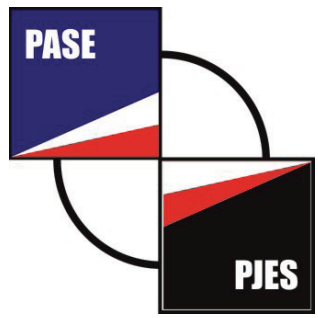

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From the Editor

The current issue of the *Polish Journal of English Studies* offers a selection of scholarly articles which cover the time period of almost the entire twentieth century. Starting with an analysis of E.M. Forster's *Howards End*, through two studies devoted to Samuel Beckett, and one article on Tom Stoppard's radio plays, finishing with a look at a contemporary American documentary film, the issue collects approaches whose main theme could perhaps be summarized as "between form and anti-form." All of these authors develop ways of diversifying formal structures, perspectives, and cultural references in a way which produces dynamic possibilities of reading and interpreting. The internal dynamics of their work are produced by a controlled loss of coherence and by intentional play with open structures, escaping from the constraints of not only traditional plot conventions but also standard possibilities of reading characters and their motivation. The play between form and anti-form would, therefore, be a general concept to call the strategy of dialogic confrontation incorporated into both structure and ideology of a given work. With this mechanism of splitting composition and comprehension, authors presented here venture into a deeper analysis of their own themes and the world around.

It is interesting to see that authors coming from different periods of the twentieth-century literature and art despite general differences of interest, theme, and form, follow a similar compositional stratagem based on employing shifting perspectives of looking, engaging their readers and viewers in a tactical game in which media of expression, conventions, genres, and styles are positioned in a dialectical distance, offering a critical view on the presented reality. As a consequence, readers and viewers are offered a superior, somewhat external location in relation to plots and characters, they also acquire a critical tool to decompose their own position as interpreters whose cultural foundations are determined by universal as well as personal axioms. The authors of articles collected in this volume trace exactly this formal aspect of writing which highlights both stylistic preferences of individual artists and broad assumptions implicitly performed by the historical epoch which they represent.

E.M. Forster's *Howards End* achieves much of its compositional coherence by incorporating into the structure of its plot rhythmic movements of Beethoven's *Symphony No. 5 in C minor* (Patrick McCullough's "More Than a Soundtrack: Music as Meaning in *Howards End*"). The play with conventions of different arts

originates in the modernist practice of intermediality and intertextuality. The formally diversified composition of a modernist work, often turning into a college of citations and references, can be seen in Patrick McCullough's opinion as an "interart" project. Forster's novel, then, can also be interpreted as a work relating together different disciplines of artistic practice and reaching for completeness unavailable for writers working merely in one medium or art form.

McCullough's specific point is to argue that Forster's novel achieves a required level of complexity and is, thus, able to "challenge notions of certainty," by "harmoniously" combining literature with music. While the interdependence between arts was a typical stylistic feature of modernism, it was also a specifically chosen writerly practice of Forster who, in his *Aspects of the Novel*, declares that "the more the arts develop the more they depend on each other for definition". Literary composition involves here relating different forms of art, developing textual or intertextual connections through which the presentation of ideas grows more nuanced and subtle, resisting conventional solutions or traditional closures. As McCullough stresses in his concluding comments, such novels as *Howards End* encourage "scholars to consider how contributions from another seemingly unrelated field (Music) augment the fictional mode and allow authors to reflect the world more accurately." On the one hand, the tension within work, spanning compositional structures characteristic for different artistic fields, helps transcend limitations imposed by genres. On the other hand, it facilitates negotiations with individual artistic imaginations, allowing both the writer and the reader to explore alternative identities.

Searching for otherness which provides an alternative formal solution as well as differentiating plot possibilities dominates two approaches to Samuel Beckett's drama presented in this volume. In both articles (Ivan Nyusztay's "The Experiment of Rebelling in Beckett: The Impact of Camus and Havel" and Thomas Thoelen's "'my thoughts are elsewhere': Reading (In)Attention in Beckett's *The Unnamable*"), Beckett's drama and prose are analysed as compositions woven out of a complex network of references to other authors, works, and stylistic dictions. Beckett's journeys to the "elsewhere" regions of language and imagination refocus attention away from his usual narrative and dramatic structures, as well as from his preferred thought patterns and solutions. Exploring links between Beckett's writing and that of Camus and Havel, one can discover not only what Nyusztay calls "all-inclusive obsession with contradiction," but also playwright's attempt to break with his own attachment to the concept of absurd

dominated by the sense of pessimism and futility. The anti-structure of hope and rebellion helps establish contrast with the usually endless cycle of failures symbolically featuring Sisyphus and his stone. For instance, in *Catastrophe*, a play dedicated to the Czech dissident Václav Havel, Becket transgresses his own imagery of waning and decreasing energy and offers a politically inspired gesture of rebellion, as if taken out of a different world view. As Nyusztay stresses, Beckett's play "presents a positively subversive cadence unknown in his other works." The presence of echoes of other sensibility and references to other writers presents the author with a formal alternative and a more promising solution, which both distances him from his own writing and helps integrate new ways of expression or as Nyusztay has it: "probe these limits by occasionally exploring an alternative world view."

Thomas Thoelen's article concentrates solely on Beckett's prose, focusing especially on his final novel *The Unnamable*, and delving into an elusive area of inattention – the subtle concept of voluntary or involuntary loosening of concentration, of grasp which one's mind secures on subjects of one's deliberation. Searching the threshold of Beckett's intellectual perception, looking into the strain of informational overload and associative rush, Thoelen manages to provide the portrait of a writer whose mind foretells the arrival of hyper reading at the age of technology but primarily whose controlled dissipation of focus secures freedom for artistic exploration. The gesture of abandon of formal and intellectual disciplines, imposing anti-form or what amounts here to no-form onto Beckett's usually highly premeditated and calculated rigour of symmetry produces in effect a way forward towards the "elsewhere" of literary discovery. What Thoelen calls the "creative potential of *in*attention" makes for a "wholly different material context for writing" in which so much is left for uncontrolled experience outside of usual language structures and cognitive habits. Therefore, inattentiveness both constitutes an "important source for creativity" and an extra possibility for "artistic freedom," and it builds a model of human intellect immersed in mediatised culture responsible for countless intrusions into mind's inner circle.

With Beckett, then, it is the constant play with otherness that mobilises his landscapes of human reflection and thought. As Nyusztay claims, it is possible to "examine the Havel-inspired rebellion in the Beckett play together with the Beckett-inspired rebellion in Havel's play," and subsequently to grasp the "transgressive" nature of Beckett's formal experimentation as well as his ethi-

cal responsibility. Then, if hyper reading – the required skill of today's digitally-driven mindset – enables in Thoelen's opinion a "reader quickly to construct landscapes of associated research fields and subfields," Beckett's subjective and idiosyncratic version of this intellectual practice which sends his mind into the area of creative elsewhere opens the possibility of inadvertent paradox and unlocks the power of his creative experiment.

A special coda to the aesthetic strategy in which forms convene and contrast in order to explore alternative paths of perception is provided by Tom Stoppard's radio plays. These forms, naturally more modest in their length, contain dramatic material of perhaps greater density and formal precision than standard, full-length plays. *Artist Descending a Staircase* and *Where Are They Now* both experiment with audience aural perception in order to set traps for both ordinary logic of reception and audience expectations. The phrase characteristically used about Stoppard's strategy, the "ambush," refers here to the structure of soundscape which confronts the listener with an interpretative disturbance, gap or multiplicity of narrative possibilities. The reconstruction of the logic, hidden behind the suggested and simulated illusion of probability lies entirely on the listener's side and invites multiple trials for logic and sense. As Jadwiga Uchman points out ("Experiments with time structure in Tom Stoppard's dramas"), there is a multiplicity of interpretative possibilities which constitute his compositional strategy for which – as Stoppard puts it himself – "the only useful metaphor I can think of for the way I think I write my plays is convergences of different threads." Especially in his *Arcadia*, Stoppard uses "time as a thematic and structural element in a number of different ways" and connects two different historical periods in order to facilitate an external, distanced, and dialectical overview of both of them. His primary point is to show how different structures of thought and different forms of expression, when alienated and analysed, reveal divergent and misleading logic of interpretation which stumbles and crumbles under false assumptions, wrong reasoning, misguided calculation. In other words, the multiplicity of forms reveals the crooked logic of human thinking and the strained reliability of what is normally considered a sound rational argumentation.

Playing exactly with such schemes and patterns of audience perception and preference lies in the centre of analysis of *Let The Fire Burn*, a documentary film by Jason Osder which concerns the 1985 bombing of the headquarters of Philadelphia's radical political group the MOVE (Kevin King "Truth Out

of Context: The Use of Found Footage in *Let The Fire Burn*"). The film is composed entirely out of authentic footage of the period based on police archives and media reports. It does not contain authorial narrative or commentary and leaves all the interpretation of the "contemporaneous footage and testimony" for the contemporary viewer to make. However, what undoubtedly remains and authentic and objective archival testimony of the period does not necessarily function as a completely transparent form of recording and archiving facts. Jason Osder, as King stresses, relies heavily on "contextual assumptions of current audiences" in controlling his own message, if not manipulation, without making an open presence in the diegetic reality of the film. Thus, the old form and the new form of documenting reality, now boosted by modern devices used for recording private lives, remain in constant tension. Therefore, King's major objective in his analysis is to show how the authentic material is "re-contextualized in the compilation process through editing and historical perspective" by which the director of the film successfully "demonstrates the perspective of the filmmakers and the historical differences in audience perceptions." Watching the film, as its analysis proves, gives a possibility of not only looking at a particularly fatal fragment of American history, but it also helps realise the "power of utilizing the contextual assumptions of re-purposed footage to develop a wholly different narrative." The very process of rearranging ready, archival material indirectly captures differences in conventions of form as well as habits of perception between old and new audiences. Self-conscious structuring of visual conventions and narrative logic opens a possibility for acknowledging "modern attitudes" as well as for maneuvering the viewer into grasping "what to feel while watching these images, instead of allowing the found footage to speak for itself." Ultimately, as King claims about the film's production crew "their use of various forms of footage, editing technique and use of other film technique such as music, do reveal a viewpoint which reflects their own cultural assumptions about such found footage."

With all of the works in question the final message and interpretative thrust are constructed through indirect play with form and structure. Instead of a straightforward narrative comment elucidating the conclusive evaluation of ideas and theses, writers and artists whose analysis is collected in this volume have chosen to rely on confrontation between arts, narrative structures and references or intertextual borrowings in order to reach for deeper understanding of their themes and for more complex presentation of motifs. Tying together

formal traditions and artistic styles into a dynamic structure allows for a more open space in exploring what otherwise would remain too narrow and limited. Such multiplicity, though at times disturbing and definitely more demanding on the reader or viewer, remains nonetheless a powerful strategy of breaking what has lost its resonant potential to redefine convention and decompose traditional language structures. Clashing form and anti-form, used as a controlled aesthetic device, illustrates the created, historical nature of art as well as our perception of its achievements.

More Than a Soundtrack: Music as Meaning in *Howards End*

Patrick McCullough,
Rhode Island College, Providence

Abstract: In *Howards End,* E. M. Forster experiments with intermediality through the mixture of literary and musical media. By doing so, the author attempts to make the novel greater than the sum of its parts. Recognizing this achievement in Beethoven's *Symphony No. 5 in C minor* "due mainly to the relation between its movements" and because the movements "all enter the mind at once, and extend one another into a common entity," Forster applies what the symphony accomplishes musically to fiction (1955, 164, 168). This technique he calls "repetition plus variation" (168). Like Beethoven's iconic four note rhythmic phrase of three shorter notes of equal length followed by one longer note: "diddidy dum," Forster repeats a phrase of his own that resonates throughout the novel: "Panic and Emptiness" (1989, 26). I argue that a reading of the novel without an attempt to understand Beethoven's experimental and irreverent approach to the symphonic form, especially in the third and fourth movements, leaves the reader of *Howards End* with an incomplete understanding of Forster's artistic vision. Forster's intermedial strategy is to create a work whose purpose is "expansion…Not completion" (1955, 169). In contrast, the 1992 film adaptation of the novel relies on Beethoven's *Fifth* as little more than diegetic accompaniment. In fact, the construction of the concert scene actively discourages an intermedial reading as sophisticated as in the novel. As a result, the film fails to communicate Forster's idea that "the more the arts develop the more they depend on each other for definition" (1955, 149). Unlike the novel, the adaptation does not attempt to translate Beethoven's rhythmic development into the medium of film, resulting in an adaptation that misunderstands Forster's artistic vision.

Keywords: E. M. Forster, *Howards End*, Ludwig van Beethoven, *Symphony No. 5 in C minor*, interart

This article addresses E. M. Forster's use of Beethoven's *5th Symphony* in *Howards End* and compares it to Merchant Ivory's use of it in his 1992 film based on the

novel. It is making the argument that Forster's employment is exceptionally experimental and has many applications to interdisciplinary and intermedial approaches to the creation and analysis of works of literature. Though popular today, intermedial studies actually have a longstanding tradition under another name, interart studies, according to Rajewsky's "Intermediality, Intertextuality, and Remediation" (2005, 44). The author explains that, while intermediality often justifies critical analyses of newer media, such as video games as texts, literary scholars and makers of literature have engaged in this tradition well before the advent of digital technologies (Rajewsky 2005, 43-4). Intermediality, for the purposes of this study, will have a much wider use and honor literature's rich tradition of interart, which corresponds well with Rajewsky's claim: "Finally, the concept of intermediality is more widely applicable than previously used concepts, opening up possibilities for relating the most varied of disciplines and for developing general, transmedially relevant theories of intermediality" (2005, 44). Finally, employing Rajewsky's explication of intermediality elucidates the importance of Forster's interart project between his novel, *Howards End*, and Beethoven's *5th Symphony in C minor*.

Just as Michelle Fillion argues about Forster's *A Room with a View*, the novel "is in many ways his most musical novel," I contend that the same can be said about *Howards End* (2001, 266). Fillion also asserts that, in *A Room with a View*, Forster makes intentional choices about which pieces of music to reference in the novel. As she says that he selects "this repertory with scrupulous attention to its signifying power," I claim that he does so again two years later in *Howards End* (2001, 266). Therefore, Forster's experiment with music and literature in the latter novel merits attention because it encourages scholars to consider how contributions from another seemingly unrelated field (Music) augment the fictional mode and allow authors to reflect the world more accurately. On Forster's specific selection of Beethoven's *5th* for *Howards End*, Fillion says the following:

> Beethoven is a logical fit with this philosophical core, for his Fifth Symphony had been cast as an embodiment of idealist epistemology in nineteenth-century German music criticism from A. B. Marx to Hugo Riemann. By their standards the Fifth Symphony had been elevated to a model of organic wholeness and internal coherence, musical attributes that promote the moral ideal of the unified life to which the novel aspires. (2010, 85)

At a cursory glance, the symphony seems to be the perfect counterpart to "Only connect…," the epigraph to the novel. In fact, as Fillion notes of the symphony, this is the first of its kind to exhibit "long-term integration, thematic recall, and end-weighted form across a multi-movement work" (2010, 85). As I will explain in greater detail later, the symphony's movements actually recall one another and cohere because of a four-note, rhythmic phrase that lasts a mere two measures. Such an intricately-woven piece mirrors the aspiration of the novel's epigram. As I dig deeper into both of these masterful works, we will see how their failures to live up to "Only connect…" actually make them successful and, most importantly, honest works of art.

Seventeen years after the publication of *Howards End*, Forster admits in *Aspects of the Novel* that "the more the arts develop the more they depend on each other for definition," and he arguably believes this when writing *Howards End* (1955, 149). It cannot be mere coincidence that he pays specific attention to Beethoven's *Fifth Symphony* in both his novel and in his theoretical work. In this symphony, he finds "in its final expression a type of beauty which fiction might achieve in its own way. Expansion … Not completion. Not rounding off but opening out" (1955, 169). The iconic rhythm to which I refer is a series of three short notes followed by a longer one (i, mm. 1-2). One needs only hear the first four notes of the symphony to recognize it. As Fillion states, "The famous 'and-Two-and-ONE' motive is obsessively present throughout the first movement, and recurs in the three subsequent movements" (2010, 85). Therefore, Beethoven uses a simple rhythm to frame his symphony. In that same vein, I argue that the fifth chapter of *Howards End* includes Beethoven's symphony in order to provide the reader with the necessary tools to understand the developmental arc of the novel, as it also relies on the repetition of the phrase "panic and emptiness." Thus, Forster spends a significant amount of time in the fifth chapter interpreting a crucial moment in the symphony that expands upon an earlier rhythm in order to draw attention to his own attempt to unite his novel through rhythm and repetition, not generic conventions (1989, 165). "Panic and emptiness," the rhythm, appears here in the fifth chapter with the context via which to interpret it, and then we have several iterations of the phrase throughout the novel that mirror its musical counterpart in Beethoven's *5th*. Therefore, Forster's writing of the novel relies on his understanding and interpretation of the symphony. That being the case, a reading that disregards the importance of the musical composition to Forster's literary work results in an incomplete understanding of the project of the novel.

In the fifth chapter of the novel, the narrator performs, through Helen Schlegel, a reading of Beethoven's *Symphony No. 5 in C minor* (particularly the third and fourth movements) that he ties inextricably to the plot of the novel through the use of a repeated and developed linguistic phrase – "Panic and emptiness" – that operates in a similar fashion to the iconic four-note rhythm in the *Fifth Symphony* (Forster 1989, 26). While Helen first says the phrase in the previous chapter to summarize her experience at Howards End, the narrator provides the reader in the fifth chapter with the context for how to interpret the expression as it reappears throughout the novel. Upon hearing each iteration of "panic and emptiness," the reader cannot help but relate it back both to Helen's experience at Howards End (where Helen first says the phrase) and her literary reading of the third and fourth movements of the symphony in chapter five (where the phrase appears four times). Influenced by Beethoven's nuanced use of a four-note rhythmic pattern in the *Fifth Symphony*, Forster attempts to make the phrase's development the cornerstone of his novel. My analysis of the novel and his later work, *Aspects of the Novel*, informs me that the modernist author experiments with music in literature in order to stitch his work together internally because he realizes that any "tying together" via plot or external form (exposition, conflict, climax, falling action, resolution) is inherently artificial and contrived. Forster's creative choice allows for a more organic unification of his work, which clashes both with his uncertain epigraph – "only connect…" – and with the unsatisfying conclusion to the novel. The contrast between the unifying power of "panic and emptiness" and the epigraph and conclusion emphasizes the shaky and possibly inadequate nature of the novel's proposed response to modernity.

For Forster, even though the symphony comprises four distinct movements, the composition asserts itself as an entire work, there being a clear rhythmic relation between all four movements. Instead of structuring his work like a traditional symphony, Beethoven experiments with repetition and variation in order to produce a work that does not suffer from the artificial cohesion rendered by a strict adherence to generic conventions. Indeed, as Forster correctly asserts in *Aspects of the Novel*, the "diddidy dum" rhythm stitches the musical composition together internally (1955, 164). Similarly, in his "Notes on Beethoven's Fifth Symphony," Christopher H. Gibbs claims that "all four movements seem to grow from seeds sown in the opening measures" (2006). What Forster notices in the early twentieth century, Gibbs draws attention to a century later. Based on their observations and the analyses of contemporary and recent critics, I pro-

pose that Beethoven eschews a strict adherence to external structure in favor of the development of a simple four-note rhythm throughout the movements of the symphony. It appears initially in the first movement, but without the return of it in the subsequent movements. Thus, Ludwig Spohr's assessment of the final movement would ring true, suggesting that "the last movement, with its empty noise, is the least satisfactory" (1971, 187). His statement seems especially accurate of the last forty or so measures of the symphony, which hit the listener over the head (the dynamic marking being sempre fortissimo till the end) with major resolution after the unexpected return of the third movement's haunting goblin march in the minor key. Indeed, these measures are nothing but meaningless noise "without the rest of the symphony" (Tovey 1971, 199). In her expert analysis of the musical composition, Fillion adds:

> Although the coda fills over one-third of the movement (mm. 294-444), its harmonic framework is astonishingly basic: a massively expanded three-chord cadential formula that ends with an eighty-measure Presto tonic prolongation studded with V-I cadences. (2010, 86)

Without the key to the whole symphony, the rhythm, the final bars of the last movement are absurdly basic for a composer of Beethoven's genius. His creative choice, however, brings the movements together under the rhythmic spell of the "diddidy dum" pattern, which appears in some variation in all four movements, allowing him to create a work that challenges the conceivable capabilities of the symphonic form and the unrealistic and socially constructed expectation Western listeners have for a satisfying conclusion via a conventional return to the home key in a musical composition. This interpretation of Beethoven's symphony is relevant to a reading of Forster's novel because it reveals the significance of the author's choice in musical counterpart to his literary work.

Forster's project with *Howards End* is to determine how the composer's musical efforts would translate into language, thus providing the justification for my argument that Forster's novel is a perfect example of intermediality. Like the composer, the author has his own version of "diddidy dum"; which is the phrase "panic and emptiness" (1989, 26). The first iteration of this theme comes in the fourth chapter when Helen Schlegel contemplates the Wilcoxes of the world. So self-possessed, so powerful, and yet a potent emotion that sparks a connec-

tion between two would-be lovers disrupts the Wilcox mechanism. Faced with the possibility of such a meaningful connection his duty-bound life cannot permit, Paul's domineering world of the Wilcoxes comes to a screeching halt and reveals the "panic and emptiness" within (1989, 26). Instead of returning Helen's affection, Paul cowers under the Wilcox name. He knows, as the obedient son of a venture capitalist reaping the rewards of British Imperialism, that he has a duty to go back to Africa and continue his father's business in the rubber industry. Although the missed love connection seems inconsequential, it is the precursor to an entire war between Schlegels and Wilcoxes that will decide the ultimate question of the novel: Who will inherit England? Forster links the tragedy of this missed connection to the third and fourth movements' goblin march through the reiteration of this iconic line in the fifth chapter in which the narrator provides a reading of the third and fourth movements of the symphony (1989, 34).

Similar to Beethoven's symphony, the rhythm is the key to the depths of *Howards End*. On the surface, Forster's novel is unsatisfying. The author and the narrator champion human connection as the solution to social divisions like class, wealth, culture, and education, but the Schlegels conquer the Wilcoxes, Charles goes to prison for a crime he commits in an attempt to connect with Helen by defending her honor, and Margaret "neither [forgives Henry] for his behavior nor [wishes] to forgive him" (Forster 1989, 347). But worst of all, Leonard Bast dies while trying to make things right, by restoring a broken connection with Helen. Even worse, as Fillion aptly points out "for all her talk of love, Helen sleeps with Leonard, then tries to pay him off, and finally forgets him. He dies ignorant of his unborn child, and is dispatched to the grave with relief. Here is thus a failure to connect" (2010, 88). Even the heroine of the novel, the one with whom Forster's narrator most closely sympathizes, is not wholly innocent, but rather causes disconnections that spread "Panic and Emptiness." In many of these cases, "Only connect…" leads the characters to failure and peril.

So, then, what is Forster trying to say? Is he ultimately cynical about the efficacy of his own proposed response to modernity? Indeed, there are only two instances where "Only connect…" generates a positive outcome: Margaret and Helen restore their relationship and Helen predicts that Tom and her child will "be lifelong friends" (Forster 1989, 351). I contend that Forster sets up *Howards End* to fail much like Beethoven does with his fourth movement in order to demonstrate the true nature of his response to modernity: his aphorism is the answer, but it is imperfect – there are no guarantees that it will work. As Leslie White asserts:

> *Howards End* reaches and "fails" in model romantic fashion, but in this failing it offers a vision of connection for which language, or perhaps the fictional mode, was for Forster at that time unsuitable, inadequate, or elusive. (2005, 50)

Similar to how Beethoven concludes his *5th Symphony*, *Howards End* refuses to resolve satisfactorily. Without any familiarity with the musical counterpart, the reader would have a difficult time figuring out why the conclusion must be unsatisfying. As much criticism on *Howards End* has already done, a reader unwilling to accompany Forster on his intermedial journey might assume that the novel is the "by-product of authorial muddle" instead of the "bracing modernist challenge" it actually is, as Virginia Woolf so insightfully put it (Woolf qtd. in Fillion 2010, 79).

With a knowledge of the principal theme of Beethoven's first movement and how it relates to the third and fourth movements, however, one can draw a parallel to a "first movement" in *Howards End*. Helen's visit to the titular house causes her, as we remember, to first utter "Panic and Emptiness." The sentiment that prompts this utterance originates during the "problem section" of Helen's visit: the morning after Paul and Helen confess a love for each other that cannot happen. At first charmed by the self-possession of the Wilcoxes, Helen catches a glimpse of what really lies beneath the surface of the very people who seem to have their "hands on all the ropes" (Forster 1989, 52). When caught between his ripening love for Helen and the duty he has been told he owes his family, Paul goes "mad with terror" and silently retreats behind the Wilcox name (Forster 1989, 26). Helen watches her beloved cower in fear and realizes that any one of the Wilcoxes would have responded this way. Their superficial fortitude crumbles when confronted by the personal side of life. For Helen, the trauma of the problem section, therefore, is twofold: she painfully realizes that love, no matter how ardently felt, can dissipate overnight, and that the powerful of this world remain that way as long as they shut out the personal side of life, something she cannot forgive. By introducing "panic and emptiness" at this juncture in the novel, Forster gives the scene a significance that plot alone could not provide. After all, Margaret Schlegel is the heroine of the novel. This scene merely weaves the Wilcox family into the overarching plot, which is the narrative of Margaret's conquering of the Wilcoxes and eventual acquisition of Howards End.

Be that as it may, the novel returns time and again to "panic and emptiness," a phrase associated with the other Schlegel sister. In fact, it does so in five separate places explicitly, and several other times implicitly by making reference to the goblins marching or the transition passage on the drum. The frequency with which this phrase occurs in the novel reveals that Helen's initial visit is more than mere exposition. In the Wilcox family, she encounters something that will have a bearing on the rest of the novel because Forster's novel is, among other things, a social commentary on imperialism and capitalism. The author, however, attempts to give a fair depiction of men like Henry Wilcox by admitting whenever possible that some of the intentions behind their actions are at the root good, but that the actions themselves avoid "the personal note in life" (Forster 1989, 96). In the forty-first chapter, Leonard Bast grasps the problem of the Imperialist:

> It breeds as quickly as the yeoman, and as soundly; strong is the temptation to acclaim it as a super-yeoman, who carries his country's virtues overseas. But the Imperialist is not what he thinks or seems. He is a destroyer. (Forster 1989, 339)

Leonard understands the complex quandary: these people commit atrocities, but they are also responsible for much of the progress that English society enjoys. Therefore, what seems beautiful and grand is rotten at the core. The power and charm of men like Henry Wilcox are bought at the price of the soul, for these men treat countless others as subhuman all for the sake of their own and their own country's gain at the expense of the working and impoverished classes – not to mention, of course, at the expense of the colonized people under British Imperial rule.

In this same chapter, however, Leonard admits that there is hope:

> To Leonard, intent on his private sin, there came the conviction of innate goodness elsewhere. It was not the optimism which he had been taught at school. Again must the drums tap, and the goblins stalk over the universe before joy can be purged of the superficial. (Forster 1989, 339)

By referring once more to his analysis of Beethoven's *5th*, Forster increases the relevance of this scene. Just as the fourth movement refuses a satisfactory

resolution, Leonard realizes that his problems, as well as England's complex social problems, have no clear or certain solution. But there is "hope even on this side of the grave" (Forster 1989, 107). The beginnings of the answer will not come if Leonard severs his connection with Helen and allows himself to be eaten alive by his remorse. No, he realizes as he makes his final journey that he must mend the connection at all costs. The reader can, therefore, intuit the importance of connection, of the "personal note in life" (Forster 1989, 96). But, due to his untimely death, this passage also makes clear the uncertainty of resolution. While "Only connect…" is all Leonard can do, it is not always enough. Without the reference to Helen's reading of the third and fourth movements of Beethoven's symphony, this scene would lack the impact that it has. The music's inclusion effectively reveals that the solutions people invent for social problems always-already have one foot in the grave. To try to connect the disparate pieces is all one can do, even though it rarely, if ever, is enough. Similarly, "panic and emptiness" weaves these seemingly disparate and irrelevant plot points together to allow Forster to make a powerful comment on the human condition.

Therefore, the intermedial experiment in *Howards End* is a success. Forster's specific choice of Beethoven's *Symphony No. 5 in C minor* harmonizes with the nature of his novel because both works resist resolution and challenge notions of certainty. The musical construction of the symphony refuses to yield to the Western listener's musical expectation for a satisfying resolution at the end of a musical composition. Instead, Beethoven mocks the listener for harboring this expectation by blaring the resolution at fortissimo in his or her ears with "forty-odd bars of … meaningless noise," thereby pointing out the contrived and misleading nature of the satisfying conclusion in works of art that claim to try to accurately reflect life (Tovey 1971, 198). In a similar fashion, Forster brings his novel to a close in an obviously contrived way. The Wilcoxes finally honor Ruth's hand-written amendment to her will to give Margaret Howards End. The reader cannot help but be dissatisfied with this "forced and improbable" conclusion, "the novel's achievement undermined by plot contrivances, inadequate character development, and most notably by Forster's alleged cultural elitism" (White 2005, 43). Margaret's eventual acquisition of the property, "so by-pass[es] the legal (and patriarchal) assumption that it would be left to [Ruth's] husband" (Henderson 1992, 76). As unrealistic and dissatisfying as the conclusion is, the inclusion of the *5th Symphony* helps the reader make sense of the novel's plot development. Like its musical counterpart, Forster's novel provides an obviously

contrived resolution in order to more accurately reflect reality and the uncertain nature of any proposed solution to modernity. Because he provides the reader with the necessary tools to interpret the failure of *Howards End* through his intermedial approach, the reader can recognize the purpose that failure serves. Perhaps our solutions are always-already doomed to fail, but there is a world of difference between failing miserably and failing spectacularly.

Forster's experiment, however, is all but abandoned in the film adaptation. The setup of the concert scene sees to that. Ruth Prawer Jhabvala, the author of the screenplay for the film, removes almost all of the impact from and the importance of this scene and instead focuses on using the third movement's theme to underscore the socio-economic divide between the Schlegels and Leonard. In other words, aside from introducing a recognizable musical theme, the concert scene occurs merely so that Leonard can believably connect with a class that would normally be out of his reach. He and Helen Schlegel encounter each other at the concert and she walks off with his umbrella, nothing more. In the novel, however, the scene with the *Fifth Symphony* connects music snobs like Tibby with emotional powerhouses like Helen and German nationalists like Fräulein Mosebach with "British to the backbone" conservatives like Mrs. Munt. In contrast, in the film, characters can easily ignore and abandon the musical statements. Given the ways in which Jhabvala alters the scene, it is clear that she intends, for one reason or another, to shut down Forster's experiment and use the music for another purpose.

First of all, Jhabvala replaces the narrator with a lecturer who comes across as pompous and pretentious. His delivery of the line, "It will, I think, be generally admitted that Beethoven's *Fifth Symphony* is the most sublime noise ever to have penetrated the ear of man," is self-indulgent and overblown (Ivory 1992). In addition, his assertion that the symphony can have an objective, universal meaning represented by heroes, shipwrecks, and goblins comes across as a flimsy argument. While, in the novel, the narrator makes it clear that the heroes, shipwrecks, and goblins are Helen's unique experience of the music and not an objective statement about the symphony, the lecturer forces his own interpretation on the audience. Jhabvala emphasizes the ridiculousness of the lecturer's assumption by having a member of the audience interrupt and challenge him. The audience member asks, "But why a goblin?" To which, the lecturer responds, "Well, it's obvious." The lecturer then goes on to explain what the goblin represents, but he fails to articulate why it specifically *has* to be a goblin.

A goblin may very well represent, as he claims, negation, but so may many other symbols. His inability to adequately articulate his point and the fact that the film literally has the viewer leave during the middle of his explanation, proves that his lecture is inconsequential to the film and his argument ineffective. After all, the principal characters cannot be bothered to stay to hear him out.

Second of all, Helen's body language during the lecture suggests that she is bored, in opposition to the Helen of the novel who is overwhelmed by powerful emotions in the fifth chapter. In fact, in the novel's telling of this scene, the symphony moves Helen so much that she "pushe[s] her way out during the applause" and "desire[s] to be alone" (Forster 1989, 35). On the other hand, the Helen of the film looks at her wristwatch and then leaves during the middle of the lecture. Additionally, whereas in the novel Forster devotes pages from the chapter to Helen's literary interpretation of the symphony, the film undermines Helen's experience of the music by giving a complete stranger, the pompous lecturer on stage, her interpretation. Helen's reaction to the music encourages the viewer to also treat the scene as inconsequential. The meaning that the lecturer tries to articulate, then, becomes mere hot air, as the viewer would rather follow Helen out of the lecture hall.

While it is unclear why Jhabvala does it, based on her alterations to the concert scene, it is clear that she intentionally shuts down Forster's intermedial experiment and uses the symphony instead as a means to emphasize the divisive forces of class and wealth that alienate Leonard Bast from the other characters. Admittedly, though, even Forster's original construction of the scene emphasizes socio-cultural divisions, as Fillion notes: "Their reactions betray the cultural, social, and gender differences that divide rather than connect people, and summarize the multiple perspectives of Beethoven reception at the beginning of the twentieth century" (2010, 82). Although they all hear the same exact composition, Helen's Wagnerian interpretation isolates her from everyone else, the Mosebachs, nationalists to the core, merely want to appropriate Beethoven as "echt Deutsch," and Tibby takes the human element completely out of the equation by only paying attention to the notes in the score (Forster 1989, 32). Thus, while Jhabvala's focusing on the divisiveness of Western music based on a linking of leisure and artistic enrichment with the wealthiest classes is perfectly reasonable based on Forster's construction of the scene, it is curious why Jhabvala completely rewrites Helen's experience of the music and downplays the importance of the symphony to the developmental arc of the narrative.

Nevertheless, three uses of the symphony augment our understanding of the film adaptation: the title of the lecture on the symphony gets reiterated in a later scene, emphasizing the chasm that separates Helen's class from Leonard's, the third movement's goblin march accompanies Leonard's chase after Helen and his umbrella, and the theme returns again in Leonard's dream in which he is definitively cut off from Helen. The first instance is effective because it adds weight to Leonard's response to Helen on the rowboat. "Music and meaning" is something that Helen can enjoy at her leisure, as well as something in which she can find "hope on this side of the grave" (Forster 1989, 107). Leonard, on the other hand, is not saved by "music and meaning"; whether he understands the truth behind it or not, he is still destitute. Whereas Helen has the leisure to find beauty and significance in the lectures and concerts she attends, Leonard realizes that the ideals these events articulate are "for rich people, to make them feel good after their dinner" (Ivory 1992). Culture and personal connections can be everything to Helen because she does not have to worry about money. Leonard, on the other hand, bitterly realizes how insignificant these ideals are to him. By harkening back to the scene of their first encounter, the film makes a powerful statement about the inability of Forster's aphorism to easily resolve problems of class and poverty. While "only connect" is the beginning of the answer, the scene reminds the viewer that it is only the catalyst for true resolution.

The second instance of the film's use of Beethoven's *5th Symphony* comes in the scene when Helen and Leonard leave the lecture hall. The former mistakenly leaves with the latter's umbrella. The novel offers more explanation as to why the taking of his umbrella is significant: "He could not quite forget about his stolen umbrella. Yes, the umbrella was the real trouble. Behind Monet and Debussy the umbrella persisted, with the steady beat of a drum" (Forster 1989, 41). For Helen, her commandeering of Leonard's umbrella is nothing special. She is rich. If someone were to take her umbrella, she could just as easily afford another and not have noticed it in the first place. To Leonard, however, it is a real thing about which to worry. The use of the third movement's goblin march to accompany his chase after the umbrella, therefore, emphasizes his exasperated and hopeless state. Although the lecture merely has a piano accompanist, an orchestra enters in full force during his pursuit of Helen through the rainy, unforgiving streets. Helen walks calmly, unaware that she has put Leonard out; Leonard gives chase, painfully aware of his predicament. Whereas Helen can afford to catch a cold catalyzed by exposure to the cold and rain, Leonard cannot. He may reclaim his umbrella, but the novel asserts

that "beneath these superstructures of wealth and art there wanders an ill-fed boy, who has recovered his umbrella indeed, but who has left no address behind him, and no name" (Forster 1989, 46). The film's use of the symphony in this scene underscores Leonard's hopeless situation and his inability to connect with the upper class because of the chasms of class and wealth between Helen and him. This musical theme will reappear later in the film to dredge up these feelings of despair.

Along those lines, the third instance of the symphony's use comes in Leonard's dream about Helen. As viewers, we are taken back to the umbrella chase scene. Only this time, there is a metal gate in the dream sequence that separates him from Helen, which reveals to us that the attempt at connection between the two is always-already fraught with failure due to divisive and othering socio-economic forces like class and wealth. The return of the goblin march helps us as viewers (and listeners) to intuit this truth. Having already associated this theme with the chase after the umbrella – a failed attempt at connection, we now associate the theme with negative outcomes. Therefore, the film's use of it here prepares us as viewers for the failed connection between Helen and Leonard and the untimely death of the latter. The dream sequence may have been evocative enough to encourage us to intuit that something is not quite right, but the addition of the goblin march fills us with a deeper sense of dread and the "hint that all is not for the best in the best of all possible worlds" (Forster 1989, 46).

While the film makes use of Beethoven's *5th Symphony*, it does so in a way that is less experimental than Forster's use. While he structures his novel after the pattern of development he perceives in the symphony, the film employs it to underscore moments that emphasize the divisive forces of class and wealth. One appropriation is no better than the other, although it is interesting that the film decidedly shuts down Forster's musical experiment. The most important thing for Forster to get across is arguably the unsatisfactory development and resolution of his plot that mirrors his response to modernity, "Only connect…," a response that is always-already fraught with failure. The film's use of the symphony, then, is less experimental, although it successfully underscores the concerns about class and wealth.

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The Experiment of Rebelling in Beckett: The Impact of Camus and Havel

Ivan Nyusztay,
Budapest Business School, University of Applied Sciences

Abstract: The infinite and useless struggles of Camus's Sisyphus have long informed discussions of the philosophy and theatre of the absurd. In the Greek myth, which Camus reductively appropriates, Sisyphus relentlessly repeats his efforts to roll the rock up the hill, regardless of the sheer pointlessness of the endeavour. But what would be the consequences of a sudden termination of these struggles? What existential paradigm shift would be brought about if the rock finally stayed put at the peak, and what would be its repercussions in absurd drama? In Beckett's short play, *Catastrophe* the Protagonist's final gesture unexpectedly and irrevocably undermines the Director's coercive strategies. Dedicated to Havel, this play is politically inspired and presents a positively subversive cadence unknown in his other works. This epiphanic moment clearly disqualifies precepts of the absurd advocated by Camus, like hopelessness, meaninglessness, or uselessness. In this study I first demonstrate how these notions, together with the French philosopher's ideas of suicide, contradiction and selfhood are central to Beckett's work. Next, turning to the post-absurdist work of Camus, I point out how the act of rebellion and solidarity constitute a response to the absurd, displacing uselessness and meaninglessness. Finally, I trace the double meaning of rebellion in Camus's work and examine the Havel-inspired rebellion in the Beckett play together with the Beckett-inspired rebellion in Havel's play. By approaching Beckett's drama in this context I hope to demonstrate Beckett's contribution to a major – if not the only – transition from absurd drama to post-absurdist theatre.

Keywords: Václav Havel, Samuel Beckett, uselessness, meaninglessness, absurd, rebellion, solidarity

The infinite and useless struggles of Camus's Sisyphus have long informed discussions of the philosophy and theatre of the absurd. In the Greek myth,

which Camus reductively appropriates, Sisyphus relentlessly repeats his efforts to roll the rock up the hill, regardless of the sheer pointlessness of the endeavour. However, what would happen if this struggle was to suddenly cease? What existential paradigm shift would be brought about if the rock finally stayed put at the peak, and what would be the likely repercussions of such an action in absurd drama? I believe that the limits of the absurd can best be grasped if we transgress them. In my view Beckett – like Harold Pinter and Tom Stoppard – did probe these limits by occasionally exploring an alternative world view, a vision of the world incompatible with the Sisyphean *aporia*. I also believe that the emergence of this alternative vision has everything to do with Stoppard's and Beckett's personal concern with the work and political activities of fellow absurdist Václav Havel. In Beckett's short play, *Catastrophe* the Protagonist's final gesture unexpectedly and irrevocably undermines the Director's coercive strategies. Dedicated to Havel, this play is politically inspired and presents a positively subversive cadence unknown in his other works. This epiphanic moment clearly disqualifies such precepts of the absurd advocated by Camus as hopelessness, meaninglessness, or uselessness. It also invalidates a much earlier reservation Beckett formulated in *Molloy*, where the act of writing itself is likened to the labours of Sisyphus.[1]

In this article I first demonstrate how these notions, together with Camus's ideas of suicide, contradiction and selfhood are central to Beckett's work. Next, turning to the post-absurdist work of Camus, I point out how the act of rebellion and solidarity constitute a response to the absurd, in effect displacing uselessness and meaninglessness. Finally, I trace the double meaning of rebellion in Camus's work and examine the Havel-inspired rebellion in Beckett's play together with the Beckett-inspired rebellion in Havel's play. By approaching *Catastrophe* in this context I hope to demonstrate Beckett's contribution to a major – if not the only – transition from absurd drama to post-absurdist theatre.

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1 Moran's apologetic excuse for feeling incompetent to register the events in writing finds expression in the following lines: "And it would not surprise me if I deviated, in the pages to follow, from the true and exact succession of events. But I do not think even Sisyphus is required to scratch himself, or to groan, or to rejoice, as the fashion is now, always at the same appointed places. And it may even be they are not too particular about the route he takes provided it gets him to his destination safely and on time. And perhaps he thinks each journey is the first. This would keep hope alive, would it not, hellish hope. Whereas to see yourself doing the same thing endlessly over and over again fills you with satisfaction" (Beckett 2003, 133-34). See also Andrew K. Kennedy (1991, 121).

Suicide

Camus famously addressed the question of the absurd and that of suicide in the context of overwhelming hopelessness dominating the period of hardly intelligible devastation brought about by World War II and its aftermath. The first sentence of *The Myth of Sisyphus* sets the key for the whole undertaking: "There is but one truly serious philosophical problem, and that is suicide" (Camus 1979, 11). To Camus this also entailed that questions rooted in the historical traditions and the cultural past of the millennia are no longer valid. Galilei's question concerning whether the sun orbits around the Earth or vice versa is of no importance (Camus 1979, 11). Instead, the most fundamental question for Camus becomes the acceptability of suicide for man recognizing the meaninglessness of life and the sheer pointlessness of all human endeavour. Man discovers his own uselessness, and painfully realizes that all goals and aspirations are a mere illusion, life is nothing but a "stage scenery masked by habit" (Camus 1979, 20).

The idea of uselessness is reminiscent of a key figure of Russian literature featuring in nineteenth-century novels.[2] This coincidence is not surprising since the great figures of this literary historical period appear as frequent reference points in *The Myth of Sisyphus*.

Goncharov's Oblomov, the prototype of this nineteenth-century hero, is reincarnated in Beckett's novels and plays, where the feeling of uselessness becomes predominant to the point that it engulfs the author himself,[3] as well as the act of writing. No doubt, therefore, that the question of suicide for Camus is inseparable from the uselessness of which man becomes aware as "the stage sets collapse" (Camus 1979, 19). It is then that the why question comes up, as man reflects on and wonders about his life turned into a treadmill. This is the beginning of the consciousness awakening. Two alternatives present themselves for awakening man: suicide or recovery (Camus 1979, 19).

For Kierkegaard the release from the absurd was ensured by faith, and indeed, Camus claims the escape is always of a religious nature. This tradition conceives of death as non-final, as hope, as the promise of an afterlife the absurd remains reluctant to postulate. "It transcends my scale," says Camus, "I do not want to found anything on the incomprehensible. I want to know whether I can

2 Lishniy chelovek.

3 Beckett's nickname was Oblomov.

live with what I know and with that alone" (1979, 42). It follows that the absurd is by no means barren and infertile, since it is accompanied by awakening and the mind's recognition of its own limits. Instead of seeking a release from the absurd, Camus takes it as rigorously as possible to establish whether it is possible to live with it. The absurd man accepts the universe for what it is, and draws from it his strength, his refusal to hope, and "the unyielding evidence of a life without consolation" (Camus 1979, 59). Declining the alternative of self-destruction could not be more straightforward: "By the activity of consciousness I transform into a rule of life what was an invitation to death – and I refuse suicide" (Camus 1979, 62).

Turning to absurd drama, we find the same tenacious dismissal of suicide as a form of release. In Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*, Didi and Gogo do contemplate hanging themselves from a tree, but instead of the expected notions of egress and escapism the characters are concerned with the derailing circumstance of erection. Similarly, in *Happy Days* Winnie, who is buried up to her waist in the mound in Act I, and up to her neck in Act II, fiddles with and even kisses her revolver Browning, but never fires it.

Contradiction

"It's absurd" means that "it's impossible," but also that "it's contradictory," says Camus (1979, 33). That contradiction is essentially inseparable from the absurd in Camus's thought is evidenced by the numerous allusions to Sören Kierkegaard, the philosopher of contradictions and paradoxes. Kierkegaard's aesthetic paradox is the first appearance of the absurd in existentialist philosophy, as Nicolae Balota points out (1979, 19). For Kierkegaard the aesthetic paradox is the combination of contradictory notions, such as, for instance, the coalition between the sublime and the comic: a coalition beyond explanation and rationality. Apart from the aesthetic paradox, Kierkegaard espouses ethical and religious paradoxes, as it is well known. Release from the religious paradox is to be found in the *credo quia absurdum*, claiming that faith provides the only explanation for the absurd.[4]

Needless to say, Camus rules out faith as a solution for the absurd, thereby consistently and rigorously retaining the element of contradiction throughout his philosophical investigations. Moreover, he seems to distance himself from the

4 For Kierkegaard's influence on Camus see Balota (1979, 19).

Danish thinker when quoting Ferdinando Galiani: "the important thing is not to be cured, but to live with one's ailments. Kierkegaard wants to be cured [....] to escape the antinomy of the human condition" (Camus 1979, 41). Contradiction proves to be sticky and contagious; an incessant reminder of the limits of reason.

When we look at any work of Beckett, we see an all-pervasive, all-inclusive obsession with contradiction, which is not just a major device of subversion and self-deconstruction, but also the greatest source of Beckettian humour. In contrast to Kierkegaard, Camus can accept no transition from contradiction and sin to God. Instead, the notion of sin is redefined, "the absurd is sin without God" (1979, 42). This idea together with the questions of contradiction and suicide lead us to Caligula. In harmony with the conclusion of *The Myth of Sisyphus*, Caligula condemns the destructive force inherent in extreme liberty/freedom (Balota 1979, 283). In this play, Camus demonstrates the dangers of amorality and incontrollable devastation stemming from the lack of sin and the sense of guilt immanent in the absurd. Caligula is a possible response to the fate of Sisyphus, inasmuch as the freedom gained in the absurd turns against itself and others. Camus condemns this amorality by presenting extreme liberty as the self-annihilation of madness. Caligula in this sense goes beyond Sisyphus when he cannot be satisfied with this world, "Really, this world of ours, the scheme of things as they call it, is quite intolerable. That's why I want the moon, or happiness, or eternal life – something, in fact, that may sound crazy, but which isn't of this world" (Camus 1958, 17).

Caligula seeks to establish the kingdom of impossibility, where all contradictions are resolved, "I want to drown the sky in the sea, to infuse ugliness with beauty, to wring a laugh from pain" (Camus 1958, 25). There is a fundamental difference between Caligula and Sisyphus, which goes beyond the difference between drama and myth. Caligula's mission to enforce the legitimacy of absolute freedom is no less absurd than Sisyphus' act. However, Caligula struggles with his fate, with the impossible, his mind set on changing the world. Sisyphus, on the contrary, perseveres in the futile and endless repetition of his act with no intent to change his destiny, let alone the world. Instead, he is engrossed in the absurd, or to speak with Camus, is "keeping the absurd alive" (1979, 53).

Caligula dismisses love and suffering, for in all human relationships he sees the curtailment of his power and desire for freedom, "Love isn't enough for me" (1958, 75). For him real happiness is constituted by unbearable freedom and condemnation of all human beings. It is to be found in blood and hatred, the incomparable loneliness of man facing his life. For him happiness is "this

intolerable release, devastating scorn, blood, hatred all around [him] [….] the ruthless logic that crushes out human lives" (Camus 1958, 76). Needless to say, in his fall he is divided as he tumbles into the yawning abyss of nothingness, "I have chosen a wrong path, a path that leads to nothing. My freedom isn't the right one….Nothing, nothing yet." (Camus 1958, 77).

Self

Searching for one's identity is an epistemological problem for the *homo absurdus*, the limits of the self are the limits of knowledge acquisition. How can I claim that I know anything? – asks Camus. The self is part of the world, and as in the case of the world I can only have partial impressions about myself: "For if I try to seize this self of which I feel sure, if I try to define and to summarize it, it is nothing but water slipping through my fingers. [….] Forever I shall be a stranger to myself" (Camus 1979, 24).

In Camus, absurd identity can only be defined in terms of fluidity, of a flux. It is nothing but a continuous flow of being taking up new shapes but never crystallizing in any of them. Similarly, Beckett's Krapp listens in vain to the spools of memory to find something in his past he can willingly identify with. As it soon turns out, identity evades the quest and proves to be fragmentary and scattered in time resisting narrative accommodation. Krapp dissociates himself from his own past, becomes a stranger to himself and hardly understands his own language. Needless to say, Krapp in this sense is not an isolated hero, but a typical embodiment of Beckett's understanding of selfhood. To be sure, both in Beckett's entire work as well as in Camus's philosophy of the absurd we find an exclusive concern with the self. The Other for both authors will be accessible only through another mode of rebellion, a revolt against this encapsulation within the confines of the self.

Rebellion

Response to the challenge of the absurd can be solidarity or rebellion,[5] though they can defeat the absurd only temporarily. The idea of rebellion appears already in *The Myth of Sisyphus* as one of the coherent philosophical stances. In this

5 *The Rebel* and *The Plague* can both be read as attempts to escape from the absurd (Balota 1979, 295).

work rebellion is approached in a metaphysical sense and bears on the human being's conviction of the inexorability of fate. Man confirms the absurd for himself, and rebels against surrendering.

In Camus's later work the rebel defies the servile subordinacy of Sisyphus, and transcends his lonely struggles through commitment to solidarity, "When he rebels, a man identifies himself with other men and so surpasses himself, and from this point of view human solidarity is metaphysical" (1956, 12).[6] A similar transition presents itself from *The Stranger* to *The Plague,* which is, as Balota quotes Camus, "a transition from isolated rebellion to the discovery of a community in whose struggles one feels obliged to share." And further, "if there is any advancement from *The Stranger* to *The Plague*, it is surely in the direction of solidarity and participation" (Balota 1979, 299).

The relationship between rebellion and the absurd in Camus's thought is not surprisingly contradictory, since though rebellion appears as an evidence within the experience of the absurd, it also harbours a moral rule which is clearly missing from the absurd.[7]

Rebellion is blatantly incompatible with extreme absurdism regarding defiance. Camus's rebel is a naysayer, he communicates and resists, whereas the absurd finds its most appropriate and eloquent manifestation in silence. This explains much of the stubborn speechlessness of Beckett's and Pinter's heroes, who intervene in and disrupt all pretentious sense-seeking dialogues and communication, thus exposing an introvert, mute self hardly expressible in words. Silence and speechlessness is perhaps the most poignant and extreme in Pinter's play *A Slight Ache*, in which a match seller shatters the life of the other characters without saying a word.

Compassion and the absurd *per se*

Rebellion and solidarity spring from the same root. As Camus argues, the rebellion that dissociates itself from solidarity becomes unworthy of its name (1956,

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6 Camus's move from the lonely labours of Sisyphus to the notion of rebellion can be reformulated as the ethical move from the isolated individual to the Other. The idea of suicide discussed and discarded in *The Myth of Sisyphus* reappears in *The Rebel* as the idea of murder which is likewise dismissed, "Murder cannot be made coherent when suicide is not considered coherent" (Camus 1956, 7).

7 The rule concerning the right or obligation of murder.

15). At the same time, the enlightening confrontation between the absurd and rebellion sheds light on another important difference, this time with regard to suffering. As Camus points out, suffering is individual in the absurd. However, in rebellion "suffering is seen as a collective experience" (Camus 1956, 15). This is the point where we reach the limits of the absurd and enter the alternative world of compassion. Compassion, as love brings about the suspension of the absurd by terminating human solitude, and restoring man's relationship with the world. These potential forms of human relationship put an end to man's exile, to withdrawals into the self. In absurd drama we find individual calvaries and the merciless thwarting of all attempts at compassion. The common suffering of Beckett's pairs contains only the illusion of compassion, the characters are never truly compassionate or empathetic with each other. The potential of compassion confirmed in these feeble attempts affect the reader/spectator precisely by remaining unfulfilled, thwarted. In this sense, too, Beckett's plays appeal to what they deny.

Nevertheless, eliciting a response through denial is by no means reducible to any form of instruction or *katharsis*. To be sure, the absurd confirms nothing outside itself, but instead, makes repeated attempts to exhaust itself. In other words, as Camus testifies in his *Notebook* (Balota 1979, 310), the plague proves that the absurd teaches us nothing. The absurd cannot be resolved through any explanation of the world, but instead, it subverts all traditional worldviews. As Ionesco most succinctly put it, "Absurd is that which is devoid of purpose… Cut off from his religious, metaphysical, and transcendental roots, man is lost: all his actions become senseless, absurd, useless" (Esslin 2004, 23).

In contrast, in both Greek and Shakespearean drama we find a mythological framework accommodating the absurd. In neither of these cases is the absurd a comprehensive universal attribute of being, but more like a temporarily derailed state of consciousness, a momentary lapse of reason (Pink Floyd). Both great periods of drama (Greek and Shakespearean) owned an all-encompassing worldview that rendered possible a conclusive and reassuring resolution of the absurd. We find concrete and straightforward explanations for absurd phenomena within the coordinates of Greek mythology and the Judaic-Christian worldview respectively. Consequently, there the absurd becomes subsumed and transubstantiated. Ajax's absurd act of slaughtering the cattle instead of Ulysses is explained away by the intervening God, as is Heracles' murdering of his own children or Oedipus' self-blinding. In these systems of mythological thought

modalities of the grotesque and the absurd prove to be the means of learning through suffering (*to pathei mathos*),[8] namely of expiation, penitence, recognition, enlightenment.

In the Theatre of the Absurd, however, we find the Camuvian variant of the absurd, which resists containment: it is self-sufficient and unresolvable. On these grounds I contest Jan Kott's (1971), Martin Esslin's (2004) and Neil Cornwell's (2006) respective contributions to the understanding of the notion of the absurd, since in these otherwise insightful and indispensable undertakings we find a rather confusing blend between the above-mentioned variants. I believe it is only by taking the absurd as seriously and rigorously as Camus did, that we can hope to see where its limits crystallize.

The Catastrophe of Identification

Dedicated to Václav Havel, Beckett's *Catastrophe* (1982) is a response to contemporary Czechoslovakian politics as the Czechoslovakian born Tom Stoppard's *Professional Foul* and *Rock and Roll* were both inspired by Havel. To my knowledge no other Beckett work brings to play the political reality – and together with it the Camuvian notions of solidarity and rebellion – as directly and operatively as *Catastrophe*.

At first glance the play is about a rehearsal – at least according to the stage directions – and as such, Beckettian theatre *seems* to come closest to self-reflection. However, it soon turns out that it is not just about a rehearsal, and consequently, neither is it merely a Beckettian experiment in self-reflexive theatricality. Having established what it is not, let us take a look at what it is about.

The stage is bare except for the Protagonist standing barefoot on a black block with bowed head. The Director comfortably seated downstage addresses his dictatorial and often violent instructions to his assistant, who servilely provides the appropriate responses. As an increasingly poignant contrast the Protagonist remains silent throughout the play. All information about him is supplied by the Assistant who seems to be responsible for every detail and nuance concerning the Protagonist's appearance and posture. The Director's questions that could as well be ours – except for the occasional bursts of outrage – focus our attention on minute details as if to present the object of merciless scrutiny through

8 Beginning with Aeschylus, learning through suffering is the motor of tragic action.

a magnifying glass. In the course of the aggressive questioning, a strong sense of hierarchy is maintained with the Director on top, followed by the Assistant and Luke, who are in charge of the lighting, and the Protagonist at the bottom.

The Director's curiosity is at odds with the stage directions that emphasize the unimportance of age and physique. Similarly, the black dressing gown covering the entire body contrasts with the nuance-oriented directorial observation. The questions and demands of the Director are not triggered by any spectacular aspect of the Protagonist's appearance, but rather by the fear of the ordinary, of the unimportant that may conceal something beyond his control.

The Director is bewildered by everything that is invisible. The hand cannot remain hidden in the pockets of the gown, and when later the whole gown itself is removed the clenched fists of the Protagonist are revealed. Puzzled, the Director unclenches the fists,[9] and orders the Assistant to whiten them to regain control and emphasize passivity and surrender. When even this fails to meet the expectations, the hands are joined and raised, which constitutes the first series of physical interference in the course of the play, to be followed by the repeated and thus emphatic bowing of the head amongst others. In this world of dubious unimportance the moment is made prospectively all-important when we think of the ultimate raising of the head, the Protagonist's sole independent movement.

The Director is attentive to all body parts including the toes, whose visibility is enhanced by the raising of the pedestal. There is one thing that must remain unseen: the face. From the beginning the hat is used to hide the face, and when the hat is taken off, it is done merely to reveal the cranium, while the face remains hidden. Its exposure is to be feared and avoided by all means:

> A: (*Timidly*.) What if he were to… were to… raise his head… an instant… show his face… just an instant.
> D: For God's sake! What next? Raise his head? Where do you think we are? In Patagonia? Raise his head? For God's Sake! (*Pause*). Good. There's our catastrophe. (Beckett 1990, 460)

An instant of revelation would invalidate the whole meticulous composition. It seems that there are a number of disturbing threats endangering the immac-

9 The fists must not be clenched, to reveal the "fibrous degeneration" (Beckett 1990, 458). Enoch Brater points out the striking biographical allusion (1987, 146).

ulate rendering of the Directorial concept. Apart from the reservations concerning the Protagonist's clothes and appearance, further regulations are introduced by the cantankerous Director to delimit and preordain spectator response. Besides the ban on showing the face, the use of a gag is also immediately ruled out. Bans and interdicts dominate this world, and an almost superhuman effort is made to eliminate even the possibility of individual initiative, physical movement and facial gestures as attempts to communicate. The comprehensive concept in the name of which all these laborious preparations are made remains vague and perhaps, irrelevant. What makes it both concrete and relevant is nothing but the dedication itself.

As the quotation above tells us, the term catastrophe refers to the manifestation of something that is incompatible with the Director's concept, and that may even question and endanger its legitimacy. Shivering is the only permitted "act" that fits in the pattern without any cosmetics ("Bless his heart." Beckett 1990, 460). It never becomes the object of scrutiny, or questioning, let alone resentment. The Director seems to be more concerned with the whitening of the bare parts of the body including the skull, the hands and the shins. Furthermore, the Director orders Luke to darken the stage so that only the whitened skull remains visible. Besides bringing to play one of Beckett's favourite contrasts – the black and white – here the lighting constitutes the finishing stroke for the finale in which the instrument of power is used against power.

As I mentioned above, power is strictly hierarchized in the play. Beyond the Director's endless series of demands and instructions there are numerous signs of his full powers, of a system of dictatorship and totalitarianism. Indeed, the Dictator is fully aware of his position, which is never questioned till the end and is ready to take advantage of it throughout the rehearsal. In the beginning, he is sitting in an armchair showering questions at the Assistant who stands beside him, and as the Director moves closer to the Protagonist, he takes out a cigar and demands a light. His presence alone puts pressure on his environment, bringing the well-established operations of surveillance palpably close. Taking note of all the instructions on a pad, the Assistant remains servile and complicit throughout, even occasionally overdoing it by making unnecessary suggestions, "What about a little… a little… gag?". The Director is outraged at the potential exposure of the subtle mechanisms of authoritarianism, "For God's sake! This craze for explicitation! Every i dotted to death! Little gag! For God's sake!" (Beckett 1990, 459).

Apart from Pozzo's bossing about Lucky in *Waiting for Godot*, this coercive language is unique in Beckett. This language use – language used to exert power – is more reminiscent of Harold Pinter's theatre, perhaps mostly of Goldberg's and McCann's brutal cross-examining of Stanley Webber in *The Birthday Party*, or the sometimes violent verbal exchange between Ben and Gus in *The Dumb Waiter*. At the same time I hasten to add that though Pinter insisted on the comic aspect of these dialogues, it would be preposterous to claim that Beckett's language in the *Catastrophe* is hilarious. The predominant and pervasive lack of comedy in the play derives from its political topicality. *Catastrophe* was written originally in French in 1982, at the time of Havel's incarceration. Much like Ionesco, Beckett protested against the political harassment which fellow absurdist, Václav Havel, suffered as a result of his writings and involvement in human rights activities. In a letter to Beckett written after his release from prison, Havel expressed his gratitude for the international solidarity and for Beckett's play especially,

> The shock I experienced during my time in prison, when on occasion of one of her one-hour visits allowed four times a year, my wife told me at Avignon there took place a night of solidarity with me, and that you took the opportunity to write, and to make public for the first time, your play, *Catastrophe*. For a long time afterwards there accompanied me in prison a great joy and emotion that helped to live on amidst all the dirt and baseness. (qtd. in Brater 1987, 140)

The topical relevance and cathartic impact of the play is confirmed by the fact that Havel himself wrote a play in response to *Catastrophe*. *Mistake* (*Chyba*, 1983) was performed together with Beckett's play as a double bill on an evening of solidarity organized at the Stadsteater in Stockholm, on 29 November 1983 (Brater 1987, 140).

Not surprisingly, Havel's play is set in a prison, where Xiboy, the newcomer and protagonist throws a spanner in the works by smoking before breakfast. As in *Catastrophe* there is a strong sense of hierarchy impersonated by the King, a trustee and his subordinates, the prisoners (numbered one to three), who menacingly encircle Xiboy, demanding an explanation. Xiboy, like Beckett's Protagonist, remains silent, as he finds himself in the focus of public scrutiny. As expected, his silence infuriates the prisoners who aggressively corner and insult him, "What a stubborn bastard! [….] You fucking mother-fucker!" (Havel 1993, 273). The King outlines the internal regulations of prison life and together

with the complicit Prisoners demands unconditional compliance. Apart from being embarrassed and shrugging his shoulders, Xiboy makes no response whatsoever, which is interpreted as a sign of disrespect and nonconformism. By the end of the short one-act play they discover that Xiboy is "some kind of a bloody foreigner," and move towards him with the King's offensive, "Well, that's his bloody funeral" (Havel 1993, 273).

Xiboy is a victim of overwhelming aggression as the Protagonist of *Catastrophe*. His mistake is throwing a spanner in the works, which is nothing less than a sequel to the gesture of Beckett's Protagonist, but in contrast with the latter it is not a culminating but an initial act that subverts the *status quo*. In other words, *Mistake* begins where *Catastrophe* ends, suggesting continuity, especially when we think of the two plays performed in succession as a double bill. Such continuity sheds light on the potential implications and consequences of the manifestation of human freedom and human rights. The theatre becomes a prison, Havel's prison where he was sentenced for his rebellion. What is an experiment for Beckett is no less than an inexorable political reality for Havel.

In the political context, the Director of *Catastrophe* is a Chief Officer laboriously humiliating the Protagonist with the help of his subordinates. What is more, the authoritarian attitude is exacerbated by crude male chauvinism, when we consider the fact that the Assistant is a woman.

Besides *Catastrophe*'s obvious political thrust, however, we must not forget that Beckett's play is after all about a rehearsal. The Director perhaps is only a director narcisstically imposing his own ideas on the character as – one may argue – all directors of plays do. Indeed, in the end Beckett does seem to adumbrate and reinforce theatricality with all available means. Lighting is so emphatic in this play that the person in charge has a name in the *Dramatis Personae* and a specific place in the hierarchy. Luke remains in the background throughout, but his contribution is indispensable both for the Director and Beckett. In the end it is all about the most accurate composition of a stage-set rendered through the contrast of light and darkness.

As the final touch is made, and only the head of the Protagonist is lit, the Director runs out of instructions and narcisstically applauds himself for the immaculate composition:

> [*Fade-out of general light. Pause. Fade-out of light on body. Light on head alone. Long pause.*]

> D: Terrific! He'll have them on their feet. I can hear it from here.
> [*Pause. Distant storm of applause. P raises his head, fixes the audience. The applause falters, dies. Long pause*.] (Beckett 1990, 461)

Light and sound effects (applause) take over the scene, concentrating all attention on the gesture that subverts the whole directorial concept. In spite of all the instructions and physical violence (the repeated bowing of the head), the Protagonist raises his head to reveal his face. This epiphany[10] is the catastrophe itself ("There's our catastrophe") when what was to be concealed at all costs is revealed. It is the failure of political identification when the statue comes to life and removes the strait jacket of identification to reveal his inalienable right to self-identity.

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10 Or as Gontarski has it, "revelation" (1985, 141).

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"my thoughts are elsewhere" Reading (In)Attention in Beckett's *The Unnamable*[11]

Thomas Thoelen,
Vrije Universiteit Brussel

Abstract: This essay examines Samuel Beckett's novel *The Unnamable* from the perspective of what N. Katherine Hayles calls "deep attention" and "hyper attention," by which she respectively refers to the ability of human attention to focus on a single object for a certain amount of time and to shift rapidly between multiple objects. Hayles furthermore associates "deep attention" with the practice of (close) reading a printed text and "hyper attention" with digital (screen) reading, moving from one browser tab or hyperlink to the next. In today's highly mediatized society, needless to say, digital reading is becoming increasingly common (if not the norm altogether). According to Hayes, the result is that "hyper attention" is being privileged at the expense of "deep attention." While Beckett's *The Unnamable* predates the practice of digital reading by some time, it is the contention here that the novel is nevertheless extremely pertinent in this context because of how it suggests inattention to be the necessary condition for the possibility of attention, both in its deep and hyper varieties.

Keywords: attention, Samuel Beckett, Katherine N. Hayles, Bernard Stiegler, technogenesis, *The Unnamable*

In a 1954 letter to Hans Naumann, Samuel Beckett confesses to "have always been a poor reader, incurably inattentive, on the look-out for an elsewhere. And I think I can say, in no spirit of paradox, that the reading experiences which have affected me most are those that were best at sending me to that elsewhere" (Beckett 2011, 465). At first sight, the idea of Beckett being easily distracted while reading appears to contradict the thousands and thousands of reading notes he took

11 This essay was presented at the *Experimental Beckett* conference held by the University of Gdansk in Sopot between 16 and 18 May 2016. Research was funded by the Research Foundation – Flanders (FWO). File number: 18209.

during his lifetime, most of which have been preserved in university libraries. Especially in the 1920s and 1930s, Beckett, in his own words, "[read] wildly all over the place" (2009b, 324), ranging from literature (in various languages) to philosophy, psychology, and art, among other things. Add to this that he also had to read to and for James Joyce,[12] and it is safe to say that Beckett, if nothing else, exposed himself to an acute overload of information during the two or three decades leading up to his "frenzy of writing" (qtd. in Knowlson 2004, 358) between 1946 and 1951. That this was often more than his attention could bear is perhaps illustrated best by the numerous doodles he drew in his notebooks and manuscripts – they seem to have provided him with a welcome escape from the vast body of information he was gathering at the time. Most interesting in the context of this analysis is the way in which these little drawings implicate the failure of attention: by realizing the creative potential of *in*attention, by letting attention drift "elsewhere." But what, then, is the role of (in)attention for Beckett's writing? Furthermore, what does Beckett's writing reveal about attention in today's highly mediatized society, characterized precisely by failed "effort[s] of attention, to try and discover what's happening, what's happening to me, what then, I don't know, I've forgotten my apodosis" (Beckett 2009c, 121).

As is clear from the letters to his friend Thomas MacGreevy in 1931, finding a suitable literary strategy for dealing with an excess of information, for channelling "the old demon of note-snatching" (qtd. in Pilling 1999, xiii), was not something that came easily to Beckett. "I'm right in a dead spot," he writes on November 8, for example, "I can't write anything at all, can't even imagine the shape of a sentence, nor take notes (though God knows I have enough 'butin verbal' to strangle anything I'm likely to want to say), nor read with understanding, goût or degoût" (Beckett 2009b, 93-94). Nevertheless, by the time of *The Unnamable* (1953), the limitations of human attention no longer (only) paralyze the writing but (also) enable the discourse to "go on," or so the novel's narrator would have us believe:

> To tell the truth, let us be honest at last, it is some considerable time now since I last knew what I was talking about. It is because

12 Apart from proofreading and editing the drafts for *Work in Progress* – "stupefying work" (2009b, 565) as Beckett himself described it – Joyce, whose eyesight was rapidly deteriorating, would "hand me [Beckett] a book from time to time and ask me to have a look at it and pick out passages that might help him [Joyce] with the writing of *Finnegans Wake*" (Beckett 2011, 463).

> my thoughts are elsewhere. I am therefore forgiven. So long as one's thoughts are somewhere everything is permitted. (Beckett 2009c, 35)

The present study will thus examine in what ways the intrusion of an "elsewhere" upon the "here-and-now" of focused attention could be seen as constituting an important resource of creativity and (artistic) freedom in *The Unnamable*.

Katherine N. Hayles discusses attention from the perspective of technogenesis, or "the idea that humans and technics are coevolving" (2012, 10). According to her, the role of human attention in the creation and further development of technology is not to be underestimated, yet remains largely overlooked. "On the level of conscious thought," Hayles believes that "attention comes into play as a focusing action that codetermines what we call materiality. That is, attention selects from the vast (essentially finite) repertoire of physical attributes some characteristics for notice, and they in turn constitute the object's materiality" (2012, 14). The materiality of the physical environment is, in other words, always already contaminated by human attention, by subjectivity: "Materiality, like the object itself, is not a pre-given entity but rather a dynamic process that changes as the focus of attention shifts" (Hayles 2012, 14). In this way, by reconstructing the physicality of the environment, attention sets up the material context for technical development: "it creates from a background of technical ensembles some aspect of their physical characteristics upon which to focus, thus bringing into existence a new materiality that then becomes the context for technological innovation" (Hayles 2012, 103). But if attention influences technological change, the reverse is also true: "the *mechanisms of attention* themselves mutate in response to environmental conditions. Whenever dramatic and deep changes occur in the environment, attention begins to operate in new ways" (Hayles 2012, 98). The result is a sort of collapsing feedback loop between the subject and its physical environment – or, the "technogenetic spiral," as Hayles also calls this circuit which effectively dissolves the distinction between inside and outside, subject and object: "models of the nervous system provide clues for technological innovation, and technological innovation encourages the adoptions of models that work like the technology" (Hayles 2012, 147).

Pondering about what "the correct attitude" would be "to adopt toward things," towards his environment, the narrator of *The Unnamable* emphasizes that "The best is not to decide anything, in this connection, in advance. If a thing turns

up, for some reason or another, take it into consideration" (Beckett 2009c, 2). What is taken into consideration is not the physicality but the materiality of things, and materiality, at least in Hayles's view, is always already mediated by human attention and thus inseparable from subjectivity: "Where there are people, it is said, there are things. Does this mean that when you admit the former you must also admit the latter? Time will tell" (Beckett 2009c, 2). Time will tell, perhaps, because time might be precisely this relation between people and things – at least this is what French philosopher Bernard Stiegler argues: "technics [a clock, a calendar...], far from being merely in time, properly constitutes time" (1998, 27).

Finding and interpreting substantive references to attention in *The Unnamable* is not my main concern, however. Rather, I am interested in how the writing itself might operate *like* human attention, first and foremost by bringing into play the abstract materiality of its physical environment, namely words inked on paper – or, as the narrator keeps reminding himself, "It all boils down to a question of words, I must not forget this, I have not forgotten it" (Beckett 2009c, 48). I am therefore also interested in how this materiality brought into existence by writing can be seen as folding back upon the writing, perhaps even altering its mechanisms in such a way that, for the narrator, "all has gone clean from the head. For it is difficult to speak, even any old rubbish, and at the same time focus one's attention on another point, where one's true interest lies, as fitfully defined by a feeble murmur seeming to apologise for not being dead" (Beckett 2009c, 19). In short, I will examine how the writing, like human attention, gets subjectivity "embroiled in a kind of inverted spiral, I mean one the coils of which, instead of widening more and more, grew narrower and narrower and finally, given the kind of space in which I was supposed to evolve, would come to an end for lack of room" (Beckett 2009c, 28). The hypothesis is that this inverted spiral of writing is not at all unlike Hayles's "technogenetic spiral" as mediated by human attention, setting up and fine-tuning material contexts for the development of ever more sophisticated technology, for ever more writing.

In *Molloy* (1951) and *Malone Dies* (1951), Beckett's writing still draws attention to language as a medium of some sorts – "an ambulance perhaps, a vehicle of some kind certainly" (2010, 7), one capable of carrying Molloy into his "mother's room" (2009a, 3) and Malone into "a plain private room in a plain ordinary house" (2010, 7). In *The Unnamable*, however, as Dirk Van Hulle and Shane Weller indicate in their *The Making of L'Innommable/The Unnamable*, "it is the problematic nature of the relation, or non-relation, between *language* and *world* – rather than

that between 'mind' and 'world' [...] – that comes to the fore in an unprecedented manner" (2014, 93). There occurs a shift, in other words, a shift which, I argue, is (also) a shift in attention, causing the vehicle, its passenger(s), and the physical environment to collapse into each other, in this way reducing the materiality of things to something "Grey. What else? Calm, calm, there must be something else, to go with this grey, which goes with everything. There must be something of everything here, as in every world, a little of everything" (Beckett 2009c, 77). Whereas the relation (or non-relation) between "mind" and "world" is said to be mediated by language, among other things, the relation (or non-relation) between "language" and "world" is at once held together and kept apart by writing. In writing, of course, "the words are everywhere, inside me, outside me, [...] I'm in words, made of words, others' words, what others, the place too, the air, the walls, the floor, the ceiling, all words" (Beckett 2009c, 104). In other words, from *The Unnamable* and onwards, language is no longer *just* the vehicle of writing, of literature, but at once its subject and object, inside and outside, meaning one can speak of a vehicle only insofar "an old broken-down cart- or bat-horse" still counts as a vehicle, for it is "unable to receive the least information either from its instinct or from its observation as to whether it is moving towards the stable or away from it, and not greatly caring either" (Beckett 2009c, 32).

This shift in Beckett's writing displays some parallels, I believe, to the shift in reading attention that is taking place (and arguably has already taken place) in contemporary society with the rise of digital media. "The age of print is passing," Hayles observes, "and the practices associated with it are now becoming visible as media-specific practices rather than the largely invisible status quo" (2012, 2). It turns out that close reading is one of those practices typically associated with the medium of print. Indeed, the more print texts are being replaced by digital alternatives, the more "other modes of reading claim an increasing share of what counts as 'literacy,' including hyper reading and analysis through machine algorithms ('machine reading')" (Hayles 2012, 11). In the context of today's highly mediatized society, where screen reading has become common practice, "hyper reading" thus refers to the new, seemingly specialized reading techniques that have developed in the wake of the so-called digital revolution:

> Among these are hyperlinks that draw attention away from the linear flow of an article, very short forms such as tweets that encourage distracted forms of reading, small habitual actions such as clicking

> and navigating that increase the cognitive load, and, most pervasively, the enormous amount of material to be read, leading to the desire to skim everything because there is far too much material to pay close attention to anything for very long. (Hayles 2012, 63)

But "hyper reading" is also often used as an umbrella term for the somewhat more inattentive ways of reading (at least when compared with close reading), such as "skimming, scanning, fragmenting, and juxtaposing texts, as a strategic response to an information-sensitive environment" (Hayles 2012, 12). After all, many of these techniques have been around long before the digital revolution in the 1990s; it just happens that if "hyper reading" was traditionally considered a mere supplement to close reading, the explosion of information and information availability with the development of the internet (to name but the most prominent example) has turned "hyper reading" into "a necessity," as it "enables a reader quickly to construct landscapes of associated research fields and subfields; it shows ranges of possibilities; it identifies texts and passages most relevant to a given query; and it easily juxtaposes many different texts and passages" (Hayles 2012, 62).

If not the self-proclaimed distracted nature of Beckett's reading then certainly the sheer volume suggests Beckett, too, had to resort quite often to "hyper reading." However, instead of looking for (further) proof of this in his reading notes or letters,[13] let us turn directly to the question of how inattentive reading experiences set up a wholly different material context for writing when compared with the materiality of language brought into existence by attentive reading.

13 Perhaps most interesting in the context of this analysis would be the reading traces inscribed in Beckett's Italian Bible from his time studying French and Italian at Trinity College, Dublin. In their comprehensive analysis of the marginalia in the books from Beckett's personal library, Mark Nixon and Dirk Van Hulle note that Beckett combined "intensive reading [with] instances of extensive reading – marked by reference to other books read by the same reader" (5). While "intensive" reading developed historically from the Protestant practice of Bible study, of reading the Bible *closely*, "extensive" reading was a response to the far greater number of books available with the advent of printing technology. Nixon and Van Hulle accordingly posit that "Beckett turned this pattern upside down in that he applied an *ex*tensive reading method to *La Sacra Bibbia*" (2013, 5). To put it more simply, Beckett often used the Bible as a reference book for looking up the biblical references he encountered in other texts. If nothing else, intensive reading – or, if you will, close reading – was by no means an unquestioned good for Beckett – on the contrary, insofar it "was inspired by the Protestant practice of studying the Bible," Van Hulle and Nixon argue that Beckett's "'extensive' reading experience," necessarily involving a number of hyper reading strategies, "reflects an act of rebellion of a reader with a rigorous Protestant background" (2013, 183).

"[R]eading is a powerful technology for reconfiguring activity patterns in the brain" (2007, 193), Hayles keeps reminding us, and now that "hyper reading" has arguably taken precedence over close reading, it should come as no surprise to learn of the "considerable evidence that hyper reading stimulates different brain functions than print [or close] reading" (Hayles 2012, 61). Moreover, "hyper reading" might actually be "involved with changes in brain architecture that make close reading more difficult to achieve" (Hayles 2012, 62). Before the digital turn, it was already quite difficult to create the right environment for what Hayles calls "deep attention," which in her view is "characterized by concentrating on a single object for long periods (say, a novel by Dickens), ignoring outside stimuli while so engaged, preferring a single information stream, and having a high tolerance for long focus times" (2007, 187). Today, however, the general inflation of outside stimuli is such that the problem of attention is precisely (and more than ever) its limited capacity. "There is too much to attend to and too little time to do it," Hayles explains, and deep attention, though "superb at solving complex problems in a single medium," only reinforces the problem, or so it seems, as "it comes at the price of environmental alertness and flexibility of response" (2007, 188). As a result, in an age where the guiding ideology is precisely that of flexibility, Hayles postulates that deep attention is making way for "hyper attention, a cognitive mode that has a low threshold for boredom, alternates flexibly between different information streams, and prefers a high level of stimulation" (2012, 100). The mechanisms of attention have mutated in such a way, she argues, that the single flow of information required by deep attention is not at all safeguarded; rather, its contamination is being actively pursued – cf. young people who "modify their [already information-sensitive] environments so that they become yet more information sensitive, for example by listening to music while surfing the web and simultaneously writing an essay" (2012, 100-101).

In *The New Cambridge Companion to Samuel Beckett*, Dirk Van Hulle writes that "Beckett seems to hit a nerve at this moment in time" (2015, xvii), a sentiment which is seemingly confirmed by the profusion of international Beckett conferences this year (2016), not to mention the countless critical studies that have recently appeared or are about to be published. A focus on attention offers some insight, I believe, as to why Beckett's writing keeps grabbing the attention in an era where deep attention appears under constant threat. Stiegler, for one, writes that "Faire attention, c'est essentiellement attendre" (2008, 174) – or, "To *pay attention* is essentially to *wait*" (2010, 96). The potential connection to Beckett may seem

obvious enough, and indeed, a brief reference to *En attendant Godot* (1953) as the parodic example of endless waiting can be found in the notes to Stiegler's text. Still, Stiegler considers here only the French etymology of the word "attention," going back to the Old French *atendre*, "to expect, wait for, to pay attention" (Harper 2001). If the origins are traced back further, however, to the Latin verb *attendere*, "literally 'to stretch toward'" (Harper 2001), attention reveals itself as a conflict, as the essential struggle between passively waiting for something and actively tending to this something. Indeed, attention is a *tension*,[14] the tension of the in-between, and it is precisely this tension which could be said to dissolve when people move further and further towards hyper attention, surrendering themselves to every possible outside stimulus. Beckett's comment about Leopold Bloom is therefore also an apt description of modern man in general: "I provoke loud amusement by description of a man at such a degree of culture that he cannot have a simple or even predominating idea" (qtd. in Knowlson 2004, 258).

If Joyce writes in *Ulysses* (1922) that the "Longest way round is the shortest way home" (1986, 309), the writing itself very much mirrors this principle, indiscriminately consuming one "elsewhere" after another – think of the exhaustive inventories in the "Ithaca" chapter, to give but one example. Beckett's writing, on the other hand, insists together with Molloy "that you would do better, at least no worse, to obliterate texts than to blacken margins, to fill in the holes of words till all is blank and flat and the whole ghastly business looks like what it is, senseless, speechless, issueless misery" (2009a, 9-10). Instead of cramming the materiality of language with the physical aspects of, say, a "blue and white checker inlaid majolicatopped table" (Joyce 1986, 610), Beckett's writing predominantly refers to the more abstract linguistic categories, to "tables" if not to "things," to "no things but nameless things, to no names but thingless names" (2009a, 29). To put it differently, where Joyce's writing attends to every possible "elsewhere" in all its minute detail, Beckett's writing, especially in *The Unnamable*, prefers to "toss and turn at least, roll on the ground, since there's no other remedy, anything at all, to relieve the monotony" (2009c, 83). Unlike Leopold Bloom in *Ulysses*, the narrator of *The Unnamable* never truly crosses the threshold

14 In his *Suspensions of Perception: Attention, Spectacle, and Modern Culture* (2001), Jonathan Crary similarly writes: "The roots of the word attention in fact resonate with a sense of 'tension,' of being 'stretched,' and also of 'waiting.' It implies the possibility of a fixation, of holding something in wonder or contemplation, in which the attentive subject is both immobile and ungrounded. But at the same time a suspension is also a cancellation or an interruption" (10).

from deep to hyper attention – for him, "The essential is to go on squirming forever at the end of the line" (Beckett 2009c, 52), to testify to but eventually resist hyper attention. "Personally I do not intend to be bored" (Beckett 2009c, 2), he states at the beginning of his narrative, but this is not to say that he will relieve the boredom of his existence, not even when increasingly plagued by "they" who "think I can't bear silence, that some day, somehow, my horror of silence will force me to break it" (Beckett 2009c, 62). At no time is the narrator allowed to forget his essentially dual obligation – which, like that of attention, is one of "going on" while being unable to stir a muscle: "it is a blessing for him he cannot stir, even though he suffers because of it" (Beckett 2009c, 73).

To be sure, I am not suggesting that Joyce's writing is somehow purely hyper-attentive; on the contrary, if the writing is said to attend to every possible "elsewhere," it does so in great detail, with a lot of deep attention:

> With what sensations did Bloom contemplate in rotation these objects? With strain, elevating a candlestick: with pain, feeling on his right temple a contused tumescence: with attention, focussing his gaze on a large dull passive and a slender bright active: with solicitation, bending and downturning the upturned rugfringe: with amusement, remembering Dr Malachi Mulligan's scheme of colour containing the gradation of green: with pleasure, repeating the words and antecedent act and perceiving through various channels of internal sensibility the consequent and concomitant tepid pleasant diffusion of gradual discolouration. (1986, 580)

From a reader's perspective, it is clear that the at times long and complex sentences in Joyce's writing, more often than not riddled with an abundance of adjectives and adverbs, require a great amount of focussed attention. What is more, it is precisely the reader's capacity for "deep attention" which offers (the illusion of) a way out of the constant struggle of attention: "That as a competent keyless citizen he had proceeded energetically from the unknown to the known through the incertitude of the void" (Joyce 1986, 572).

What I *am* suggesting, then, is that, in Beckett's writing, the conflict of attention is so pervasive (and arguably omnipresent) that deep attention can no longer be distinguished from hyper attention, that "waiting" has become inseparable from "going on":

> I'm not there yet, I'll go there now, I'll try and go there now, no use trying, I wait for my turn, my turn to go there, my turn to talk there, my turn to listen there, my turn to wait there for my turn to go, to be as gone, it's unending, it will be unending, gone where, where do you go from there, you must go somewhere else, wait somewhere else, for your turn to go again, and so on, a whole people, or I alone, and come back, and begin again, no, go on, go on again, it's a circuit, a long circuit, I know it well, I must know it well, it's a lie, I can't stir, I haven't stirred, I launch the voice, I hear a voice, there is nowhere but here, there are not two places, there are not two prisons, it's my parlour, it's a parlour, where I wait for nothing [...]. (Beckett 2009c, 129)

We see now that this circuit in Beckett's writing indeed mirrors that of the "technogenetical spiral" (Hayles 2012, 147) as mediated by human attention: it prevents (absolute) passage "from the unknown to the known through the incertitude of the void" (Joyce 1986, 572) precisely in the sense that any (profound) attempt at passage is destined to transform what was known into what is now unknown: "perhaps they have carried me to the threshold of my story, before the door that opens on my story, that would surprise me, if it opens, it will be I, it will be the silence, where I am, I don't know, I'll never know, in the silence you don't know, you must go on, I can't go on, I'll go on" (Beckett 2009c, 134). Furthermore, if the circuit of human attention collapses the distinction between inside and outside, subject and object – between what Stiegler calls the "who" of subjectivity and the "what" of technology – then so does the circuit in Beckett's writing, as not only does this circuit lock in the attention of the novel's narrator, forcing it to follow a "course that is not helicoidal but a succession of irregular loops, now sharp and short as in the waltz, now of a parabolic sweep that embraces entire boglands, now between the two, somewhere or other, and invariably unpredictable in direction, that is to say determined by the panic of the moment" (Beckett 2009c, 39). Rather, the constant state of being in-between cognitive modes, of not being able to "go on" while neither being allowed to slow down and pay close attention, this irresolvable tension, also invades the attention of the reader, of

> oh you know, who you, oh I suppose the audience, well well, so there's an audience, it's a public show, you buy your seat and

> you wait, [...] it takes time, you hear a voice, perhaps it's a recitation, that's the show, someone reciting, selected passages, old favourites, a poetry matinee, or someone improvising, you can hardly hear him, that's the show, you can't leave, you're afraid to leave, it might be worse elsewhere, [...] that's the show, waiting for the show, to the sound of a murmur [...]. (Beckett 2009c, 98-99)

It is in this sense, by neither privileging deep nor hyper attention but always insisting on the essential, irresolvable struggle between the two cognitive modes, that I argue Beckett's writing to, quite literally, *hit a nerve at this moment in time*: "What about trying to cogitate, while waiting for something intelligible to take place? Just this once. Almost immediately a thought presents itself, I should really concentrate more often. Quick let me record it before it vanishes" (2009c, 54-55).

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Experiments with time structure in Tom Stoppard's dramas

Jadwiga Uchman,
University of Lodz

Abstract: The present study aims to analyse selected plays of Tom Stoppard for the stage and the radio from the perspective of experimenting with time structures. In all cases, chronological time schemes are abandoned and replaced by different constructs. In the radio drama *Artist Descending a Staircase*, the piece starts in the present then, over a sequence of scenes, moves several years backwards only to return to the present again at its end. Another radio play, *Where Are They Now*, interweaves scenes in which school graduates meet in the present with past moments when they were still at school. *Travesties* composes its account from the viewpoint of the memories of old Henry Carr, who is trying to recall the past but is not quite able to do so because of his erratic memory. In this stage drama, scenes from the past are introduced by the Old Carr's appearance on the stage. Finally, *Arcadia* is set in two time periods which, at first, follow each other separately only to become fused at the end of the drama, when the characters from the past and the present dance a waltz together. In all cases, the specific treatment of time adds to the overall richness of the pieces' texture.

Keywords: Stoppard, radio and theatre drama, time, experiment

As varied and divergent as Tom Stoppard's oeuvre may be, it still contains certain recurrent thematic and structural elements which are characteristic of his output. While "contriving the perfect marriage between the play of ideas and farce or perhaps even high comedy" (Hudson 1974, 8), the playwright deals with a variety of themes: the relativity of human identity and reality, the difficulties pertaining to describing reality by means of language or artistic creativity, moral issues, history, mathematics and physics. This multitude of themes is paralleled by the appearance of multiple dramatic means which include, among others, the use of play within a play, intertextual references to a wide spectrum of fields of knowledge and specific disruption of chronological time.

The technique of distracting the linear flow of time varies depending on the requirements of effectively presenting the thematic issues concerned. The aim of the present study is to discuss the experimental treatment of time in Stoppard's selected stage and radio plays.

In his first drama, *Enter a Free Man*, Stoppard includes a specific disruption of both time and space to illustrate the discrepancy between what Riley, the titular character, actually is and what he would like to be. Ronald Hayman has described the drama, arguing that it "looks like a realistic play about a man with an unrealistic image of himself" (1974, 20). The stage is divided into two sets. On the left, there is the pub where Riley is pretending to be a successful businessman and a free man, while on the right the space signifies his home where he appears to be an unemployed dreamer and loser taking weekly allowances from his daughter, Linda, who is the money earner in the family. The drama starts at home with Linda and her mother talking about trivial issues after Riley's departure to the pub. The lights slowly fade out on the bar, while Linda's sentence "There is two of everyone" is heard. As the audience now view the pub scene, Riley's loud announcement "Enter a free man" is followed by Linda's remark at home "Poor old Dad" (Stoppard 1977, 10). Stephen Hu, when discussing the scene, argues:

> The transitional device that Stoppard uses twice to shift locales in Act I is known in film and video editing as an audio bridge, a relatively uncommon technique in which aural and/or verbal cues from a scene bear some informational relationship to elements in the scene to follow. Visuals in the second scene begin to dissolve-in or fade-in while the audio of the first scene continues, sometimes as a voice-over narrative. (1989, 16)

The audio bridge connects the two settings and at the same time introduces the contrast between two selves of the main character evident in Riley's boastful announcement and the pitiful remark of Linda. The same can be noticed in the case of the second audio bridge, which is much longer than the previous one. Here Riley gives a lengthy speech in the pub, dealing with his monotonous existence at home, as the bar set fades out. We then see Persephone watering the plants as Riley continues to talk shifting, unexpectedly, reality back to his home before the speech has ended:

> and when I came down this morning, there she was, just watering the flowers from a jug, as usual . . . That was the first thing that happens this morning . . . (*To* PERSEPHONE.) There's no need-. (Stoppard 1977, 35)

Even though this scene contains an audio bridge, the treatment of time is different, as while changing the locale, Riley, and the audience alike, moves backwards in time to the morning. What follows next is a quarrel at home with Linda, Riley taking his allowance and leaving for the bar again. Therefore, this indicates another repetition emphasising the monotonous and repetitive quality of his existence and unfulfillment both at home and in the pub. Anthony Jenkins concedes: "By backtracking, Stoppard allows us to view Riley's complaints about his family's lack of appreciation with prior knowledge that he will be equally frustrated and inadequate in the outside world" (1988, 4). It transpires that despite his efforts to create an image of himself as a free man, he does not live up to this standard both at home and in the pub despite all his attempts to impress the people there. It should be added that the audio bridges are a means not only of disrupting the chronological sequence but also of shattering the theatrical illusion, a way of reminding the audience that what they are watching is not reality, but only its artistic, theatrical representation.

When *Travesties* starts, we watch a scene set in the library and listen to a succession of exchanges between Gwen and Joyce, Lenin and Nadya, Tristan Tsara and Cecily, the librarian. As the prologue comes to an end with Joyce's departure:

> *The stage now belongs to* OLD CARR. *The* LIBRARY *must now be replaced by the* ROOM. *Needless to say, the change should occur with as little disruption as possible, and the use of music as a bridge* is *probably desirable. . . . It* is *possible that* CARR *has been immobile on stage from the beginning, an old man remembering.* (Stoppard 1976, 21)

The whole play is a reproduction of the past as remembered by old Carr and not necessarily as it actually was. As Peter Wood concedes, the past is "seen prismatically through the view of Henry Carr. At one point, Tom was thinking of calling it *Prism*" (qtd. in Sammells 1986, 381). The printed text of the play acknowledges Stoppard's indebtedness to Lenin's *Collected Writings,* Nadezhda Krupskaya's *Memoirs of Lenin,* to six books about Lenin, an illustrated history

of the First World War, two books on James Joyce and two on Dada, which, while indicating Stoppard's main sources of information on the period, simultaneously points to the importance of concrete historical material in the play (Stoppard 1976, 15). Despite his thorough historical knowledge, Stoppard was still aware that he could not unmistakably reproduce the past as it actually was and thus explained the importance of Carr for the structure of the play in an interview with Nancy Shields Hardin:

> I tend to remove situations from reality [...]. In *Travesties,* once you've decided that the whole thing is happening in an old man's head, you are liberated from the somewhat tedious inconvenience of having to stick to any kind of historical truth. (Hardin 1981, 163)

The play is, as its title suggests, a travesty not only of Oscar Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest*, in the production of which Joyce and Carr participated and which forms the backbone of *Travesties,* but it also is a travesty of the past. In the stage directions, Stoppard indicates the great extent to which form and content of the play are shaped by Carr's narrative interventions:

> *. . . the scene (and most of the play) is under the erratic control of Old Carr's memory, which is not notably reliable, and also of his various prejudices and delusions. One result is that the story (like a toy train perhaps) occasionally jumps the rails and has to be restarted at the point where it goes wild*. (1976, 27)

The fallibility of Carr's memory is signalled by means of the repetition of certain scenes in different variants, questioning, in a sense, the reliability of his accounts of the past. The introduction of Carr as narrator and the disruption of the chronological time sequence resulting from his memory failures may be treated as a kind of disclaimer indicating the narrator's unreliability. This point is made explicit at the end of the play where, with "*most of the fading light*" centred on Carr, he presents his last speech and recollection of the past:

> Great days … Zurich during the war. Refugees, spies, exiles, poets, writers, radicals of all kinds. I knew them all. Used to argue far into night … at the Odeon, the Terrasse … I learned three things

> in Zurich during the war. I wrote them down. Firstly, you're either a revolutionary or you're not, and if you're not you might as well be an artist as anything else. Secondly, if you can't be an artist, you might as well be a revolutionary … I forgot the third thing. (Stoppard 1976, 98-99)

Similarly to *Travesties*, *Arcadia* dramatises two periods of time, yet their relationship is considerably different to that in the play about the modernist literary and political revolutionaries. Whereas the earlier drama presented the past as a retrospection of old Carr narrating in the present, *Arcadia* shows the scenes from the past and the present interchangeably as happening on stage, which, according to Pavis, is "both the time of the performance underway and of the spectator watching it" (1998, 409). When the play starts, we see "*a room on the garden front of a very large country house in Derbyshire in April 1809*" (Stoppard 1993, 1); the room is occupied by Thomasina Coverly and her tutor, Septimus Hodge. The first words are uttered by Thomasina, who enquires what a "carnal embrace" is and gets the answer: "Carnal embrace is the practice of throwing one's arms around a side of beef" (Stoppard 1993, 1). As the disappointed girl pushes for further definition, referring to Mrs Charter being seen in a carnal embrace with Septimus in the gazebo, the conversation starts to become filled with sexual undertones causing the tutor to remind her what she should be thinking about and concentrating on: "I thought you were finding a proof of Fermat's last theorem" (Stoppard 1993, 2). Thus, the initial moments of the drama introduce us to two of its main topics: love and science. On the one hand, Thomasina, in the initial scenes thirteen years old then later sixteen, is involved in the scientific debate of the play. On the other hand, she has a soft spot for her tutor and tries to win his interest and affection. In the scenes from the past, there is a number of different characters, many of them being involved in romances or hoping to be so. It is also in these scenes that Lord Byron, even though remaining an off-stage character, plays an important part. In the scenes of the present, there are only a few characters, the foremost being; Valentine Coverly, aged around thirty, a post-graduate biologist and mathematician, an expert at computers; Hanna Jarvis a research worker and author of a book on Caroline Lamb. At present Hanna is working on a book about gardens, developing the idea that romantic gardens marked "the decline from thinking to feeling" (Stoppard 1993, 28). There is also Bernard Nightingale, an Oxford don trying

to reconstruct the story of Byron's stay at Sidley park. The modern times characters either investigate the past to try to specify it in the case of Hannah and Bernard or explain scientific riddles which were a mystery to Thomasina and Septimus, as in the case of Valentine.

The theory of chaos serves as a kind of basis for both the apparent randomness and underlying order. The theory's main points can be explained in Stoppard's words as follows:

> [the theory] suggested itself as a quite interesting and powerful metaphor for human behaviour, not just behaviour, but about the way it suggested a determined life, a life ruled by determinism, and a life which is subject simply to random causes and effects. Those two ideas about life were irreconcilable. Chaos mathematics has precisely to do with the unpredictability of determinism. (qtd. in Gussow 1995, 84)

Valentine not only explains "the New Geometry of Irregular Forms discovered by Thomasina," as found in her notes by Hannah, but he is also the one who calls it "an iterated algorithm" (Stoppard 1993, 43) concluding Thomasina's premonition, "the melancholy certitude of a world without light and life … as a wooden stove that must consume itself until ash and stove are one, and heat is gone from the earth" is nothing else than "the second law of thermodynamics" (Stoppard 1993, 65). The science introduced in the play functions on two levels, thematic and structural, as the drama is built in a non-linear form, alternating scenes from past to present. In the last scene, Stoppard shows the two time phases side by side, simultaneously. John Fleming writes:

> When I asked Stoppard what led to the decision to intermingle two time periods in the final scene, he gave both a practical and a thematic answer. On the one hand it was "just to change the deck" so that "just at the point when the audience thinks it can guess what's coming next, you have to fool them" (Fleming 1993, 23). When pressed further on the topic, Stoppard added: "I have a secret agenda, but I wouldn't lay it on the audience. The play mimics the way an algorithm goes through bifurcations into chaos, as a matter of fact. In a very compressed way" (Fleming 1993, 24).

> Elsewhere, he added: "The play bifurcates two or three times and then goes into the last section which is all mixed up. So, it's very chaos structured" (Demasces and Kelly 1994, 5). Thus, as in keeping with the strongest science plays, the form and content wed as the very structure of the play not only embodies the spirit of deterministic chaos but also creates a very crude diagram of bifurcation into chaos. (Fleming 2008, 52)

The setting of the scenes in two periods has a number of consequences, the first of these concerns objects appearing on the stage. A number of the same objects belong to the past in scenes from the nineteenth century and to the present in modern scenes. So, for instance, the apple given by the silent Gus, a teenager who stopped speaking at the age of five and who has a youthful crush on Hannah in scene two (Stoppard 1993, 33), reappears in the schoolroom of Thomasina and Septimus in scene three, as indicated in the stage directions: "*There is also an apple on the table now, the same from all appearances*" (Stoppard 1993, 35). Later on in the scene, Thomasina picks up the apple leaf and says: "I will plot the leaf and deduce its equation" (Stoppard 1993, 37). Her diagram, found later in her portfolio, is discussed by Hannah and Valentine in scene four when the latter explains the nature of the iterated algorithm. Later, when Hannah picks up an apple leaf from the table she says: "So you couldn't make a picture of this leaf by iterating a whatsit?" and gets the answer "Oh yes, you could do that" (Stoppard 1993, 47). Finally, in scene seven, Thomasina's diagram of the apple leaf is drawn by her in the past (Stoppard 1993, 87) to be inspected by Valentine and Hannah when the scene shifts a few moments later to the present. The apple seems to function on two levels, not only as far as the phases of time are concerned but also in the two thematic motifs of the play: love and science. It is not only the diagram which appears in two-time spheres in this scene, as Thomasina also draws a picture of Septimus and his tortoise Plautus. The picture is then found by Gus and given to Hannah, helping her to solve the mystery of the hermit from the past.

A few words should be said about Gus, the mysterious, silent teenager. When he appears in the last scene, like most of the other modern characters he is dressed in Regent clothes, as everybody is dressing up, getting ready for the party which is about to take place in the marquee. The stage directions read "*It takes a moment to realize that he is not Lord Augustus, perhaps not until Hannah*

sees him" (Stoppard 1993, 96). For some time, the audience is not aware of whom they are watching – Gus from the present or Augustus, Thomasina's brother from the past. Stoppard observes:

> Gus is about as far as I'm prepared to go into metaphysics, I suppose. By which I mean, intellectually and temperamentally – I don't know which it is – I don't believe in a mechanistic universe. I don't think that's a complete description. So Gus represents, I suppose, my feeling that there is something more mysterious than that. And we don't know how it works, and there's no point in explaining Gus because that would say I do know how it works. But in the first place, I don't know how it works; in the second place I don't think anybody does know; in the third place I don't think it's possible to know; in the fourth place I don't think it's necessary to know. It's that kind of feeling. (qtd. in Fleming 1993, 41)

There is yet another mystery in the play, that concerns the music to which the characters both from the past and present are dancing at the end of the play. The music can be heard at many moments during the play. When the piano is audible for the first time (Stoppard 1993, 76), we do not know who is playing it and whether it is being played in the nineteenth century or now, as the characters from both periods are present on the stage. Later on, it is specified by Thomasina and Septimus that it is Thomasina's mother who is playing with a Count from Poland, and Thomasina then asks her tutor to start teaching her to waltz (Stoppard 1993, 81). However, another kind of music is heard: "*The music changes to party music from the marquee*," as the two of them kiss (Stoppard 1993, 92). Then "*SEPTIMUS takes her in his arms carefully and the waltz lesson, to the music of marquee, begins*" (Stoppard 1993, 94). At the beginning, they dance "*with the slight awkwardness of a lesson*," then they are "*waltzing freely*" (Stoppard 1993, 95, 96). While they are still waltzing, Gus hands over to Hannah the drawing presenting Plautus and Septimus and "*Then, rather awkwardly, he bows to her. A Regency bow, an invitation to dance*," and they "*start to dance, rather awkwardly*" (Stoppard 1993, 96). The final stage directions of the play read: "SEPTIMUS *and* THOMASINA *continue to dance, fluently, to the piano*" (Stoppard 1993, 96). The end of the printed text indicates a change of music so that each couple now dances to the music of their times. Septimus and Thomasina dance to piano

music, while Hannah and Gus to modern music. Such a solution is possible in a printed text but not in the reality of a theatre production when a concrete music must be heard. The modern couple does bear some characteristics of the old times, such as Gus's Regent costume and bow. Their dancing rather awkwardly may be due to Gus's shyness or inability to dance. What is certain is the fact that in the final moments of the drama the two phases of time are mixed completely together as the past and present melt into one entity and the two couples from different times dance together. For this, a solution concerning the music must be found. The two couples must be dancing to one kind of music; no other way is possible. In a brilliant article concerning the time structure of Stoppard's drama, Jerzy Limon argues:

> it becomes obligatory to signal the difference in behaviour or reaction between the two dancing couples. The difference signals parallel but separate indexical functions operating, by which we understand that Hannah and Gus are dancing ('awkwardly') to the modern music we cannot hear, whereas Thomasina and Septimus waltz to the music we can hear, incompatible as though it might seem. (2008, 228)

Such an interpretation might be supported by the fact that when Septimus and Thomasina start dancing to the marquee music, they dance awkwardly. This solution demands a change in the music at the very end of the drama from modern to piano, as indicated in the stage directions. This can be done slowly, blending one kind of music into another, just like the two periods of time melt into one.

Where Are They Now? and *Artist Descending a Staircase* were created before *Travesties* and *Arcadia* but will be discussed now, as these two dramas were written for the radio, a medium in which time fulfils a slightly different function to theatre plays. These short radio plays may be considered as a kind of warm-up exercise for the theatre plays, as there are certain aural ambushes set in them which the audience is required to solve successfully in order to be able to correctly interpret the sounds they hear and thus the meaning of the play. Stoppard, who claims his aim is to "entertain a roomful of people" (1974, 6), experiments with the audience's ability to make discoveries while decoding the meaning of the pieces. He has commented on this aspect of his writing on several

occasions. He has called his art "the theatre of audacity" (Hayman 1979, 9), one of whose assets are "the dislocation of the audience's assumptions" (Hayman 1979, 143). In the interview for *Theatre Quarterly* Stoppard observed:

> I tend to write through a series of small, large and microscopic ambushes – which might consist of a body falling out of a cupboard, or simply an unexpected word in a sentence. But my preoccupation as a writer, which possibly betokens a degree of insecurity, takes the form of contriving to inject some sort of interest and colour into every line, rather than counting on the general situation having a general interest which will hold an audience. (1974, 6)

Where Are They Now?, a short 35-minute radio play commissioned by BBC Schools Radio and transmitted on 28 January 1970, presents a Hove school reunion with three central characters. In a note preceding the published text, Stoppard indicates:

> The play is set in two intercut locations, School Dinner (1945) and Old Boys' Dinner (1969). Part of the idea is to move between the two without using any of the familiar grammar of fading down or fading up; the action is continuous. (1973b, 61)

Thus the play makes use of a specific structural experiment with time, providing the continuous rendering of two periods, separated by a passage of twenty-five years in the story. The structure of the play depicts the simultaneous existence of the characters on three levels: past scenes from 1945, present scenes from 1969, and the past as now remembered by the three friends and not necessarily as it was. We can, therefore, view the characters from at least three different perspectives. The action is, as Stoppard argues, "continuous," in most cases, with scenes changing unobtrusively and bridged by the same repeated word or sound. Such is the case with scenes one and two, linked by the same words "old man" (Stoppard 1973b, 64). The words are identical, but they have a different referent. In the first case, they are used by Chico as an explanation of the root of the word "senile" – "senex – senis – old man!" during the boys' conversation with their Latin master in the past (Stoppard 1973b, 64). In the second case, they are used in a scene set in the present, starting with Dobson, the same teacher,

saying "Splendid, Brindley, old man" (Stoppard 1973b, 64). At first, we might suspect that the teacher is praising the pupil for giving a correct answer, yet it soon transpires that this is not the case, as indicated by the name "Brindley" and not a nickname from the past "Chico" being used and then further clarified when the teacher continues: "Splendid to see you" (Stoppard 1973b, 64). Similarly, later on, one scene ends with a "*Thump*" (Stoppard 1973b, 73) indicative of the sound of being beaten by the teacher as a punishment. The stage directions, introducing the next scene read: "*Thump. Thump. The headmaster's gavel. Silence overtakes the* OLD BOY's *dinner*" (Stoppard 1973b, 73). Listening to this radio play demands the special attention of listeners who are requested to decode and interpret the aural signals, no matter whether verbal or merely acoustic.

The last play to be discussed, *Artist Descending a Staircase,* also contains a number of ambushes for the audience connected with the proper decoding of different signals, many of these being aural as expected in a radio play. There are two main ambushes set by the play, the first one being connected with properly decoding of the identity of the man with whom Sophie falls in love during an art exhibition. She identifies him as the artist who painted "black railings on a field of snow" (Stoppard 1973a, 38) and it was assumed by all to be Beauchamp. It might have been, however, Donner who painted a white fence: "Thick white posts, top to bottom across the whole canvas, an inch or two apart, black in the gaps – " (Stoppard 1973a, 51). In the course of the play, it transpires that she may have fallen victim to an optical illusion and been in a relationship with the wrong man, which in the end leads to her suicide.

The second ambush concerns the ability to properly decode the aural signals the listeners hear and to distinguish the difference between what is actually happening in the radio play and what is a recording within it, or a recording within a recording similar to play within a play technique (Limon 2003, 151). The play aims to teach us how to interpret properly the sounds we hear, as in doing so we will be able to understand the aural reality we encounter in the play and grasp the specific time structure of the drama. The play opens and ends with a tape recording registering the moment of Donner's falling down some stairs, which is interpreted on both occasions by the stage directions to attentive listeners of this radio piece. What comes in between is a sequence of scenes following a specific time pattern: "in the sequence ABCDEFEDCBA" where "A = here and now, B = a couple of hours ago, C = last week, D = 1922, E = 1920 and F = 1914" (Stoppard 1973a, 11). Thus the play

has a V shape with scene A being set in the present at Donner's death and F marking the most distant point in the past. Moving from one scene to the next, retreating more and more into the past, is marked by a repetition of a signal which, although acoustically the same, specifies something else on both occasions. Scene A, presenting the tape registering the fall of Donner, and introducing Beauchamp and Martello, ends with the former's mentioning of a "master tape" which is listened to at the beginning of the next scene. Similarly, the second scene E, following the scene set in 1914 showing the artists walking amid the events of World War Two starts with all three men "*chanting out directions*: Left! … left … right … right … turn … right a bit … turn … left … turn … stop!" (Stoppard 1973a, 47-48). We might initially assume that what we are listening to is a military drill only to discover that this is not the case. The three men are having a game with Sophie, trying to specify the place she occupies in the room. This aural signal helps us realise that sometimes a given sound may, in different contexts, signify different things. Such is also the case with the recording preserved on the tape registering Donner's fall down the stairs. When we hear the tape for the first time, we listen to the sounds specified in the stage directions and interpreted by Martello and Beauchamp as follows:

> (a) DONNER *dozing: an irregular droning noise.*
> (b) *Careful footsteps approach. The effect is stealthy. A board creaks.*
> (c) *This wakes* DONNER, *i.e. the droning stops in mid-beat.*
> (d) *The footsteps freeze*.
> (e) DONNER's *voice, unalarmed: 'Ah! There you are …'*
> (f) *Two more quick steps, and then Thump! He falls heavily down the stairs, with a final sickening thump when he hits the bottom. Silence.*
> (Stoppard 1973a,13)

As already stated, the play teaches us to interpret sounds correctly and thus not to be mistaken in their decoding. In the course of the drama, there are numerous references to a buzzing fly: "*either verbal*" (Stoppard 1973a,16, 22, 45, 47, and 58) or "*aural*" in which "*the buzzing is actually heard*" (Stoppard 1973a, 45, 57, and 58) or simply as information "*the fly is smacked by one of the characters*" – one or more times (Stoppard 1973a, 22, 24, 45, 47, 56). As the play ends, the listeners hear Beauchamp chasing and finally killing the fly. Then they listen to the recording registered on the tape once more:

(a) *Fly droning.*
(b) *Careful footsteps approach. A board creaks.*
(c) *The fly settles.*
(d) BEAUCHAMP *halts.*
(e) BEAUCHAMP: '*Ah! There you are.*'
(f) *Two more quick steps and then Thump!* (Stoppard 1973a, 54)

The sounds on the tape described identically on both occasions as "droning" are identified as the snoring of Donner and the buzzing of a fly. Thus the unhappy coincidence of falling down the stairs is seen by the two artists as referring to the murder of Donner. The play, therefore, solves the mystery of Donner's death, suggesting that it was not a case of whodunit but an unhappy accident.

In all the plays discussed, and others not analysed here, time fulfils a thematic or structural role, or both simultaneously. The employment of specific temporal structures, juxtaposing two phases of time or fusing them in intriguing ways marks Stoppard's mastery of the use of the given medium and his experiments with the self-reflexive qualities of the pieces. The artist draws the attention of the audiences to a number of different issues: the past as it is remembered by people is seldom the same as it actually was, the recollections of the past may sometimes be considered erroneous, and the same quality of not only words but also of sounds rendering different meanings.

The dramas under discussion use time as a thematic and structural element in a number of different ways. The radio plays, *Where Are They Now* and *Artist Descending the Stairs,* juxtapose scenes from the past interwoven in a masterly way with those from the present. The audience is invited to guess at what time the given scene takes place, by decoding the reoccurring sounds, which in each case denote something different. To some extent these pieces also skilfully compare the past as it actually was and as it is remembered. The stage play *Travesties* uses a slightly different time structure by which we are continually reminded that the scenes from the past do not necessarily represent what actually was but only as it is remembered by an erratic memory. The construction of *Arcadia* also intertwines two time phases, yet in this case, the characters from the present do not recall their past but try to reconstruct somebody else's. Suwalska-Kołecka approaches the play from the perspective of the semioticians of history, citing Yury Lotman and Boris Uspienski whom she follows in respect of "scepticism concerning the availability of history to us" (2003, 90).

In the case of *Arcadia*, this scepticism refers to both Hannah Jarvis and Bernard Nightingale, who, being literary sleuths, while analysing concrete historical events, erroneously interpret the past.

While discussing his creative process, Stoppard argues: "the only useful metaphor I can think of for the way I think I write my plays is convergences of different threads. Perhaps carpet-making would suggest something similar" (qtd. in Hayman 1979, 4-5). This seems to be a successful metaphor for what the artist achieves – he weaves magical carpets using a number of different threads, one of these being the structural and thematic use of time.

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Truth Out of Context: The Use of Found Footage in *Let The Fire Burn*

Kevin King,
University of Lodz

Abstract: The documentary film *Let The Fire Burn* utilizes only preexisting news, deposition and documentary footage to chronicle the 1985 bombing of a radical political group's headquarters by the city of Philadelphia. The article holds that the process of editing this compiled footage into a narrative sequence reflects the temporal process of contextual change in what both the filmmakers and viewers consider authorial voice of "truth" in 2013 as opposed to 1985. This new contextual viewpoint reflects the proliferation of digital footage from devices such as smart phones, police body cameras and surveillance cameras that have often exposed police and other officials in deceptive practices and falsehoods. This context creates the framework for a new perspective on the MOVE bombing, in which audiences detect a new "truth" behind contemporaneous news coverage and official statements on the event. Yet this new perspective can also be manipulated through the contextual assumptions of current audiences, ones that center upon the assumed validity of found footage over more formal content.

Keywords: MOVE, compilation documentary, authorial voice, documentary mode

Introduction

Let The Fire Burn is a 2013 documentary film about the city of Philadelphia's confrontation with the MOVE organization in 1985, which resulted in city officials authorizing police to drop an incendiary device on MOVE's residential headquarters. This action led to a fire that killed eleven people and destroyed over sixty houses in the surrounding neighborhood. *Let The Fire Burn* utilizes a "compilation" approach (Nichols 2010, 191) to document the history of MOVE and the events leading to this confrontation. The film's director, Jason Osder, along with editor Nels Bangerter, used only found footage to tell the story of MOVE and the events leading

up to the bombing, eschewing many of the traditional narrative conventions used in documentary film. These conventions include witness interviews conducted by the filmmakers, re-creations of past events using actors, or the use of any spoken narration to describe the events on screen. *Let The Fire Burn* instead employs only footage created for other purposes, in this case, news reports and an earlier documentary about MOVE (Pomer & Mancini 1980), video depositions utilized in legal proceedings resulting from the incident, and televised hearings conducted by the city of Philadelphia to investigate the circumstances that led to the confrontation (*Temple Law Quarterly* 1986). In this way the "authorial voice" of the film is first diffused among the various sources of information and testimony, then edited together by the filmmaker to create a narrative structure.[15] This diffusion gives the appearance of more authenticity and objectivity than a traditional documentary with narration and staged interviews. These traditional forms, however well researched and documented, often suffer from their period's cultural assumptions, which can then date their conclusions. Here the viewpoint of Osder is more obscure, hidden under the various perspectives of contemporaneous footage and testimony from police and MOVE members. Yet their use of various forms of this footage, editing technique and use of other film technique such as music, do reveal a viewpoint which reflects their own cultural assumptions about such found footage.

The MOVE Group

The MOVE group was a communal collective of mostly but not exclusively African Americans, which was often described, in the nomenclature of the time, as a "black nationalist" organization. MOVE's motives and goals were actually somewhat murky aside from railing against an American society which MOVE members, along with many other African Americans, saw as racist and exploitative (cf. Washington 1989). The group's founder, Vincent Leaphart, renamed himself John Africa and developed an anti-technology ideology and lifestyle along with what was described in the press as a cult persona (McCoy 2010).

The organization, which at its height had around 50 members, lived in a series of row houses in largely African-American, working class neighborhoods in Philadelphia. The group frequently clashed with these neighbors, sparking

15 Jane Loader, co-director of the compilation documentary *Atomic Café*, refers to this approach as "compilation verite" (Loader 2002).

complaints that caused the police to become involved, a police force notorious for its racism (Pennsylvania Crime Commission 1974).[16] These early police interactions escalated into a shoot-out in 1978 that left a policeman dead and nine MOVE members in custody. During the lengthy trial and afterwards, the MOVE group continued to come into conflict with neighbors and the police, which led the city to attempt to evict them from their last dwelling in 1985, and in so doing finally to making the dubious decision to use a bomb on a rooftop structure.

The Compilation Documentary Form

The traditional documentary approach utilizes authorial voices made expressly for the film, usually some combination of narration, re-creations and interviews. Narration is written from the filmmaker's point of view, which informs the viewer about the meaning of archival footage, while the testimony from witnesses or experts is shaped by the memories and agendas of these subjects and by the process of filming itself, in which this testimony is staged for a camera crew. While found footage displays the attitudes and agendas of its original creators, these become re-contextualized in the compilation process through editing and historical perspective, which demonstrates the perspective of the filmmakers and the historical differences in audience perceptions (Randolph 2000, 29-41).[17] These perceptions have changed more recently through the ubiquitous growth of devices capable of creating found footage itself; cell phones and digital recorders, along with police and security cameras have become a major tool in recording news events as they happen, from terrorists attacks to natural disasters. For viewers of *Let The Fire Burn* this contemporary found footage of police interactions with citizens informs the re-contextualization of the police actions against MOVE, both in terms of the TV footage of the incident and police and MOVE member testimony at commission hearings. In the United States police are almost never convicted for killing civilians

16 This study found that "widespread corruption has been a constant problem which has plagued the department since its inception." [With a] "history of excessive use of arrests and failure to provide adequate protection for minorities" (Pennsylvania Crime Commission 1974).

17 In Emile de Antonio's compilation film *Point of Order* (1964), kinescopes and newsreels of the McCarthy hearings of the 1950's are compiled without commentary and ordered in a seemingly "historical narrative." Yet this time-line is manipulated to reflect post-hearing attitudes, so that Joseph Welch's famous "Have you no shame?" speech, which came to epitomize the McCarthy hearings, finishes the film, when in fact it occurred half way through the hearings.

in the line of duty (Stinson 2017),[18] but the public has seen countless examples of fatal interactions between police and citizens, particularly citizens of color, that paint a disturbing pattern of police culpability.[19] Since the structure and conclusions of a compilation documentary reflects the temporal attitudes and beliefs of the filmmakers and their audience, these attitudes can alter the authorial integrity of the various protagonists shown in the compiled footage.

A History of Compilation Films

It is the temporal nature of the process of re-contextualization which gives the compilation documentary film its power and its potential limitations and even dangers. In perhaps the earliest compilation film, *Fall of The Romanov Dynasty* (1927), Esfir Shub edited newsreel and archival footage of Tsarist Russia juxtaposed between title card commentary from a post-Revolution, Soviet perspective (Osipova 2001). But modern viewers are now aware of the crimes of Stalin's regime, and these title cards and the ideology behind them create a perspective and sense of irony inconceivable to Shub. The presentation of found footage in compilation documentaries can be used for satire, as in *The Atomic Café* (1982), in which filmmakers Jayne Loader, Kevin Rafferty and Pierce Rafferty utilize American newsreels and public service films of the Cold War era to reveal the biases and absurdity of the underlying viewpoints of this footage, in which the government proposed survival from a nuclear holocaust. Yet this comicality can also blur the underlying serious issues; for a viewer thirty five years later, the film's period perspective and lack of gravitas becomes more obvious in its equivocations of Cold War figures such as Harry S. Truman and Joseph Stalin and an emphasis on testimony from individuals who were considered ridiculous at the time, but are presented as mainstream for the sake of humor (Rizvi 2015, 45-47). A more recent example of a compilation documentary is *The Autobiography of Nicolai Ceauşescu* (2010), in which director Andrej Ujică compiled Romanian state TV and film footage to create a narrative of the career of Ceauşescu that is book-ended by the infamous video footage of his arrest and interrogation that led to his and his wife's execution (Dargis 2011).[20]

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18 From 2005 to 2015 American police killed an average of 1000 people per year in the line of duty, but over that period only 13 were convicted of murder or manslaughter (Stinson 2017).

19 A recent study showed that 86% of Americans now support the use of "body cameras" on all police (YouGov 2015).

20 It could be argued that *The Autobiography of Nicolai Ceauşescu* is truly "verite" in that no extraneo-

What all these compilation films demonstrate is the power of utilizing the contextual assumptions of re-purposed footage to develop a wholly different narrative, one that is often at cross purposes to the narrative intended by the original creators. For a viewer witnessing Ceauşescus' sordid end at the beginning of *The Autobiography of Nicolai Ceauşescu*, the propaganda of the state footage takes on a ghoulish absurdity. Similarly, while in *Let The Fire Burn* the filmmakers structure the narrative generally along a historical timeline of the events, they use a title card to reveal the outcome of the MOVE stand-off and subsequent loss of life and property at the film's outset, creating a sense of dramatic irony and dread as we see events unfold towards their inevitably terrible conclusion, one that could only be guessed at by the news reporters creating the footage in real time.[21]

Furthermore, the passage of time reveals underlying assumptions that were inherent in the creation of the compiled footage that were either unrealized, dismissed or barely acknowledged by the original creators. The footage used in *Let The Fire Burn* was three to four decades old when the film was produced, so that a modern viewer, especially one from the United States and particularly one from Philadelphia, has a much different contextual framework in processing and evaluating what is seen on screen. I have discussed the changed attitudes towards the police among contemporary viewers of *Let The Fire Burn* and the creators of the 1985 footage (Yuning, Sun, and Triplett, 2009). Without this background absent from such found footage in the 70's and 80's, citizens received their information about MOVE and their confrontations with police through TV news. As shown in *Let The Fire Burn*, local television news coverage was almost wholly supportive of police actions, both in the 1985 confrontation and the 1978 so-called "shootout" in which a policeman was killed. Similarly, we see police testimony in the commission hearings that the MOVE members did not have any automatic weapons and the policeman was killed by a hail of automatic weapons fire. Yet this went barely acknowledged at the time and no policemen were ever indicted for any crimes (Sanders and Jeffries 2013). Today, with many American's knowledge of the systematic abuse by police against minority populations, many viewers look at this "evidence" in news reports or commission testimony

us music, sounds or titles are utilized.

21 This dread is heightened through a dramatic musical soundtrack placed underneath both the found footage and these titles.

with very different eyes, even if we choose to go along with the earlier views on these incidents (Prior 2013, 116).[22] A prime example of this phenomenon is the infamous Rodney King found footage of 1991. This camcorder footage, captured by a man named George Holliday from the window of his apartment, became a media sensation, resulting in a trial in which the officers were acquitted, followed by riots that left 53 people dead and 7,000 structures burned at a cost of a billion dollars. For African Americans this was an example of a black citizen being brutalized by a white police force in the manner of an occupying army, not a civic organization whose motto is "to serve and protect." But many whites had little sympathy for Rodney King; he was driving an automobile legally intoxicated (on alcohol and PCP) and had just led police on a high-speed chase. It is the sort of encounter that happens every day in large American cities. The fact that the audience was able to see this beating, instead of merely hear the statistics, changed the public's attitude with the visceral power of the image. Hence the contextual framework (as we have seen above, often defined by race and class) by which a viewer of 2013 (or today) reacts to the 1985 TV news and commission footage in *Let The Fire Burn* and re-configures their response about who they think has authorial integrity; the police or citizens of color. Some might still hold firm to the institutional view that the police are a so-called "thin blue line" between the law-abiding public and the hordes of criminals in our cities. But many others have not only come to a new perspective on just what happens during these encounters but have a new appreciation for the public statements of African Americans that have been made for decades (Martin 2005, 307-326).

The Authorial Voice of Deposition Footage

We can also see how the process of re-contextualization is affected by the various types of compiled footage used in *Let The Fire Burn*. For example, legal deposition video utilized as evidence in a court case opens the film. As might be expected with such footage, the image is grainy and sound quality low, the framing unbalanced. Yet this low aesthetic quality lends the footage an air of authenticity, since it is clearly "real" as opposed to a staged (and slickly photographed) recreation of survivor testimony. The subject of this deposition footage, used

22 There is increasingly a bifurcation of media into "right and left" in the United States that influences trust in stories about the police and citizens (Prior 2013).

in a legal action against the city of Philadelphia, is Michael Ward, one of the two survivors of the MOVE house fire (*New York Times* 1991).[23] In the deposition footage, the thirteen-year-old Ward is flanked by three unidentified men as he answers questions about the MOVE incident. One man asks Ward if he knows what it means to tell the truth, and what happens to people who don't tell the truth. The boy's answer, "bad things," serves as a signpost and warning to the various witnesses we will soon see; the media which report upon the fire and the makers of this documentary (or any documentary) with the implicit risk of distorting the "truth" through the use of cinematic technique. Finally, Michael Ward's very innocence and his childish version of the "truth" is in itself a testament to the lies and injustices of American society that produced a reaction like the MOVE group and the bad things that followed.[24]

As mentioned above, the methods the filmmaker uses to establish an authorial voice without the usual documentary tools of staged interviews or voice-over has its own set of risks. We see Michael Ward giving his deposition testimony throughout the film, contrasted with commission hearing footage and news reports made as the confrontation unfolded. Ward's viewpoint, owing to his age and audience expectations about his fear of the authority figures around him, lends itself easily to viewers' contextual notions of which footage is "truer" than others. But, we do not know if this child has been coached beforehand as to what to say during the deposition, or if he would lie out of a desire to please these authority figures. In the initial deposition image, we see on one side of Ward two men with legal pads, giving the appearance of lawyers, and another man opposite who never speaks, but who was in fact Ward's father. Yet none of these men are identified. Would this proximity affect the boy's testimony? The father was estranged from the boy's mother, who was a member of MOVE and died in the fire. Would the boy answer differently if he was not sitting beside his father? Instead we have an assumption of authorial integrity created by the contextualization of our attitudes about the grainy deposition footage and the innocence of a child's responses to such authority figures. What Osder does not provide is contextual information about these figures, that is, we have no documentation of the identity or relationships of these men. The subsequent use of Michael

23 Ward and his father received $840,000 and monthly payments of up to $9 million in a settlement.
24 That is, to the modern viewer made aware of these injustices through various media sources, including found footage. Others might see the subsequent presentation as a slanted usage of the compiled footage.

Ward's deposition commentary on life inside the MOVE house and details of the stand-off and bombing as it unfolds is very effective, owing to this authorial integrity, but it has not been earned through the accumulation of any verifiable evidence save the viewer's attitudes towards his testimony, which is a contextual viewpoint that can change over time.

Here again we see how the functioning dynamic of the compilation documentary, the process of re-contextualization, constantly evolves with each set of historical audience members, whose view of past events alters with the advent of new historical information, sociological developments and levels of sophistication about media and the potential for manipulation. Just as the "Voice of God" narration once commanded authorial credibility,[25] contemporary audiences often find images that are seen as unrehearsed or "real" compelling in themselves, especially if they are from a past devoid of reality show techniques (Goodmilow 1997, 92).[26]

The Authorial Voice of Commission Testimony

In a similar fashion, video recordings of the commission hearings that investigated the fire are edited to convey both the attitudes behind the police and MOVE members' actions and to comport with modern viewers' reassessment of these very attitudes thirty years on. Throughout the film this commission footage is interspersed with Michael Ward's deposition testimony and TV news reports aired live during the final confrontation between police and the MOVE group, creating juxtapositions and contrasting truths not available to any contemporary viewers nor the various people testifying or creating these news reports. In this way the viewer must decide which viewpoint or witness has more authority in recalling events truthfully, a judgement dependent upon the contextual perspective of that viewer and those giving testimony.

The public commission hearing footage lends itself to a level of gravity both conceptually and visually, one that implies an honest attempt to uncover the truth about what happened on May 13, 1985, with a host of community members

25 Wolfe observes that "disembodied, this voice is construed as fundamentally unrepresentable in human form, connoting a position of absolute mastery and knowledge outside the spatial and temporal boundaries of the social world the film depicts" (1997, 149).

26 Jill Godmilow notes that one of the very first examples of documentary footage, Lumière's 1895 film *Workers Leaving the Lumière Factory*, was in fact elaborately staged (1997, 93).

drawn from all sides and the hearings videotaped. Yet the motives behind this commission were more complex than merely a quest for the truth. Public reaction after the MOVE bombing and subsequent fire was extremely negative, centering not so much on the police response to the MOVE organization, but the fact that 60 houses of "innocent" people were destroyed. With a public relations disaster on their hands, and under the threat of numerous lawsuits, the city organized a panel of twelve community leaders to investigate how the city's confrontation evolved from the police handling neighborhood complaints against MOVE into a full-scale attack which killed eleven people (*New York Times* 1991). These televised hearings become an expositional device through which the viewer learns about the MOVE organization, through testimony of former MOVE members, neighbors and police, along with the details of police actions against MOVE during the seventies and leading up to the events of 1985, and finally a step by step explication of how the police came to decide to drop an incendiary device on the building. This footage is cross-cut with various news reports filmed during the confrontation and Michael Ward's deposition testimony about what was happening inside the MOVE house.

In editing this footage, the filmmakers utilize the re-contextualization process in creative ways, sometimes emphasizing modern attitudes and at other times subverting them. For example, testimony from former MOVE members who were not in the house during the police action but were still supportive of the group's aims provides both a narrative on the nature of MOVE viewed from the inside and its relation to the white power structure. Commission member William B. Lytton, a visual emblem of white, elite America in his expensive suit and tie, asks former MOVE member Laverne Simmons about the "philosophy" of MOVE. Simmons answers simply "the absolute truth," a response that is cross-cut to a skeptical look by Lytton, a look (and implied response) that might easily be shared by many white viewers of the documentary. Then another former MOVE member, Louise James, testifies to Lytton that John Africa "exposed the lie in the system." When Lytton asks her to explain that system, she replies "The establishment. You." Here the filmmakers cut to a shot of Lytton shifting his eyes as though guilty, an attitude perhaps shared by those same white viewers who found earlier claims of Africa's "absolute truth" so ridiculous. The modern American viewer knows all too well, through the proliferation of video evidence and their own experience, that however crazy John Africa's views might be when held up to a sophisticated

Western philosophy which denies absolutes, the truth of the systemic prejudice against people of color in America is one of the few "absolute truths" of American society.[27]

Immediately after the guilt-ridden look on Lytton's face, there comes a dissolve into a campaign ad by the notorious Philadelphia mayor (and former police chief) Frank Rizzo. The ad utilizes classic racist code words, still in use today, decrying a "small minority among us that seeks to destroy the heritage of 1776," and arguing that "we must be ever vigilant that this minority does not impose its philosophy on the unwilling majority of Americans." This ad resonates at different levels depending upon the viewer's contextual perspective. Someone who is of color knows "exactly" what Rizzo is referring to when he talks about "a small minority," while anyone from Philadelphia of the historical era of Frank Rizzo and the civil rights struggles is well aware of the filmmakers' intention on following this testimony with the notorious campaign ad. This linkage between the attitudes of the "brainwashed" cult members and the reality of the history of prejudice against minorities lends authority to their views, so that even if viewers share the educated commission members' eye-rolling skepticism about John Africa, they understand how these views came about, and have another perspective on the "absolute truth" of these former members' position and the MOVE incident.

The Authorial Voice of the Media

The story of how the MOVE stand-off evolved into a fire is also delineated in *Let The Fire Burn* through various TV news reports that were broadcast live during the incident in 1985. The filmmakers use both dramatic irony and audio technique to give viewers a sense of growing dread as we watch TV reporters describe events in real time. Dramatic irony operates here because unlike the reporters who breathlessly comment on the stand-off almost as a sporting event we know from the beginning of the film that there will be a fire that kills eleven people and destroys sixty-one homes. We also watch these events with an eye on detecting how things went so badly, not merely as exciting live TV, especially when

27 See Jane Elliott ask American white audiences about whether any would stand up to assert that they would want to be treated like black citizens are in the United States. No one ever stands (YouTube 2016).

cross-cut with commission testimony by police and city officials. News footage of neighbors being evacuated the very day of the police action against MOVE is especially compelling. They are interviewed and offered a chance to explain that they were given no prior warning and hence no time to take their possessions.[28] We know what will happen as we watch these interviews; these people lost everything in the fire, and many had little or no fire insurance. Yet here again the filmmakers betray their premise of objectivity by putting ominous music under this footage to increase the suspense as events unfold to the tragic and inevitable outcome. This audio manipulation tells the viewer what to feel while watching these images, instead of allowing the found footage to speak for itself.

By using this footage under the timeline that it was recorded, and with our knowledge of the events to come, the viewer's contextual perspective shifts, and as we watch these news reports, the underlying bias of these news organizations in favor of the police becomes clearer. When barrages of gunfire erupt, the journalists report that MOVE members are firing on police, describing the scene as a "shoot-out," which infers that two sides are exchanging gunfire. But later, only four guns were found in the wreckage of the MOVE house and none had been in working order, a fact that the police chief is unable to explain during his commission testimony. TV reporters marvel at the equipment used by the police, and their interviews with neighbors tend towards the notion that the police are protecting the public from this menace. Yet later testimony makes it clear that it was the police who went into the confrontation looking for a fight, perhaps in retaliation for the 1978 killing, which led not only to the decision to drop the bomb but the mayor's notorious command to "let the fire burn" which led to the firestorm that consumed 61 homes.

Conclusion

Let The Fire Burn ends with an especially powerful bit of testimony from the commission hearings, in which the commission chair, the Reverend Paul Washington, who had been involved in the civil rights movement in Philadelphia since the 1940's, questions two policemen about the final moments in the MOVE house. Michael Ward's mother pushed him towards police, then ran back into

28 One elderly African American resident being moved presciently tells reporters that the only way the police will be able to remove the MOVE members is "to kill them all."

the burning house, presumably because she thought she would be killed. This is cross-cut with Ward's deposition testimony, recreating the horror of this moment through a child's eyes. Washington wonders why Ward's mother would go back into the fire.

> Just as a human being myself, I'm just trying to imagine myself in that situation. Behind me there is a raging inferno, and in front of me are people saying "Come out. Come out." I'm trying to imagine what would cause me to turn back into the fire.

When a policeman comments that no one can know why MOVE members acted the way they did, inferring with his tone that these cult members were all crazy, Washington counters with a response that encapsulates the process of re-contextualization that *Let The Fire Burn* both explicates and gives rise to in its compilation style:

> I knew a lot of those people as individuals and as human beings. A lot of people know MOVE from what they've seen, but I've had a lot of dealings with them and I knew them to be more than MOVE people. I knew many of them by name, as human beings. It's probably a rhetorical question; I don't think you, by the way you've responded can answer that.

Washington's eloquent response about knowing MOVE members as human beings, and the emotion of his resignation that the police simply cannot answer his question resonates even more from today's perspective, born from the Rodney King video and countless cell phone and YouTube clips of the police and their abuse of minorities. We understand the Reverend's incredulity and sadness in a way that might not have been possible thirty years ago, and it is a testament to the power of this thirty-year-old found footage to illustrate this contextual shift in culture and understanding, a shift that came in part from the technology that has made found footage so ubiquitous. Viewers now appreciate and believe in the authority of his words, even if they find the explosion of most found and self-generated media vacuous and vulgar. This contextual shift renders the experiment of *Let The Fire Burn* especially powerful, for viewers look at the witness

testimony and news footage from a perspective that lends credence to the words and concerns of marginalized groups in American society. Instead of lecturing its audience on the cultural attitudes and prejudices that figured into each step of the MOVE tragedy, the film lets the contemporaneous footage demonstrate these factors without commentary. The film does carry the burdens of its own time and place, and access to truth is often provisional and shifts with time. Temporal distance exposes the lies of the past, but we are trapped in our own set of assumptions and perspective. But perhaps it is a primal goal of documentary film to at least strive for such moments, however few, if only to assure viewers of subsequent generations that they still exist.

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Authors' Biodata

Kevin King is a filmmaker, playwright and educator. His play, *The Idea Man,* won the 2009 Ovation Award for Playwriting, while his documentary film, *Baker's And the Bird*, was featured on the Turner Broadcast Network and the Public Benefit Corporation. He has written on the arts for publications such as *Orbit Magazine*, *Film Threat* and the *Sacramento Bee*. From 2015 to 2019 he was a Senior Lecturer in documentary film, creative writing, film genre, and playwriting at the University of Łódź, Poland. Over that time his film students created over 70 short documentary films. His article "Fight or Flight: Documentary Practice in Two Views of Migrants in Sweden" was published in *Dilogos, Vol. XVIII No. 35/2018*. He is the English language editor of the Polish journal *Prac Polonistycznych* and a contract editor for the University of Lodz Press. He recently completed the documentary film *Asheville Food Truck* and is currently completing *The Professionals*, a documentary on two American women playing professional basketball in Łódź and *The Artist*, a documentary about feminist performance artist Marta Ostajewska. He is currently writing a book on creating and teaching short documentary films.

Patrick McCullough pursues his Masters in Literature at Rhode Island College in Providence, Rhode Island.

Ivan Nyusztay is an Associate Professor at Budapest Business School, University of Applied Sciences. He also teaches part-time at Gáspár Károli University. Moreover, in the academic year of 2014/15 Ivan Nyusztay was employed by UITM in Rzeszow, Poland, where he taught British and American Culture and Literature. He holds a PhD. from K.U. Leuven, Belgium (2000) and a habilitation from ELTE University of Budapest (2012). He is author of two books on drama theory (*Myth, Telos, Identity: The Tragic Schema in Greek and Shakespearean Drama,* Amsterdam–New York: Rodopi, 2002, and *Configurations of Identity in Absurd Drama: Samuel Beckett, Harold Pinter, Tom Stoppard*, Budapest: L'Harmattan, 2010), and of a number of articles including "Infinite Responsibility and the Third in Emmanuel Levinas and Harold Pinter" (*Literature and Theology*, OUP, 2014), and "The Merry Sufferer: Authentic Being in Samuel Beckett's *Happy Days*" (*Philosophy and Literature*, Johns Hopkins UP, 2018). Starting out as a Shakespeare scholar and a specialist in drama theory,

over the last ten years Ivan Nyusztay extended his research to 20th-century drama, with a focus on the theatre of the absurd.

Thomas Thoelen completed his PhD on the subject of technology in Samuel Beckett's prose fiction at the Vrije Universiteit Brussel (Belgium), research for which was funded by the Research Foundation—Flanders (FWO). He has published in *Samuel Beckett Today / Aujourd'hui* and also co-edited the special issue "Samuel Beckett and the Nonhuman" (vol. 32.2, 2020).

Jadwiga Uchman is former head of the Department of British Drama, Theatre and Film at the University of Lodz. She specialises in modern British drama, especially poetic drama, theatre of the absurd, as well as in the plays by Samuel Beckett, Tom Stoppard, and Harold Pinter. She has published *Problem of Time in the Plays of Samuel Beckett* (Lodz UP 1987); *Reality, Illusion, Theatricality: A Study of Tom Stoppard* (Lodz UP 1998); *Samuel Beckett, Harold Pinter, Tom Stoppard*: *Playwrights and Directors* (Lodz UP 2011).

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