and dynamically altered by the engagement with unusual linguistic assemblages. That is, the process is a matter of distortion in the informational sense: noise. The more distorted the use of language, the more rich in information the text itself becomes. Hart's engagement with Joyce's sentimentalism, therefore, proves to be an impetus for the reflexive nature of the radical use of language.

Critically quite a distance from Hart's argument, Margot C. Norris' article "The Consequences of Deconstruction: A Technical Perspective of Joyce's *Finnegans Wake*" welcomes Derridian analyses in *Wake* criticism as a means of reviving the radical interpretations with which the novel originally met. She argues that the conservative criticism of the novel "is characterized chiefly by a belief that the work contains fixed points of reference in the manner of a traditional novel" (Norris 130). The *Wake*, Norris suggests, "serves as a literary exemplar" (133) of the "event" or "rupture" that the concept of structure underwent, according to Derrida, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. In her discussion, Norris explains that

> the 'rupture' in the history of structure—brought about, as Derrida says by our being self-consciously forced to 'think the structurality of structure'—results in the idea of a structure in which presence is not so much absent as unlocatable. The center is ex-centric, and the structure is determined not by presence but by freeplay. (132)

As an example of this "rupture," Derrida identifies the language in the *Wake* as a "Babelian act of war" aimed at conservative approaches to language, literature, and

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the structure of meaning. While deconstructive approaches to the *Wake* are absolutely appropriate with their analytical operatives exposing textual fissures, discrepancies, and inversions, such analyses may overlook the possible radical subtexts of apparently conservative readings like that of Hart's. However acentric and subversive Joyce's text may be, Norris remains insensitive to the fact that the *Wake* is constructed by means of extensive reference to and reliance upon Western literary canon, science, history, religion, and teleology.

In this sense, a reading of the *Wake* may benefit from a study responsive to the supplementary relationship that links, reconfigures, and absorbs both radical and conservative interpretative approaches to the novel. Norris' Derridian reading claims the *Wake* "goes beyond the plunder of language to destroy it, in order that we may see how it is created" (147). However, inverting this analytical position may indeed prove more rewarding. By reversing Norris' argument, the implication is that Joyce need not transcend the plunder of language nor does his writing need to violently destroy it. Indeed, one cannot go beyond the plunder of language since the ineluctable modality of this reflexivity simply allows for the labyrinth to expand and distort *ad infinitum* with every increasing level and cycle. Rather, the *Wake* is immersed in the plunder of language, constantly reconfiguring it, in order that we may see how Joycean language is dynamically producing, reproducing, and mutating both on the level of the text and the extra-diegetic spaces.

Here, and in the Derridian sense, language in the *Wake* is in a supplementary relationship—not with a referent—but with language itself. The crucial difference, however, is situated in the opposing directions to which these two methods gesture.

This is where the significance of information theory is most salient and may offer

further insights into Joyce's ambivalent sentimentality and how it operates. While

sharing many of the same methods and assumptions as deconstruction, the

conclusions derived from chaos and information theory are decidedly different. Both

analytical models assert a kind of radical textual interiority; however, information

theory suggests, in contradistinction to deconstruction, that the unveiling of chaos

within a closed system enhances the richness of permutational possibilities. Hart

remarks in *Structure and Motif in Finnegans Wake* (1962), that

> Joyce was always an arranger rather than a creator, for, like a mediaeval artist,
>
> he seems superstitiously to have feared the presumption of human attempts at
>
> creation. The mediaeval notion that the artist may organise but cannot under
>
> any circumstances create something really new is, of course, capable of
>
> universal application but it is more than usually relevant to Joyce. (Hart 44)

This suspicion towards the act of creation thus gestures towards an aesthetic of

reconfiguration. Skinner writes that "*Finnegans Wake*…is and may well remain the

classic example of the recombination of borrowed verbal fragments including

extended intraverbal frames" (Skinner 308). By the 1960s, Hart suggests Joyceans

were "gradually becoming aware that every situation, description, and scrap of

dialogue in [Joyce's] works was remembered, rather than imaginatively 'created'"

(*Structure and Motif* 44). In the opening decades of the twenty first century, such an

aesthetic approach, that of reconfiguration or textual remix, is remarkably prevalent

and certainly owes much to the Joyce's methodology. "Joyce was in advance of the

communications pundits of our own day [1970s]," writes Burgess, "in recognizing the

fascination of media in themselves (like Marshall McLuhan) and the width of the

whole field of semiology (like Roland Barthes)" (Burgess *Joysprick* 24). Eliot

suggests that

> History has many cunning passages, contrived corridors
>
> And issues, deceives with whispering ambitions,
>
> Guides us by vanities. (Eliot "Gerontion" 38)

Such is the mode of the *Wake*: a work of historical and mnemonic reconfigurations,

contrived labyrinths, the ambitious deception of conventional language, guided by

narcissistic vanities (that is, circular and loopy reflexive extensions amidst differing

levels of diegesis). While the Derridian mode gestures towards the subversion of

order, the analytical apparatus presented here suggests that the idiosyncratic language

of the *Wake* is indicative of the processes that underlie a supplementary relationship

between genuine originality, literary reproduction, and the metamorphosis of text

towards a new kind of multiplicitous literary order.

The critical discussion surrounding Joyce's writing and the new sciences of chaos,

complexity, and information theory is relatively scarce yet its insight is highly

successful. Thomas Jackson Rice's excellent study *Joyce, Chaos, and Complexity*

(1997) splits Joyce's scientific influences in two directions: the science of the past for

Dubliners and *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* and an intense anticipation of

the sciences of chaos and complexity for *Ulysses* and the *Wake*. Indeed, Rice argues

that, like chaos theorists, the reader of the *Wake* is faced with the problem of

conceptualizing the connections that link minute and vast phenomena. Philip

Kuberski's equally outstanding *Chaosmos: Literature, Science, and Theory* (1994)

details a vast array of conceptual shifts in literature, science, philosophy, and theory

away from modernism towards a "chaosmos." Key to Kuberski's book is the

convergence of dichotomic preconceptions. The second chapter ,"Joycean Chaosmos

and the Self-Organizing World," links Joyce's agenda in the *Wake* largely with those

of the poststructuralists. Here Kuberski suggests Joyce's project was largely

subversive and thus draws a similar conclusion to Norris: "*Finnegans Wake* is a

massive joke at the expense of the *enlightenment* inspired by Bacon, Descartes, and

Newton, perpetrated by one of its most rigorous students; an encyclopedia

compendium of world history, human sciences, and art—all consigned to darkness"

(Kuberski 70). N. Katherine Hayles in *Chaos Bound: Orderly Disorder in*

Contemporary Literature and Science (1990) suggests that the final impulse of these

types of studies "is to show that both scientific and literary discourses are being

distinctively shaped by a reevaluation of chaos. It is this vision that defines the

contemporary episteme and differentiates it from the modernist era" (177). However,

Hayles suggests that chaos, complexity, and the information sciences yield

constructivist readings rather than subversive analyses and may prove to be a critical

way out of the irony and reflexivity of the postmodern labyrinth; though, the exit

from such a labyrinth seems to be another labyrinth: Stephen's protean labyrinth.

Reading the *Wake* in terms of chaos and information theory therefore allows for a

reading which is simultaneously radical and conservative, a means of conflating the

text as a reflexive technological extension of the human mind with traditional

discussion of literary sentimentalism.

Developed in the 1940s at the Bell Telephone Laboratories, largely through the work of mathematician Claude Shannon, information theory offers interesting implications for radical studies of language. Shannon outlines the general principles—and mathematical realization of those principles—of communication systems in *The Mathematical Theory of Communication* (1949). Shannon's lucid and economic prose served as an impetus for specialists in the humanities to employ the philosophical implications of information theory to their own fields of study. The philosophical suggestion here most pressing for the study of literature is that information theory allows for a study of the interrelationships and metamorphoses of words and language without an analytic assumption that a linguistic unit in question must corroborate with a meaningful referent. In his addendum to Shannon's work, "Recent Contribution to the Mathematical Theory of Communication," Warren Weaver explains:

> The word *information*, in this theory, is used in a special sense that must not be confused with its ordinary usage. In particular, *information* must not be confused with meaning. In fact, two messages, one of which is heavily loaded with meaning and the other which is pure nonsense, can be exactly equivalent, from this present viewpoint, as regards information. (8)

This phenomenon may at first elicit a reaction of anxiety towards this intractable divide between information and meaning. Meaning suggests a direct and ordered relationship conjoining a signifier and its referent; information implies a relationship that is metamorphosing and aleatoric. In other words, meaning is governed by pattern while information is characterized by randomness. Burgess records that "Joyce often

spoke of [*Finnegans Wake*] as mathematical, and one thing in it that the vast chaotic dreaming mind never impairs is number" (Burgess *Here Comes Everybody* 270). Yet, even if the dreaming—i.e. closed system—mind does not misinterpret number, the arithmetic mode here is non-linear and chaotic; Joyce never impairs number in the same sense that his asemic information fecundates into remarkably semantic possibility. Like his formulation of sentimentality, Joyce indulges asemic possibility yet saves himself from it. That is, since the *Wake* is a literary work, it must—in accordance with information theory—paradoxically express aspects of both semantically charged pattern and playful metamorphosing randomness.

As an analytical model for the study of the non-traditional mode of language employed in the *Wake*, this paradox inherent in information theory, like that of Joyce's formulation of sentimentalism, allows for the creation of fascinating literary possibilities. That is, the language of Joyce's novel is certainly not mathematical information in the pure sense of Shannon and Weaver. Rather, this move permits the language of the *Wake* to work in terms of orthographic, phonetic, syntactic, etc. relational networks which comment upon and complete their connections, only to metamorphose and reorganize in new configurations. In her book *How We Became Posthuman: Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature, and Informatices* (1999), N. Katherine Hayles astutely expresses the implications of the paradox in question:

> Identifying information with *both* pattern and randomness proved to be a powerful paradox, leading to the realization that in some instances, an infusion of noise into a system can cause it to reorganize at a higher level of complexity. Within such a system, pattern and randomness are bound

together in a complex dialectic that makes them not so much opposites as

complements or supplements to one another. (Hayles 25)

This supplementary relationship between pattern and randomness is fundamental in

examining the unique function of language in the *Wake* as that which is polysemous

yet its semantic multiplicity is constantly reorganizing itself at higher levels of

complexity. The language is, therefore, not necessarily gesturing toward a stable

referent but is rather reconfiguring a multiplicity of relationships within a closed

textual system.

Before examining a passage emblematic of literary sentimentalism in the *Wake*,

take the first paragraph of the novel as an example of how the relationship between

information and language may ameliorate an examination of heterarchical

sentimentalism and cognitive mutation. One reason this paragraph is of great

significance is that the first sentence of the novel is, as the reader eventually learns

some six hundred and twenty eight pages later, the second half of the novel's final

sentence and is therefore metonymical of the ineluctable modality in question. It does

not demand much of a leap to accept that this structural peculiarity suggests

something about the notion of "beginning" and "end" as conceptual nodes in a pattern

that may become decreasingly manifest—though manifest nonetheless—within an

overarching structure governed by circularity and chaos. A similar trend is apparent

in the syntactical structures that configure the novel; while the language of the novel

is largely constructed and governed by complexity, the variety of syntactical

structures are principally identifiable as correct according to English grammatical

rules. Arguably, a preliminary observation of the unique circularity of the novel's

overall structure that is, however, the structural result of smaller units of grammatically correct syntax reveals the paradoxical nature of interpreting the *Wake*. Radical interpretation may focus on the idiosyncratic language and unusual structure of the novel as definitively subversive forces, while conservative readings can simultaneously proclaim the work's correctness and impeccability in terms of syntactical sophistication. The counterintuitive response to these two opposing readings would be to assert that both have equal interpretive merit toward the same end, particularly if the two analyses are necessarily permitted to function simultaneously. Furthermore, both gesture towards the potency of language to disorder the senses and the senses to, in turn, disorder language.

Upon closer examination, the strangeness of the supplementary, conflicting, complementing, and metamorphosing nature of the work complicates any interpretive approach to the novel. A paradoxical approach—that which is always gesturing towards contradictory directions—may indeed be the most appropriate for an optimal reading of the *Wake*. While this move does not require an elucidation of the textual meaning, it does suggest the possibility of radical linguistic experimentation as a chaotic path to thinking about the ceaseless metamorphosis and reconfiguration of language and art within a closed system. In this sense, the first word of the text, "riverrun" (1.1), is not necessarily, as Tindall suggests in *A Reader's Guide to Finnegans Wake* (1969), "the central word of the book" (30); the occurrence of "riverrun" is, according to an alternative accuracy, anywhere and everywhere in the book. That is, if there is neither beginning nor end to the *Wake*, there is also no definitive centre, no possibility of finding the action "arundo…in midias reeds" (*FW*

158.7). If the motion of the running river is "from swerve of shore and bend of bay" and "brings us by a commodius vicus of recirculation back to Howth Castle and Environs" (1.1-3) so confirming the structural loop of the novel, this circular motion also suggests that the structure of the cycle is neither direct, stable, or linear. Rather, the loop here is paradoxically back where it started, yet different. Indeed, to delimit the complexity of the sentence (1.1-3) would yield something like "riverrun…brings us" back by means of recirculation to "Environs;" "Environs," is important in that, in the French, the term suggests approximation—or, since it suggest the plural, indefinite approximations. This structural loop does not destroy language in order to reveal how it is constructed; rather, it suggests, through radical literary form, the recirculation of ideas and their gradual metamorphosis into new, yet self-similar, manifestations. Each time the novel is reread, a new novel is born; each time a new novel is born, so is a new reader.

The metamorphosing loop of the novel itself is comprised of excessive divergence, reiteration, digressions, and fissures. It may be argued that the components of the novel are chaotically metonymic—that the metamorphosing, dispersing, and mutating structure of a word or sentence contains the changing whole within its processes. "There is considerable variation in the extent to which each individual chapter of *Finnegans Wake* is organised according to an internal cyclic scheme, and in general it is true to say that those chapters which were written or revised last tend to show the greatest concern with cyclic development," writes Hart, "such a late chapter may be subdivided again and again until complete cycles are to be found in short sentences or even in single words" (Hart *Structure and Motif* 45). While a delimited version of the

sentence above suggests the cyclical metamorphosing nature of the novel, the informational excess of the sentence does not function to destroy the traditional utterance but rather adds to its flourishing richness. McLuhan intimates much the same in his commentary on the work's title: the title of the *Wake* "is a set of multi-leveled puns on the reversal by which Western man enters his tribal, or Finn, cycle once more, following the track of the old Finn, buy wide awake this time as we re-enter the tribal night. It is like our contemporary consciousness of the Unconsious" (McLuhan *Understanding Media* 55). The river which runs past "Eve and Adam" to "Howth Castle" reconfigures relationships between time and location. Here, the river runs from Eden to Dublin Bay (Tindall 30). The reversal of names, "Eve and Adam" rather than the traditional "Adam and Eve," is also suggestive of the cyclical "Environs;" that is, the reversal of the names demonstrates a metamorphosis through reiterated cycles in sequential terms. That the river runs from the first humans to Joyce's contemporaries implies that the loop structurally reconfigures, not solely a sequential order of names, but also concepts of temporal progression. Thus location and temporality are also absorbed by a structure of radical interiority: a closed feedback loop that is mutating with every cycle, yet in which each cycle cannot be identified in terms of progressive, dichotomic, or hierarchical relations.

An analytic inclusion of the remaining words of the "opening" sentence again significantly adds to the level of operational complexity. The riverrun brings us "by a commodius vicus." Burgess identifies the "vicus" as a signifying fissure:

> Time remains the enemy; history must be spatialised. How? By seeing it as a
> circle, a wheel perpetually turning, the same events recurring again and again.

> In the 'Nestor' episode in *Ulysses* there is a reference to Vico Road, Dalkey [situated along the shore of Dublin Bay] and it is the Italian historiographer, Giovanni Battista Vico (1668-1744), who shows the way to the wheel. (Burgess 191)

"Vicus," in this sense, responds to emphasis on acentric location and temporality. The term conceptually links an Irish location—"vicus" being Latin for vicinity (Tindall 30)— with the Italian historiographer's *Scienza Nuova* in a fashion that is spatially and temporally strange. However, these lines of association are neither direct nor are they corroborative; Joyce's diagrammatic structure of time collapses linearity and causality into a purling structure of turbulence.

The term, "commodius" is more contentious. The term is most certainly linked to the adjective "commodious" consequently modifying the multiplicitous "vicus" as spacious and suitable. Tindall suggests that the term is "probably a reference to commode or chamber pot, a suitable container for 'riverrun'" (30). Campbell and Robinson suggest that the neologism "sweeps the mind back to the Rome which showed its first severe symptom of decay in the time of emperor Commodus" (Campbell and Robinson 26). "Commodius" may also suggest a commode, a highly ornamental piece of furniture characterized by its structural inclusion of drawers. A conceptual assemblage of these four interpretations is telling. "Commodius" is a term which is at once indicative of a "container" or a piece of furniture—that which forms and structures the work as a whole, a work which is baroquely ornamented and contains hidden chambers or convenient spaciousness—that is ultimately governed by change and decay thus becoming emblematic of the relationship between text and the

mind of the reader. To appropriate Campbell and Robinson's notion of "decay" in terms of information theory is to neutralize the negative value of the term. In this sense, decay can be interpreted less according to a fall into an inferior condition and more in terms of a transformation from one condition into another, a movement towards ambient disorder. In his book, *Ambient Findability*, Morville discusses how information technologies are developing means for users to find any kind of information from any place at any time. In the book, Morville provides two simple and effective definitions for ambience: "surrounding; encircling" and "completely enveloping" (6). Indeed, the opening lines of the *Wake* attest to its ambient quality. If we add to the ubiquitous quality of ambience the Heraclitean element of unencumbered plasticity, we are confronted with the difficult task of navigating a foggy and dynamically turbulent sea of both entropic information and ordered semantics. In the field of information development and search engine marketing, Morville employs the term "ambient findability" as that which "describes a fast emerging world where we can find anyone or anything from anywhere at anytime…Information is in the air, literally. And it changes our minds, physically. Most importantly, findability invests freedom in the individual. " (6-7). Yet, ambience also invest a great deal of freedom for the linguistic processes constantly at play in the *Wake*. In the opening three lines of the work, like the opening two words of "Proteus," Joyce introduces the reader to the theme and form of the novel—that of ever shifting, circulating, and metamorphosing phenomena thus establishing the novel, like its elements, as a literary shape shifter. The events will not, as Burgess and Vico suggest, be the same "again and again;" rather, with each "pass," the *Wake*

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becomes a new novel, configures new themes, and structurally mutates and adapts to a new ecological iteration; simultaneously, as Morville suggests, what the reader finds will change who the reader becomes.

The peculiarity of this phenomenon when speculating upon the *Wake* harkens back to the crucial distinction between information and meaning characteristic of chaos and information theory. To read Joyce's work in terms of meaning—to attempt a definitive exegesis of the text—is to comply with an ontological position which is impossible for the *Wake*. This is to say that the very conceptual models and processes that produce meaning are dichotomic. A linguistic signifier from this ontological position, no matter how chimerical, must express significance or semantic intention—it must gesture towards an end or purpose, it must correlate with some cultural referent. The very concept of the tenor, a continuity of semantically charged expression that progresses through a written work, purports a conceptual movement towards the exterior, a semantic drift or flow that begins with an initial expression which transcends itself and associates with an external referent.

Information, on the other hand, need not subscribe to a logic of binarism. Rather, information is, in its mathematical sense, asemic and asignifying; the relationships that develop through information are reflexive, chaotic, and internally self-organizing. While language in the *Wake* cannot be equated directly with scientific information, Joyce's prose experiments can certainly optimize in potential when regarded as aesthetics of proto-systems theory. "Form is what [Joyce] loves," suggests Burgess, "and it seems a pity that...prose form cannot subsist without content. Joyce's content is as limited, in terms of the separable and summarisable, as ingenuity can make it.

He is, as we know, McLuhan's delight" (Burgess *Joysprick* 119). Thinking about the language of the *Wake* in terms of information—rather than meaning-generating linguistic structures—may open new approaches of inquiry into the performance of the work: that is, its effects on the mind of the reader. Chaos theory and information, according to Hayles, express the

> desire to breach the boundaries of classical systems by opening them to a new
> kind of analysis in which information is created rather than conserved…chaos
> is deemed to be more fecund than order, uncertainty is privileged above
> predictability, and fragmentation is seen as the reality that arbitrary definitions
> of closure would deny. (*Chaos Bound* 176)

To read the *Wake* in accordance with information—and therefore resist totalizing exegesis of the text—is perhaps a more fruitful way of approaching the text as a kind of writing which opens a multiplicity of possibilities for assertions of orthographic assemblage and assemblages of the level of the senses and emotion.

The uncertainty of Joyce's words—both chimeran and protean—declares fecundity through their ability to metamorphose according to syntactic, temporal, and affective relationships. Though traditional practices of writing seem to decay further and further in the *Wake*, as the reader reexamines the text, the literary and aesthetic possibilities of the novel simultaneously flourish. Shannon suggests that

> the fundamental problem of communication is that of reproducing at one point
> either exactly or approximately a message selected at another point.
> Frequently the messages have *meaning*; that is they refer to or are correlated
> according to some system with certain physical or conceptual entities…The

significant aspect is that the actual message is one *selected from a set* of

possible messages. The system must be designed to operate for each possible

selection, not just the one which will actually be chosen since this is unknown

at the time of design. (31)

This system is much like Joyce's novel itself; if there is indeed an actual message in

the *Wake*—such as the exegetic and reductionistic studies of Campbell, Burgess, or

Gordon (1986) reveal—this does not delimit the likelihood of other messages that

result from unusual configurations and reconfigurations of multiple levels of diegesis.

The relationships between words and meaning in the *Wake* are, in this sense, more

akin to the metamorphosis that information undergoes in a state of transmission in

that the chimerical portmanteau language is ever-dynamic, resisting an ultimate

referent; in the *Wake* there is no refuge for the dichotomic logic of denotation or

traditional formulations of sentimentalism. The *Wake* is constantly reconfiguring; the

novel is many novels. Like the traveler stepping in the Heraclitean river, the reader

of the *Wake* cannot read the same word twice.

Nor can narcissus gaze at the same reflection twice. It is appropriate, therefore,

that the Nuvoletta episode, like that case of Dorian Gray, is one of both

sentimentalism and narcissism. Joyce's sentimental Narcissus is, unlike Wilde's,

female and as a result the transformations, extensions, and mutations in sense and

sentimental ratios here gesture towards Joyce's tendency to understand women in

reproductive terms. Christy Burns, in her article "An Erotics of the Word: Female

'Assaucyetiams' in *Finnegans Wake*," remarks that "When a voice in *Finnegans

Wake* proclaims that '[t]he word is my Wife, to exponse and expound' (*FW* 167.29),

it echoes a motif from Joyce's earlier works that is brought to the fore in the *Wake*, where it is alternately affirmed and ironized. Both women and words are potent transformers in Joyce's writing" (Burns 315). Burns is correct to note that the "absolute demarcation of virgins and whores—in their relation to that which is intellectually 'pure' are and that which arouses 'kinetic' desires" (315-316) is not only a characteristic trait of Stephen, but also one that continues throughout Joyce's oeuvre. However, that this gesture is one that acknowledges "the dangers of women's sexual desires and [indentifies] the artist's inability to control women (or words) as a spur to the vengeful artist" (316) may be a point of contestation in the sense that Joyce is not necessarily engaged in a struggle to control women and language but employs textual formations of women as a means of demonstrating certain operations of diegetic level transfer, linguistic extensions, and cognitive transformations. Female narcissism, for Burns, is mediated by the male gaze. Like Craft's reading of Dorian Gray, however, the narcissism that concerns Burns is Freudian, that which is engaged in "self-enrapture, which completely severs the subject's relation to the outside world, eliminating any prospect of influence of affection" (318).

Narcissism here, on the other hand, is narcosis and amputation; in its pure sense, narcissism is the absolute transfer of body and mind to the diegetic space of the reflection. Nuvoletta's act of reflexive reflection is explicitly expressed three times during the fable: "Nuvoletta listened as she reflected herself" (*FW* 157.17-18); "her feignt reflection" (*FW* 157.24); and, finally, "Nuvoletta reflected for the last time in her little long life" (*FW* 159.6). In contradistinction to Freud's formulation, the

relation between the self and the outside world is intimate by extension rather than severed in a literal sense; the prospect of influence and affection is heightened in an intense way. The body is anesthetized because it is cognitively transferred to the reflection yet the connection remains; the sense ratios extend in strange and nonlinear formations; the relationship between body and media is closed in a complex knot of perpetual reconfiguration. In this formulation of narcissism, if the body is present it is aware of its presence as mediated through language; as a result of engaging with language, the body and mind are transferred to the diegetic level of the linguistic or aesthetic and are therefore negated. However, since the language user is aware of his or her transfer into the reflection, he or she knows about their negation thus affirming the presence of the body and mind. This intimate knot, the ineluctable modality, or the strange loop is in this case one whereby the body is simultaneously present and negated/anesthetized. Like Dorian, then, Nuvoletta is emblematic of the relationship between language and the mind in terms of the narcissistic formula, the ineluctable modality. Also, like Dorian, Nuvoletta's narcissism ends in suicide; however, while Dorian literally severs the intimate relationship between aesthetics and the body resulting in his death—and the death of the wiggly level-crossing narrative— Nuvoletta's suicide is one that occurs early in the work and is more accurately a scene of ambient transformation than of diegetic negation. Dorian effectively ends up like the drowned man in "Proteus," severed from the realm of language and, as a result, dropped from the text. Nuvoletta, on the other hand, as a sentimental and narcissistic operative establishes the manner in which a character is both present and absent in the text, evaporating then liquefying, and transferring the body absolutely into the text

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while simultaneously transforming into Anna Livia, the water, the Heraclitean river, the subject and substance of the textual dream. While Hart's definition of sentimentalism and Freud's formulation of narcissism both stress disjunction and dissociation, the Nuvoletta episode demonstrates how emotion, like narcissism, depends on an intensely intimate relationship between differing narrative topologies. Burns' formulation of this logic operates in much the same way, though in the terms of relationships amongst women rather than level of narrative: "In Joyce's construction of female identifications, narcissism, even in its altered form, eliminates the aggression implicitly upon realizing the alienation or difference encoded within identification. Narcissism becomes the ability to simply embrace a contiguity, a similitude that links the distinct subjects" (Burns *Gestural Politics* 99). Nuvoletta's suicide, whereby she becomes water—and by extension, a similitude with the text itself—ultimately expresses the informational fecundity associated with the ineluctable modality.

Nuvoletta's tale is, at first glance, a relatively simple narrative in comparison with much of the *Wake*. Nuvoletta appears in the short episode—itself a translation of a Javanese parable from the professor's lecture—featuring the authoritarian Mookse who, while out for an evening walk, encounters a strange creature hanging from the branch of a tree, the Gripes. Their conversation rapidly turns into a debate whereby the Mookse is aggressively demanding the Gripes' respect and recognition of the former as the superior. The Gripes more or less ignores the Mookse's insistence and, as a result, the two engage in a battle of words, a massive Babelian act of war. This is the context of Nuvoletta's story. "The Nuvoletta portion of the tale," suggests

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Bernard Benstock in "Beyond Explication: The Twice-Told Tale in *Finnegans Wake*," "is entirely subsumed by the Nuvoletta voice, from the opening sentence…to the closing sentence…The style is remniscient of the first half of the "Nausicaa" chapter of *Ulysses*, where any pretense of objective narration is forgone and a narrative mode that is romantically young and feminine is in full swing" (Benstock 100). Whether this narrative mode is indeed "feminine" is not particularly the point; what matters most is that Nuvoletta's episode—though a fable in the tradition of the Russian fabulist Ivan Krylov (McHugh 159)—is, like that of "Nausicaa," reminiscent of the language of romantic novelettes (phonologically similar to Nuvoletta's name) that were marketed to women at the time: "I mean for those crylove fables fans who are 'keen' on the pretty-pretty commonface sort of thing you meet by hopeharrods" (*FW* 159.13-15).

What is remarkable, though, is the sentimentality of the Nuvoletta episode:

Nuvoletta in her lightdress, spunn of sisteen shimmers, was looking down on them, leaning over the bannistars and listening all she childishly could. She was alone. All her nubied companions were asleeping with the squirrels. Their miwer, Mrs Moonan, was off in the Fuerst quarter scrubbing the backsteps of Number 28. Fuwer, that Skand, he was up in Norwood's sokaparlour, eating oceans of Voking's Blemish. Nuvoletta listened as she reflected herself, though the heavenly one with his constellatria and his emanations stood between, and she tried all she tried to make the Mookse look up at her (but *he* was fore too adiaptotously farseeing) and to make the Gripes hear how coy she could be (though he was much too schystimatically auricular about *his ens*

to heed her) but it was all mild's vapour moist. Not even her feignt reflection, Nuvoluccia could they toke their gnoses off for their minds. (*FW* 157.08-25) The evening progresses and the Mookse and the Gripes pay no heed to Nuvoletta and her attempts to attract their attention. "A woman of no appearance" then gathered "up his hoariness the Mookse motamourfully where he was spread and carried him away to her invisible dwelling" (*FW* 158.25-28). The Gripes is, meanwhile, "plucked…torn panicky autotone, in angeu from his limb and cariad away its beotitubes" (158.35-36) by a "woman to all important" (158.32). Where the space of debate was once occupied by the Mookse and the Gripes, "there were left now an only elmtree and but a stone" (159.3-4). So, by failing to attract the attention of the Mookse and the Gripes,

> Nuvoletta reflected for the last time in her little long life and she made up all her myriads of drifting minds in one. She cancelled all her engauzements. She climbed over the bannistars; she gave a childy cloudy cry: *Nuée*! *Nuée*! A lightdress fluttered. She was gone. And into the river that had been a stream (for a thousand of tears had gone eon her and come on her and she was stout and struck on dancing and her muddied name was Missisliffi) there fell a tea, a singult tear, the loveliest of all tears (I mean for those crylove fables fans who are 'keen' on the pretty-pretty commonface sort of thing you meet by hopeharrods) for it was a leap tear. But the river tripped on her by and by, lapping as though her heart was brook: *Why, why, why! Weh, O weh! I'se so silly to be flowing but I no canna stay*! (*FW* 159.06-18).

As Hart remarks, Joyce employs sentimentality as a way of negating sentimentality, simultaneously employ information to negate meaninglessness. In this sense, Joyce's sentimentalism operates in a self similar way to the narcissism of Nuvoletta: that of the paradoxical knot or yet another ineluctable modality. Here, sentimentalism is negated via ambivalence; thus its logic is transferred and transformed into ambivalence. Since the transformation is transparent—and on display—the rhetorical employment of ambivalence ultimately heightens the significance of sentimentalism. Therefore, Joyce's sentimentalism is not simply negated but is simultaneously emotionally lush and leaden, swirling unpredictably between the two. That is, "one of the most remarkable things about *Finnegans Wake*" Hart remarks, "is the way in which emotion, in respect both of feeling and of tone, pops in and out of the book. Hard, cerebral writing suddenly gives way to an emotional extreme, and vice versa" (Hart "James Joyce's Sentimentality" 28). Another way of considering this modality is to think of Joyce's formulation as sentimentalism mirroring itself: the sentimental mode reflecting upon the sentimental mode in a bidirectional feedback loop, affirming and negating itself according the logic of McLuhan's Narcissus. Like the semantic conundrums that link information and meaning, and the relationship between the numbed senses and media extensions, the sentimental dimensions of the *Wake* are enhanced in the presence of ambivalence by means of tangled diegetic hierarchies. Nuvoletta, "her heart…brook" ultimately, dissolves into the river and like the Heraclitean river, she will no longer remain semantically static: "so silly to be flowing but I no canna stay."

Yet, what is perhaps most striking about the Nuvoletta episode is how Joyce actively demarcates differing diegetic levels by means of a topological distinction between the clouds and the river. These topologies as conceptual metaphors establish a kind of geometrical grid that permits the visualization of diegetic matrices in such a way as to facilitate the interdependent relationships between the concrete and the abstract. In 1965, American neurophysiologist, neurobiologist, and Nobel laureate, Roger Sperry, intimates a kind of abstract topology for the diegetic level of ideas in his paper "Mind, Brain, and Humanist Values." Sperry suggests a self similarity between the two differing levels: neurons and the ideas that these neurons make possible. As always, this logic may also operate in reverse. The suggestion is one of ontological significance in that Sperry suggests that neurons and ideas may coexist on the same level of reality; that is, the relation between the brain and ideas is heterarchical or, at least, a tangled hierarchy. In a sense, the reader is like Nuvoletta, "looking down…leaning over the bannistars and listening;" intensely engaged, though like a child, not fully conscious of the mental processes that leap and fall between different levels of a tangled diegetic schema. Nuvoletta's life does not end in suicide, but rather in evolving metamorphosis. "Ideas cause ideas and help evolve new ideas," Sperry writes, "They interact with each other and with other mental forces in the same brain, in neighboring brains, and thanks to global communication, in far distant, foreign brains. And they also interact with the external surroundings to produce in toto a burstwise advance in evolution that is far beyond anything to hit the evolutionary scene yet" (Sperry 36) Ideas, like organisms, are apt to mutate and adapt to their environment. The primordial ooze of nature is, in this sense, analogous

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to a kind of primordial riverrun of the *Wake* where "the river tripped on [Nuvoletta] by and by, lapping as though her heart was brook;" organisms and ideas, materialism and abstractionism, brains and language are all subject to the same systemic parameters of dynamism and plasticity. Gleick writes that

> Atoms of hydrogen, oxygen, carbon, and iron could mingle randomly for the lifetime of the universe and be no more likely to form hemoglobin than the proverbial chimpanzees to type the works of Shakespeare. Their genesis requires energy; they are built up from simpler, less pattered parts, and the law of entropy applies. For earthly life, the energy comes as photons from the sun. The information comes via evolution. (Gleick 292)

Like Borges' "Library of Babel" (1941), the biosphere—or, on the higher level of information—infinite combination just as on the scale of infinite ideas, all possible ideas find their home among the semantic abyss of endless combination for the reader's "bungless curiasity" (*FW* 157.25-26). Likewise, sentimentality in the *Wake* gestures towards continuity of possibility rather than disjunction. Where there is absolute possibility in a single level of narrative, there is no "gnoses" (*FW* 157.25), or knowledge. Where there is possibility in noisy, looping relationship amongst multiple levels, there is the possibility of knowledge by constant reorganization of semantic extensions of the mind. Likely the former is the reason why so few have undertaken the task of theorizing a kind of selection of ideas. That is, for many scientists it is tempting to shy away from such poetic conceits—the cognitive fecundity of conceptual metaphor—in favor of a more staunch materialism indifferent

to the medium of communication: linguistic potentiality. That Sperry and others take

the pains to entertain this diegetic topology, however, is telling.

French Jesuit paleontologist and philosopher Pierre Teilhard de Chardin[17]

established an analogous conceptual topos to describe the infosphere: the noosphere.

"Similar to the atmosphere and biosphere, the noosphere is composed of all the

interacting minds and ideas on earth," writes Morville, "it's a provocative and

romantic concept. But is the noosphere real? Or, is it just a metaphor, a figure of

speech for relating one experience of the physical world to the ethereal realm of

knowledge?" (33). In a 2004 essay, Tom Wolfe describes the profound effect that

Teilhard's work had on McLuhan:

> technology was creating a "nervous system for humanity, "[Teilhard] wrote,"
>
> a single, organized, unbroken membrane over the earth," a "stupendous
>
> thinking machine…" That unbroken membrane, that noosphere, was, of
>
> course, McLuhan's "seamless web of experience." And that "one civilization"
>
> was his "global village." We may think, wrote Teilhard, that these
>
> technologies are "artificial" and completely "external to our bodies," but in
>
> fact they are part of the "natural, profound" evolution of our nervous systems.

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[17] In his 2004 article, "McLuhan's New World," Tom Wolfe writes "here we see the shadow of the intriguing figure who influenced McLuhan every bit as much as Harold Innis but to whom he never referred: Pierre Teilhard de Chardin…His mission in life, as he saw it, was to take Darwin's theory of biological evolution, which had so severely shaken Christian belief, and show that it was merely the first step in God's grander design for the evolution of man. God was directing, in this very moment, the 20th century, the evolution of man into a noosphere...a unification of all human nervous systems, all human souls, through technology. Teilhard…mentioned radio, television, and computers specifically and in considerable detail and talked about cybernetics…He died in 1955, when television had only recently come into widespread use and the microchip had not even been invented. Computers were huge machines, big as a suburban living room, that were not yet in assembly line production. But he was already writing about "the extraordinary network of radio and television communication which already links us all in a sort of 'etherised' human consciousness," and of "those astonishing electronic computers which enhance the 'speed of thought' and pave the way for a revolution in the sphere of research" (Wolf 22).

"We may think we are only amusing ourselves" by using them, "or only

developing our commerce or only spreading ideas. In reality we are quite

simply continuing on a higher plane, by other means, the uninterrupted work

of biological evolution." Or to put it another way: "The medium is the

message." (Wolfe 22-23)

Though Morville rightly suggests that this conceit is both provocative and romantic,

the ramifications of the noosphere being "just a metaphor" are somewhat misleading.

That is, for both Teilhard and McLuhan, what the noosphere represents is a process of

transformation whereby thought—or the central nervous system—crosses from one

level of narrative to another through a process of transformation. These levels are

deceptively stacked; instead, they prove to be embedded within one another. Teilhard

suggests that "the further the living being emerges from the anonymous masses by the

radiation of his own consciousness, the greater becomes the part of his activity which

can be stored up and transmitted by means of education and imitation" (225). For

Teihard the noosphere is a topological space where thought is born and proceeds

according to the processes of evolution:

The recognition and isolation of a new era in evolution, the era of noogenesis,

obliges us to distinguish correlatively a support proportionate to the

operation—that is to say, yet another membrane in the majestic assembly of

telluric layers. A glow ripples outward from the first spark of conscious

reflection. The point of ignition grows larger. The fire spreads in ever

widening circles till finally the whole planet is covered with incandescence.

Only one interpretation, only one name can be found worthy of this grand

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phenomenon. Much more coherent and just as extensive as any preceding

layer, it is really a new layer, the 'thinking layer,' which, since its

germination…has spread over and above the world of plants and animals. In

other words, outside and above the biosphere there is the noosphere. (Teilhard

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This conceptual space above and outside the biosphere is also the diegetic space

where Nuvoletta leans over the bannistars of ever widening, shimmering circles of

light. From leaning to leaping, Nuvoletta dramatizes the cognitive processes of

crossing levels of tangled narrative levels and, as Teilhard suggests, "from this point

of view man only represents an extreme case of transformation" (225). That is,

Nuvoletta is demonstrative of the cognitive transformations that reading unusual

literature effects. Furthermore, this transformation is one which the reader

experiences in a manner that is both intellectual as well as emotional: transfer to and

from "the noosphere tends to constitute a single closed system in which each element

sees, feels, desires and suffers for itself the same things as all the others at the same

time" (Teilhard 251). This conceptual stratification resonates with the Nuvoletta

episodes since it documents a little cloud that eventually crosses over into the

biosphere by condensing into rain. Teilhard's conceptual map is fascinating, yet it

does not account for a theory that describes the means through which the substance of

level crossing may operate.

    Parisian biologist and Nobel Prize winner, Jacques Monod, however, did attempt

to theorize this in a more concrete way that would prove remarkably fecund in the

conceptualization of ideas in the age of information and, as a result, in its relation to

the *Wake*. Monod's proposal was that analogous to the biosphere which "stands above the world of nonliving matter" (Gleick 310), so can another conceptual level of abstractions—of ideas—exist beyond the biosphere, "ideas have retained some of the properties of organisms. Like them, they tend to perpetuate their structure and to breed; they too can fuse, recombine, segregate their content; indeed they too can evolve, and in this evolution selection must surely play an important role" (Monod *Change and Necessity* qtd. in Gleick 311). For Monod, there is a conceptual topology where all the "myriads of drifting minds [are] one" (*FW* 159.7); this topology is a conceptual space of remarkable fecundity that ultimately blends sense ratios, emotional ambivalence, meaning, and information. Dawkins, six years later, with the publication of *The Selfish Gene* (1976), comes to a similar conclusion through a study of genetics. Dawkins remarks that genes are the units of natural selection:

> They are past masters of the survival arts. But do not look for them floating loose in the sea; they gave up that cavalier freedom long ago. Now they swarm in huge colonies, safe inside gigantic lumbering robots, sealed off from the outside world, communicating with it by tortuous indirect routes, manipulating it by remote control. They are in you and in me; they created us, body and mind; and their preservation is the ultimate rationale for our existence. They have come a long way, those replicators. Now they go by the name of genes, and we are their survival machine. (Dawkins 19-20)

From this position, Dawkins speculates upon an analogous unit to the gene: the meme. The origin of memes, for Dawkins, is in the brain of the individual. Memes are kinetic and travel along certain trajectories; the specifics of these trajectories are

unique to the type of thought with which the meme corresponds. What is crucial, however, is that the meme always gestures outwards yet is, at the same time, embedded within the brains of individuals.

A meme, regardless of its specific qualities or content, always travels away from one mind towards another mind. In this sense, a meme is both a unit of thought constituted within the brain of an individual and simultaneously that which crosses diegetic levels: springs from the material brain, to the abstraction ambience of tangled trajectories that link cognitive terminals, and into another material brain. Adding a humorous connotation to Joyce's "vaultybrain" (*FW* 159.25), Gleick clarifies that memes travel outward and away from the brain

> establishing beachheads on paper and celluloid and silicon and anywhere else information can go. They are not to be thought of as elementary particles but as organisms. The number three is not a meme; nor is the color blue, nor any simple thought, any more than a single nucleotide can be a gene. Memes are complex units, distinct and memorable—units with staying power. Also an object is not a meme. The hula hoop is not a meme; it is made of plastic, not of bits…The hula hoop is a meme vehicle…the meme is not the dancer but the dance. (Gleick 313-314)

Memes are the process and the effect. They are, Gleick and Dawkins would suggest, not conscious and active agents; rather, they are abstract units whose only procedure is to further their replication in the cultural environment. "[Memes'] interests," Gleick remarks, "are not our interests" (314); yet, "awareness of memes [foster] their spread" (318). This recalls the complexity of thinking about information in relation

to meaning: the asemic quality of mathematical information guarantees the possibility for the manifestation, and gradual reconfiguration, of any number of semantic patterns. Doing so, however, requires movement from one topology to another; this abstract process is acutely dramatized in the Nuvoletta episode through the means of the girl's suicide: jumping from a cloud—and, indeed, being a little cloud that succumbs to condensation, "*Nuée*! *Nuée*!" (*FW* 159.9)—into the biosphere: "A lightdress fluttered. She was gone. And into the river that had been a stream" (159.9-10). "A gene might maximize its own numbers by giving an organism the instinctive impulse to sacrifice its life to save its offspring," Gleick writes, "the gene itself, the particular clump of DNA, dies with its creature, but copies of the gene live on. The process is blind. It has no foresight, no intention, no knowledge. The genes, too, are blind" (Gleick 304). Just as the genes have no foresight, no intention, and no knowledge, the same can be said of memes. This is why Joyce's dramatization of the process is both aesthetically pleasing and intellectually gratifying. Memes emerge from the brain yet they proceed without intention and without meaning; Nuvoletta's self-murder, however, gives the process an emotional and sentimental force that is otherwise absent in the actual course of memetic transfer and transformation. Just as "the gene is not an information carrying macromolecule" but rather "is the information" (Gleick 308), memes are not information carrying conceptual units but rather are information. This distinction helps distinguish memetic dissemination from, for example, allusion, homage, or intertexuality. Rather, this mode of conceptualization allows for certain valueless processes to propagate and proceed according to their own logic in conjunction with the logic of the cultural environment

in which they are situated. That is, memes, like genes, adapt; they are both the
process and the effect. Likewise, not only does Nuvoletta reconfigure the constitutive
assemblage of the water, but the river, or constitutive environment, "tripped on her by
and by, lapping as though her heart was brook" (*FW* 159-16-17). Her reflexive
movement from one diegetic level to another—suicide, autoamputation, or an
instinctive impulse towards the sacrifice of the self into her own reflection—not only
generates a media ecology but ultimately becomes an integral part of the system it
produces. That is, Joyce's sentimental narcissism as expressed by Nuvoletta is a
dramatization of media and information adaptation.

Adaptation has a biological connotation associated with processes of evolution and
mutation and therefore a different kind of metamorphosis of form than that which is
associated with the revelation of underlying metaphysics of language. Linda
Hutcheon's *A Theory of Adaptation* (2006) examines the processes in which
narratives continually reappear—that is, are adapted—from one form or medium into
another. Crucial to Hutcheon's analysis is Dawkins' concept of the meme. What is
noteworthy about this gesture is that Hutcheon sets up an analytical apparatus where
cross-media adaptations can be examined beyond reader/audience expectations
regarding formal and semantic fidelity to its original. Instead, she redirects the focus
to the necessity for change, sometimes radical, when considering adaptation. In short,
there is a shift away from agency: memetic adaptation is blind, has no foresight, no
intention, and no knowledge of its origin and its plasticity. Like in biological
reproduction, the adapted text must have some copying fidelity, but what is even
more crucial is that the texts-as-memes must, in Dawkins' words "exploit their

cultural environment to their own advantage" (Dawkins 199). Hutcheon agrees: a form "adapts to its new environment and exploits it, and the story [or form] lives on…the same and yet not" (Hutcheon 167).

The processes of environmental engagement—or, cross-diegetic mutations—prompt the question as to whether we can "look for selfish or ruthless memes" (196). Dawkins' answer is "that we might, because there is a sense in which [memes] must indulge in a kind of competition with each other" (197). Dawkins continues: "the human brain, and the body that it controls, cannot do more than a few things at once. If a meme is to dominate the attention of a human brain, it must do so at the expense of 'rival' memes" (197). This is where Dawkins' argument is explicitly at odds with the present conceit. For Dawkins, the brain is in control; perhaps it is over occupied by a particular meme—establishing competition with rival memes—but nevertheless the multi-level diegetic topos between ideas and the brain is, in general, ambient. "In the competition for space in our brains and in the culture," suggests Gleick, "the effective combatants are the messages. The new, oblique, looping views of genes and memes have enriched us. They give us paradoxes to write on Möbius strips. 'The human world is made of stories, not people,' writes David Mitchell" (Gleick 322). Yet, what Mitchell's wit understates is that the worlds of stories are both embedded within people and construct the social effects that connect people. In the *Wake* different semantic and diegetic levels are in a kind of competition with one another; certainly this ineluctable modality provides us with a complex Möbius strip worth speculation. Nuvoletta's lightdress shimmering as she leans over the bannistars suggests a girl in a dress made of light, shining fabric who is leaning over a banister

in the starlight. This polysemous and kaleidoscopic image occupies the same

semantic space as that signifying a "girl" comprised of vaporous river water—a little

cloud—situated somewhere above the atmosphere who, like an evening gown is

reflecting the shimmering starlight. Furthermore, she acts as a safety railing

delimiting the borders of the cloud, preventing rays of starlight from approaching the

Earth. These three conflicting, yet simultaneous, significations are crucial in

considering the informational fecundity of the text. While Dawkins suggests that one

meme—a single reading of the sentence—must dominate another reading, an

effective manner of experiencing the *Wake* would be to read both simultaneously.

That is, Nuvoletta is a girl and a cloud; she is wearing a shimmering dress of

lightweight material and is evaporated water refracting starlight; she leans over a

banister and operates as that which guards the borders of light and shadow. Phrases,

language, memes certainly are in selfish or ruthless competition with one another,

though a single mode of reading cannot dominate the text itself but rather only

dominate the mind of the reader in a momentary manner. That is, one possible

meaning will, to the reader's surprise, slip and loop upwards or downwards to another

semantic possibility; a myriad of other readings—both semic and asemic, emotionally

ambivalent, and chronologically linear or non-linear—will also struggle for linguistic

and informational authority. Nuvoletta may not be selfish, but her incorporation into

the river is ruthless and absolute: at first, "She was alone" (*FW* 157.13), then "She

was gone," but ultimately her suicide occurs in the fluvial system that is the

expanding work itself. The effect is one of semantic and asemic simultaneity and of

ambivalent sentimentalism. The fable expresses more emotion that is warranted of

the process it represents, yet it operates effectively as a demonstration of narcissistic cross-diegetic level crossing.

Dawkins writes that "we must not think of genes as conscious, purposeful agents. Blind natural selection, however, makes them behave rather as if they were purposeful, and it has been convenient, as a shorthand, to refer to genes in the language of purpose" (Dawkins 196). Here, again, is an explicit example of conceptual metaphor: a mode of language employed to transform asemic and valueless processes into meaningful language. That this mode of language seems to provide agency to those chemical—or linguistic—processes is indicative of the ways in which the mind itself is engaged in a bidirectional relationship of semantic formation with phenomena; that is, it is sentimental. Dawkins employs the following example: "when we say 'genes are trying to increase their numbers in future gene pools,' what we really mean is 'those genes that behave in such a way as to increase their numbers in future gene pools tend to be the genes whose effects we see in the world'" (196); or, this is what Joyce is doing when dramatizing the Nuvoletta fable. That this mode of utilizing conceptual language or agential metaphors, describing valueless processes in terms of those which may be the effects of willed action, is convenient according to Dawkins:

> Just as we have found it convenient to think of genes as active agents, working purposefully for their own survival, perhaps it might be convenient to think of memes in the same way. In neither case must we get mystical about it. In both cases the idea of purpose is only a metaphor, but we have already seen what a fruitful metaphor it is in the case of genes. We have even used

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words like 'selfish' and 'ruthless' of genes, knowing full well it is only a

figure of speech. (196)

Yet, figures of speech are indeed the modes of accessing, evaluating, and

transforming reality; language, like scientific modes of symbolic notation, is not

numinous but is rather metaphorical. The claim that these agential modes of language

are simply metaphor is misleading here. Dawkins suggests that memes are living

structure; the "life" or "living" of these linguistic modes is, in fact, not at all

mystical—that is, transcendent—but are instead immanent extensions of the

ineluctable modality that changes and adapts and changes with its constitutive

ambient media ecology.

Something is at stake here, however, at least on a material analytical level.

Thinking about memes, or metamemetics, disrupts certain distinctions between

material and the conceptual; that is, there is an ontological level crossing that brains

(material structures) are structurally reconfigured by ideas (conceptual abstractions).

Gleick records evolutionary psychologist Nicholas Humphrey's response to Dawkins'

meme as that which should not simply be considered metaphorically but, rather,

technically: "When you plant a fertile meme in my mind," Humphrey writes,

you literally parasitize my brain, turning it into a vehicle for the meme's

propagation in just the way that a virus may parasitize the genetic mechanism

of a host cell. And this isn't just a way of talking—the meme for, say, "belief

in life after death" is actually realized physically, millions of times over, as a

structure in the nervous systems of individual men the world over. (Gleick

315)

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This gesture towards the parasitic will return in a moment. What is crucial, however, is Humphrey's emphasis on how certain ideas or memes have physically become manifest in the nervous systems of individuals all over the world. This is another instance of hierarchical level-crossing. For Wilde, it is the crossing between the apparently distinct ontological levels of Victorian England and Hallward's canvas; here, it is the distinction between literary sentimentalism and the physical structure of the individual brain; Nuvoletta does acquire a kind of life after death, a diegetic event that, given the structure of the novel, repeats *ad infinitum*, each time the same yet different. The haziness here is between the abstract and the conceptual, though the two are self-reflexively intertwined in ways that suggest a complexity that disorders such a hierarchy. The paradox of transcending incompleteness, a metamemetic position is simply an expansion of the ineluctable modality. Nuvoletta crosses diegetic levels—consider the conceit linking the noosphere and the biosphere—only to be integrated into the ambience of the work itself, ultimately parasitizing and reconfiguring the text as a whole. The reader's "gnoses" of the text is not transcendent but immanently fissioning and mutative.

Yet, this gesture does not explicitly suggest that the organic or the cognitive is in fact undergoing a mutation to the material, so much as the inanimate is most effectively conceptualized as alive, as living structures. Dawkins engages in a kind of Darwinian structuralism, or what he refers to as "Universal Darwinism" (322). From this position, he suggests that "all life, everywhere in the universe, would turn out to have evolved by Darwinian means" (322). That Dawkins recognizes this conceit as one that is "general," rather than as a concise argument "based upon the facts about

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life as we know it" suggests that this approach is one that proceeds in principal. "In principle arguments such as mine," he writes, "can be *more* powerful than arguments based on particular factual research. My reasoning if it is correct, tells us something important about life everywhere in the universe. Laboratory and field research can tell us only about life as we have sampled it here" (322). This universalist claim is not so much philosophical arrogance as it is an intellectual conceit from which Dawkins can make further claims, not only regarding natural selection on the genetic level, but also in regards to analogous parallelisms. Therefore, Dawkins is capable of making claims like: "memes should be regarded as living structures, not just metaphorically, but technically" (192). Here is Dawkins apology: "DNA is a self-replicating piece of hardware. Each piece has a particular structure, which is different from rival pieces of DNA. If memes in brains are analogous to genes they must be self-replicating brain structures , actual patterns of neuronal wiring-up that reconstitute themselves in one brain after another" (323). That is, memes, or ideas, restructure the patterns of the brain, and according to Dawkins, physically rearrange brain structures. If King Lear is the pattern of all patience, it is appropriate that the *Wake* constitutes the pattern of all potentialities. That is, Joyce, like Wilde, is a *monstrorum artifex*.

Memes, like all replicators, are "survival machines," a term Dawkins employs to denote both the material and the processes through which replicators mutate for survival. With the *Wake*, the brain and historiographic culture form a kind of closed, dynamic ecology, an ambient Heraclitean river. Consider the following passage in which, for the sake of consistency, the term "gene" has been substituted by "meme":

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The first thing to grasp about a modern replicator is that it is highly

gregarious. A survival machine is a vehicle containing not just one [meme]

but many thousands. The manufacture of a body is a cooperative venture of

such intricacy that it is almost impossible to disentangle the contribution of

one [meme] from that of another. A given [meme] will have many different

effects on quite different parts of the body. A given part of the body will be

influenced by many [memes], and the effect of any one [meme] depends on

interaction with many others. Some [memes] act as master [memes]

controlling the operation of a cluster of other [memes]. In terms of the

analogy, any given page of the plans makes reference to many different parts

of the building; and each page makes sense only in terms of cross-references

to numerous other pages. (Dawkins 24)

The messages in the *Wake*—the linguistic and cognitive processes that instigate

change amongst the respective diegetic levels—become the constitutive and

ubiquitous structure through which "survival machines" operate in a literary fashion.

What is important to consider regarding the significance of the conceptual

structures is that they are all Heraclitean rivers. As a result each operates self-

similarly as the conceptual topos for the *Wake*. Furthermore, these conceptual topoi,

or non-material extensions of the central nervous system and its cognitive acrobatics,

are established as topographically, thus conceptually, different levels of diegesis. As

a result, the link between the noosphere/infosphere and the brain are intricately linked

in a turbulent, ambient ecology. What, then, might reconfigure an understanding or

engagement with the *Wake* is to imagine the text and its cognitive extension as a kind

of ambient Heraclitean river through which the reader must first navigate. Such

ecological metaphors should, however, not alienate the conceit of the *Wake* as an

information system. Rather the extenions of material or organic into the non-material

or information—from blood to bits—is the foundational logic structuring the diegetic

level crossing in discussion. Much in this sense, the *Wake* is very much a proto-

information era text, almost metonymical for the sensibility and experience of the

information boom of the turn of the millennium. The work is a "fast emerging world"

where can find a multitude in a given word, or anyone in any place. The *Wake* shifts

its canonical authority to the cognitive mutations of the reader while, instantaneously,

the reader's authority is a point of suspicion insomuch as subjectivity here is co-

adapting rapidly with the constitutive fluent ecology. While ambient findability

invests freedom in the individual, it also, by its very logic, envelops the individual

into its ubiquity: "*Why, why, why! Weh, O weh! I'se so silly to be flowing but I no*

canna stay!" (*FW* 159.17-18). Read the quotation again: "*Why, why, why! Weh, O*

weh! I'se so silly to be flowing but I no canna stay!" The phrase is no longer there

nor is the reader: I no canna stay. The reader cannot read the same phrase twice since

the reader is the book, the noosphere, the river memetically adapting with Joyce's

text. That is, the imperative of reading the *Wake* is to conceptually blend the static

with the dynamic, the stable with the fluid, information with meaning, language with

mind, and ambivalent shifts in sentimentality with changes in sense ratios. In short, it

is appropriate when navigating Joyce's river that the reader conflate the "groot hwide

Whallfisk" (*FW* 13.33-34) with the land. The reader cannot step into the same river

twice since the reader is level crossing "into the river that had been a stream" (*FW* 159.10).

Ultimately, whether the "ineluctable modality of the visible" or the "ineluctable modality of the audible" (*Ulysses* 31), the reader, like Stephen is forced to submit to the absolute continuity of experience through shifting sense ratios when engaged in unusual media. And Stephen is steadfast in asserting his continuity: "Open your eyes now. I will. One moment. Has all vanished since? If I open and am for ever in the black adiaphane. *Basta!* I will see if I can see" (31). As Stephen opens his eyes, he accepts that one cannot sever the mind from the world/word: "See now. There all the time without you: and ever shall be, world without end" (31). If one sense is severed, it continues in another diegetic space; in short, Stephen is—like Nuvoletta— inescapably and dynamically knotted with multiple levels of diegesis whereby a movement from one diegetic space to another simply results in reorganization of sense ratios: labyrinth without end. The world without end is embedded within language just as the word is embedded within the world. Like the bells of George's church, both the level of language and the brain are "a creak and a dark whirr in the air high up" (57); transportation of one diegetic level to another, and it somehow remains in multiple locations simultaneously as an "overtone flowing through the air" (57). The "Nausicaa" episode of *Ulysses* has Leopold Bloom experience a similar, though less successful, level crossing. Like Stephen, Bloom's experience also takes place along the shore of the beach. After his encounter with Gerty MacDowell, Bloom begins writing a message in the sand employing a stick as a writing instrument. It begins with "I" (312) and is promptly interrupted: "Some flatfoot

tramp on it in the morning. Useless. Washed away. Tide comes here. Saw a pool near her foot. Bend, see my face there, dark mirror, breathe on it, stirs. All these rocks with lines and scars and letters. O, those transparent! Besides they don't know. What is the meaning of that other world. I called you naughty boy because I do not like" (312). Following the interruption, Bloom writes five more characters "AM. A." (312); however, rather than concluding the sentence, he effaces "the letters with his slow boot" (312). Bloom seems to miss the significance of this moment. Rather than recognizing himself as cognitively embedded within the markings in the sand, he concludes "Hopeless thing sand. Nothing grows in it. All fades" (312). Whether or not Bloom assumes the letters in the sand are "in the waste of all peacable worlds" (*FW* 158.10-11), he does not linger to contemplate his relationship with the letters in an intimate or sentimental way. Rather than accepting the reflexive quality of "I. AM. A." as a complete formulation in itself—that is, Bloom is extended into and embedded within the characters scraped into the sand and *vice versa*—he rejects this operation valuing growth over reconfiguration. "Granular as this first membrane might be," writes Teilhard of the birth of thought and self-reorganization, "the noosphere there and then began to close in upon itself—and to encircle the earth" (Teilhard 206). The letters effaced by the slow boot thus disassemble and are engulfed within the noisy ambience of tiny pebbles; the procedure is, therefore, remarkably similar to Nuvoletta's suicide: that of dissolving character into the ubiquitous noise of informational fecundity.

So, Nuvoletta's suicide is her transformation and complete sublimation into looping processes of the text/brain relationship. Death, in this episode, is a dramatization of the fluent dissolve of the cognitive centre into language and

language into a cognitive centre. The girl's death by condensation is, for Burns, a fall

"out of her virginal life, and, when she is an Anna Livia, she will fall, not to her

corporeal death but to the death of physical innocence" (Burns 324). That is, when

she transforms into an Anna Livia—the river and the text—the loss of physical

innocence, on a structural level, is the narcosis of the body as it is absolutely

transferred into the water. In short, Nuvoletta is a survival machine because she, like

the reader, perpetually, repetitively, and reflexively extends into alternative levels of

diegesis. Unlike Bloom who "looped, unlooped, noded, disnoded" (*Ulysses* 226), by

not recognizing the extension of his cognitive centre in the phrase "I. AM. A.,"

Nuvoletta's transformation is "motamourfully" successful: a metamorphosis of the

word (*mot*)—and thus perception—through the sentimentality of *amour*. Henry

Miller intimates this in more aggressively energetic language, privileging the position

of writer though intimating the ambience of cognitive reception from a reader: "I am

a writing machine…The thing flows. Between me and the machine there is no

estrangement" (Miller 28). Writing machines belong to the same ecology as

Dawkins' survival machines; consequently, so do reading machines. The intimation

here is again that of self-reflexive loops moving in surprising ways between linguistic

transfer (writing machines producing survival machines) and cognitive transformation

(reading machines). While the processes here are dynamic they are also ubiquitous;

the sentimentality is ambient and, yet, ambivalent. Each survival machine only

makes sense in terms of cross-referencing, not only other survival machines, but its

ambient relationship with writing machines and reading machines. We find ourselves

back where we begin, yet the signpost is uncanny. "Destiny takes pleasure in

repetition, variants, symmetries," writes Borges (Borges "The Plot" 36). One cannot

truly escape ubiquity, the semantic dimensions of lexography and syntax change with

indifferent constancy, the same phrases, yet different. "So it returns," as Bloom

muses, "Think you're escaping and run into yourself. Longest way round is the

shortest way home" (Joyce *Ulysses* 309). I am *so silly to be flowing but I no canna

stay*: I am a writing machine; I am a reading machine; I am a Heraclitean river; I am

Finnegans Wake; I am a strange loop; I am motamourfully protean.

Chapter Four

"Zero, zero, and zero": Zero-Player Games,

Proceduralism, and Samuel Beckett's *Endgame*

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Everyone knows his part by heart. Words and gestures follow each other in a relaxed, continuous manner, the links as imperceptible as the necessary elements of some properly lubricated machinery. Then there is a gap, a blank space…And then suddenly the action resumes, without warning, and the same scene occurs again.
-Alain Robbe-Grillet *Project for a Revolution in New York*

As a reader I find myself locked within an automaton I cannot control, which will never do what I would do (even by chance), and which provides no nourishment.
-Steve Aylett

Cellular automata are stylized, synthetic universes.
- Tommaso Toffoli and Norman Margolus

1. Introduction: Something is taking its Course

In his essay *Trying to Understand* Endgame (1957), Theodor Adorno comments

that in the work of Samuel Beckett "poetic procedure surrenders…without intention"

(119). This observation is a remarkable claim about, not Beckett's work, but the

effect *Endgame* has on the way we experience intimacy with narrative. Indeed, it

clears the path for the question of what exactly is "taking its course" (Beckett 13, 32)

in *Endgame*. Not only does it open an interrogation of what is taking its course, but

also how the play proceeds on its own. Adorno suggests that with Beckett "thought

becomes as much a means of producing meaning for the work which cannot be

immediately rendered tangible, as it is an expression of meaning's absence" (Adorno

120). He continues: "the interpretation of *Endgame* therefore cannot chase the

chimera of expressing its meaning with the help of philosophical mediation" (120).

Instead, Adorno suggests that understanding Beckett's text "can mean nothing other than understanding its incomprehensibility" or engaging in an act of "reconstructing its meaning structure" only to admit that the text, in the end, "has none" (120). Adorno's observation is acute yet also limiting if not misleading. Beckett's text does not necessarily suggest that "philosophy, or spirit itself, proclaims its bankruptcy as the dreamlike dross of the experiential world, and the poetic process shows itself as worn out" (121). Instead, the process that propels *Endgame* is one that ultimately demands of the reader the assumption of an unusual interpretive pose: that of readerly non-involvement, diminution of agency, and, at its most extreme, to assume the conceit of readerly exclusion. Pose means that the interpreter assumes a particular intellectual, analytical, and imaginative position in an argument, particularly when the argument is grounded on the self-contradictoriness of a paradox. To do so, we must first establish certain premises for this argument:

1. We must consider *Endgame* as an ideal text divorced from materiality or performability (it is, after all, a play).
2. This ideal text is a poetic procedure that proceeds without intention.
3. Without readerly intervention, the ideal text still "takes its course."
4. The reader assumes an imaginary pose: of exclusion and non-agential involvement.

So, what we have here is a thought experiment: an ideal text that proceeds without intention and without a reader, a kind of textual automaton. What this thought experiment is asking is: what are the effects of this ideal text? What might it say about our relation to narrative; what is the significance of our exclusion? That is to

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say, how might *Endgame* offer itself to us as a means to meditate on the encroaching shift in what is becoming the predominant cultural narrative code in the developed world: the increasing dominance of programming and digital code over the narratives of alphanumeric code?[18] For this final inquiry, we will turn to the work of Vilém Flusser. Along this trajectory, Flusser writes that

> when programming has set itself free of alphanumeric writing, thought will no longer need to work through a spoken language to become visible. The detour through language to the sign, such a distinguishing mark of Western cultures (and all other alphabetic cultures), will become superfluous. Thought and speech will no longer be fused, as they were when the alphabet was predominant…As the alphabet is surpassed, thought will liberate itself from speech, and other, nonlinguistic thought (mathematical and pictorial, and presumable completely new ones as well) will expand in ways we cannot yet anticipate. (Flusser *Does Writing have a Future?* 63)

Ultimately, our thought experiment suggests that *Endgame* can act as a stepping stone toward new thinking in the digital age as much as it is a text for interpretation. The path to thinking in this manner, however, is tangled and strange. It is our prerogative not to interrogate the path; thought rests waiting sometime beyond this tradition of analysis.

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[18] I am using Flusser's extrapolation on alphanumeric code. He writes "the alphanumeric code we have adopted for linear notation over the centuries is a mixture of various kinds of signs: letters (signs for sounds), numbers (signs for quantities), and an inexact number of signs for the rules of the writing game (e.g., stops, brackets, and quotation marks). Each of these types of signs demands that the writer think in the way that uniquely corresponds to it. Writing equations requires a different kind of thinking from writing rules of logic or the words of language" (Flusser *Does Writing have a Future?* 23).

But why *Endgame* in particular? The work of Beckett is at the forefront of a literature that interrogates the relation between the degree to which language and narrative constitute the individual and the degree to which the individual may fracture, destroy, and reconfigure language and narrative as a means towards identifying the essential quality of the self. Creative work is, in its very poesis, implicitly critical and so it is no surprise that *Endgame* among other work by Beckett, appears at a point in recent history when major shifts in thinking from structuralist and functionalist thought towards more explicitly poststructuralist and formalist modes of thought. *Endgame* is situated at this historical moment, resting on the structuralist intellectual environment yet allowing the poststructuralist impulse to arrive as a new poetic and critical possibility. I recognize *Endgame* as a psycho-ecological text since it operates according to both functionalist and formalist impulses. However, what makes the text particularly relevant to this study is how it also suggests, by procedural determinism and various failures of engagement that constitutes its narrative, is how it suggests experimental thinking outside the strange loop of language and thought: that is, *Endgame* asks us to become the void in order to, paradoxically, think in the void. The void here, however, is not a concrete absence but, instead, it is that which rests in silence succumbing to and inviting the possibility of that which is unthought to arrive. The void is submission, a clearing of self, a distinct nothingness that resists the poesis of self-representation. To ground this position, I turn to Heidegger's formulation of thought as that which demands the invitation of openness of being to the possibilities that arrive before us. This openness is at once founded upon language but only insomuch as that language is

poetic. Poetic here means that which is never before uttered, the event of allowing

futurity to speak through *Dasein*, to allow the nothingness of the abyss of thinking to

be the condition upon which production and creative thinking can only take effect. In

short, Heidegger asks for an exclusion of the agent in thought almost as if the agent

were a medium for the possibility of new thought. Again, like in the case of Beckett,

the unthought, the nothingness, the unword, is not a concrete and literal absence.

Instead, it is a calling for the assumption of a position of intellectual and agential

openness, clearing and diminution.

   This is all more urgent now than it has been to date. Indeed, *Endgame* is situated

at the moment when a shift from structuralism to poststructuralism takes place.

Moreover, the text is also situated at the moment when another shift is becoming

more explicitly manifest: the shift from a focus on language to a focus on digital

code. Structuralism suggests that there is a reductionist element that functions as the

substratum of any narrative and, resultantly, explains and structures all that which is

extrapolated from it and rests within its constitutive logic. Poststructuralists do not

deny the limits of this logic, but they do recognize the play and spontaneity of the

individual within the limits of the constitutive system. Meanwhile, in symbolic logic

and computer science a new narrative was gradually taking shape: that which would

come to be called digital code. By the early 1960s, the intellectual climate is

recognizing the birth of an information revolution. "It is a commonplace that

cybernetics and automation will bring about radical changes in our way of life" writes

Ulric Neisser in 1964 (Neisser 71). More emphatically, McLuhan acknowledges the

gradual formation of a "cybernation" (McLuhan "Cybernation and Culture" 103). In

the twenty-first century this code will constitute the predominant mode of information

dissemination. The most fundamental thing that distinguishes this kind of narrative

from the narratives of language is its rigidity. While poststructuralists unveiled the

degrees to which the limits of language are subject to spontaneity, plasticity, and

direct agential intervention, digital code is explicitly—even radically—structuralist: it

is rule-based and is the procedure that operates inflexibly as the substratum that

makes discourse—and its limits—possible. While code expresses itself as that which

is not poetic, it is nevertheless expressive of poesis; that is, it is productive, creative,

and offers new possibilities for narrative. While code proceeds by a procedure we

may identify as mechanistic, this kind of mechanism is ultimately creative. Indeed,

Valéry suggests that a poem is "a kind of machine for producing the poetic state of

mind by means of words" (Valéry 152). Deleuze identifies something similar:

> The modern work of art is anything it may seem; it is even its very property of
>
> being whatever we like, of having the over-determination of whatever we like,
>
> from the moment it works: the modern work of art is a machine and functions
>
> as such…Why a machine? Because the work of art, so understood, is
>
> essentially production—productive of certain truths. (Deleuze *Proust and*
>
> *Signs* 128)

Perhaps Deleuze could be more accurate to suggest that the work of art is productive

also of uncertain truths. Valéry's suggestion that the mechanistic can establish the

poetic state of mind, however, is accurate. If we consider these statements in terms of

mechanistic procedures of code, then we see that the poetic state of mind—the mind

capable of thinking the unthought—may arrive at us by accepting the arrive of digital

code as a narrative that, if learned, may offer similar flexibility (within deterministic limits) that poststructuralists recognize in language. That is, digital code is capable of, not only poesis, but poetry more generally understood.

In this chapter we recognize digital code as the substratum that lies beneath the narrative; that is, in our thought experiment, the proceduralism of digital code is that which is taking its course. As opposed to the conflict between ideas/speech/writing and reality and the difficulty of discourse to arrive at truth, digital code as narrative in the thought experiment is a coherent system but does carry along with it any semantic value. This is the difficulty of engaging with the text in an intimate way; that is, its incoherence is due to the inflexibility of its systemic coherence. With psycho-ecology, I suggest that it is the power of systems that structure our thought and self identity; yet, I also suggest that through Heidegger's formulation we are able to learn to think spontaneously at the limits of what the procedural narrative of code permits. Here, digital code is the constitutive narrative structure with which we cannot fully engage until we think at its limits. Rather than focusing on the way the reader can think and interpret within the operating narrative structure, I suggest that we speak after the narrative by allowing the possibilities of the future to arrive at us by being open to it by thinking in the void.

The text demands that the reader identify *as* absence and openness toward the end of taking up identification with incomprehensibility and become transposed directly into that which is without semantic structure. Our thought experiment concerns how the reader must submit through absence to the text at hand. This conceit is in contradistinction to what Robbe-Grillet suggests about *Endgame*, even though our

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thought experiment, like Robbe-Grillet's reading is phenomenological. "The human condition, Heidegger says, is to *be there*. Probably it is the theatre, more than any other mode of representing reality, which reproduced this situation most naturally," writes Robbe-Grillet, "the dramatic character *is on stage*, that is his primary quality: he is *there*" (Robbe-Grillet 111). Robbe-Grillet's position, however, is one that emphasizes the actor/spectator relationship. Robbe-Grillet suggests that the characters/actors are *there* in the sense that they must explain themselves and that Beckett's theatre is an "assertion of Sartrean freedom *en situation*" (Connor 129). And so, Robbe-Grillet suggests that Beckett's stage characters "do not seem to have a text prepared beforehand and scrupulously leaned by heart, to support them. They must invent. They are free" (Robbe-Grillet 121). Here, however, we will discuss how neither Beckett's characters nor his readers are free. Instead, we are concerned with the strange role into which *Endgame* posits the reader of the text. Beckett's text strives for a kind of paradoxical and imaginative rigor rather than an existential or post-philosophic exactness; instead of operating as a dramatic and textual "opposition to ontology" (Adorno 121), *Endgame* is experimental, employing nothingness as a means of making manifest that which we wish to forget: meaninglessness, nothingness, our own exclusion. "Interrogating the nothing—asking what and how it, the nothing, is—turns what is interrogated into its opposite," writes Heidegger, "the question deprives itself of its own object" (Heidegger "What is Metaphysics?" 96). What our thought experiment asks is how the textual object may take its course by depriving itself of its questioner—that is, its reader—and what this may mean. The chapter asks of *Endgame* how the determinism of closed systems may be made

diegetically significant when the text is considered as a zero-player game: a game that

proceeds by digital code, grammar, and laws—instead of intuitive human language—

without the input of human players. [19] This observation offers the possibility of

meditating upon the motion of the play and Beckett's utterance that something is

taking its course with consideration to actantial narrative theory, procedural rhetoric

in current video game theory, and a discussion of computer simulated cellular

automata with emphasis on John Conway's zero-player automation *Game of Life*

(1970). James Acheson suggests that Beckett's early plays are preoccupied with "the

relationship between art and the limits of human knowledge" (Acheson 141) and

indeed our idealized *Endgame*, text of our thought experiment, pushes this concern to

the ends of logic. Indeed, as Lawrence E. Harvey suggests, with Beckett's work "art

is above all a way to fill the vacant house, to make the time go by while we wait for

the end" (Harvey 393). That the end never arrives in *Endgame* makes more emphatic

that the end, nothingness, is a condition of the reader. In order to do so, Beckett

inverts the paradoxical formulation of the interrogator investigating nothing by

allowing nothingness to assume the role of procedure and the reader to assume the

pose of nothingness.

   Early readings of the text are primarily concerned with its relationship to the

intellectual and cultural influence of existentialism. Martin Esslin's *The Theatre of*

the Absurd (1961), and its chapter "Samuel Beckett: The Search for the Self," is

likely the most influential and long lasting of these studies. While accurate, this kind

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[19] This does not exclude the author of the text or game. Just as zero-player games, like John Conway's
Game of Life was designed by Conway, Beckett's text is clearly written by Beckett. However, the
manner in which these games play out is, beyond the initial set-up or writing of the game, procedural
and automatic.

of reading is reductionistic and, resultantly, by the 1970s and 1980 fell out of favor

for more nuanced readings.[20] The title of the play[21] has had an influence on earlier

critical judgments of the text as a "the last part of an on-stage game of chess"

(Acheson 150). So, as Acheson reminds us, that Hamm and Clov have very red faces

while Nagg and Nell have very white faces implicates the text's characters in some

kind of conflict, though a conflict governed by strict rules. David Helsa, as a result,

sees Nagg and Nell as removed from the game and so removed from the conflict.[22]

Francis Doherty, however, notes that the colors red and white represent the same

team in chess: "in this play we have only one of the two colours for the protagonists,

only one side of the board. The metaphor of the chess-game is so far frustrated,

broken-backed, and any critical attempt to pursue too closely the movement of the

play in chess terms will be equally frustrating" (Doherty 93). Acheson remarks that

there is, instead, another game at play here, "a game in which Beckett pits his four

red-or white-faced characters against the darkened faces of the theatre audience"

(Acheson 150).   The purpose of this game, Acheson suggests, is to disrupt our

attempts at interpreting the play in a definitive manner. In this way, checkmate

occurs at the moment the audience "recognizes that the play is meant to be a

counterpart both to the infinitely complex world around us and to the equally

complex human mind—a counterpart that resists even the most ingenious

explications" (150). Later critics, however, are more concerned with the mechanics

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[20] Readings of Beckett in, and against, the context of Esslin's Theatre of the Absurd, however, still appear. See Michael Y. Bennett's *Reassessing the Theatre of the Absurd: Camus, Beckett, Ionesco, Genet, and Pinter* (2011).

[21] The meaning of the title was finally confirmed in Deidre Bair's *Samuel Beckett: A Biography* (1978). Beckett corrected the mistranslation of *Fin de partie* as *End of The Game* to "*Endgame*, as in chess" (Bair 467).

[22] See David Helsa, *The Shape of Chaos: An interpretation of the Art of Samuel Beckett.* Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P., 1971. 151. Print.

of the text that make this destabilization possible. That is, more recently, the

discussion regarding Beckett's work is concerned primarily with language and

performance.[23] Michael Worton provides an apt summary:

> The central problem [that Beckett's early plays] pose is what language can
>
> and cannot do. Language is no longer presented as a vehicle for direct
>
> communication or as a screen through which one can see darkly the psychic
>
> movement of a character. Rather it is used in all its grammatical, syntactic
>
> and—especially—intertextual force to make the reader/spectator aware of
>
> how much we depend on language and how much we need to be wary of the
>
> codifications that language imposes upon us. (Worton 68)

The role of language in Beckett's work, however, operates in an even more radical

than that of Worton's suggestion. Jonathan Boulter questions Robbe-Grillet's

assertion of presence via a Derridian reading of *Endgame* in "'Speak no more': The

Hermeneutical Function of Narrative in Samuel Beckett's *Endgame*." Rather than

disclose a ground from which meaning can be negotiated and made possible, Boulter

demonstrates how Beckett's narrative functions to make manifest the absence of this

possibility. Ultimately, narrative in *Endgame* gestures towards the reification of "the

absolute interpretive isolation of the characters" and "to signify the impossibility of

hermeneutic or dialogical, communication" (Boulter 42). This shift towards language

and the logic through which language discloses absences rather than presences marks

fascinating paths for the consideration of *Endgame*.

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[23] Here, however, we are concerned only with language, and text specifically, that speaks itself.
Performance relies too heavily on spectatorship and, as is often the case, the agency and intentionality
of the spectator as a kind of reader.

It is, however, Ileana Marcoulesco's interrogation of the tendency towards solipsism[24] in Beckett's oeuvre, one his central concerns, against—in the sense of *alongside*—which the argument at hand is also situated. Marcoulesco suggests that solipsism is commonly "no more than a provisional, ephemeral, almost fictional stage in the development of an argument" but that in the work of Beckett this philosophical mode operates as "one of the leitmotifs that stamp his artistic construct with the indelible emblem of an impossible wager" (Marcoulesco 215). The disclosure of Beckett's fiction as a pose for Cartesian *solus ipse* is, as Marcoulesco points out, accurate. With her identification of this stance as refracted through the Cartesian occasionalism of Arnold Geulincx (1624-1669), she aptly suggests that, in Beckett, "the *cogito* is an assertion of powerlessness associated with an incessant and painful introspection; the ego, unlike the Cartesian subject of *cogitationes*, is at best an occasion for, and not an underlying substructure of, thinking" (216). While this is effective for Beckett's work in general, at least from *Murphy* onward, *Endgame* suggests something different. Rather than the tendency towards inwardness, *Endgame* posits the reader in a different movement of diminution. Like Mouth in *Not I* (1972), but to the diegetic level of the reader, Beckett attempts to "supersede anguish" by bringing about the "nihilation of the ego itself" (217). *Endgame* turns the *cogito ergo sum* inside out demonstrating that something proceeds with no concern to organic intentionality: or, *Endgame* is a procedure, *non sum*. Something is taking its course but we, as readers, are not in control.

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[24] Marcoulesco ultimately concludes that "it would be preposterous to try and inflate his flickering meditations to the size of a philosophical self-conscious thesis, or to dissolve his work into a mosaic of metaphors each signifying a philosophical dilemma, and argument, or a counterargument. Solipsism is not really thematized by Beckett, but only lightly touched upon, toyed with, and, in the end, deconstructed" (Marcoulesco 223).

2. Actants and Pataphysics: Imagining Exclusion

In the 1960s Algirdas Greimas developed the actantial narrative model as a means of analyzing the processes and functions of narrative. Rather than examining the story, plot, or character, Greimas' model suggests that the study of action and operation is the imperative of structural reading. Greimas' methodology is as effective in its possibilities as it is striking in its limitations. What Greimas does provide, however, is the analytical concept of actants.[25] One clarification that needs to be made in regards to actants is that they are not actors. Actants "operate at the level of function" write Donna Haraway (Haraway 115). "Several characters in a narrative may make up a single actant," she continues, "the structure of the narrative generates its actants…Non-humans are not necessarily 'actors' in the human sense, but they are part of the functional collective that makes up an actant" (115). On the level of narrative, various elements and essential qualities operate in tandem in such a way as to propel a narrative, to animate it without the agential intention. Haraway suggests that in this sense, "action is not so much an ontological as a semiotic problem. This is perhaps as true for humans as non-humans, a way of looking at things that may provide exits from the methodological individualism inherent in concentrating constantly on who the agent and actors are in the sense of liberal theories of agency" (115). While Haraway suggests that action in this sense is more of a semiotic than ontological problem, Adorno's comments in regards to *Endgame* suggest that the text may indeed yield some remarkable ontological observations. Not only does the

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[25] Greimas categorizes actants into six categories of three oppositions: 1. The axis of desire: subject/object 2. The axis of power: helper/opponent 3. the axis of knowledge: sender/receiver. See Greimas, A. J. *Structural Semantics: An Attempt at a Method*. Trans. Daniele McDowell, Ronald Schleifer, and Alan Velie. Lincoln: U of Nebraska P., 1983. Print.

actant as a critical tool provide a means of examining the function of a narrative as it operates without agential intention, this inevitably places the reader-theorist in the odd position of false objectivity. "Let us be on guard against the dangerous old conceptual fiction that posited a 'pure, will-less, painless, timeless knowing subject,'" writes Nietzsche, and suggests that "we should think of an eye that is completely unthinkable, an eye turned in no particular direction, in which the active and interpreting forces, through which alone seeing becomes seeing *something*, are supposed to be lacking; these always demand of the eye an absurdity and a nonsense" (Nietzsche *On the Genealogy of Morals* 119). For the poetic procedures to operate without intention the reader as an inevitable agential force may aim to imagine their absence; that is, interpretation must take on the conceit of agential exclusion. Though, "there is *only* a perspective seeing, *only* a perspective 'knowing,'" suggests Nietzsche (119), this perspective can only be made more urgent through its temporary eclipse. Such is the oddity the reader/interpreter must face when imagining such an eclipse of both semantics and agency. Like the poetic procedure—and *Endgame* as actant—the reader must, then, undertake an imaginary pose: a mode of reading founded upon the principle of imagination and procedure rather than induction. That is, our thought experiment asks of us to imagine our exclusion.

This imaginary pose is tantamount when considering *Endgame* as that procedure that surrenders without intention. It is a pose that is explicitly one of relations amongst actants *not* amongst reader and text. In his collection *Pataphysical Essays* (2012) René Daumal writes that "there is no other way to define an actor but through its action, and there is no other way to define an action but by asking what other

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actors are modified, transformed, perturbed, or created by the character that is the

focus of attention" (Daumal "Ghosts" 122). In other words, we do not define actors

by their agency or intentionality but, instead, on the systemic effects they cause and

how these systemic effects precede the very possibility of such causality. One way of

thinking about this is by engaging with the text in a pataphysical manner. The term

pataphysics was coined by Alfred Jarry in his posthumous 1911 novel *Exploits and*

Opinions of Doctor Faustroll, Pataphysician: A Neo-Scientific Novel: "Pataphysics,"

he writes "is the science of imaginary solutions, which symbolically attributes the

properties of objects, described by their virtuality, to their lineaments" (Jarry 145).

He continues: pataphysics is

> the science of the particular, despite the common opinion that the only science
>
> is that of the general. Pataphysics will examine the laws governing
>
> exceptions, and will explain the universe supplementary to this one; or, less
>
> ambitiously, will describe a universe which can be—and perhaps should be—
>
> envisaged in the place of the traditional one, since the laws that are supposed
>
> to have been discovered in the traditional universe are also correlations of
>
> exceptions, albeit more frequent ones, but in any case accidental data which,
>
> reduced to the status of unexceptional exceptions, possess no longer even the
>
> virtue of originality. (145)

So, the pose our thought experiment suggests is a pataphysical one. Also, Jarry is at

the core of a theatrical movement that Esslin retrospectively christened the Theatre of

the Absurd. However, this assumption greatly deforms the possibility of Beckett's

work. Esslin suggests that "language in Beckett's plays serves to express the

breakdown, the disintegration of language" and that his complete oeuvre "is an endeavor to name the unnamable" (Esslin 85). Esslin remarks that Jarry's pataphysics is "subjectivist and expressionist" (351) and "exactly anticipates the tendency of the Theatre of the Absurd to express psychological states by objectifying them on stage" (351). This is true, but what Esslin disregards, and what is essential in our thought experiment is that pataphsyical subjectivism and expressionism need not be projected outward towards some kind of presence on the stage. That is, Esslin is not committed to the pataphysical gesture that would negate the very site of psychological and expressionistic projection. Indeed, as P. J. Murphy suggests, "Esslin's statements epitomize a common tendency to circumvent the full implications of the problem by, at key critical junctures, identifying Beckett's characters as somehow real or human, when it is the rigorous investigation of their very status as bestowed by language that is at the heart of the Beckettian enterprise" (Murphy 222). Esslin's reading *requires* anthropocentrism whereas Jarry's, like Adorno's and Beckett's, do not. So, considering Jarry's pataphysics as a guide to Beckett legitimizes the potentials of imaginative solutions to reading effectively by imaginatively removing the reader from the procedure at hand. Because, as we saw in Adorno's comment, Beckett's work is by definition exceptional, the pose the reader needs to assume when reading *Endgame* must be exceptional: to assume the pose of virtual disappearance and to allow the narrative, the actant, to take its course and to attribute the properties of objects to the contours of their operations.

3. *Endgame*, Experimentation, and Scientific Narrative:

Experiment Without Experimenter

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Jarry's pataphysics and, by extension, *Endgame*, express the relation between scientific experimentation and literary experimentation: or, the relation between scientific and aesthetic paths to epistemology. Sociologist and philosopher of science Bruno Latour remarks that "the accuracy of [a] statement is not related to a state of affairs out there, but to the traceability of a series of transformations" (Latour 123). So, when the narrative structure of scientific method is divorced from experimenter and object of inquiry what is revealed is a narrative that confirms itself via repetition and reproducibility. In this sense, experimentation as a narrative, whether scientific or literary, may be appropriately considered according to the criteria of pataphysics. Experimentation is not that which projects outwards; our thought experiment on *Endgame* does not *tell* us something about the world so much as it tells us about analogous methodological procedures. So, whereas Esslin would have experimental modes of theatre perform an expressionistic projection of psychological states, Beckett's text—as it negates the reader as the site of inquiry—projects only its own methodological procedure. That is, experimentation itself, as a kind of narrative, once put in motion also takes its course: science and art, as actants, proceed and surrender without intention. The reader's most intense involvement then, is the pose of non-involvement and so the traceability of transformations here is not concerned with the state of affairs of the individual or the world so much as with the effects produced by the transformations within the parameters of methodology as a narrative. "An experiment is a story, to be sure…but a story *tied* to a situation in which new actants undergo terrible trials" writes Latour (123). Something is put in motion by experimentation itself, the experiment takes its narrative course, and ultimately

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experimentation reveals what it *must* reveal via relations amongst repetition. However, the text of *Endgame* will "never end" and will "never go" (Beckett 81) because it cannot accomplish more than the reproducibility of results implicit in the inductive methodology assumed by scientific experimentation. The text simply refuses to engage our intimacy by prohibiting our involvement.

> "The assertions of science are on shaky ground," writes Vilém Flusser,
>
>> the puzzle-solving way of reading is a criterion-setting one in disguise, and science establishes values just as politics and art do. Science, like art and politics, is a fiction. It is becoming more and more clear that it is nonsense to try to distinguish sharply between science, art, and politics. We can assume that in science, there are normative-political as well as fictional, artistic, and poetic impulses at work. (Flusser *Does Writing Have a Future?* 83)

Beckett's text may be that which resists the inductive bias behind the scientific project. It is too much to suggest that the effect of *Endgame* is to blur the distinction between science, art, and politics. Instead, what *Endgame* accomplishes through repetition without change is the denaturalization of criterion-setting modes of expectation associated with interpretation of scientific and experimental narrative. "Imagine if a rational being came back to earth," muses Hamm, "wouldn't he be liable to get ideas into his head if he observed us long enough" (Beckett 33). Beckett, however, does not allow this rational being to make an appearance and so, such a criterion-setting mode of interpretation is excluded allowing the text to proceed according to its own criteria. It is Hamm who has to provide the voice of this rational being, this extra-diegetic entity: "Ah, good, now I see what it is, yes, now I

understand what they're at!" (33). For Hamm, this agency of interpretation from without will be that which may justify that his suffering will not "all have been for nothing" (33). Unfortunately for Hamm, *Endgame*, the experiment without experimenter or object of study, proceeds according to the criteria of an unknown procedure that resists rationalization. Whether the course of events is or is not "for nothing" rests outside the methodology of experimentation *as* experimentation. Value judgment *is* interpretation yet the interpreter is asked by our thought experiment to submit to the pose of nonexistence. The reader, then, cannot "understand what they're at" because to do so is inaccurate to the procedure at hand.

In Latour's discussion on Pasteur's philosophy of science, where "the phenomena preceded what they are the phenomena of" (Latour 118-119), he talks of what he calls the "name of action" (119). The name of action is an expression Latour ultimately uses to describe "strange situations—such as experiments—in which an actor emerges out of its trials" (308); another way of thinking about this phenomenon is when procedure reveals procedure. Here, "we do not know what *it is*, but we know what *it does* from the trials conducted…a series of performances *precedes* the definition of the competence that will later be made the sole cause of these very performances" (119). "The actor does not yet have an essence," writes Latour, instead "it is defined only as a list of effects…Only later does one deduce from these performances a competence, that is a substance that explains why the actor behaves as it does" (308). The name of action, in short, is what happens when experiment as a narrative unfolds *as* scientific narrative. That is, the methodologies and procedures of scientific experimentation propel themselves by a kind of logical prescription: they

are pre-scripted by their constitutive narrative. *Endgame* follows this process yet the text excludes the possibility of the later deduction. Instead, the text is the persistent series of performances that precede its causal meaning. In other words, *Endgame* speaks itself; the narrative precedes interpretation and proceeds as an actant. The reader thus assumes, rather than the privileged position of experimenter-interpreter, an imaginary pose to the conundrum of reader a text via exclusion. The name of action for *Endgame* as procedure, then, is the manner that the text reveals itself *as itself* through iteration.

So, unlike Joyce's reconstructive synthesis, the diegetic conundrum in Beckett's text demonstrates, as Latour remarks about scientific experimentation, that "'construction' is in no way the mere recombination of already existing elements" (Latour 124). Rather, there is a relationship between the narrative and narrative *as* narrative—both as actants—that "*mutually exchange and enhance their properties*" (124). In this way, we cannot say that Beckett writes as a means of prompting the text to say simply what he wants it to say—that the text cannot simply prompt meaning from the reader—nor can we claim that the reader simply prompts any additional semantic competence from the text or its author. Instead, the three are shapelessly intertwined and proceed without intention, agential design, or value. Hamm seems aware of, not only his lack of agency, but his proxy status as actant indistinguishable from the diegetic determinism of the text:

HAMM:

Clov.

CLOV *(absorbed)*:

Mmm.

HAMM:

Do you know what it is?

CLOV *(as before)*:

Mmm.

HAMM:

I was never there.

(Pause.)

Clov!

CLOV *(turning towards Hamm, exasperated)*:

What is it?

HAMM:

I was never there.

CLOV:

Lucky for you.

(He looks out of window.)

HAMM:

Absent, always. It all happened without me. I don't know what's

happened.

(Beckett 74)

That Hamm was never there is a contentious statement. He is, certainly, *there* in

Robbe-Grillet's sense: he, as actant, proceeds and repeats like and with the narrative

of the text. Yet, Hamm is an actant constituent rather than an agent; that is, he is *part*

of the text and therefore *part* of the textual actant. This, perhaps, is the closest point of identification he can have with the extra-diegetic. Though Clov thinks this state of exemption is lucky, as if unlike Hamm, he *is there* always, his lot is no different from any*one* or any*thing* constituted by the narrative *as* narrative. "Action is slightly overtaken by what it acts upon," Latour writes,

> an experiment is an event which offers slightly more than its inputs…transfers of *in*formation never occur except through subtle and multiple *trans*formations…there is no such thing as the imposition of categories upon a formless matter…in the realm of techniques, no one is in command—not because technology is in command, but because, truly, *no one*, and *nothing* at all, is in command. (Latour 298)

Because nothing and no one is commanding the procedure that animates the actant,[26] there is no reason to attempt communion between diegetic realms. "We have to abandon the division between a speaking human and a mute world" and we must dismantle the assumption that "we have words—or gaze—on one side and a world on the other," writes Latour (140). Because we need not think of the language of the text as a kind of series of large vertical gaps between things and language, we may instead consider "small differences between horizontal paths of reference—themselves considered as a series of progressive and traceable transformations" (141). *Endgame*, like Latour, aims to move beyond models of interiority versus exteriority, looking for an "alternative to the model of statements that posits a world 'out there' which

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[26] Beckett, as author, certainly commands the text. However, the thought experiment here asks that we suspend this kind of judgment. Beckett's presence in this kind of formulation is that of one who establishes the initial set-up of the actant. He puts the automaton in motion, but it is the automaton that takes its course.

language tries to reach through a correspondence across the yawning gap separating the two" (141).

The episode, in which Hamm requests a prayer, articulates the drama of incomplete inter-diegetic communication, or multi-level interchange. "Let us pray to God" (54), he suggests. And although he is interrupted by the crisis of a rat in the kitchen, Hamm, Clov, and Nagg do proceed to attempt a petition of observance, first out loud, then in silence, both to no success. With rehearsed and ironic expectation, Hamm asks "well?" (55) only to receive Clov's answer "What a hope! And you?" inevitably abandoning his aspirations for communion; from Nagg, the comical "Wait!" and then "Nothing doing!" (55); and Hamm himself to himself: "Sweet damn all" (55). Their attitude of abandon is not, however, one of theological crisis. Though Hamm concludes that "the bastard…doesn't exist" (55), his remark is not exclusively concerned with God so much as an extra-diegetic *primum movens* of any kind. Here, the absent animator is the reader more precisely than God. The crisis is not religious so much as it is diegetically systematic: the crisis is not cosmic but, rather, one of malfunction. The text is more indicative of a reiterative, skipping simulation than a theological cosmology. The reader, in this sense, is the nonexistent bastard, not God. While Hale suggests that the universe of *Endgame* is one "without order" (Hale 83), what unveils itself is that the text is one of absolute order. And so the experiment, the name of action, of *Endgame* lends itself to the discourse of computer procedure just as aptly as it does to procedures of language.

4. The Excluded Reader: Zero, Zero, Zero, Heidegger and Thinking

Dramatizing, in this subtle and systemic fashion, our exclusion as reader, the text operates in such a way as to make not only narrative appear before itself as narrative, but the reader (through subtraction) interfering in the act of reading by disclosing process itself. This procedure discloses itself most tellingly in the episode where Clov turns the telescope, first on the window, and then on the auditorium. This move, though certainly meta-theatrical on the level of performance, operates in two ways when considering the play as that which propels itself by its own logic. First, it reveals its diegetic level as something distinguished from, though somehow connected to and dependent upon, the auditorium or extra-diegetic level of the reader. That is, Clov's action at once discloses and deconstructs the conventional way of thinking about the performer/audience or text/reader relationship. Secondly, the episode emphasizes the misplacement of the extra-diegetic: Clov unveils that the link which establishes readerly agency has been severed. Indeed, this is the moment when the reader needs to take notice and make manifest that the mystery of his or her absence is hidden, not only on the level of Hamm and Clov, but back at his or herself:

CLOV:

Things are livening up.

(He gets up on ladder, raises the telescope, lets it fall.)

I did it on purpose.

(He gets down, picks up the telescope, turns it on auditorium.)

I see... a multitude... in transports... of joy.

(Pause. He lowers telescope, looks at it.)

That's what I call a magnifier.

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(He turns toward Hamm.)

Well? Don't we laugh?

HAMM *(after reflection)*:

I don't.

CLOV *(after reflection)*:

Nor I.

(He gets up on ladder, turns the telescope on the without.)

Let's see.

(He looks, moving the telescope.)

Zero...

(he looks)

...zero...

(he looks)

...and zero.

HAMM:

Nothing stirs. All is—

CLOV:

Zer— (Beckett 29)

The "zero" to which Clov refers is not simply the enigmatic nothingness that lies

beyond the room. The mischievous connotation that haunts Clov's claim that "things

are livening up" (in the environment that rests beyond the room's bare interior) is a

gesture of caustic irony. There is, at once, a reader beyond; however, the conceit

demands the reader amounts to zero: "Nothing…nothing…good…good…nothing…

goo—" (78). The exclusion of the reader, that is, announces itself via its absence in the reiterative narrative motion at hand. The reader is, in a word, "corpsed" (30) since we accept the analogy between death and exclusion. On the level of the textual automaton, in its deathly reiterations, "the whole place stinks of corpses" (46) yet, as Clov aptly remarks, for the extra-diegetic, "the whole universe" (46) carries the same stench. But, the play cannot fall into further decay: the methodological iterative structure forbids this kind of trajectory. At what seems to be a moment of intense anxiety, of remarkable self awareness, Hamm attempts to initiate an intervention (an absurd intervention that fails as it must always have failed) into the unfolding procedure, to bring something unthought, unknown, unprogrammed, into being: "Think of something" (46), he requests.

This shift to thought directly confronts the iterative determinism of the play. Yet neither Hamm nor Clov exist in a constitutive environment where they can think simply because the determined procedural motion of the characters will not permit them to learn. Heidegger remarks that the human being "learns when he disposes everything he does so that it answers to whatever essentials are addressed to him at any given moment. We learn to think by giving our mind to what there is to think about" (Heidegger *What is Called Thinking* 4). Hamm and Clov cannot dispose of every thing they do because they are not agents but constitutive parts of the narrative as actant. Since, "in order to be capable of thinking, we need to learn it first" (4), the two characters cannot think because they cannot learn. If they were to give their minds over to what there is to think about, their minds would, in this case, neither undergo an experience nor a transformation. As systemically constituted characters,

they can only give themselves over to the constitutive actant-as-narrative. Whatever

essentials are indeed addressed to these at any given moment will, indeed, be

precisely what is, was, and will be addressed to them. Heidegger continues:

"everything thought-provoking *gives* us to think. But it always gives that gift just so

far as the thought-provoking matter already *is* intrinsically what must be thought

about" (4). They cannot, in its most absolute sense, engage in what is thought-

provoking because they constitute what is thought-proceeding. Marcoulesco remarks

that philosophy "can be read into the Beckettian text as the willy-nilly

accompaniment of the drive to think, along with the impossibility to think, one's lived

experiences…yet never as the thing itself" (Marcoulesco 223). The inflexible method

of the narrative here determines the impossibility of thinking with each cycle of the

text. So, the episode unfolds with the kind of comedy that reveals the mechanics of

the humour: procedure and routine.

That is, routine in the sense of a conventional unfolding of procedure is a kind of

coded set of instructions. Clov's answer to the request to think is, in its own right,

appropriate: "What?" (Beckett 46). Hamm's response is reiteration as much as

recitation. That he responds "angrily" (46), is precise in its futility: "An idea, have an

idea" (46). Hamm's anger, he adds the exclamatory "A bright idea" (46), unfolds

according to the deterministic logic of a joke. We simply wait for the punch line

because the diegetic determinism here again disallows the joke to proceed in a

manner which is rejuvenating or defiant. "Although the state of the world,"

Heidegger writes, "is becoming constantly more thought-provoking" (Heidegger

What is Called Thinking 4)—and we might add that the play is gesturing towards a

similar status of inquiry—what is "*most thought-provoking is that we are still not thinking*" (4). *Endgame* radicalizes this. Clov and Hamm are still not thinking because they will, forever stuck in the automaton, still not be thinking. Clov, "*pacing to and fro, his eyes fixed on the ground, his hands behind his back*" (Beckett 46), as the stage directions note, is, with comical futility "having an idea" (47). His idea? An ineffectual and absurd mode of action: to "set the alarm…You whistle me. I don't come. The alarm rings. I'm gone. It doesn't ring. I'm dead" (47) so Clov claims. If, as Heidegger remarks, we are still not thinking, then "this course of events seems to demand rather that man should act, without delay instead of making speeches…and never getting beyond proposing ideas on what ought to be, and how it ought to be done. What is lacking, then is action, not thought" (Heidegger *What is Called Thinking?* 4). Then in *Endgame*, this predicament is radicalized: what is lacking is both thought and action. Whether the alarm is working or not—"it's worked too much," but "it's hardly worked at all," because "it's worked too little" (Beckett 47-48)—is not significant. What is significant is that the sum of each possibility is procedurally equivalent: the narrative proceeds, something takes its course.

5. Zero-Player Games and Proceduralism: *Endgame* as Automaton

This is all very odd. Yet, the impulse to understand certain narrative systems with the exclusion of a participant or reader has recently been undertaken in the theory of game and play. At the 2012 *Philosophy of Computer Games Conference* in Madrid, Spain Staffan Björk and Jesper Juul presented an evocative paper titled "Zero-Player Games, Or: What we Talk about When We Talk about Players." Their argument aims to disclose the biases behind the way we think about games and players. For

Björk and Juul, the most frequently cited definitions of games in the literature refer to players as central to an understanding of what games are and what gaming means. While the authors acknowledge that games are "designed objects" (Björk and Juul) that imply an engagement, input, or intervention on behalf of a player, they argue "that many common conceptions of players are too vague to be useful" (Björk and Juul) and that any definition of a game overly reliant on the idea of a player will prove both denotatively and connotatively inadequate. In order to reconceptualize the player concept, Björk and Juul aim to examine the paradoxical idea of the zero-player game: a game that proceeds without agential intervention and thus an appropriate analogue to Beckett's narrative. The critical and theoretical discussion surrounding the question of what a game is and what a game means is, Björk and Juul suggest, explicitly what they call "player-centric." As a result, the means of extrapolating upon the concept cannot reflexively account for itself as a phenomenon. With the very gesture of the player-centric debate, games are being defined by a sub-component (the player) that is assumed to be a semantic constituent and thus cannot disclose themselves to themselves as games, to flip and turn in on themselves. The player-centric bias is one that stems from the bias of the critic; indeed, it is odd to concede that one can consider an object of study without *one considering it*. Yet, what Björk and Juul propose here is not a study that wishes to argue against the significance of the study of players and their role in games—or to argue that players need to be dismissed entirely from the gaming equation—but instead to bring to the attention of the discussion that it possible and productive to examine games in the absence of the player concept. In a sense, they are also engaging in pataphsyical

imagination solutions. In this logic of negation, Björk and Juul are effectively establishing the negative space through which one may consider both games and players *and* games and non-players. Here we note the analogue to our thought experiment on *Endgame*. Acheson suggests that Beckett undermines "whatever illusion the play might fortuitously create by insisting on *Endgame* as theatre" (Acheson 152). Yet, we recognize the text as a kind of literary zero-player game in that it operates by a similar conceit: that of an excluded reader[27] and a text that proceeds impartially taking its course.

Björk and Juul suggest that "many publications from the last few years have tried to argue that it is impossible to discuss games as designed objects, since games only actually exist when played, or *as* played" and that games are objects that "give players the ability to intentionally act towards reaching the goals of a game" (Björk and Juul). In much the same way, we are tempted to think of texts as deliberate artifacts that only exist—in the sense that they reveal a kind of semantic ambience— when read or *as* read and that give readers an intentional engagement towards a reading goal, primarily completing the narrative through active engagement and interpretive intervention. Citing the dominant literature on games and players, Björk and Juul find a noticeable bias in the role of player agency, intentionality, and aesthetic engagement.[28] Such features are fundamentally at odds with the procedurality of *Endgame* since the unfolding of the text is, and will be as Clov

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[27] Here the reader could conceivably constitute a traditional reader, a theatre spectator, or stage actor responding to textual prompts. For this discussion, however, we will limit the inquiry to the scope of this project: the reader in the conventional sense, a person who reads text from a printed book. There is much discussion regarding Beckett's intertextuality; that is, the relational role of text-as-text. See Michael Worton's "*Waiting for Godot* and *Endgame*: Theatre as Text" in *The Cambridge Companion to Beckett* for an introduction.

[28] My survey of the critical literature is indebted to research compiled by Björk and Juul.

remarks, "the same as usual" (Beckett 4). Linda Hughes in "Children's Games and Gaming" (1999), for example, identifies the interpretation and aesthetic variation on behalf of the player when discussing games:

> Game rules can be interpreted and reinterpreted toward preferred meanings
> and purposes, selectively invoked or ignored, challenged or defended,
> changed or enforced to suit the collective goals of different groups of players.
> In short, players can take the same game and collectively make of it strikingly
> different experiences. (Hughes 94)

Laura Ermi and Frans Mäyrä (2005) note the "interactive nature" as the "essence" of a game, concluding that "there is no game without a player" (Ermi and Mäyrä). Mia Consalvo, in "There is No Magic Circle" (2009), suggests that games are created—that is, they come into being—"through the act of gameplay" and that this coming into being "is contingent on player acts" (Consalvo 408). Likewise, Gordon Calleja, in *In-Game: From Immersion to Incorporation* (2011), also places emphasis on a coming into being, "a game becomes a game when it is played," he writes: until the game is played "it is only a set of rules and game props awaiting human engagement" (Calleja 8). Miguel Sicart, in his paper "Against Procedurality" (2011), engages in a critique of the limits of procedural rhetoric and "takes a game design perspective akin to that taken in some procedural rhetorics,[29] but expanding it to include creative play[30] as the privileged way in which games act as rhetorical artifacts" (Sicart). Sicart identifies what is the exceptionalist argument that dominates discussion about games "an argument that justifies that games as aesthetic form are different than

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[29] See Ian Bogost's *Persuasive Games. The Expressive Power of Videogames* (2007) and Mary Flanagan's *Critical Play. Radical Game Design* (2009).
[30] See Bernie DeKoven's *The Well-Played Game. A Playful Path to Wholeness* (2002).

others" (Sicart) and "that games belong to players—at most, games belong to the designer if she wants to establish a dialogue with the player through the game—but *play*, the performative, expressive act of engaging with a game, contradicts the very meaning of authorship in games" (Sicart). Sicart's movement towards play rather than procedure is, again, evocative of this privileging of the player as agent, prime mover and instigator of the game. Yet the exceptionalism of agency and aesthetic engagement is, ultimately, that which rests upon the assumption of the player as a central element to games themselves and, by extension, the reader as a central element for a text. Indeed, in *Endgame*, the role of player or reader is interrupted. Rather than a text that permits the performative expressive acts of play and, in striking contrast to Hughes' emphasis on players instigating "strikingly different experiences" from the same game, *Endgame* is a text that reveals itself in the thought experiment as radically unchangeable: it is the same as usual. Indeed, rather than Sicart's creative play and agential flexibility, Hamm concurs that, within the parameters of the *Endgame* environment, "there's no reason for it to change" and Clov, always lacking in his faith for any kind of diegetic intervention, utters the significant remark: "all life long the same questions, the same answers" (Beckett 5). What we may suggest now is that Beckett's play, as a game, is proceduralist rather than player-centric. As a text, it is proceduralist rather than reader-centric. Its central diegetic conceit is, at its most extreme, that the text is a zero-player game.

Perhaps the most well-known kind of a zero-player game is the cellular automata. Cellular automata "lend themselves to a variety of uses. In some cases, they are used to simulate processes for which the equations that do exist are not adequate to

describe the phenomena of interest" (Keller 205), writes Keller. Conventionally

cellular automata are implemented as a means of "producing recognizable patterns of

'interesting' behavior in their macrodynamics rather than in their microdynamics"

(205). "Cellular automata models are simulators par excellence," she continues,

"they are artificial universes that evolve according to local but uniform rules of

interaction that have been pre-specified. Change the initial conditions, and one

changes the history; change the rules of interaction, and one changes the dynamics"

(207). Tommaso Toffoli and Norman Margolus write in *Cellular Automata*

Machines: A New Environment for Modeling (1987) that

> cellular automata are stylized, synthetic universes…They have their own kind
>
> of matter which whirls around in a space and a time of their own…A cellular
>
> automata machine is a universe synthesizer. Like an organ, it has keys and
>
> stops by which the resources of the instrument can be called into action,
>
> combined, and reconfigured. Its color screen is a window through which one
>
> can watch the universe that is being "played." (Toffoli and Margolus 1)

Keller notes that Christopher Langton, computer scientist and founder of artificial life

systems, understands cellular automata as that which could be used to simulate

universes or environments for living beings, "where the ultimate goal would be to

create life in a new medium." (Keller 209). Langton speculates that the simulation of

artificial life:

> is the study of man-made systems that exhibit behaviors characteristic of
>
> natural living systems. It complements the traditional biological sciences
>
> concerned with the *analysis* of living organisms by attempting to *synthesize*

life-like behaviors within computers and other artificial media. By extending

the empirical foundation upon which biology is based beyond the carbon-

chain life that has evolved on Earth, Artificial Life can contribute to

theoretical biology by locating *life-as-we-know-it* within the larger picture of

life-as-it-could-be. (Langton "Artificial Life" 1-2)

The means of creating new kinds of life in a process that follows a "bottom-up

synthesis" (Keller 210), in which great complexity arises from very simple rules and

within determined—limited and local—parameters, has "proved to have immense

appeal for people far beyond the world of computer scientists. Perhaps especially, it

proved appealing to readers and viewers who have themselves spent a significant

proportion of their real lives inhabiting virtual worlds" (210). The virtual worlds to

which Keller refers are extended here to those which range from various forms of

social media to our engagement with aesthetic artifice. H. Porter Abbott suggests that

what this kind of "formal experimentation requires from the critic is to find ways of

talking about Beckett's fiction as an imitation of life without producing those often

elaborate structures of meaning, knit from a variety of 'clues,' which have marred so

many otherwise excellent discussions of Beckett" (Abbott 8-9). When considering

our thought experiment as a kind of zero-player game, under the conceit of a cellular

automata, we are faced with the obtrusive potentiality of facing life as we know it and

life (or, exclusion from life) as it could be. There are no clues for us here because

Endgame does not invite the interpreter to intervene in the procedure. Much in the

way Langton imagines the significance of computer models of artificial life as

creative mimesis, representation that looks-forward and is future-directed, *Endgame*

unfolds most intensively in the text, yet its effects are felt most intrusively on the extra-diegetic level. The life as it could be, horrific and sterile as it is on the textual level, is life as it is, at the extreme of future-directedness, absent.

The most famous example of a zero-player game is Conway's *The Game of Life* (1970). In the October 1970 issue of *Scientific American*, Martin Gardner, wrote the piece "The Fantastical Combinations of John Conway's New Solitaire Game 'Life'" in his "Mathematical Games" column, where discusses John Horton Conway's experimental zero-player game then simply called "Life." The game follows the principles of automation expressed in the work of game theorist and mathematician John von Neumann. "A mathematical simulation of cellular genetics," writes Justin Parsler, the game is more of an "intellectual puzzle" than a traditional game. In this sense, the game follows in the same spirit as that of *Endgame* a text that Acheson identifies as "a puzzle" (Acheson 204). *The Game of Life*, like *Endgame*, plays out on a metaphorical checkerboard.[31] The squares on the board are representative of a cell that is either dead or alive. "Because of its analogies with the rise, fall and alternations of a society of living organisms, it belongs to a growing class of what are called 'simulation games'—games that resemble real-life processes" writes Gardner (Gardner 120). "To play life you must have a fairly large checkerboard and a plentiful supply of flat counters of two colors. (Small checkers or poker chips do nicely)" he continues, "An Oriental 'go' board can be used if you can find flat counters that are small enough to fit within its cells. (Go stones are unusable because they are not flat.) It is possible to work with pencil and graph paper but it is much easier, particularly for beginners, to use counters and a board" (120). With each turn,

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[31] Conway's *The Game of Life* can, however, also be played on an actual checkerboard.

"cells either die or come to life, depending on the number of living neighbors they have; a cell with two live neighbors dies, one with more than three dies, one with three stays stable. A dead cell with three live neighbors comes to life" (Parsler). The game is, in essence, a Universal Turing Machine. First conceptualized in 1936 by mathematician and cryptologist Alan Turing, the Turing Machine can simulate the logic of any well-formed instructions. In other words, the Machine can be modified in such a way as to process the logic of any computer algorithm.

The game is also remarkable in its ability to establish a logic of complexity from simplicity: that is, the variety of possible ways to set up the game in combination with its simple rules proves profound in its meditative implications. "The rules," Gardner suggests, "should be such as to make the behavior of the population unpredictable" (Gardner 120). And, the rules are quite simple. Gardner identifies only three: first, "there should be no initial pattern for which there is a simple proof that the population can grow without limit," second, "there should be no initial patterns that apparently do grow without limit," and finally,

> there should be simple initial patterns that grow and change for a considerable
> period of time before coming to end in three possible ways: fading away
> completely (from overcrowding or becoming too sparse), settling into a stable
> configuration that remains unchanged thereafter, or entering an oscillating
> phase in which they repeat an endless cycle of two or more periods. (Gardner
> 120).

To these criteria, Conway adds simple genetic laws. Each cell of the checkerboard, which is assumed to be a plane that extends infinitely in every direction, will have

eight relative cells "four adjacent orthogonally, our adjacent diagonally" (Gardner).

Here are the laws: first, survivals constitute those cases in which "every counter with

two or three neighboring counters survives for the next generation" (Gardner). The

second refers to deaths: "each counter with four or more neighbors dies (is removed)

from overpopulation. Every counter with one neighbor or none does from isolation"

(Gardner). And the third refers to births: "each empty cell adjacent to exactly three

neighbors—no more, no fewer—is a birth cell. A counter is placed on it at the next

move" (Gardner). It is clear here that once the pieces on the board are set up, there is

no direct engagement by the player. "The initial setup of the game board" writes

Parsler, "constitutes 'playing' the game, even though there are no set goals, nor any

winner" (Parsler); in this sense, the processes that follow from the well-formed

instructions unfold as a series of deterministic nodes of mutation and change upon

which the instigator may consider. Gardner is careful to indicate that "it is important

to understand that all births and deaths occur *simultaneously*" and that they

"constitutes a single generation or, as we shall call it, a 'move' in the complete 'life

history' of the initial configuration" (Gardner). This complex relation between

simplicity and complexity—and by initiating simple diegetic procedures that reiterate

indefinitely—*Endgame* proves remarkable when considering it in relation to cellular

automata.

Like simple systems of chaos and unpredictability, from Conway's *The Game of

Life* emerge complex patterns and demonstrates that even within the confines of

determinism, even simple determinism, the complexity and variability of possible

results are staggering. Hayles writes that

emergence implies properties or programs appear on their own, often

developing in ways not anticipated by the person who created the simulation.

Structures that lead to emergence typically involve complex feedback loops in

which the output of a system is repeatedly fed back in as input. As the

recursive looping continues, small deviations can quickly become magnified,

leading to the complex interactions and unpredictable evolutions associated

with emergence. (Hayles "Narratives of Artificial Life" 146)

The recursive loops to which Hayles refers are unique from those we examined in

earlier chapters. That is, unlike Hofstadter's strange loops that are characterized by

inter-diegetic level crossing paradoxes, the feedback of simulation systems occur only

in one diegetic level. This recursive process is how, from simple sets of instructions,

properties or programs can emerge on their own. Gardner discusses this emergence

further: "You will find the population constantly undergoing unusual, sometimes

beautiful and always unexpected change." He continues,

In a few cases the society eventually dies out (all counters vanishing),

although this may not happen until after a great many generations. Most

starting patterns either reach stable figures—Conway calls them "still lifes"—

that cannot change or patterns that oscillate forever. Patterns with no initial

symmetry tend to become symmetrical. Once this happens the symmetry

cannot be lost, although it may increase in richness. (Gardner 120)

And here, with the "still life" is where we find *Endgame*. Itself a kind of zero-player

game, a diegetic automata, a procedure that cannot change, is skipping, and oscillates

forever. Hamm's repeated phrase "don't stay there, you give me the shivers"

(Beckett 32, 65) thus signifies something structurally metonymical: his shivers are the shivers of the simulated, still life universe. He is not commanding Clov to cease standing because of the ominous sense it causes him to experience. Rather, it becomes indicative of the text itself and a recognition thereof: Hamm is addressing the simulated universe as much as he is addressing Clov. The shivers are the oscillation of still life, the recognition of the constitutive situation. "Well, you'll lie down then, what the hell!" expresses Hamm, "Or, you'll come to a standstill, simply stop and stand still, the way you are now. One day you'll say, I'm tired, I'll stop. What does the attitude matter?" (37). Indeed, the attitude does not matter; one may say that they are tired and they will stop, but this cease in movement is not an end but an oscillation. The standstill, the simple stop, shivers, oscillates. The text itself takes on "nice dimensions, nice proportions" (2); that is, the text assumes a symmetry that cannot be lost.

So, when Hamm demands to know "what's happening" (13), Clov's response that something is taking its course is as indicative of the proceduralist rhetoric as it is an accurate description of the diegetic motion of the text. "Proceduralists claim that players, by reconstructing the meaning embedded in the rules, are *persuaded* by virtue of the games' procedural nature" writes Sicart (Sicart). They also suggest that "objects can embody values in their design" (Sicart) and justify "the cultural validity of computer games providing arguments for the exceptionality argument (computer games as unique, expressive cultural objects), and opened the possibility for a new take on serious games that combined design approaches with a strong humanist discourse" (Sicart). The discourse associated with proceduralism, Sicart suggests,

opens the discussion on how games are vehicles of political and ideological significance; here, however, we are concerned with how the narrative-as-game may disclose particular operations of reading on the extra-diegetic level. The work of Ian Bogost in his studies *Unit Operations: An Approach to Videogame Criticism* (2006) and *Persuasive Games: The Expressive Power of Videogames* (2007) are significant additions to proceduralist criticism in both academia and industry: "It is the success of Bogost's arguments not only across the academic body but also in the games industry what makes proceduralism a popular way of conducting computer games scholarship" (Sicart). Sicart continues:

> What proceduralism…[argues is] that computer games present a technological and cultural exception that deserves to be analyzed through the ontological particularities that make computer games unique, in this case, the fact that they have a "procedural nature." The proceduralists take their starting point in [the][32] statement that digital games are unique, among other things, because of their procedural nature…that is, because they are processes that operate in [a] way that is akin to how computers operate…procedurality is understood not just as an ontological marker of computer games, but as the specific way in which computer games build discourses of ethical, political, social and aesthetic value. (Sicart)

Yet, with *Endgame*, the conceit of proceduralism is carried to a kind of extreme. The text itself embodies a diegetic value in its design, and this value is, however, reconsidered as that which operates and proceeds without intention. The demonstration at play is a text that proceeds without semantic value. Value here is

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[32] See Janet H. Murray's *Hamlet on the Holodeck: The Future of Narrative in Cyberspace* (1998).

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the status of meanings in relation to one another: value is the intentionally structured

hierarchical merit of one term in semantic exchange with others. To be without

semantic value is to be semantically procedural and heterarchical. That is, *Endgame*

expresses its value as a procedure signifying that without value. Hamm asks what is

happening, but he must already know (if knowledge is constituted and programmable)

as he is moved by unseen forces. We do not "play" the players in the text, rather they

are played by the valueless process, the design, of the play itself: "Me—*(he* yawns)—

to play," Hamm notes, his yawn expressing disjunction more so than ennui. The

disjunction being between "me" and "to play;" that is, rather than indicating that he

"plays" and therefore "is," Hamm's yawn signifies a vocalized gap that separates

agency from procedure. Hamm, though without diegetic agency, is not without an

acute sense of anxiety. There is embedded in *Endgame* the sense that the game itself

wishes to transcend its own process. The desire to exceed what Ruby Cohn calls the

"claustrophobic boundaries" (Cohn 21) of the room's walls that both constitute and

signify the architecture of procedurality is the straining to escape the valueless

processes: "Let's go from here, the two of us!" Hamm arduously cries to Clov, "You

can make a raft and the currents will carry us away, far away, to other…mammals!"

(Beckett 34).

However, Hamm's ardor speaks to the futility of his cry. There are no other

mammals—if we excuse the brief existence of a rat, or the questionable existence of

the boy[33] beyond the walls—in the design of *Endgame*. Indeed, it is Hamm's dog

that makes manifest the processes of text as a kind of game simulation rather than a

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[33] That the boy does not appear within the walls suggests that he cannot exist according to the
procedure in any way other than as a brief, non-manifest textual mention.

traditional narrative. This unsettles not only the status of narrative but also the status

of language in *Endgame*. In his discussion on *Endgame*, Benjamin H. Ogden

suggests that Beckett's language is one that forgoes any attempt at an ideal abstract

language of the kind Wittgenstein proposed in *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* in

favor of a language that is understood to be explicitly concerned with, following

Stanley Cavell, natural concretisms. Ogden suggests that "in order to speak a

language properly, then, one cannot just know the dictionary or formal definitions of

words (its 'ideal' generative grammar), but must understand the 'natural

environment' in which phrases and words are logical or appropriate" (Ogden 127).

The act of reading literature, Cavell suggests, is a process of "naturalizing ourselves

to a new form of life, a new world" and that by doing so it is essential to focus upon

the inhabitants of the fictional world (127). Ogden, however, seems to be gesturing

more towards a kind of reading position of which the sort proceduralists would agree.

He finds Cavell "too eager to 'hear' things in the text, to discover the cleverest

readings rather than to permit the text to yield its unique, multiform logic" and, so,

Ogden opts to "allow *Endgame* to speak for itself" (136). The wording of the play

must not speak *to* but rather speak *for itself*, to proceed without intention. The

wording of Hamm's request for his dog is, then, worth noting for its heterarchical

indeterminacy: "Is my dog ready?" (Beckett 39). Clov's responses, that the dog

"lacks a leg" and that he is "a *kind* of Pomeranian" (39, emphasis added), is equally

telling; the animal is, after all, a "black toy dog" with "three legs" (39). Here we

cannot read *Endgame* literally as Cavell might have us because we assume the pose

that the text proceeds on its own, the simulation moves itself and speaks itself. So,

not only is the dog a simulation, but it is one that reveals itself as an imperfect simulation demonstrative of a debilitating mutation of the appendages of agential mobility. Indeed, the lifeless dog becomes metonymical of both the status of language and the text itself:

CLOV:

Your dogs are here.

(He hands the dog to Hamm who feels it, fondles it.)

HAMM:

He's white, isn't he?

CLOV:

Nearly.

HAMM:

What do you mean, nearly? Is he white or isn't he?

CLOV:

He isn't.

(Pause.)

HAMM:

You've forgotten the sex.

CLOV *(vexed)*:

But he isn't finished. The sex goes on at the end.

(Pause.)

HAMM:

You haven't put on his ribbon.

CLOV *(angrily)*:

But he isn't finished, I tell you! First you finish your dog and then you put on his

ribbon!

(Pause.)

HAMM:

Can he stand?

…

CLOV:

Wait!

(He squats down and tries to get the dog to stand on its three legs, fails, lets it go. The

dog falls on its side.)

HAMM *(impatiently)*:

Well?

CLOV:

He's standing.

HAMM *(groping for the dog)*:

Where? Where is he?

(Clov holds up the dog in a standing position.)

CLOV:

There.

(He takes Hamm's hand and guides it towards the dog's head.)

HAMM *(his hand on the dog's head)*:

Is he gazing at me?

CLOV:

Yes.

HAMM *(proudly)*:

As if he were asking me to take him for a walk?

CLOV:

If you like.

HAMM *(as before)*:

Or as if he were begging me for a bone.

(He withdraws his hand.)

Leave him like that, standing there imploring me.

(Clov straightens up. The dog falls on its side.) (Beckett 40-41)

While Clov is only partly committed to the farce—he refers to the dog in the plural,

concedes that the black dog is "nearly" white, only to, upon interrogation, admit that

the dog, in fact, "isn't"—he does seem to demonstrate a recognition of the

proceduralism of the narrative as metonymically expressed by the dog. His response

to Hamm's accusation that the maker has forgotten the dog's reproductive organs is

indicative of the diegesis itself as an iterative procedure that is at once static and

sterile. The dog "isn't finished" and, until the end, the dog will have no genitalia.

However, there is no end to *Endgame*; the procedure forbids it. *Endgame* is, rather,

taking its course, and will continually do so *ad infinitum*. The dog cannot stand and

therefore cannot—like Hamm, Nagg, Nell, and the narrative itself in our thought

experiment—have or be engaged by any agential mobility. The text, like the dog, can only demonstrate the *as if* it were being asked to be taken for a walk; or, *as if* the intervention of agency and intentionally could provide alternatives to the strict design. That the narrative can "go on" differently from the procedural patterns determined by the text's design is impossible: an attempt at intentional intervention will, like the dog, fall flat. Indeed, while both Hamm and Clov indicate awareness of the proceduralism that governs the course of the text, here, it is Clov who euphemistically expresses that the text is "not a real dog, he can't go" (56). Indeed, the diegesis of the play, like the dog, is a simulation: it is "not even a real dog!" (69). It is not a real diegetic environment, it is not a game with a player, it "can't go," but it must take its course.

6. Simulation Fever: *Endgame* as Zero-Player Simulation

That *Endgame* is not a real diegetic environment implies its status as a simulation. The simulated environment that constitutes the text is radical in its proceduralism. Keller clearly identifies simulation as follows: "simulo *v*. 1. *To make* a thing *like* another; *to imitate, copy*…2. *To represent* a thing as being which has no existence, *to feign* a thing to be what it is not" (Keller 203). So, simulation is simultaneously openly mimetic and artificial. Ian Bogost, in *Unit Operations* (2006), utilizes the concept of "simulation fever" as a means of discussing the implications of procedurality on the relation between the system and its player. "Working through simulation fever means learning how to express what simulations choose to embed and to exclude," he writes (Bogost 109). The player thus becomes integrated in his or her relation to the processes determined by the game. Working through simulation

fever involves the recognition of how one is embedded within and how one is

excluded from the procedurality of the game. This mode thus permits a certain

flexibility in the agency and interpretive methodologies that a player may utilize to

understand the game while simultaneously remaining implicated in and determined

by those processes animating the game. Bogost suggests that certain kinds of

interpretation may achieve a point through which one may understand the system

from within and without: this

> would encourage player critics to work through the simulation anxiety a
>
> simulation generates. Part of this process takes place within the gameplay, as
>
> the player goes through cycles of configuring the game by engaging its unit
>
> operations. Another process of configuration has to do with working through
>
> the play's subjective response to the game, the internalizations of its
>
> cybernetic feedback loops. (Bogost 108-109).

What Bogost identifies as the working through of a simulation anxiety is, in fact, a

kind of anxiety itself. That is, the anxiety of undergoing an experience with

simulation is that which discloses anxiety to itself. The experience cannot be one

governed by anxiety, that causing anxiety, but instead anxiety is that disposition

which reveals anxiety. Anxiety is that which helps the player both recognize how he

or she is embedded within the systemic procedure of *Endgame* yet also forcing the

indifference of the system to that recognition by unveiling how one's intentionality is

ultimately, and paradoxically, excluded from the operation. The concept of

simulation fever, then, is a means of assuming a kind of contradictory stance

regarding how one may be an accomplice in the simulation itself: it is a means of

making meaningful the constitutive system and deterministic ambience while at the same time attempting to express how the player or reader experiences the system.

The player is, then, both embedded and excluded. Yet, this balance is, unlike almost every other element in Beckett's text, hardly symmetrical. Hamm and Clov are ultimately forced into this paradoxical stance. They seem largely aware of the procedurality of the text—of the parody that mocks the possibility for them to live authentically or make meaningful and meditative choice—and, yet, are unable to have an effect on the very procedurality that determines the reiterative narrative. So, when Hamm, for example, remarks that "nature has forgotten us" (Beckett 11), and Clov responds that "there's no more nature," the two are simultaneously recognizing the text itself as a kind of simulation as well as that constitutive environment, nature itself, being excluded from the artificial system in which they take their course. "No more nature! You exaggerate," Hamm repudiates suggesting that there is at least something that resembles nature—the artifact, the text as simulation—but Clov is steadfast: there is no more nature "in the vicinity" (11). That is, simulation is an approximation but not a spatial proximity; Hamm and Clov are, nevertheless, both embedded and excluded from the system. Again, Hamm and Clov do not fully correspond with Bogost's player; instead, it is the reader of *Endgame* who is most intimately embedded, and yet taking the conceit of the text as a case of radical procedurality—the zero-player game—the reader is more excluded than embedded in the text. While simulation fever allows, Sicart writes, for games to "convey messages and create aesthetic and cultural experiences by making players think and reflect about the very nature of the rules" (Sicart), this reflexivity is one that gestures more

intensely to that which is excluded rather than that which is embedded. If Hamm and Clov were fully embedded in the text, we could suppose some degree of agency from them. Because they are not, we see that they often do think and reflect about the nature of the rules, but the nature of these rules is not natural, they are artificial, simulated, and these thoughts and reflections are programmed. The procedurality here does not establish a delicate balance between agency and absence; rather, the text is one that gestures more towards that which expresses diminution of choice to the point of absence, nothingness, exclusion: zero. "Both mental modeling and cognitive mapping show how the interpretation of a game relies as much or more on what the simulation excludes or leaves ambiguous than on what it includes," writes Bogost (Bogost 105). In a strange turn for this logic, our zero-player game embeds the reader by readerly exclusion: the radical finitude of the extra-diegetic in relation to reiterative endlessness of the diegetic logic. Like Björk's and Juul's examination of what the player means to gaming in zero-player games, our thought experiment raises the question of what reader means with a text *as* zero-player game. So, with such simulation anxiety a simulation generates for the reader is at once that which intensifies self-awareness only towards a directionality of exclusion, the transitory conditionality of the reader.

The text, though one of repetition, cycles, and reiteration, operates in such a way to express a kind of communion with nothingness. Beckett's insistence on the repetitive qualities of the text juxtaposed with the sterility of the simulated natural environment is significant. When Hamm asks Clov if his seeds have come up, Clov's response is telling:

CLOV:

No.

HAMM:

Did you scratch round them to see if they had sprouted?

CLOV:

They haven't sprouted.

HAMM:

Perhaps it's still too early.

CLOV:

If they were going to sprout they would have sprouted.

(Violently.)

They'll never sprout! (Beckett 13)

Like all occurrences in *Endgame*, Clov's seeds will never sprout simply because they never have sprouted. It is the non-linear cyclical directionality of the text that determines this; Clov's hopelessness is not despair; it is, instead, procedural accuracy. Much in the manner that the toy dog is a simulation without reproductive organs, the diegesis of *Endgame* is a simulation where nature and the natural environment itself is absent, sterile, and incapable of proclivity and unpredictability. Hamm, with his typical exaggeration, muses: "But beyond the hills? Eh? Perhaps it's still green. Eh? *(Pause*.) Flora! Pomona! *(Ecstatically.)* Ceres!" (39). But the green will not sprout because, again, it never has sprouted in *this looping reiteration* and, so, cannot. Indeed, even stories themselves, mythology and narratives of growth and rebirth, are without significance; neither Flora nor Pomona, no Ceres are beyond the hills. That

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is, the prospect of both biological and narrative proliferation and growth are at odds with the static simulation that constitutes the diegesis of *Endgame*.

Like Conway's *Game of Life*, before achieving a state of still life, sterility, or reiterative death, there is a moment of remarkable fecundity, a simulation of nature's cycles of reproduction, flourish, prolificacy, and unpredictability. Whether the memories of these earlier cycles as recited in the text are based on past actualities is not important. What does draw attention, however, is that the very logic of Nagg and Nell, as an older generation, suggests that there is something of a programmed past that proved remarkably different from *Endgame*'s skipping present. That is, Nagg and Nell once reproduced: Hamm is their offspring. And, indeed, Hamm understands this as a great injustice, cursing Nagg as an "accursed progenitor" (9), an "accursed fornicator" (10), and as "scoundrel" (49) asking Nagg "why did you engender me?" (49). Not only did Nagg and Nell once procreate, they have memories of a past once remarkable in its fecundity, growth, and mobility. Nagg and Nell, now confined to living inside trash cans, once rode, and "crashed on [a] tandem and lost [their] shanks" (Beckett 16). Unlike the present, their orientation in the world is precise and relatable: "It was in the Ardennes" recalls Nell, "on the road to Sedan," is Nagg's concurrence. Though, abruptly juxtaposing this memory with the present, Nagg compassionately interjects, asking Nell whether she is "cold" (16). Indeed, the tenderness and thoughtfulness that Nagg and Nell share towards one another is also of the past. Nagg recalls how he once could make Nell laugh, "the first time," he made her laugh so intensely, he "thought [she'd] die" (21). This recollection is, again, set in a nostalgic scene of time, place, and mobility now lost: this time, not in the

Ardennes or on the way to Sedan, but "on Lake Como" (21) in that month of rebirth,
April. The two, out rowing on Lake Como the day after their engagement, recollect
how they "were in such fits that we capsized. By rights we should have been
drowned" (21). However, they could not have drowned because they represent the
possibility of life in another time and place. Indeed, even within the action of text,
death and the prospect of an absolute change is uncertain. It is not definite whether
Nell dies. It is reasonable to suppose she, like the rest of the characters, does not
perish because she cannot. It simply "looks like" (62) she is dead but, as Hamm
claims, "life," or at least something that resembles it, "goes on" (67). No matter how
powerfully the characters may will to "get it over" (70), they, as actants rather than
agents, can neither be "gone nor dead" (70) but rather must go on. That is, they
represent what would be still life oscillations—a no longer changing loop—of the
simulation rather than cycles of alteration.

The past, real or imagined, is a time diametrically contrasting with the now
constant present of the text. The happiness or comedic prospect of natural order
being restored is, now, recognized by both Nagg and Nell as no longer something of
potentiality. Nagg is more disheartened, however: he reveals the possibility that the
past and the recollections that accompany it are, indeed, themselves (if not false in the
sense of simulations) false to the sense that they did not (and cannot) take place in the
simulation at all. In response to Nell's meditation upon her happiness on Lake Como,
Nagg indignantly responds that it was not happiness, "it was not, it was not, it was my
story and nothing else. Happy! Don't you laugh at it still? Every time I tell it.
Happy!" (21). Indeed, now, for Nell, the only thing that is comical is the unhappiness

of stasis: "Yes, yes, it's the most comical thing in the world. And we laugh, we laugh, with a will, in the beginning. But it's always the same thing. Yes, it's like the funny story we have heard too often, we still find it funny, but we don't laugh any more" (19). Laughter, as an affective source of restoration or rejuvenation, then finds no place in *Endgame*. It is not that the text is not funny, at moments it is quite funny, but it is not the kind of humour that readily invites laughter because it is not the kind of text that encourages the active involvement from either characters or the reader. Valerie Topsfield argues that "despite the uncompromisingly gloomy setting [of *Endgame*], Beckett's inborn dicacity is much in evidence, and there is a wide spectrum of humour in the piece, ranging from the arch or intellectual, to the *risus purus*, the defiant laugh at what is unhappy" (Topsfield 112). However, *Endgame*'s relentless repetition disallows remembrance in a meaningful sense since the causality of memory is incommensurable with the reiterative directionality of the simulation. There cannot be meaningful defiance here because the text will not allow it. Certainly the text's humour is sophisticated, but it proceeds without the temporal logic of that which makes laughter restorative. Without remembrance, without past or future, Beckett's text disrupts the biases of what it means to represent what is alive both literally and metaphorically.

Simulation does, after all, aim to stand in as a proxy: the more mimetically precise, detailed, and accurate, the better. Keller identifies the central question regarding simulation: "how closely can a mechanical simulacrum be made to resemble an organism in the most fundamental attributes? What properties would the simulation need to have before it could be said to be alive?" (206). Early automations are

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seductive enough in their simple power for self-animation and self-progression.

Despite the seductive quality, the animation in itself is not enough to compel a belief

in a mechanism as a living being. The simulation is made; it is fabricated as a means

of instilling and inhabiting a likeness to its original object. Yet, in the *techne* that the

maker practices is an embedded object as actant. The object contains and

accommodates its *telos*, the simulation is assembled and so self-assembles, graduating

from a copy to an intimation and an intimacy. Imitation is the most intimate of

processes for a simulation. The simulation's purposiveness is to be precisely intimate

with its original object, to enshroud its rank as representation, to be absolutely iconic.

Its end is its beginning; it shimmers as rapidly oscillating symmetries. Though the

object may be feigned, it ultimately represents, not an original object, but that which

has no existence. The stage in *Endgame*, and its constitutive actors, reveals itself as a

proxy for that which *is not*. The natural environment, nature itself, is a simulation

and, as we have already seen, there is repetitive evidence from the text suggesting that

the characters are uncannily aware of this condition. Far more than a demonstration

of meaningless, then, *Endgame* imitates the processes that constitute the shimmering

symmetries of simulation: the text expresses nature in a cycle of iterative sterility.

Simulations "have come to constitute an alternative reality," Keller notes, "one that

appears ever more easily interchangeable with the original" (208). Yet, how the

sterile environment in *Endgame* relates to the extra-diegetic level is complex.

Something, indeed, is taking its course; something is happening because it just so

happens to be precisely what happens, has always happened, and will always happen.

The play represents processes, yet it also unveils the thing it aims to represent, a thing

that it resists: the extra-diegetic. "A good part of the appeal of [simulation]" Keller remarks, "derives from the exhibition of computational results in forms that exhibit a compelling visual resemblance to the processes they are said to represent" (207). How closely can a demonstration of meaninglessness be made to resemble the fundamental attributes of its object? So long as it propels itself and animates itself— its rituals of mechanization may not constitute life—the play unveils the silence of the fundamental attributes of the extra-diegetic in question. The impulse of *Endgame* animates a simulation of both nature and life. The play ceaselessly merges with, as it departs from, its original object: the realm of the reader. The sterility of the text suggests the absence, or pending absence, of the reader: a mysticism of the void.

"How is it possible," asks Hayles, "that in the late twentieth century to believe, or at least claim to believe, that computer codes are alive? And not only alive, but natural?" (146). She remarks that the question is more difficult to answer than one may initially think largely because the question itself involves narrative assumptions that have been adequately unveiled and articulated. The conjecture underlying inquiry's logic cannot stand on its own but is instead a dynamic series of parts circulating about in a constitutive cultural conversation. "Pull any one thread," she continues, "and a tangled weave of interconnected strands begins to vibrate" (146). So, given the complexity of this tangle of narratives and cultural presuppositions, it is perhaps most effective to approach the subject indirectly. That is, rather than solely regarding the scientific content of cellular automata or other modes of artificial life, one must look "at the stories told about and through them" (147). The narratives Hayles examines are those explicitly involved in artificial life programming and

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coding as well as the language used to talk about the product of this programming and coding. Here, however, the focus is on a conceit: that Beckett's *Endgame* is itself a simulation of a kind of automata, a zero-player game operating without a gamer, something that unfolds *ab initio*. Heidegger asks "when does language speak itself as language?" (Heidegger "The Nature of Language" 59) and so it seems that *Endgame* is asking when does a narrative speak itself as a narrative? If "language is the house of Being" (63), as Heidegger famously remarks, and we extend the question to one of diegesis—that is, narrative is the house of Being—inter-diegetic knots, narrative relations, are the psycho-ecology, the tangled environment, in which this locale of familiarity is built. Yet, though "we speak our language," Heidegger writes, "our relation to language is vague, obscure, almost speechless" (58). *Endgame*'s diminution of language, the gradual stripping away of dialogue, dramatizes this trajectory of speechlessness as that which ultimately silences the house of being. It is, oddly enough, in this state of being almost speechless that we must examine *Endgame* through a similar mode that Hayles suggests we consider whether cellular automata or other simulated life: we must lose our sense of locale, or our singular position, as reader in order to, paradoxically, allow the narratives to operate as themselves. This movement inward is also, indeed, a movement outwards: a positionless position for the reader, disguising the ontological position of one who animates the text, retreating from the diegetic equation.

7. Simulation and the Body: Merleau-Ponty, *Endgame,* and a Phenomenology of Exclusion

With *Endgame*, the reader and the narrative are equiprimordial; that is, they each disclose themselves to themselves, co-originating, yet moving apart. Beckett's play takes its own course, and the reader—through the present conceit—retreats. This repetition operates *ad infinitum*. That is, it does not gesture *towards* but instead gestures *iteratively*. Hayles suggests that "while artificial life marks a decisive break in the 'nature' of human being through the narratives it tells, it also re-inscribes traditional ideas and stories. Characteristic of the narrative field as a whole is a seriated pattern of innovation and replication" (147). *Endgame*, however, is the seriated pattern of innovation and replication atrophied. While Jane Alison Hale remarks that "movement is a fundamental characteristic of the time and space of *Endgame*;" that "time passes; the characters 'get on'; yesterday and the future continually contaminate the present" (Hale 71), the logicality of this chronological directionality is complicated by the text. The brief tableau that opens the text is itself co-original with that which ends the text. Thus it dramatizes a symmetry that at once defies linearity yet remains inscribed via iterative processes:

> *Bare interior. Grey light. Left and right back, high up, two small windows, curtains drawn. Front right, a door. Hanging near door, its face to wall, a picture. From left, touching each other, covered with an old sheet, two ashbins. Centre, in an armchair on castors, covered with an old sheet*, HAMM. *Nothingness by the door, his eyes fixed on* HAMM, CLOV. *Very red face. Brief tableau.* (Beckett *Endgame* 1)

And the apex of the text's loop:

Cover me with the sheet….[*He tries to move the chair, using the gaff as before. Enter* CLOV, *dressed for the road. Panama hat, tweed coat, raincoat over his arm, umbrella, bag. He halts by the door and stands there, impassive and motionless, his eyes fixed on* HAMM, *till the end.* HAMM *gives up*]…[*He covers his face with handkerchief, lowers his arms to armrests, remains motionless.*]…[*Brief tableau.*] (82-84).

The initial point, the brief tableau opening the play, is also the brief tableau at its terminal point. This diegetic structure, unsettling as it is, operates as both as the narrative propulsion and, yet, like Clov, establishes a movement that stands there as if it is impassive and motionless. "The end is in the beginning," riddles Hamm, "and yet you go on" (69). The narrative thus emerges out of what cannot constitute narrative: "Moments for nothing," remarks Hamm, "now as always, time was never and time is over, reckoning closed and story ended" (83). The story, of course, has not ended. Clov, with the play's opening line, declares that "it's finished, nearly finished, it must be nearly finished" (1) articulating the embeddedness of a paradoxical ending in the beginning. At the opening of the text there is the sense that much has already transpired. Indeed, Hale remarks that

> The time and space of *Endgame*, as announced by its title are those of an
> ending; the form and content of the play convey the impression of a world that
> is in gradual decline, where everything and everybody are weakening,
> winding down, running out. In spite of this progressive diminishment,
> however, the end toward which all seems to be moving is uncertain, unknown
> because unknowable, and perhaps unattainable. (Hale 72)

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The reason for this conundrum: that the beginning is, indeed, somewhere in an extended and knotted chronology. Though the play has just begun, it is already "time it ended" (3); that is, we see that what has already transpired is what will inevitable follow. Pushed along the current of the game's automatic determinism, we have Hamm's declaration: "And yet I hesitate, I hesitate to…to end. Yes, there it is, it's time it ended and yet I hesitate to—*(he yawns)*—to end" (3). That, amidst his hesitation, Hamm's yawn is indicative of something tedious, repetitive, and exhausting. To assume Hamm's boredom is the result of the play beginning *in medias res*, however, would be misleading. The beginning is the play's ending and the ending is what precedes its commencement. We are not in the middle of some kind of action, but rather the play opens somewhere, stochastically anywhere amidst oscillating still life. Hamm is tired because he *must* be exhausted, he will always yawn, because he has indefinitely yawned at this locale in the diegetic loop. If Hamm asks Clov where the latter is, Clov must declare that he is "here" (8), and yet when Hamm demands that Clov "come back" (8) and again asks "where are you?," Clov will again answer "here" (8). Not only does this exchange express the narrative oscillating static in micro, it establishes orientational determinism. Hamm will be exhausted, in the same place, every time just as Clov must always be in the relativistically indeterminate "here." Indeed, Hamm's yawn—like all yawns in the play—is a most suitable action because it, like the most nuanced details of the narrative, is involuntary in its most absolute sense. Pages closed, one imagines *Endgame* silently taking its course at any number of narrative velocities silently on the reader's bookshelf. The play, once emerged, repeats its million moments *ad*

nauseum. Repeating itself indefinitely, the reader vanishes indefinitely. The decay of *Endgame*, is not at all entropic but static and stochastic. The play remains and will continue to proceed.

   The process of reading *Endgame*, a process which ultimately denies the reader the satisfaction of identifying as the *primum movens*, is also a process which invites phenomenological investigation. Because such a reading is one of locating dislocation, diegetic level crossing from simulation to the quiescent encoder, it assumes the conceit of an interaction between perceptual and spatial recognition as a site of being. While the recognition here, spatially a level away from the narrative, operates on the metaphor of the reader's exclusion, a reader-as-abyss, the reader notes the disjunction in his intimacy he shares with the actant. Because the narrative space of *Endgame* is a simulation, the semiotics here are, to borrow from Scott Bukatman, "post referential" (Bukatman 117). The reader must suspend his or her disbelief in the narrative conceit, while at the same time, suspend the assumption in his own presence. Bukatman suggests that "a phenomenology of science fiction[34] helps us to understand the strategies of these works: specifically their attempt to redefine the imperceptible (and therefore absent to consciousness) realms of the electronic era in terms that are physically and perceptually familiar" (117). Beckett's play is not one concerned so much with mapping the cognitive tools for the electronic age, however. Instead of making that near which is lacking from consciousness, the gesture of *Endgame* is to make consciousness itself, on the extra-diegetic level, disappear.

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[34] A recent reading of *Endgame* as a work of post-apocalyptic science fiction is included in Charles A. Carpenter's *Dramatists and the Bomb: American and British Playwrights Confront the Nuclear Age, 1945-1964* (1999). Carpenter's reading is quite good, though it is worth noting that, throughout his life, Beckett vehemently objected to this kind of evaluation of the play.

While "an emphasis upon the absolute reality of the world 'in itself,' has evident benefits in constructing a phenomenology of an abstract and nonphysical space" (117), *Endgame* discloses the simulated reality of a world that has created itself, that unfolds itself: the last million last moments of a still life corpsed yet shivering at its apex.

Bukatman remarks that the simulated space in the work of Baudrillard or cyberpunk literature depends upon metaphors of spatial movement and human perception. He writes that the rhetoric of simulated space depends upon a specific phenomenology of perception in the likes of that elaborated upon by Merleau-Ponty's materialist and existentialist philosophy. Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology recognizes the reality status of the objective environment, however, his main contribution is on the spaces of interaction that situate themselves between the physical objects as innately perceptible and the subjective "motile perceiver" (Bukatman 117). The interaction between these two is what constitutes the consciousness of the subject. Bukatman writes that "Merleau-Ponty's preliminary emphasis on the primary activity of *perception* corresponds to the paradigmatic strategies of visualization which are shared by narrative, scientific, and philosophical elaborations of electronic space" (118). This is explicitly engaged with the reality status of real and simulated spaces and the hierarchy of values that accompanies such formulations. The dichotomy of form and matter is intimately bound in a series of ontological biases. "Reality," writes Hayles, "at the fundamental level is seen as a form rather than matter" (Hayles 154). She continues: "the assumption that form occupies a privileged position relative to matter is especially easy to make with

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information technologies since information is defined in theoretic terms as a probability function and thus as a pattern or form rather than a materially instantiated entity" (155). In the end, however, whether or not simulated spaces are real, Bukatman adds, is not really the question since our experience of such spaces certainly is ontologically significant.

Merleau-Ponty famously posits the body as a "point of view upon the world" (70). At first glance, this position may seem at odds with the conceit of character as constitutive functions of the diegetic actant and the reader as an absent body in *Endgame*. What this formulation does achieve, instead, is a consideration of how certain symmetries in the play operate to anesthetize and delimit the primacy of the body. This process proves, ultimately, to make the body—through its disappearance—manifest to itself. Furthermore, this mode also inquires into certain assumptions we may have regarding the intentionality of the agential nature of diegetic actants and their relation to the strange experience of *Endgame*. Much in the same way as Heidegger,

> Merleau-Ponty looks beyond the subject object divide to try to gain insight into the concrete structures of worldly experience. But whereas Heidegger does little more than mention the problem of embodiment in passing, Merleau-Ponty bases his entire phenomenological project on an account of bodily intentionality and the challenge it poses to any adequate concept of mind. (Carman 206)

In general, the issue of embodiment is engaged in discussions over the status of how mental activity may be a divergent locale from the body for phenomenological

investigation. That is, whether the phenomenological sphere of the mental itself is a distinct mode for the subject's orientation with physical surroundings. "Merleau-Ponty never doubts or denies the existence of mental phenomena," Carman clarifies, "but he insists, for example, that thought and sensation as such occur only against a background of perceptual activity that we always already understand in bodily terms, by engaging in it" (Carman 206). Symmetries in the unique attributes of bodies in *Endgame*, serve to simultaneously emphasize the body as a site of perception and negate the effectiveness of the body through complementary mutilations. Perhaps the most explicit example is that Hamm "can't stand" (Beckett *Endgame* 10) while Clov "can't sit" (10). This complementary structure at once emphasizes the body's primacy and, at the same time, in its relation to its complement, negates its potentiality as an effective site of agency and perception. Hamm and Clov are symmetrical complements, though, those that negate through diminution: ones and zeroes. In order for Hamm to be a site of bodily perception, he needs Clov as an extension of himself. Clov, likewise, needs the bodily attribute of sitting acquired by Hamm in order to be a fully operating site of perception. However complementary they appear, the two are indelibly separate and as mutually affirming as they are delimiting.

Merleau-Ponty evocatively notes a paradox of regress in identifying the body as the locale of perception; indeed, this logic also informs certain biases we commonly hold regarding narratives as purposive agents. "I observe external objects with my body, I handle them, examine them, walk round them, but my body itself is a thing which I do not observe: in order to be able to do so, I should need the use of a second

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body which itself would be unobservable," writes Merleau-Ponty (*Phenomenology of Perception* 91). What he suggests here is that the body cannot observe or engage with itself in the same manner is it does with exterior objects. It cannot, in other words, achieve transcendence from itself as a means of positioning itself as an objective observer of that which is the "subject-object" (Merleau-Ponty 95) of observation. Like Hofstadter's "I," as a heterarchical strange loop, Merleau-Ponty's point is that while one can see and touch parts of the body, a gradual movement up the hierarchy of unity and completion, one can never fully observe the "perceiving organ in relation to itself" (Carman 207). When Merleau-Ponty writes that "my visual body includes a large gap at the level of the head" (PP 94), the conundrum of the bodily structure of perception proves to be largely anchored at the eyes. The body plays a constitutive role in experience precisely," writes Carman, "by grounding, making possible, and yet remaining peripheral in the horizons of our perceptual awareness" (Carman 208). That the eyes are at the centre of this strange loop in the question of perception again attests to the negation of intentionality on behalf of the narrative in *Endgame*. Mary F. Catanzaro suggests that "Central to *Endgame* is the theme of coupling and partnership—and its seeming impossibility—where we see the full spectrum of broken promises that undermines agreement and accord" (Catanzaro 165). Indeed, the need for "the use of a second body" to observe oneself is somewhat dramatized by another strange symmetry: Hamm's blindness and Clov's propensity to stare, "his eyes fixed on Hamm, till the end" (82). Very early in the play Hamm requests that Clov look into his eyes: "Did you ever see my eyes?" (Beckett *Endgame* 3) asks Hamm. Clov responds in the negative. "Did you never have the curiosity,

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while I was sleeping, to take off my glasses and look at my eyes?" (3) Hamm continues in inquiry. Clov again responds in the negative: "Pulling back the lids? *(Pause.)* No" (4). Hamm again: "One of these days I'll show them to you. *(Pause.)* It seems they've gone all white" (4). Hamm's visual body indeed includes a large gap at the level of his head in the literalized form of blind eyes. Asking Clov if he's ever seen his blind eyes is, by extension, asking Clov to act as a kind of second body. Clov's refusal, of course, attests to the impossibility of this formulation.

Ultimately, however, this dramatization demonstrates how the body in *Endgame* may be a site of perception but, at the same time, is not an intentional agent of perception. As simulations constituted by the diegetic actant, Hamm, Clov, Nagg, and Nell, each in their unique relation to one another, prevent bodies from achieving the status of a point of view upon the world. "I move external objects with the aid of my body, which takes hold of them in one place and shifts them to another" writes Merleau-Ponty. He continues,

> But my body itself I move directly, I do not find it at one point of objective
> space and transfer it to another, I have no need to look for it, it is already with
> me—I do not need to lead it towards the movement's completion, it is in
> contact with it from the start and propels itself towards that end. The
> relationships between my decision and my body are, in movement, magic
> ones. (Merleau-Ponty 94)

In *Endgame*, however, the mutilated complementary bodies do indeed require one point of objective space transferred to another. While the human body need not look for itself at another point since it is already present, the simulated bodies in the

diegesis do need to seek beyond themselves as a means of completing their incomplete, mutated, and mutilated physicality. The cellular automaton, the zero-player game, at its point of still life, achieves a state of complementary disjunctions. As a result, on the diegetic level of the play Beckett radicalizes the difficulty of explaining and interpreting one's situation or environment. On the diegetic level of the play, bodies are less nodes of perception than pieces in a programmed puzzle. That is, the bodily symmetries in *Endgame* negate one another. "The primary reason that explanation and interpretation are inextricably entwined," writes Hayles on the difficulty of interpreting narratives of life, "is that the program is an artifact, not a natural system…Analogy is not incidental or belated but central to the program's artifactual design" (Hayles 150). Complementary and yet self-negating pairs such symmetries and zero-sum analogies go on but cannot move forward; these programmatic pairs are, like Hamm, left shivering and trembling, the automata is forever jammed, the game's progression is gridlocked: diegetic kill screen. Such configurations highlight the bodies in *Endgame* as mutilated simulations in a sterile automaton rather than as physical bodies that activate and manage perception. Things are complicated even further in that, Hayles continues, "the narratives which produce life…are produced by it" (162); and yet, here, we have a nonliving artifact, a simulation, automating itself.

Hayles notes that the assumptions we have about a system as an actant, "in particular thinking of it as independent action undertaken by purposive agents, are transported into the narrative" (Hayles 151). Considering the narrative as the constitutive automata—that is, the narrative as programmatic actant—it is worth

noting these assumptions to be misleading. The narrative motion of *Endgame*

proceeds without intention according to valueless processes. The actant *is* its own

code, and the code *is* the actant. The metaphorical grammar—or code—that moves

the narrative to its terminus only proves to have the diegesis deterministically loop

back to its origin and restart. There is, however, a polysemy to the metaphorical

sense of narrative as actant. Hayles identifies this mode as having two divisions:[35]

first, the constituents of diegesis are informational rather than physical. Second, the

actant is engaged in transformations and transfers from one narrative level to another.

Moving from code to the realm of the encoder, the actant, in its drama of bearing

forth and diminution, performs the inverse function of the reader, the encoder of the

text. The proper function, therefore, of the narrative as actant is not to signify, it does

not mean. Rather, it reaches beyond itself, revealing itself as actant, and,

consequently, also bears witness to that which it does not signify, or that which it

expedites the disclosure of the reader's nonexistence: the reader. *Endgame* thus

resists the assumption that narrative as actant can operate as a purposive agent or an

independent code proceeding with something like intention. Hayles writes, of

cellular automata, that

> Narrative tells a story, and intrinsic to story is chronology, intention and
>
> causality…Each site will develop its own microecology. Because background
>
> programs run when demands on the computer are at a minimum, the programs
>
> will normally be executed late at night…Humans are active while the
>
> 'creatures' [or actants] are dormant; they evolved while we sleep…linking the

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[35] Hayles is concerned with the "characters" or "bodies" of cellular automata; that is, the simulated organisms. Here, the focus remains on narrative itself.

[actant's] evolution to the human word in a complementary diuranal rhythm, the proposal edges towards a larger narrative level that interpolates their story into ours, ours into theirs. (151-152)

Yet *Endgame* eludes narrative in this sense. Its implied recursive structure resists chronology, its dialogue protests against sustained causality, and the status of diegetic intentionality is, here, staunched through the metaphor of narrative as actant. Instead, *Endgame* incites. The way the play interpolates its story into ours and ours into that of the text operates upon an unintuitive formulation that, ultimately, promotes a strange mode of phenomenological investigation. "Information technologies seem to realize a dream," Hayles continues, "impossible in the natural world—the opportunity to look directly into the inner workings of reality at the most elemental level" (155). As a demonstration of meaninglessness, the play's inter-diegetic architecture, cannot signify. Instead, it calls forth, encourages, and summons the reader to identify with that which minifies beyond the elemental: the abyss that no longer requires the reader, the narrative that operates as its own servomechanism.

8. Thinking in the Void: *Endgame*, Vilém Flusser, and
The Twilight of Information Illiteracy

This formulation, however, is all very strange for the reader. After all, the reader is to take the pose, or submit to the conceit, of exclusion. How then, if the characters of the play are incapable of action or thought, is the reader to undergo experience while accepting the position of that which negates experience? This is perhaps our paradoxical intimacy with a text that resists intimacy. If we are to learn, we must dispose of everything we do so that we may be open to the essentials of the text that

are given to us at any given moment. We learn to think by giving over our minds to nothingness: to give our minds over to the demonstration of nothingness, that which there is yet to think about and that which there is to think through. Like our idealized text, we must allow something to take its course, to surrender to a poetic (or should we say digital) procedure. "We never come to thoughts," writes Heidegger, "they come to us" (Heidegger "The Thinker as Poet" 6). Thoughts here in a traditional sense, however, cannot truly arrive. Events are "the same as usual" (Beckett *Endgame* 4), remarks Clov, while Hamm concurs: "there's no reason for it to change" (5) because *telos* in our thought experiment is impossible. There is no end-point, only an endgame. Hamm wishes for a terminus, "old endgame lost of old," he muses, "play and lose and have done with losing" (82), but he cannot escape the patterns which oscillate forever. Clov, perhaps hopefully, remarks that "it may end. *(Pause.)*," yet remains partially practical: "all life long the same questions, the same answers" (5). Yet, each knows that the later portion of Clov's remark is accurate and his hopefulness is procedural and without opportunity. "That's always the way at the end of the day, isn't it, Clov?," Hamm remarks, and Clov, astutely: "Always" (13). And this is, in itself, the revelation—a re-revelation—of infinite iterations: "it's the end of the day like any other day, isn't it, Clov?," Hamm asks, though only grammatically a question. Clov's response, acting as the eyes of Hamm: "looks like it" (13). The strangeness here, is not only one of positioning for the reader, it is one that undermines the conventional expectations of humour. Humour, of course, depends on repetition. *Endgame* does not, however, provide any definitive punch lines. Both Nell and Clov, using the same words, ask "why this farce, day after day?" (14, 32).

Perhaps a punch line would answer this conundrum: this farce, day after day, will be broken, cathartically shattered by pattern-disruption and laughter. As if demanding of the possible joke: "Have you not finished?" Hamm asks, "Will you never finish? *(With sudden fury.)* Will this never finish?" (23). It does not matter whether we have "asked these questions millions of times" (38) because the answers must, at the level of text, always be the same. Hamm, like Clov, seems to embody this. Yet, more so than Clov, he expresses it, even if via proxy:

> You'll be sitting there, a speck in the void, in the dark, for ever, like
>
> me…You'll look at the wall a while, then you'll say, I'll close my eyes,
>
> perhaps have a little sleep, after that I'll feel better, and you'll close them.
>
> And when you open them again there'll be no wall any more. *(Pause.)* Infinite
>
> emptiness will be all around you, all the resurrected dead of all the ages
>
> wouldn't fill it, and there you'll be like a little bit of grit in the middle of the
>
> steppe. (36)

By identifying with this speck in the void, this little bit of grit—like Hamm and like Clov—one may wait and hope to no triumph. The infinite emptiness that surrounds them is not only spatial: it is potential and conceptual: it is a procedure that proceeds without value. Hamm and Clov experience that which is both strange and intimate to the reader: the possibility of undergoing the experience of disappearing influence of alphanumeric language and the narratives that it makes possible.

What proves significant with undergoing an experience with a text like *Endgame*, our idealized text that constantly resists the possibility of agential experience, is the

manner through which this undertaking proves remarkable. "To undergo an

experience with something," writes Heidegger

> means that this something befalls us, strikes us, comes over us, overwhelms
>
> and transforms us. When we talk of 'undergoing' an experience, we mean
>
> specifically that the experience is not of our own making; to undergo here
>
> means that we endure it, suffer it, receive it as it strikes us and submit to it. It
>
> is this something itself that comes about, comes to pass, happens. ("The
>
> Nature of Language" 57)

Though with each pass, something takes its course. *Endgame* does not permit an

experience beyond what appears as the text itself. As a little speck in the void, Clov

and Hamm experience what comes about, what comes to pass, and what happens:

they experience proceduralism. But this, for them, is what must always constitute

experience. For the reader, however, *Endgame* establishes a textual conundrum

through which the reader succumbs to the twofold nature of undergoing an

experience. The narrative delimits experience to something confined and defined:

that is the narrative of *Endgame* is a procedural gesture. The experience of the

reader, however, as a zero-player, thus undergoes an experience that is not his own

making. One must endure it, suffer it, receive as it strikes us. *Endgame* is a text to

which we must submit if we wish to learn and think in new ways.

  Such an experience is and has been for us textual, linguistic; however, prospective

experience suggests something programmatic and procedural. "To undergo an

experience with language…means to let ourselves be properly concerned by the claim

of language by entering into and submitting to it" (Heidegger "The Nature of

Language" 57), writes Heidegger. He continues, "man finds the proper abode of his existence in language" (57) and therefore any "experience we undergo with language will touch the innermost nexus of our existence. We who speak language may thereupon become transformed" (57). If language is indeed the "house of being," then the narratives of digital code anticipate very alien architectures. That Clov is "doing his best to create a little order" (Beckett 57), is indicative of his struggle with this procedure. What is more, this struggle against the constitutive process shows that Clov's behavior is not only inauthentic but ridiculous. He cannot submit and allow the experience to come and pass because he is bound to the procedure by a different logic. "A *program* is to be understood as writing directed not toward human beings but toward apparatuses," writes Flusser (Flusser *Does Writing Have a Future?* 56). "Here no human beings require instruction," he continues, "instructions can instead be issued to apparatuses. In this way, it becomes clear that the goal of instruction," that is, proceduralism, causes subjects—or simulations of subjects—to "behave as they should automatically" (56). Heidegger's gesture towards the authenticity of an experience with language is indeed that which makes more striking the impossibility for thinking or experience on the level of *Endgame* as conceived in our thought experiment. Indeed, the manner we experience alphanumeric language differs radically from the way we experience digital code.

   "Scientific and philosophical information about language is one thing; and experience we undergo with language is another," Heidegger suggests, "whether the attempt to bring us face to face with the possibility of such an experience will succeed, and if it does, how far that possible success will go for each one of us—that

is not up to any of us" (Heidegger "The Nature of Language" 59). And while the possibility of any experience is something that proceeds beyond our agency—it strikes us, we do not, like in our reading of Joyce, activate it—the possibility of experience in *Endgame*'s proceduralist simulation is strikingly demoted. Indeed, for Heidegger information about language—a text as simulation—thus produces something radically altered from an experience with language. Does *Endgame* as a text that simulates the effects of our information illiteracy become a space or gesture of cruelty? Hamm's constant physical discomfort, and his addiction to pain killers, suggests a kind of simulation whereby this discomfort proceeds pitilessly as if inflicted by the something that is taking its course, that some kind of constitutive narrative (even cultural narrative) unfolds then repeats relentlessly and indifferently. The demonstration at play is a text that proceeds without intention. What is uncomfortable for us in the humanities is that *we, as readers and theorists of narrative, are left out of the equation*. On six occasions Hamm asks for his pain killer (Beckett 7, 12, 24, 35, 48, 71). Hamm, with his programmed addiction, expects that there should be relief. "There's no more pain-killer" (71), Clov finally responds, therefore assuming that, at this final yet endless recursive iteration, there never was and never will be pain-killers for Hamm. Hamm's response, "Good…!" (71), is not so much one of reserve or coming-to-terms as it is an approval that, as always, something is taking its course as it should. That is, he responds not to the nonexistence of the pain-killer so much as to the functional accuracy of the diegetic actant proceeding recursively and unintentionally as it must. Indeed, "in logically constructed computer programs," writes Flusser, "there is no symbol for *should*"

(Flusser *Does Writing Have a Future?* 57). Indeed, the textual simulation, the procedural actant is another thing entirely from an experience with language. There is no symbol for *should* and, resultantly, to assume *Endgame* as a cruel simulation is to approach the situation before us with misleading criteria. The cruelty here is akin to Antonin Artaud's sense of the word: Artaud writes that this sense of cruelty "is not sadistic or bloody, at least not exclusively so…The word cruelty must be taken in its broadest sense, not in the physical, predatory sense usually ascribed to it…cruelty means strictness, diligence, unrelenting decisiveness, irreversible and absolute determination" (Artaud 77); that is, cruelty here is the absolute indifference and determination of a procedure. Our text here, the zero-reader text, does not invite intimacy, it excludes us. The cruelty is that digital narrative is something very alien, something that proceeds with absolute indifference. We can talk *about* it with the critical biases, but we cannot fully engage *with it* because there is a fundamental change in the predominant code underlying knowledge (which is embedded in knowledge production and knowledge mobilization) currently taking place.

One the level of the reader, then, the procedural indifference plays out in a slightly different way: it is not painful so much as anxious and uncomfortable. Though the conceit of our thought experiment is that *Endgame* is a zero-player game, the text is nevertheless expressed through language. Oddly enough, though, for our thought experiment we must imagine that the language negates itself by posing as something like programmed code. "When the issue is to put into language something which has never yet been spoken, then everything depends on whether language gives or withholds the appropriate word" writes Heidegger ("The Nature of Language" 59).

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That which has never been spoken, in the case of *Endgame*, is the use of language for the conceit of absolute procedural narrative motion: digital code is not fully informed by our thinking yet there is evidence that it may gradually constitute our thinking. So *Endgame*, like the reader, proceeds to put into motion that which is already in motion, to endure the diegesis but also submit to their absence from its very proceduralism. The experience of *Endgame* is, then, where experience breaks off just as, for those of us who are not digital code literate, our experience with the coming dominant cultural code breaks off. "Where something breaks off, a breach, a diminution has occurred. To diminish means to take away, to cause a lack," Heidegger notes (60). He goes on: "no thing is where the word is lacking" (60); that is, no thing—simulation—is where code determines. Furthermore, the reader, being where the word is lacking, poses as an absence. This absence, though, is not a renunciation; indeed, it would be absurd to push the conceit so far. Instead, the sense and ability to think about no-sense and unthinking opens the possibility for the simultaneity of experience and non-experience. And code, simulation, and proxy are the best sites for this procedure. "This relation [between word and thing] is not, however, a connection between the thing that is on one side and the word that is on the other," suggests Heidegger, "the word itself [and thus the code itself] is the relation which in each instance retains the thing within itself in such a manner that it 'is' a thing" (66). And, resultantly, nonentity is, by this logic, a kind of entity that serves a paradoxical, though imaginatively productive, disclosure of the transformative possibilities of our thought experiment experience of *Endgame*. "The *aistheton*, what can be perceived by the senses," Heidegger writes, "lets the *noeton*, the nonsensuous, shine through"

(Heidegger "A Dialogue on Language" 14). And so, the text will "be there to solace [its] last million last moments" (Beckett 49) and the reader vanishes with each iteration. With each recognition of the play taking its course on behalf of the reader, the absence—even the corpsing—of the reader thus shines through. Not only is the play a demonstration of meaninglessness its effects operate to dramatize the diminution of the self. It provides the analgesia that is forbidden to Hamm; if we submit, it reveals the threshold of experience.

In the years since Beckett's death in 1989, developments in the instruction of digital code have rapidly taken root. Ultimately, the pose the reader must assume when reading *Endgame* interrogates a fundamental conundrum at the centre of reading today, a conundrum that goes beyond Beckett and modernist studies. Jonathan Boulter writes that one of the fundamental themes of Beckett's work is "the agonizing fact of being in a language that endlessly composes and decomposes the subject. Being in Beckett means existing, finally and forever, in a language" (Boulter 133). For Heidegger, Being is Dasein; more specifically, Being is an openness and submission to linguistic and poetic experience. The language of *Endgame* is that which asks the reader to assume the submission to its proceduralism: our thought experiment asks of us how *Endgame* also makes manifest the agonizing fact of being amidst digital code. Ogden suggests that the language of *Endgame* "might justly be considered a dialect, a language that shares an alphabet and lexicon but that differs grammatically and syntactically to such a degree that communication can effectively break down between those speaking the dialect and those speaking the language from which it derives" (Ogden 135). But Beckett goes even further than this. He quite

masterfully establishes a textual logic in which the text *must* speak itself. Flusser

suggests that the transition from alphanumerical language to digital code will have a

radical impact on the very nature of critique. With this transition, "critique becomes a

synthesized practice, based on knowledge that is interdisciplinary and part of a

network of knowledges" (Finger 74). The transition to learning digital code, for

Flusser, serves a similar function as does the pose of ontological clearing in

Heidegger; that is, it is a way to relearn thought:

> For us, thinking was, and still is, a process that moves forwards, that frees
>
> itself from images, from representations, that criticizes them, thereby
>
> becoming increasingly conceptual. We have the alphabet to thank for this
>
> understanding of thought and this understanding of thought to thank for the
>
> alphabet (feedback). The new digital codes arose from the new understanding
>
> of thought, and feedback is making us think in quanta and images more
>
> clearly the more we use the new codes. (Flusser *Does Writing have a Future?*
>
> 145).

Assuming a more intense degree of intentionality than Heidegger's openness,

Beckett's negation, or Bogost's proceduralism, Flusser does, however, anticipate a

kind of subtle productivity to this shift. Perhaps the old endgame is alphanumeric

language itself. That which will ultimately be lost of old will indeed play and lose

and have done with losing. The alternative is, however, digital code; while it offers

alternatives, it nevertheless also attracts the alternatives of the zero-player game, of a

different order of proceduralism, a new kind of poetic submission. While Murphy

suggests that, in Beckett, "expression necessarily precedes existence" (Murphy 222),

here we suggest that being submits to procedure and precedes the codification of existence. The engagement with digital code for most readers, however, is of a different order of reader negation: illiteracy. If we push *Endgame*'s process of diminution into the twenty first century, then this facet of the text calls upon a more intense anxiety. Worton notes that

> we must persuade ourselves that we exist, somehow we must find justification for our lives. In…*Endgame*, as in many of the later plays, such proofs of existence as movement, thinking, dialogue and a relationship with God that have been proposed by philosophers are replaced by anxiety—by an anxiety which leads to the compulsion to repeat and, above all, to fictionalize. (Worton 82).

Worton's evaluation of anxiety, perhaps, needs further elaboration. The reader's proof of existence is made manifest via the pose of absence: the anxiety here is the intense non-self awareness or intense self non-awareness. We are not compelled to repeat so much as we are compelled to recognize that repetition, oscillation, and still life are apt metaphors for how closely we are able to truly identify with the stories— and the technical means upon which they are made possible—that we rely upon. The reader's inability to identify on an intimate level with the text is an expression of the inability to engage with the zero-player automaton; moreover, though, is that our exclusion is an experiment for the literate to experience the coming illiteracy. "An experiment is a text about a nontextual situation, later tested by others to decide whether or not it is simply a text," writes Latour, "if the final trial is successful, then *it is* not just a text, there is indeed a real situation *behind* it, and both the actor and its

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authors are endowed with a new competence" (Latour 124). Not only does the effect of *Endgame* allow us to imagine a zero-reader text in the sense that it calls for the clearing for thinking, it is the zero-player game whose central conceit is bringing to light our absence from the coming thought of a new competence via a new language.

So, it is appropriate to recognize the ontological puzzle that Beckett lays bare as one that is in itself linguistic, poetic, and procedural. Yet, *Endgame*, in our thought experiment in particular, expresses most intensely the poetic procedure: that which calls for surrender and proves a demonstration of meaninglessness. Without meaning, the semantic force of language, we experience anxiety; that the anticipation of Being, with the removal of language-as-meaningful, awaits extinguishing. Yet, Heidegger suggests that "anxiety strives to expect resoluteness of itself. It clears away every covering over of the fact that Dasein is itself left to itself. The nothingness before which anxiety brings us reveals the nullity that determines Dasein in its *ground*, which itself is as thrownness into death" (Heidegger *Being and Time* 295). Because Being for Heidegger is the clearing and openness that allows thinking to take place, the removal of self in our thought experiment demands of the reader to assume the role of thinker. The flux here is complex and difficult to navigate: to think of nothingness is to dedicate a concept or referent to *nothing* thus negating its very status as that which it is, which is the *is not*. So, Heidegger suggests that the equation reverse role: rather than deform nothingness by giving it form, we must assume nothingness as a means of being open to its valuelessness, to submit and surrender to its procedure. In this way—though difficult and in many ways outside articulation—*Endgame* discloses a remarkable opening for thought. By

deconstructing the biases of perception, *Endgame* projects, to borrow a phrase from

Paul Éluard, a "vision beyond this crass, insensible reality which we are expected to

accept with resignation, [and] conducts us into a liberated world where we consent to

everything, where nothing is incomprehensible" (Eluard "Beyond Painting"158-159).

Our thought experiment demands that we must take seriously the idea that the text

takes its course and that our identification with nothingness is the very path to

considering how we may go on when we can no longer go on. And so Topsfield is

absolutely correct to remark that, despite the relentless logic of diminution and

negation in Beckett, "the 'message' of *Endgame* is positive" (Topsfield 112). Our

non-engagement is our path to engagement with the procedure and "since that's the

way we're playing it," Hamm determines, "let's play it that way and speak no more

about it, speak no more" (Beckett 84). With this inability to speak and think from

nothingness, whether our illiteracy is linguistic or digital, *Endgame* becomes the path

for a potential revelation through the surrender and submission to new and

unconventional procedures of perception. Like Hamm's experience, the effects of

Endgame ask us to acknowledge the procedures that surrender without intention: the

effects ask us to be nothing, to urgently "think of something." Ultimately, what these

effects offer us is an instructional unfolding of the minimizing of the self; the

recognition that radically different narratives are radiant in the twilight; that

something unarticulated is always on the horizon. If digital code has something of a

narrative embedded in it, it will be very strange to us indeed. So, the overwhelming

irony of this chapter is evident: it is an intentional and agential staging of criticism. It

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is more so, however, a kind of opening remark. A procedural analysis may begin

only as our thought experiment comes to a close.

Epilogue

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Marcus Aurelius remarks that "there are obvious objections to the Cynic Monimus's statement that 'things are determined by the view taken of them'; but the value of his aphorism is equally obvious, if we admit the substance of it so far as it contains a truth" (Aurelius *Meditations* 2.15). That is, the affirmation of a self-reflexive system is also its negation. While this may seem alien, it is also remarkably close to home. The uncanny contexture that unsettles the logic of causation that weaves the inter-diegetic fabric of Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* proves at once ostensibly affected and, yet, expressive of a more intrusively organic process of linguistic thought. Woolf's *To the Lighthouse* also draws the reader in to its diegetic architecture by making manifest that the reader does not only experience being-in-the-world but also being-in-the word. This profound intimacy with the text offers the possibility of temporal disclosure; that is, with narrative experimentation with diegetic temporality, Woolf offers life as a whole in miniature. Being-in-the-world is thus analogous to being-in-the word; both modes of being are translatable as an invasive, and yet obsequious, finitude: being-as-temporality. *Finnegans Wake* offers entry points to endless linguistic and cognitive transformations; and, yet, embedded in this infinite novel are the notable moments of sentimentality, moments of tenderness that serve as reminders that our extension into text—and text's extension into us—is, though something that seems to proceed on its own, experienced with radically singular instances of emotionality. My treatment of Beckett's *Endgame* is a bit stranger since it complicates the inter-diegetic loops in question.

The impulse of the fourth chapter was personal. When I first read *Endgame* five or six years ago, I *felt* very much like Hamm and Clov in the sense that the text—their constitutive environment—was proceeding regardless of how intensely I wanted to understand and intervene. It was this confusion experienced between intervention and understanding that made me reflect on the act of reading as something that is both active and submissive. As I drafted the chapters of this dissertation, I was also at work publishing articles on the intersections between the information sciences and late twentieth and early twenty-first century experimental fiction in England and Japan. A recurring theme in the research of this area is the coming information illiteracy. The language that I write here is very different from the *program* that makes possible the logical substratum of my word processor. It is the latter that is becoming dominant in late capitalist culture despite the evidence that the majority of the population of the developed world is incapable of intervening in digital code or programming more generally understood: we are excluded from the narrative of code because we are informationally illiterate. This is not what *Endgame* is about, certainly. But the intense effect the text has on the reader between the conundrums of choice and the indifference of determinism seems a particularly appropriate analogue to our current relation to a cultural environment that is increasingly more interested in serving apparatuses rather than human beings. Reading *Endgame* discloses the potential difficulties of the reflexive system between text and reader by expressing a diegetic environment that seems to proceed regardless of reader agency. This reading experience simulates a kind of exclusion: it is as if we are not there. And yet, this is obviously a critical conceit: we have to imagine that we are not there in order to

recognize that there is, indeed, a threshold that establishes the limit of experience with language and cultural narrative.

Each text examined here has embedded in it both the potentiality of Coleridge's flower and the flower's Coleridge. Level-crossing between reader and text—and the consequential cognitive mutations—tangles the linear causation between poetic reading and the reader as the text's entity of poesis. Reading is, then, both intimately active and creatively submissive. The experimental tendency of Modernist fiction offers a spontaneity and playfulness into the conventional substratum of cultural narrative at the time: this impulse is timelessly relevant. Experimentalism urges metanoia and unpredictable cognitive change fuels experimentalism. To varying degrees, all expression is poetic expression because the neurological site of expression is itself a locale for poesis. The proceduralism of digital code presents itself to us as inflexible simply because the literate are unwilling to infect it with the experimental spirit of the modernists. Hofstadter calls for fluid concepts and creative analogies in information coding as a means of making code more human rather than the human more code-like. That is, the future of cultural narrative—both literary and programmatically digital—must serve poetry, not apparatuses. Feedback loops must be creative and productive rather than inflexible and indifferent. Like Wilde, we must create monstrosities; we must strive to be as subtle and intelligent as Woolf; as ineffable and playful as Joyce. If only Clov were as courageous as Beckett: he must leave the room. The worst that could happen is failure. But, as Gleick remarks, the more errors there are in a data stream, the more information rich it will prove to be (Gleick 257). Failure is especially and inevitably poetic. What is imperative, in the

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end, is that both Coleridge and the flower are mutually possessive and reciprocally

lush with blooming.

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