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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

FOREWORD

OOD, SWEET, HONEY, sugar-candied reader, to take a phrase from Behn, in the pages to follow are the results of a call for papers literary and linguistic. Fittingly they number nine, as Dickinson's muses, or Chaucer's groups, and in true Arthurian fashion, they might better be gathered at a round table: diverse in angle, yet close in theme, all concerned intimately with language. Together they show as much like paints in the florilegia of old, vivid to the mind as colors to the eye, as like plums in Williams' icebox, ripe to be read and relished, and so may they inform no less than they enlighten.

Explicit prohemium.

CONTENTS

LANGUAGE AND MASTERY

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Denise Riley's instruction, "Don't let the English language beat you – master it before it masters you," presents the learning of language as a competition in which man's competitor is language itself.[1] Saussure's writings on linguistics, Bakhtin's challenge to structuralism, and the family of literary theories of deconstruction, however, reveal Riley's imperative to be a mere ploy and instead suggest that an individual's mastery over language is ultimately impossible. It is language itself that proves capable of mastering the human subject, our meanings, and our intentions, regardless of our proficiency in it.

Ferdinand de Saussure's Course in General Linguistics was published posthumously in 1916; its publication represents the point at which structuralism began to achieve preeminence in literary studies, becoming the catalyst for the emergence of linguistics as a science in itself.[2] Saussure is referred to by Vincent B. Leitch as the "father of linguistics," for laying the philosophical foundations for semiology.[3] While semantic studies concern themselves with the analysis of word meanings, semiotic studies seek not to assign meanings to things but to come to know how meanings are possible, through the study of the life of signs in society.[4] Saussure's realization that "if human actions

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1   Riley, *Bad words*, 44.
2   Renfrew, *Mikhail Bakhtin*, 58.
3   Saussure, "From *Course in General Linguistics*," 820–822.
4   Barthes, "The Structuralist Activity," 218.

or productions have a meaning, there must be an underlying system of distinctions and conventions which makes this meaning possible,"[5] fuelled the linguistic investigation that birthed the school of literary theory now termed structuralism.[6]

Saussure's great revelation was understanding language not as a naming-process, but as a concrete system of signs which unite a "concept" (concept) and a "sound-image" (image auditive) in the production of meaning.[7] These "sound-images" were not only "the sum of elements or phonemes" that could be "called up by a corresponding number of written symbols," enabling language to be put into graphic form in grammars and dictionaries.[8] Crucially, "sound-images" had a further dimension for Saussure: they were not only a material sound, a purely physical thing, but the "psychological imprint of the sound, the impression that it makes in our senses." This understanding gave the "sound-image" and the linguistic sign their "psychological character."[9]

According to Saussure, thoughts, which are chaotic by nature, become ordered in the learning of language and are forced to acquire form; such form is produced when the elements of sound and thought combine.[10] At the base of language, an auditory image (not the material sound but its psychological imprint) becomes associated with a concept, and this association works "outside the individual," who can never create or modify language themself; the auditory image exists by virtue of "a sort of contract signed by members of the community."[11] Linguistic signs, Saussure tells us, are thus tangible; they are conventions that have to be learned and are not subject to individual will.[12] In Saussure's writing, the "concept" and "sound-image," which constitute signs, are replaced with the "signified" (*signifié*) and "signifier" (*significant*), respectively.[13] These latter terms are one example of the set of interpersonal rules and norms that Saussure unearthed and that constitute the system of language. A rudimentary conclusion of Saussure's structuralism is suggested by Culler: "To learn English is not to memorize a set of utterances . . . [but] to master a system of rules and norms which make it possible to produce and understand language."[14]

However, Culler's conclusion that language is a system of rules and norms that might

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5   Culler, *Structuralist Poetics: Structuralism, Linguistics, and the Study of Literature*, 4.

6   Barthes, "The Structuralist Activity," 218.

7   de Saussure, "From *Course in General Linguistics*', 826.

8   Ibid., 824.

9   Ibid., 827.

10 Ibid., 831.

11 Ibid., 824.

12 Ibid., 826.

13 Ibid., 827.

14 Culler, *Structuralist Poetics,* 8.

be mastered by an individual is complicated by Saussure's further articulations on the subject. Saussure suggests that in a language composed of signs, everything is based on relations: "whatever distinguishes one sign from the others constitutes it."[15] This idea that a sentence can have meaning only by virtue of its relations to other sentences within the conventions of the language leads to startling conclusions when read in conjunction with Saussure's further claim that "language has neither ideas nor sounds that existed before the linguistic system."[16] This idea, in turn, leads one to the disconcerting realization that "a speaker's utterances are understood by others only because they are already virtually contained within the language."[17] Saussure here echoes Heidegger's belief that, while language speaks, man speaks "only in so far as he artfully complies with language,"[18] and thus the ease at which we can champion man's mastery over language is considerably reduced. If language and its signs, not man, are the origin of meaning, and if all of man's subsequent ideas are articulated only through and in relation to this linguistic system, then language's ultimate mastery of man seems inescapable.

Although Saussure's writings may ultimately dispense of the individual subject as a source of meaning, the individual can never be entirely dismissed; as Culler reminds us, "meaning moves through him."[19] By understanding man as essential to the transmission of meaning, the individual regains a degree of mastery over language: without him, language, and the meanings it contains, would cease to find a means of expression. In addition, Saussure himself saw "the speaker's ability to produce new combinations of signs as an expression of 'individual freedom' which escaped the rules of an interpersonal system."[20] Though the signs are ultimately contained within the language system and are defined only by those which they are not, man has the freedom to play with them, creating new combinations that best suit his intentions. By way of this freedom, man can reassert a degree of dominance over language.

Russian literary theorist Mikhail Bakhtin, regarded by some as the most astonishingly productive thinker in the humanities to emerge from Soviet Russia,[21] further reinstated the centrality of the individual subject to the meanings delivered by language. Bakhtin is firm in maintaining that "the presence and self-constitution of the speaking subject lies at the heart of any process of human understanding."[22] He considers meaning "immanent" within a text, believing it "to inhere in the concept or phenomenon

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15   Saussure, "From *Course in General Linguistics*," 837.

16   Ibid., 836.

17   Culler, *Structuralist Poetics,* 30.

18   Ibid., 28.

19   Ibid., 30.

20   Ibid., 29.

21   Renfrew, *Mikhail Bakhtin*, 1.

22   Ibid., 2.

[of meaning] itself."[23] In this way, he avoids having to relegate the human subject, as the structuralists do, to a mere vessel through which meaning moves, rather than as its source; he locates meaning and man simultaneously in the text itself. If his understanding of the centrality of the human subject and meaning within a text were simply merged with the structuralists' literary theory, the relationship between man and language would appear largely cooperative. However, Bakhtin does not theorize that this relationship is one of equal footing: instead, his theory defines the relationship in such a way that any degree of mastery over language by man appears impossible.

Bakhtin's literary theory, pieced together from his publications under the "triple personae" of Volosinov, Medvedev, and Bakhtin,[24] opposes the structuralist idea that language is a concrete, closed system with a new conception: the historical understanding of a "living language."[25] He begins with the conviction that "language is never unitary,"[26] explaining that our words are constantly interpreted and re-interpreted in a language that belongs to others as much as to ourselves. Bakhtin describes our reality in which the word, once uttered, "enters a dialogically agitated and tension-filled environment of alien words, value judgements and accents . . . [and] weaves in and out of complicated inter-relationships."[27] He calls this the "social heteroglossia" surrounding the word; it complicates expression and refracts the intentions of the prose writer. According to Bakhtin, this "social heteroglossia" is something which "only Adam . . . who approached a virginal world with the first word" could have escaped.[28] These observations lead Bakhtin to his conclusion that, far from being "a neutral medium that passes freely and easily into the private property of [a] speaker's intentions," languages do in fact "live a real life."[29] This is one of Bakhtin's most damaging revelations for the notion of man's mastery over language. He tells us that "there are no neutral words and forms . . . that belong to 'no-one'" and that "language has been completely taken over . . . [and] shot through with the intentions and accents of others."[30] Man will never again, since Adam, be the first or only master of the words he uses; his intentions will be refracted by the social heteroglossia which his words form a part, the meanings of his words "determined by that which has not yet been said" and anticipated only by the answering word.[31]

Although Bakhtin considered meaning inherent in the text, his theory also paved

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23   Ibid.
24   Flower MacCannell, "The Temporality of Textuality: Bakhtin and Derrida," 969.
25   Renfrew, *Mikhail Bakhtin*, 63.
26   Bakhtin, "Discourse in the novel," 1012.
27   Bakhtin, "Discourse in the novel," 1014–1029.
28   Ibid., 1014.
29   Ibid., 1023.
30   Ibid., 1024–5.
31   Ibid., 1015.

the way for the future dissemination of the meanings in texts. He described the forma-tion of meaning as the "co-creation of 'speaker' and 'understander'";[32] although the text comes from the outside, written down and printed under circumstances over which the reader exerts no control, it is partly endowed with its emergent meaning by the read-er's own mind.[33] According to Bakhtin, the "specific ideological context" that supports verbal forms prevents an individual from truly saying or hearing words: because "we assume that there is an order that supports us" and so organise ourselves by our values rather than abstract entities, what we say or hear is always "what is true or false, good or bad, important or unimportant, pleasant or unpleasant."[34][34] This led Bakhtin to the conclusion that we can only ever read our self-imposed meanings in language and never confront truly abstract or ideal entities, a conclusion which was more radically built upon in deconstruction.

Deconstruction, originated from Jacques Derrida's exploitation of Saussure's insights into language, explains that the meaning which we think we impart through the use of a word or creation of a text is actually something over which we have no control. Lan-guage is always being disseminated as an infinite trace of meanings, one sign giving birth to another in an infinite circle, that ultimately exceeds intention and eludes our grasp. Working within the space between the "signified" (the concept, what is meant) and the "signifier" (the sound-image, the vehicle for conveying meaning), which together compose the sign, Derrida highlighted the noncoincidence of the two sides.[35] For him, the signifier functions as a "trace" that gives the false impression that the signified was prior to it, even though the only evidence for the concept is the trace itself.[36] Derrida uses the term "trace" to suggest that the interpretation of a sign is in fact "a reading, not a decodage."[37] It is only the interpreter putting in its place another sign, the resulting chain of which can have no determinate meaning.[38] If our understanding of signs is born of our own reading of them, there can be no guarantee that any two individuals conceive of the signified in the same way.

In his assertion that a single "text authorizes innumerable interpretations", that there can be "no 'correct' interpretation," Nietzsche worked to similarly combat what he saw as a completely misplaced faith in the relationship between truth and meaning in language, asserting that "truths are illusions which we have forgotten are illusions."[39] He taught

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32   MacCannell, "Bakhtin and Derrida," 974.

33   Kuzmicova, "Outer vs. Inner Reverberations," 127.

34   MacCannell, "Bakhtin and Derrida," 973.

35   Leitch, "Introduction to Jacques Derrida," 1605.

36   Ibid.

37   de Man, "Semiology and Rhetoric," 1318.

38   Abrams, "The Deconstructive Angel," 430–1.

39   Nietzsche, "On Truth and Lies in a Nonmoral Sense," 427.

that we obtain the concepts to which we refer "by overlooking what is individual and actual" and that it is only fault of man's audacity and pride that we believe ourselves to be referring to certainties and not to "totally subjective stimulations" in our use of words and designations.[40] Nietzsche's example, in attempting to spread his lack of faith in the relationship between truth and meaning, along with Miller's reminder that "man finds in things nothing but what he himself has imported into them,"[41] fuels the work of the deconstructive critic, who attempts to reopen meanings in literary texts, avoiding fixed conclusions and resurrecting possibilities.[42]

However, Derrida accepts that there is a limit even to the capabilities of deconstructive criticism: the deconstructive interpretation will inevitably end in an impasse, the result of a paradox where the critic, thinking to deconstruct the text, finds that he has simply participated in "the ceaseless play of the text as a self-deconstructive artefact."[43] The search for meanings and fixed truths in a text reveal that none can be found, for every meaning we imagine ourselves to have landed upon is dispersed as soon as we write about it and pass it on to others. That man could possibly master language, therefore, seems absurd: if the meanings we attempt to communicate through language are disseminated into an infinite trace, one sign giving birth to another in an act of interpretation that lays no claim to authority, we cannot hope to master such a phenomenon. It ultimately exceeds our grasp. This stance is best evidenced by deconstruction's self-awareness—an awareness of all literary criticisms' ultimate failure, including its own. A renunciation of our claim to mastery over language, however, need not be carried out in the bitter mood of the unsuccessful competitor. Derrida asks us, in surrendering ourselves to the "seminal chanciness of the trace," to gaze with "a Nietzschean affirmation, the joyous affirmation of the play of the world and . . . the affirmation of a world of signs without error, without truth, [and] without origin."[44] Paul de Man concurs, suggesting that the "pathos" we feel in finding ourselves at that impasse, a "state of suspended ignorance," will be either the "anxiety, or bliss, of ignorance": "an emotive reaction, not to what language does, but to the impossibility of knowing what it might be up to."[45]

There is a sense that the more freely we are able to admit man's inability to master language, the more we are able to liberate and thus enjoy the text. In considering it a free agent more than an agent of man, we are better able to be inspired and encouraged by language, an organism which, in resisting our intentions and orienting itself towards

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40   Ibid.

41   Miller, "Tradition and Difference,' p. 6-13.

42   Miller, "The Critic as Host," 443-445.

43   Abrams, "The Deconstructive Angel," 434.

44   Derrida, "La Structure, le signe et le jeu dans le discours des sciences humaines," 427.

45   de Man, "Semiology and Rhetoric," 1326.

the future, lives and breathes a life of its own. Denise Riley herself, in an article on lyric shame, reflects this notion of language as autonomous even from its user. She is adamant that the lyric needs to be "released from the you" who is "not the source" and refers to the "free burning of language itself," acknowledging the way in which language's meaning disseminates—or burns—in an infinite and unstoppable trace.[46] Of the literary theories discussed, it is structuralism which clings most desperately to the belief in man's mastery over language. We might best describe the "structuralist attention" given to texts as "a desire to isolate codes, to name the various languages with and among which the text plays, to go beyond the manifest content to a series of forms and then to make these forms the burden of the text."[47] One might thus understand man's attempt to master language as doing little more than burdening it. In actuality, the understanding that allows for the greater reach of communication and art is the surrender of mankind to language's mastery over man, as this surrender generates a sense of infinite possibility.

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46   Riley, "Lyric Shame," 73.

47   Culler, *Structuralist Poetics,* 259.

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RESTORATIONS OF LANGUAGE AND LYRIC:
ADORNO AND BENJAMIN ON STEFAN GEORGE

by Ben Zimmerman
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In his radio address "On Lyric Poetry and Society," Theodor Adorno proffers a remarkable exegesis of a short Stefan George poem. To Adorno, the nameless twelve-line poem[1] promises the possibility of a "lyrical language [that] represent[s] language's intrinsic being as opposed to its service in the realm of ends."[2] The radio address, as ambitious as it is abstruse, explains that this promise subsists in the poem's unique "elevated style" and quasi-medieval form.[3] Yet despite his discussion of these features Adorno never fully explains how these formal aspects facilitate the transcendent[4] quality he ascribes to the language of George's poem. Accordingly, this essay sets out to develop an instructive account of what enables the lyrical language of George's poem to transcend "the realm of ends." Before exploring how such an account can be developed, though, one should first understand Adorno's perception of contemporary lyrical language as mired in the realm of ends, as understanding this position cultivates an appreciation for

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1   The poem, which begins with the line "Im windes-weben" and comes from George's 1907 collection The Seventh Ring, does not have a title, and Adorno does not give it one.

2   Adorno, "On Lyric Poetry and Society," 53.

3   Ibid., 51; "The form is medieval in an almost undefinable way." (Ibid.)

4   I use the term 'transcendent' both to invoke the claim that George's lyrical language transcends "the realm of ends" (Adorno, "On Lyric Poetry and Society," 57) and to call attention to the fact that Adorno arguably creates an aura of mysticism around this language and its expressive power.

the gravity of the problem George's work promises to address. Having established this context, I will explain how exactly George circumvents the fallen state of lyric poetry to achieve an unadulterated engagement with "language's intrinsic being."

Curiously, Adorno spends little time addressing the fallen state of language directly, focusing instead on the widespread sense of alienation from language that surged in the wake of its fall. Fortunately, however, the ways in which Adorno contrasts the lyrical language of George's poem with language caught in the realm of ends casts into relief the theorist's views on the fallen condition of language.[5] Adorno, along with his fellow neo-Marxists, believed the language of his time was in crisis. The prevailing use of language instrumentalized communication, consigning it to the purely utilitarian function of arranging and effecting exchanges of commodities within capitalist frameworks.[6] Under these conditions, language had effectively become a tool for the modifications and "mediations" of labor processes (as well as the relations entailed thereof).[7] Constrained by these totalizing associations with exchange and by the primarily utilitarian mode of communication, language became something alien[8] – its words sundered from the meanings once signified.[9] Knowing language only in its instrumental capacity, speakers were left radically alienated from the intrinsic being of language as a thing in and for itself.[10] That there was anything in language which defied commodification became unthinkable.

Lyric poets, in an effort to keep their medium "undisfigured"[11] by instrumentalization, sought to assure their lexicon's individuation from the debased language of their time. Faced with the need to either restore or replace their linguistic tools, lyric poets opted for the latter, seeking to distance themselves from the problematized "living language"[12] and install a new one in its place. To preserve their imperiled artform, lyric poets contrived to accentuate their genre's most defining feature: its literariness.[13] The

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5   At various points in this essay, I emphasize the difficulty Adorno's texts present. While that difficulty is not necessarily relevant to the essay, I do believe that it is highly relevant to the process of understanding Adorno, as he is well-known for having strong views on the processes by which texts and language itself is understood – q.v. iep.utm.edu/adorno/#H6.

6   Gandesha, "The 'Aesthetic Dignity of Words,'" 139.

7   Stahl, "Georg Lukács."

8   Bernstein, Comparative Literature 1210.

9   Gandesha, "The 'Aesthetic Dignity of Words,'" 151.

10   Adorno, "On Lyric Poetry and Society."

11   Ibid., 45.

12   Ibid., 44.

13   I use this term in the sense of the Russian Formalists. See, for example, the entry for "Literariness" in Oxford Reference: "The sum of special linguistic and formal properties that distinguish literary texts from non-literary texts, according to the theories of Russian Formalism."

lyric poets increased the floridity of their diction. Their new dialect was a turgid inflation of the old, exaggerating its difference from the common tongue. Unfortunately, this exaggerative project led lyric poetry into a state of grotesque self-caricature, as the efforts to create a purer language eventuated in works composed of nothing but rococo vapidity and baroque form, ushering in an era Adorno called "the elevated, poeticizing [. . .] moment in weak later lyric poetry."[14]

By dramatically increasing the literariness of its language, lyric poets destroyed the unity that once existed between form and language. To understand why this disunity spelled catastrophe, it is instructive to call on the work of Walter Benjamin, whose essay "The Task of the Translator" (1923) offers an insightful paradigm for understanding the delicate relationship between language and form:[15]

> The relationship between content and language is quite different in the original and the translation. Whereas content and language form a certain unity in the original, like a fruit and its skin, the language of the translation envelops its content like a royal robe with ample folds. For it signifies a more exalted language than its own and thus remains unsuited to its content, overpowering and alien.[16]

According to the paradigm Benjamin advances, the language lyric poets contrived to substitute for a no-longer-present one was doomed to fail because its *raison d'être* was to invoke a language other than its own. The success of a lyric poem, therefore, is always dependent on a delicate balance between the genre's formal aspects and a language that is no longer present, invokable in spite of its absence. Lyric poets hoped to salvage their weakened art by creating something that could replace the extinct language, rather than invoke it, believing that such a creation would harmonize the lyric form with a language suited to it. But the bombastic dialect these poets created was a replacement that only signified the language for which it stood. In this inception lay the replacement's fatal flaw. The new language was only ever a means to an end – something instrumental – and so could never reestablish communion with language's intrinsic being: a thing in and for itself, no mere expedient. The ulterior language to which a poem's diction points must be no other than the "pure language" Benjamin prophesies.[17] The lyric poets' failure to recognize this truth subtends their misguided linguistic production: a language that gestured at a language that gestured at pure language.

It is by the lights of this same paradigm of poetic language that George's lyric suc-

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14   Adorno, "On Lyric Poetry and Society," 44–45.

15   Though Benjamin's analysis is explicitly focused on translated works, his insight
       transpose quite nicely to the case at hand if one considers lyric's hyper-inflated mode as
       a sort of translation wherein the language of lyric poetry has been translated to a
       dramatically elevated register.

16   Benjamin, "The Task of the Translator," 258.

17   Ibid., 257.

ceeds where the bombastic failed. George's words did not seek to simulate the meanings expressed by a no-longer-present language, but to replicate that language's very way of meaning: remaking it in the image of its most essential feature. This signature of George's lyric poetry is most clearly brought to light in Adorno's explication of the unassuming word "gar," which George masterfully engenders with immense significatory power in the following lines: "Nun muss ich gar / Um dein aug und haar / Alle Tage / In sehnen leben."[18] Adorno says of these verses: "Subtle ears have taken umbrage at the elliptical 'gar,' which is probably used in place of 'ganz und gar' [completely] and to some extent for the sake of the rhyme. One can concede the justice of this criticism and the fact that as used in the line the word has no proper meaning."[19] In other words, George seems to be using "gar" instead of the idiom "ganz und gar" – meaning "completely" or "totally and completely" – even though "gar" does not by itself carry the same adverbial meaning. Nevertheless, any German speaker would quickly understand what George uses "gar" to denote, and herein lies the crucial distinction between George's lyrical language and the turgid dialect employed by his contemporaries.

With his brilliant elision of the phrase, George invites his readers to imagine that the meaning of "ganz und gar" had been debased by commercial use and no longer carried the sense it once did. Under these circumstances, the idiom could no longer be used to signify the sense the phrase carried prior to its debasement. Using the blunted arsenal of a fallen language, how could one hope to signify this sense? Proponents of the hyper-inflated account would most likely try to select a synonym or near synonym from a higher register, such as *insgesamt* ('in total'). Such a selection, though, would constitute an ill-fated attempt to signify a word that no longer exists by using a meek stand-in. George, on the other hand, uses the neologistic "gar," creating a phrase that recaptures a word that no longer exists by recalling its way of meaning – the way in which a given referent was connected to its unique sense. After all, the sense of "ganz und gar" does not die with the phrase: the debasement of words is not the same as the debasement of meanings. To select *insgesamt* is to accept that the domain of possible meanings has shrunk: that no figment of language can ever regain access to the sense "ganz und gar" once possessed. George's ungrammatical "gar," by contrast, takes the faded words of a faded language and renews them by finding a form in which the debased phrase can be heard anew. He upcycles the word to encode a well-known but now lost sense and in so doing "hears his own language as though it were a foreign tongue." To overcome alienation from language, George intensifies it "until it becomes the alienation of a language no longer

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18   Qtd. in Adorno, "On Lyric Poetry and Society." A translation of these lines is as follows: "Now I must [completely] / For your eyes and hair / Every day / Live in yearning." Note well, however, that the translation drops "gar," which I have added back in as "completely" in brackets.

19   Adorno, "On Lyric Poetry and Society," 53.

actually spoken, . . . [of] an imaginary language."[20] George, Adorno explains, accentuates the debased condition of the language in which he writes until the debasement is luminous to his readers – until, that is, the reader is able to apprehend and appreciate both the fallen state of language and the possibility of its remedy. George defamiliarizes the used-up, commodity-fetishism-laden language until the reader can experience it anew, "as though it were a foreign tongue" or "even an imaginary language." It is in such a language that George writes when he "construct[s] lines that sound as though they were not written by him but had been there from the beginning of time."[21]

George educes from the alienated dialect of lyric a language that "can no longer bear anything but the universal [...] *in* the particular."[22] Through this dialect, he recovers a language harmonious with the lyric form. The recovered language is by no means a universal one – in any sense. George's achievement here is not the creation of a universal language but the (re)creation of a language whose particularity does not alienate it from the universal, from what is universal to all expression. No longer do fustian verses overwhelm the graceful economy of well-composed lyric. Having eschewed the affected literariness to which so many of his peers fell prey, George writes with the voice of a reawakened lyricism, inextricable from language's intrinsic being. By intensifying language's alienation, he effects a recuperation of the debased language's way of meaning and, in so doing, makes lyric poetry possible once again. His words represent – or perhaps simply remember—the intrinsic being of pure language in and for itself.[23]

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20   Ibid., 52.
21   Ibid., 53.
22   Ibid.
23   Ibid., 53–54.

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"WORD-SCULPTURES" AND "WORD-SONG": DECONSTRUCTING CARIBBEAN TEXTUALITY

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INTRODUCTION

Textuality concerns a society's notions, values, and beliefs about texts and their struc-tures. European post-structuralists of the late twentieth century studied textuality by systematically analyzing the relationships of novels, poems, and other texts to social reality; they believed that social truths are negotiated by interacting with a text rather than by approaching it as a container of knowledge. This theory of textuality as a form of social interaction differed from traditional European literary tropes, many of which idealized a classical focus on the individual rational consciousness as the most logical way to pursue knowledge. However, neither traditional nor post-structuralist textuality could comfortably accommodate texts produced during the post-*colonialist* era twenty years later, especially those authored by Caribbeans. Not only were Caribbean writers initially underrepresented and marginalized by the Anglophone canon, but the new models of textuality they posed were often misunderstood by Euro-American scholars. Two writers in particular – Jamaican poets Linton Kwesi Johnson and Kamau Brathwaite – sought credibility in this canon despite abandoning traditional linear or authorial structures. While their poems partly support the post-structuralist idea of an interactional text through orality, communality, and the performer-audience relationship, they advance post-structuralism by using textual form to initiate social change rather than only to discuss it: in their model of textuality, interaction between writing and reality co-de-termines both, and in creating and canonizing such interactive texts, they demonstrate

a textuality of recursiveness, orality, naturalism, and communality, one boldly reflective of the emerging transcultural Anglophone reality.

<div align="center">"CYCLES, RECURRENCES, REPETITIONS"</div>

One textual feature that marks Jamaican poetry is an underlying recursiveness. As scholar Pascale De Souza observes, Jamaican poets often gravitate toward "rejecting the linear timeline," wherein each line offers new information, in favor of "cycles, recurrences, and repetitions."[1] This recursive writtenness is best exemplified by Johnson's poem "If I Woz a Tap-Natch Poet." In this poem, Johnson claims to write "wid mi riddim / wid mi rime / wid mi ruff base line / wid mi own sense a time."[2] The consonance, assonance, and anaphora in these lines is repetitive by nature, but the whole stanza appears three more times, creating a cyclical experience for the listener that always concludes on the final beat "time." In this passage, we can make two observations about recursive textuality. First, by ending the stanza repeatedly on "sense a time," Johnson marks his poetry with a seeming agency over temporality. Instead of relegating acoustical interpretation to his readers, he suggests that the poem's true form is based on the music, dance, and oral tradition of Jamaica. Secondly, his "sense [of] time" parts with the assumption that texts belonging to a "canon" are timeless, urging instead the experience of his work as a historically specific event—one meant to be performed and heard at a particular time and place. Johnson's text is therefore fundamentally interactional, supporting the post-structuralist theory that true meaning lies in one's social interface with a text.

Likewise, cyclical recursiveness is also present in Johnson's beginning stanza, his title dually functioning as the first line: "if I woz a tap-natch poet / like Chris Okigbo / Derek Walcot / ar T.S. Eliot."[3] These lines reappear twice, but the poets are substituted for others – Kamau Brathwaite, Martin Carter, etc. Despite the seeming banality of naming other writers, this repetition is not as simple as it appears. In each cycle, Johnson adds a new tier, an adjective associated with each "tap-natch" poet: first are "dyam deep" and "bittah-sweet," then "soh rude / an roolsy / an subversive," and finally "soh beautiful dat it simple."[4] Here, the cycles are not only recursive but accumulative: each repetition layers in new meaning, creating a multidimensional textual effect. De Souza again attempts to describe such a textuality but seems only to circle it, noting that Caribbean writers like Johnson represent "dynamism and displacement, multiplicity, indeterminacy, and metamorphosis," characteristics that she claims are definitive of the

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1   De Souza and Murdoch, "Caribbean Textuality," xiii.
2   Johnson, "If I Waz a Tap-Natch Poet," 17–22.
3   Ibid., 1–3.
4   Ibid., 5–6, 32–34, 63.

region itself.[5] We can assume De Souza uses these adjectives to acknowledge the ethnic and cultural multiplicity resulting from tangled histories of colonialism and enslaved migration to the Caribbean. This social reality, specific to the region, manifests textually through recurrences, motifs, and other forms that mirror the way in which Caribbean stories are anything but straight and linear. Johnson's recursive textuality thus aligns with post-structuralism because it reflects the social experiences of Jamaicans, from British colonialism and enslaved migration to independence and modernity. However, because Johnson also actively urges scholarly acceptance of his work, his text also acts *on* social reality, surpassing the one-sided transfer assumed by post-structuralism.

ORALITY AND ORTHOGRAPHY

Another intrinsic element of Johnson's literary textuality is the pervasiveness of orality as manifested in phonetic orthography. In "If I Woz a Tap-Natch Poet," Johnson transcribes the pronunciation of Jamaican Patois (an English-based creole), depicting authentic speech as produced by Jamaicans. For example, the words "touzan" and "lovah" for *thousand* and *lover*, respectively, represent two characteristics of Jamaican English: stopping (the substitution of the interdental fricative "th" with the stop consonant "t") and r-dropping.[6] Johnson even captures the vowel qualities of Jamaican Patois, such as in the word "compahshan" (*compassion*).[7] In this example, the subtle difference in orthography of the second syllable from the traditional spelling of the word (*pa* vs. "pah") signifies a shift in vowel pronunciation. The spellings of other words are simply phonetic approximations of the words' spoken features; in "dispozishan" (*disposition*), for example, Johnson includes the /z/ and /ʃ/ ("sh") phonemes present in the word's pronunciation.[8] Throughout his poetry, the oral permeates the written and triumphs over conventional orthography, even at times by seemingly insignificant spelling choices. De Souza believes such orthography demonstrates the tension between "the inscription of the written word and the preservation of [Jamaican] oral traditions," a conflict between textuality as fixed and textuality as performative and dynamic.[9] Johnson's decision to preserve pronunciation in spelling is an attempt to mimic reality in the smallest building blocks of writing—to prioritize the shared, communal event of *hearing* a poem over the individual experience of reading it silently.

Johnson also reimagines textuality by juxtaposing phonetic orthography with the semantic content of his poems. For instance, he writes, "still / mi naw goh bow an

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5   De Souza and Murdoch, "Caribbean Textuality," ix.

6   Johnson, "If I Waz a Tap-Natch Poet," 26, 11.

7   Ibid., 67.

8   Ibid., 68.

9   De Souza and Murdoch, "Caribbean Textuality," xii.

scrape / an gwaan like a ape / peddlin noh puerile parchment af ethnicity / wid ongle a vaig fleetin hint af hawtenticity."[10] Here, he ironically compares himself, as a black man writing poetry, to an "ape" or "bafoon" (buffoon) because his work is considered inauthentic. His "hawtenticity" is compromised by the very way he spells the word. However, a broader social and cultural illiteracy is at play. Oral texts were no more palatable to the early Anglophone canon than was Jamaican oral culture as a whole. Jamaican reggae instrumentation, call-and-response rhythm, and dub poetry – one of the first forms of performance poetry – each evolved to characterize Jamaica. Therefore, if Euro-American publishers were unfamiliar with these oral traditions as intrinsic to the Jamaican way of life, they might struggle to appreciate the "structural multiplicities" of creole language like flexible orthography or dismiss them altogether.[11] Even while largely unknown in Anglophone literary circles and untaught in most literature courses, Johnson's poetry is an actualization of his cultural identity, modeling a social textuality at once unique to the Caribbean and supported by post-structuralist thought.

MULTIMODALITY AND VERBAL ART

Multimodality is "the intersectionality of sound, text, and the visual" as well as the "friction and amplification that occurs when [these] modalities are synchronized."[12] In 20th century Caribbean poetry, visual spatiality is one such modality applied and involved in textuality. While Western literature often relegates acrostics and concrete (calligrammatic) poems to childrens' literature, Caribbean poets use space on the page extensively. Kamau Brathwaite, for example, is known to manipulate typefaces, font sizes, and word placements in his poetry.[13] "Negus," from his collection *The Arrivants,* demonstrates such playfulness with line breaks:

> it
> it
> it
> it is not
> it is not enough
> it is not enough to be free
> of the red, white, and blue.[14]

Beyond the recursive syntax, these visually descending one-word lines create a sense of falling, drawing us down the page even as the sentence starts, regresses, and starts again. With so much white space between the beginning of the sentence and the moment

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10   Johnson, "If I Waz a Tap-Natch Poet," 71–75.

11   De Souza and Murdoch, "Caribbean Textuality," x.

12   Smyth, "Black Atlantic," 392.

13   Ibid., 394.

14   Brathwaite, "Negus," 222.

it is completed, Brathwaite creates the effect of an unhurried speaker who demands the reader or listener to wait for the rest of the line.

The visual modality of "Negus" also has a semantic function. The content of the poem emphasizes the absence of a linear path to be free from colonialism, from "the red, white, and blue" and "the whips, principalities, and powers."[15] Just like its recursive structure, the temporal path leading out of colonialism is nonlinear – backtracking must come before progress. Heather Smyth, a scholar of Brathwaite, also notes how the poem visually rejects the assumption of linear progress, instead encouraging its readers to embrace a dynamic "textual kinetics" with jumps, repetitions, and playful spatiality meant to represent this nonlinearity.[16] Combined with the poem's content, Brathwaite's multimodality urges its readers to recognize our world as beyond slavery ("whips, principalities") but nonetheless still influenced by colonial politics. His visual innovations are not only a structural depiction of the social realities of colonial narratives (as post-structuralism would indicate) but also an impulse for changing the reality of persistent neo-colonialism.

Verbal art is a second modality Brathwaite uses to reshape textuality according to his identities, as his figurative language works to construct double meanings. In "Negus," he engages in verbal play with the word *semicolon*, writing, "it is not enough / to be pause, to be hole / to be void, to be silent / to be semicolon, to be semicolony;".[17] Here, the semicolon represents convention as a frequently misunderstood and policed punctuation mark. Brathwaite is uninterested in adhering to Standard English grammatical rules, just as he is uncomfortable with his country's being in a state of "semi-*colony*" (italics added) – that is, a "silent" and "void" state of never quite escaping colonialism. This wordplay is a mixture of punning and enjambment that synchronizes with semantics to highlight "words' multiple meanings and the double consciousness of culture."[18] Drawing from W.E.B. Du Bois's idea of "double consciousness," Brathwaite uses dual meanings of words to mimic the duality of Jamaican identity, a combination of West African and English heritage. He underlines this doubleness to better characterize Jamaican peoples, many of whom were "born of travelling, rupture, appropriation, loss, [and] exile" resulting from the interaction of white Europeans with West African slaves in Jamaica.[19] Jamaican Patois, for instance, developed through the mixing of British English and West African languages and is therefore also a product of double identity, migration, and intersectionality. As Brathwaite illustrates, the post-colonial Caribbean is not cap-

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15   Ibid.
16   Smyth, "Black Atlantic," 394.
17   Brathwaite, "Negus," 224.
18   Smyth, "Black Atlantic," 394.
19   Bryce, "Adventures in Form," 9.

tured uniformly by a single definition – rather, cultural multiplicities are mirrored in textual ones, where multiple meanings suit multiple peoples and multiple realizations of writtenness.

A final type of verbal art Brathwaite adds to textuality is environmental mimesis: instances of sound symbolism that "approximate the natural experience."[20] He writes, for example, of the "sibilance that the sea suggests" and the "syncopation of waves," using the sibilants /s/ and /z/ to imitate rolling, undulating waters. [21]Each word is given a texture by the tongue. As these examples suggest, the environment is better captured by mimesis than artificial rhymes or meter because it imitates the natural, not the artificial. After all, as Brathwaite notes, "[t]he hurricane does not roar in pentameter."[22] Likewise, he writes that he "must be given words so that the bees / in [his] blood's buzzing brain of memory / will make flowers," alliterating the plosive /b/ so as to mimic a beating heart filled with "buzzing" bees.[23] Such instances of mimesis can be found throughout the entirety of *Islands*, creating a "productive tension between the textual and the oral, the scribal and the sound," and demonstrating both that sound is textual and that text is transcriptive.[24] In Brathwaite's own words, his goal is to "create word-sculptures on the page, but word-song for the ear."[25] Smyth considers this simultaneous visual and acoustic quality as disruptive to the very foundation of the literary. Rather than being a traditional text, Brathwaite's work is "inspired orature noted on paper like a musical score."[26] The understanding of a text as a musical score of the environment is unique to Jamaican culture, as is the nation's deep relationship to the environment threatened today by water scarcity, rising sea levels, and deforestation. Brathwaite's textuality not only challenges exclusivist definitions of what it means to speak English but also describes a people for whom the environment of the "Islands" is such a central – and urgent – part of national identity.

COMMUNAL CONSCIOUSNESS

One of the starkest contrasts between Jamaican and American literature appears in the preference for commonality. Whereas American writers tend to preside as independent literary geniuses or authorities, Jamaican writers consider themselves mouthpieces of a shared, communal consciousness. Rather than viewing texts as products of individual insight and creativity, the latter know that their particular achievements are only a

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20   Brathwaite, *History of the Voice*, 265.
21   Genzlinger, "Kamau Brathwaite."
22   Brathwaite, *History of the Voice*, 265.
23   Ibid., 224.
24   Smyth, "Black Atlantic," 394.
25   Ibid.
26   Ibid.

means to the more fulfilling accomplishment of representing a shared culture. Because of this deemphasis on the individual, Caribbean writers can inhabit different personas and voices more easily, thereby welcoming multiplicity. For instance, in *History of the Voice*, Brathwaite proposes the acceptance of a creole "nation language" that is simultaneously English and African because it "more closely and intimately approaches our own experience."[27] The personal pronoun "our" here attempts to capture all ethno-cultural identities between English and African. As Smyth contends, such an emphasis on the communal consciousness mirrors what Brathwaite calls "tidalectics": "a way of seeing history as a palimpsest, where generations overlap generations, and eras wash over eras like a tide on a stretch of beach."[28] In addition to indexing environmental mimesis with the tidal analogy, tidalectics explains some of the underlying recursiveness found in Jamaican poetry – it is informed by multiple generations, cycles of kin who share recurrent, overlapping identities. Brathwaite's "poetic mission" is therefore a "collective and restorative one," striving to include as many people as possible in his claim for approval by the Anglophone canon and the world.[29]

In the wake of Johnson and Brathwaite's textual innovations, more scholars are interested in the works of Caribbean writers previously overlooked despite the works' common linguistic identity, being written in English, with the Anglophone canon. In fact, contemporary technology like digital hypertexts may be encouraging this acceptance of a diverse range of textualities, demonstrating that the post-structuralist view of interactive texts continues to apply to our modern digital climate. Photography and video on social media have made oral, performative, and recordable texts more widely accessible and more acceptable as subjects of scholarly study. The definition of a text is rapidly shifting as different media and modes of publishing are explored, and they remind us of where these oral and recursive practices evolved in addition to the new directions they will take. As De Souza notes, there is something within Caribbean literature that embraces both the new and the old, in a "relentless effort to describe and elucidate the character of the Caribbean people."[30] The more we open our minds to the depth and breadth of that effort, the better we are positioned to rectify the past and realize a truly post-colonial future.

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27 Brathwaite, *History of the Voice*, 265–266.

28 Smyth, "Black Atlantic," 393.

29 Campbell, "Limestone and the Literary Imagination," 72.

30 De Souza and Murdoch, "Caribbean Textuality," xii.

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LANGUAGE AS A MEANS OF DISTINCTION AND EXCLUSION: *HEDENDAAGSCH FETISCHISME* AND *LADY CHATTERLEY'S LOVER*

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INTRODUCTION

Hedendaagsch Fetischisme (1925), which was initially supposed to be called *De Taal* [The Language], is one of the two philosophical nonfiction works of Dutch modernist writer and philosopher Carry van Bruggen.[1] The book is a critical contemplation on language and the way in which people use language to distinguish themselves from others. The title *Hedendaagsch Fetischisme* [Contemporary Fetishism] refers to the intrinsic value and superiority that people attribute to certain accents, dialects, vocabularies, and languages.[2] The value attributed to language is what she calls "taal-fetischisme" ('language-fetishism').[3] For van Bruggen, one of the greatest problems in understanding language is the ineradicable tendency of people to confuse what is put together incidentally and what belongs together essentially. The pronunciation or form of a word – the accent, dialect or national language that is used to express a meaning – is taken

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1   Van Bruggen, *Hedendaagsch Fetischisme*, 7. Her second philosophical non-fiction work is *Prometheus*, which was published in 1919 (Fenoulhet, *Making the Personal Political*, 47).

2   Swaan, "Niet echt gedistingeerd," 121. The term *fetishism* refers to Karl Marx's concept of *commodity fetishism*. This concept holds that when an ordinary item is viewed as a commodity, it is changed into something transcendent. It now has a price and value attributed to it, which is understood in relation to other commodities. Yet the value lies in the labour that was used to produce it, not its relation to other commodities (Billig, "Commodity Fetishism and Repression," 315).

3   Ibid., 119.

to have semantic meaning. For example, people will interpret a statement spoken in a nonstandard dialect differently from when this same statement is expressed by someone who does not speak in any dialect, owing to the prejudices toward the former speech variety and the value therefore attributed to it. Different accents, dialects and national languages are perceived as more or less valuable as the result of the associations that are connected to them. Van Bruggen refers to this misunderstanding as the "bizarre associatie" ('bizarre association').[4] Combatting this misunderstanding is a key point in her language philosophy.[5]

The misunderstanding that van Bruggen speaks of can be observed, amongst other instances, in various works of literature. To further understand her theory and its implications, I will examine it in relation to the infamous *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, written by D.H. Lawrence in 1928. Set in early twentieth-century England, the novel chronicles the life of Constance Reid, a woman from the upper-middle class who marries the aristocrat Clifford Chatterley in 1917. After the couple's honeymoon, Clifford is sent to war and returns impotent and paralyzed from the waist down. Once he hires a nurse to relieve Constance of her duties as caretaker, she starts taking long walks in the woods on their estate, where she encounters Oliver Mellors, the estate's gamekeeper and a married man. The two meet each other on multiple occasions, and while Constance expresses her interest in Mellors, he keeps her at a distance, constantly reminding her of their difference in social class. Nevertheless, they eventually begin an affair, and Constance becomes pregnant with Mellors' child. She confesses to Clifford, who then fires Mellors and refuses to allow Constance a divorce. In the novel's final chapter, Constance and Mellors both continue their attempts to divorce their respective spouses in hopes that they can be together.[6]

At a brief trial in November 1915, the British authorities used the 1857 Obscene Publications Act to censor D. H. Lawrence's novel *The Rainbow*. *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, likewise, was first published in Italy in 1928 but suppressed in Britain until 1960 by reason of the "obscenity" of some of its chapters,[7] especially those involving sex and the language used to describe it.[8] The trial must be understood in the context of inter-war Modernism: during this time, authors started exploring the relation between the authority of tradition and the demands of innovation and between the endowments of the past and the imperatives of the present in and through language.[9] We tend to think

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4   Ibid., 28.
5   Sicking, "Overgave en verzet," 271.
6   Lawrence, *Lady Chatterley's Lover.*
7   Parkes, *Modernism*, 3–4.
8   Karolides, *120 Banned Books*, 375–376.
9   Yao, *Translation*, 27.

of Modernism as a time of representational crisis, radical innovation, new representative strategies, and a great extension of the possibilities of literary text,[10] yet this obscenity trial displays how, in cases such as *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, this innovation was met with resistance from British authorities.

I have chosen to analyze *Lady Chatterley's Lover* using van Bruggen's theory for two reasons. First, both works are from the interwar period, a time of transition and innovation in which social attitudes towards language were changing in Europe and in which philosophy of language and linguistics were expanding as disciplines. Because of new and developed communication technologies, such as the telephone and radio, people were suddenly able to hear accents and dialects from regions they had never visited before, prompting them to reflect on their own language as well as on language use in general. This reflection included a consideration of the role of formal features like pronunciation in the interpretation of a speaker's meaning.[11] Second, all three different levels of distinction in language that van Bruggen speaks of – accent, dialect, and national language – appear in *Lady Chatterley's Lover*. The novel's main characters each belong to different social classes, and all use different forms of the same national language that, according to van Bruggen, signify their individual classes. The novel both reaffirms and disrupts the bizarre association, which it conveys is sometimes confirmed but not necessarily true, and thereby reflects the novel conceptions of language and literature in the interwar period.

Reading this novel alongside van Bruggen's language philosophy will allow for an original analysis, given the absence of an English translation of *Hedendaagsch Fetischisme* as well as van Bruggen's status as a minor philosopher in the Netherlands. This analysis of an early twentieth century English novel will demonstrate how van Bruggen's theory, one unique among her contemporaries, can be applied to a new transnational context as well as how it functions in literary contexts.

I. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Language is a tool of social cohesion.[12] One typical way people unite is based on shared nationality, and citizens of the same nation often feel united by their shared language.[13] The historian Eric Hobsbawn refers to this phenomenon as an "imagined community," which is the result of a linguistically homogenous population.[14] This is connected to the tendency to attribute excessive value to certain languages, especially the language that we speak ourselves, as van Bruggen describes. Language can determine

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10   Williams, *Multilingualism*, 24.
11   Ibid.
12   Fenoulhet, *Making the Personal Political*, 48.
13   Hobsbawn, "Language, Culture, and National Identity," 1066.
14   Ibid.

who we feel connected to, due to its social value.[15] Yet, perhaps even more than as a means of connection, language can function as a means of distinction. For van Bruggen, distinction begins with the unequal values we ascribe to different forms of language. The core of our "taal-fetischisme" is the "bizarre associatie."[16] As Sicking explains, van Bruggen refers to the tendency of people to confuse what is put together incidentally and what belongs together essentially.[17] An example can clarify what she means with this expression. Daffodils are yellow spring flowers. The flowers and their yellow color essentially belong together, for if they were blue, we would not easily recognize them as daffodils. However, the name of the flower is not essential to it, but merely a coincidence in history. If the flowers were to have received a different name, we would still recognize them in the same way. The name 'daffodils' is merely incidental, but not essential to the existence and recognition of the flower, yet people tend to confuse this incidental name for an essential part of the being of the flower. This is what is of significance to van Bruggen: what a word represents, not the word per se. The word that is used to describe an entity is not of importance to the essence of the entity. However, because of the bizarre associatie, we attribute value to the language that is used to communicate meanings. This happens because we associate certain aspects of language with values that incidentally find themselves together with the language, and do not essentially belong to it.

When we attribute different values to different forms of language, all groups of language users become distinguished from one another.[18] In early twentieth century Holland, distinction between groups or individuals either took place on the basis of the accents that they had, their dialects, or the language(s) that they spoke.[19] Van Bruggen states that certain accents are presumed to belong to people who are perceived as more "civilized", such as aristocrats, while other accents belong to people who are perceived as "uncivilized", such as working-class people.[20] Accents and dialects spoken by the working class are instantly labelled as uncivilized by middle and upper classes. These assumptions about social meaning are based on parts of language that incidentally, rather than essentially, have come to belong to a certain class. Therefore, the different values that are attributed to these accents are based on an arbitrary division of accents. However irrational and arbitrary these prejudices about certain accents are, they have real consequences – because of these associations, accents can be used as a means of

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15   Van Bruggen, *Hedendaagsch Fetischisme*, 106.

16   Ibid., 28, 119.

17   Sicking, "Overgave en verzet," 271.

18   Van Bruggen, *Hedendaagsch Fetischisme*, 95.

19   Currently, in the Netherlands, associations with different accents and dialects still create distinctions between people.

20   Van Bruggen, *Hedendaagsch Fetischisme*, 96.

distinction and exclusion.[21]

When writing about this distinction, van Bruggen observed that a dialect from Amsterdam was perceived as less civilized than a dialect from Rotterdam.[22] It was therefore also perceived as less valuable by association, despite this value's not being inherent to the language.[23] Van Bruggen also observed that in the Netherlands, at the moment of writing *Hedendaagsch Fetischisme*, not speaking any dialect but only speaking a national language "properly" was another way in which the aristocracy used language as a means of distinction.[24] Upper-class people make use of the fact that dialects are associated with so-called uncivilized people who are not able to speak the national language "properly."[25] In contrast to the "proper" national language, the regional languages were the object of ridicule and derision.[26]

The topic of national languages is interesting, for in contrast to accents and dialects, van Bruggen's contemplation on national language is not concerned with how a language is spoken, but what language is spoken. Distinction on the basis of national language is possible because in van Bruggen's time, aristocrats saw certain languages as noble or civilized, while they perceived other languages as uncivilized. Based on different associations with different national languages, aristocrats preferred certain national languages in conversation. This way of thinking originated in the values that are attributed to different languages. Van Bruggen observes that one cannot be civilized without the "right" languages, by which she refers to languages that aristocrats perceive as essential for upper classes in Europe.[27] It is thus only considered an asset to speak several languages when these languages are valuable by association.

According to van Bruggen, there were three modern languages and two classical languages that were taught as additional languages to every young Dutch child that grew up in the aristocracy during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. The former are French, English, and German, and the latter Latin and Greek.[28] Of these, French was known as the language of "honnêtes gens [decent people]."[29] People of lower classes could attempt to learn these languages, but they would never be able to speak them as well as the upper-class children that were able to travel to England for a semester, for instance. An incorrect pronunciation of these modern aristocratic languages would give

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21   Sicking, "Overgave en verzet," 271.
22   Van Bruggen, *Hedendaagsch Fetischisme*, 96.
23   Ibid.
24   Sicking, "Overgave en verzet," 278; Van Bruggen, *Hedendaagsch Fetischisme*, 95.
25   Sicking, "Overgave en verzet," 277.
26   Van Bruggen, *Hedendaagsch Fetischisme*, 95.
27   Ibid., 96.
28   ibid 97–98; currently, these languages remain mandatory in Dutch high schools.
29   Ibid., 116.

away that one did not belong to this group, just as using the wrong knife to cut fish would give this away.[30] However, not every modern language had the same association at this time. A person could speak Spanish or Russian, but in a Dutch language context they would be perceived as rather suspicious. For example, since Spanish was not taught in schools, a person who spoke Spanish would have most likely learned this while trading figs, wood, or anchovies, which would show that they belonged to the trading working class. However, in this same era, someone who spoke Italian would be assumed to love art and read Dante, since this was the most plausible reason someone would know Italian.[31] These different associations are how languages 'give away' one's background.

According to van Bruggen, Latin is mostly characterized as the language of scholars.[32] However, she mainly focuses on the fact that while Greek was seen as an important language, Hebrew, the original language of the Old Testament, was regarded as the language of the "poor Jew". This proves that value is not necessarily connected to the historical importance of a language itself, but rather what the language could reveal about the background of a person.[33] Reading ancient Greek shows that one is civilized and well educated. In contrast, speaking Hebrew, at this time in history, demonstrates that one is of (poor) Jewish descent – which was already taken as a reason for contempt in Europe in the early twentieth century.[34] These associations determine the value of the language and the way the person that speaks this language is regarded.

In what follows, I will show how language distinguishes people and maintains power differentials in *Lady Chatterley's Lover*. The novel confirms the idea that certain forms of language belong to certain classes and upbringings. However, by uniting Constance and Oliver, it also rejects the idea that people from different social classes with different forms of language are necessarily distinguished from each other. Their relationship shows that in the early twentieth century, differences in language did not necessarily have to exclude people from other social classes.

II. ACCENT

The first level on which language can serve as a means of distinction is that of the accent. Different accents are frequently associated with different social groups. In addition, people can adjust their accent to fit with the sort of people in their presence. Van Bruggen detects this distinction through accent in the Dutch language. "Ik ken het niet

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30   Ibid., 97.
31   Ibid., 97–98.
32   Sicking, "Overgave en verzet," 278.
33   Van Bruggen, *Hedendaagsch Fetischisme*, 99.
34   Ibid., 99–100.

helpen" characterizes the proletariat, while "ik kan het niet helpen"[35] characterizes the aristocracy (van Bruggen 96). A certain accent, with its additional associations and therefore value, can thus establish that a person is from a certain class or upbringing. Consequently, people with different accents are distinguished from each other as belonging to different backgrounds; by recognizing such differences, one person may exclude another from their 'group'. Their difference creates distance.

In *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, this distinction on the basis of accent can be observed in the character of Mrs. Bolton. She is Clifford's caregiver and has a peculiar relation to the upper class. While she herself is from a middle-class family, she desperately wants to belong to the upper class though "at the same time a resentment against the ruling class smouldered in her."[36] Even though she wants to belong to the upper class, she can never be a part of it. Not only will Mrs. Bolton never have a title or the fortune of someone from the upper class, but she will never know the manners, discourse, and way of speaking of the upper class well enough to fully belong to it. Her inability to master the way people from the upper class speak, and the distinction this creates between her and Constance, can be observed in the language used by each class. Lawrence describes Mrs. Bolton as a woman who speaks in "heavily correct English."[37] The fact that she is from the middle class but mingles with the upper class, thereby speaking "heavily correct English," can be interpreted as a convergence strategy. This is a strategy whereby individuals adapt their speech rate, accents, and other features of language to mimic their interlocutor's linguistic behavior.[38] However, several tiny differences in Mrs. Bolton's accent, compared to Clifford's and Connie's accents, give away her background. When other characters notice the way she pronounces certain words, it indicates that her pronunciation differs from theirs. One example of this is in a conversation Mrs. Bolton has with Connie about hyacinths, in which Connie says she wants them to be removed from her room. When saying "'Why, they're so beautiful!' [Mrs. Bolton] pronounced it with the 'y' sound: be-yutiful!"[39] Although this is a small difference in her speech, Connie does notice it, since she would pronounce the word "beautiful" without emphasizing the 'y' sound. This distinction through language creates a distance between them. Mrs. Bolton cannot meet the upper-class way of speaking, and Connie is aware of this. In this way, Mrs. Bolton's speech excludes her from Connie's class and maintains the power differential between them.

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35 In English, this could be compared to the difference between "I cannae help it" and "I cannot help it."

36 Lawrence, *Lady Chatterley's Lover,* 96.

37 Ibid., 94.

38 Giles, "Communication Accomodation Theory," 295.

39 Lawrence, *Lady Chatterley's Lover,* 114.

III. DIALECT

In *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, the character Oliver Mellors speaks in a Derbyshire dialect, a dialect spoken mostly by working-class people. His accent is explicitly noted by several characters throughout the novel. Mellors is the gamekeeper of Clifford's estate, which too indicates that he is from the working class. However, throughout the novel it seems as if Mellors only speaks in this dialect to generate a certain reaction from the people around him. He can speak both in his own vernacular and in 'proper' or 'standard' English, making his choice intentional. This is first made evident in a conversation between him and Connie: when she asks Mellors if he likes working on the estate, he answers "Why, yes, thank you, your Ladyship!"[40] However, in his following statement, Connie notices that "[Mellors'] voice on the last words had fallen into the heavy broad drag of the dialect . . . perhaps also in mockery, because there had been no trace of dialect before. He might almost be a gentleman."[41] If Connie is right, Mellors chooses to speak in his dialect to mock her – perhaps because she, as an upper-class woman, is asking him if he enjoys a job that she would never perform herself. By using his dialect, he confirms his position as gamekeeper from the middle class, but at the same time he emphasizes the distance that exists between them because of their different social statuses by additionally creating distance in their communications. The fact that Connie is confused about Mellors' class identity because of his shift from 'standard' English to his Derbyshire dialect shows that she associates 'standard' English with being a gentleman, while she associates his regional dialect with lower class positions.[42]

Mellors switches between his native Derbyshire dialect and 'standard' English at least twenty times throughout the novel.[43] He does this when he wants to distance or distinguish himself from other characters. He can either distinguish himself from upper-class people or working-class people, depending on the speech he chooses. Shifting to his Derbyshire dialect creates a certain distance between him and characters from the upper class. For example, Mellors uses his vernacular to distance himself from Connie when she asks him for a key to his little hut in the woods. Mellors speaks to her first in 'standard' English, but as soon as Connie asks if he has another key he answers, "Not as Ah know on, ther' isna."[44] Connie notices that "[Mellors] had lapsed into the vernacular," and interprets this as his "putting up an opposition."[45] When Mellors wants to go against Connie's actions, he shifts to his vernacular to create a distance between them.

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40   Lawrence, *Lady Chatterley's Lover,* 58.
41   Ibid.
42   Miller, "Erotic Class Masquerade," 8.
43   Ibid., 3.
44   Lawrence, *Lady Chatterley's Lover,* 105.
45   Ibid.

This shows that language difference works both ways; different speech creates distance and distance causes people to use a different kind of speech. Mellors also explicitly states that after noticing an "unlivingness" about the middle and upper classes "which just left him cold and different from them... he had come back to his own class."[46] This shows that Mellors feels a distance between him and these two classes, but also suggests that for Mellors, "coming back to his own class" means using his own dialect again. He intentionally excludes himself from the middle and upper class, which is possible because of the bizarre association that he too holds about his dialect essentially belonging to the working class.

Lawrence depicts Mellors as what Michael North refers to as a "bi-dialectical shifter."[47] This is someone who belongs to two distinct linguistic communities and is able to shift between dialects when they deem this necessary.[48] That Mellors belongs to two different linguistic communities is confirmed in the novel by Clifford. Connie asks how Mellors could have been an officer if he speaks "broad Derbyshire."[49] She asks this because officers have a higher social standing than people from the working class, which entails that one should speak 'standard' English when fulfilling this job, not a dialect. Clifford answers: "He doesn't ... except by fits and starts. He can speak perfectly well, for him. I suppose he has an idea if he's come down to the ranks again, he'd better speak as the ranks speak."[50] When he speaks 'standard' English, Mellors is accepted by members of the higher ranks, and when he speaks Derbyshire English, he is accepted by those who belong to lower social classes. By choosing to speak a certain dialect, he creates a distance between himself and one of the classes. Margery Sabin suggests that Mellors' bilingualism becomes "the verbal weapon of Mellors (and the novel's author Lawrence) against the sterile, hypocritical, and repressive formulae of 'correct society.'"[51] In other words, Mellors' dialect is a means to oppose and discredit the entire language of 'standard' English as nothing more than a bourgeois cliché.[52] While Mellors can speak 'standard' English, which would be regarded as the speech of a higher class, he actively chooses to speak in his dialect, as not to reaffirm that 'standard' English is more valuable than his dialect.

Mellors is the exact same person when he speaks his vernacular and when he speaks 'standard' English. However, because different values are arbitrarily associated with different ways of speaking, Mellors is perceived as possessing a different social status when

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46   Ibid. 161.
47   North, *The Dialect of Modernism*, 19.
48   Ibid.
49   Lawrence, *Lady Chatterley's Lover,* 108.
50   Ibid.
51   Sabin, *The Dialect of the Tribe*, 16.
52   Ibid.

he speaks in these different ways, which shows precisely what van Bruggen means when she states that value is arbitrarily attributed to language. Language does not determine the status of a person, but language and status incidentally find themselves together. Mellors can speak 'standard' English while he is a working-class man, but he can also speak in another dialect while he works as an officer of a higher class. The value that is attributed to the speech a person uses cannot conclusively tell us anything about the status of a person; thus, the association between language, value, and class is bizarre. Language, then, should not be taken as a reason for people to exclude others from their social environments.

IV. NATIONAL LANGUAGE(S)

As explained in the introduction, van Bruggen states that there are three modern and two classical languages that all upper-class Dutch children were taught in the early twentieth century: French, English, German, Greek, and Latin.[53] These were associated with belonging to the upper class. Both Clifford and Connie in *Lady Chatterley's Lover* speak 'standard' English and French and can read Latin.[54] These languages incidentally find themselves together with upper-class people, but do not essentially belong to them. If certain events in history had been different, it would be plausible that upper-class people would speak different languages. However, value is attributed to these languages as if they essentially and exclusively belong to the upper class. Thus, Clifford and Connie seem to confirm these associations between the upper class and such languages. Van Bruggen also claims that French and Latin are languages that are associated with upper-class people,[55] thus implying that the associations she observes in The Netherlands in the early twentieth century could be applied to early twentieth century England as well. However, the following example will show that the associations between these languages and the upper class are unjustified.

Near the end of the novel, it is revealed that Mellors also knows how to speak French and German.[56] Mellors once asks Connie if she is familiar with some French words: "You know auto da fé means act of faith?"[57] This shows that, in reality, this language does not only belong to the upper class, despite the assumptions people make. In addition it exposes that the languages one speaks do not reveal anything intrinsically about their class, and that the association of class with certain languages is not essential but incidental, since languages can be spoken by people from every class. Languages do

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53   Van Bruggen, *Hedendaagsch Fetischisme*, 97–98.

54   Connie refers to standard English as "ordinary" English (Lawrence, *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, 111).

55   This is true for Dutch people in the early twentieth century.

56   Lawrence, *Lady Chatterley's Lover,* 223.

57   Ibid., 238.

not essentially belong to one or another class. Mellors even knows Latin, though it is difficult to derive how much he knows from the religious phrase "te deum laudamus!"[58] It seems that by giving Mellors some knowledge about these other languages, Lawrence attempts to decrease the distance between Mellors and Connie. He brings them to the same linguistic level.

In his chapter "Lawrence and the politics of sexual politics," Drew Milne claims that at the end of the novel, "class" is abolished.[59] By this he means that the value of class is taken away; it becomes irrelevant. Neither Connie nor Mellors attribute any value to the different classes they belong to. In addition, they pay as little attention as possible to the fact that they come from different classes. The reason for this is that it is a necessary precondition for the romantic relationship they try to build and maintain together.[60] Connie and Mellors need to make class irrelevant if they want to have an equal relationship; otherwise, Mellors will remain the subordinate of Connie. If the novel is interpreted in this sense, then Lawrence brings the characters closer together and renders their class difference insignificant by placing them on the same linguistic level. Thus, while Lawrence shows that class and its associations are not intrinsically relevant to the relationship between people, he also demonstrates that the distance between people of different classes can be overcome with less difficulty when they use language in the same way. However, the fact that Connie attempts to start a relationship with Mellors, and that Lawrence has attempted to bring him closer to her in terms of class, does not mean that Mellors is regarded as belonging to the upper class by others. Even after Mellors has shown that he speaks French and Latin, Connie's sister Hilda explains that Connie cannot be with him, no matter what languages he speaks, because he still does not truly belong to 'their' class. Hilda states that "one can't mix up with the working people," referring to Connie and Mellors' relationship.[61]

Clifford also seems to be aware of this alleged inability of people from different classes to 'mix' with each other. When Clifford is thinking about the difference between him and the colliers that work for him, he considers their inelegance compared to his "well-groomed, well-bred existence."[62] On the basis of these apparently insuperable differences, he concludes that "it was the difference they resented," and "he believed they were right to resent the difference."[63] Following from Clifford's conclusion, this resentment by the working-class people could be interpreted to stem from their lower status

58   Ibid., 239; "we praise you, oh Lord!"
59   Milne, "Lawrence and the Politics of Sexual Politics," 202.
60   Ibid., 211.
61   Lawrence, *Lady Chatterley's Lover,* 257.
62   Ibid., 181.
63   Ibid.

compared to Clifford. He is 'well-bred,' 'well-groomed' and wealthy, while these same things can apparently not be said about the colliers. Clifford seems to agree that this is indeed a reason for them to resent him. Perhaps he too resents them for being so much more inelegant than him. Since Mellors belongs to the same working class, it can be assumed that Clifford's attitude towards him corresponds with his attitude towards the colliers. From these passages it becomes clear that both the upper and working classes acknowledge the differences between them and feel like they can't unite with the other.

Thus, even though Mellors speaks French and Latin, he is not able to join the upper class because both he and the upper class acknowledge and perpetuate the differences between them, while it is evident that not knowing French and Latin would certainly exclude him. Upper-class people will resist Mellors' joining since they feel that he does not belong, and Mellors will resist his joining the upper class because he also feels like he does not belong with them. We might extend this analysis to conclude that in the early twentieth century, a shared language did not ensure that power relations would be abolished. Even when the use of language is equal or could be equal, outsiders cannot 'mix' with other classes.

CONCLUSION

Carry van Bruggen states that language can function as a means of distinction on the basis of three levels of language difference: accent, dialect, and national language(s). These differences in language distinguish people from each other because of the bizarre associatie that is attached to them. This distinction stratifies individuals according to social class, which perpetuates uneven power relations between them. I have situated the analysis of *Lady Chatterley's Lover* in early twentieth century Europe, a time when social relations were shifting and ideas about language and literature were changing. I have shown that the novel uses language to distinguish between individuals and maintain power relations between different characters. In Part Two I showed that Mrs. Bolton's accent displays that she is from the middle class. Because Connie notices that her accent deviates from that of the upper-class people in the novel, she distinguishes Mrs. Bolton from them and excludes her from the higher class. Next, Part Three demonstrates that Mellors' dialect is associated with working-class people as well. Mellors can choose to speak in his dialect as opposed to 'standard' English when he feels the need to distinguish himself from other classes; however, his different use of language still prevents Mellors from entering a higher class. Last, in Part Four, I note that even though Mellors speaks the languages of the upper classes, he is still not seen as someone belonging to an upper class. The analysis in this chapter thus also shows that being able to resolve the differences between one's language and another's does not ensure that power relations between the two people will be abolished, nor that one will fit in with the others' class.

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FICTIONALISM ABOUT FICTIONAL CHARACTERS: ANALYZING METAFICTIONAL AND METALEPTIC DISCOURSE

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INTRODUCTION

According to fictional realists, fictional characters like Sherlock Holmes and Victor Frankenstein exist, and *Sherlock Holmes* and *Victor Frankenstein* do, at least sometimes, refer to their intended referents. The family of fictional realist theories may be classed under one of two groups, the first being language-dependence, holding that fictional characters are created by authors through linguistic practices.[1] The second group consists of those who subscribe to language-independence, holding that fictional characters are eternal, uncreated entities whose existences are wholly independent of any linguistic practices.[2] Fictional antirealists, on the other hand, insist to prevent ontological profligacy. The family of fictional antirealist theories typically make use of descriptivism, pretense theory, or outright fictionalism to analyze fictional discourse.[3] To circumscribe

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[1]   See, for example, Searle, "The Logical Status"; Van Inwagen, "Creatures of Fiction"; Van Inwagen, "Fiction and Metaphysics"; Thomasson, *Fiction and Metaphysics*; Kripke, *Reference and Exitence*.

[2]   See, for example, Parsons (*Nonexistent Objects*), Zalta (*Intensional Logic*), Wolterstoroff (*Works and Worlds of Art*), Currie (*The Nature of Fiction*), and Lamarque ("How to Create a Fictional Character").

[3]   For descriptivism, Frege (Über Sinn und Bedeutung) and Russell ("On Denoting") are classics. For pretense theory, Walton (*Mimesis as Make-Believe*) provides the kernel, and Everett (*The Nonexistent*) follows from it. For fictionalism, see the next section for a brief illustration.

the topic, I will first introduce a common schema employed by the rivalry in this section.

Theorists of fiction appeal to our everyday conversations, namely language that contains names purporting to refer to fictional objects, for supporting evidence. Certainly, the ability to account for different kinds of fictional discourse is a desideratum for a complete theory. Realists and antirealists appeal to different kinds of fictional discourse, but they nevertheless agree on a similar classification schema, one under which there are thee kinds of fictional sentences:[4]

☞ Internal sentences

(1) "The miserable Hatter dropped his teacup and bread-and-butter, and went down on one knee."[5]

(2) Jonathan Harker has a dangerous encounter with Count Dracula and his brides at Castle Dracula in Transylvania.

(3) Smaug is a red-golden dragon.

☞ External sentences

(4) Victor Frankenstein is a fictional character.

(5) "Mary Shelley based Victor Frankenstein's attempt to create a new species . . . on the most advanced scientific research of the early nineteenth century." [6]

(6) "There are characters in some nineteenth-century novels who are presented with a greater wealth of physical detail than is any character in any eighteenth-century novel."[7]

(7) "A certain fictional detective is much more famous than any real detective."[8]

☞ Existential sentences

(8) Victor Frankenstein does not exist.

(9) There are dragons in *The Lord of the Rings*.

As demonstrated, internal sentences are claims either *within* or *about* the content of works of fiction, external sentences are claims that are true or false *in virtue of* the content of works of fiction, and existential sentences are "claims that express one's ontological commitments."[9] There are subtle differences among the schemas, but they carry little

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4   I use *discourse* and *sentences* rather loosely and interchangeably throughout this paper. In the fictional realism and anti-realist debate, *discourse* is usually understood as a collection of sentences in a communicative context. Though Thomasson and Brock focus their discussion on discourse and statements respectively, both theorists ultimately engage with the same phenomenon. *Sentences* is preferred, in my opinion, because it is a broader category while statements might sometimes be only taken as complete declarative sentences.

5   Carroll, *Alice's Adventures*, 97.

6   Mellor, *Mary Shelley*, 107.

7   Van Inwagen, "Fiction and Metaphysics," 73.

8   Parsons, "Review," 163.

9   Brock, "Fictionalism about Fictional Characters," 4.

importance within the scope of this paper.[10]

My aim in this article is to examine how Amie Thomasson's abstract creationism and Stuart Brock's fictionalism analyze fictional sentences. In the following section, I will present Thomasson's way of handling fictional sentences; in §II, I will do the same for Brock's fictionalism; in §III, I will refute Jérôme Pelletier's metafictional counterexample against Thomasson; and in §IV, I will argue that Pelletier's metaleptic counterexample threatens both creationism and fictionalism. I suggest a novel analysis of metaleptic sentences, namely by analyzing them as complex sentences. While possible replies are available to both sides, I argue that fictionalism fares better than creationism if my suggested analysis is taken into consideration.

I. THOMASSON'S ABSTRACT CREATIONISM

For the realist, linguistic behaviors offer the strongest evidence (i.e., the apparent meaningfulness and truth-evaluability of external sentences) for the existence of fictional entities. Complexities arise, however, in the minuter points of difference; (4) is a simple assertion about Victor Frankenstein as a fictional character, (5) is a critical claim that speculates about a certain element in a literary work, (6) is a historical claim that does not involve any specific fictional names, and (7) is a comparison between a fictional character and a real individual (an extra-fictional comparison). All of the examples, however, have truth-values determined not by the content of literary works but rather by virtue of them; for instance, notice that Victor Frankenstein is not a fictional character but a depressed scientist in *Frankenstein*. To account for external sentences, Thomasson argues that fictional characters exist as abstract human artifacts created via linguistic activities.[11] External sentences are thus *prima facie* taken at face value.

Unfortunately, under the assumption that fictional characters are abstract artifacts, internal sentences like (1)-(3) resist a straightforward analysis. (While establishing a definitive concept of abstract objects lies far beyond the scope of this paper, I take non-spatiotemporality and causal inertia as paradigmatic characteristics thereof.)[12] It is

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10 There is another, more minor difference between their taxonomies: Brock groups fictionalizing (discourse within works of fiction) and internal discourse (about the content of works of fiction), which are differentiated by Thomasson, into a single category. Brock's critical sentences and Thomasson's external discourse coincide with the subtlety of how they define them: the former appeals to her ontological commitments (external discourse represent claims about characters as fictional characters), and the latter appeals to the content of literary works only. In the case of existential sentences, the ontological motivation is obvious; Thomasson focuses on nonexistence claims, as she believes them to be the most problematic for a realist, while Brock ignores positive existential claims – after all, he does not claim that fictional characters are existent (cf. Brock, "Fictionalism about Fictional Characters"; Thomasson, "Speaking of Fictional Characters"). I follow the internal/external/existential distinction throughout this article.

11 Thomasson, "Speaking of Fictional Characters," 207.

12 Due to the uneasiness of defining abstract objects positively, they are sometimes

difficult for creationists to explain, for example, how an abstract object solves crimes. Some might argue that abstract objects could still possess physical properties in abstract settings. In fact, some Platonists or neo-Meinongians who distinguish between two types of properties or modes of predication also take this approach. The point remains that properties possessed by abstract objects must in some way differ from concrete objects.[13] Thomasson suggests an alternative solution by appealing to pretense and claiming that utterers of internal sentences only ever pretend to refer to fictional characters as actual beings in fictional worlds.[14] Internal sentences like (1)-(3) are thus analyzed with implicit fiction operators (e.g., "according to the story..." or "in the story of...").[15]

Existential sentences receive notable attention from both sides.[16] Negative existential sentences raise a paradox, namely in that we want to affirm the existence of fictional objects while retaining the pre-theoretical intuition of such sentences as patently true. A sentence like (8) is false since Frankenstein truly exists according to Thomasson's theory – even though our intuition says otherwise. Frankenstein is only an abstract object analogous to laws or money and does not exist as we do.[17] Based on Donnellan's metalinguistic suggestion, Thomasson argues that the truth-value of (8) "depends entirely on whether or not, in the prior predicative sentences presupposed, speakers intended to refer to a person or to a fictional character."[18] It would be bizarre if (8) were asserted as a genuine response to (5). However, negative existential claims "may be sensibly made in the context of literary discussion if what is being denied is that there is such a character" – i.e., such an artifact.[19] If I claim that "Victor Frankenstein is a well-developed character in War and Peace," one may then refute or correct me by uttering (8); since (8) in this context denies

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defined negatively as non-concrete objects are, and it is in this sense that non-spatiotemporality and causal inertia seem to be paradigmatic characteristics – albeit not without controversy. However, this definition suffices for the scope of our current study. Take the example of numbers which are generally taken as abstract objects; obviously, we cannot pinpoint when and where do numbers reside, nor do they cause anything to happen, unlike a table or a chair. For some objections to abstract objects as non-spatiotemporal or causally inert, see David Friedell, "Creating Abstract Objects."

13 Parsons (*Nonexistent Objects*) and Zalta (*Intensional Logic*) showcase two different kinds of properties and two different modes of predications respectively. My thanks to the editors of *Arché* for suggesting a clarification along this line.

14 See Thomasson, "Speaking of Fictional Characters," 208-214; Van Inwagen, "Creatures of Fiction." I use the term *fictional worlds* very loosely, without any arguments for or against quantifications over such worlds. For a related issue regarding problems in quantification over (possible) worlds, see Sainsbury, "Fictional Worlds."

15 I am aware of subtleties between preface and prefix versions of pretense theory. Some further comments are made in the next section. For a critical overview of different fiction operators, consult Sainsbury, "Fictional Worlds."

16 Brock, "Fictionalism about Fictional Characters"; Thomasson, "Speaking of Fictional Characters"; Thomasson, "Fictional Discourse and Fictionalism."

17 Thomasson (*Fiction and Metaphysics*) provides a detailed argument for this analogy.

18 Thomasson, "Speaking of Fictional Characters," 217.

19 Ibid., 218.

that Victor Frankenstein exists in the context of *War and Peace*, however, it will not bear on the existence of Victor Frankenstein as an abstract object. Thomasson maintains that (negative) existential sentences must be situated contextually to be sensible and considers this theory "minimally revisionary" compared to those of her rivals, whom she criticizes as "removing the ceiling to change a light bulb."[20] I turn to introduce a major rival of Thomasson in the coming section.

II. BROCK'S FICTIONALISM

Fictionalism, surprisingly, is undermotivated in the theory of fiction but thrives in other areas of metaphysics. Very roughly, fictionalism about a certain region of discourse *D* treats claims within that region not as truth-theoretic but instead as possessing other useful features; thus, *D* is best regarded as a sort of useful fiction.[21] Take mathematics as an example: a fictionalist of numbers will argue that although numbers do not exist, making all mathematical discourse literally false, mathematics is still useful for, say, its accuracy and reliability in empirical science. As a result, fictionalists might contend that all claims within that region of discourse are (probably) false or at least not truth-evaluable but that we nevertheless should retain at least some instances for their useful features.[22] Fictionalism about fictional characters works in similar fashion, denying the existence of fictional objects but assenting to the meaningfulness and usefulness of fictional discourse in, for instance, our aesthetic perception or understanding.

Brock proposes a fictionalist account of fictional characters that he claims to be capable of "a smooth and uniform handling of all claims about fictional characters" while preserving ontological parsimony and not positing any exotic objects.[23] His proposal is deceivingly simple: any internal sentence is fronted by an implicit fictional operator like *according to the story*, any external sentence is fronted by the operator "*according to the realist's hypothesis*," and any existential sentence can be analyzed at face value.[24] Within this framework, (2) is true according to the story of *Dracula*, and (4)-(7) are true according to Thomasson's abstract creationism. Fictionalism poses itself as parasitic on the realist's theory of fiction, taking the latter as just another useful fiction. The realist theory is

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20   Ibid., 208.

21   Note that this crude definition is not uncontroversial; consult Kalderon (*Fictionalism in Metaphysics*) and Kroon, Brock, and McKeown-Green (*A Critical Introduction*) for a survey on contemporary fictionalism.

22   I have bracketed quite a few terms here because there is divergence within fictionalism in metaphysics, notably via the hermeneutic/revolutionary distinction in which the former proposes a way to interpret the claims in a region of discourse, while the latter proposes a normative method to reformulate those claims, hence the bracketed *should*. This distinction should not bother us here.

23   Brock, "Fictionalism about Fictional Characters", 8.

24   Ibid., 9.

useful insofar as it enables the fictionalist to explain the intelligibility of fictional discourse adequately without sacrificing ontological parsimony.

As Brock characterizes existential sentences as "claims that express one's ontology commitments," it is reasonable of him to countenance only the analysis of negative existential claims such as (8), which he claims ought to be read literally.[25] With the two theories sketched above, I now turn to examine a criticism of Thomasson's creationism posed by Jérôme Pelletier. I claim that Pelletier's argument, despite seeming to apply to both Thomasson's creationism and Brock's fictionalism, is unfortunately mistaken.

III. PELLETIER'S METAFICTIONAL COUNTEREXAMPLE

As briefly introduced above, both Thomasson's and Brock's theories hinge on a crucial differentiation among internal, external, and existential sentences. Even though different strategies are employed respectively, being less revisionary is still a desideratum for a theory:

> I say 'less revisionary' because it seems that any theory of fictional discourse has to give up appearances somewhere to avoid the surface inconsistencies in our ways of talking about fiction—for example, as we, in some contexts, will say that Frankenstein's monster was created by Dr. Frankenstein; in others that he was an invention of Mary Shelley's . . . [26]

The difference between creationism and fictionalism resides in how they analyze external and existential sentences. On the one hand, negative existential sentences are notoriously difficult to explain regardless of one's ontological commitment. On the other hand, both the creationist and fictionalist analyze internal sentences within the scope of pretense – i.e., with the aid of fiction operators. The striking difference between them appears in the analysis of external sentences; while the creationist analyzes them at face value, the fictionalist employs a fictional operator that is parasitic on the realist's theory. The only difference lies in when to use which operator (if any). But if the internal/external distinction fails, either theory would work as intended, which motivates an examination of a counterargument to this distinction.

Jérôme Pelletier notices the priority of a theory of fictional discourse over the ontological dispute:

> The dispute between language dependent realists and pretense theorists is at root a dispute within the framework of the philosophy of language on the status of discourse

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25   Brock also provides two options for those who accept the realist argument against the plausibility of any literal readings of negative existential claims but does not commit to either, so I omit the discussion here. In fact, I largely ignore existential sentences in the following sections.

26   Thomasson, "Fictional Discourse and Fictionalism," 256.

about fiction [in real contexts] and only derivatively an ontological dispute.[27]

I agree with Pelletier here; the ontological dispute follows only after the decision of whether pretense is involved in discourse about fiction. He also suggests an investigation into fictional narratives, putting forward examples of what I will label as metafiction. Here is one of these examples, taken from Woolf's *Orlando*:

> He stretched himself. He rose. He stood upright in complete nakedness before us, and while the trumpets pealed Truth! Truth! Truth! we have no choice left but confess – he was a woman. The sound of the trumpets died away and Orlando stood stark naked No human being, since the world began, has ever looked more ravishing. His form combined in one the strength of a man and a woman's grace. [...] Orlando looked himself up and down in a long looking-glass, without showing any signs of discompose, and went, presumably, to his bath. *We may take advantage of this pause in the narrative to make certain sentences. Orlando had become a woman – there is no denying it.*[28]

The usual indication of a metafictional narrative is self-reflexivity.[1429] In such cases as Woolf's intrusion above, readers are reminded of their engagement with a fictional work. Allegedly, these *quasi-intrusions of the narrator* are not marginal but central features of narratives, demonstrating the plausibility of apparently external sentences appearing within an undisputedly internal discourse. If this analysis of metafictional narrative is correct, the realist owes us an explanation or analysis of metafictional discourse with respect to the internal/external distinction.[30] Pelletier's argument from metafictional discourse can be reformulated as follows:

(P1)   A fictional sentence is either an internal or an external sentence.

(P2)   Realists employ pretense if and only if they are analysing internal sentences.

(P3)   There are external sentences that appear within internal discourse.

(C)   Realists could not possibly employ pretense non-arbitrarily.

If his argument is valid, it is not only directed to the creationist but also to the fictionalist, who is parasitic to the former's theory.

It should be noted that whether a sentence is internal or external to a work of fiction is not always so clear-cut. In fact, we rely in most cases on the principle of charity and conversational context.[31] Take (9), for example, which is most likely to be regarded as an internal sentence according to the principle of charity; as noted before, it might be an

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27   Pelletier, "Vergil and Dido," 198.

28   Ibid.

29   One can argue about whether self-reflexivity is a sufficient or necessary condition of metafictional narrative, but the point here remains there are at least some self-reflexive metafictional narratives that are problematic according to Pelletier. I thank Caroline Wall for suggesting a clarification on this point.

30   Pelletier, "Vergil and Dido," 199–200.

31   Brock ("Fictionalism about Fictional Characters," 19) makes a similar point.

existential sentence when uttered by a realist in a philosophical context. For creationists or fictionalists, we need to distinguish between (a) intention or pretension to refer, and (b) fictional characters as abstract artifacts or concrete objects. We are either intending to refer to an abstract object or pretending to refer to a person via a fictional name. These factors render (P3) false. It is *prima facie* impossible to have external sentences within internal discourse since it is not possible to simultaneously intend and pretend to refer to an object which is both abstract and concrete. Consider the example given by Pelletier again: "We may take advantage of this pause in the narrative to make certain sentences." Ignoring the problematic indexical *we*, the answer to his question is straightforward for both theorists. Suppose (10) appears within the content of a story; then it can be analyzed in realist terms as follows:

(10')   According to the story of *Orlando*, we may take advantage of this pause in the narrative to make certain sentences.

The status of (10) is thus disambiguated by examining the context that I write a story about a fictional literary critic. My work of fiction then may include many sentences look like this:

(11)   Edward Fowles' new novel *A Study in Magenta* depicted the life of Sheldon Hayes, a realistic eighteenth-century scientist.

Depriving this sentence of any context, (11) does seem like an external sentence uttered by a literary critic. But with the context clarified, it is without any doubt an internal sentence:

(11')   According to my fictional story, Edward Fowles' new novel *A Study in Magenta* depicted the life of Sheldon Hayes, a realistic eighteenth-century scientist.

As the fictionalist agrees with the realist on the treatment of internal sentences (for the most part), paraphrases like (10') and (11') are available to them both. Metafictional discourse is well accounted for in both theories.

IV. PELLETIER'S METALEPTIC COUNTEREXAMPLE

Apart from self-reflexive metafictional discourse, Pelletier draws inspiration from Gérard Genette's conception of metalepsis to pose a far more serious problem for language dependent realists. Metalepsis is roughly characterized by the intrusion of the narrator or narratee into the fiction.[32] Although metafictional discourse does not pose a threat to the internal/external distinction of fictional discourse, metaleptic discourse

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32   I have been informed that a more complete definition also includes the movement of the dramatis personae between narrative/diegetic levels, but Pelletier's argument does not hinge on this part of the definition, so the rough and partial definition provided here should suffice.

does.[33] Consider the example posed by Pelletier: "Virgil has Dido die in Book IV of the *Aeneid*."[34] Though writers are often told to murder their darlings, sentences like (12) express a different sense by which authors get rid of their beloved characters; (12) is not about a fictional character being erased from the narrative but about that character's death in the story. Assume (12) was uttered by a critic who seriously intends to comment on the literary work. It must then be treated as an external sentence by both theories. But with respect to the creationist's vision, fictional characters are abstract objects that cannot die – at least not in the sense of our intuitive understanding of the word in (12). Therefore, the sentence cannot be analyzed straightforwardly. Assume the creationist choose to paraphrase (12), and a potential candidate arises:

> (12') "Virgil organized the *Aeneid* in such a way that his character Dido left the narrative in Book IV."[35]

(12') is the non-metaleptic version of (12). However, it is doubtful whether the sentences are equivalent since (12) is describing an event in the fictional world while (12') is describing an event in the actual world. Pelletier presses the creationist to explain the apparent truth of (12), since a critic could easily (and most likely) choose (12) over (12').[36] He speculates that the creationist can treat (12) as true with respect to its fictional context, i.e., as an internal sentence. If the creationist fronts (12) with a fiction operator, she might get something like the following:

> (12*) According to Book IV of the *Aeneid*, Virgil has Dido die.

(12*) is undoubtedly false because Dido, according to the *Aeneid*, committed suicide by stabbing herself with her lover's sword instead of being killed by Virgil. Pelletier then concludes that either the creationist extends pretense to cover external sentences in (12*) and risks collapsing into a Waltonian theory, or she admits that pretense theory possesses stronger explanatory power.[37]

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33   Pelletier ("Vergil and Dido," 201) admits that some metafictional sentences can be uttered with "nonfictional intent" as with some examples shown above. In other words, if the context is considered, metaleptic sentences may be more problematic insofar as they are uttered truly with a serious assertoric intention.

34   I thank the editors for informing me that this example was first posed by Genette in his *Narrative Discourse*.

35   Pelletier, "Vergil and Dido," 201. I only use Pelletier's suggested paraphrases as examples here, but readers should note that there are countless other ways of paraphrasing this very sentence; e.g., "Virgil organised the *Aeneid* in such a way that his character Dido was taken out of the narrative in Book IV." The subtle differences between these paraphrases should not bother us here. The point of paraphrasing is simply to amend the intuition that the name *Dido* seems to refer to a real person and not an abstract artifact.

36   I thank Caroline Wall for suggesting a clarification of this point.

37   See Walton (*Mimesis as Make-Believe*) for his influential anti-realist theory of fiction which claims that, besides the official games of make-believe authorized by the work of fiction, unofficial games of make-believe are often adopted by readers in their fiction-talk, or even in their emotional response.

Let us turn back to whether (12) and (12') are equivalent. If they share the same meaning, the realist is obliged "to give an account of the content asserted" in (12) "without endangering her distinction between 'fictional' and 'real' contexts of discourse about fiction.[38]" Two possible replies are available from the creationist. First, (12) and (12') share the same meaning and (12') is an adequate paraphrase of (12), so that both (12) and (12') can be regarded as external sentences. Since (12) is uttered by a critic with adequate understanding of the name *Dido* – at a minimum, she knows *Dido* refers to a fictional character created by Virgil – she thus purports to refer to the fictional character Dido. With this presupposition, the verb *die* following *Dido* should be replaced or paraphrased into a syntactically and semantically agreeable verb phrase, such as *written out of the narrative*. Note that this is not an ad-hoc solution but a paradigmatic handling of metaphorical language usages. Compare (12) with the following:

(13)   John has Fido die at his house.

If Fido is a dog, then what (13) amounts to is either a tragic death of a beloved pet or animal cruelty. But suppose *Fido* was used by John and the utterer (and/or audience) of this sentence to refer to John's computer. In this case, *die* should be interpreted as *unable to function properly*. Accordingly, what is problematic in the case of (12) is not the internal/external distinction but the ambiguity in natural language. As (12) is about Dido as a fictional character – an abstract artifact, according to the fictional realist – it serves as a paradigmatic external sentence when the ontological presupposition is clarified through pragmatic means.

Second, even if we grant that (12) is intuitively true with respect to the fictional context, implying that (12) and (12') do not share the same meaning (since (12') is most definitely not true with respect to the fictional context), there is still a possible remedy. The problem can be dissolved if (12) is analyzed as a complex sentence. Although (12*) is blatantly false, it can be paraphrased into the following:

(14)   Virgil created a fictional character Dido who died according to Book IV of the *Aeneid*.

The main clause of (14), *Virgil created a fictional character Dido,* is an external sentence. The underlined subordinate clause, *who died according to Book IV of the Aeneid,* serves as the pretenseful underpinning of the original sentence (12). In other words, a metaleptic sentence can be analyzed as an external sentence with a subordinate clause that spells out the fictional context. The fictional context is thus contained within a subordinate clause which is reliant on the main clause. By this analysis, the creationist can affirm that (12) and (12') express different meanings – the former involves a covert pretenseful subordinate clause, while the latter does not. This analysis preserves the intuition that (12) must be

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38   Pelletier, "Vergil and Dido," 202.

about the fictional context without denying it as a serious external sentence.

However, the creationist should be reluctant to adopt this analysis. Even if (14) is an external sentence, albeit with a subordinate clause covering the fictional context, it nevertheless involves a pretenseful underpinning. As noted in the previous section, the creationist only employs pretense in the cases of internal sentences. If she wishes to admit (14) as a proper analysis, she needs to either clarify whether such an underpinning counts as pretense, or forfeit the rule of employing pretense according to the internal/external distinction. Pelletier's criticism is going in the right direction if the above analysis is taken into consideration. Based on this observation, the creationist is better off sticking with her guns and pursuing the first reply, namely resolving the ambiguity of (12) through pragmatic means of ascertaining the ontological presupposition as noted above.

Can the fictionalist also adopt the above analyses? Due to her non-committal ontological attitude, the first analysis is out of her reach, as it would be self-defeating if she agreed with treating the ontological presupposition as a parameter for analyzing sentences. That leaves him with the second option. The fictionalist variant should look like:

> (14*)   According to the realist's theory, Virgil created a fictional character Dido who died according to Book IV of the *Aeneid*.

(14*) is fairly similar to (14), except that the beginning of the sentence contains the fiction operator parasitic to the realist's theory. This doubly pretenseful underpinning agrees with the fictionalist's decision to analyze both internal and external sentences with fiction operators. Brock pursues another path to analyze metaleptic sentences, namely by adopting a hybrid realist theory that considers fictional objects as simultaneously concrete and abstract.[39] He sees no trouble in an inconsistent fiction, hence no trouble in an inconsistent realist theory for his parasitic strategy. This is not without controversy; however, a theory with less inconsistency and equal explanatory power is always desirable. Hence, the above analysis is still worth considering.

At last, I contend that my proposal fares better than the creationist's. There is a crucial difference in premises regarding these two analyses. The creationist's analysis assumes the pair of sentences (12) and (12') are equivalent semantically and that the ambiguity is resolved through pragmatic means, while I suggest the opposite. Their meanings are different because, like Pelletier's observation, only the former concerns the fictional context. From a natural language semantic point of view, it is difficult to ascertain the sameness of content in (12) and (12'). Recall that a theory needs to be less revisionary. If our pre-theoretic intuitions about the content of this pair of sentences are different from our post-theoretic understanding, it is prudent to preserve these intuitions *unless* they can be explained away in a non-ad hoc way. Based on these considerations, I argue that

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39   Brock, "Fictionalism about Fictional Characters," 13–14.

fictionalism about fictional characters armed with complex sentence analysis has the upper hand in analyzing fictional discourse over creationism.

CONCLUSION

In this paper, I provide an overview of two leading proponents of realism and antirealism about fictional characters: Thomasson's abstract creationism and Brock's fictionalism. I critique and refine Pelletier's counterargument to the internal/external distinction of fictional discourse based on metafiction and metalepsis. While I show that metafictional sentences pose no genuine threat to either theory, metaleptic sentences remains troublesome. I then propose an analysis of metaleptic sentences as complex sentences without forfeiting the internal/external distinction. Lastly, I contend that Brock's fictionalism armed with the complex sentence analysis has the upper hand in formulating a minimally revisionary, smoother, and more unified account of fictional discourse.[40]

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LESSONS FROM SEMIOTICS: AGAINST A POSTMODERN INTERPRETATION OF CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE

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This past century has evinced a cultural shift in civil disobedience movements that goes beyond a simple reorientation of aims. The targets of dissent have also become more abstract (i.e., systemic) in nature, and whereas earlier movements (e.g. the Civil Rights Movement) revolved around key figures, the same is not true of later ones (e.g. the Black Lives Movement). There is also something to be said about the novel uses of social media by movements such as #MeToo. In this paper, with the help of Jakobson's model of communication, I introduce a semiotic analysis of civil disobedience with a particular emphasis on the Civil Rights Movement and Black Lives Matter (BLM). This comparative analysis will both allow us to scrutinize the significant cultural shift observable across civil disobedience movements and explain why this shift fails to be captured by the post-structuralist or postmodernist explanatory framework.

The paper is divided into two parts. In Part I, I will focus on extending Roman Jakobson's linguistic model of communication (§1.1) by drawing from Speech Act Theory and Gregory Bateson's analysis of play (§1.2-3), with the results of which I will develop a grand semiotic model for civil disobedience (§1.4). In Part II, I aim to explain some key differences between early and contemporary movements of civil disobedience by using this modified model (§2-3) which will lead me to reject the post-structuralist and postmodernist interpretations of civil disobedience (§4) with their appeal to moral relativism (§5).

I. TOWARD A SEMIOTIC ANALYSIS OF CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE

1. Jakobson's Model

Roman Jakobson (1896-1982), one of the dominant linguists of the 20th century, developed a robust framework for understanding interpersonal communication. Primarily influenced by Karl Bühler's Organon-model, Jakobson deconstructed speech communication into six constitutive elements: a "message" (the piece of information that is transmitted), an "addresser" (the person producing this message), an "addressee" (the person to whom the message is addressed), a shared "code" (the system of signs which create and set the boundaries for the meaning of the message and the necessary conditions for its understanding), a "context" (the verbalized situation, object, or mental state referred to by the message), and a "contact" (the physical or psychological channel connecting the addresser and the addressee).

Having made this distinction, Jakobson then contends that the relationship between the message and each of these six factors gives rise to six different language functions. From this account, the *phatic function* of language (in operation when the message is oriented toward the contact) serves "to establish, to prolong, or to discontinue communication."[1] Examples of this function include saying 'hi' to initiate conversation, asking 'can you hear me' to assess communication, and saying 'bye' to conclude an exchange. The *referential function* of language is oriented toward the context and is most clearly (but not exclusively) expressed grammatically by the indicative mood, a verb form used to express statements of fact. This function is the one most commonly employed and pertains to declarative statements of the form *Jane plays outside* or *I like the sound of fallen leaves*. The *metalingual function* operates when speech is oriented toward the code, such as when the addresser and addressee need to ensure they are using the same code. For example, it is the function we use when giving definitions or disambiguating as in the case of a father who, after complaining that he was 'used as a scapegoat' at work, must then explain what he meant to his excited but confused 5-year-old. The *conative function,* oriented toward the addressee, is expressed grammatically by imperatives (phrases that express a command) and thus encompasses instructions, warnings, and orders, such as "John, drop it!" or "Be careful!" The *emotive function* operates when the message is oriented towards the addresser and expresses the speaker's attitude. Though also conveyed by intonation, the emotive function is best exemplified by interjections such as 'Uh-oh' or 'Hurray!'. For instance, the use of the word 'alas' in Percy Shelley's poem "Alas! This is not what I thought life was" allows us to discern the speaker's sorrow. Compare this with what would be conveyed by 'Hurray! This is not what I thought life was.' Last, the *poetic function* operates when the message is oriented toward itself. This function emphasizes

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1   Jakobson, "Closing Statement."

the message itself and its formal and aesthetic characteristics. As the name implies, it is the active function in poetry, but it is also operative in political slogans such as 'I like Ike.' After having distinguished the six functions above, it is important to mention that they are not mutually exclusive; Shelley's line, for example, clearly instantiates both the poetic and emotive functions. In fact, Jakobson took the six of them to operate simultaneously, one or two taking precedence for any single speech utterance. These functions are summarized below.

	Factors of linguistic communication	Function of language
Message	The piece of transmitted information determined by the other five factors	Poetic (message → addresser)
Addresser	The one producing the message (also 'enunciator,' 'sender,' 'coder,' 'speaker')	Emotive (message → addresser)
Addressee	The one receiving the message (also 'enunciatee,' 'receiver,' 'decoder,' 'audience')	Conative (message → addressee)
Code	The system of signs required for the message to have meaning (i.e., the semantic field)	Metalingual (mesage → code)
Context	What is referred to by the message (also 'referent')	Referential (message → context)
Contact	The physical or psychological channel through which the message is sent	Phatic (message → contact)

Table 1.

Using this model as the semiotic backbone of the following discussion, I will make some modifications before applying the model to civil disobedience.

2. Rosa Parks: A Case Study

To justify why adjustments are warranted, I will apply the model to one of the best-known examples of civil disobedience. On December 1, 1955, Rosa Parks, former secretary to the Montgomery chapter of the NAACP, was pressured to give up her bus seat for a white passenger in compliance with the Montgomery segregation bus laws. In light of her refusal, James Blake, the bus driver, called the police to have her arrested. It did not take long for the news of this incident to spread. On the night of Parks' arrest Jo Ann Robinson, another civil rights activist, mimeographed over 35,000 leaflets announcing a bus boycott that would continue until December 20, 1956, when Montgomery's discriminatory bus laws were finally declared unconstitutional.[2]

Framing her actions in Jakobson's model (Table 2) would make Parks the addresser, James Blake the addressee, and "I don't think I should have to stand up" the message.[3] The contact would be the sound waves that transmitted the message, while the code

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2   Williams, *Eyes on the Prize*, 66–68.

3   Gordon and Parks, "Montgomery Bus Boycott Revisited," 0:58.

	Rosa Parks' Civil Disobedience
Message	"I don't think I should stand up."
Addresser	Rosa Parks
Addressee	James Blake
Code	English and its semantic and grammatical rules
Context	Her self, her mental state, and her situation
Contact	Sound waves

Table 2.

would be the semantic and grammatical structure of the English language. Lastly, the context would be all the information from the relevant circumstances needed to make sense of Parks' message: her mental state, the bus, the Montgomery segregation laws, and the larger political context – including the broader system of constitutional rights.

Nonetheless, it would be faulty to directly apply Jakobson's model to Parks' act of civil disobedience, as insofar as the context refers to the actual state of affairs, it remains uncertain how Jakobson's model could account for the modal language Parks employed. Her judgment "I don't think I should have to stand up" uses "should" as an auxiliary verb of directive modality and therefore makes an explicit reference to non-actual deontically ideal worlds.[4] Therefore, we must find the locus of normativity someplace else. To circumvent this issue, I will draw from the resources of analytic philosophy to explain why we may locate the normativity of Parks' judgment in the code rather than in the context, which Jakobson himself would have agreed with but might still require an alternative reconstruction.

What can we say about normativity? Though this term proves to be unsurprisingly hard to define,[5] it is often done so negatively as *that which is not descriptive.* A more substantial attempt at a definition might indicate that normative judgments are those that express some form of commitment or evaluation.[6] For our purposes, we are only concerned with prescriptive normative judgments, the subclass to which Parks' judgment belongs. Prescriptive judgments are judgments of the form "X should (not) Φ," "X ought (not) to Φ," or "X must (not) Φ," all of which are action-guiding insofar they assert that an agent has a strong reason to act or not to act in a certain way.[7] We may further under-

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4   Carr, "Deontic Modals."

5   See recent attempts by Finlay and Wedgwood.

6   For an argument of moral realism as a necessary condition for speech acts, see Cuneo, *Speech and Morality*; for a critical response, see Olson, "Metaethics Out of Speech Acts?"

7   In this paper, we are solely concerned with *practical* normative judgments, or judgments about action. However, there can also be prescriptive epistemic judgments of the form "X ought (not) to believe *P*" and other forms of non-moral normative judgments.

stand *reason* to mean something like a *consideration in favor*. When Parks declares that she does not think she should have to stand up, she subverts the specious reasons given by the segregation laws to stand. In this way, she contests that there are moral reasons to stand up. There are of course legal reasons for her to do so, and in light of her possible arrest, there are likely also prudential reasons that concern her well-being,[8] but Parks through her act challenges the idea that *morality* gives her any reason to acquiesce to the bus driver's commands. To put it another way, she expresses the following proposition: "it is false that I have a moral reason to give up my seat to a white passenger" which by extension broadens to "it is false that African-Americans have a moral reason to give up their seats to white passengers." Parks' prescriptive judgment then calls for some form of redress by ethically implying that "it is permissible to break Jim Crow laws" which directly challenges the authority of the Montgomery segregation laws. Circling back to Jakobson's model, the persuasive intention of Parks' act would mean that the conative function of language takes precedence over the emotive one, placing its importance next to the referential function.[9] This will have important consequences for section 5. That being said, it will be helpful to apply Speech Act Theory to shed further light on her prescription of redress and her conveyance of opposition.

Manifestly, Parks' expression of dissent is not sufficient to constitute an act of civil disobedience, for we may judge many policies and laws to be mistaken and yet express our dissent through legal mechanisms (e.g., by voting). Hence, we must find other ways of characterizing the illocutionary forces of these acts. In "Protest and Speech Act Theory," Mathew Chrisman and Graham Hubbs argue that the illocutionary force[10] of protesting involves "…conveying opposition to something, not merely by expressing disapproval (however justified), but doing so in a way that amounts to publicly making an evaluative claim, one which appeals to a wider audience, and in effect says that the object of protest is in some way unfair or unjust. To be more precise, the present suggestion is that, unlike a mere complainer, a protestor presumes there is some overlapping conception of what is unfair or unjust between them and their audience and they are publicly characterizing (at least implicitly) the object of protest as falling under this conception" (5).

There are three main conditions to be drawn from this account.[7] According to Chrisman and Hubbs, to categorize someone's speech act as an act of protest, it must (1) convey opposition to some object by (2) publicly prescribing redress based on justice

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8   For discussion on the normativity of prudential discourse and prudential reasons see Fletcher, *Dear Prudence.*

9   This goes in hand with the claim that, semantically, moral discourse is pre-reflexively realist (Cuneo, *The Normative Web*), even if in the end it is shown to be systemically and uniformly false.

10   Although Chrisman and Hubbs avoid the term "illocutionary force" by thinking it overly reductive, I employ it here for the sake of convenience.

which, in turn, (3) presumes an overlapping conception of justice with the audience. While the first two points were mentioned earlier, the justification for the third stems from the need for the addressee's uptake. Following Austin, a speech act must satisfy certain conditions to attain its aim or to be performed *felicitously*.[11] One of these conditions is for the addressee to understand, recognize, or accept the speaker's intention in a suitable way, in a word, to respond with the appropriate *uptake*.[12] Hence, protesting requires the addressee to share an *overlapping conception* of justice to elicit uptake and for the speech act to be successfully performed or *decoded* to use Jakobson's language.[13] Such a requirement for uptake seems implicit in John Searle's claim that an act of protest "involves both an expression of disapproval and a petition of change,"[14] insofar as the petition for change aims to persuade the audience. John Rawls, supports a similar claim when arguing that civil disobedience should address "the sense of justice in the community, an invocation of the recognized principles of cooperation amongst equals."[15]

Having introduced all these ideas, I can now begin to explain and make some adjustments to Jakobson's model. I propose three main changes. First, because there needs to be a *conceptual* overlap between the addresser and the addressee, the system of ethics, morality, or justice can be best understood as belonging to the code rather than the context of a message. As established in section 1.1, the code is the locus for the non-contextual semantic values of a speech utterance and therefore is also the locus for the speaker's and the audience's conceptual structure.[16]

The second adjustment concerns where we locate dissent. We can imagine an alternative course of events where Rosa Parks proclaims, "I don't think I should have to stand up," but then acquiesces to the bus driver's or police's command to stand up. In this case, her speech act satisfies all the conditions for uptake described above – that is, it would have conveyed opposition, prescribed redress, and presumed an overlapping conception of justice – yet it would not have been an act of civil disobedience. This incongruity vanishes once we notice how the conveyance of opposition (and more broadly the overall message) is chiefly a function of Parks' actions more so than her words. By breaching the law, she was successfully conveying the opposition required for her act to constitute one of civil disobedience. There must then be a way to account for this non-linguistic component.

Lastly, as argued by Chrisman and Hubbs and as seen in other cases of civil disobe-

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11   Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*, 116–117.

12   Ibid.

13   Chrisman and Hubbs, "Protest and Speech Act Theory," 5.

14   Searle, "A Taxonomy of Illocutionary Acts," 368.

15   Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, 337

16   This argument parallels those given by Kant, Kripke, Brandom, Gibbard and Boghossian, all of which ascribe normativity to concepts.

dience, Rosa Parks was not addressing only one person: along with directly addressing the bus driver, she indirectly addressed the rest of civil society. Her message's contact and addressee, then, must also be adjusted, as they fork into a verbal and non-verbal (sonic and visual) channel of communication with the bus driver; and into a series of leaflets, flyers and subsequent headlines that repeated her message to a broader audience. Though the need for these qualifications and the failure to satisfactorily account for Rosa Parks' code, message, contact and addressee naturally stems from using an explicitly interpersonal and linguistic model, these gaps may be compensated for by incorporating Bateson's analysis of play.

3. Bateson: Extending the Model

By studying the play behaviors of nonhuman animals, Gregory Bateson realized that human verbal communication operates at several contrasting levels of abstraction.[17] He noted three such levels: the denotative, the metalinguistic, and the metacommunicative.[18] The denotative level, similar to Jakobson's referential function of language, is instantiated when we explicitly refer to a situation, object, or mental state. In Parks' case, the message is denotative insofar as she refers to herself and her mental state when expressing, "I don't think I should have to stand up." The metalinguistic level, akin to Jakobson's metalingual function of language, is manifested when we refer to language itself, such as in the above analysis of Parks' statement. The metalinguistic level is the one that requires us to use quotation marks. Lastly, the metacommunicative level, undiscussed by Jakobson, is reached when we say something about communication via non-linguistic communication. Bateson introduced this latter level of abstraction by noting how when chimpanzees bite each other in a particular way they communicate that they are playing rather than fighting. The exact form of communication is instantiated by children when they imagine themselves as knights and play with sticks as if fighting with swords. The fact that playing may turn to fighting, for children and chimpanzees alike, is a testament to this kind of communication and the possibility of its failure.

Bateson's additions opens a way to analyze Rosa Parks' non-verbal language in that, by sitting still, she was making use of the metacommunicative level of communication. We can see the force of her metacommunicative act for even if she had remained silent, her non-verbal message could have sufficed to express her normative judgment, that she should not have to stand up. Moreover, it allows us to see how messages may have many-to-many or many-to-one forms of communication between addresser and addressee because if action can be communicative, the model also analyzes individual and collective actions.

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17   Bateson, "A Theory of Play and Fantasy," 132.
18   Ibid.

4. The Semiotics of Civil Disobedience

With the help of Bateson's work, we can now construct a semiotic model for civil disobedience based on Jakobson's model with the three modifications discussed above: (i) it must appeal to a shared notion of justice (the modification to the code), (ii) it must be a physical (i.e., a metacommunicative) act of lawbreaking (the modification to the message), and (iii) it must be intended for a wide audience (the modification to the addressee and contact).[19] The modified model is given below.

Jakobson-Bateson Model for Civil Disobedience	
Message	A metacommunicative breaking of one or more laws on the basis of justice.
Addresser	(i) A single individual or (ii) a group of dissenters partaking in collective action
Addressee	The community of individuals within a given society
Code	A common system of ethics, morality, or justice that demarcates what is and isn't morally permissible
Context	The unjust law or set of laws that the civil disobedience is opposing
Contact	(i) The visual or verbal transmission of the message and (ii) mass media (e.g., print media, social media, broadcasting media, etc.)

Table 3.

II. A CULTURAL SHIFT IN CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE

The model above enables us to diachronically analyze civil disobedience and trace the cultural shifts in its practice. Here, I will compare three historical cases of civil disobedience (the Civil Rights Movement, the Anti-Apartheid Movement, and India's struggle for independence) against three contemporary ones (Black Lives Matter, the Arab Spring, and the Occupy Movement). Even if they all definitionally instantiate the same message (established by the model above), being examples of civil disobedience, the other constitutive factors of communication changed drastically. I will now turn to these changes in the addresser, context, and contact, leaving the code to be discussed in section 3.

Addresser: A single or a group of dissenters, civil disobedients, or protestors. There has been a striking historical shift in the structure of groups that partake in civil disobedience. Whereas the three aforementioned paradigmatic movements of civil disobedience revolved around key figures (i.e., Mahatma Gandhi, Nelson Mandela, Martin Luther King Jr.) and often had a hierarchical style of leadership, contemporary movements such

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19   Whereas (i) accounts for the 'civility' aspect of civil disobedience and shows why it is distinct from ordinary criminal activity, (ii) accounts for the 'disobedience' aspect of civil disobedience and distinguishes it from legal protest. Moreover, (iii) distinguishes civil disobedience from conscientious objection.

as Black Lives Matter are decentralized and unstructured.[20]

Context: The unjust law or set of laws that directly conflict with a shared system of ethics. The shift in the message's context (and thus in the targets of protest) has been marked by a reduction of tangibility. Whereas the targets of the three paradigmatic cases of civil disobedience were forms of clearly delineated de jure segregation (i.e., Jim Crow Laws, Apartheid Laws, and British colonial law), the targets of contemporary movements are more abstract. The newest movements challenge a set of institutions and practices (police brutality and systemic racism in the case of Black Lives Matter or economic inequality in case of the Occupy Movement), which are harder to capture and thus to challenge.

Contact: The visual or verbal transmission of the message and mass media. Lastly, the contact has changed due to the evolution of the message's context described above and exogenous changes in mass media. Because contemporary movements tend to challenge an abstract set of unjust practices and institutions, there are few (if any) unjust laws for them to break.[21] Hence, they must opt to break other tangential laws to get their messages across. This form of dissent is known as *indirect* civil disobedience and is exemplified by those climate change activists who opt to obstruct traffic given the absence of laws that ordain pollution.[22] Moreover, the rise of multilateral platforms such as Twitter and Facebook has enabled the proliferation of messages and groups themselves. Many of these groups originated from hashtags (such as #BlackLivesMatter, #Occupy, and #MeToo) or were galvanized by way of social media (such as the Arab Spring).

III. A SHIFT IN COMMON CODE: A SYSTEM OF ETHICS REVISITED

The transformation of civil disobedience's relation to the common code of ethics is evident enough in the different attitudes held by Civil Rights and Black Lives Matter movements toward respectability politics. This term refers to a marginalized group's strategic impersonation of the dominant group's values to exact change[23]. Earlier, civil rights activists subscribed to respectability politics by presenting their social values to be "continuous and compatible" with mainstream American values[24]. These dissenters strived to display a mixture of Christian and democratic values in their appeals to the general public. In contrast, BLM activists often challenge respectability politics in their critique of mainstream values.[25] Rather than working within the boundaries of the code,

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20   Clayton, "Black Lives Matter," 12.

21   For the purposes of this paper, I will leave *justice* broadly defined as 'what we owe each other' and, more importantly, consider it continuous with the code of ethics.

22   Wermus, "Climate Change Protest."

23   Chen and Dorsey, "Understanding Respectability Politics."

24   Clayton, "Black Lives Matter," 14.

25   Ibid.

BLM activists have devoted their efforts to expand them. A similar argument can be made for other movements (e.g., #MeToo) that instantiate a rise in mainstream cultural critiques from marginalized perspectives.

I contend that this transformation points to something crucial. Historically, civil disobedience movements often worked within their audience's code of ethics, ascoding their message with shared values would enable the addressees to decipher their message. For instance, when Rosa Parks declares, "I don't think I should have to stand up," she implicitly appeals to the constitutional right of equal treatment under the law that everyone claims to endorse. This appeal is also seen in some of the slogans of the time: "Stop Lynching: Build Democracy," "March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom," and "one man, one vote" all appeal either to democratic values or to a liberal framework common to U.S. citizens, in both cases decipherable by the greater public. Ultimately their political strategy, also seen in Gandhi's and Mandela's appeals to peace and democracy, is justified by Jakobson because understanding and hence communication between both parties (i.e., addresser and addressee) requires employing a common code. Such need for an overlapping framework also acts as an explanation to why this strategy is useful when persuading those in power of the plight of the marginalized.

The discussion above, however, renders contemporary civil disobedience deeply paradoxical insofar as it also critiques the code used to engage with its audience so that the latter is unable to morally justify the former's message. Critiquing the code risks severing the conditions for communication, thus making the message fall stillborn and rendering civil disobedience futile. Interestingly, this paradox allows us to see why acts of protest are interpreted as riots by some and as civil disobedience by others. If the audience (the addressee) shares the same principles of justice (the common code) with a group of dissenters (the addresser), then by understanding its appeal to justice, the audience takes the message as an act of civil disobedience. However, if the audience does not share the same code, the actions of the group of dissenters become either revolutionary or criminal. Because ethical codes are generally unable to accommodate for what could potentially be unjustified violence, we also find here an explanation for the controversial nature of coercive civil disobedience and why it is often taken as a reason for dismissing a dissenter's claims.

IV. DERRIDA'S EVENT AND POSTMODERNITY

Such a pivotal shift in civil disobedience as observed in section 3 suggests that there might be significant historical forces at play. We will first explore a possible explanation given by Derrida in "Structure, Sign and Play," and then turn to one given by other postmodern theorists.[26]

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26   Distinguishing Derrida from postmodernist thinkers is not always justified, even if

In his 1966 lecture, Derrida argues that humanity has witnessed what he solemnly deemed the 'event'. According to Derrida, *structures* have been continuously tied to a center (namely, a privileged term or notion) such as *ousia*, *arché*, *aletheia*, transcendentality, God, or man. However, at some point during the late '60s, people abandoned the constant substitution of one center for another and turned to free play *jeu libre* (i.e., the interplay of absence and presence).[27] More specifically, free play occurs when *signifiers* "point beyond themselves to other signifiers" rather than being fixed by their *signifieds*,[28] and meaning is therefore dislocated. In free play, meaning becomes open-ended, variable, and endlessly deferred.[29] It is then plausible that such interplay is manifested, in some way, by the parodic element of contemporary civil disobedience and its critique of the structure of language.

Alternatively, there are other related ways of accounting for the contemporary distrust of the code, such as the one given by Lyotard, Harvey, and Jameson in their attempts to describe postmodernism. Jean-François Lyotard, in *The Postmodern Condition* argues that this new epoch is one of "incredulity toward metanarratives," grand truths or stories that give some orienting purpose to the world such as Salvation, Marxism, Progress, etc. (xxiv). In Lyotard's account, postmodernism expresses cultural distrust and skepticism, eschewing objective and absolute truths in favor of localized language games. On the other hand, David Harvey argues in *The Condition of Postmodernity* that postmodernism, a result of the 20ᵗʰ century's great disappointments, reflects the loss of "the eternal and the immutable."[30] This new epoch "swims, even wallows, in the fragmentary and chaotic currents of change as if that is all there is."[31] Fredric Jameson, likewise, in *Postmodernism or The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, argues that postmodernity is the loss of the hermeneutic model and that "depth is replaced by surface," in a way that is analogous to Derrida's notion of free play where signifiers only allude to other signifiers.[32] The postmodern turn is the abandonment of Ferdinand de Saussure's *signified*. This characterization of our current epoch by the thinkers of the postmodern suggests that we have culturally rejected moral universalism (the belief in a shared system of morals) in favor of relativism (the view that moral universalism is false). It therefore seems as if postmodernism, in its rampant skepticism and relativism, has taken objective ethics as

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Derrida routinely rejected the affiliation. Yet, the reason for drawing this distinction here lies in that the theorists mentioned below (viz. Lyotard, Harvey and Jameson) regarded themselves as studying *postmodernity* as a cultural epoch, whereas Derrida gives an alternative explanation that is useful to discuss separately.

27   Derrida, "Structure, Sign, and Play," 292.

28   "Free play" in Chandler and Rod, *A Dictionary of Media and Communication*.

29   Derrida, "Structure, Sign, and Play," 292.

30   Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity*, 44.

31   Ibid.

32   Jameson, *Postmodernism*, 12.

one of its victims. Under this description, the turn in civil disobedience appears to be explained by this new air of distrust that engulfs our cultural milieu. I will now turn to why such characterization of civil disobedience fails.

V. DESERTING POSTMODERNISM

There is a way in which civil disobedience resists the postmodern explanatory framework. If civil disobedients were entirely committed to moral relativism, they would not partake in civil disobedience. Let us recollect that for a metacommunicative act to constitute civil disobedience, it must presume an overlapping conception of justice with the audience. Jakobson's model refers to this as a common code of ethics. Without a common code, civil disobedients would be committed to silence insofar as they would forgo any possible hope of being understood. Protesters would fail to secure uptake from their audience and would fail to convey any opposition through their actions. Nevertheless, the aim of civil disobedience is stronger than the mere conveyance of dissent, as it also seeks to bring about a change in laws or policies[33]. Hence, the speech act's uptake must be more substantial than mere understanding by the audience. Even in recent cases of civil disobedience wherein protesters aim to challenge the mainstream code of ethics, they are making a comparative claim by asserting that their code is preferable to the mainstream one. The only way to make such an evaluation is by appealing to an even more general code that would, once again, encompass both addresser and addressee. When objectors break the law, they seem to make a judgment akin to 'your system of ethics is *wrong*,' which must presume a broader moral framework that would enable both addresser and addressee to make sense of the statement. Full-fledged moral relativism would prevent civil disobedients from comparing their code of ethics to the one they criticize, so no critique would be well-founded.

We have two alternatives here. We may take civil disobedience to be evidence against Derrida's and the postmodern analysis of our culture and add to its mounting list of criticisms. Or, if we consider their characterization of cultural epochs (e.g., modernity or postmodernity) as valuable and possibly correct, we might take the recent surge in acts of civil disobedience to be an abandonment of the self-referential and ironic relativism of postmodernity. If the latter, we can see in these contemporary movements of civil disobedience a shying away from postmodernity's skepticism and a return to lost values. If moral universalism were central to modernism, (and if postmodernism spurned such universality) the 21st-century model for civil disobedience must manifest a return, albeit one colored by the lessons of postmodernism, to absolute moral truths.

Prima facie, this conclusion might seem too hasty. What about other metaethical positions? Could a skeptic of absolute moral truths not argue instead that a civil dis-

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33   Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, 320.

obedient's moral judgments express non-cognitive attitudes which are inapt for truth or falsity? At first glance, this non-cognitivist position seems possible but subject to several objections. As discussed earlier (§1.2), the persuasive aim of Rosa Parks' actions and of all other acts of Civil Disobedience reflects the precedence of the conative function of language over the emotive one. This ranking is also supported by Chrisman and Hubb's speech act analysis and may be taken as an argument against the non-cognitivist insofar as persuasion and disagreement (rather than mere disapproval) seem constitutive of all acts of civil disobedience. The skeptic, however, is not disarmed by this argument, for she may respond by objecting that Jakobson's model seems to be problematically predisposed against non-cognitivism, since all six functions (including the *referential*) operate simultaneously for any given message (see §1.1). It thus seem as if the debate between cognitivism and non-cognitivism requires further examination, yet such debate is ultimately irrelevant for the purposes of this paper as the relativist embraces many of the same metaethical commitments as those that embrace moral universalism (objectivists). For example, both relativists and objectivists embrace the thesis that normative claims are truth-apt, pace the non-cognitivists, and additionally uphold the thesis that there are some normative truths pace the error theorists. Hence, any non-cognitivists or nihilist critique would be equally harmful to both postmodern relativists and objectivists. Given that the argument in this paper only aims to raise problems for the relativist position, we can safely assume that the metaethical debate has already been settled against non-cognitivism, nihilism, and now postmodern relativism.

CONCLUSION

In this paper I began by summarizing Jakobson's model for communication with the six factors and functions of language he identified. However, applying Jakobson's model to Rosa Parks' act of civil disobedience showed that some adjustments were necessary for the model to fully account for all aspects of civil disobedience. After making these adjustments with resources from Chrisman and Hubb's speech act analysis of protest and Bateson's analysis of play, I used the modified model to account for the differences between historic and contemporary movements of civil disobedience. This comparative analysis served two purposes. Firstly, it justified the use of the model by exhibiting its explanatory power. Secondly, it revealed that civil disobedience rests upon moral universalism and thus rebuts the position taken by late continental theorists. In the wake of the postmodernists, the natural consequence of moral relativism is apoliticism, and contemporary civil disobedience is anything but apolitical.

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RHYTHMIC NONSENSE:
A STUDY OF LANGUAGE AND SURREALISM

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I. THE FRAGILITY OF SENSE

As the horrorist H.P. Lovecraft once noted, "The most merciful thing in the world, I think, is the inability of the human mind to correlate all its contents. We live on a placid island of ignorance in the midst of black seas of infinity, and it was not meant that we should voyage far."[1] If a person were to study the make-up of this island refuge, he would find that its soil is composed of sense and coherence, that each grain of sand is but a corpuscle of meaning – a preposition correctly placed, an adjective properly deployed, an appropriate pronoun, and so on. But he would also meet with the discomforting realization that where there ought to be some subtending structure beneath the landmass, there is nothing. The island rests atop a void.

The sense of a phrase is not an origin in itself, as exposited by Gilles Deleuze in Logic of Sense.[2] Rather, sense springs forth in the very act of composition and therefore can never be articulated in or alongside its host phrase. In order to be interrogated, the sense of a certain proposition must become the object of an additional proposition, and so on ad infinitum. Fundamentally, sense is the effect of elements that do not themselves have a sense.

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1   Lovecraft, "The Call of Cthulu."
2   Deleuze, *Logic of Sense.*

Linguistic agents, further, find themselves largely untrammeled in their ability to manipulate their native linguistic systems, to the extent that they are able to transgress even the most stringent of semantic rules. Whether or not such a thing as inborn "generative grammar" exists is largely irrelevant to this discussion, for even if such structures are indeed active in the initial apprehension of language, they are utterly susceptible to collapse. Deleuze identifies two types of nonsense into which coherence may devolve, citing Lewis Carroll's fanciful neology in the poem "Jabberwocky" as exemplary of the first:[3]

> 'Twas brillig, and the slithy toves
> Did gyre and gimble in the wabe:
> All mimsy were the borogoves,
> And the mome raths outgrabe.

Carroll is remarkable among authors for his playful attitude towards language. In his understanding of the instabilities inherent to structures of meaning and his endeavors to expose them through ludic and absurd wordplay, his work quite overtly prefigures the tastes of 20th-century poststructuralists. Even so, Carroll's work lingers at the surface of language, gleefully splitting and recombining atoms of meaning to create puzzling new isotopes yet declining to plunge deeper into a more primordial form of nonsense. Critically, such verses remain hermeneutically interesting, inviting further interpretation. What is Carroll playing at? What does he "really" intend? The salience of these questions reveals that, at this juncture, the descent into nonsense is yet incomplete.

Truly chthonic nonsense, the second type discussed by Deleuze, involves a relapse into the terrifying somatic immediacy of impulse, impression, and organic rhythm. Prior to the internalization of language, the infant exists as a locus of variations in sensory intensity and bodily rhythm (primal light and primal noise), an undifferentiated entity Deleuze refers to as a "body-without-organs." He associates this modality with the schizophrenic condition as exemplified by such metrical ravings as the cris-soufflés of Antonin Artaud: "ratara ratara ratara Atara tatara rana Otara otara katara." Evidently, Artaud's schizophrenic episodes impaired his ability to construct sensible phrases, which caused his utterances to lapse back into gurgling, infantile somaticity. Deleuze thus concludes that, through a series of syntactic "syntheses" by which phonemes are articulated into morphemes that, in turn, coalesce to form words, the introduction of language inaugurates a division between signification and immediacy, one that is maintained by the systematic demands of coherence. Consequently, the subject is locked into a set of mutually exclusive possibilities: on one hand, participation in language and society; and on the other, regression into perceptual immediacy. An exploration of sense and the circumstances of its collapse will be the overriding goal of this essay.

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3   Carroll, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland.*

II. LANGUAGE, SUBJECTIVITY, AND CATHARSIS

As Martin Heidegger famously declared in a later work, "Language is the house of Being."[4] It is language, according to Heidegger, that conditions the very mode in which a person relates to Being (Dasein als Volk). Emmanuel Levinas, in a turn from Heidegger to Martin Buber, maintained that the Saying (*Dire*) is superior to the Said (*Dit*).[5] In other words, it is the possibility of addressing and of being addressed that really matters in discussions of sociality, rather than the particular linguistic history into which one finds oneself thrown. Though formal philosophy has long been aware of language's hold upon subjectivity, it is in the realm of theoretical psychoanalysis that the most compelling studies have been conducted. The work of the French feminist Julia Kristeva, in particular, amounts to a tragically underappreciated exploration of subjectivity, human language, and their reciprocal fragility.

Kristeva's theory, delineated in her *Revolution in Poetic Language*, is simultaneously a response to and an elaboration on Jacques Lacan's interpretation of psychoanalysis, which had become widely celebrated in her day for its structuralist reformulation of the Freudian method. Kristeva assents to Lacan's idea of the Father as an icon representing the abstract force of sociality which calls the infant into subjectivity, but while Lacan's portrayal of the Father depicts him as the forbidding ambassador of "language and law," Kristeva views the same figure in softer tones. For Kristeva, the Father is associated with love, rather than discipline, and the relationship he bears to the burgeoning subject is one of imaginary identification, as opposed to the symbolic intervention proposed by Lacanian theory. Antecedent to its individuation as a discrete ego, Kristeva asserts, the infant exists in a state of perceptual immediacy, unmediated by representation, not unlike the condition described by Deleuze.[6] Psychoanalysis, however, introduces a new thesis, according to which the pre-egoic infant does not initially discern any meaningful division between himself and the mother, an elision which Kristeva refers to as chora. The figure of the Father then appears as the original "third party" who interrupts the bond between mother and infant, announcing by his very presence that their unity is not as thoroughgoing as it seems. The child comes to identify with the individuated image of the Father, a precursor to his own movement into separated subjecthood and the construction of an ego. Thereby, the nascent subject is ushered away from union with the mother and enters the mediated, lawful world of society which depends on language for its communications. The end of mother-infant unity is therefore the beginning of the infant's acquisition of language.

While Kristeva does not reject the Freudian characterization of the fall from somatic,

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4   Heidegger, "Letter on Humanism."
5   Levinas and Philippe, *Ethics and Infinity*.
6   Kristeva, *Revolution in Poetic Language*.

maternal immediacy as violent, she suggests that it may also be a gift. Indeed, in her treatment of melancholia she identifies a psychosis resulting from over-attachment to the mother and failure to fully accept the world of the ego, an affliction which petrifies the subject and renders it incapable of growth, causing it to fixate instead upon a lost and unrecoverable paradise. Language and its affordances thus act as compensation for the subject's lost "pre-thetic" (approximately equivalent to pre-individuation) unity, providing the subject with avenues of self-expression.

Following her analysis of the first linguistic/paternal moment, Kristeva introduces the notion of the semiotic order, posited as the murmur of the very drives repressed during individuation. For Kristeva, the semiotic is not categorically separate from language, as one might expect, but rather always embedded within it as inflection and rhythm: the somaticity which animates the sign. Crucially, however, the semiotic as it manifests in language seems to be merely a dampened echo of the primordial chora which predates subjectivity; and this mélange of symbolic and semiotic components engenders a situation in which neither is purely itself.

When the semiotic order surges forth most powerfully in language, it incites a revolt within the subject. This "irruption of the semiotic" is often triggered by transgressive art, and is associated with a temporary destabilization of identity. Accosted by a reminder of the pre-thetic period, the subject's structural bonds weaken, rendering it suddenly ductile and susceptible to reconfiguration. A type of "poetic revolution" then takes place, as a momentary reversion to the pre-thetic clears a space for the subject to recalibrate itself. For Kristeva, the subject is always a sujet-en-procès (either "subject-in-process" or "subject-on-trial"), constantly engaged in self-revision and reinvention. Furthermore, as Deleuze bears witness, there is a certain pleasure in the collapse of sense into nonsense, the rigid world of language reverting to primal noise. We are somehow both captivated by it and paralyzed for fear of it.

Poetry, in Kristeva's view, empowers an Aristotelian/Freudian catharsis by providing a common channel in which the semiotic and the symbolic can surge forth in tandem, facilitating a release of latent psychic "pressure." Yet it seems that the presence of the semiotic signaled therein can only ever be incomplete, tainted and trapped inside the vehicle of language. Its cathartic potential, by extension, will likewise remain incomplete, never fully spiriting the subject back to the primordial unity of the pre-thetic phase. Kristeva's version of psychoanalysis valorizes a condition of "creative discord," in which the subject is kept revisable by the continual challenge of semiotic-symbolic poetry. However, the novelty of the semiotic as it is announced in sundry forms of media remains under-examined. If, as Deleuze claims, the original lebenswelt consists of incoherent light and sound, then the most perfect aesthetic invocation of it will be visual and phonic.

III. THE SURREAL

If the sublime is realized in the moment when the observer is overcome by the awesome breadth of the external universe, the surreal might be defined as its commensurate opposite: a vision which seduces by disclosing the frightening depth of the internal universe. As Kant said of the sublime, "[It] is limitless, so that the mind in the presence of the sublime, attempting to imagine what it cannot, has pain in the failure but pleasure in contemplating the immensity of the attempt."[7] In essence, the sublime dazzles through its resistance to, and transcendence of, human intellection. A scene is sublime when one is overcome by the majesty of the exterior world, but it is surreal when the selfsame feeling is evoked by the tenebrous folds of one's own deep interior, when the energies which lie beneath the "I" are glimpsed in their awesome power.

The subtending philosophy of surrealism is inexorably linked to the psychoanalytic notion of the subconscious; hence the style's preoccupation with such events as occur beneath the "surface" of human cognition. Andre Breton, author of the most successful attempt at a "Manifesto of Surrealism," defined the style as "Pure psychic automatism, by which one proposes to express, either verbally, in writing, or by any other manner, the real functioning of thought," and its aim as "[To] resolve the previously contradictory conditions of dream and reality into an absolute reality, a super-reality."[8] The primacy of oneiric, fugue, and hypnagogic states is, accordingly, integrated into surrealism from psychoanalysis. Under such conditions a world of unadulterated impulse is sought, and a great reservoir of subliminal energy is, paradoxically, invited to trespass on the grounds of thetic consciousness.

Even beneath the shroud of fugue, words and language may continue to flow, as if from the mouth of a sleep-talker. This is sometimes not merely incidental but essential to surrealist practice, as in the "automatic writing" of Breton's early experiments. But, according to Breton himself, in this case the automatic outpouring of language takes on a transgressive character, since during the exercise social regulations supposedly fade into the background, and one is "free from aesthetic or moral preoccupations."[9] Such literary automatism might justifiably be thought of as a self-inflicted instance of Kristeva's poetic revolution, and because it remains tethered to the structures of language it carries the same ballast. Regardless of the nonsensical content of the composition, a fluent speaker cannot escape the fact that the words of automatic writing retain their common meanings. Here, another anecdote from Lewis Carroll illustrates the point. When, upon their first encounter in Wonderland, Humpty-Dumpty attempts to convince Alice that "glory," in fact means "a knock-down argument," the girl responds indignantly, proceed-

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7   Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason.*
8   Breton, *Manifesto of Surrealism.*
9   Ibid.

ing to retrench herself in the semantic structures of her native linguistic system.[10] This retrenchment is always a possibility in such plays of language.

For a move still deeper, one might look to the "automatic drawing" of Andre Masson. In Masson's blind productions, one no longer encounters signs, nor any transparency at all, but a turbulent melee of pure movement. Yet the whole automatic sketch is, as Nietzsche said of dreams, "immediately meaningful."[11] Just as for the early Nietzsche our "gods" are the products of dreams, the surreal draws its force from the anterior and the subsurface.

It is distinctly likely that only the most intense form of fugue – the fever dream – could initiate a truly radical semiotic relapse. Perhaps it is the case that in times of severe illness the architecture of subjectivity is broken along with that of bodily health, causing an abrupt and terrifying malfunction of the symbolic order and, concomitantly, a resurgence of primal light and noise. What this yields are the indeterminate shapes and colors that convulse in mad flashes before the eyes of the sickly dreamer and the sound of primeval chuffing that overcomes him. One might define surrealism, in its radical quest for hypnagogia, as an endeavor to simulate the fever dream as exhaustively as possible. It is not difficult to imagine an immersive surrealist piece which would plunge the still wakeful viewer into an artificial dream. Among the essential hallmarks of surrealism is the evocation of the uncanny in the familiar, and a totalizing surrealist piece would be required to project such paradoxical forms throughout the entire space in which it was exhibited, applying itself to every sense. Still, artistic artifacts, glimpsed only for a moment, will only ever be able to permeabilize the subject for a moment.

IV. YVES TANGUY AND BODILY CONFUSION

Pukka surrealism remembers its central goal of abolishing the division between the worlds of dream and consciousness, and therefore frequently depicts bodies in a muddled state of confusion, deliberately making a univocal interpretation of them impossible. In this respect, the distinctive style of Yves Tanguy offers several exemplary case studies – in part because the artist drew inspiration directly from his dreams.

The rather clarion title of Undefined Divisibility (1942) represents an unusual choice for Tanguy, who generally gave his works fantastically elusive names. True to its titular promise, the painting conveys the unmistakable possibility of bodies but goes no further. It raises the question of the individuated, semantic order without providing an answer, alluding to something determinate while adducing only indeterminacy. In the foreground, one's attention is directed to two frustrated clusters (even this word does not do them justice, for by design the piece is refractory to language) of myriad

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10   Carroll, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland.*
11   Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy.*

shapes and colors. These figures appear to be composite, yet any attempt by the viewer to parse their parts seems to sputter and die before ever gaining much momentum. The clusters are neither individual nor group, yet somehow they strike the viewer as both. They hearken back to the time before "time," before differentiation, before anything at all was represented. Beyond the fore, the rest of the painting is merely a boundless, horizonless vista where nothing at all could be said to exist. Indeed, the worlds disclosed by Tanguy's "landscapes" are in actuality non-worlds, overlapping with our own in only the most basic possible elements: form and color. But then, as Descartes reflected in his Meditations, even the most eerie of dreams are confined to such basic categories as can be extracted from the conscious mind. Or perhaps something else entirely is true. Could the implicit goal of Tanguy's (and his colleagues') creative endeavors be to furnish a counterpoint to the Cartesian paradigm? Is it possible that the waking world is but an echo of the primordial dream which predates subjectivity itself?

As he aged, the fanciful flavor of Tanguy's productions vanished and left a cold indifference in its wake. In both Multiplication of the Arcs (1954) and Imaginary Numbers (1954), each painted in the year before the artist's death, the vaguely biotic atmosphere of earlier works is conspicuously absent. Severe mazes of geological structures, like the black planets of Lovecraft's visions, "Roll in their horror unheeded, without knowledge or luster or name."[12] These late landscapes are almost cruel in their disregard for organic life. Perhaps this was an attempt by the artist to regress further still, to a world before life itself. Could the later works, in their refusal of all but the blandest of colors and their exultation in tangled, shadowy tumors of matter be a desperate attempt to penetrate Kant's noumenal world, prior to all perspective, time, and space? Surely, this is a world that predates not only language but perception itself.

V. BEFORE AND AFTER LANGUAGE

If existentialism was an attempt to cope with the death of God, postmodernism is the practice of dancing on His grave. Once the Author of authors, with His determining presence, has been destroyed, and language has been completely untethered from its correspondence with manifest reality, the path that remains is that of Derrida's free-play of meaning, in which signs interact liberally and on their own terms, without fixity. "Free-play is always an interplay of absence and presence," he writes, "but if it is to be radically conceived, free-play must be conceived of before the alternative of presence and absence; being must be conceived of as presence or absence beginning with the possibility of free-play and not the other way around."[13] The postmodernist pursues untrammeled aesthetic

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12   Lovecraft, "Nemesis."
13   Derrida, "Freeplay."

creation in the wasteland of meaning. It is unsurprising, then, that postmodernism qua critique of modernism began in architecture and the visual arts, not formal philosophy. Surrealism can thus be thought of (somewhat elliptically) as proto-postmodernist, for the two share a distrust of the modernist's faith in reason, progress, and the promise of enlightenment. Such movements are the first to benefit from the illumination of the fragility of language, for every structure shattered is but another barrier removed on the path to creative liberation.

Derrida realized that everything has a context, and that context is everything. But if "il n'y a pas de hors-texte" (there is no outside-text), then perhaps we ought to speak of an *avant-texte* (before-text). Surely, there was a time before language and subjectivity – we are, after all, born into a vocabulary of mere intensities where the same gurgling sounds are given at different volumes. The greatest contribution of Lacanian psycho-analysis may be its interest in the moment of linguistic acculturation, and by association the period before language. At the final count, the practice of surrealism amounts to an aesthetic investigation of this very pre-thetic space. But in this endeavor the visual and phonic arts can travel distances that bare criticism and literature cannot: they can break free of language.

What then is the place of the surreal in the 21st century? It seems as though the late movement of society into the space opened by digital media has begun to engender a radical change in the way discourse is conducted. As Paul Virilio observed, distance and time are decreasing in importance as communication becomes limited only by the speed of digital transmission. Exposure to media in all its forms is more consummate now than in any previous age, and new avenues of expression are continually being developed. This ongoing process of innovation is by nature hostile to limitation, and the traditional structures of language constitute exactly that. We are, in effect, witnessing the triumph of Kristeva's sujet-en-procès, whose possible lines of flight are multiplying daily. Sur-realism's great contribution to this phenomenon will likely arise from its practitioners' rebellion against the architecture of language. Might this make it the ideal postmodern art form? In its reduction to the bare minimum – to what remains when individuality, sociality, and structure have been dispensed with – the surreal may be uniquely suited to the trajectory of the contemporary moment. Indeed, it is possible that the future will no longer be linguistic at all, but surrealist.

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TO UNDERSTAND UNDERSTANDING: CONGEALED HERMENEUTICS

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INTRODUCTION

A discussion of understanding cannot simply be a discussion of knowledge: the two are different, and each needs to be explored in its own right. In everyday usage, the two terms are often interchangeable; we mean the same thing when we say that we understand something as when we say that we know it. Claims about how well a particular text is understood, for example, could just as well be framed in terms of knowledge of the text to the extent that we understand something when we have such knowledge. We might make a preliminary pass at identifying the difference between understanding and knowledge by reference to the Aristotelian concepts of efficient and final causes:[1] the how and why of some proposition. In this interpretation, understanding is knowing all the related facts that make some known proposition true. Understanding, then, could be treated as a subset of knowing in general, namely the knowledge of related propositions. I understand that "the ball is blue," for example, when I know of the physical laws and properties that make that ball "blue." Yet there is good reason to think that understanding and knowledge differ more than this. Socrates made the case that "seers and prophets . . . say many fine things without any understanding of what they say" in the *Apology*.[2] The ability to say true things does suggest knowledge over them, but the mere possession

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1   Grimm, "Understanding."
2   Plato, *Apology*.

of knowledge does not further imply an understanding. That the two are distinguishable despite their close relationship should motivate the treatment of understanding as something related to yet wholly different from knowledge.

We might start our investigation of the understanding by noting that there are different methods of understanding in the same way that there are different methods of knowing. Let us call each method of understanding a hermeneutic method. Then, much like how a method of knowing produces the possession of knowledge, let the product of a hermeneutic method be the possession of understanding. With such definitions in place, it becomes clear that it is through understanding the hermeneutic methods that we gain an understanding of understanding itself. These methods, then, will be our main focus, and the hermeneutics of Hans-Georg Gadamer, Paul Ricoeur, and Martin Heidegger will be the objects of our critique. Broadly, I aim to demonstrate that the hermeneutic methods of these authors rely on the formation of concepts to achieve understanding in the form of interpretations. However, such concept formation leads to a manipulation of what is being understood and the loss of content, such that we might describe these methods as dissective in nature. While these dissective methods are by no means incapable of producing an understanding, we might also wish to identify a hermeneutic method that avoids altering the content of the understanding to such a degree. I will discuss our pre-theoretic experience of understanding art to illustrate, in contrast to these dissective methods, what a hermeneutic method not limited by the use of concepts might look like. Such a method is congealed hermeneutics, which is capable of preserving and expressing the internal structure of what is understood.

DISSECTIVE HERMENEUTICS

Richard Palmer identifies two primary issues at the heart of hermeneutics, the body of theoretical work pertaining to interpretation. First, to achieve an adequate degree of clarity in its claims, hermeneutics needs to be able to answer the question, "What happens when I say 'I understand'?" Second, to achieve significance, it must also take on "the confronting of another human horizon [through the] historical penetration of the text."[3] Both of these issues are addressed in what I call dissective hermeneutics. For the first, understanding is there understood as the act of dissection – the deconstruction of the raw material to be understood into interrelated concepts. The blue ball is broken apart into the concepts of the ball and of blue such that what is not inherently conceptual is transformed by dissection into concepts that then fall into our possession. Once we possess these concepts, we declare that "I understand," thus equating the possession of the pieces with the understanding of the whole. Different hermeneutic methods vary in their solutions to the second issue, but each generally starts with some raw material to

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3   Palmer, *Hermeneutics.*

be understood, from which concepts and propositions, in turn, are to be derived. In what follows, as we move to consider three specific hermeneutic methods, I hope to consider them not as isolated examples of dissective methods, but instead as representative of a more general underlying trend in all hermeneutics toward dissective interpretation.

Let us focus first on the hermeneuic method of Hans-Georg Gadamer. Gadamer introduces the concept of "play," wherein we interpret material by engaging in a "game" with it.[4] The term "game" intends to reflect how within the game, the objects of representation become what they represent and that this shift occurs when we engage in the "play" of the game. What is important to us, however, is the "transformation into structure" of the interpreted material, wherein interpretation moves from deciphering what the representation is to the meaning being conveyed by the representation.[5] For example, in a chess match, the shape and color of the objects on the board represent and thus mean the various pieces in the game. A transformation into structure occurs when we shift our attention away from the objects physically on the board, which merely represent the pieces, and instead focus on just their meaning: the chess pieces as understood within the game of chess. In Gadamer's terms, this transformation produces a "representation of such a kind that only what is represented exists,"[6] such as when an actor denies that he is merely representing a character and claims to actually be that character. Here, Gadamer makes a conceptual distinction between the representation and meaning of the interpreted material, differentiating the concept of the "players" with "what they are playing."[7] In terms of the previous example, the players are the actors, and they are playing the characters. The former, then, disappears in the transformation into structure, leaving only the latter to be what is interpreted. Indeed, interpreting a performance means forgetting about the actors and concerning oneself with only the characters they play.

This concept in turn relates to Gadamer's broader treatment of experience as "a happening, an event, an encounter"[8] – that is, as the raw hermeneutic material that is completely conceptualized. To produce the representations needed for the transformation into structure, Gadamer must transform the continuous world into individual events by conceptualization. Only then is it reasonable to speak of this or that event as representing this or that meaning. We can therefore see how Gadamer's hermeneutics are dissective in nature. First, the experience sought to be understood is conceptualized as an event. It is isolated by being transformed into a discrete concept, which can stand outside of

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4   Gadamer, *Truth and Method.*

5   Ibid.

6   Ibid.

7   Ibid.

8   Palmer, *Hermeneutics.*

the context in which the event was originally experienced. Next, further dissection takes place within the conceptualized event, whereby a particular meaning is produced as a discrete concept separate from the representation. The gunshot first becomes a particular event, posited to exist independently of the scent of smoke and the blowing of the wind that were part of the original, raw experience. Then, the concept of a signal to begin the race (the meaning) is distinguished from the concept of the gunshot (the event) through the transformation into structure. The experience is thus dissected, and the understanding of the experience as the event of the starting pistol achieved.

Yet this dissection is an active process that divides the raw material into individual concepts not initially present in the raw material; that is to say, it alters what is to be understood. Furthermore, the division of the whole into discrete concepts does not preserve everything from the original experience. That is because the internal structure that makes the whole not simply a "bundle of parts" is seemingly lost. The bundle of parts cannot be used to put the whole back together, and through the need to produce concepts that can undergo a transformation into structure, our dissective hermeneutics leave us with precisely this "bundle," which differs substantially from what we had started with. Returning to the starting pistol, when the event of the gunshot's flash is conceptualized as different from the experience as a whole, there is, in a sense, an arbitrary line drawn between what is and is not. Our experience itself does not designate this or that portion of experience as sight and others as hearing or smell. The raw material does not dissect itself without a conscious act and is not composed of naturally discrete parts. Instead, it is entirely up to us to determine what falls within or without the concept we construct. Indeed, we see that this is the case by being able to construct many different conceptions of the same experience, such as for the concept of gunshot itself, which contains all the related sensory experience. But this dissection, critically, changes our understanding of the experience of the gunshot itself. The gunshot's flash is now a thing – a concept – capable of standing on its own such that we could say that "the flash of the gunshot was blinding" without invoking the original experience and still make sense. Such a concept is not part of the original experience; however, once we conceptualize it in this way, the flash of the gunshot is introduced into our understanding of the experience and is mixed with all its other parts. In trying to grasp the experience of the whole, we attempt to form a network of concepts, relating the sight to the sound to the smell, and then each to the greater event. Yet we can only superficially "glue" these parts together; each concept remains individual in its own right, despite the indifferentiable states in the original experience. We merely create further conceptual constructions in the form of relationships, which ultimately fail to recreate that sense of togetherness. Indeed, it is by creating these relationships between concepts that dissective hermeneutics forms the bundle that attempts to resemble, but no longer is the raw material of the original experience. What was once unified and holistic has been analyzed into parts, but the

parts put back together do not reform the original whole. This transition into the bundle of concepts, then, is the final result of the manipulation of dissective hermeneutics.

It should be clarified that this analysis of dissective hermeneutics is by no means a negative evaluation of its worth. For the racer waiting for the signal to start, for example, taking the gunshot as a particular event is far more beneficial than attempting to preserve the integrity of the original experience of the sights, sounds, and smells of the stadium at that time. Under his intents and purposes, only the meaning of the gunshot is important. To assume, then, that any manipulation diminishes the value of an interpretation is to neglect the real needs of subjects in one's answer to the question of "What happens when I say 'I understand'?" Indeed, dissective interpretation is almost demanded by our use of systematic languages, which must be built up out of concepts. The components of language must be exchangeable. When we describe a ball as blue, for example, it is essential to our act of predication that other objects could take the place of the ball and be described as blue; that is to say, blue and ball are individual concepts that can be freely combined with other concepts. If no dissective acts formed such concepts, we would have no corresponding linguistic components to form sentences. Dissective hermeneutics, then, is what makes systematic language possible.

However, the limitations of dissective methods reveal themselves more readily when we step outside of language. For example, consider when we attempt to understand art. Whereas we have been accustomed to separating the semantic and aesthetic aspects of language – such as ignoring the font and color of a written word when understanding the meanings of words themselves – in art, we rarely have such strictly defined semantic-aesthetic distinctions in place. That is not to say that we cannot draw such distinctions in understanding art: we can consider the contents of *Napoleon Crossing the Alps* (overleaf), namely Napoleon crossing a mountain on horseback, without commenting on the paint strokes made by the painter Jacques-Louis David. Yet when we choose not to make such a distinction, we see that there are other ways to approach understanding besides dissective hermeneutics. Bertrand Russell writes about seeing the color of things as "a sort of medium color, intermediate between the various points of view" in his arguments in favor of sense data.[9] When we observe the shading on Napoleon's coat, we find not a collection of individual colors but rather a gradient. It appears that when we view a painting, we first experience it simply as it appears to us, before any conscious work is done to understand it. But when we do attempt to dissect the painting into concepts, the use of dissection seems to destroy aspects of the painting we could previously perceive. Even if we were to try to conceptualize each shade and brush stroke, we would find ourselves grasping only a mere collection of colors, while the underlying aspect of the art that enthralls us would be lost.

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9   Russell, *The Problems of Philosophy*.

The concept of orange is by itself an abstract entity, and its relation to a coat does not give it any power. Yet when we see it in a painting, it can have the power to move and stir us. We seem to see the beauty of the artwork not through dissecting it into conceptual components but instead viewing it as it is, which forces us to recognize the limitations of dissective hermeneutics and at the same time hints at the existence of a form of non-dissective hermeneutics that is within our power. It seems that in some sense, we understand art without dissection and that we lose such an understanding by that act.

THE SEARCH FOR NON-DISSECTIVE HERMENEUTICS

Supposing that non-dissective hermeneutics is within our capabilities, we may ask what such a method would be. We may have good reasons to assume its existence and our ability to use it when we understand things like art. However, it does not follow that we could use such a method explicitly; in the sense of using it actively and consciously. We do not merely want to be able to understand through subconscious or otherwise implicit means because that would prevent the communication and explanation of what we understand. We thus need a method that allows for explicit understanding, preferably through systematic language as the means by which such understanding can be expressed. How this can be achieved is not immediately clear, but by considering other dissective hermeneutics, we can approach an understanding of what it would take for a non-dissective method to be successful in being explicit. Recall that in dissective hermeneutics, we isolate concepts from holistic experiences to make them individual, self-standing, and open to recombination; we might call an understanding so produced particular in nature, in the sense that it is composed of discrete parts. Their conceptual nature makes them particular, whereas the raw understood material is not. A non-dissective method, in comparison, should produce a non-particular final understanding. That said, let us use the methodology of Paul Ricoeur as the starting point of our movement toward a non-dissective hermeneutics.

The hermeneutic methodology used by Ricoeur is pluralistic in the sense that it is open to "meanings with multiple or multivocal senses." The intended meaning, produced by the speaker, author, or creator of the material, is considered alongside the "symbolic sense," produced by the secondary interpretation of an audience or listener.[10] Each meaning, however, is still of the same material, and in that sense the two overlap. This method rejects the claim that interpretation depends on authorial motivation. Instead, the motivation behind the work is made "essentially peripheral".[11] This avoids some of the features of dissective hermeneutics previously discussed; for one thing, it no longer argues that the raw material to be interpreted has some inherent conceptual division that

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10 Ricoeur, *Existence and Hermeneutics*.
11 Freeman, "Paul Ricœur on Interpretation."

Jacques-Louis David, *Napoleon Crossing the Alps* (c. 1801), Oil on canvas

would produce some correct meaning. Even though Ricoeur accepts a primary-secondary distinction between symbolic and intended meaning,[12] the result is a plurality that is open to every possible interpretation. Within this plurality, each interpretation refers to the same material while posing different understandings of that material.

Despite achieving this interpretative plurality, however, Ricoeur's method still only produces interpretations that are particular in nature, which reveals that Ricoeur's hermeneutics are still dissective in nature. Each interpretation – a "sense of meaning," in Ricoeur's own terminology – stands wholly different from other interpretations if it does not exclude them altogether. Individual interpretations remain conceptual as with Gadamer, because the means by which they are formed – through dissection – remain the same. At the same time, however, the plurality of interpretations also demands to be considered together as the collective meaning of the interpreted material. Such a move forces interpretations of the same material together, without any means of mediating their differences. This inevitably leads to contradictions within the plurality such that we might consider it a confused concept. (It is important to note that the contradictions appearing when the plurality is forced together do not arise from the nature of the plurality itself but from how each interpretation within the plurality is structured.) Each interpretation is conceptually structured, and that structure is retained in the plurality thereof; these interpretations, then, are still particular in nature, so Ricoeur's method is no less dissective than Gadamer's. The hat is "blue," or the hat is "black"; each concept excludes the other insofar as to include the two interpretations in a plurality is to attempt to join contradictory concepts into a single thing. We can pretend that these concepts can be joined coherently, say by introducing the term "blue-black" into our language, but the term loses its plausibility when we try to identify its referent: we are either alternating between meaning blue and meaning black, meaning some third colour in between the two, or simply using the term emptily without any referent at all. Yet they all have abandoned any notion of a plurality and no longer reflect the understood material. None of these three options could be the plurality Ricoeur seeks.

Ricoeur's pluralistic hermeneutics do not allow for all interpretations to be contained within a given plurality, and in this sense, they contain something we want to preserve when we eliminate particularity: determinateness. Propositions about Napoleon should not be contained (or at least should be rendered highly irrelevant) within a plurality of interpretations of a painting that has nothing to do with Napoleon. Determinateness is the sense of direction (in a semantic and not spatial sense) of an understanding, the property of that which Hegel calls the "this" of sense-perception.[13] It is what allows for differentiability such that one determinate is not another determinate – "this" as opposed

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12   Ricoeur, *Existence and Hermeneutics*.
13   Friedrich Georg Wilhelm Hegel, *The Phenomenology of Spirit*.

to "that". This property is, however, not what makes something particular. Rather, determinateness is what allows us to make those dissections before we make them. A determinate has no inherent way to be dissected into concepts but allows for the dissected concepts to have content. A non-determinate would be without semantic directionality such that there is nothing to dissect at all. A concept is both particular and determinate in that it retains the directionality of the immediate "this" but has been made discrete – in Hegelian terms, universal – such that it is also now something with particularity. When both particularity and determinateness are present in a thing,[14] we can say that the thing is distinct. To elucidate these terms, consider the painting of Napoleon once more: what is determinate is the raw experience when viewing the painting. It is all that we experience prior to making any dissections. It is determinate in that it is this unique experience, not confused with any other. But dissecting the painting into concepts such as "Napoleon", yields an understanding made of distinct parts: the concept is particular in that it is now separate from the original material, and also remains determinate because we can still refer to it as an immediate "this". We have already seen how a methodology that leads to particular interpretations will be dissective, so we must seek only purely determinate understanding.[15] Yet there also lies a further question, as it does not follow from determinateness alone that we are able to explain a determinate's nature.

Beyond determinateness, however, we also need the quality of definiteness, if we are to describe determinates. Definiteness is the property of being able to capture some determinate nature such that it becomes a coherent understanding, and it is needed to describe determinates without resorting to mere "this-not-that." Interestingly, concepts are nearly always definite, but that is not the case with that which is only determinate and not particular. It is easy enough to claim the existence of some hermeneutic that leads to a determinate understanding – this being our original aim rephrased in the terminology established. What will then demonstrate this claim as valid is a methodology that also includes the property of definiteness.

What, then, is determinate and definite but not particular? It cannot be a logical atom lacking all complexity, for then even if it were still determinate, we could only speak of it as a "this," and it would thus certainly no longer be definite. Without the complexity, there is nothing to be captured and thus no quality by means of which it could be made definite. But definiteness must also not come from the boundaries and limitations

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14 Note that when we say that some *thing* is particular, we already imply that it is particular simply by virtue of being able to refer to it as a thing. Likewise, it is not possible for a thing to not be particular, which is important when referring to determinates that are not particular.

15 Note further that when we refer to particular understanding, we may use the term "interpretation" because of its conceptual structure. We must use the more general term "understanding" when referring to non-particular determinates.

imposed upon it, for it would then adopt particularity and become a concept. Its deter-
minateness and definiteness, then, must both stem from some internal structure, not in
the sense of internal parts (that would lead to particularity again) but instead an internal
nature that we can point to and say "this is what is this!" That this sentence borders on
incoherence is telling, and it indicates how language, especially used in a literal sense, can
face difficulty when trying to express such a structure of understanding built inherently
to avoid concepts. Even if we were to name the determinate by giving its structure a name
(much in the same sense as we might give a painting a name) – calling it "the structure,"
for example – we have not given the determinate definiteness. We would either have
conceptualized our system, giving it particularity, or merely have come up with a fancier
way of saying "this." In either case, it seems that we will need some other way to convey
this determinate structure.

Let us then consider the Heideggerian methodology, which begins to both construct
and convey its hermeneutics with the properties of determinateness, particularity, and
definiteness in mind. Although Heidegger himself offers no direct analogue for any
of these three concepts, he had some understanding of the difference between them.
Heidegger makes the distinction between what is understood and what is "taken apart by
making an assertion," suggesting that he recognizes the possibility of non-propositional
interpretation. He even goes as far as to effectively describe the act of dissective interpre-
tation, an act that "always splits the phenomenon asunder, . . . [without any] prospect
of putting it together again from the fragments." Heidegger is thus evidently aware of
the problem that a dissective hermeneutics poses, and claims that his method "holds the
phenomenal content secure." Heidegger's methodology leaves room for non-conceptual
understanding such that even the "mere pre-predicative seeing of the ready-to-hand is,
in itself, something which already understands."[16] That which is pre-predicative and
non-particular is understood as determinate. If the ready-to-hand – that which we
encounter immediately – prior to its dissection into the conceptual present-at-hand
can already be understood, then surely the Heideggerian method has succeeded as a
non-dissective hermeneutics. In his method, "experience is always already interpreted,"
and particularity does not need to be applied for understanding to be possible.[17] Unfor-
tunately, such hopes for a non-dissective methodology are dashed when we attempt to
make explicit – that is, definite – this determinateness. While Heidegger accepts a sense
of understanding of the determinate, the attempt to make determinates definite "dwin-
dles to the structure of just letting one see what is present-at-hand, and letting one see
it in a definite way."[18] For Heidegger, understanding must, to be expressed, take the form

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16   Heidegger, *Being and Time.*

17   István, "Heidegger and the Hermeneutic Turn of Philosophy."

18   Heidegger, *Being and Time.* Heidegger's usage of *definite* should not be confused with

of what he calls an apophantic assertion – some proposition declaring something to be the case – since what is grasped by fore-sight cannot be spoken of through language. This apophantic assertion, however, is not a mere linguistic turn, but a change in the very structure of what is understood. The apophantic assertion is still determinate and definite, but in achieving the latter it "no longer reach[es] out into a totality of involvements" and also adopts a particular character.[19] Here, we have returned to the singular interpretations of Gadamer, abandoning even the plurality of Ricoeur. We find ourselves with only this or that particular present-at-hand in conceptual form, adopting a single propositional viewpoint. Heidegger's method has thus also been shown to be dissective, yet we see that the reason behind the dissective nature is different from the others. Rather than an issue of determinateness (as with Ricoeur and Gadamer), for Heidegger, the problem is that for something to be understood definitely, it must have "the structure of 'something as something',"[20] meaning that it must be treated as a particular concept. The blue ball I see must be structured as the concept of a blue ball. Therefore, no matter how capable Heidegger is at understanding the raw material, he cannot avoid producing a final interpretation that is particular. Such particularity arises from the dissection in the transition to the apophantic structure, meaning that the hermeneutic method overall must also be dissective.

From this movement of critique through the methodology of Ricoeur and Heidegger, we have formalized our understanding of particularity and have come to understand its importance in indicating the use of concepts, and thus, the dissective nature of a hermeneutical method. Ricoeur's pluralistic hermeneutics have allowed us to understand the need for the understanding to be determinate, lest it decompose into contradictions. Meanwhile, Heidegger's methodology demonstrates the problems faced that risk resorting to particularity when trying to express determinates as definite. With these conditions in mind as the basic requirements for a non-dissective hermeneutical method, we can formulate one that satisfies both of these conditions. More importantly, we are also now able to test such a method to see if it is indeed non-dissective.

CONGEALED HERMENEUTICS

It is at this point that we introduce what will be called congealed hermeneutics, which uses a congealed structure to present the understanding. I mean "congealed" in the sense of a coalescence, wherein what was once separate has now come together. Yet the sense of togetherness in "congealed" is stronger than simply that of a complex,

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ours, since for him *definite* more closely resembles that which is individual and particular.

19   Heidegger, *Being and Time*.

20   Ibid.

a system, or a plurality, wherein the individual parts retain their distinctiveness. In a congealed structure, the particularity that comes with a bundle of concepts is erased, only the determinateness of the whole remaining. Additionally, the congealed structure is not a unity without any parts, for while a unity is not a bundle, the congealed structure itself is not particular. In my critique of Heidegger's methodology in the previous section, I showed how his method became dissective as a result of final interpretations becoming particular. A congealed structure avoids this by avoiding becoming a single unitary particular and a bundle of particular parts. It thus avoids being both an atom and deriving its definiteness from its parts, each of which we have established to deny non-particular determinateness. The congealed structure is thus not particular in nature, and neither is the understanding the congealed structure expresses. To corroborate, it is definite. However, by erasing the conceptual structure of what was once its components, we do not simply recreate the conceptual structure at a higher order. We also maintain definiteness by placing the focus on the internal structure to allow its determinate nature to be described. Accordingly, a congealed understanding[21] is not some concept but a definite determinate, with its structure unconstrained by any boundaries or limits that would make it particular.[22]

Once again, such a non-particular determinate is hardly easy to describe with systematic language. It is instead easier to shed light on the nature of our methodology with an example and apply it to understand a philosophical problem. By contrasting the congealed hermeneutics with dissective hermeneutics, we can come to understand what the congealed method does differently. Let us consider the argument made by the Bradley Regression: that for some relation R between A and B, if we treat R as an object, we must conclude that there must also exist some relation R_1 connecting A to R, as well as some relation R_2 connecting R to B.[23] In predicate logic, it can be expressed simply as follows:

$$\exists R(R_{ab}) \leftrightarrow \exists x[\exists R_1(R_{1,\,ax}) \wedge \exists R_2(R_{2,\,xb})]$$

One is then able to substitute R_1 and R_2 for an expansion of their own as R_{11}, R_{12}, R_{21}, R_{22}, and so on ad infinitum. This, as Bradley argued, leads to an infinite regress. However, what Bradley does not realize is that this regress is not the result of the "prob-

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21   From here on out we should note that the use of "a" to speak of "single congealed understandings" is merely for ease of communication, and not indicative of any conceptual nature.

22   An interesting result of this lack of boundaries is that for any determinate, all would be contained within its structure, as nothing can be not-this without creating a numerical distinction between the this and not-this. However, the determinateness property means that there is a consideration of relevancy, such that spilled wine in Paris is contained in but effectively does not influence the congealed understanding of an artwork in London.

23   Bradley, *Appearance and Reality*.

lematic nature" of relations but rather of dissective interpretation. This is because under the dissective method, we approach the issue step by step. We first assert that there is a relation R, and then in considering the relation R, we treat it as an object, leading us to the conclusion that we must further assert the existence of relations R_1 and R_2. We can describe this particular dissective hermeneutic method as dynamic: the movement through individual steps is the dynamic component, while the assertion of particular objects gives us the dissective aspect of the hermeneutics. It is also quite clear that, using this method, we would arrive nowhere, for we would have to follow the infinite regress ad infinitum. Even if that were possible, it in no way reflects the way we think of relations pre-theoretically – namely, with relatively great ease and without regression.

On the other hand, congealed hermeneutics completely avoid the infinite regress by considering the internal structure of the understood material. If we return to our regress and consider not what to do in each step but how the structure of the proposition as a whole is structured, we see that we are forced to move deeper into the regress by the lack of connection between the two objects. At each step, a connection is established between two objects by relation. However, when that relation becomes an object, connectivity is lost, and we are forced to assert new relations to mend the connection. This sense of connection is then what we are really trying to establish in our understanding and is thus the determinate of a relationship. We further see that this need for connectivity continues indefinitely, without any variation, so we can understand the structure of the relationship – its determinate nature – as a connection, expressed as the congealed form of the infinite propositions about the objects so related. Importantly, this congealed form is not just a bundle of propositions. What the congealed form conveys is the determinate, non-particular structure of the relationship, not the collection of propositions themselves. We have therefore achieved an understanding which satisfies the criteria we set out. It is not particular, since it is not constrained by concepts, and it is also both determinate and definite. The expression of the structure of relationship – connectivity – can be almost perfectly described by a congealed form of the infinite propositions about the material we aim to understand. We have thus preserved the determinate structure while allowing it to be definitely expressed, satisfying our conditions for non-dissective hermeneutics.

That said, it must be noted that the expression of the definite determinate is still in terms of concepts generated as a result of the conceptual structure of language. We have already shown that the structure is determinate, but the way that the non-particular determinate is to be conveyed must be through particular concepts. It is a concession we must make if we wish to describe and explain our understanding, and is by no means a fundamental requirement of definiteness. We experience and understand determinates constantly, as when we view art. But such experiences of determinates are implicit and cannot be conveyed. If we hope to be explicit, then we are limited by the means through which communication can occur, though this limitation certainly does not restrict us.

The limitation of using conceptual language does not affect the non-particular nature of the determinate, so our non-dissective nature is preserved for the congealed hermeneutics.[24]

CONCLUSION

I have argued that our current hermeneutic methods are dissective in nature such that they lead to the deconstruction of the understood material into conceptual objects. Through the example of Napoleon Crossing the Alps, I have demonstrated that such a dissective method is neither the only possible approach to hermeneutics nor the method most reflective of our pre-theoretic method of understanding, thus raising the possibility of non-dissective hermeneutics; and through a critique of Gadamer, Ricoeur, and Heidegger, I have shown that non-dissective hermeneutics must reject particularity, but maintain both definiteness and determinateness. One method that fulfills this criterion is the method of congealed hermeneutics, which respects both the non-particular nature of "understanding" and the necessary use of conceptual language to convey it. Through congealed hermeneutics, it becomes possible for the understanding to come to represent the internal structure of the understood material, and through this possibility, I arrive at a non-conceptual understanding highly reflective of our day-to-day experiences and most evidently noticed when observing art.

In this work I have only outlined the bare minimum of what a congealed hermeneutic method would be; significant further work is needed to transform it into a method able to contribute to discourses on aesthetic and semantic understanding. However, I also believe that such a shift in focus from the concepts derivable from the material to the structure of the material is a welcome one. This move might allow us to more explicitly grasp those parts of our experience which seemingly avoid all attempts at conceptualization. Perhaps there is value in restraining our tendency to divide the world into conceptual boxes, and to see instead what lies between the lines.

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24 To fully explain how particulars can convey non-particulars, a deeper exploration into the nature of both language and hermeneutics is needed. However, we can also superficially conclude that in the expression of a congealed understanding, our congealing of the concepts manipulates the particular concepts to becoming "close enough" to the non-conceptual determinate such that we can implicitly make the leap over the gap. Whether such a movement can be done explicitly, or if there is some systematic method to obtain these "close enough" congealed understandings is not yet known. The example of Bradley's Regression could be analyzed into a simple infinite repetition; it is likely the simplest a congealed structure could be. It has not yet been demonstrated whether understandings of things with more complex structures can be similarly achieved, but at least our pre-theoretic ability to understand the world gives hope for such an endeavor. Even if we do not explicitly use a non-dissective form of understanding, such a method is certainly not beyond our capabilities.

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ON THE METAPHYSICAL POSSIBILITY OF NOTHINGNESS

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INTRODUCTION

This paper argues that we should accept nothingness as metaphysically possible because Lowe's argument that mathematical truths entail its impossibility fails, and because there is nothing else likely to entail its impossibility. After briefly outlining the cosmological question that Lowe is attempting to answer – to wit, why there is anything (concrete) at all – I will explain his solution, which claims that the necessity of mathematical truths ensures the existence of at least one concrete object. Lowe interprets the natural numbers as universals whose instances are sets, and relies on an Aristotelian understanding of universals, according to which they can only exist if instantiated. His argument also relies on rejecting the empty set as 'fictional'. These premises allow Lowe to derive the metaphysical necessity of the existence of at least one concrete object. Rather than disputing any of Lowe's premises directly, I will perform a *reductio ad absurdum*, showing that together his premises entail an unacceptable conclusion. Finally, I will consider the prospects for a positive argument for the possibility of nothingness. Because possibility is conceptually anterior to necessity and impossibility, these prospects are quite weak. Therefore, rather than attempting such a demonstration, I will argue that it is unlikely for there to be anything that makes nothingness impossible.

THE COSMOLOGICAL QUESTION

Lowe's argument provides an answer to the question, "Why does anything exist?" It will be helpful to clarify this question before exploring his response. Lowe interprets this as asking why any *concrete* object exists.[1] He defines an object (concrete or abstract) as "any item possessing determinate identity conditions", by which he means that one can precisely state what it means to be, e.g., *a* fork.[2] Other examples of objects include bicycle-horns, lobsters, and sets. Examples of non-objects include ocean waves and facts. Non-objects can be said in some sense to exist but cannot be "assigned determinate identity conditions in a non-arbitrary way". Consequently, non-objects cannot be counted.[3] One can say that 'there are exactly 10 lobsters in this room' but one cannot say that 'I learnt 100 facts this morning, no more and no less.' For instance, is it a fact that while walking to class this morning I saw Gabby? Or are these two distinct facts, that I walked to class this morning and that I saw Gabby today? Or are there three facts: that I walked to class this morning, that I saw Gabby today, and that while walking to class I saw Gabby? There is no nonarbitrary way of deciding such matters, whereas one can simply count the lobsters because it is clear what it means for something to be, and therefore to count as, *a* lobster.

A concrete object is one which exists in time and/or space. Thus bicycle-horns are concrete, as they exist in time and space, but so are non-extended Cartesian egos since, if they exist, they must exist in time. Abstract (i.e., non-concrete) objects, such as numbers, exist outside of time and space. Predications of them are therefore tenselessly true or false: statements such as '2 + 2 = 4', for example, are eternally true or false, meaning they cannot go from being one to the other. Lowe understands the cosmological question as referring exclusively to *concrete* objects, so a solution which merely showed that some *abstract* object(s) necessarily exist would be insufficient.[4]

LOWE'S ARGUMENT

Lowe's response to the cosmological question begins with an analysis of numbers and mathematical truths. As explained above, demonstrating the existence of abstract objects does not in itself constitute a solution to the cosmological problem. However,

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1   Van Inwagen and Lowe, "Why Is There Anything At All?," 111.

2   Ibid.

3   Ibid.

4   This interpretation is based on the intuition that "if the only objects were abstract objects, there is an obvious and perfectly good sense in which there would be nothing at all" (Van Inwagen and Lowe, "Why Is There Anything At All?," 96). If the necessary existence of some abstract objects were established, we would still be left with the question of why anything, in this second sense, exists. A full answer to the cosmological question must therefore establish the necessary existence of a concrete object.

Lowe's solution proceeds by first establishing that one can reasonably suppose a certain type of abstract object to necessarily exist, and then deriving from this the necessity of some concrete object existing. Specifically, Lowe begins by arguing that numbers must exist in every possible world. This position can be established by appealing to truthmaker maximalism, the theory according to which every true proposition is true in virtue of something which makes it true, which we call its truthmaker.[5] This principle is highly plausible, capturing our intuition that assertoric propositions (i.e., those capable of being true or false) must always be about something, and that it is what a proposition is about that determines its truth-value. It follows from this principle that mathematical propositions require truthmakers. The most plausible candidate for the truthmakers of mathematical propositions is the numbers they involve, so that '3 + 5 = 8' would be true in virtue of (properties of) the abstract objects 3, 5, and 8. If we hold that mathematical truths are necessary,[6] it follows that their truthmakers – i.e., the numbers they involve – must exist in every possible world. While truthmaker maximalism suffices for Lowe's argument, it is not necessary. It may be that not *all* truths need truthmakers but that (at least some) mathematical propositions do. Furthermore, as Cameron argues, Lowe's argument requires only that numbers be an "ontological commitment" of mathematical truths, i.e., that mathematical propositions could not be true without the existence of numbers.[7] In any case, let us accept, for the sake of argument, the necessary existence of the natural numbers.[8]

The next stage of Lowe's argument attempts to establish that the natural numbers should be understood as kinds of sets.[9] Lowe's principal argument for this view proceeds by elimination: numbers must exist to ground mathematical propositions, and there is no other reasonable account of what numbers are. It is inconceivable that numbers are concrete particulars, since they would then be localisable in time and space and of the same nature as specific corporeal objects, which is absurd. If numbers are not concrete, they must be abstract objects. Abstract objects are either universals or abstract particulars.[10] Lowe argues that if one decides that numbers are abstract particulars, then

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5   This position is advanced by, e.g., John F. Fox (Fox, "Truthmaker," 189), Gonzalo Rodriguez-Pereyra (Rodrigues-Pereyra, "Truthmaker Maximalism Defended"), and Ross P. Cameron (Cameron, "How to Be a Truthmaker Maximalist").

6   Cameron argues that this necessity can be understood either weakly, as mathematical truths being false in no possible worlds, or strongly, as mathematical truths being true in all possible worlds (Cameron, *Much Ado About Nothing*, 210). Only the latter suffices for Lowe's argument.

7   Cameron, *Much Ado About Nothing*, 210.

8   For an extensive criticism of Lowe on this point see (Rodriguez-Pereyra, "Lowe's Argument Against Nihilism," 339–340).

9   Lowe, "Are the Natural Numbers Individuals or Sorts?"

10   The terms 'kind' and 'universal' can be used interchangeably, at least for present purposes: a 'universal' is a 'kind' of thing. For example, the colour blue is a

there is no non-arbitrary way to decide *which* abstract particulars they are. For instance, what non-arbitrary desideratum could choose the members of the sequence $\{\varnothing\}$, $\{\varnothing, \{\varnothing\}\}$, $\{\varnothing, \{\varnothing, \{\varnothing\}\}\}$, ... over those of the sequence $\{\varnothing\}$, $\{\{\varnothing\}\}$, $\{\{\{\varnothing\}\}\}$, ... ?[11] In both series, since each member is a set, the natural numbers are being metaphysically construed as abstract particulars. The former series is the standard mathematical construction of the natural numbers as ordinals.[12] Lowe's point is that, from a metaphysical point of view, nothing speaks decisively in favour of taking the members of the first series, rather than the second series, as the natural numbers. In both cases each member corresponds to the relevant number: in the former by containing that many members, in the second by being contained in that many sets. If one cannot non-arbitrarily decide between these series, then construing the natural numbers as abstract particulars would unnecessarily introduce an element of arbitrariness into our metaphysics, which surely ought to be avoided.[13]

The only remaining possibility is that numbers are universals, all of which are abstract. The most plausible group of universals for the natural numbers to be is kinds whose instances are sets. Thus, '2' is the kind of two-membered sets, '3' is the kind of three-membered sets, etc. On this interpretation, a group of three items is itself an instance of the number 3. Lowe's view therefore brings the natural numbers themselves into connection with our everyday use of numbers, which I take to count strongly in its favour. In any case, let us accept his claim for the sake of argument.

Having shown why Lowe thinks that the natural numbers exist in all possible worlds, and that they are kinds of sets, I will now present the main content of Lowe's argument. Lowe takes an Aristotelian understanding of universals, according to which kinds have no existence over and above their instances. On this view, no uninstantiated kind can exist. Therefore, since the natural numbers exist in all possible worlds, every possible world must contain a set with n-many members for each natural number n. The existence of the natural numbers therefore implies the existence of a denumerable infinity of objects. However, given the existence of one particular we can construct a denumerable infinity of sets. A 'singleton' or 'unit set' is a set containing only one object. If "one can distinguish between an object and its unit set",[14] then, provided some object o exists, one can generate the following sequence: $\{o\}$, $\{o, \{o\}\}$, $\{o, \{o\}, \{o, \{o\}\}\}$, and so on. This

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universal because many things can be blue, but this universal 'blue' just is a kind of thing, viz. things that are blue. Abstract particulars are singular, non-spatiotemporal entities, such as sets.

11    $\varnothing$ is the symbol for the empty set.

12   Badiou, *Being and Event*, 152–153.

13   Lowe thinks that the same problem of arbitrariness will arise for any series of abstract particulars suggested as candidates for being the natural numbers.

14   Van Inwagen and Lowe, "Why Is There Anything at All?," 117.

process can be repeated infinitely, to produce all the requisite sizes of sets, and thus ensure the existence of the natural numbers. In this way, the existence of a single object implies the existence of a denumerable infinity of objects.

If an object o and its singleton $\{o\}$ are not distinct entities, then $\{o, \{o\}\}$ is not a genuine two-membered set, but rather is identical to the unit set $\{o\}$.[15] In that case, the previous solution would fail to provide a denumerable infinity of objects, or indeed any object over and above the initial o. Even if this is true, however, the same result can be achieved provided that the object o, whose existence is admitted, is an instance of some universal K: $\{o\}$, $\{o, K\}$, $\{o, K, \{o, K\}\}$, $\{o, K, \{o, K\}, \{o, K, \{o, K\}\}\}$, etc.[16]

The above considerations imply that every possible world necessarily contains some object, but not that it must contain some *concrete* object, which is the aim of Lowe's argument. I will now prove this result by elimination. o must be (a) a universal, (b) an abstract particular, or (c) a concrete particular.

We will begin with (a). Universals can only exist if instantiated, so it is impossible that the only existent object be a universal. It would be viciously circular for the only existent objects to be (1) a universal K instantiated by a set S that contains K and (2) that set S. Therefore, o cannot be a universal.

Now let us turn to (b). Lowe assumes that sets are the only abstract particulars. Sets rely on their members for their existence.[17] If one set relies on another for its existence, then that second set cannot also rely on the first for its existence, for this would be a vicious circularity. Indeed, the reciprocal membership of two sets is precluded in standard set theory by the axiom of regularity.[18] Consequently, if no concrete particular exists, then the only set that could exist is one which relies for nothing on its existence, i.e., one which has no members. This would be the empty set ($\varnothing$). However, Lowe

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15   If we take this view, then the claim that $\{o, \{o\}\}$ has two members would be like me saying, "I am wearing two jumpers: my blue jumper and my favourite jumper," when these are the same item of clothing. For o and $\{o\}$ would be, in that case, different manners of designating the same object: o. Since an object cannot be contained twice in the same set, $\{o, \{o\}\}$ would then be in reality the single-membered set $\{o\}$.

16   Since the universal K is a distinct object from its instance o, $\{o, K\}$ would be a genuinely two-membered set. And since a two-membered set is distinct from its members, $\{o, K, \{o, K\}\}$ would be a genuinely three-membered set, and so on.

17   Sets are defined by their members: a set is only the set that it is in virtue of the objects that it contains. Take the set $S = \{a, b, c\}$. If a did not exist, then this set could not contain it. But S is the set containing a, b, and c. Thus, if S could not contain one of these, then it could not exist. The existence of a set therefore depends on the existence of its members.

18   The axiom is as follows: $\forall x('x$ is a nonempty set' $\rightarrow \exists y(y \in x \wedge x \cap y = \varnothing))$ (Jech, *Lectures in Set Theory*, 19). If $x \in y$ and $y \in x$, then $z = \{x, y\}$ would violate this axiom, for $z \cap x = \{y\}$ and $z \cap y = \{x\}$.

argues that the empty set is a "purely fictional entity."[19] Accepting this argument for the nonce, it follows that *o* cannot be an abstract particular.

Since every possible world contains at least one object, and since this cannot be a universal or an abstract particular, we can conclude that (c) every possible world contains at least one concrete object – which is to say that there being no concrete objects at all is impossible.

THE PROBLEM WITH THE ARGUMENT

Throughout the preceding section I made a number of assumptions, and showed that together they establish the impossibility of nothing concrete existing. In this section, I will show that those assumptions, while necessary for Lowe's argument, cannot be accepted because, taken together, they also entail the absurd conclusion that there are no mathematical truths involving the number 0.[20] The following assumptions are necessary components of Lowe's argument:

(1) Mathematical propositions require truthmakers to have truth-values.

The truthmakers of mathematical propositions are kinds of sets with relevantly many members (e.g., if a proposition contains the numbers 2 and 3 then its truthmakers will be the kinds of two-membered and three-membered sets).

Uninstantiated kinds do not exist.

There is no set with no members.

It follows from (1) that the proposition '2 - 2 = 0' requires truthmakers to be true (or false.) It follows from (2) that the truthmakers for '2 - 2 = 0' would be the kind whose instances are two-membered sets and the kind whose instances are zero-membered sets. It follows from (3) and (4) that there is no kind whose instances are sets with no members. Therefore, it follows from (1-4) that '2 - 2 = 0' is not true (or false.)

I hold that this conclusion is so absurd that any theory or argument which entails it must be rejected. Therefore, if Lowe's solution cannot succeed without using premises that entail this conclusion, it must be rejected. In the following section, I will consider and reject an attempt to avoid this conclusion while preserving Lowe's solution.

Rearranging the Equation

A response which seems initially viable is to argue that 0 is not needed as a truth-

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19   Van Inwagen and Lowe, "Why Is There Anything at All?," 116. Lowe's principal objection seems to be the empty set's lack of well-defined identity conditions: "A set has these only to the extent that its members do – but the empty set has none. Many things have no members: what makes just one of these qualify as 'the empty set'?" (Ibid.)

20   This argument is presented in condensed form in Baldwin, "There Might Be Nothing," 237).

maker (or ontological commitment). One may point out that '2 - 2 = 0' is equivalent to '2 = 2', and that the troublesome digit does not feature in the latter equation. One could justify rearranging the equation this way by appealing to the peculiarity of 0 – it is, for instance, the only number by which one cannot divide other numbers. Furthermore, this rearrangement seems to preserve the sense of the original equation. Thus, if all relevant propositions can be dealt with as easily as '2 - 2 = 0', then perhaps Lowe's solution can be preserved.

However, the plausibility of this response does not extend to more complex mathematical truths. Consider the following propositions: '2 + 2 > 0', '0 × 2 = 0', 'the function $y = x$ intersects the x-axis at (0,0)', 'the function $f(x) = x^2$ has a gradient of 0 at (0, 0)', and 'all real numbers divide 0 but 0 divides no real numbers'. None of these admit to rearrangement in the way that '2 - 2 = 0' did. '2 + 2 > 0' does not express the same thing as '2 > -2'. '0 × 2 = 0' could only avoid containing 0 if an equal value were added to both sides, but it is surely inconceivable that it expresses the same truth as '2 = 2', for instance. The case of multiplication by 0 is particularly important because what fundamentally underlies the truth of '0 × 2 = 0' is a basic truth about the number 0, to wit, that its product with any number is itself. That is to say, 0 is necessarily a truthmaker, or at least ontological commitment, of '0 × 2 = 0'. The other examples contain no number other than 0, so there is no possibility of removing it while retaining the proposition's original sense. This way of avoiding the absurdity that Lowe's solution entails cannot, therefore, be generalised.

Unnecessary Assumption?

Perhaps it is not the case that (1-4) were all necessary for Lowe's solution. I will now consider each assumption and see if his solution could proceed without it, in which case it would still be viable, since all are necessary to entail the absurd conclusion. If we reject (1) then mathematical propositions can be true without any objects making them true, in which case the truth of mathematical propositions would not imply the existence of any objects. Without this premise, Lowe's argument would not get off the ground. If we reject (2) or (3), then it no longer follows that for each natural number n there must be a corresponding set with n-many members, in which case one could not infer the necessity of an object that secures the existence of these sets. If we reject (4) then the object securing the existence of the necessary sets and kinds could be the empty set. No other objects would need to exist to this end, since the empty set itself depends on nothing for its existence. Therefore, the premises which are sufficient for the absurd conclusion are also necessary for Lowe's solution; it seems, then, that we have good reason to reject the latter.

IS NOTHINGNESS POSSIBLE?

Yet even if Lowe's positive argument for the impossibility of nothingness fails, this does not establish that nothingness is actually metaphysically possible. I will pursue this matter here using Lowe's own theory of modality, according to which "all facts about what is necessary or possible, in the metaphysical sense, are grounded in facts concerning the essences of things – not only of existing things, but also of non-existing things."[21] For instance, lobsters are necessarily extended beings because it is part of the essence of every lobster to be extended. One can define necessity and possibility in terms of each other: p is possible iff $\neg p$ is not necessary; p is necessary iff $\neg p$ is not possible. Thus, it is possible for lobster to be red because 'not being red is not part of the essence of lobsters.

On Lowe's theory of modality, necessity is logically or conceptually prior to (mere) possibility because essences immediately provide necessity claims, from which we can then derive possibility claims in the manner just described. A proper demonstration of the possibility of any non-actual state would therefore have to proceed negatively, that is, by demonstrating that nothing entails its impossibility. With states or objects which are actual, one can often 'shortcut' such demonstration either by pointing to some actual instance of them, or by proving that they are in fact necessary. Since the contested nothingness is certainly not actual, the present context allows us no such shortcut. I will therefore not attempt a proper demonstration of the possibility of nothingness, for this would require proving a universal statement, across the domain of all existent or non-existent objects, to wit, that they do not entail the absolute necessity of a concrete object's existence. However, I will argue that it is unlikely for either a concrete or abstract object to entail this necessity. Since all objects are either concrete or abstract, I will therefore conclude that we have good reason to suppose that nothingness (the absence of any concrete object) is possible.

A concrete object could be necessarily existent, that is, exist in virtue of its essence. However, this is rather unlikely because concrete objects exist within time and/or space, and are therefore exposed to external causal influences.[22] Regarding all known concrete objects, these causal influences are capable of destroying those objects, therefore making their existence merely contingent. For this reason, I find it implausible that a concrete object could be necessarily existent.

Alternatively, the essence of some necessarily existent abstract being could entail the existence of some concrete object(s). This is the path followed by both Lowe and theists

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21   Lowe, "Necessity, Essence, and Possible Worlds," 152.

22   It may be thought that God exists within time, and is therefore a concrete entity, yet few would maintain that He is exposed to causal influence. In this case, He would be a plausible candidate for a necessarily existent concrete object. However, I am discounting theological responses in this paper because Lowe's intention was to provide a naturalistic response to the cosmological question.

in answering the cosmological question. The theistic solution argues that God's creation of the world follows in some way from His essence.[23] However, this solution only succeeds insofar as God's essence plays a double role: it must both secure the existence of those concrete entities He creates *and* His own existence. For without the latter, it would be possible for God not to exist and therefore not to produce the world and the concrete beings it contains. Similarly, Lowe was able to infer the existence of concrete entities from the existence of abstract entities, viz. mathematical truthmakers. It was the necessary existence of mathematical truthmakers existing (itself ensured by the necessary truth of mathematical propositions) that could ensure the necessity of concrete objects existing. I therefore suggest that any attempt to ground the necessity of concrete existence in the essence of some entity must eventually appeal to an entity whose necessary existence is guaranteed by its own essence, be that entity God or mathematical truthmakers.[24] This implies that a concrete object could not entail the necessary existence of another concrete object unless the former was itself necessarily existent, in which case nothingness would already be impossible.

The question then arises of what necessarily existent abstract object(s), other than God and mathematical truthmakers, could entail that some concrete object(s) exist. It is unlikely that any exist, or at least I am unable to think of any. It was because of his Aristotelianism about universals that Lowe was able to infer the existence of concrete entities from the existence of universals. However, this same commitment makes it far more difficult for Lowe to argue that any universals are necessarily existent. A more Platonic metaphysics would face the opposite problem: it would be clear that (at least some) abstract objects exist necessarily, but it would not be clear that their existence entails their instantiation. Conversely, Aristotelian universals only exist if instantiated, whence the difficulty of establishing any as necessarily existent. A further argument is thus required to establish the necessity of universals existing, such as that which Lowe provides for the necessary existence of the natural numbers. Therefore, unless such an argument can be provided, we can provisionally conclude that nothingness is metaphysically possible.

Lowe's argument was intended as an answer to the cosmological question: Why is

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23   For instance, it may be thought that God is 'inherently creative' or 'loving' in a way that (necessarily) implies his creating a world of some kind. If, as with Leibniz, God is thought to always do what is best, then He would necessarily create the best possible world, which must be this one since He in fact created it. As indicated in note 16, God may be thought as temporal, in which case it would not be necessary to derive the creation of the world from His existence, as His own necessary existence would imply the impossibility of a world containing nothing concrete.

24   Kinds of n-many membered sets are necessary existents qua mathematical truthmakers, although, when considered solely qua kinds of sets, it might seem bizarre to say that their essence entails their existence.

there anything at all? We have seen that his solution to this problem fails, and I have argued that the prospects of any naturalistic solution at all are slim.[25] Yet the question itself remains. A number of responses to the unabetted looming of this question lie open to us. We might abandon Lowe's naturalistic bent and return to a theological solution à la Leibniz, arguing that God's essence grounds the impossibility of nothingness. Alternatively, we might take a completely different tact with regard to this question, accepting the possibility of nothingness but explaining its non-obtaining on other grounds.[26] Finally, if such approaches prove unfruitful, we may be driven towards a radical kind of metaphysical nihilism, constrained to accept the very existence of anything at all as a sheer, inexplicable *factum brutum*.

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25 Of course, this part of my argument depends completely on the metaphysical theory of modality it worked in, viz. Lowe's essentialist theory. On the idea that metaphysical theories of modality alone should determine our verdict on metaphysical nihilism see Cameron, *Much Ado About Nothing*, 218-219; for an opposing view see Efird & Stoneham, "Combinatorialism and the Possibility of Nothingness."

26 For instance, Peter van Inwagen argues that nothingness is possible but infinitely unlikely (Van Inwagen and Lowe, "Why Is There Anything at All?," 95–110).

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