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# GENDER FORUM

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## Anybody's Concerns II: Gender and the Body

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*Gender forum* is an online, peer reviewed academic journal dedicated to the discussion of gender issues. As an electronic journal, *gender forum* offers a free-of-charge platform for the discussion of gender-related topics in the fields of literary and cultural production, media and the arts as well as politics, the natural sciences, medicine, the law, religion and philosophy. Inaugurated by Prof. Dr. Beate Neumeier in 2002, the quarterly issues of the journal have focused on a multitude of questions from different theoretical perspectives of feminist criticism, queer theory, and masculinity studies. *gender forum* also includes reviews and occasionally interviews, fictional pieces and poetry with a gender studies angle.

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## Detailed Table Of Contents

Editorial	1
<b>ajaykumar:</b> The "Feminine Principle" in Butoh: A Methodology that Spans History, Cultures, and Disciplines? or Developing a "Feminine" Body-Space on a Sunday?	2
<b>Konstanze Kutzbach:</b> AnyBody's Simulacra: A Theoretical Approach to (Post-Gender) Identity	13
<b>Tina Wald, Johanna Hauke and Chrissula Kalpaki:</b> "I Want to Create a European-Jewish-British Theatre Where Women Have a New Role": An Interview with Julia Pascal	32
<b>Isabel Karremann (Review):</b> David M. Halperin: <i>How to Do the History of Homosexuality</i>	51
<b>Peta Mayer (Review):</b> Annamarie Jagose: <i>Inconsequence: Lesbian Representation and the Logic of Sexual Sequence</i>	57
<b>Sean O'Toole (Review):</b> Nancy Ordover: <i>American Eugenics: Race, Queer Anatomy, and the Science of Nationalism</i>	61
<b>Astrid Recker (Review):</b> The Right to Speak. Wally Lamb and the Women of York Correctional Institution: <i>Couldn't Keep It To Myself: Testimonies from Our Imprisoned Sisters</i>	64
<b>Tina Wald (Review):</b> Coming off Rage? Angry Young Women at the Royal Court in Lucy Prebble's <i>The Sugar Syndrome</i> , Gary Mitchell's <i>Loyal Women</i> , and Stella Feehily's <i>Duck</i>	75
<b>Michelena Wandor:</b> <i>Barlines</i>	81
<b>List of Contributors</b>	104

## Editorial

1      **Anybody's Concerns II** continues the exploration of artistic, medical and cultural practices and discourses regarding gendered bodies initiated in our recent issue [Anybody's Concerns](#).

# **The "Feminine Principle" in Butoh: A Methodology that Spans History, Cultures, and Disciplines? or Developing a "Feminine" Body-Space on a Sunday?**

By ajaykumar, Goldsmiths College, University of London, England

## **Abstract:**

I am concerned with gendered body-space, and whether the aspiration for a notion such as 'feminine principle' is or can remain valuable in con-temporary-space. In an earlier article, a tantric interpretation of the dance work Kagemi, choreographed by Ushio Amagatsu, I introduced the notion of supposed inter-action between 'male and female,' known and defined in various ways in Japan as *in-yo-do*, in China as *yin-yang*, in Tibet as *yab-yum*. In South Asia the notion of male and female body-space, although found in Taoism, Buddhism and Hinduism, is central to the way of Tantra. Unlike notions of female body-space found in Japan, or China, in South Asia, in Tantra the notion of the 'feminine principle' considered the female aspect as active and the male aspect as passive. I am reflecting on whether the positing of ancient notions of the 'feminine principle' are effective in con-temporary-space; whether a significant re-conception of body-space is possible, and for whom; and if the pursuit of such an aspiration may need a jettisoning of the historic insights altogether.

1 This article is a further examination of a subject area investigated in my review "Butoh and Transcending the Identity of Sex" in *Gender Debat|t|ed*. I am concerned with gendered body-space, and whether the aspiration for a notion such as "feminine principle" is or can remain valuable in con-temporary-space. In the earlier article I introduced the notion of supposed inter-action between "male and female," known and defined in various ways in Japan as *in-yo-do*, in China as *yin-yang*, in Tibet as *yab-yum*. In India the notion of male and female body-space, although found in both Buddhism and Hinduism, is central to the way of Tantra, a practice or way of being that, according to some , predates both the conception of Buddhism and Hinduism and yet permeates both these ontological systems in different ways as well as Jainism. Although according to George Feuerstein, it made its appearance in 500 C.E., and its influence reached maturation circa 1000 C.E. (X). This I believe corresponds to an apogee of South Asian civilisation, embodied in the rock cut edifices at Ellora. The work and practice at Ellora aspired for an integrative dynamic of body-space-time- nature-art-ontology-technology-science. Unlike notions of female body-space found in Japan, or China, in India, in Tantra the notion of the "feminine principle" views the "female aspect" as active and the "male aspect" as passive. As previously stated:

If there is anything universal about Amagatsu's work, it certainly lies in the importance of an ongoing and profound investigation of the "feminine principle" [...] Furthermore, Amagatsu's work could be interpreted as synthesising a number of concepts: the relationship between the human being and nature, pertinent to a "post-humanist" society; the disruption of conventional perceptions of gender; and the

ongoing subversion of Butoh, even with itself. (ajaykumar online)

Beyond this extract, I do not intend to summarise or refer to the first article, as it is so readily accessible on this journal site. Some readers who are unfamiliar with Butoh and the subject area may find it useful to read that article as a precursor to this one. I am reflecting on whether the positing of ancient notions of the "feminine principle" are effective in contemporary-space; whether significant re-conception of body-space is possible, and for whom; and if the pursuit of such an aspiration may need a jettisoning of the historic insights all together. This theme extends beyond performance. In the case of Butoh, it could be argued that it is an art practice and an ontological process syncretical of "meditation" in its profound sense. In Tantra the artefact essentially exists only to enable that ontological process. It is of greater significance that in India the artist has historically been regarded as an adept in and that the act of artistic creation was pursued with all the dedication and single-mindedness of a spiritual practitioner. Indic Art was seen traditionally as a form of Yoga. A "tantric" reading of *Sankai Juku* could be provocative, in the context of Tantra being a philosophy or un-philosophy of the body. Scholars and teachers oft quote from the Vishva-Sara-Tantra: what is not here is nowhere.

2 In the terms of a body-space or a body-space-time, the statement by Kayo Mikami, a former acolyte of Hijikata, that "Butoh is now, always now" is ontologically significant. How is the now? How is the significance of Butoh in the now? How is the significance of the now in Butoh? Some argue that *Sankai Juku* is not Butoh. How is? A well known *Tao* saying is "the minute you name a thing you miss the mark." Pina Bausch is often quoted as saying "I am not interested in how the body moves but what moves the body." How moves the body-space?

3 *Sankai Juku* on the whole avoids "naming" its work in terms of explaining it. According to Pierre Barnier, *Sankai Juku's* producer, the publication of *dialogue with gravity* was in effect an act of appeasement to critics' requests for explanation. It is a slender and small volume of text, 14 cm x 10 cm, with two images only. It is significant, however, that the content of the much bigger, thicker and larger book, *Sankai Juku*, by Amagatsu and Delahaye, is primarily images with one essay only. One of the difficulties of wider comprehension of Tantra is its necessary secrecy. Although there are Tantric texts, it has been essentially a secret teaching passed from teacher to pupil when teacher felt pupil was ready to receive it. The first image in this book is one of Amagatsu in an androgynous costume. Further images of androgynous bodies follow, intensified by the fact that in each image the performers have shaven heads and white make up, which covers almost the entirety of their body. This body is

often shown almost naked, save the covering of genitalia. Sri Ramakrishna, a significant adept of the nineteenth century spent a period of time dressing and behaving as a female devotee. He wrote of his unusual practice:

I spent many days as the handmaid of God. I dressed myself in women's clothes, put on ornaments, and covered the upper part of my body with a scarf, just like a woman. With the scarf on I used to perform the evening worship before the image...I cannot speak of my self as a man. (Nikhilananda 603)

With regard once more to the book, *Sankai Juku*, the fact that such a relatively large tome consists primarily of images reminds me that the ancient Greek word for "thinking" was one that had a multi-sensory notion of thinking:

Do you see what I mean?

Can you grasp the meaning?

Or are you still in the dark?

Let me shed more light on the matter.

4 In Butoh, the desire to play with notions of both "masculine" and "feminine" has been expressed in performance methodology by both male and female artists, such as the male and female dancers of Hakutobo Dance Company, led by Hijikata's former principal performer, Yoko Ashikawa. They also appear genderless according to Joan Laage (see 133). Significantly, little in the way of writing in English appears written by or from the perspective of Japanese female Butoh dancers. Moreover, Ashikawa appears more interested in an erasing of hierarchy and personal ego:

Although many people tried to establish the Hijikata myth, they don't know the nameless nature of humankind, self-abandonment, and sacrifice. They should know the nameless nature of butoh. This is the reason why the dancers of Hakutobo always use the family name, 'Ashikawa', and the reason why each dancer has a leading part, because we think everybody is on the same level, and that the leading part has no special value. (Bergmark online)

5 In her writing on *Butoh, Zen and Japan*, Sondra Fraleigh devotes one chapter, "My Mother's Face," to a reflection on the "feminine principle" or the goddess (87-96). Writing in the first person, and embroidering the personal experience of her mother with the wider philosophic experience of Mother, Fraleigh makes a forceful case for the existence and value of the Mother or the Goddess in a number of societies at different historical periods:

When we transcend our particular existential experience of "mother," the larger feminine principle, also called the Goddess, can begin to teach us. From Tara in Tibet to Isis in Egypt, she has many names. The metaphysics of the Goddess may not even be experienced in terms of one's own mother but is symbolic of qualities associated

with the mythic feminine wherever it manifests in women and in men...She is yin (in Chinese philosophy), the receptive...Like the dark goddess Kali (in India) and Oya (in Nigeria), the Goddess is also a destroyer. She dances with fire. Like natural disasters, she uproots trees and tears them apart; she is a great leveller...in Japan, she is the clearing away of ego that represents Zen emptiness. We pass through her to come back to ourselves, renewed...just as ancient Demeter and her daughter Persephone passed through the dangers of the underworld and returned to bring forth the fruits of earth in Springtime in Western mythology. (90-91)

Fraleigh later describes other faces of the Mother Goddess in other ages: in Sumerian myth she is Innana, Queen of Heaven, and conversely Ereshkigal, Queen of the Underworld; both whore and holy one in Gnostic gospels, Grace in the gospel of Valentinus: the eternal silence.

6        Could the nature of such a writing, marvellous in its ideal and seeming humanity, if realised in some con-temporary-space, or in some ex-temporary-space, be a forerunner to a another, if paradoxical form of patriarchy?

7        How is this need for myth-making?

8        Is this a prelude for another kind of parental complex??

9        This investigation of course extends beyond the realm of dance. Vandana Shiva writes of reclaiming the "feminine principle." She writes of the Chipko Movement's world view of one where nature is *prakriti*: Nature, the creator and source of wealth. Chipko challenges the notion of "progress" and "enlightenment." Siva attempts the re-conception of *Sakta Tantra* as a means to counter patriarchy. Shiva advocates the embracing of *prakriti* (Nature) as living nature or "feminine principle," a principle that is the entirety of nature, inclusive of its ability to create, sustain and destroy. There is here, ontologically, no divide between human being and nature. I-nature am. The Chipko Movement was begun by largely illiterate women and has had considerable economic, political, social and cultural impact in its areas of operation. It has influentially redefined gender and gender roles in its sphere of activity. Whether such a movement can have substantial pan-South-Asian influence in term so of gender perception remains to be seen.

10       The force of patriarchy has also been highlighted by June Campbell in relation to Tibetan Buddhism. Here the historic Tantric conception of female-male, with the female as active and male as passive, has been reversed by Tibetan Buddhism's notion *yab-yum*. This trend has resulted in the notion of the self-born enlightened tulku, (an example being Dalai Lama), who historically has almost exclusively been male. Campbell points out that

egalitarian ideals of gender equality can fail to materialise when dominant groups in society, selectively use (consciously or unconsciously) philosophical ideals to promote self-interest. Thus, despite the availability, for example of the texts of the



Madhyamika tradition, as propounded by Nagarjuna and later. The Yogacharin epistemological school of Asanga and Vasubandhu, which provided theoretical frameworks for disclosing the dynamics of dualistic thinking, polarity became the central most important metaphor in the Tibetan iconography. (186)

11 Can such historical appropriations ever be reversed or revised in a manner that will have relevance beyond the academic journal to those who are most oppressed by it? For the kind of perception of Tantra that Siva is advocating to be pertinent in con-temporary-space, and to engender further insights, one wonders whether it is necessary for some kind of destruction and displacement to first take place. Campbell posits a similar question. Campbell's analysis is valuable in a number of ways: primarily because she exposes ideas that have emerged in South and East Asia to rigorous contemporary critique. The historic, and still largely current, exotification of such ideas and the culture from which they have emerged, seemingly posits them in a stasis of paratruth. The emergence of critique from any quarter enables those ideas to evolve beyond being fixed as some "historic fundamental truth," and therefore removed from major intellectual discourses. Such fixing also entraps the powerless in the societies from which the ideas have emerged - predominantly composed of women - to pernicious fundamentalism. Campbell borrows from Irigaray to reinforce the significance of her thinking:

When the father refuses to allow the mother her power of giving birth and seeks to be the sole creator [...] he superimposes upon our ancient world of flesh and blood a universe of language and symbols that has no roots in the flesh and drills a hole through the female womb and through the place of female identity. A stake and axis is thus driven into the earth in order to mark out the boundaries of the sacred space in many patriarchal traditions. It defines a meeting place for men that is based upon immolation. Women will in the end be allowed to enter that space, provided they do as nonparticipants. (17)

12 Did you know that telling a joke is supposed to enhance a learning experience?

Have you heard the one about the female tulku?

No.

13 Education is an imperative here, and there are still huge impediments to education access in South Asia, particularly for women. At the same time, education must not be considered simplistically as formal schooling. The Chipko Movement can be perceived as a profound process of education. However so far orthodox Hindu society has also demonstrated considerable rejection of Tantra in its entirety. Tantric adepts also put to a Truth that is discernible. This is problematic in space-times that increasingly question the notion of an ultimate truth that can be discerned by human beings.

14 There is a resonance with *Sankai Juku's* inter-action with constructed lotus plants in Kagemi and Chipko activists embracing of trees for a greater good to a point where the human life may be sacrificed in favour of the tree. Such an action presents a challenge to the narcissistic aspects of humanism, which places the human being centre stage. It is valuable to think of human beings here post-humanistically, as only one relational part of a whole. In this context it is worth considering early Butoh pioneer Akira Kasai's conception of the "community body." His idea de-emphasises the individualism (not individuality) of the performer - echoing Yoko Ashikawa - and focuses more on the wider landscape (see Fraleigh 228-241). Interviewed by Fraleigh, Kasai says:

There are natural elements in Butoh. But the dance is not an ecological movement or a political movement. It is a movement toward healing, just as certain words and movements can heal [...]. As we move into the twenty-first century I see that dance will divide into two streams - one more technical and mechanical, and the other one connecting intuitively to the earth. (237)

In physics there are schools of thought that have asserted through the twentieth century that the very fact that an individual may test something changes that thing. It is already more than thirty years since John Wheeler, (who conceived the idea of black holes) wrote:

Nothing is more important than this, that it destroys the concept of the world as "sitting out there," with the observer safely separated from it by a 20 centimeter slab of plate glass. Even to observe so miniscule an object as an electron, he must shatter the glass. He must reach in. He must install his chosen measuring equipment. It is up to him to decide whether he shall measure position or momentum. To install the equipment to measure one prevents and excludes his installing the equipment to measure the other. Moreover the measurement changes the state of the electron. The universe will never afterwards be the same. To describe what has happened, one has to cross out that old word "observer" and put in its place the new word "participator." In some strange sense the universe is a participatory universe. (244)

15 The images in the book, *Sankai Juku*, on the whole seem to de-emphasise the notion of the "body-in-relation" and give a heightened sense of the anthropocentric, a body-individuum. The images presented consequently have more of a narcissistic quality. Perhaps this is one of the problems for any theatre company, but particularly one that is undergoing some kind of Butoh exploration, when it becomes renowned and joins a global circuit of major international touring theatres such as Sadlers Wells in London, and Théâtre de la Ville in Paris. Consciously or unconsciously one develops a particular "cult of personality" by the nature of such tours and the nature of audience's relation to the artist and what is presented on stage. Furthermore, as many Japanese now comment, Japan's spiritual mother is now no longer China but the U.S.A. Whatever the accuracy of such perception, it is evident in Japan today, that if one were, crudely, to use the spurious term "western," then Japan could appear

at space-times more "western" than the "West." Paradoxically there are conceivably more "Buddhists" living on the West Coast of the United States than in India.

16 The "linear" journey as metaphor is one that is deeply embedded in contemporary culture around the globe. Lakoff and Johnson write of the primary metaphors in their (North American) and other cultures as being "purposes are destinations" and "actions are motions:" "In our culture, there is a profoundly influential folk model according to which people are supposed to have a purpose in life, and there is something wrong with you if you don't. If you are purposeless, you are seen as 'lost,' 'without direction in your life, as not knowing which way to turn'" (60-61). A life that exhibits as a "non-linear narrative" is less valued. They remind us that the Latin term *curriculum vitae* means a course of life.

17 A typical view of some of my students when encountering Butoh for the first time is that it is boring because there is "no action." This kind of experience is replicated by some other students of mine when watching Tarkovsky's *Stalker*, *Mirror* or *Nostalgia*. How is "boring?" Hayao Kawai writes of a study where Japanese fairy tales were presented to "western children" who found them dissatisfying, "boring" because "nothing happens:" there is no action. Historically Japanese art could be described as an art of *ma* (signifying many things including "space-time," "emptiness," "interval"). Zeami writes of the *Noh* Theatre: "what the actor does not do is of interest: the actor does just enough to create a blank space-time where nothing is done," (Komparu 73) and a journey is made.

18 How is "boring?" Is the action in the story or in the "mind?"

19 To what extent are such archetypal images helpful in con-temporary-space? When, where and how is "form" engendering of cloud and when, where and how can it be engendering of clarity. How, when and where can iconoclastic practice usefully serve?

20 The introduction of Butoh in Japan was deeply disturbing. The first Butoh performance, *Kinjiki (Forbidden Colours)*, created by Tatsumi Hijikata in 1958, caused deep repulsion amongst its spectators. This audience comprised many from the Japanese modern dance establishment. Some were physically sick. Others could not bear to remain in the theatre and left (no mean feat by Hijikata in a society where there is an esteem and obligation on human beings to "endure.") The content of *Kinjiki* was inspired by Genet; and *Kinjiki* took name and inspiration from Yukio Mishima's book. The forbidden colour was that of homosexuality, a profoundly taboo subject. Hijikata perceived homosexuality positively in a society that had made it into a non-subject. The staged buggery was a defining moment in Japanese performing art. The manifestation of Butoh in Europe and North America was also a disturbing experience for many. Such disturbance is inherently necessary in the kinds of

dialectical process at play here. However, over the last forty years one has witnessed in performance art a number of practitioners exploring body mutilation and other acts that were initially highly disturbing. Artists such as Ron Athey and Franko B have explored and continue to explore cutting. All avant-garde practices have their time. Eventually they lose their ability to provoke their spectators in the same way as they had initially done. One can perceive an aspect of an audience's need to be titillation, of finding a new sensual gratification, a new "flavour-of-the-month." At the same time, as aforementioned, disturbance is necessary. Meditation is not as commonly perceived a tranquil process but a liminal process.

21 Seeing can be a blinding process as Paul discovered on the road to Damascus. The process of un-doing can be profoundly painful. If we are ill-equipped to deal with it then it can also be destroying. Christmas Humphreys points out that Zen is not psychotherapy or an alternative to psychotherapy for those who are mentally ill. According to Humphreys one needs to begin "healthy" to undertake this path. Ironically the film-maker Paul Schrader when asked what is the most important thing for a filmmaker, he responded simply with "his health." Yet how and where is folie, un-reason; and where is un-reason unravelling?

22 In Akira Kurosawa's film *Rashomon*, several characters tell a story, each interpreting a supposed sequence of events in their own way. Kurosawa exhibits the relativity of truth, and therefore its lack. For Kurosawa human beings, as the characters in the film, "are unable to be honest with themselves about themselves" (189). They need to embellish a story, their story, because to tell it as they saw it would be too painful, too difficult, too revealing. For reasons of some kind of self preservation they cannot face this mirror. For Hijikata, "the reason we suffer anxiety is that we are not able to deal with our fears" (Viala, and Masson Sekine, 188).

23 How is this need for myth-making?

24 British cultural policy, through organisations such as the Arts Council, in the past has emphasised "accessibility" of art in a tone that smacked less of availability and more on dumbing down. Certainly my numerous discussions with art producers and managers have engendered such a perception. An art work may actually be impenetrable. On the whole such a work would not have been funded, unless the artist was in some sense a "superstar," a demi-god, in the eyes of the producer/curator/administrator. An art work may be opaque in a particular age and later become "comprehensible" to a new audience. The language that has been previously used by policy-makers and implementers has also laid too much responsibility at the door of the artist or cultural producer to make work that is "understood." Not enough emphasis in policy documents has been placed on strategies for nurturing an "art

of the spectator," which ultimately is a more democratic, liberating process.

25 If the emphasis of arts and cultural policy moves away from a system that is still predominantly weighted toward the appreciation of artwork, artist, and increasingly the appreciation of the critic, and shifts toward the development of an "art of the spectator," such an art could be thought of as a liminal practice rather than a liminoid one: something which could be a perception of the contemporary world of the art.

26 How is this "art of the spectator?" Even if desired, is it realisable? This is where an iconoclastic reconceiving of Tantra, and in part Zen, in con-temporary-space could be pertinent. Could a benchmark of liminality be the idealist aspiration, as one Buddhist sage describes it, "the art of living long fulfilled lives?" It is worth noting here that the life of a Zen monk (in the monastery) is conceived as a preparatory one only, before the acolyte returns to the mundane world of the everyday, where he or she may experience a more profound enlightenment through her/his very engagement with that world. The import of the destructive force of the *prakriti* should be remembered for even such an ideal to re-surface beyond its initial cultural, historical sites.

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# **AnyBody's Simulacra: A Theoretical Approach to (Post-Gender) Identity**

By Konstanze Kutzbach, University of Cologne, Germany

## **Abstract:**

The [...] paper pursues a meta-theoretical focus as it traces how Georges Bataille's and Julia Kristeva's theories incorporate an increasingly less material or corporeal definition of the post-gendered subject and the signifying structures underlying it. [...] Kristeva's and Bataille's theories can be read as taking the (dissolution of) the subject beyond a framework of the real; and thus they call for a hyperreal contextualization, in which identity must be conceived of as (different levels of) Baudrillardian simulation.

1 Contemporary culture testifies to the fact that the "destabilized subject" has for some time been established as a predominant paradigm whose disconcerting and threatening aspects are often represented in different genres and forms of contemporary art. In this paper, rather than considering concrete forms of representations, which can be understood as external phenomena or symptoms of a certain *Zeitgeist*, I will focus on the theoretical assessment of the postmodern subject which is at the core (and is the cause) of these representations. Thus my paper will discuss and connect three theories which conceive of the subject (and its physical/natural qualities) as an unstable and ambivalent borderline phenomenon always on the verge of dissolution and not-being. These theories, accordingly, lend themselves to a reading of the postmodern subject as bursting the dualistic confines of not only the notions of subject and object but also of reality and hyperreality.

2 The following paper pursues a meta-theoretical focus as it traces how Georges Bataille's and Julia Kristeva's theories incorporate an increasingly less material or corporeal definition of the post-gendered subject and the signifying structures underlying it. Their concepts are to some extent anachronistic, since - although they were devised as early as 1957 and 1980, respectively, - they clearly surpass the socio-political or mimetic scope of contemporaneous interests in and expectations of theories of gender identity. I will argue that their theories instead represent or imply a timelessness which allows them to still contribute to contemporary critical debates on subjectivity. Kristeva's and Bataille's theories can be read as taking the (dissolution of) the subject beyond a framework of the real, and thus they call for a hyperreal contextualization, in which identity must be conceived of as (different levels of) simulation. Baudrillard's paradigm of simulation, whose principles suggest a deconstruction of both (gender) identity and the notion of representation/signification, will serve as a structural and theoretical framework in order to trace the diminishing materiality found in Kristeva's, and even more so, Bataille's theory.

3 Located in the field of poststructuralist theories of (gendered) identity, Kristeva's



(abject, jouissance) and Bataille's concepts (continuity of being, blindspot) conceive of identity as at its most interesting when on the verge of annihilation, as the following quotes from Kristeva's *Powers of Horror* (1982) [1980] and Colin MacCabe's introduction to the 1982 edition of Bataille's *Eroticism* [1957] show:

These body fluids, this defilement, this shit are what life withstands, hardly and with difficulty, on the part of death. There, I am at the border of my condition as a living being. My body extricates itself, as being alive, from that border. Such wastes drop so that I might live, until, from loss to loss, nothing remains in me and my entire body falls beyond the limit - cadere, cadaver. If dung signifies the other side of the border, the place where I am not and which permits me to be, the corpse, the most sickening of wastes, is a border that has encroached upon everything. It is no longer I who expel, 'I' is expelled. (Kristeva 3-4)

[Bataille] is concerned to place eroticism at the very centre of life but to do so by stressing its relationship to death as the moment at which our individual existence breaches the confines of the body to join the undifferentiated continuity of existence. It is our relation to both dead and living bodies which differentiates us from animals, who neither bury their dead nor feel any shame in their sexual activity. (MacCabe x)

4 However, as I will argue, and as the quotes above indicate, their assessment of identity differs when considering the aspect of "destabilization:" whereas Kristeva insists on the subject always being in contact with the symbolic order or modality, and thus stresses the redemptive aspect of referentiality and representation,<sup>1</sup> Bataille seems to temporarily dismiss the compensating power of the symbolic and the rational and rather celebrates the loss of control through the total dissolution of the subject as found, for example, in the continuity of being. Hence I will argue that their seemingly similar assessment of identity differs in terms of degree of "instability," ambivalence, obscurity, and borderline-ness. Toril Moi (1986) sums up Kristeva's approach to identity as outlined in "Revolution in Poetic Language" (1974) as follows: "Because the subject is always *both* semiotic *and* symbolic, no signifying system he produces can be either 'exclusively' semiotic or 'exclusively' symbolic, and is instead necessarily marked by an indebtedness to both" (93). Whereas Kristeva is obviously aware of the risk entailed in the destabilization of the subject, Bataille's theory even seems to call for the subject's dissolution, considering it as sine qua non condition of human existence: "Violence alone, blind violence, can burst the barriers of the rational world and lead us into continuity" (Bataille, *L'Erotisme* 54 qtd. in Richman 81).

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<sup>1</sup> The ambivalence of Kristeva's concept of the abject has often been neglected or ignored by critics: "When commentators [as, for example, Naomi Schor, who equates 'the abject' with Simone de Beauvoir's concepts of 'Otherness/negativity'] refer to the abject in passing they tend nevertheless to simplify it as the other or that which has been (successfully) expelled" (Still 222). Menninghaus argues that a simplified assessment of the abject entails a contradiction, since the abject, according to Kristeva does not have a (clear) object, however, it is given one in the approaches that reduce her theory to political or moral purposes (see 554).

5 In order to specify these differences, I will introduce Baudrillard's paradigm of simulation. His three-stage model will serve as the basis of a classification of Kristeva's and Bataille's assessment of the unaestheticized subject on the verge of annihilation. On the basis of Baudrillard's theory of the simulacrum as a "copy without an original," I will argue that the assumptions of subject identity as well as the aspects of signification entailed in the theories of Kristeva and Bataille<sup>2</sup> can be correlated with different orders of Baudrillard's simulation.<sup>3</sup> Thus, I will show in my paper how Kristeva's concepts of the abject and jouissance, in that they reflect a reluctance to giving up the contact to the symbolic order, can be related to the second order of simulation. Accordingly, Kristeva's concept still relies on (discursive) positions of gender. Bataille's concepts of moment of being and blindspot, since they do not share Kristeva's reluctance and even call for the subject's referentless dissolution and annihilation, relate to what Baudrillard refers to as third-order simulation. His concepts, I argue, totally abandon any reference to the very concept of identity and, accordingly, gender. On the basis of this classification, it will be discussed how the three orders of his model correspond to different concepts of gender identity and how both critics - by representing different orders in the theory of simulation - take similar yet different approaches to (gendered) identity. It is yet important to keep in mind that tracing a hyperreal approach to gender identity has nothing to do with any kind of mimetic or "realist" assessment of identity: "The concept of self-identity in our culture has been turned into a simulacrum, and is therefore irrelevant to real life" (Rider 2003). In the following, I will briefly sketch the relevant ideas of Baudrillard's model, i. e., clarify the theoretical premises of the principles of signification underlying his assessment of identity in each order of simulacra. I will then relate the central aspects of Kristeva's and Bataille's theories to it, both of which entail an approach to the postmodern subject itself and to the notion of signification that is linked to it (for more detailed explanation see footnote 2).

### **Baudrillard: Representation versus Simulation**

6 Although first published in 1976, and 1981, respectively, both *Symbolic Exchange and*

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<sup>2</sup> Both Kristeva's and Bataille's theories incorporate a concept of identity as well as one of the underlying principles of signification: in the case of Kristeva, it is the abject and jouissance, in the case of Bataille the moment of being and the blindspot. Bataille's concept of blindspot, as I read it, describes the underlying energy of a point of excess (moment of being) which defies or suspends the rules of signification (see Schneider 148). Kristeva's concept of jouissance can likewise be regarded as describing the underlying signifying structure of the (abject) subject, which is anchored in the pre-oedipal stage or semiotic modality and provides the subject with energy (see Kristeva 9).

<sup>3</sup> Critics who refer to Baudrillard's theory of simulation/simulacra often focus on the concept in general rather than on the differences between and implications of the single orders of simulation.

*Death and Simulacra and Simulation*,<sup>4</sup> which are Baudrillard's most thorough analyses of the principle of simulation, provide a still up to date account of the workings of the postmodern subject and society. The concept of simulation is opposed to that of representation inasmuch as representation is based on "the principle of the equivalence of the sign and the real," whereas simulation, as Baudrillard states, is derived from "the utopia of the principle of equivalence, from the radical negation of the sign as value, from the sign as the reversion and death sentence of every reference" (Baudrillard, *Simulacra* 6). Simulation thus defies reference to any sort of reliable reality: "It is the generation by models of a real without origin or reality: a hyperreal" (Baudrillard, *Simulacra* 1). In other words, the models precede the actual events, or the map the territories, as Baudrillard shows in *Simulacra and Simulation*. Simulation is basically an attempt at locating the subject with regard to the real and - along with that - at describing the increasingly complex workings and movements of signs heading for a total abolishing of the real (see Baudrillard, *Simulacra* 81).<sup>5</sup> Taking the symbolic order, a state preceding the principles or orders of simulation where the workings of signs are totally in keeping with and leaving intact our notion of reality (see Horrocks, Jevtic 103-104), as a point of departure, Baudrillard distinguishes three different orders, each of which includes the preceding one(s) (see Baudrillard, *Exchange* 57).

7 The symbolic order still obeys the rules of reality, in fact, as Horrocks and Jevtic argue, "reality [is] not an issue" (104), since (gender) identities are still sustained within a signifying system where "signs are dominated by unbreakable and reciprocal symbolical order" (104). A symbolic order thus understood could, for example, describe the workings of essentialist models represented by the patriarchal conflation of gender and sex, as, for example, typical of nineteenth-century cultural discourses on gender where the prevailing stereotypical images of women and men assigned positive characteristics to the males and vice versa. Gender identity can therefore be described in terms of an unobscured signifier-signified relationship where (physical) signifiers relate to and designate monovalent positions of (cultural) signifieds. In contrast to that, the first order of simulacra denotes a subject(ivity) characterized by "signs [that] are emancipated from duty" (Horrocks, Jevtic 105). This order, where signs "dissimulate something" (Baudrillard, *Simulacra* 6) does - strictly speaking - not yet belong to the realm of simulation, since dissimulation can be compared to pretending, to the imitation of a real, a principle which runs counter to questioning and destroying a real (see

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<sup>4</sup> In the following referred to as *Exchange* and *Simulacra*.

<sup>5</sup> Just as the notions of identity and meaning are subject to an ever increasing dissolution, the specific aspect of gender, which is included therein, is also heading for an abolishing of the real when progressing along the orders of simulation.

Baudrillard, *Simulacra* 3). The signs or images, as Baudrillard calls them, "move from reflecting a profound reality to masking or perverting a profound reality" (Horrocks, Jevtic 106). Thus, although the signs mask a reality and therefore go a step further than in the symbolic order, they still refer to and exist on the basis of an assumed reality - even if an inverted one: "[The signs] dream of the symbolic order but can only feign or falsify it" (Horrocks, Jevtic 105). One could say that at this order reality is acknowledged through its repulsion: "The first-order simulacrum never abolishes the difference: it presupposes the dispute always in evidence between the simulacrum and the real" (Baudrillard, *Exchange* 54); the difference is never questioned, it is only concealed. In contrast to that, "simulation [that is, as I would say, second and third-order simulation] threatens the difference between the 'true' and the 'false,' the 'real' and the 'imaginary'" (Baudrillard, *Simulacra* 3). In keeping with this, Baudrillard establishes "the counterfeit" as the dominant paradigm of identity of this first order, which works according to the principles of signification outlined above. Counterfeiting, as Baudrillard argues, does not happen through "changing the nature of an 'original,'" but rather through its extension, thus by means of "completely altering a material whose clarity is completely dependent upon a restriction" (Baudrillard, *Exchange* 51). The counterfeit is based on an ever pervading principle of falsity (see Horrocks, Jevtic 105), generating (and imitating) identity as a form of make-believe that is always referring back to the reality of the symbolic order: "The modern sign dreams of its predecessor, and would dearly love to rediscover an *obligation* in its reference to the real" (Baudrillard, *Exchange* 51). This order reflects, for example, as I would suggest, the mechanisms of radical feminist gender theories from the seventies, which try to deconstruct patriarchal and misogynist attributions to the sexes. Although they call for a separation of sex and gender, i.e. the signifier and the signified, they still extend and sustain the conflation through the inversion of the qualities attributed to the sexes.

8      The second order of simulacra is, one could say, the stage where "real" simulation begins, or which, at least, bears traces of simulation. Instead of signs that "dissimulate something," this stage is marked by "signs that dissimulate that there is nothing" (Baudrillard, *Simulacra* 6). At this stage of beginning simulation, the image or the sign, according to Baudrillard, "masks the absence of a profound reality" (Baudrillard, *Simulacra* 6) as simulation means "to feign to have what one doesn't have" (Baudrillard, *Simulacra* 3); the principles of signification at work can best be explained when looking at the dominant paradigm of identity of this stage, which is that of "production and the series" instead of imitation. In an ever increasing infinite series of production, the sign does not, like the

counterfeit, refer back to a real/an original, but "[...] indifferently to other signs in the series," regardless of the notion of origin or real (Horrocks, Jevtic 107).<sup>6</sup> In this order, where the dissolution of the real begins, signifier-signified relationships are not just taken at face value (symbolic order) or simply inverted (first order of simulacra), but derive meaning (if one can say so at all), from "[referring] to serial differentiation, not to reality" (Horrocks, Jevtic 107).

9 With regard to theories of gender identity, this is the order where Kristeva's theory of the abject (identity) and the concept of jouissance (signification) could be located. Although her argument is partly based on clear gendered positions (like the maternal and the paternal and the notion of jouissance), her theory at the same time defies them, allowing for a less material/physical assessment. This seemingly contradictory nature of her theory can be explained by reading these gender positions, as Inge Suchsland suggests, as discursive positions within a signifying system, or, as I will argue, as the beginning of (second-order) simulation. The very concepts of the mother and the father and the underlying concept of jouissance as understood by Kristeva thus testify to the fact that there is no resemblance whatsoever between the signifier and the signified, and that referentiality and the generation of identity here is based on signs that do not refer (back) to a real anymore, but on signs dissimulating "that there is nothing" (Baudrillard, *Simulacra* 6).

10 In contrast to the preceding orders, the third order of simulation totally discards any reference to reality in favour of a simulated hyperreality. Former principles and laws of referentiality here are totally taken over by simulacra, generating a universal simulation; reality and its reliable referents have disappeared (see Blask 10-11). Simulations/simulacra do not designate or refer to anything, but merely interact with other simulations/simulacra (see Blask, 23), which turns them into a quasi intra-referential system of signification, or better, simulation. Whereas, as Baudrillard states, the sign/image of the second order only "masks the absence of a profound reality," the image/sign of the third order "has no relation to any reality whatsoever: it is its own pure simulacrum" (*Simulacra* 6). This being the case, the simulacrum clearly has subversive potential as a form of counter-discourse, as Baudrillard outlines in *Symbolic Exchange and Death*. Not only does third-order simulation testify to the arbitrariness between signifier and signified (as described by de Saussure), but it also witnesses the dissolution of this arbitrariness, of the *difference between* signifier and signified (see Blask 30) and thus defies any form of meaningful interpretation other than of an intra-referential nature. As mentioned above, in this order the maps (or, as Blask calls them,

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<sup>6</sup> This idea is clearly indebted to both Derrida's concept of *différance* as well as to the de Saussurean concept of arbitrariness between signifier and signified.

"models that endlessly revolve within and around themselves [endlos in sich kreisende Modelle]" 31; my translation) in a mis-en-abyme like fashion precede and govern the events.

11 As far as the paradigm of identity is concerned, this - according to the principles at work at this order where simulation has become the all encompassing and pervading notion - is also based on pure simulation and hyperreality. Since the hyperreal is "more real than the real" (Horrocks, Jevtic 109), the form of (gender) "identity" derived from it is "the clone, android or replicant": something that is "more human than human" (Horrocks, Jevtic 110).<sup>7</sup> This model, which precedes the facts (or "reality"), not only defies the different forms of gender conception outlined with regard to the previous stages - those which work on the basis of signifier-signified conflation as well as those conceiving of gendered identity as merely discursive positions within a signifying system (as suggested, for example, by Kristeva). It goes a step further than the second order of simulation, where Kristeva's discursive approach is located and discards any reference to any reality (even a discursive one) in favour of a system of intra-referential signification. This hyperreal approach to locating the subject with regard to representation calls for a likewise "hyperreal" assessment of (gender) identity like, for example the one provided by Georges Bataille.

12 Bataille's theory - as I will argue - surpasses Kristeva's concept, since his conception of (gender) identity as outlined, for example, in *Eroticism* (1957) could be read not only as being based on discursive positions partly referring back to a real, but as conceiving of gender (identity) itself as a simulacrum, a model, only affiliation to which has any meaning (see Baudrillard, *Exchange* 56). The third order of simulation is thus an appropriate framework for Bataille's two basic concepts discussed here: the blindspot, which relates to representation, and the continuity of being, which refers to identity; the latter provides a model where - in contrast to Kristeva - the subject (and along with it gendered identity) is unsexed and dissolved ad infinitum and where "our individual existence breaches the confines of the body to join the undifferentiated continuity of existence" (MacCabe x). The blindspot as the point where "reason founders" (MacCabe x) accordingly willingly defies any form of reliable representation.

13 In the following, I will first outline and elaborate how Kristeva's concept of identity - the abject - and its underlying concept of signification - jouissance - relate to Baudrillard's

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<sup>7</sup> From the point of view of simulation, which does not refer back to the real, the category of gender must be conceived of as one which has never existed because gender, especially since it describes a cultural construct, is a concept clearly located within a real(istic) or mimetic framework. Accordingly, the "clone, android or replicant," which are "more human than human" are not only not gendered, they are even less than that since they cannot be aware of a category of gender as a priori; they themselves can be regarded as the "map that precedes the territory" (Baudrillard, *Simulacra* 1).

second-order simulation. Then I will show how Bataille's concept of identity as represented by the continuity of being and the underlying assumptions about signification<sup>8</sup> (blindspot) refer to the third order of simulation, that is, simulation proper. The following analysis starts where simulation begins - which is at the second order, because only then is the reference to the real abolished.

### **Kristeva and Baudrillard**

14 Kristeva's two concepts, as I suggest, represent a stage on the way to "real" simulation; they work according to similar principles as Baudrillard's second order of simulation. In her theory of the abject as outlined in *Powers of Horror* (1982) and her concept of jouissance as described in "Revolution in Poetic Language" (1974), she leaves behind essentialist approaches to gender identity which relate - as previously outlined - to Baudrillard's symbolic order and the first order of simulation. Instead, she suggests a contradictory assessment of identity, negotiating (gendered) identity in a rather ambivalent fashion by conceiving of it as discursive positions which only partly (if at all) refer back to the real and the symbolic order.

15 The abject and abjection denote an in-between state that the subject is permanently exposed to and also a process the subject has to undergo constantly: something which takes me to "the border of my condition as a living being" (Kristeva 3). By means of these concepts Kristeva describes the contradictory nature of identity permanently struggling against not-being. As the abject is highly contradictory in nature, it is impossible (and also unnecessary) to pin it down: Kristeva refers to it as "[a] 'something' that I do not recognize as a thing" (2). On the one hand, the subject must dispose of the abject since it threatens the subject, on the other hand the subject cannot do so without eventually causing its own annihilation because ultimate abjection means death (see Kristeva 3). Kristeva traces abjection back to the state of *primal repression*, where the "not-yet-subject" separates from the archaic mother (for fear of the phallus of the father) in order to generate an independent subject identity (see Suchsland 124). Accordingly, the abject always contains the archaic contents of this pre-objectal relationship, "in the immemorial violence with which a body becomes separated from another body in order to be" (Kristeva 10). According to Kristeva, the subject is and will therefore always be a fragile structure, which (often vainly) tries to exclude these contents of the unconscious.

16 This ties in with the notion of jouissance, which, as mentioned before, can be regarded as the underlying signifying structure of the (abject) subject: "It follows that jouissance alone

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<sup>8</sup> For further information on the close connection between identity and language compare also Jacques Lacan's idea of the unconscious being structured like a language.

causes the abject to exist as such" (Kristeva 9). Contradictory like the abject, jouissance too provides the subject with energy and at the same time fosters its destabilization. Inasmuch as identity is concerned, the theory of the abject takes into consideration the annihilation of the subject, yet also opts for sustaining it, safeguarding it against what threatens its boundaries. This being the case, I would like to argue that Kristeva's contradictory concept of identity is based on the principle of serial production as outlined by Baudrillard. Trying to sustain its boundaries, the subject oscillates between the undefined and ever changing discursive realms of the mother (jouissance/semiotic) and the father (symbolic order), which are never the same each time the subject revisits them. The ambivalences inherent in the concept of the abject - or jouissance - all testify to the fact that this borderline nature of identity does not generate a clearly defined material subject since there is no object the subject can set itself off against in order to safeguard its boundaries:

[T]here is nothing either objective or objectal to the abject. It is simply a frontier, a repulsive gift that the Other, having become *alter ego*, drops so that "I" does not disappear in it but finds, in that sublime alienation, a forfeited existence. Hence a jouissance in which the subject is swallowed up but in which the Other, in return, keeps the subject from foundering by making it repugnant [...].

We may call it a border; abjection is above all ambiguity. Because, while releasing a hold, it does not radically cut off the subject from what threatens it - on the contrary, abjection acknowledges it to be in perpetual danger. (Kristeva 9)

17 Since the abject does not have an object, the subject thus exposed must rely on "[referring] to serial differentiation, not to reality" (Horrocks, Jevtic 107). One could say, the sign exerting power over the subject in this phase "masks the *absence* of a profound reality" (Baudrillard, *Simulacra* 6). The signs of the mother/father and those of the subject/object are permanently evading secured positions, concealing the fact that they are actually non-existent (at least not in a material or "real" way). Accordingly, the abject subject's quest for being is, one could say, granted only within a framework of serial production where the mother and the father as well as the subject/object are ever changing signifying positions hardly referring back to a real, but rather perpetually and inconsistently referring to each other. Thus the signs simulate a gendered haven, yet at the same time deny the subject a clearly accessible (gendered) real. The subject is permanently torn between being and annihilation, between the serial signs or discursive positions of the mother and the father, each of which vanishes or leads to destruction when the subject tries to secure its own subjectivity through objectifying them:

A massive and sudden emergence of uncanniness, which, familiar as it might have been in an opaque and forgotten life, now harries me as radically separate, loathsome.



Not me. Not that. But not nothing, either. A 'something' that I do not recognize as a thing. A weight of meaninglessness, about which there is nothing insignificant, and which crushes me. On the edge of non-existence and hallucination, of a reality that, if I acknowledge it, annihilates me. There, abject and abjection are my safeguards. (Kristeva 2)

By doing so, the abject denies the subject access to a real, on the basis of which it could - in a dualistic manner - derive a clear concept of its own subjectivity in contrast to an other. It instead destabilizes our notion of self, dictating a realm of signification in which signs refer "[indifferently] to other signs in the series" (Horrocks, Jevtic 107), dissimulating an absence, in this case the absence of a reliable object. One could say that the object seduces the subject (see also Baudrillard's concept of "seduction," according to which it is the object that exerts power over the subject [see Blask on this]). In keeping with Baudrillard's theory, the object simulates its own object-ness in order to tempt the subject into annihilation, "[masking] the absence of a profound reality" (Baudrillard, *Simulacra* 6) and "[feigning] to have what [it] doesn't have" (Baudrillard, *Simulacra* 3), or to put it differently, to be what it is not. On the other hand, however - and this is where Kristeva's theory lacks the radicality found in Bataille - she stresses that the subject needs to be in touch with the semiotic as well as the symbolic modality in order to sustain subject identity. This being the case, Kristeva's assessment clearly relates to Baudrillard's theoretical premises because according to the principles of the second order of simulation, the ties to reality are not totally severed yet - the state of simulation proper is not reached yet. In order to clarify this point, I shall now consider the aspect of referentiality underlying this concept of identity.

18 In keeping with the principles of the image or sign of second-order simulation, Kristeva's theories partly obscure the signifier-signified relationship in that the sign entails one signifier that refers to several possible signifieds, thus dissolving referentiality by means of "signs that dissimulate that there is nothing" (Baudrillard, *Simulacra* 6). This is the case, for example, with the concept of jouissance, which - as outlined above - is closely related to and conditions the abject. Jouissance itself, one could say, is not located in mutually agreed upon realms of signification in that the signifier itself is a strange, sometimes non-verbal one (such as bodily rhythms, etc), yet the signifier is not distorted in itself (as it is the case with Bataille's theory of blindspot, where the signifier itself is already semantically obscured). Thus, Kristeva's concept of signification "starts to dissolve the real" (Blask 27; my translation) and opts for an obscuration of the real, without, however, totally discarding it. This becomes even clearer if one recalls her insistence on the subject always being in touch

with both, the semiotic and the symbolic realm.<sup>9</sup> This latter aspect of her theory even bears traces, one could argue, of signification according to first order simulation as it opts for a reconciliation with and in the real through "homogeneity and universalization of language" (Blask 27; my translation).

9 But then again, the very concept of the abject counteracts this stability provided by the symbolic order, and "draws me toward the place where meaning collapses" (Kristeva 2), thus permanently destabilizing the (gendered) subject. As my discussion has shown, Kristeva's theories of identity and signification basically meet the "requirements" of the second order of simulation. They go beyond essentialist conceptions of gender since her "subject in process/on trial" (Moi 89) most of the time defies the connection to the real (let alone biology or the material) because it is constituted on the basis of ongoing serial negotiations with the different discursive positions it relates to (as, for example, the mother and the father). The signifier-signified relationship is thus not to be taken at face value but is rather based on the principle of "serial differentiation," rendering (gender) identity a second-order simulacrum. In contrast to Bataille, one could argue that the struggles of the subject in process and the underlying mechanisms of signification take place within a three-dimensional hermetic system, staked out by the positions of father/mother, symbolic/semiotic, or simply subject/object as images or signs which refer to other archaic or pre-oedipal images and signs that are always already there, thus revealing a principle of "backwardness." Since only the signified is distorted one could argue that the signifying process reflects at least some connection to real representation. Meaning is still based on preceding processes of signification and as such takes place within a more or less hermetic three dimensional space which contains all possible signifieds radiating from a signifier. As far as Bataille's theory is concerned, I will try to show how his conceptions of continuity of being and blindspot go beyond Kristeva's positions in that they relate to the third order of simulation, suggesting a mis-en-abyme like structure expanding (gendered) identity and representation to a fourth (ad infinitum) dimension. This fourth dimension displays a radiating "forwardness"<sup>10</sup> rather than a backwardness because the two concepts - in contrast to Kristeva's concept - cannot turn back to anything as they do not assume anything as real or a priori (as even the signifiers on which identity relies are distorted).

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<sup>9</sup> Kristeva's insistence on the indispensability of both modalities to some extent runs counter to other central assumptions and principles of her (later) theories and may be motivated by her sacrifice of radicality for the sake of applicability of her theory, especially in view of feminism's objectives and popular positions in the early 1970s.

<sup>10</sup> See also Baudrillard's metaphor of the metastasis, which represents the contradictory aspects of acceleration as well as inertia resulting from an ever increasing chaotic growth. This culminates in the principle of ecstasy as a point of no return, which as such defies the laws of logic and referentiality (see Blask 69-70).

## Bataille and Baudrillard

20 I will now, along the thematic and structural lines of the previous section, show how Bataille's concept of identity (continuity of being) in *Eroticism* as well as his (implied) concept of referentiality (blindspot) in his *Story of the Eye* (2001) [1967] are reflected in the workings and principles of Baudrillard's third-order simulation. Concepts of sex and gender are discarded by means of their total dissolution/simulation which is, according to Baudrillard's concept of hyperreality, brought about by a collapse of the (difference between) signifier and signified.

21 Bataille's central interest lies in the intersection of death and eroticism and their implications for human existence: "What I want to emphasise is that death does not affect the continuity of existence, since in existence itself all separate existences originate; continuity of existence is independent of death and *is even proved by death*. [...] Erotic activity, by dissolving the separate beings that participate in it, reveals their fundamental continuity, like the waves of a stormy sea" (*Eroticism* 21-22).

22 According to Bataille's idea, "the aim of sexual pleasure is not the gaining but the losing of control. It is the moment of orgasm with the rending of the separate and unified self into a physicality that can no longer be located in one body [...]" (MacCabe xiii). In contrast to Kristeva's abject subject, Bataille's subject in continuity represents a desirable state as it does not depend on or seek the gaining back of control by means of securing its attachment to the real or a symbolic order. Bataille takes effort to stress the fascination rather than the danger inherent in the connection of death and continuity (see *Eroticism* 13). The dissolution or literal destruction of (physical) boundaries are even elevated to the status of the sacred. He outlines how in the feast taking place after rituals of sacrifice "[the] human flesh [...] is eaten then is held as sacred" (Bataille, *Eroticism* 71).

23 The sacred nature of the subject, whose physical and spiritual boundaries are thus breached after the subject's release from its enclosure "in its individual separateness" (90), is reminiscent of the hyperreal assessment of the real represented by third-order simulation. The subject's sacred nature in this elevated state precedes the facts, as it ties in with a hyperreal description of identity in which the subject cannot any longer be described according to mutually agreed upon mimetic models of identity anchored in the real. Instead, as the subject finds perpetual continuity beyond its own death, it is becoming a mere simulation defying the laws of the reality of life and death: "It is the common business of sacrifice to bring life and death into harmony, to give death the upsurge of life, life the momentousness and the vertigo of death opening on to the unknown. Here life is mingled with death, but simultaneously

death is a sign of life, a way into the infinite" (Bataille, *Eroticism* 91). In this state, as the subject is figuring in its own death, it can be described as a copy of a copy of a copy (without an original) and is accordingly elevated above the human, being "more human than human" (Horrocks, Jevtic 110). In other words, it bears traces of the paradigm outlined by Baudrillard: the replicant. As it blurs the boundaries between reality and hyperreality (see Horrocks, Jevtic 108) and "the true and the false" (Horrocks, Jevtic 110), as well as between subject/object, it goes beyond the assessment of identity suggested by Kristeva's discursive approach.

24 In keeping with the dominant paradigm of identity of the second-order simulation, (serial) production - Bataille describes his concept of (re)production as a mechanism that entails a discontinuity since it always refers back to the realm of the real and the symbolic. However, Bataille does not stop here; his concept implies and anticipates associations of what is to come when looking at third-order simulation, as the following quote - when read with regard to Baudrillard - shows: "Reproduction leads to the discontinuity of beings, but brings into play their continuity" (*Eroticism* 13). In conclusion, one can state that Bataille's approach to (un/gender[ed]) identity is less physical or material and thus less realistic than Kristeva's, even though he at times seems to suggest an essentialist description of gender which can, however, be deconstructed through his own concept of continuity.

25 There have been several debates about the question of whether or not Bataille's theory pertains to or is founded on sexist assumptions. As Judith Still states, while "[Dworkin] claims that Bataille has a *male* conception of sex," Susan Sontag, like several other critics, defends Bataille's theory against reproaches of sexism. Emphasizing the democratizing implications of Bataille's central theoretical concepts she argues in her article "The Pornographic Imagination," as Still writes, "that the relation [Bataille] highlights between sex and death is a *human* question" (Still 235).

26 I would suggest that reducing Bataille's theory to essentialism does not do justice to the visionary qualities also implied (eingedacht) in it. Bataille did make an important and early contribution to the philosophical exploration of identity; one could even say that from a poststructuralist point of view, he paved the way for theories like Baudrillard's, which conceive of (gender) identity not only as anti-essentialist but totally anti-real(ist) and simulacral.

27 In accordance with his seemingly essentialist understanding of the subject, he conceives of the female side as passive, while at the same time assigning an active role to the male (see Bataille, *Eroticism* 17). However, this essentialism is undone because of the mechanisms at work in the process of dissolution and erotic continuity, especially the latter of

which eventually functions as a form of democratizing principle:

Dissolution - this expression corresponds with *dissolute life*, the familiar phrase linked with erotic activity. In the process of dissolution, the male partner has generally an active role, while the female partner is passive. The passive, female side is essentially the one that is dissolved as a separate entity. But for the male partner the dissolution of the passive partner means one thing only: it is paving the way for a fusion where both are mingled, attaining at length the same degree of dissolution. (17)

Thus, eroticism, I would argue, generates a (democratizing) gender-simulacrum, which is not based on any type of realistic concept, but which instead provides a model which is "irrelevant to real life" (Rider 2003) as it precedes and thus defies the principles of the 'real gender' or the 'gendered real': "The whole business of eroticism is to destroy the self-contained character of the participators *as they are in their normal lives*" (Bataille, *Eroticism* 17, emphasis added).

28 Bataille further states that "the female partner in eroticism was seen as the victim, the male as the sacrificer, both during the consummation losing themselves in the continuity established by the first destructive act" (18). In order to comment on and sum up this point, I would like to suggest that gender difference is both deconstructed and has become obsolete as a concept because the "regulated social order basic to our discontinuous mode of existence as defined and separate individuals" (18) is upset by eroticism. Identity in general (including gender) is a simulacrum, or a hyperreal model, as for example the replicant, which precedes formerly gendered positions, denying any contact whatsoever to the symbolic order. As with the (difference of) signifier and signified, not only the positions of subject and object are blurred, but the category of their difference is also effaced, suggesting a collapse of subject and object which generates a state of identity which knows no a priori since it has nothing to refer back to: "the subject is identified with the object losing his identity" (31). This state of identity could be referred to as 's/object,' in order to distinguish it from 'traditional' concepts of collapsed subject and object that do rely on and refer back to on something a priori, as for example to the previously visited and ever changing discursive positions (as represented, for example, by Kristeva's abject). Identity thus dissolved is again strongly associated with the aspects of signification or representation, and, as Bataille suggests, is located "outside the control of reason" (92). The simulacral concept of identity becomes even clearer when looking at signification, where Bataille's theory opts for an infinite reversal of the subject-object or the observer-observed positions, leading signification ad absurdum.

29 Bataille's concept of representation is closely related to his assessment of identity, and it also centres on the notions of sex and death as outlined above. Colin MacCabe states in his introduction to *Eroticism* that "[Bataille] wishes to stress [...] that this world creates as its

necessary counterpart the world of sex and death *where reason founders* [...] and the individual and discontinuous beings that we are taste the terrifying pleasures of the continuity of existence" (MacCabe x; emphasis added). Thus, the representation underlying the subject in continuity can be regarded as a form of self-contained system of representation, reminiscent of Baudrillard's third order of simulation, according to which the image or the sign "has no relation to any reality whatsoever" (Baudrillard, *Simulacra* 6). The total detachment of Bataille's concept of signification from external or realist realms is mirrored in the concept of the blindspot, "the point at which the literal detail exceeds the symbol, exceeds the foundational or rationalized system given to contain it. [Bataille] found this excess in laughter, ecstasy, violence, death [...]. The blindspot is the crack through which duality overflows, exceeding its own distinctions - [...] not without contradiction, but inexorably *in* contradiction, or 'alteration'" (Schneider 148). This quote shows that Bataille goes a step further than Kristeva in her approach to signification, since she insists on a synthesis or reconciliation of the semiotic modality or *jouissance* and the symbolic order. In contrast to that, Bataille even opts for a total dissolution of the (gendered) subject, driving both identity and representation not towards a synthesis but towards "the alteration between symbolic and literal [which] refuses to resolve but dances in a kind of frenzied contradiction around a volatile crack - a 'blindspot'" (Schneider 148). Bataille's system of representation here very much reflects the principles of Baudrillard's third-order simulacrum. He not only - like Kristeva - assumes the relation of signifier and signified as arbitrary or free floating, but rather understands it as being based on a "slippery kind of [...] sensuous correspondence by which the symbolic 'alters' with that which it pretends to supersede: the literal - in much the same way as an eyeball alters with a saucer, testicles, the sun in *Story of the Eye*" (Schneider 148).

30 Inasmuch as the workings of signification, as implied in Bataille's theory and exemplified in *The Story of the Eye*, are concerned, signification is permanently obscured not only by means of metaphors that represent a distorted relationship between signifier and its (polyvalent) signifieds, but also by metaphors that are based on distorted signifiers. The signifier itself is, in terms of simulation, "a copy of a copy of a copy...", or a model preceding reality. There will be no resolution - not even a polyvalent one - between the signifier-signified, nor between the ever reduplicating signifiers themselves; rather, the signifier and signified collapse. Due to the semantic distortion of the signifier, as for example the "envaginated eyeball," the reader witnesses, as Schneider puts it, "the slippage in signification from one meaning to another [...] in which an eyeball becomes a saucer of milk becomes a

testicle becomes the sun becomes an eyeball again" (147).<sup>11</sup> See also Susan Sontag's analysis of *The Story of the Eye*: "The egg in the first chapter is simply the earliest version of the eyeball plucked from the Spaniard in the last" (Sontag 110-11). To sum up this point, this total obscuration of meaning generates an intra-referential system of representation, permanently reproducing and altering meaning and along with that (gender) identity. The semantically distorted signifiers are without reference to the real and interact with other components of the system, that is, with other simulations. This simulated hyperreality provided by Bataille's theoretical concepts clearly goes beyond Kristeva's approach, dissolving not only the relation between signifier and signified, but also the *difference* between signifier and signified (see Blask 30).<sup>11</sup> This undoing of the difference between signifier and signified, which results in a collapsing of the two, surpasses the principles of signification underlying a conception of identity that relies on realist structures of signification, even discursive ones. The total loss of meaning and identity can be represented as a mis-en-abyme structure, in which identity (the infinite subject-object split and reconciliation described in the concept of continuity of the s/object) as well as signification (as represented by the blindspot) "has no relation to any reality whatsoever: it is its own pure simulacrum" (Baudrillard, *Simulacra* 6). This is clearly in contrast to Kristeva's concept, which I have described as a three dimensional space or hermetic system in which all discursive positions the subject can take - even though they are based on an infinite number of possible signifieds - are a priori and pre-inscribed. Bataille's theory instead requires an additional dimension which accounts for the system's infinite forwardness in keeping with the contradictory principles of perpetuity represented by the Möbius strip.<sup>12</sup>

31 Baudrillard's model of simulation provides an appropriate framework for the synchronic as well as diachronic classification of different concepts of (gender) identity. In focussing on the second and third order of simulation, this paper has shown how Kristeva's and Bataille's theories of identity and signification can be interpreted as representations of the postmodern subject/body as a fragile and increasingly simulated and less materialist notion. This culminates in the realm of the hyperreal (third order of simulation), which locates the (formerly gendered) subject with regard to a total collapse of signifier and signified and cuts the ties with any form of real or realism, witnessing instead a total dissolution of the physical and spiritual features of identity as well as the subject/object split suggested by the notion of

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<sup>11</sup> This ties in with Roland Barthes' reading of Bataille's *Story of the Eye*, according to which "Bataille's slipping into and out of concrete particulars trips up the fixity of any meaning so that 'any term is never anything but the signifier of a neighboring term'" (Barthes, "La Metaphore de l'oeil" 195-96 qtd. in Schneider 147).

<sup>12</sup> Another structure that describes these principles is the hypercube, "[o]ne of the simplest four-dimensional structures [...]. It is the four-dimensional analogue of an ordinary cube" (Burbanks 1996).

eroticism in Bataille's theory: "As part of the destructuring process of the rational, Cartesian subject, [eroticism] can lead to a fusion that defies physical boundaries. The subject transcends itself not to rejoin a lost union of oneness with the universe, but to participate in an experience that pushes Being to the limit during orgasm, the 'petite mort' simulating death" (Richman 81). This concept of hyperreality, or hyper-materiality, as one might call it, in which there are no objective correlatives, and in which "[a]ll the referentials combine their discourses in a circular, Möbian compulsion" (Baudrillard, *Simulacra* 18), denotes an ever changing and self-contained system of not only signification but also visualization as another form of representation that brings forth the conception of the s/object. This s/object does not know of and refer to any kind of former separation of subject and object, as it represents "the map that precedes the territory" (Baudrillard, *Simulacra* 1), or the copy without an original, to use Baudrillard's words. As such it is subject to (s/object to) the contradictory principles of the Möbius strip: just like the surface(s) of the Möbius strip are always already there and have neither been clearly together nor distinctly separate, the position of the s/object does not derive from two distinct modalities or positions, either. Thus, the very category of the difference between subject and object has either become obsolete or is simply not part of third-order simulation as third-order simulation denies any idea or reference to the idea of a priori.

32 It would exceed the scope of this paper to trace the possible connection between, for example, Bataille's theory of visualization and Baudrillard's paradigm of (third-order) simulation. However, I suggest, the genre of contemporary film, e.g., testifies to the fact that - just as is the case with written media - the visual genres witness a similar dissolution and dematerialization of the subject-object positions. The relationship between observer and observed, as well as the visualizing (in analogy to the signifying) structures underlying it follow a similar mis-en-abyme pattern. It would thus be a worthwhile endeavour to locate the post...post...postmodern subject<sup>13</sup> with regard to visual representation, tracing in how far the subject (or rather the s/object) is subject to subject to subject to... "a Baudrillardian hall of mirrors in which others mimick others mimicking others till the Different supposedly collapses with the Same" (Schneider 171).

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<sup>13</sup> In keeping with the mis-en-abyme character suggested by Baudrillard's paradigm of (third-order) simulation, one could even dispose of the referentiality entailed in the concept "**post**modern," revealing the very meaning of "post" as a simulacrum and void, since it runs counter to Baudrillard's principles as it assumes a signifying structure as well as a concrete concept as a priori (i.e. modern). Accordingly, the post<sup>x</sup>-modern-subject discussed in this paper can best be described when conceiving of the prefix "post" as following the same mis-en-abyme like principle.



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## **"I Want to Create a European-Jewish-British Theatre Where Women Have a New Role": An Interview with Julia Pascal**

By Tina Wald, University of Cologne, Germany with assistance of Johanna Hauke and Chrissula Kalpaki, University of Cologne

**Julia Pascal** was born in Manchester, the granddaughter of Romanian and the great-granddaughter of Lithuanian Jews. After studying dance as a child she moved into theatre and was trained as an actor at E15 Acting School. After four years work in theatre, TV and film she read English at London University. After graduation, she joined the National Theatre where she became the first woman director with her adaptation of Dorothy Parker's writings, the Platform Performance *Men Seldom Make Passes* which ran over two years. She became Associate Director of The Orange Tree Theatre for a year directing plays by Fay Weldon, Bertolt Brecht, Alfonso Vallejo and Howard Brenton.

She formed *Pascal Theatre Company* and produced plays by Seamus Finnegan, Karim Alrawi, Thomas Brasch, Melanie Phillips, Carole Rumens and Yana Stajno. As a playwright she has written *Theresa*, which deals with the Channel Islands' occupation, *A Dead Woman on Holiday* set in The Nuremberg Trials and *The Dybbuk*, a new take on Anski's version. These three formed *The Holocaust Trilogy* which were produced at The New End Theatre. Other plays set in World War Two are *Year Zero*, *Woman in the Moon* and *The Yiddish Queen Lear*. Her adaptation of *The Golem* has been presented to young people and her *St Joan* was a response to the French National Front's presentation of Joan as a racist icon. All her plays are published by Oberon Books. Her radio play *The Road To Paradise* was broadcast on BBC Radio 4. *Crossing Jerusalem*, set in the second intifada, was commissioned by The Tricycle Theatre and produced in spring 2003. Julia's next play is set in the Muslim communities of Lancashire and is commissioned by The Bush Theatre.

### **Julia Pascal on Directing**

**Tina Wald:** You are not only a writer but also an actress and a director. When did you first discover your interest in theatre and how did it develop?

**Julia Pascal:** When I was a child I used to do a lot of ballet and I wanted to be dancer, so I think it started at that moment. I went to Drama school and worked as an actor for four years, always playing foreigners - very boring - or prostitutes or drug dealers - so limiting. And little by little I realised that I was on the wrong side. I thought maybe I'm a director but I didn't

know how to become a director. There were very few women directors in that period and there were no schools of directing. So I went to university at twenty-four as a mature student. I read English at London University between twenty-four and twenty-seven and then I went back into acting at the National Theatre - playing again foreigners, playing a Russian revolutionary military part in a play about Russian Revolution. But at the same time I was actually in my finals. So it was a very heady moment, we were rehearsing in the afternoon, playing at night on tour and I was studying to three or four in the morning. It was a very stimulating period in my late twenties. When I was at the National Theatre I asked if I could direct something. So I compiled *Men Seldom Make Passes* from Dorothy Parker's writing, which became a Platform Performance. I discovered I was the first woman to direct at the National, so I got some press, which was sort of good and bad for me. The so-called liberal male directors such as Peter Hall and Trevor Nunn resented that this publicity exposed how male-dominated theatre directing was. They ran the two main theatre flagships at the time: The National Theatre and the Royal Shakespeare Company. My exposé of how few women worked as directors embarrassed them. After the National Theatre I went to the Orange Tree Theatre, which is a pub theatre in Richmond. There I learned the business of running a theatre. I learned to do budgets, to direct plays and to promote new writing.

Then in 1983 I founded my own company PASCAL THEATRE COMPANY and got into raising money, directing plays, finding writers; at that time there was a lot of money for New Writing. Today I'm writing much more and rather hate having to find money. I'm beginning to pull out of producing. I'm getting commissions for other companies who employ me as a writer, which is sad in a way because it means that I direct less, which I miss.

**TW:** What is the difference between directing your own plays and directing other writers' plays?

**JP:** When you are directing your own, you can insult the writer much more easily, "you wrote this? It's shit, get rid of it." You can't do that with other writers; you always have to consult them. When it is your own you know the journey you've made and you can see quite fast what does not work once you rehearse the piece. I think it is also very useful that I've been an actor. I see when the actors are struggling with the text and I can reconsider the writing when I think that it is not quite right at this point.

I've never directed a Shakespeare. When I started directing I realised that outside of the main subsidised theatres it was very hard for younger directors to direct the classics

because money was focused on contemporary drama. So there is a hole, a gaping hole in my directing experience. For instance, I would love to do *The Merchant of Venice*, which is the trickiest play in the world to me. I was just in Venice and I thought: I know how to do it. But the RSC or the National are not going to be interested in me because I haven't been doing that before. So there are areas of frustration as well.

**TW:** Have you ever seen one of your plays directed by somebody else?

**JP:** Yes, I saw a student production of [\*The Dybbuk\*](#) that was extraordinary. It was marvellous. Very visual. They used ladders to create those images of bodies that we see in newsreels of the liberation of Belsen or Auschwitz. Sam Boardman-Jacobs, the director had a woman just sliding down the ladder. That was terrific. They did it in Wales and they used a lot of Yiddish singing in it, although all of the actors were Welsh and in no way biographically connected to the Jewish experience. That was the most extraordinary. For them, it meant something else, because also the Welsh culture had been oppressed and was dying. It was exciting; I liked it. Sam later produced and directed the Holocaust Trilogy with his students at the University of Glamorgan and he was highly inventive with the staging. He had twenty-five people on stage whereas I did the plays with five. He has great vision and empathy for the period and that gave his productions an acute insight. I've seen other productions of other plays. I haven't quite understood what was going on, but never mind. What can you do! There have been student productions in the U.S., which I have not seen.

**TW:** You just mentioned that you were the first female director at the National Theatre when you did *Men Seldom Make Passes* in 1978 and that back then there weren't many female directors in general. Has this changed? What is it like to be a woman director today?

**JP:** It has changed very slightly, very little. You get women in every position but in general women are still on the fringe. What has happened since then is that more women are going to television and film because the independent production companies have been brought into the main TV and cinema arena. The market is open there, but not in theatre. There has been a huge move towards diversity in the funding of theatre work. So the Arts Council, which is the main funder, is putting a lot of money towards getting black companies and black directors in. That area has been encouraged. But in terms of women any push towards 50/50 equality is considered unimportant, which I find pretty shocking. I've written about it

enormously in the press and I don't know what else to do except create work and perhaps be a model to others and encourage other women.

It is very hard to promote yourself. If you work on the fringe it's difficult to get the best critics. I didn't insist on directing [\*Crossing Jerusalem\*](#), which I could have done, because I knew that if they brought in an older male director, the old male critics would find that much more respectable, and of course they did. That's the system. I should say that I was delighted with my director on *Crossing Jerusalem*. Jack Gold, who is known best as a film director, was very supportive of the work and worked in very close collaboration. I have no problems working with an established male director as long as trust and respect is there. In this case this was certainly the case. Also the play was initially backed by The Tricycle Theatre's Artistic director Nicolas Kent, who pushed me as a writer. These experiences were challenging and positive. However it is very hard for women to get major funding in the subsidised theatre and, currently, all the major flagships are headed by men.

Funding women's work in the theatre is a problem: unlike black and Asian work, it's not on the top of anyone's agenda. As for the women themselves, it is distressing to note that they are fractured and form no pressure group. Black practitioners have harried the Arts Funding bodies but women never have. They are frightened of being ostracised and that's what actually happens. Back in the 1980s I got a letter from Trevor Nunn telling me I would never work for the Royal Shakespeare Company, for articles I had written in the press about sexual apartheid in the subsidised theatre. Speaking out means possible blacklisting. Nunn's letter threatened my future employment.

**TW:** Had you explicitly criticised the RSC in these articles?

**JP:** Yes. Because it is a state-subsidised company and it is headed by men who believed themselves to be great liberals, but in fact they did and do continue to appoint younger versions of themselves. It is very male, very patriarchal. They bring in a woman director from time to time but they are still a minority. Men are considered good for directing productions with big budgets. The power still remains in the hands of men. There are exceptions, of course. Genista McIntosh, the former administrator of the National Theatre used to be a very powerful woman. She was one of the few. These prejudices against women are unconscious but deeply rooted within the British system. Theatre comes from the church, another male preserve. In comparison to the state-subsidised companies, the commercial theatre is much easier for women, because commercial theatre doesn't mind if you are a dog, a giraffe, or a

woman. They don't care, it's just about making money - whereas the state-subsidised theatre has its own censorship. And women have flourished more in television, film and radio because these are newer media. There isn't this church-holy-place-feeling about that. Theatre in Britain and I would say internationally has an unspoken political agenda. There is little solidarity amongst the women, which is really painful because they are mainly white middle-class women who don't know enough about solidarity and collective action. When the big debates did happen, there was a point in the 1980s when sectarianism was on the agenda. During the conference of women theatre directors and administrators, one woman suggested buying a theatre in the West-End and getting Princess Diana as a patron. I said: "No, it's crazy. We have this state system; we should demonstrate or go on strike because more than 50 percent of the audience are women." The Arts Council shouldn't fund theatres that don't move towards 50 percent or affirmative action. But affirmative action is not a British way of life, it's an American one. There is tremendous apathy and laissez-faire here. It's very hard to get any sort of movement against the status quo. As a result the same white male middle-aged or young, middle-class hierarchy from Oxford and Cambridge continues.

### **Julia Pascal on Producing Jewish Theatre in Britain**

**TW:** What has changed in the Arts Council's policy concerning woman's theatre and Jewish-British theatre since Blair?

**JP:** Nothing at all. There is even more talk about "diversity," and more white middle-aged bureaucrats appointing people because they are black. It's ignorant and it's stupid. There is no long-term thinking on this issue. It's just: "We are guilty, we are white, we had the Empire. We throw money at black companies. Please go away!" The problem is, getting state subsidised money for Jewish work is almost impossible. The subtext to this is the belief that Jews are rich, therefore they don't deserve state subsidy. So I don't get Arts Council money to fund my projects. For instance, I had done my children play *The Golem* in multicultural schools and just applied for a grant from the Arts Council. It was turned down. The Arts Council told me to my face that "Jewish work is not a priority, black art is." I am all for black arts getting funding but so should all minorities. I've done black work and it was immediately funded. So it's not about the quality of the work, it's absolutely about the Arts Council's policy. And it's very frustrating. It's also somewhat out of date. Our newest, most disadvantaged immigrant population now comes from Eastern Europe, but the Arts Council has not pushed them to the top of the list. I do think liberal guilt about empire is the muddled

thinking behind these funding decisions. What is worse is that the Arts Council, which is a quango, is not a democratic institution. Nobody votes these people into power. They are known as "the great and the good" and they pick the causes that please them. All goes on behind closed doors and is very secret.

### **Julia Pascal on Acting**

**TW:** You often collaborate with the actress Ruth Posner who survived the Warsaw Ghetto. How important is personal experience in a production of a Holocaust play? Is it difficult for actors with first hand experience to re-enact their experiences? Does it enhance the authenticity of the play?

**JP:** The answer is "yes, it is difficult" and "yes, it does enhance." For Ruth it was terribly difficult. The first play I did with her was [\*Theresa\*](#). We worked with the German choreographer Thomas Kampe. And it was very tense to begin with. He said to her one day, "Where did you learn your German?" because she speaks really good German. She said "from the Germans" and the room went very quiet because of course that is how she learned it, hiding in Poland as an Aryan with a false passport. There was a problem for him in so far as he was playing the Jewish son in *Theresa* and various Nazis as well. He wouldn't do the Hitler salute for example. And I got up and said "Look, Thomas, you do it like that" and then I realised that of course he just couldn't do it for obvious reasons. It was very poignant watching him playing both Nazis and Jews. He obviously much preferred playing the Jew. You could feel that. So that means the baggage that people brought was terrible on one level, but wonderful on another because there was truth on stage. Theresa was a young woman when she came to Britain, she wasn't sixty - I changed it. I didn't want to cast a twenty-year old. I wanted to cast someone who had the actual experience in her body. For example, at the beginning of *Theresa* I play the "Blue Danube," and when we rehearsed that scene we spent a week just moving to it remembering her life. So it wasn't kitsch waltzing but it was about recovering Ruth's own war experiences. It was jagged and disturbing because the audience feels the experience through Ruth's body even if they cannot grasp it intellectually. Physicality is important for all my productions.

**TW:** Similarly, in your introduction to *Theresa* you state that Ruth Posner evokes the memory of Nazi occupation through her very presence. Can you elaborate on that? How can the audience sense her past?



**JP:** British audiences hear Ruth's Polish accent. I used some of her experience, such as little Polish songs from her childhood. In a way she has got an arrested development of someone who left at twelve; her Polish is that of a child but she is a woman, she is seventy. Somehow it transmits to the audience that there is a Polish child in the body of an older woman. They don't know exactly what it is all about, but they feel the strangeness, the "Verfremdungseffekt" if you like. There is something very European about someone who has come from Poland and lives in Britain. Ruth didn't have an English education until she was thirteen or fourteen. Until today she retained her Polishness, there is no way that that ever gets lost. I mean people always ask me where I am from. I was born here but I clearly transmit something that is not English because my grandparents who were Romanians brought me up. I don't know what that is, but it's not an "English framing" if you like. So similarly with Ruth, that's felt immediately. And I wanted that. It is a certain mood, a certain atmosphere about people.

Similarly with Thomas. He is not a polished actor but he is a wonderful dancer and performer and in fact he has a special knowledge because he has been brought up by Nazi teachers, he says, and his father was a real fascist. Thomas has struggled to deal with that and that struggle comes across on stage. If English actors played these roles, the tension would somehow dilute.

### **Julia Pascal on Writing: From Facts to Fiction**

**TW:** You did a lot of research for all of your plays. Could you explain about the process of transforming your research into fiction?

**JP:** The research is the most exciting part. When I'm doing a new play, I think I could do research for the rest of my life. The act of moving from research to writing is pure hell I have to say. For instance for [\*Woman in the Moon\*](#), I interviewed a lot of people who have been in Camp Dora. I ended up with ten monologues by men who had been there. It was extraordinary but I thought, "This isn't a play," the structure of a series of monologues is boring. At first I didn't know what to do with it. Then I read a lot about Wernher von Braun, and I started to read about science and moon landings and it took me somewhere else. I did not know how to connect all this. But suddenly I thought: "Well everything has a myth behind it. What's the myth? Is it Faust?" Like Faust, Wernher von Braun sells his soul to the devil for knowledge but he's never going to hell, he is going to the moon. And once I got that, it's Faust back to front because he doesn't die, he is celebrated. Once I got that I could write the play.

The starting point for writing is the finding of some sort of leitmotif or myth or fairy tale or some structure. That's the hardest and I'm in that stage at the moment with the next play. It was easy with [\*The Yiddish Queen Lear\*](#) because Shakespeare gave me the spine of the plot. With [\*Theresa\*](#) I knew she left Vienna, she came to London, she went to Guernsey, she was gassed in Auschwitz. In a way I knew the journey and then it was just a question of collaging different styles together.

In addition to this leitmotif, I have an idea of mood. For instance in *Theresa*, I knew I wanted to use English music hall as a style in the scene when Theresa comes to England. In the coffee house-scene, I wanted to express the Vienna Coffee House and the end of the Austrian Empire and sweetness and beauty and kitsch almost and then the brutality at the same time. So it's mood and taste and smell I go into and that determines the style.

**TW:** At what point and how do you decide what the style of a particular play will be like, whether it will be naturalistic or rather more experimental?

**JP:** Before you write it. And it's really hard for me to write naturalism, which is strange, because most people write naturalism first. But my reference is sideways: through imagery and music. It's very hard for me to discipline myself to go to beginning, middle and end, to think linearly.

And that's a debate we had amongst women in those conferences about "Do women write differently from men?" I don't think that women write differently from men but I think you make a choice to go that way or the other. So I'm sometimes forcing myself to do what I find a bit harder, a bit more difficult, which is writing linearly.

### **From Page to Stage**

**TW:** When you start to rehearse the play, in how far do you collaborate with the actors? Do you revise the script during the rehearsal process according to their ideas?

**JP:** Certainly with the early plays and with *Theresa* and *Crossing Jerusalem* I did. Even before I started to rehearse *Crossing Jerusalem*, I made sure that quite a few Arab men read the Arab roles I had written. At one point they said, "No this isn't right, his brother would never speak to him like that. He is not giving him enough respect." I listened to that and then I changed it and made the character more respectful. That was very useful. So yes, I listen hard, you have to, especially if you write out of your own culture.

**TW:** Your plays always seem to end with complex and powerful images. Such as in [\*The Dybbuk\*](#), where you note that in the final scene "the movement must be perpetual, symbolising the murder of six million but the effect must be of death and rebirth. You can kill a people, but you cannot kill their culture." How did you translate this notion into a stage image?

**JP:** I told the actors that they must not be victims, physically. Five actors were walking through a corridor of light and we used pops and costumes in a new way. For example, there were moments of breaking traditional Orthodox Jewish images such as women wearing men's prayer shawls. This was mixed with women tearing their hair, throwing up playing cards as if to mock fate or lifting men who were weak or ill. So you have the feeling of a crowd of people or extraordinary crazy things going on but as if each one came through the light another one is behind them. So when the light was very slowly fading you kept seeing people arriving and falling, arriving and falling. That is the ghost continuing in your brain. The image of the people falling and returning as the light disappears leaves an after image on the retina like a ghost, which goes back to the original first speech of *The Dybbuk* and reflects how I feel in Germany. I just came back from Prague and I feel the same thing. The ghosts are still there. I wanted to make the audience undergo a catharsis, to go out full rather than depressed. It is really hard to stop the actors going down into depression, particularly Ruth. I find that quite a struggle. I make them realise that they have to push out a ray of physical energy, which the audience feels. I want to show resistance and struggle, not the defeat of the Jews. Of course they were defeated but this is art and the fact that I am making this piece of theatre is an act of resistance against the Nazi annihilation machine. Also, working with a German like Thomas means that the work has resonance of unity between those who were made enemies.

**TW:** Your play [\*Woman in the Moon\*](#) ends with an impressive combination of visual and acoustic elements:

Lights fade gradually as we hear a sound mix of St Matthew's Passion, the Internet, "you've got mail," The Apollo Moon landing in 1969, the countdown, ten, nine, eight, seven, six, five, four, three, two, one. We have lift off!!! which mix with the Mozart. The cast climb as if going into a rocket. There is smoke, giving the double image of people being gassed and people going to the moon.

Can these visual and acoustic elements transmit meaning which language is not able to? Is this an attempt to express the inexpressible?

**JP:** Yes, it's a sort of film. As you read it, it sounds like film to me. I like playing with different time zones. In the first scene I've got fifty people just crossing and wearing different clothes from the 40s to today. I love the idea that the past is the present. I have related today's mobile phones to what happened in 1943 in Camp Dora. We are absolutely linked to that period even if we don't know it. I suppose young people today see Camp Dora as the Middle Ages, whereas I see it just on the back of my shoulders because I know the men who were there. So it is an attempt to bring it to the audience, to show them the latest work of the past and the present. Yes I think that is the joy with the theatre that you can do that.

**TW:** Music plays an important role in your plays. What criteria do you apply when choosing it?

**JP:** It's terribly emotional and coming from the gut. It's not that I have a great knowledge of music, it's coming from what I've heard and what speaks to me. Before I wrote *Woman in the Moon* I walked through my tiny flat about a thousand times playing "St Matthew's Passion." "St Matthew's Passion" evokes the great Christian iconography, and it is totally connected to all these Holocaust stories. I used it to bring in Christianity through music. Christianity is never mentioned in the text but the music places it right at the beginning to subliminally show a connection between the crucifixion and the revenge circle which ended in the holocaust. I see the Holocaust as linked to the Catholic church's blaming of the Jews for the death of Jesus. The Protestant church was equally antisemitic during most of its history. So the beauty of "St Matthew's Passion" is seductive and critical.

**TW:** I had the impression that you don't only use music as language, but also language as music - especially when you use languages which most of the audience won't understand. Does every language have specific meaning to you?

**JP:** They have rhythm to me. I suppose it is like the rhythm of the heart, the rhythm of the brain. It is an important question to me what sort of English I use because it seems like either of Anglo-Saxon or of French root. My next play is about children of Pakistanian background and God knows what sort of English I'm going to use in a setting in Northern England. So that decision is huge to me in terms of musicality and the effect it has on the audience. I think it comes from hearing a lot of languages as a child, most of which I didn't understand. I must

have heard six languages growing up till the age of about eight, apart from English. I think that is the residual, the desire to plug into that and to give it back.

**TW:** Could you describe the difference between French and British English in terms of sound and rhythm?

**JP:** It is not merely a difference of sound and rhythm, it is an emotional difference. Anglo-Saxon English is tougher. If you want to do that (*claps her hands*) you use Anglo-Saxon, if you want to make it sweeter you use French. For instance when I did *The Dybbuk* I had to look at the original source, which is of course translated from Yiddish and I don't read Yiddish. So I looked at it in English translation, which is a very bad American 1950s one and I thought I don't want to use any of this. So I read a French one and translated it into English in order to include my own translation into my *Dybbuk* story where necessary. I wanted to get it closer to kaballah, to make it sound more mystic than the really tough Anglo-Saxon English. These are the decisions no audience is ever going to know but they will respond to the different choices I have made through the emotion of hearing French-based or Anglo-Saxon based English. I must have learnt this studying poetry as a schoolgirl and it comes back to me when I write now.

**TW:** How important are aspects of irony and humour in your plays?

**JP:** Humour is very important in my plays because Jewish humour is just part of my everyday life. Even when I interviewed survivors, humour came up in all areas. For example Jews from Eastern Europe like my family find German Jews a people apart. They are called "Yeckes" here. This expression is the Yiddish for jacket because German Jews even in a very hot climate - in Israel for example - would never take off their jackets. I have used this in a scene in *Theresa* when Theresa meets a German professor whom she momentarily takes to be her son. He is stiff and more German than the Germans, which is doubly funny and touching in a Jewish refugee who ends up working as a bellboy in a London hotel.

I often noticed that people come with a very serious attitude to my plays thinking it's going to be humourless political work. They are surprised when they start to laugh during the performance. I am always pleased as Jews got through some of the horrors by mocking it.

### **Julia Pascal on *A Dead Woman on Holiday* and her experience of cultural difference**

**TW:** In [\*A Dead Woman on Holiday\*](#) you link the Nuremberg Trials to the love affair between Sophia and Paul. In your introduction to the play, you say that you meant to explore "the notion of a seemingly impossible love between people of two different cultures." Can you elaborate on the aspect of cultural differences in the play?

**JP:** I was not brought up in a religious family but in a family very conscious of being Jewish. My father was completely traumatised by the Holocaust. He had spent the war in India as doctor in the Army. He came back to England and learnt that his Lithuanian cousins had been murdered in a forest in 1941/1942. This had a huge effect on him in terms of marrying within our community. He used to tell me "Better you marry a Jew who beats you than a non-Jew who is nice to you." As a result of which I've rarely had an intimate relationship with a Jewish man. I had to deal with this incredible pressure as a young woman and now I'm very interested in other groups who have the same sort of pressure. With Thomas, my German choreographer, I can talk so easily about things that I can't talk about with my French husband for example because he hasn't come through the same story.

So it is terribly complex and I guess you're attracted to the opposite. I am interested in that reaching out across cultures and I think this struggle is in *A Dead Woman on Holiday*. The fight that Mark Twain expressed when he evoked the idea of tired old Europe and the new Eden of America are hinted at within the characters and experiences of Paul and Sophia. I think Sophia is a fierce character and a damaged person. This duality between Europe and the U.S. is also in the play through Dee Dee. She represents the American who is unable to imagine the European bloodbath of the twentieth century because of her experience of living in such a secure society as was the U.S. in the forties. I wanted to look at the American-European division between the New World and the Old. I guess it's a personal quest but I think it has resonance for many people. As for the central story which asks who is the correct partner in life and should he or she have the same culture and history - well, this is an eternal dilemma for all of us. These are the big questions for me. It's an exploration; I have no answer.

**TW:** *A Dead Woman on Holiday* ends with a complex image: "Spot on the shape of the German Woman smoking a cigarette. Let the smoke be prominent as a reminder of the smoke of six million. Paul and Sophia move towards one another as the lights fade to blackout." Could you comment on this juxtaposition of images of a love affair and the Holocaust?

**JP:** I think we have to love each other or we die. I'm interested in the love affair between Germans and Jews and Gentiles and Jews in Germany and Middle-Europe. Hitler came in 1933, but before 1933 we had this extraordinary connection and collaboration of Jews and Gentiles in art and elsewhere. In a way I miss that but maybe I have a romanticised idea of how it was before 1933. In a recent reportage I was affected to hear one Jewish survivor say, "We loved the Germans but they didn't love us."

Perhaps this final image also has to do with my father's generation. He was certainly psychologically damaged by what happened in the Holocaust even though his experience was not direct. It made me focus on those who have suffered from the Holocaust without being in a concentration camp; people who suffered by extension if you like. It became very interesting for me to think of that generation and of us, their children. Because I know a lot of children of real survivors. I don't think I'm a child of a survivor at all, but I know children of survivors and grand children of survivors who are still suffering the effects of the previous generation. I think today's wars are still about *that war*. I don't see the Middle East or Iraq as something separate. I certainly see it as an extension of the Second World War.

**Julia Pascal on *The Yiddish Queen Lear* and the female reassessment of Jewish tradition**

**TW:** In your introduction to [\*The Yiddish Queen Lear\*](#) you explain that "Looking at a Queen Lear rather than a king gave me the chance to explore a non-traditional Jewish family where greed, selfishness, promiscuity and ambition could be explored from the female point of view." Could you elaborate on your use of a female point of view in your remake of Shakespeare's *King Lear*?

**JP:** I suppose there have been very few plays about Jewish women where they are not just stereotypes. What I want to do with all my work is to create a European, a Jewish, a British theatre where women have a new role, where they're not just stereotypes. Esther, the Yiddish Queen Lear, does not represent the cliché of the young beautiful Jewess; she is a monstrous character. I said to the actors I wanted monstrous people because that's what those actors I wrote about had been. They had been egotistic, rude, and ambitious. I enjoyed writing Jewish actresses because their very profession was provocative. Jewish women were not supposed to go on the stage. It was considered a really promiscuous thing - however, there were a few Jewish actresses. I was thinking of a particular woman who had a Yiddish theatre in Warsaw. I never wanted to create idealised sweet Jews; I wanted to show them as bad and as mischievous as everybody else. I also found Esther very attractive on stage as a character. In

*Crossing Jerusalem* I have another horrendous middle-aged woman. So I wanted to just break the mould of Jewish mothers and present something newer and challenging.

**TW:** In your introduction to *The Yiddish Queen Lear* you mention that as a girl you weren't allowed to go to your grandmother's funeral and that this prohibition came as a surprise to you. Can you elaborate on the role of women in the Jewish community in general?

**JP:** My family was not orthodox; they were observant but great Zionists. I think that was a Holocaust reaction. So, I was brought up as an ordinary British girl in an ordinary British school. I didn't go to Jewish schools, but my father made it very clear that education was not for women and after school I should maybe get a job or get married fast and have children.

The role of women never really hit me till this funeral, when suddenly my grandmother's house was full of men with big hats that I had never seen before. And the mirrors were covered with sheets, so that you wouldn't see the angel of death in the mirror. I mean, it's all this East European superstition, I don't think it's anywhere in Jewish law. And suddenly, the cars were ready and I put my coat on and I was told: "Oh, you don't, you stay in the house. Women don't go to the funeral." And I said: "Why not?" It is assumed that women will make a fuss. It comes back from the old country: Women would tear their hair, scream and shout and throw themselves on the grave. I think it's a relic of that. I'm not sure it's true of all Jewish practice. I've heard of many others where women do go to funerals in Reform Judaism.

I insisted on going to my grandmother's funeral and it was very important to go.

### **Julia Pascal on Theresa and her reconsideration of British national identity**

**TW:** Your play [\*Theresa\*](#) sheds an unusually critical light on the British role in the Second World War. Did you have any troubles in producing and staging the play for that reason?

**JP:** Yes, it's critical of the British. I had trouble selling *Theresa*, to begin with, when I rang up theatres and said: "This is about the Channel Islands and their collaboration with the Nazis," and they said: "We don't believe that happened." It wasn't public knowledge back in 1990, but now it has entered the public domain. When I started researching I found a photograph showing a British policeman bowing to a Nazi. Even I found it shocking when I saw the photograph. It's disturbing because the mythology is that the British are the good guys, that they would never behave this way, and yet they did. So it has a terribly difficult resonance when it is played in Britain. The play is still banned in Guernsey. This is because I reveal the



name of the Bailiff, a major collaborator and because the children of this Bailiff, and his grandchildren, are still in power. And so it is still hushed up. Instead of being hanged, the Bailiff was knighted. This is British hypocrisy. They covered up the level of collaboration on Guernsey and Jersey because the war was over and it was important to move on and hide the real history. Today there are still files which are hidden from the public.

**Julia Pascal on *Crossing Jerusalem* and her experience of staging the Israeli-Palestinian conflict**

**TW:** You already mentioned your new play *Crossing Jerusalem*, in which you focus on the conflict between Israel and Palestine. How do you portray this conflict?

**JP:** Through the Israeli family. I took twenty-four hours in the life of this Israeli family. The mother is an estate agent, which has got huge symbolic meaning because if you are dealing property in Israel, then who owned the property before 1948? The family gathers at her office and when they are going to have lunch, they realise that there is no food in the house. Because of the bombings going on in the supermarkets, she has been too frightened to go shopping. So they decide to go to this restaurant in an Arab town in Israel proper, where one of the Arab waiters turns out to be the son of a man who worked in that family many years before. When this man intrudes the family life, the whole conflict comes out. Writing the play was difficult concerning the choice of language because they would be speaking Hebrew and Arabic and I'm writing in English. Although I know about ten words of Hebrew and I've heard Arabic, I could never write a play in those languages. If you hear Israelis speak it sounds brutal and very crude to British ears. I decided to use quite an American English because British English sounded wrong and because a lot of Israelis do have a slight American accent. And I spent weeks just listening to Arabs on the radio to hear the sounds of their voice in English. I found there was not just one Arab accent but that, just like the Israelis, their accents depended on the influences they heard and who taught them English. This freed me up as a writer. Eventually, the actors played it with very mild Israeli accents and very mild Arabic accents for the British audience. During the performances, the audience was very silent, attentive and frightened, certainly the British ones. Some of the Israelis were offended and said things like "Why do you show this? Haven't we got enough problems? You are a Jewish woman, you shouldn't be doing this." For instance, there is a speech by one of the Arab men, who talks about Martin Luther King's *I Have A Dream*. His dream is to see Israel without Jews. It's a poetic speech but of course it offended many spectators. But I included it, because I've heard it. We also had

difficulties casting an actor for that role. It is very hard to find Arab actors because Muslim Arab parents are unlikely to support their children going onstage. I think we met every Arab actor in London. Eventually, we chose Daniel Ben-Zenou, a Moroccan Jewish actor, and Nabil Elouabi played his brother. Nabil is of North African Muslim background. This combination worked very well as the two became great friends.

**TW:** How did people react to your plays, and particularly to *Crossing Jerusalem*? Did you have a particular audience in mind when you were writing it?

**JP:** I don't really write for an audience, I write for what obsesses me. And I try to humanise, if you like, the intellectual debate. But I never know who is going to come. Obviously, a lot of Jews come because they want to know. And for many it is a relief to see their experience on stage. Many were upset by *Crossing Jerusalem*. During a performance, one rather orthodox Jewish man came up to Daniel and said: "As a Jewish boy you should be ashamed playing an antisemite." That was funny. And I knew that the play was working. But the text is not just about Arab antisemitism, it also shows Israelis saying terrible things about the Arabs. Many spectators were pleased that I tackled the big current issues. I had Palestinians come to the performances as well, and Arabs who came to the performances were happy with the play. But I heard there were some Israelis who refused to come. Lots of British people who knew nothing about the situation came and said: "I didn't know what was going on and this helped me to understand a bit more." We had a lot of young black women who were ushers, 18-year-olds, and they knew nothing about it. And they said: "What's this play all about?" And I said: "Watch it." They watched it three or four times. They said: "Still, I don't completely understand. Why is everybody crying when they leave?"

**TW:** You just said that you write about what obsesses you. But don't you also feel a responsibility for representing certain groups within society? And is it a pressure?

**JP:** You're right, responsibility is coming all the time from different sides. And I certainly felt pressure when I did *Crossing Jerusalem*. After interviewing survivors for my earlier plays, I always felt that my play was quite true to their spirit. I took bits from one person and mixed it with other people. But now I think it's very important for me to write about today and I am not sure I'll keep on writing about the past any more, although it's much harder to write about today because you have no distance. Great art is emotion recollected in tranquillity and

tranquillity is rarely something you can have when you write about the here and now. Writing about today is like writing on the run. It's more frightening in a way because it is so easy to get it wrong, especially when I'm writing out of my culture. So the terror is quite strong. Not in the rehearsal room because most actors don't know the politics of a play and here I feel a responsibility to make sure the actors understand. It was difficult to explain the atmosphere of Jerusalem to the actors who were not Israeli. They came with all sorts of assumptions which needed deconstructing. I show the volatility of the Israelis in *Crossing Jerusalem*, which is something that is not known here. People tend to think all the Israelis are bastards and killers. One Jewish character called Varda says: "The Arabs have got twenty-three countries. Why don't they leave us alone and go there?" And yet later the audience discover she had a love affair with an Arab as a younger woman. My aim was to expose how an individual can hold many different opinions at the same time. All I hoped to do in the end was just to break stereotypes of the Israelis and Arabs, make people question and see how complex the conflict is. If you feel the audience leaves changed, then you feel you've done something.

### **Julia Pascal on her British-Jewish identity**

**TW:** You were confronted with two different cultures when you were brought up in Manchester and had a British education, but still a Jewish family background. You mentioned your father who suffered from the experiences of the Holocaust. How did you cope with this double-culture?

**JP:** Badly, I think. Very badly. My parents lived in Blackpool, which is a working class seaside town. My grandparents lived in Manchester in a more bourgeois setting and I lived in both places. When I went to school I felt very different. I remember that in the first history lesson in primary school the teacher went around the class saying: "Well, your family were probably Irish, and your family were Anglo-Saxon." And then she saw me and she just ignored me.

My parents would say: "Well, you can go to prayers in the morning. And you can sing hymns about God but you mustn't sing that Jesus is the son of God. Absolutely not. And if people tell you that Jesus was killed by the Jews, you say no, it was the Romans!" So, I'm about five and I'm getting all this stuff and they talk about "the English" and I say: "Who are we?" There is a tremendous fracture in that thing, and I hated being Jewish. Absolutely hated being different. As a child, you are conservative and you want to be like everybody else. I didn't know how to mix on the playground. I was very isolated. It was only at Grammar

School that there were a few more Jewish girls and it was very academic. And then I felt fine. We moved to London and then there were also black kids in school. It was much easier then. You know, I was just one of many.

It wasn't till I was much older that I began to see that actually it was quite a valuable experience, and certainly as a writer, to be the outsider, it's the best thing that could happen to you. But it's agony till you get to that point. And I still don't find it easy. I am asked almost every day: "Where are you from?" And I say: "Manchester," and they look at me. And I know they are thinking: "That's not what we want to know." What do I say? If I say I'm a Jew, it makes me sound like I'm an orthodox religious Jew, which I'm not. What do I say? It's delicate.

### **Julia Pascal on future projects**

**TW:** Which are your future projects? You mentioned a new play? Do you again research a particular topic?

**JP:** I am trying to write a play that is not about Jews, but I'm still interested in double-culture. I am going back to the North of England and look at children whose parents or grandparents came from Pakistan or Bangladesh. I'm interested in the double-culture of Muslims living in Northern England; it's very different from my Jewish-Northern-England experience. I feel we must look at what is happening in Muslim diversity, in Muslim life in Britain.

And yes, I do enormous research. I went to Bradford where they had riots and to areas in Lancashire where the The British National Party is active. I went to one particular school and I interviewed children and adolescents over the last six months; I just listened to their stories and recorded them. There are a number of problems in schools all over the country. For instance, the mothers of some of the children in the school I went to in Rochdale don't speak English. So the children speak Urdu or Bengali at home, which means that their English is not good. When the children show me their work, I can hardly read what they have written, because their spelling in English is like me writing Japanese. They can't spell, they can't write, and these are children attending a good school. What's the future for them? Another problem is the racism the children are confronted with. When I got a taxi, the white taxi driver came up with all this racist stuff, which I just listened to because it's important for me to hear what ordinary white working class people think. So, somehow, all this research is becoming a play. I'm on the second draft. At the stage when a writer has to junk her research and just concentrate on character. Hopefully my outsiderliness will give some insight into this

particular area. I just want to break some boundaries and use my own experience to make characters who surprise the audience.

**TW:** Thank you very much for the interview.

**JP:** It was a pleasure. Thank you.

**The interview was conducted in London in June 2003 and was updated in March 2004.**

**David M. Halperin: *How to Do the History of Homosexuality*. (Chicago/  
London: Chicago University Press, 2002)**

By Isabel Karremann, University of Erlangen, Germany

1 Halperin diagnoses a peculiar kind of academic "amnesia" (2) when it comes to the history of (homo)sexuality, both in regard to the familiarization of the historical alterity of its object (the sexuality of ancient Greece, for example) and in regard to its methodology (the ways in which we historicize sexuality). He claims that the categories and terminology of our own contemporary discourses on sexuality render the specific alterity of other historical cultures' organizations of sex and gender opaque: "All our research into otherness, into cultural alterity, presents to us an endlessly perplexing spectacle of the exotic, which merely reinforces our attachment to our own categories of thought and experience" (3). Moreover, the constructivist approaches developed out of a need to redress these shortcomings have come to obstruct our vision in their turn. The broad reception of critics such as Michel Foucault, Halperin argues, has led to a conventionalization of his highly original writings to such a degree that they are reduced to a set of almost clichéd concepts. The fault obviously does not lie with Foucault - indeed, Halperin's essays are based on very careful (re)readings of his texts - but rather with the academic commodification of his ideas: The "almost ritualistic invocation of [Foucault's] name" has reduced "the operative range of his thought to a small set of received ideas, slogans, and bits of jargon that have now become so commonplace and so familiar as to make more direct engagement with Foucault's texts entirely indispensable" (25). As a result, Halperin claims, we are nearer to "Forgetting Foucault" (the title of ch. 1) than we might think. This paradox of forgetting the all-too-familiar, and of familiarizing otherness to the point of erasing its specific alterity, constitutes the double focal point of the essays collected in this volume, a paradox which significantly informs the practices and politics of writing the history of (homo)sexuality.

2 The introduction to the volume serves as a response to various criticisms of Halperin's seminal publication *One Hundred Years of Homosexuality* (1989). In dialogue with his critics as well as more recent work on the history of sexuality, Halperin develops his highly sophisticated - and at the same time convincingly simple - methodology of "How to do the History of Homosexuality." Rather than contributing to a history of homosexuality as such, the four essays engage with what Halperin calls "historiographical" issues of evidence, identification and politics of writing the history of homosexuality. Taken together, they constitute a meta-discussion of methodology, or, as Halperin himself puts it, of "the

interpretive quandaries and intellectual pleasures of doing the history of homosexuality" (2). Instead of discussing each essay individually, therefore, I will address the main methodological concepts that underlie Halperin's detailed and fascinating readings of ancient sexualities.

3 In the first essay, as indeed throughout the volume, Halperin challenges the by now firmly established division between pre-modern sexual acts and modern sexual identities as one of the most glaring and conventionalized mis-readings of Foucault. By placing the relevant passage from *The History of Sexuality*, vol. 1, in the context of the overall argumentative move of the book, he shows that the usual readings of this passage are inattentive to Foucault's text and result in a rigid discursive and temporal differentiation between sexual act and sexual identity that forecloses any inquiry into genuine pre-modern conceptualizations (29-32). Here, as in the other three essays, he challenges the "current doctrine that sexual acts were unconnected to sexual identities in European discourses before the nineteenth century" by showing the complex intersections of sexual acts, sexual desire and sexual identity in several instances ranging from ancient Greece to early modern England.

4 While Halperin does not wish to demolish the "absolutely indispensable distinction between sexual acts and sexual identities," he challenges the temporal and discursive gap academic discourse has established between *pre-modern sexual acts* and *modern sexual identities*. As his illustrations show, sexual acts could be interpreted as representative of an individual's sexual morphology (you look like it, you behave like it, but it does not encompass your entire subjectivity), as well as expressive of individuals sexual subjectivity (you do not look like it, but the hidden deviant preference informs your subjectivity). His perceptive reading of the ancient Greek *Erôtes*, a dialogue about the relative merits of homosexuality and heterosexuality, complicates our modern, simplistic identification of sexual object choice and sexual orientation further. This is a list of considerations derived from the text, a list whose unfamiliar juxtaposition of categories clearly upsets our own categories of sexual identity, due to "(1) the text's emphasis on paederasty to the exclusion of homosexuality [...]; (2) the masculinization of the paederast and the effeminization of the lover of women; (3) the paederast's lack of social marginalization; (4) the shared queerness of both interlocutors; (5) the ability of each interlocutor to put himself in the erotic subject position of the other; (6) their common knowingness about both women and boys; (7) the paederast's capacity to eroticize elements of human anatomy independently of the sex of the person whose anatomy is being eroticized; (8) the lover of women's utilitarian appeal to quantitative factors as a basis for calculating relative sexual value [a woman's body provides more orifices for the man's

penetrative pleasures]; (9) both men's treatment of sexual object-choice as a matter of taste." (99). This list seems reminiscent (to the reviewer at least) of Borges' quote from a certain Chinese encyclopedia cited at the very beginning of Foucault's *The Order of Things*...

5 Scholars, then, should be wary of bringing the concepts of their own contemporary discourses of sexuality to bear on historical texts, since this practice tends to efface the alterity of these texts and with it the chance to identify the specific discourse on sexuality of that time: "Those historians of sexuality who redescribe in modern conceptual terms the culturally specific phenomena they observe in the distant historical record behave, in effect, like tourists in the archives: they misrecognize the sexual features of the period they study as exotic versions of the already familiar" (60). A typical analytical move, Halperin proceeds, would be to take one highly particularized instance and to generalize it to such an extent that it functions as a placekeeper for the concept as a whole (for example, a stigmatized instance of same-sex encounter such as anal intercourse comes to stand for homosexuality as such, that is, for homosexuality as stigmatizing, aberrant practice per se). The ludicrous effects of such totalizing statements become immediately apparent when the rhetorical strategy is turned on its head and "homosexuality" is replaced with "heterosexuality." This has been brilliantly undertaken by Mario DiGangi (*Homoerotics of Early Modern Drama*, 1997), whose parody of the totalization of heterosexuality employs the diction and concepts of much current work on same-sex erotic practices and identities: "In early modern England, heterosexuality was considered a shameful and dangerous practice; it was therefore socially and legally proscribed. Laws and local customs punished those people who engaged in premarital sex, had illegitimate children, or committed adultery. In sonnet sequences and tragedies, heterosexual relations are often represented as anguished, violent, or politically disastrous affairs..." (see also 62). Instead, Halperin concludes, we should carefully recover the terms in which erotic experiences of individuals belonging to the past were actually constituted and reflect on the difference between those terms and the ones we currently employ. Our own methods do not provide us with objectivity; rather, we must realize the extent to which we bring our own situated knowledge to bear on our interpretations of historical documents.

6 It is therefore essential to develop ways of thinking about same-sex sexual encounters that do not automatically correlate them with "homosexuality." Our modern notion of homosexuality, as Eve Sedgwick Kosofsky has already diagnosed in her 1990 *Epistemology of the Closet*, is far from unified; rather, "the definitional incoherence at the core of the modern notion of homosexuality is a sign of its historical evolution: it results from the way 'homosexuality' has effectively incorporated - without homogenizing - earlier models of same-



sex sexual relations and of sex and gender deviance" (12). In his last essay, aptly (yet not dogmatically) entitled "How to do the History of Homosexuality," Halperin explores these earlier models as well as their differences and overlaps in an attempt to provide Sedgwick's claim with a historical grounding. He offers "a new strategy for approaching the history of homosexuality," one that is committed to the constructivist approach of New Historicism while acknowledging the existence of transhistorical continuities and integrating them into a genealogical account of the emergence of (homo)sexuality.

7 Halperin identifies four pre-modern discourses of same-sex erotic relations: effeminacy, paederasty or "active" sodomy, friendship or male love, and passivity or inversion. The modern concept of homosexuality constitutes a fifth category, one in which each of the other four lives on and accounts for its incoherence. Each of these categories conceptualizes same-sex encounters differently and exists independently from the others, yet also shapes the others through its exclusions. In a very careful analysis, Halperin demonstrates where exactly these discourses differ and where they overlap.

8 Effeminacy, for example, constitutes a violation of gender norms and has functioned traditionally as a marker of *heterosexual* excess in men, while paederasty or "active" sodomy refers to male sexual penetrations of another male subordinate in terms of age, social class, gender style and/ or sexual role. Both this and the category of friendship or male love, are in keeping with normative gender roles; if anything, they lead to a heightened status of hyper-virility. Neither does sodomy, even if there is a conscious preference of same-sex penetration, affect the sodomist's sexual identity as such; here the notion of sexual act performed on a youth or social inferior is appropriate. Similarly, the same-sex sexual object choice does not necessarily function as a marker of difference, nor is it visibly inscribed on the sodomist's face and body (in contrast to the spectacularly visible otherness of the invert). Male friendship can exist only between equals - hierarchy brings with it the odour of sodomy. The disinterested love between two men, often envisaged as a merging of individual identities and hence as an unwillingness to live without the other, is all about sameness, and in this insistence on equality in all respects, it seems to distance itself self-consciously from the world of (sodomitical) sexual penetration. The fourth category, "inversion," marks a transgression from gender norms, indeed a reversal of masculine gender identity. While it involves sexual penetration by another man, this is less significant for the classification than the spectacularly deviant gender identity; the "womanly" liking for a "passive" role in sexual intercourse with other men is only one aspect of it. While effeminacy is an option potentially *all* men are held likely to succumb to (which makes this category correspond to what

Sedgwick has called a "universalizing" notion of gender deviance), inversion clearly is perceived as a constitutional defect only a few men suffer from: they have been unable to withstand the allure of pleasure and have betrayed their masculine gender ("minoritizing" view). Accordingly the "passive," is seen as spectacularly different: his deviant gender identity affects his personal demeanor, his attitudes, gestures and manners of demeaning himself - "Inversion manifests itself outwardly" (124). It is this category which comes closest to what in modern discourse will be called a sexual orientation or identity.

9 Homosexuality, a term first coined in 1869 in Germany, differs from these concepts in that it combines three previously uncorrelated concepts: an orientation perceived as perverted (like the passive/invert); a notion of same-sexual object choice (as in sodomy and inversion); a sexually deviant behaviour (like inversion and effeminacy). "Homosexuality" in the modern sense is "at once a psychological condition, an erotic desire, and a sexual practice" (131). What distinguishes homosexuality most from pre-modern categories of same-sex relations is that *homosexual object-choice in and of itself* functions as a marker of sexual and social difference. Furthermore, unlike the pre-modern discourses (apart from friendship) which refer to only *one* of the sexual partners, it "applies to both partners alike, whether active or passive, whether gendered normatively or deviantly. The hallmark of 'homosexuality', in fact, is the refusal to distinguish between same-sex sexual partners or to rank them by treating one of them as more (or less) homosexual than the other." (132)

10 While some features of the pre-modern discourses on same-sex relations survive in the modern notion, homosexuality as a concept rearranges and reinterprets the earlier patterns of erotic organization in significant ways. Now sexual object-choice becomes detached from any consideration of gender - the term is applicable to both men and women, independently of their orderly or disorderly gender behaviour. The former hierarchy of sexual roles loses its significance for classification and gives way to the sameness or difference of the sexual partners: no matter who does what to whom, both partners are assumed to participate in and be responsible for the sexual encounter alike. Finally, homosexuality is now set against heterosexuality, both defined by sexual object-choice and constituting seemingly mutually exclusive forms of human subjectivity and sexuality (133/34).

11 To conclude, Halperin's *How to do the History of Homosexuality* is a very instructive and useful book for all wishing to study the history of sexuality. All of the essays in this collection have been published previously (ch. 3 as early as 1992 and the first three chapters now for the third time), and the title of Halperin's keynote lecture at the *Sexuality After Foucault* conference in Manchester last November was the same as that of ch. 1, "Forgetting

Foucault." Yet in spite of this slight hint of "academic recycling," Halperin's book is indeed a very welcome contribution to the methodology of (not only) sexual historiography. Apart from its methodological merits, what makes this collection eminently readable are the fascinating accounts of ancient and early modern concepts of sexuality. Unfortunately, many scholars and historians of sexuality take Foucault's dictum of the emergence of the homosexual as a type in the 19th century too literally: they assume that not much of interest in same-sexual matters can have happened before and restrict their investigations to this relatively short period. Halperin shows us that pre-modern discourses of (homo)sexuality from ancient Greece to early modern Europe are not only instructive and interesting in themselves, but can contribute significantly to a better understanding of the modern concept of homosexuality and, indeed, of contemporary critical discourses on the history of sexuality as well.

**Annamarie Jagose: *Inconsequence: Lesbian Representation and the Logic of Sexual Sequence*. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002)**

By Peta Mayer, University of Melbourne, Australia

1 When reading theory we come into contact with assumptions upon which texts are based, indeed most theory relies on the "self-evidence" of certain beliefs to generate knowledge. In texts such as these, generally what is more interesting than the actual content is the way that the content is assembled - the organizing assumptions in a process which aims not to make assumptions. *Inconsequence: Lesbian Representation and the Logic of Sexual Sequence* is a text which does not take much for granted, its interventions dissolve the camouflage coating that distracts ideologically-softened minds. In her inimical urbane style Annamarie Jagose pulls apart the "narrative mechanisms of numerical order or chronological progression" (ix) to examine the mechanics of narratives that form separate and hierarchically rendered temporal switches figuring female homosexuality in belated relation to heterosexuality and to male homosexuality.

2 Through her interpretation of a handful of texts (Anne Lister's diaries, *Little Dorrit*, *The Bostonians*, *Mrs Dalloway*, *Rebecca* and "pulp sexology" are each designated their own chapter with helpful subheadings assisting the digestion of her meaty thoughts), Jagose demonstrates how a narrative establishes a cast of qualitatively assigned variables which are sexualized through both the temporal mechanics of the text, and through critical response. *Inconsequence* picks up on the momentum Jagose set in motion in her *Lesbian Utopics* (1994) and *Queer Theory* (1996). Its epistemological crispness and artful honing of diverse influences that rigorously address the normative clamp on our existence contributes to the interpretative sophistication which produces the most exciting theory of our time. This is the lifeblood of queer theory, with its particular theoretical twists and turns that productively counter the all-too-common extinguishing of complexities and paradoxes effected by the simple laziness of causal thinking.

3 Jagose confronts the remedial motivation within lesbian theory founded on the belief that the historical invisibility of the lesbian demands her contemporary restitution to the ranks of the visible. Indeed, if the lesbian was invisible, to what advantage is it to submit to this system of delineating that visibility was so desirable, if it was this system that produced this injustice in the first place? Given that this system, this recombination of disparate powers and influences, is invested in stipulating that "here is a lesbian," (most often in the guise of connotative practices that point to the void, etc) and "here is a non-lesbian," (most often this

goes without saying), is it not surmisable that these loaded appellations also seem to be at the service of this mode of organizing power? Hence Jagose's strategy is to enquire into the way in which these powers, and their snaky forms in narrative, engender the characteristics that become empirically emphasized and ordered into the imperfect and mutually exclusive categories of heterosexuality and homosexuality, never to quite adequately contain the resistances they produce. It is not merely that a field of representations is qualitatively circulated in which the lesbian is figured as that most incomprehensible of figures. It is that in attaching this representation of secondariness and derivation to the lesbian, a sequence is brought about that in itself refers to the lesbian without needing to attend to her messy specifications.

4 Two of the theoretical tenets underpinning Jagose's work are firstly that a period of time is not a blank *tabula rasa* on which discursive imprints are left but itself a construction to be investigated, and secondly that the deconstruction of historical discourses that were available to the author of a text at the time the text was written should not be confused with the productive textual economies and persuasions of our own time. The intention is to not retrospectively recuperate for ideologically-suspicious contemporary purposes the plotting of points and axis that could belong to different maps and lead to different destinations. It is also important here to note that within certain strands of queer literary criticism, (and also given the time frame that the discussed texts were written ) that to invoke the late nineteenth century is to call into play a host of coordinates that provide some of the most important foundational premises within this field. This temporal bracket, set upon by Foucault and famously elaborated by Sedgwick, invites the historicizing urge that levers temporal representations of desire from their suturing to identarian forms. This constructed time frame speaks of the influential narratives that were generated from Freudian psychoanalysis, particularly the case history, its pathologising momentum and its sequestering of desire as that which is recalled, through memory, retrospection, and in language that promotes the production of the ascendancy of the Oedipal family. Sexology - one of Jagose's particular bugbears - also found its cultivation within this temporal soil, crystallizing "sexuality as a sequential effect" (24). Furthermore, incurring legislative force from Wilde's trial onwards, the encasing of desire with identity and the personification of the legitimate - as prior and precedent - and the illegitimate - as derivative and secondary - solidified into new cultural identifications.

5 Accordingly, the *fin-de-siecle* 4period functions itself as a before-and-after stopgap in Jagose's text, as with many queer theoreticians who would nominate homosexuality's birth as dating from this time. Jagose wields this temporal panacea to redress that taxonomically

inappropriate criticism which, for example, preemptively claims the early nineteenth century diaries of Anne Lister as lesbian artifacts. Likewise she identifies where literary criticism dresses up *Little Dorrit's* 1857 Miss Wade from the lesbian emperor's periphrastic wardrobe to ill-fit her with the new clothes of contemporary representation. Put more succinctly, it is essential to Jagose's strategy that we don't impose our own, (still incoherent) identifications on to a retrospective temporal linearity that searches for an origin in some fantasized past. Similarly, with regard to her chapter on *The Bostonians*, Jagose once again mobilizes the historicized figure in favour of the contemporaneous recuperation of the lesbian-in-character: "Considering *The Bostonians* through its privileged figure of marriage enables a reading structured less by the retrospectively reified categories of modern sexual identification than by the historically specific, late nineteenth century forms that licensed sexuality as culturally visible" (68).

6 Discernible yet fleeting in the first three chapters of *Inconsequence*, Jagose's particular allegiance to the more opaque concepts of narrative theory is not always as clear as her rigorous deconstruction of, for example, sexology and psychoanalysis. Nevertheless the influence of narrative theory as an interpretive device is cranked up in the final three chapters. The point here is that the form (compositional techniques) will say something regardless of the content (plot). What is being said through form and how can it possibly intersect with representations of sexuality? This theoretical stance is not to be mistaken for the oversimplified equation of non-linear narratives with the "queering of" identity that we relate to the late twentieth century. Indeed Jagose reads *Mrs Dalloway* against the trend that praises its non-realist techniques as resisting the "tyranny of sequence" that indeed produces the realist tradition as so indebted to the narrative of heterosexuality. Drawing comparisons between the Freudian homosexual subject, who is either unable to adequately recall the past, or, on recalling, becomes interpellated through a sequential Oedipal hijinx, and Woolf's similar representational economy, Jagose illustrates how memory writes the fraught homosexual subject into existence: "For Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway*, as for Freud, the remembering homosexual subject is invariably recast as the homosexual subject of memory. Increasingly, homosexuality is confined to the mnemonic register, its surfacing in the present a temporary glitch in that future-directed temporality that is, as the novel's closure attests, contracted to heterosexuality" (82). Thus Jagose insists that Woolf's narrative, conferred with the authority of memory - which being a temporal thing and having such attributions of the homosexual historically imported to it - functions as a site from which sexually-identified indicators can be interpreted to suggest tensions other than those that arise from a non-narrative reading.

7        This is an important point for *Inconsequence*, indeed for any work that strategically resists the premise that the effects of sexual registration are always subject oriented - and the closing chapters insistently bring sequence and medium in to focus. In her impressively tight Chapter Five, Jagose examines the attempts to establish sexual registration through sequence both within du Maurier's *Rebecca*, its cinematic adaptation, and Susan Hill's 1993 "sequel" *Mrs de Winter*, and across these intertextually related mediums. She argues that despite, and perhaps even because of the fact that homosexuality is nowhere mentioned in du Maurier's *Rebecca*, the temporal disjunctions that are created through the narrative's backward and foreward movement resist an easy identification with the developmental teleology that figures Oedipal heterosexuality. Moving to Hitchcock's adaptation, Jagose claims that the destabilising devices of point-of-view editing and spectator-identification techniques, combined with homosexuality's familiar rendering through illusion, connotation and coding, continue to insinuate its periphrastic persistence. And she convincingly dispenses with the bland and unnecessary *Mrs de Winter* for its failed attempt to recuperate the sexual unrest demonstrated over the cultural anxiety of *Rebecca*. In the final chapter we are treated to a photographic sequence manufactured by pulp sexology in its mission to visibly represent the problem that it seeks to identify as lesbianism. Jagose draws on Foucault and Barthes to comment on the diffusion of sexual knowledge through the scientific/pornographic with the imperative to represent as uncoded that which is accessible through the photographic lens. By stripping the effects of sequence back to its licensing mechanics, *Inconsequence* reveals how lesbianism comes to figure as the derivation by which all sexuality is generated.

8        Sequence is one of those arenas that I find both challenging and threatening for its conceptual proximity to mathematics and the possibilities that might be on offer to literary theorists capable of excavating the tricky knowledges marooned behind those other ivory towers. Jagose works over two sequential paradigms, the chronological/hierarchical and the retrospective narration of present and past. I wonder what else could be gained from investigating other sequential logics such as simultaneously rendered sequences and sequences co-existing within a text. Nevertheless, Jagose's incisive deconstruction, and exquisitely detailed footnotes, are invaluable to learn from - to witness how she does what she does - makes *Inconsequence* an important tool for any contemporary theorist.

**Nancy Ordover: *American Eugenics: Race, Queer Anatomy, and the Science of Nationalism*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003**

By Sean O'Toole, The City University of New York, USA

1 The book jacket of *American Eugenics*, Nancy Ordover's lucid and unflinching account of the eugenics movement in the United States, makes a provocative claim: "The Nazis may have given eugenics its negative connotations, but the practice - and the 'science' that supports it - is still disturbingly alive in America." Fortunately, this is no casual allusion. Ordover argues that the history of eugenics, commonly thought to be the province of foreign fascists, is also grounded in American politics and culture of the past century. Indeed, as her study makes clear throughout, the record of eugenics in the United States is not even strictly historical, but ongoing, persistent, and enjoying a renewed respectability.

2 Writing passionately and with an abundance of research at her command, Ordover traces the sources and permutations of American eugenics as an ideological umbrella for a number of elite interests, each of which seeks to determine and distribute social value on the dubious basis of genes. Exposing the broad popularity of this "scientific" approach to social engineering over the past 120 years is the book's first blow to the eugenics movement. The 57 pages of Notes alone are worthy of publication and tell a moving and convincing story, ranging in just one chapter from Margaret Sanger's early *Birth Control Review* and a 1920 U.S. House Committee Hearing on *Biological Aspects of Immigration* to the more recent publishing phenomena of Murray and Herrnstein's *The Bell Curve* and Hamer and Copeland's *The Science of Desire*. As Ordover suggests, the mass appeal of eugenics has been matched only by its ability to "be resuscitated, repackaged for public consumption, and hailed as brave, groundbreaking, and legitimate" once a particular form of it has been discredited (xii). A second organizing objective of the book is therefore to reveal eugenics' agility as an ideological formation.

3 While *American Eugenics* casts a wide net over eugenicist currents, it never loses sight of the depths reached in three overlapping areas: (1) the consolidation of American nationalism; (2) the regulation of sexuality and gender norms; and (3) control of women's reproduction. Indeed, the real power of the book is in the links that it finds between issues that are commonly thought of as separate-namely, anti-immigration campaigns, the biologization of queer sexuality, and the compulsory sterilization of poor women and women of color. It offers a single point of departure for a truly interdisciplinary critique of the ideological turn to biology and science, and creates new prospects for activist interventions into that field.



4     The first section, "National Hygiene: Twentieth-Century Immigration and the Eugenics Lobby," takes up the role of eugenics in nationalist and racist enterprises. It examines the anti-immigrant rhetoric of the Immigration Acts of 1917 and 1924 as it constructed ideas about the American "nation" and offered a biological and quantifiable basis for national character. As Ordoover shows, standards of anatomical correctness were imposed on immigrants' bodies and legislative debates alike, with the eugenics lobby predicting dire consequences for the nation's bloodline if the "unfit" were not kept out. She traces the echoes of this thought through to *The Bell Curve's* 1994 call for IQ-based entry for immigrants and the termination of welfare, which the authors claim promotes reproduction among women with low intelligence quotients. As Ordoover notes, while the authors claim they are not "the people to try to rewrite immigration law," the book appeared shortly before the vote on Proposition 187, in which California voters sought to bar undocumented immigrants from health care and public education. *The Bell Curve's* model may have replaced racial "purity" with the more palatable standard of "competency," Ordoover argues, but its rhetoric is intertwined with previous eugenics crusades. Despite disclaimers to the contrary, it still finds an end in restrictive immigration laws, as Ordoover writes: "In the year following the passage of Proposition 187, the United States deported a record 51,000 undocumented immigrants" (xix).

5     The second section, "Queer Anatomy: One Hundred Years of Diagnosis, Dissection, and Political Strategy," examines the recent interest in discovering a "gay gene" in light of a century of medical models and interventions impressed upon (and sometimes embraced by) queers in the United States. Ordoover recounts the "medicalization of queers" since the nineteenth century, which includes psychiatric diagnoses, hormone regimens, aversion therapies, and surgery-all under the guise of "treatment." The demand for legitimacy among queers has witnessed a redeployment of the same vocabulary and once-disqualifying medical categories, to varying degrees of effectiveness. Hamer's highly publicized search for a gay gene serves as a case in point. The claim following from Hamer's research is that if homosexuality is hereditary, then it should be a protected minority status. However, Ordoover argues that eugenic thought operates through precisely this kind of "liberatory biologism," dangerously predicating civil rights on anatomy, a strategy generally used against the marginalized. One need only think of the potential use of such a genetic marking in prenatal screening and genetic engineering to understand the risks of such a strategy. Citing the backlash in legislative and cultural responses to AIDS, the twenty-eight antigay initiatives passed in the U. S. between 1992 and 1997, and the nine gay rights laws repealed, Ordoover

asks, "If queers were truly safe, would the scientific community be having this discussion?" (xxiv).

6 Ordoover's study looks not just to the political right for supporters of eugenics. As she convincingly shows, the history of American eugenics also includes the history of the refusal of liberal organizations, including some feminist organizations, to oppose what amount to state-sponsored population control measures. The third and final section, "Sterilization and Beyond: The Liberal Appeal of the Technofix," explores the liberal acquiescence to and participation in the eugenics movement by way of mandatory sterilization policies and the reliance on quick "technofixes" to divert attention away from the need for more fundamental social changes. Ordoover takes aim at Margaret Sanger and the early birth control movement's alliance with eugenics and support for income-based population control measures. She argues that this was more than a politically savvy alliance, but rather constitutes an "unabashed courtships of eugenicists" in their attempt to eliminate "not poverty but the poor." This liberal-eugenic alliance has yet to be severed. Ordoover traces its reverberations in welfare policies and medical practices in the decades that followed, including the euphemistic "Mississippi appendectomy" or sterilization, which used dubious protocols for obtaining "consent," and the latest round of reproductive technologies-quinacrine, Norplant, and Depo-Provera. *American Eugenics* offers a powerful critique of liberal assent to such "solutions," treating eugenics as an extremely agile current that can jump from right-wing causes to liberal "reform."

7 Skeptical readers of the book might wish for a more nuanced picture-if the history of bigotry Ordoover uncovers here did not make itself so spectacularly and doggedly transparent.

**The Right to Speak. Wally Lamb and the Women of York Correctional  
Institution: *Couldn't Keep It To Myself: Testimonies from Our Imprisoned  
Sisters*. New York: Regan Books, 2003**

By Astrid Recker, University of Cologne, Germany

1       The stories collected in *Couldn't Keep It To Myself* are the result of a writing workshop for women prisoners held by Wally Lamb at York Correctional Institution. Although they all are biographical, the stories the women tell are not what one might expect them to be: pessimistic, gloomy, or filled with hatred against prison and society. Taking us into the past and present lives of the authors, these pieces are full of hope - although the majority of incidents they relate are distressing -, and the subjects that emerge from them before our eyes are primarily individual persons, not convicted criminals.

2       Don't you ever say a word. Throughout their lives the women who contributed to *Couldn't Keep It To Myself* were silenced. What happens in this house stays in this house. Silenced by those who abused them, battered or molested them - by fathers, mothers, uncles, brothers, husbands, supposed friends of the family, and neighbors. Skip the lip service, you rotten, ungrateful little liar. It is for this reason that their contributions to this collection of autobiographical stories are, as Wally Lamb states in the introduction, "victories against voicelessness - miracles in print" (9). And don't you dare say a thing. One of the main achievements of *Couldn't Keep It To Myself* is that in each of the stories the authors practice writing as a form of re(dis)covering their own voices, and every one of them succeeds in doing so as the presence of a multiplicity of individual, clearly distinguishable voices proves. The voices we may discover belong to adults and to children, they are chatty, sarcastic, matter-of-fact, distanced, involved, and angry. Most amazingly, however, none of these voices is bitter - a fact that is more than remarkable taking into account what every one of the authors experienced in the course of her life. Of the eleven contributors ten were or still are inmates of York Correctional Institution (with the exception of Nancy Birkla, who was imprisoned in the Kentucky State Penitentiary for Women). Of these ten all but one were sexually abused as children. More often than not the experience of sexual violence continued as they grew older, perpetuated by abusive boyfriends and husbands. Eight of these ten women were beaten throughout their lives.

3       Drawing attention to the links between self-awareness and power, Lamb writes about the contributors that "in taking on the subject of themselves - making themselves vulnerable to the unseen reader - they have exchanged powerlessness for the power that comes with self-

awareness" (5). Indeed, questions of self-awareness, power and control over one's own life play a crucial role in all of the stories, and by successfully implementing these notions in their works the women emerge as true authors - subjects with the authority to speak from their own point of view rather than being spoken (for) by others. Growing more aware of themselves, the women featured in *Couldn't Keep It To Myself* discover their own, individual voices, and they do so in an environment in which "expressions of individuality" are "taboo" (342), as Dale Griffith, teacher at York and the only contributor never incarcerated, remarks in "Bad Girls." Writing themselves into being, the women take control over themselves and their past as well as their future lives. In so doing each of them allows us to see her on her own terms, to look "beneath the surface of her conviction to the complexities that shaped her for prison" (Griffith 343). In this manner, *Couldn't Keep It To Myself* affords us a personal, inside perspective rather than directing our gaze through the labeling and objectifying prison bars depicted not only on the cover but reproduced at the beginning of each of the chapters of the hardback edition. The *sine qua non* of this ability to make oneself seen on one's own terms is self-awareness. Before they could make others aware of themselves, the women who contributed to *Couldn't Keep It To Myself* therefore had to undergo a process of becoming aware not only of themselves but of the influences and experiences that turned them into the person they were or were becoming when they began to participate in Lamb's writing workshop. Each of the stories in *Couldn't Keep It To Myself* confirms that its author has accomplished this task. They have thus taken a decisive step towards enabling us, their readers, to fulfill the wish of Bonnie Foreshaw: "that people reading this book will bear in mind that we are human beings first, inmates second" (208).

4 The two ways of seeing and being seen referred to above, the inside and the outside perspective, are among the central concerns of Nancy Whiteley, whose two contributions ("The True Face of the Earth" and "Orbiting Izzy") open the collection. This is stressed by her juxtaposition of two quotations from the works of Saint-Exupéry: "[W]hat is essential is invisible to the eye" (23) and "The aeroplane has unveiled for us the true face of the earth" (50; emphasis omitted). On the one hand, both of her stories show a preoccupation with the point of view afforded from an airplane, from which one looks at things from an above or outside position and which allows us only to see the surface of things. Thus we find frequent references to outward appearance or facial expressions. Often, the protagonist's face is merely a mask, a surface hiding something that cannot be seen from the outside or above. Through her writing Whiteley seems to hint at the need to exchange the airplane-point of view for another one that focuses on what is invisible to the eye. Despite its promise, the former point

of view is unable to reveal the "true face of the earth," as the narrator remarks upon looking back onto her life at the end of the story: "*The aeroplane has unveiled for us the true face of the earth . . .* No way, I decided. I hadn't learned the truth about the face of the earth or anything else during those plane rides" (50-51; emphasis in the original). Looking at things or persons from an above or external point of view reveals nothing about their substance, their true face as opposed to the face as mask. Hence both of Whiteley's stories suggest that the fox's remarks in Saint-Exupéry's *The Little Prince* are true: "[W]hat is essential is invisible to the eye" (23) and can only be discerned with the heart. Whereas looking at things or persons from an outside perspective results in labeling them according to what they appear to be, Whiteley enables us to look beneath the masks and labels. Through her writing she has thus created the place that she and her friend Paula once imagined: "a place where the labels people had stuck on us fell away like wet Band-Aids" (35). Accordingly, both "The True Face of the Earth" and "Orbiting Izzy" focus on friendship that does not depend on looks or appearances, but on true love and care. Whiteley-the-protagonist is unable to cope with the fact that she makes herself "vulnerable" (Lamb 5) by granting others such an inside perspective of herself, and finally backs out of the friendships described in the stories. Whiteley-the-author, however, refuses to retract. Instead, through publishing "The True Face of the Earth" and "Orbiting Izzy," she grants her readers an inside perspective on her life and self. Therefore, both stories are an appeal not to judge her and her fellow contributors on the basis of what they seem to be at first sight. They are proof of the fact that by making her self "vulnerable to the unseen reader" Whiteley has truly exchanged powerlessness for power (Lamb 5).

5 In Michelle Jessamy's "Motherlove" we find a similar juxtaposition between two ways of seeing and being seen. In this story, centering on the protagonist's teenage pregnancy, her struggle for the love of her mother and an incident of sexual abuse by a "friend" of the family when she was eleven, incidents of watching and being watched are contrasted with the narrator's attempts to make her mother see her. For example, on the day the abuse occurred, Mo'Shay, the protagonist, "stayed to watch Fred" repair the television when he started "staring strangely at her" and caused her to avert her eyes (252). During the ensuing abuse, Fred tells Mo'Shay: "Been watching you for a long time, little girl" (253). Instances like the abuse, in which seeing or watching is clearly associated with an objectification of the seen, contrast with references to the protagonist's mother's refusing to see, or recognize, her. At the dinner table, Mo'Shay has to "[steal] glances at her mother," whose "tired eyes looked out at nothing" (158), and only when she has turned her back at her does she feel "her mother's eyes

upon her" (258). Ironically, during the ensuing inquiry whether she might be pregnant, it is Mo'Shay who "[looks] away" (259) and her mother who demands: "'Could you at least face me when I'm talking to you?'" (258). This temporary exchange of roles draws attention to the fact that all the while Mo'Shay's mother has been the one refusing to face her daughter, not vice versa, and that it is a look of acknowledgement and recognition assuring her of her mother's love that Mo'Shay struggles for throughout the story. Other than the more tentative ending of Whiteley's stories, "Motherlove" closes with Mo'Shay and her mother finally looking at one another, not in a distanced, superficial manner but in a way that grants recognition and acknowledgement: "Shay looked up from the baby clothes to her mother's face. She smiled. Her mother smiled back" (264-265). Exchanging the threatening and objectifying gaze of the abuser for the acknowledging and reassuring look of her mother, the story of Mo'Shay is not only another offer to look beneath the surface but also an example of the positive and optimistic conclusion that almost all of the stories in *Couldn't Keep It To Myself* have. As such it contrasts significantly with Barbara Parsons Lane's "Puzzle Pieces" which, although showing the strongest preoccupation with questions of seeing and being seen, does not fully succeed in replacing the objectifying gaze of external observers with a look of acknowledgment and recognition from an involved reader. In consequence, Lane's story seems to be the least optimistic of the collection.

6 In "Puzzle Pieces," watching is inextricably tied up with exerting control, while being watched is inevitably to be turned into a powerless object. In the story's first chapter, significantly entitled "The Visit," Lane repeatedly points to her own inability to see and control. Sitting in the visiting room shortly after having entered prison, she remarks that since she has been imprisoned she has been unable to look at herself: "Until now, I haven't even thought about my appearance. I haven't been able to face myself in a mirror anyway" (213). At the same time one of her greatest concerns is that as a result of her crime she will be unable to look after her family: "I know I am in prison because I took a life and must be punished. I take full responsibility for my crime. My greatest punishment is not the loss of my freedom, [...] or the fears I face. Far worse than these is the separation from my children's lives - the lost opportunity to watch my grandchildren grow, the inability to make sure the family is safe" (216). Unable to watch her children and grandchildren, she feels she no longer has any influence on or control over their lives. At the same time Lane suffers immensely from the fact that in prison she is the one who is constantly being watched. The first two paragraphs of Chapter 3, entitled "Cell Door Window" (the window, that is, through which the officers watch the inmates in their cells), exclusively deal with acts of seeing or watching

and Lane's uncomfortableness with the latter:

Walking up the stairs to my twelve-cell tier, I spot an inmate standing at her window, staring out at nothing. The faraway look on her face makes me nervous and I hurry past.

I'm impatient as I stand in front of my locked cell door, waiting for the guard to see me and trigger the switch. [...]

Our cell has two windows. One looks onto the compound. The other, a three-by-eighteen inch strip of glass built into the cell door, gives a narrow view of the corridor. [...] In her boredom, Sherry stands at our skinny strip of window and broadcasts bulletins about what she sees. [...] I roll onto my side and face the wall, hoping to discourage Sherry's chatter. *Who cares?* I want to scream. *Do you know what you look like from the other side of that door? A caged animal, that's what!* (219; emphasis in the original)

We learn that one reason for Lane's extreme feelings with regard to being watched is her mother's stay in a psychiatric hospital when Lane was seventeen. Conceiving of her mother as a "caged mental [patient]" (219), she abhorred the fact that she and her younger siblings came to the hospital to look at their mother as you look at a caged animal, an object. The second, and probably more important reason why Lane suffers so much from being watched, is her marriage to Mark, whom she shot in a frenzy when he told her he had sexually abused her granddaughter, something Lane experienced herself as a child. In the case of Mark, watching is inextricably tied up with control and threat. Not only does he follow his wife around in order to watch and control her, he also "floods [their] yard with light to prevent burglaries" (222). By bathing his belongings, among which he also counts his wife, in light (i.e. by making them visible), he brings them under his control. On other occasions, Mark threatens his wife and others to "watch their backs" (224) or to "watch out" (25). These incidents are only two of the numerous examples of how Mark is associated with watching. It is highly significant that Lane "can't remember shooting Mark but can still see the look of hatred on his face the moment before" (215-216), thus reducing her husband wholly to someone who looks. More than any other of the stories of *Couldn't Keep It To Myself*, "Puzzle Pieces" illustrates what it means to be objectified by a (male) gaze, and it is due to her experiences with both her husband and her mother's hospitalization that Lane refuses to join her cell mate in watching out of the cell window. To her, looking out of this barred opening appears to be equivalent to succumbing to the objectifying gaze of those who stand on the other side of the window, looking in. Thus she writes: "I will *not* go to my cell window and stare out without a purpose. *Get away from that window! [...] Don't let this place swallow you up! Don't become a caged animal!*" (222; emphasis in the original). According to this logic, to watch is to make oneself susceptible to being watched by others. Therefore, Lane seems to believe that if she does not watch, she can withdraw herself from the objectifying gaze of those who watch her from an

external point of view. This logic is faulty in the sense that it renders her passive and thus keeps her from claiming her own point of view. This is strongly emphasized by the fact that Lane ends "Puzzle Pieces" with letters from her children in which they "write, from their own perspectives, about the 'then and now' of [her] crime and punishment" (240). Although Lane tells her story from her own perspective, and although she assures us that she has become "more self-aware" and that her "eyes are wide open" (238), she does not, or at least not completely, succeed in deconstructing or averting the objectifying gaze directed at her from beyond the prison bars. Once more succumbing to the perspective of others at the close of her story, she ends up being the object of another's gaze again.

7 In contrast to Lane, whose faulty notion of control keeps her from fully claiming her own point of view and taking control over how she lets others see her, Tabatha Rowley succeeds in doing both in and through "Hair Chronicles." The latter is an intricate negotiation of questions of self-awareness and power in relation to the two ways of seeing and being seen elaborated above. Having used her changing hairstyles to picture the process during which she came to be more self-aware and regained control over her life, Rowley writes at the end of "Hair Chronicles": "Today I am a woman with better decision-making skills and control over my actions. Physically, mentally, and spiritually, I am strong. My hair charts the history of how I got this way" (110). The two different ways of seeing and being seen are also exemplified by her hair. In the past, Rowley describes, her different hairstyles were not meant to signify something essential but were merely a fashion statement: "For some, dreads are worn as a political statement against oppression, but mine were about style, not about substance" (98). Rather than conceiving of her hair as a "testament to the world" about who she really is (102), at that time Rowley used it as a form of camouflage or mask. Whenever she ran away from home, she changed her outward appearance: "I would cut my hair and dye it a different color. My hair would keep the cops from recognizing me, I figured, in case Ma put out a missing person report" (109). In this sense, Rowley's hair allowed her to restrict other people to the airplane-point of view of Whiteley's story in that it prevented them from looking beneath the surface to her "real" self. It is in prison that she realizes that the self she sought to protect through her camouflage never existed, and that her changing hairstyles, which she claimed to be mere style, were in fact only expression of her search for a substance: "In an effort to figure out who I am," Rowley thus writes, "I have sported some pretty big styles and some pretty wild cuts" (105). It follows that the control she believed she had over others' perceptions through the style of her hair was not genuine in that it lacked a coherent subject fulfilling the function of an agent. As a consequence of this insight, Rowley decides to



forsake the "processed styles" she forced upon her hair and her self in the past (109) and lets both "go natural" (105). From this point on her hair no longer serves her as a form of camouflage but indeed becomes a "testament to the world" about who she really is (102). Not only has she therefore finally (re-)discovered her self, the individual underneath the surface, the substance beneath the style, she also allows us to exchange the external point of view, which used to grant her protection, for the inside one. Although Rowley makes herself "vulnerable to the unseen reader" by exposing her true self (Lamb 5), the possible "[m]ockery" that might result from this exposition has, she assures, "lost some of its power over [her]" (109). This is aptly illustrated by her remark that rather than burning combed or cut hair to keep anyone from putting a spell on her (100), she now simply flushes it down the toilet, self-assured that nobody but herself has control over her own life. Like her hair, Rowley's contribution to *Couldn't Keep It To Myself* is a "testament to the world" about who she is. As such, it clearly forsakes the treacherous security of the external, the airplane-point of view and lets its readers partake in its protagonist's (as well as its author's) progress towards self-awareness, power, and genuine control.

8 It is this newfound control over their lives which Rowley, and all other contributors, express by taking control over their texts (with the possible exception of Lane, who hands her text over to her children in the end). Two stories explicitly using this practice to draw attention to their authors' control over their texts are Nancy Birkla's "Three Steps Past the Monkeys," and Brenda Medina's "Hell, and How I Got Here." In the latter, the narrator's description of events constantly undermines the views voiced by the protagonist (her younger self). As in many of the other contributions, it is the issue of control that comes to the fore in Medina's story. "Control of my own life," she writes, "was a fight I intended to win" (154). She describes how in a struggle to escape from her controlling mother's grasp she runs into the arms of a controlling and abusive boyfriend who introduces her to an even more controlling gang. Having been present at a gang-related killing, Medina enters prison aged seventeen with a conviction for murder and a sentence of twenty-five years without parole. Since in prison she is ironically freed from the control of both the gang and her boyfriend, she begins a process of taking control over herself and her own life again. Unimpressed by the consequences of her behavior, Brenda, once she has entered York Correctional Institution, decides that in the future she will do whatever she wants to do. The narrator finally exposes the faulty assumption of her younger self, i.e. that taking control over one's own life can be accomplished by becoming a troublemaker with a "badass" reputation (172). She does so by repeatedly showing that, paradoxically, this form of control is inextricably linked with

confinement. Whenever Brenda leaves her unit, she has the freedom of choice to be constrained either by leg chains or handcuffs (171). Concerning her attack of a fellow inmate, the narrator remarks: "By the time I regained control, I'd been pinned down to the floor, shackled, and handcuffed" (171). Through linking her younger self's notion of control with the contradictory notion of constraint, Medina exposes the paradoxical and illusionary status of this control. At the same time the fact that she does so serves as a sign to the reader that Medina has not only realized the mistakes of her younger self, but that she has exchanged illusionary for true control by taking control over her text. As a consequence, the end of "Hell, and How I Got Here," in which we witness the author's younger self realize that she has to change her behavior in order to regain genuine control over her life, is highly convincing in the optimism it imparts, despite the fact that Medina was facing another sixteen years of incarceration at the time she was writing this story.

9 Birkla's "Three Steps Past the Monkeys" is an even more striking demonstration of what it means to have control over one's own text. Describing the painful process of unlocking suppressed childhood memories of sexual abuse, Birkla's story plays with various notions of recovery. She addresses recovery not only in the sense of recovering from her addiction but, more importantly, deals with questions of re-/discovering buried memories and the importance of being able to re-cover (i.e. cover up again) these memories after retrieving them. Throughout the story, Birkla thus stresses the importance of surfaces - devices, that is, for covering or hiding things. Realizing in prison that she cannot maintain the "recovery self" (127) she built up during her previous stay in a substance abuse treatment center without practicing self-recovery first, Birkla succeeds in uncovering the memories of sexual abuse hidden beneath the protective surfaces. At this point, then, she can begin to re-cover in the sense of covering up these memories with the prospect of regaining her physical and mental health. However, it is not only her self-conscious use of language and imagery which shows that Birkla has successfully taken control over her life and text again. She explicitly stages herself in this position of control when she describes how she renounced her "self-assigned role as victim" (121) and succeeded in breaking free from the vicious circle of succumbing to her husband's control, refusing to take responsibility, and reverting to self-destruction by means of drugs. By referring to her role as marital victim as "self-assigned" (121) she replaces one fiction (that of the woman as passive victim without any control over the abusive situation) with another, albeit even more cynical one (the fiction that she has brought all of this upon herself). Employing the second fiction as a tool of regaining agency and control over her own life, Birkla shows that she has actively and consciously freed herself from her

abusive husband. She is thus not only the author of the story, which retraces her process of self-recovery, but in the story itself she figures as an author of a fiction enabling her to take control over her own life again. Intricately linking issues of self-awareness, authorship, and control, "Three Steps Past the Monkeys" is a comment both on how Birkla conceives of herself and on how she wishes to be seen by her readers, i.e. as an author, a subject with control over her narrative as well as her life, and as someone speaking with the authority granted by her own point of view.

10 Due to limitations of space, a number of stories from *Couldn't Keep It To Myself* had to remain unaddressed. Like Birkla's, these, too, link notions of self-awareness and control (over the text as well as life). Frequently, the process of coming to self-awareness is not only a central aspect of the narrated action, but the carefully chosen language and imagery as well as the diligent construction of the stories betray a strong sense of what it is the authors wished to convey. In addition, the author's self-consciousness or -awareness is often emphasized by a recognizable, almost ironic, distance between the experiencing and the narrating *I*. Thus, in nearly all of the stories, the narrators are indeed much more self-confident, powerful and self-aware than the younger self who is the protagonist of the story. Each piece is as successful as the others in allowing its author to emerge as a powerful subject with her own voice and her own point of view to speak from. Carolyn Ann Adams, Bonnie Foreshaw, Robin Cullen, and Diane Bartholomew thus also manage to replace the point of view of external, uninvolved observers with an insider's perspective on their person and their lives. They allow us to see them as they see themselves and wish to be perceived by others, thereby eluding the labeling and objectifying power of the prison bars on the cover through returning the gaze. It is highly significant that of all possible artworks it should be "a disjointed patchwork replica of the Mona Lisa" (Lamb 13), produced by the inmates in an art class, that is depicted on the frontispiece of the hardback edition, the portrait of a woman, who in an almost disturbing and steady manner returns the gaze of the observer. The fragmented picture has not lost any of its original's uncanny capability to unsettle the spectator by creating a feeling of being watched. What is more, it is precisely its fragmentation that makes it a fitting image for the stories *Couldn't Keep It To Myself* comprises. Not only does it direct our attention to the fact that most of the women have experienced things that shattered their sense of wholeness or unification. More importantly, it emphasizes that each of the pieces of the collection is unique with regard to the perspective it grants us and with regard to the subject it represents. "The smooth space of patchwork," Deleuze and Guattari write in *A Thousand Plateaus*, "is to demonstrate that 'smooth' does not mean homogeneous, quite the contrary [...]" (477). At the

same time, they describe patchwork as "[a]n amorphous collection of juxtaposed pieces that can be joined together in an infinite number of ways [...]" (476). Neither homogeneous nor completely disjointed, both fragmented and interrelated in "an infinite number of ways," the stories of *Couldn't Keep It To Myself* interlock to form a multi-faceted rather than seamless whole.

11 This impression of uniqueness and authenticity is slightly marred by Wally Lamb's introduction. The book could certainly have done with a less detailed description of Lamb's motivation to become a teacher, the success of his first novel, and his inability to say "no" without an index card. Even though followed by a more conventional introduction, these introductory remarks undermine the overall project of *Couldn't Keep It To Myself*: to enable its contributors to speak for themselves, in their own voices and from their own point of view. It remains unclear why Lamb could not position himself on an equal level with the other contributors, for example by turning his personal experiences into a story similar to the one by his colleague Dale Griffith. By framing the women's stories with his own voice and personality (a circumstance also expressed by the fact that Lamb's name completely dominates the cover of the hardback edition), Lamb not only draws attention away from the contributors and onto himself, but also stages himself as someone with control over the women's texts and voices. This becomes particularly apparent in his remarks on editing in the "Notes to the Reader." All of us are aware of the fact that a process of editing is involved in publishing such a collection of stories. But does Lamb not somehow undermine the project of the book by telling its readers in such a concrete and highly detailed manner to what extent the editor was actually involved in the production of the published pieces? Yet despite these drawbacks, the pieces comprised in *Couldn't Keep It To Myself* (particularly when read for themselves rather than mediated through Lamb's introduction) are a powerful and moving testimony to the reader about who their authors were and are. Each of the women enables us to see her on her own terms, from an inside rather than an outside perspective - and each of them certainly makes us aware of the fact that in the first place she is a unique person, not an inmate.

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**Coming off Rage? Angry Young Women at the Royal Court in Lucy  
Prebble's *The Sugar Syndrome*, Gary Mitchell's *Loyal Women*, and Stella  
Feehily's *Duck***

By Tina Wald, University of Cologne, Germany

1        After a number of plays focusing on issues of race, questions of gender are back on the stage of the Royal Court Theatre, where three new productions of the autumn/winter season feature angry female protagonists. While the debut plays by Lucy Prebble and Stella Feehily explore the (suppressed) rage of "ladettes" (thus offering a female alternative to the lads so popular in the dramatic New Writing of the 1990s), the established Irish dramatist Gary Mitchell tackles the female share of violence in the Northern Ireland conflict.

**Lucy Prebble: *The Sugar Syndrome* (October 2003, RC Upstairs)**

2        *The Sugar Syndrome*, first performed in October 2003 in the Court's smaller venue upstairs, is an impressive and witty debut by the twenty-two-year-old Lucy Prebble, who won the *Sunday Times Most Promising New Playwright Award* in 2002 and subsequently participated in the Court's Young Writers Programme. The play thematises sexual child abuse in an innovative way. In contrast to the Trauma Drama on paedophilia written during the 1990s, Prebble concentrates on the perpetrator rather than on the victim of child abuse, and she manages to create an ambiguous character, who oscillates between being a self-justifying perpetrator and a guilt-ridden, even somewhat pitiable, victim of his own urges and of social discrimination. Tim is introduced when the seventeen-year-old Danielle poses as eleven-year-old boy called Dani in a chatroom and sets up a date with Tim. The potential perpetrator thus becomes a victim of Dani's lie; he himself rather than the child he believes he talks to is seduced and tricked by the Internet communication. When Dani and Tim meet, Tim ironically apologises that he does not live up to Dani's (and possibly the audience's) stereotypical idea of a child abuser: "I'm sorry I'm not the freakshow you expected" (14). Through comments like these, *The Sugar Syndrome* constantly plays with the audience's preconceptions about child abuse, and questions and undermines them.

3        Despite their initial mutual disappointment, an unusual friendship develops between Dani and Tim who feel united through their common past of having been hospitalised in a mental institution and the psychiatric ward of a prison respectively. Just as Tim has not been "cured" from paedophilia, Dani has not yet fully overcome her bulimia, as her "Thinspiration" book, which contains images of slender models and celebrities, as well as her manic urge to

control herself and others show. Dani attempts to reform Tim according to her credo of self-control: "'That's just how you are.' How convenient. So what's the point of fighting it. That's binge mentality, I've started so I may as well finish [...] Every day is a blank slate. And you are defined not by your pathetic emotions and urges, but by *what you do*" (31). The friendship between the damaged outsiders runs the risk of being melodramatic, but Prebble is constantly aware of her use of cliché and self-reflexively plays with the employed stereotypical notions. For instance, Dani resentfully points out, "Everyone makes me angry. Sometimes I think about just staying in bed for the whole of the day, if that didn't make me such a fucking cliché" (16) and Tim informs Dani, "You may be surprised to hear that I don't need another person calling me a pervert" (17). Prebble is not interested in simply deconstructing clichés, on the contrary, she manages to reveal the (crude) reality behind those stereotypes and demonstrates that the characters' awareness of their situation often enhances rather than alleviates their pain.

4 As the quotes already indicate, Prebble succeeds in combining the comic and the tragic, in making *The Sugar Syndrome* vacillate between (black) humour and utmost seriousness. This surprising combination of humour and horror is a common feature of plays dealing with child abuse, but Prebble manages the shifts particularly well. Despite the play's comic features, it remains a thoughtful and saddening analysis of both Tim's personal and explicit as well as society's general and latent paedophilia. It is Dani who suggests that Tim's "preference" is part of a social trend of eroticising the childlike and the youthful: "a thousand of grown ups pay fifteen quid to dress in school uniform and go dancing to 'love Shack'. [...] At least you're honest about it. Not like all those blokes there drooling over little girls where it's safe, where it's allowed" (49). Despite the truth of Dani's statement, it remains one of her doubtful strategies to justify Tim's obsession. He himself argues that his sexual interest in children is not criminal per se by saying, "Just because a man fancies women doesn't make him a rapist" (15). Furthermore, he employs a pseudo-Foucauldian argument to defend himself, which Dani attempts to explain to her lover Lewis, who is horrified and disgusted by Dani's friendship with Tim: "He made a good point the other day. How in history, it's always the oppressed minorities who are made out to be sick and dangerous, blacks or gays or whatever. How we need to turn them into monsters. [...] We can't see it cos we're on the inside" (25).

5 Arguments like these help to blur the boundaries of what is normal and what is not in this unusual friendship between the seventeen-year-old bulimic and the thirty-something paedophile. In this respect, *The Sugar Syndrome* appears to be a typical Generation X-

product, as the play itself self-reflexively announces: "I'm Generation X, we don't judge anything anyone does, only how it's reported" (14). However, the ending of the play reintroduces moral judgement. When Dani looks at the images and videos Tim has downloaded from the Internet (he claims that he has never even looked at them), the victims of child abuse are for the only time given an anonymous and inarticulate, but still touching and alarming voice: When Dani looks at the images she is "shocked but entranced. An audio file is opened. The sound of a young boy, eight or nine, screaming in terror and begging through tears for it to stop. It is chillingly real. Dani is appalled and deeply shaken by the monstrous sound. [...] She is on the verge of tears" (70). Without explicitly discussing the issue of child abuse afterwards again, this short sound element highlights the power imbalance and cruelty of paedophilia, which stands in stark contrast to Tim's stories of mutual love and tender support. Watching those images, which the audience in the original production could not see, appears to transform Dani's world view; she later asks her mother "There *are* some things we *can't* help, aren't there?" (73), thus leaving behind her belief in complete (self-)control. The fact that Dani for the first time is able to talk to her mother about her bulimia and her stay in the hospital reinforces the impression that Dani starts to change, that she undergoes a process of maturing and of coming to terms with her past.

11 Although for the most part of the play Brenda seems to have adopted a more traditional image of nurturing femininity, at the end of the play she is transformed back into the "raging bull" (40) she once was. She injures Heather with a knife and offers Gail, the local leader of the WUDA, an even more cruel war between women: "Because if you want to go to war with me; I'll give you a war and every single person that you ever loved, every friend you ever had and every member of your family will never ever be safe again" (104). Facing the brutalised and brutalising women, Adele's desperate argument "The point is that you are always saying that we are better than them, so how are we if we just do what they do?" (61), which actually refers to Catholics and Protestants, could also be applied to the men and women of Mitchell's universe. Instead of offering an alternative female way of dealing with private and political conflicts, Mitchell convincingly shows that Northern Irish women cannot escape the deforming effects of civil war and religious hatred.

### **Stella Feehily: *Duck* (November 2003, RC Upstairs)**

12 Stella Feehily's *Duck* negotiates questions of violence and female coming of age, thus focusing on some of the same topics as those raised by Mitchell and Prebble. *Duck* is the first full-length play by the trained actress Feehily. As a co-production between Max Stafford-



Clark's *Out of Joint* and the Royal Court, it was first presented at the Jerwood Theatre Upstairs in November 2003 after a national tour including a run at the Traverse Theatre during the Edinburgh Festival in July/August 2003. Duck centres on two young women, Sophie, named "Gull" by her mother, and Cat, called "Duck" by her boyfriend Mark because of her large feet. The play starts with "a huge explosion. Sounds of running. Car alarms. Sirens in the distance" (3), which suggests Mitchell's Belfast as a more likely setting than Dublin, where it actually takes place. However, the explosion is not due to a political, but to a private act of protest: Cat alias Duck has blown up the new luxurious jeep of her boyfriend Mark. Starting with this outrageous act, the play slowly unravels Cat's complex and opaque motives for her deed, which appear to vary from attention seeking to revenge for Mark's recent negligent behaviour to provoking an end of their relationship.

13 Although Cat is unwilling to discuss the reasons and consequences of her act, Sophie repeatedly offers interpretations of it. She even writes a college-essay on the tradition of arson, and keeps reading out relevant passages to Cat: "In the seventeenth century (as at other times) arson was a common means of revenge. [...] It required no great physical strength or financial means and could be concealed. [...] Arson and scolding appeared to offer a dramatic form of protest to the poor and rejected. Enabling them to vent an inarticulate rage against the hopelessness of their condition" (57-59). The "hopelessness" of Cat's situation is rooted in Cat's dependence on Mark, as he is not only Cat's boyfriend but also her employer and the owner of the flat they live in. Hence Cat feels she has to endure his outbreaks of aggressive jealousy as well as his sexist conduct, which includes offering her sexual services to his mates: "What are friends for? [...] She's a hole. She likes it hard" (19).

14 Feeling increasingly mistreated by Mark, Cat attempts to escape into an affair with the sixty-something novelist Jack, who turns out to be less interested in taking care of Cat, or "Gina Lollobrigida" as he dubs her, than he first pretends to be. Confused by the chaos of her love life and her work, Cat moves back in with her parents, who do not even attempt to conceal how little they welcome the return of their lost daughter: "We've got used to that extra space now [...] We cut the umbilical cord you know" (80-81). Cat's dysfunctional family life is shaped by the depression and alcoholism of her father, the miserable marriage of the parents based on the unwanted pregnancy of Cat's mother, and the mother's suspicion of Cat that even includes her fear that Cat might seduce her younger brother. Sophie's family background is similarly problematic, rendering the girlfriends without positive role models, as the advertisement for Duck points out: "you can't learn to be good when your elders are no longer your betters" (see book cover and the RC-Homepage).

15 Duck portrays the slow process of the girls' coming of age, which includes Cat's realisation that she cannot solve her problems by (financially and otherwise) relying on men and both girls' insights that they cannot keep on escaping from their dire present and similarly bleak future prospects with the help of alcohol, drugs and night life pleasures. It is again Sophie who researches the implications of their bird nicknames, finding out that "gull" connotes "an unfledged bird" (46), and thus a state of immaturity both Cat and Sophie attempt to overcome. At the end of the play, the girls renew their friendship after a quarrel about Cat's negligence of Sophie and after Sophie's fall out of a window, which was an accident according to Sophie but on purpose according to Cat. When Sophie decides to move out of her conflict-ridden parents' home, Cat supports her. In the final scene, the girls sit by a roadside with a pile of bags and boxes. Although they have been waiting for a taxi for a long time, they are unwilling to go back to Sophie's house to again call a cab. Their situation visualises the transition moment in their lives, and Cat laconically observes that their intended triumphant departure has gone slightly wrong: "The Great Escape this ain't" (109). Also the last words of the play ironically comment on their attempt at a new start, on the meaning of their nicknames, and on Sophie's recent "accident:" "Cat: Her first flight. / Cat and Sophie: Chirp chirp. / *They start to laugh*" (111).

16 The play's calm and serene ending stands in stark contrast to the loud, violent and hurried beginning, suggesting a process of maturing on the part of the girlfriends. Like *The Sugar Syndrome*, *Duck* is a female coming-of-age play. Slightly modifying this label, Prebble's and particularly Feehily's texts could also be dubbed plays about female "coming-off-rage," while the female protagonist's departure from rage and violence is less certain in Mitchell's *Loyal Women*.

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## *Barlines*

By Michelene Wandor

### **Overture**

So oft it chances in particular men,  
That for some vicious mole of nature in them,  
As in their birth wherein they are not guilty,  
(Since nature cannot choose his origin)  
By their o'ergrowth of some complexion  
Oft breaking down the pales and forts of reason,  
Or by some habit, that too much o'er-leavens  
The form of plausible manners, that these men,  
Carrying I say the stamp of one defect,  
Being nature's livery, or fortune's star,  
Their virtues else be they as pure as grace,  
As infinite as man may undergo,  
Shall in the general censure take corruption  
From that particular fault: the dram of eale  
Doth all the noble sustenance of a doubt  
To his own scandal.

Enter Ghost.

HORATIO: Look, my Lord, it comes.

*(Hamlet, Act 1, Scene 4)*

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### **THE FIRST DAY**

Mrs Dean hears the gravel crunch as she tucks the vacuum cleaner away in the cupboard behind the kitchen door. Mrs Dean sighs, and smooths down the front of her Liberty floral blouse, Springtime colourway, bought from a classy mail-order catalogue. As she hurries through the corridor into the main hall, she can see ahead of her the open hatchback of a car. A Black Watch tartan holdall is already on the gravel, and next to it, a large cardboard box.. Mrs Dean takes up her position behind the table facing the open oak front door, and awaits the first arrivals.

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*The golden sound, the golden O of sound, travelling from note to note, articulated with fingers, breath and tongue; a steady, liquid stream of breath, round and full, coming from deep, deep within the body, held at its centre by the diaphragm, the sound of a golden O, a line in the ear's air. Held in the mouth, the lips loosely clasped round the mouthpiece, with no precious air seeping out from the edges, the tongue flicking backwards and forwards against the mouthpiece and the edge of the fipple, the cheeks loose, while the fingers play up and down along the shaft. In this century the right hand is uppermost. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, it was quite common to have the left hand uppermost.*

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The wide, semi-circular drive is at the end of a long dirt track, at the top of a light incline, leading away from one of the wide arterial roads from London to the north-east. Not quite in East Anglia, Mrs Dean is careful to stress, but the landscape is already flat enough to carry a whiff of the fens, the sky at times the grey of the brooding, looming North Sea on bleak winter days. In spring and autumn the sky looks as though it goes on forever, with a luminous bright blue light which makes the place a haven for amateur painters. Indeed, the most popular courses with the clientele are the painting courses.

For Mrs Dean, however, by far and away the most popular are the early music courses. These have an enthusiastic clientele, and the most charismatic tutors. And of all the early music courses run throughout the year, this is the most special. This is the one week of the year when one substantial piece of music is explored, practised and put together for a special performance at the end of the week.

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*Silenus, the god with goat's hooves, the lower half of his body curved and hairy, animal and delicate, all at the same time, plays the panpipes. So does Marsyas, later flayed alive by Titian. The panpipes are a series of hollow tubes, bamboo or reed, joined together, each making a different sound, according to its length. Before and after this, came the single pipe, fashioned from a reed, and then from wood: the whistle, the recorder, producing the golden O.*

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Mrs Dean takes her seat at the table in the hall. Before her are rows of badges with the names of each participant hand-written on an oblong strip of paper in her best italic handwriting (learned at Dartington School, back in its postwar, progressive schooldays). Each piece of paper is slipped into a transparent plastic holder, with a safety pin at the back. Mrs Dean has before her an open book with a list of participants, names and addresses, amounts paid and

owed, and with the relevant room numbers in a column at the side. To the right of the book are the room keys, ranged in numerical order. Mrs Dean is ready.

First the piffari arrived, stereotypically drunk, their unhemmed cloaks little more than rough woollen blankets, flung over their shoulders, doubled back to allow their arms free rein, bundles on their backs, slung soft and bulging, the occasional hard outline of an instrument to raise the profile of the fabric. Mostly they walked, now and again one arrived on horseback, the signal of a court musician. The others, itinerants, defiantly swaggered into the house.

The more refined string players arrived on carts, their instruments kept carefully separate from their clothes, heavy, embroidered cloaks keeping them well wrapped against the rain. Heavy woollen cloth wrapped round the instruments, sometimes heavy, grubby canvas, sewn into the rough hour-glass shape of the instrument, violin or viol, small or large, with a long pouch the length of the instrument at the back for the bow. The heavy cotton fabric used by the Venetian viol players drew glances of envy, and later, tactile admiration from the Roman contingent.

Finally, the singers, their throats cossetted against the damp, their faces swathed. The Concerto delle Donne arrived together, Laura, proud of her Spanish ancestry, her long shawl draped over hennaed hair, sitting at the front of the cart which brought them down from Lake Garda, where they had sung at the emperor's winter solstice. Maria and Isabella sat together at the back, giggling.

\*\*\*\*\*

'Mrs Dean,' pronounces Gabriel. 'Well, well.' Gabriel always says the same thing on arrival.

'Gabriel. And Netta. How lovely to see you both.' Mrs Dean comes out from behind the table, to touch right cheeks with Netta.

Gabriel will never shake hands, and will certainly never hug or kiss anyone. Those honours are reserved for privacy, and his revered wife, to whom he always refers as his 'better half'. Netta softens the arrival by adding, 'Hello, Mrs Dean. That's a very pretty blouse.'

Gabriel looks up and round the hall. 'Same old Catchpole Manor.' His pleasure shines through: at being at Catchpole Manor again, at seeing Mrs Dean, at knowing that everything is clean and polished and prepared; that the large tins of Instant coffee nestle by the urn behind the serving hatch, that the large trays of sticky pudding are being prepared for the first

supper, that the stainless steel dishwashers are ready for their regular load.

'Just for you,' says Mrs Dean, 'we haven't changed a thing.' They all laugh. This is a ritual. 'How was your journey?'

'Traffic,' says Gabriel.

'I'll get you some tea,' says Mrs Dean. 'Shall I get one of the girls to bring up a tray?'

'Oh, yes, please,' says Netta. 'Gabriel is a bit tired.'

'Nonsense,' dismisses Gabriel.

Netta ignores him and nods her thanks at Mrs Dean. 'Is it alright if we unload the music later? We've left a box outside. It was too heavy to bring in.'

'Of course,' says Mrs Dean. 'I'll get Deirdre to carry it into the library, if you like, and the girls can do the rest later.'

Gabriel is about to refuse the offer, but Netta gets in first. 'Lovely. Thank you.' She taps Gabriel on the arm. 'Come on, dear.'

As Netta and Gabriel climb the stairs, Mrs Dean notices that he is a little more hunched than last year. He has lost weight. His cardigan hangs more loosely.

\*\*\*\*\*

The city of Mantua lies twenty-five miles south of Verona, and sixty miles from Padua. During the medieval period, as the Mincio became economically and strategically more important, the lower part of the river was diverted into the plains around the city. Here it formed three wide lakes, the Lago Superiore, the Lago di Mezzo and the Lago Inferiore. Until the eighteenth century, Mantua remained entirely surrounded by water, a mini Venice, with a handful of bridges crossing the few canals which wound through the island.

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The course brochure welcomes participants from four o'clock. A cup of tea and a biscuit is available in the dining hall from 4.30, and dinner is at 6.30, announces the brochure. Mrs

Dean has never been happy with this phrasing. 'A cup of tea'; 'a biscuit'; as if just one each of these has to be shared between everyone. But she has not been able to think of an alternative. Cups of tea? Tea? The tea urn? Or just tea? In the end she leaves the phrasing as it has always been since the house began to run courses in the early 1950s. It offends her sense of the precise and the organised, but, like so much else, she has had to learn to live with it.

\*\*\*\*\*

The city goes back to Etruscan times. Virgil was born here, and there is still a statue of him half way up one of the walls in the Piazza Broletto, not far from the Palazzo Ducale. The city is situated in the southern part of the Paduan plain, on the right bank of the Mincio, ten miles north of its confluence with the Po.

\*\*\*\*\*

For the rest of the afternoon Mrs Dean is busy non-stop, greeting the arrivals, giving each a map of the house and the surrounding area, two keys, one for each bedroom and one for the main door, a name badge and a blank timetable for each to fill in. To each she says the same thing:

'Lovely to see you', sometimes with 'back' or 'again', or just 'Lovely to see you'; to each she indicates the pile of brochures on the side table: 'These will tell you about the history of the house, and you will also find a booklet in your room.'

*Unjustly, the golden O has been discredited. The register of the recorder family lies high, the actual sounds being an octave higher than they appear to sound. This is because there are relatively few high harmonics in each note the instrument produces, and so the human ear is cheated, or magicked into hearing something lower than the 'real' sound. What is it that we really hear?*

\*\*\*\*\*

Isabella d'Este, who came from Ferrara to marry Francesco Gonzaga in 1490, is justly known as a patron of the arts, the fine arts, as a collector of classical artefacts, and as a patroness of music. Her husband, Francesco, died in 1519, and their son, Federico, became the ruling Duke.

Federico's rule ushered in an era of ruthless politics, cultural and sexual hedonism. It was Federico who enlarged the Palazzo del Te, on the outskirts of Mantua, on the Te island, enlisting the talents and skills of Giulio Romano and his assistants, to set up a palace of love for his mistress, Isabella Boschetti.

\*\*\*\*\*



Just before 5 o'clock, Barton and Catherine Phelps arrive, having tramped from the station in their mountain boots, state of the art rucksacks on their backs. Mrs Dean feels a rush of motherly concern, as she always does when she sees them. Married for ten years, an inseparable musical couple, with not a baby in sight. She would never dream of asking them whether or why, but as each year passes, and each of them becomes a little more portly, with strands of greying hair streaking their matching hairstyles, she wonders whether they have a pact for childlessness.

Barton, meanwhile, never a patient man, has already picked up their room key, while Catherine collects the name badges. Catherine smiles her bubbly smile and speaks for both: 'Darling Mrs Dean, you don't look a day older.' And Mrs Dean ritually replies: 'I'm not a day older than I was this morning, Kat, dear.'

Barton is already halfway up the staircase, and as Catherine follows him, Mrs Dean reminds them about the tea.

\*\*\*\*\*

*There are many different sizes of recorder, including the garklein, so named in Germany because it is the smallest, bunching the fingers together on the finger-holes, which can, on appropriate occasions, double as a wide wooden straw, through which cider can be sucked from an evening glass.*

\*\*\*\*\*

Federico managed to juggle his political allegiances cleverly, between the Pope and Emperor Charles V, who visited Mantua in 1530, and rewarded Federico by making him the first Duke of Mantua. Before then, the Gonzaga had been Marquises, a title they took for themselves, after they had been, during the previous century - let's not beat about the bush here - after they had been little more than mercenaries, fighting for whoever would pay them the most.

\*\*\*\*\*

Marla arrives a few minutes after Barton and Catherine. Mrs Dean has known her as long as she has known Gabriel and Netta; she was one of Gabriel's original tutors, and has been a regular every year since - except for one year's absence, the year, coincidentally, when Barton and Catherine came for the first time. Marla has brought a present for Mrs Dean, a blue and white ceramic duck to add to the collection which graces Mrs Dean's private sitting room.

The Palazzo Ducale is unusual, compared with other Italian Italian Renaissance palaces. Although it does have the familiar crenellated towers in the Castello di San Giorgio, most of

the other buildings look, from the air, at any rate, like other houses in the rest of the city. The church of Santa Barbara is the exception.

It was completed in 1562, and because Mantua was so close to Rome in its papal loyalties, was granted the rare privilege of placing the altar so that the celebrant was facing the congregation, an unusual departure from the more common Catholic practice of facing away from the congregation, and towards God.

It did not escape the notice of some people that this new move was similar to the way that the Jewish rabbis combined prayer and their relationship with their congregation.

\*\*\*\*\*

At ten to six, Mrs Dean tidies the table, with its few remaining badges, before going to the kitchen to check on supper. A taxi draws up on the gravel, its engine running for long enough for its passenger to pay, then the door opens and a man with shoulder length blond hair and a midnight-blue crumpled linen jacket, pulls a suitcase on wheels, with a bass viol carried on his back, the long strap over his right shoulder.

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*When a new string is put on the viol, it must be carefully wound up to its correct pitch, and then nurtured until it settles into a tension where it can play truly with its neighbours.*

\*\*\*\*\*

'Robert Waterson,' he says, parking the suitcase, and coming towards Mrs Dean, his hand outstretched. 'I'm sorry if I'm late.'

Mrs Dean takes the outstretched hand; it is strong and warm and the clasp is firm. The piercing blue eyes make immediate contact. Mrs Dean realises that she had forgotten what it was like to blush. She mentally notes that this man may well be one of those who causes bedroom doors to open and shut frequently at night. Trouble, she thinks, then she checks the thought sharply.

'You're not at all late,' she says. 'The bar will be open in five minutes, so you could say you've arrived on time. If you drink, that is,' she adds.

'Oh - just normally,' says Robert.

'Your key,' says Mrs Dean. 'Your room is just at the top of the stairs, next door to the Phelps'.'

'Is Barton here already?' asks Robert.

'He and Catherine arrived on the four-thirty train.'

Robert is struggling to hang onto his key, heave the viol into a more comfortable position, and pick up his case.

'You can put the viol in the main hall. That's where most people have left their instruments,' suggests Mrs Dean.

'No, it's alright,' says Robert. 'I have to change a couple of strings anyway. I may as well do that in my room.'

'Let me help you,' says Mrs Dean. Momentarily forgetting about checking on supper, she acts as porter as she leads Robert up the wide, curved staircase.

\*\*\*\*\*

Barbara was the patron saint of architects, artillery founders, prisoners and stonemasons, and she was thought to be a protector against thunderstorms, fire and sudden death. She was the patron saint of war, and thus very suitable as an emblem of the Gonzaga family.

\*\*\*\*\*

'I've been looking forward to this course,' says Robert, as they walk up the broad, curving staircase. 'Gabriel told me about this staircase.'

'And?'

'It's fabulous.'

'It's an adaptation of the Italian Renaissance style to the English taste, in oak,' says Mrs Dean.

'Like Hatfield House?' asks Robert.

'Yes,' says Mrs Dean, pleased. 'Are you interested in houses of this period?'

'To tell you the truth,' answers Robert, 'when Gabriel invited me to Catchpole Manor, I decided to do a bit of research. I like to know where I'm going. I don't really know whether I'm interested in houses like this. But I love the feel of it already.'

'When you get a chance, go and look at the front properly. Catchpole is smaller and more domestic than Hatfield, but like Hatfield, it's built out of brick. That's unusual for the early sixteenth century - where buildings were mostly timber-framed, with infilling of wattle and daub.'

'Ah. Like the bryk place in Hackney. Bryk spelled b-r-y-k. Sutton House.'

'You have been doing your homework,' said Mrs Dead with admiration. She turns right at the top of the stairs and stops outside room number 10.

'This is yours.' She puts the key in the lock and opens the door. 'There's a brochure about the house in your room, but, if you're really interested, I'll show you round the rest of it some time.'

'Many thanks,' says Robert. He lowers the viol carefully to the floor, and again puts out his hand to shake hers. His hand is strong and warm, firm in its clasp. She feels her palm tingle as she goes back down the stairs.

*An old string plays sharp on the frets; curling slivers strand along the string. Near the bridge, the rosin bleaches the string white. Along the frets, the string is a darker, translucent ruddy hue, stained by the fingers.*

\*\*\*\*\*

The story goes that Barbara was very beautiful. Her father imprisoned her at the top of a tall tower, at Heliopolis, in Syria. He then went off on some military exploit or other, and while he was away, Barbara became converted to Christianity. Because of this, she persuaded some workmen to build three windows for her tower, in honour of the holy trinity, the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost.

When her father returned, he was appalled, as a good pagan, at this demonstration of infidelity, and he tried to kill her. Miraculously, she was transported to the top of a mountain,

where she was discovered and sentenced to death. However, her father followed and found her, and then personally killed her. Later, he was struck by lightning.

\*\*\*\*\*

It is 6.35. The hall is full.

The dais on which high table used to be now hosts a row of serving tables. Barton feels at home here; it reminds him of the dining hall at Peterhouse, where he was an active, if not scholarly, student. He feels more than somewhat transgressive as he walks up the stage right stairs to collect his hors d'oeuvres for supper.

On the first table are ranks of small glass dishes, each with a prawn cocktail, smothered in pink sauce, with a quarter slice of lemon as garnish. The flow of excited and hungry people crosses the dais, and descends the stairs on the other side to return to their tables. The rest of supper is served to everyone by the local girls who have Easter holiday jobs for this week.

The first night etiquette is that the tutors sit together. As for the rest, regulars greet each other, gathering from all over the British Isles. People save places for their friends by tipping chairs forward, with their backs resting against the table. Occasionally a newcomer to the course hovers a little awkwardly, asking 'May I?' at an empty chair, and being welcomed.

Robert comes into the hall, a little unsure. Gabriel beckons him, and he joins the tutors' table.

\*\*\*\*\*

The influence of the Council of Trent earlier in the sixteenth century inadvertently introduced practices and approaches into the Catholic ritual which the Jews had never lost.

There was a distinctive Santa Barbara rite, with its own missal and breviary, developed and negotiated between Mantua and Rome, under the leadership of Duke Guglielmo, who was also something of a musician himself, and who composed parts of what came to be known as the Santa Barbara chant.

The polyphony sung in the church of Santa Barbara came from the musicians in the gallery at the west end.

\*\*\*\*\*

The first course on this first evening is a vegetable soup, a thin broth of bouillon with some

floating carrots and onions. Then, substantial slices of roast beef, Yorkshire pudding, with horseradish sauce in a sauce boat, roast potatoes, pale cauliflower florets and diced carrots. Each vegetable is piled on a large plate, which is put on the table, for people to help themselves. Not only is this more efficient (Mrs Dean learned in her early days that the girls could be careless and drop individual plates), but it is also an aid to good eating relations, as people pass the dishes to each other.

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At the north end of the Santa Barbara gallery, a corridor connects the church with the Palazzo Ducale.

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Desert is fairy cakes, with the tops sliced off, in the style of a boiled egg, to reveal a golden yellow fluffy sponge inside; each top is half-upended, to look like wings, steadied on a layer of butter cream, the whole dusted with white icing sugar. At this point the serving tables are all cleared and the left hand table acquires urns of tea and coffee. When everyone is settled with their hot beverage, Gabriel taps a knife on the edge of his glass. The chatter dies down, and Gabriel slowly climbs up the right hand steps onto the dais.

Just as he turns to lean on the banister, a triumphant sound sweeps down from the gallery opposite him. Four sackbuts announce the opening phrase of the Canzon primi toni, a 8. They are joined by their fellow four, and the eight musicians make their way through the piece. Notes crack and the intonation is a bit off now and again, and the final chord dies away as lips unaccustomed to regular pursing tire. But everyone loves it and Gabriel laughs and applauds with the rest.

'Well,' he says. 'What could be more appropriate than the sound of Gabrieli?'

The Council of Trent was set up by Pope Paul 111 in 1542; to clarify doctrinal beliefs, and to legislate for disciplinary and musical reforms within the Church, as a result of the Protestant Reformation.

The Council met over a period of eighteen years, until 1563. At least one meeting was held in Mantua.

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When the applause has died down, Gabriel begins.

'Welcome, everyone,' he says, in his soft Cornish burr. The dining room settles to little more than the chink of spoon on cup. 'Welcome to Catchpole Manor. As you are probably all aware, this is our twentieth anniversary, and I am delighted that we have all made it again. A few things have changed this year. We have a magnificent new dining room, and part of the new annexe is now finished. So, while you thrill to the sounds of early music, you'll be able to enjoy the very 21st century privilege of en suite facilities.'

Applause, a few thumps on scattered tables, and a heckle from one of the Midlands' sackbut players of 'About time, too.'

'I don't need to introduce our team to you - well, I only need to introduce one person. Robert Waterson, a former student of Barton's at the North-Eastern Conservatoire, is with us this year. Robert has just come back from a year at The Hague, and I'm sure he will be a welcome addition to our team. He has, I think, just released his first CD - is that right, Robert - '

Robert nods, and then stands up and says: 'Yes. I've brought some copies with me, if anyone is interested.' A glissando of interest and curiosity buzzes round the hall, joined by a few giggles from a pair of teenage girls. Robert sits. Marla, Barton and Catherine look quickly at each other without moving their heads.

'As for the others, well, it's the same old lags. My better half is here to keep me in order, and, if she can find some willing helpers, she has some new arrangements to try out on you. Then we have dear Marla Conway, still without a grey hair in her head -' (everyone laughs affectionately, including Marla) - 'and, of course, Barton Phelps and Catherine Norton. I expect we will all be worked very hard by both of them, and love every minute of it. Barton will take the first session after supper - around 8.30, in the big hall.'

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Music, the Council of Trent declared, should be uplifting for the faithful; the words should be intelligible, whether spoken or sung, and any references to anything lascivious or impure must be removed. The Mass should be said in Latin.

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'Now, most of you will know the form. There is a noticeboard by the front door, on which the groups for the day will be listed. Everyone will play with their regular group in the mornings, and in the afternoon you are free to make your own playing arrangements, or to request an

organised group to play particular repertoire. Your course packs include seven sheets of paper, and if you give them to me the night before, I will make the necessary arrangements.

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Despite these various strictures, it could not be said that life at the Mantuan court was any the less abstemious, any the less riddled with luxury.

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'Each year, as you also know, we work on one special piece of music, which is performed at the end of the week. Barton has chosen 'Orfeo' for this year, and he will organise people for that. I'm not sure - are we doing the whole thing, Barton?'

Barton stands briefly. 'Extracts, Gabriel.' He waves a sheaf of A4 pages aloft. 'I've made a list of what is needed; perhaps I could pass this round the hall, so that people can note what they would like to do, and Catherine and I will look at it tonight, and allocate parts tomorrow morning.'

'Excellent.' The paper goes to the next table along, and as Gabriel continues, gradually it moves round the hall.

'Oh, I nearly forgot. Robert has asked if we would like some talks on the background to "Orfeo". I am sure we would.' Nods and more interest, and this time Barton looks at Catherine and raises one eyebrow as he sits down and turns towards her.

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Although we are mostly concerned with the early seventeenth century, we must be aware that the foundations for everything that happened then were laid a century earlier.

'The curfew.' Cheers from the Northern sackbut table. 'Well, now. The bar closes at ten, but anyone who wants to bring further liquid beverage is welcome to use the bar space. But I think, in consideration of those of us who would like to retire a little earlier, we should retain our normal times: no music after eleven pm, or before 7 am. That seems reasonable.'

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At fifteen, Isabella d'Este could recite the classics. She studied Latin, the lute, the cittern and the lira da braccio. She sang and played the keyboard. During her first decade in Mantua, she increased the number of singers at court, and encouraged the composition of Italianate styles of music. She commissioned new instruments from Lorenzo di Pavia in Venice.



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'Please check also that you know the location of the fire extinguishers in the building, and remember that the main door is locked at eleven at night. You each have a key, if you plan to be out after then.'

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She constructed and decorated her own studiolo, a room also described as camerino nostro, in the tower of the Castello di San Giorgio, commissioning painters, including Mantegna to produce pictures for the walls, to her carefully specified designs. When she grew old, the studiolo was transferred to the ground floor, and in 1522, to the Corte Vecchio.

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'Now. What else. Oh, yes. You will have your first group session, with tutors, tomorrow morning, after breakfast. My better half and I will put the music in the library tonight. The list of groups is pinned up on the board. Please make sure your music stand is clearly labelled with your name. Oh, and please, please put all the parts back into the correct folders. There is nothing more annoying than choosing the seven-part Schmelzer, and finding that you only have six parts.'

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Some of the instruments commissioned from Lorenzo di Pavia can be seen painted onto the wooden panels of her studiolo.

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'Finally,' says Gabriel, 'do have a wonderful week. Music does more than merely soothe the savage breast - music is a civilising influence. Music brings harmony to everyone, and making music is the most harmonic thing we can do. If all the nations in the world decided to make music instead of war, the world would be a far better place.'

Everyone has heard this many times, and still everyone applauds. Gabriel half turns away, then turns back and holds up his hand again.

'One more thing. Our kind housekeeper, Mrs Dean - it is Mothering Sunday and Mrs Dean and the girls have made nosegays for all the ladies.' The doors at the side of the dais open, and the girls come out, carrying trays like usherettes. They circulate round the hall, giving out small posies of two daffodils, their stalks cut short, each remaining length of stalk tied with a bright yellow ribbon. Everyone bursts into applause and laughter, and Gabriel goes back to his table.

Members of the Mantuan nobility staffed the bureaucracy, the diplomatic service, and the top ranks of the army. The latter had important links with the Holy Roman Empire, so that church and state were absolutely linked in the city.

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After dinner, the banqueting hall is milled with people unpacking instruments, grabbing chairs, putting cushions they have brought from home on hard wooden chairs, stacking one plastic chair on top of another to make the seat higher, putting up music stands, all with a mixture of excitement and anxiety. Agnes, an old recorder hand, in all sense of the word, ostentatiously places her chair at the edge of the semi-circle of chairs, and is heard to say rather more loudly than is necessary, 'God, I'm not sitting next to him.' Those who know her know this refers to Geoffrey, now in his eighties, one of the pioneers of the serpent and racket revival, and now unable to command the puff necessary to play them. 'He always plays so out of tune,' rounds off Agnes. Geoffrey is also now deaf in his left ear, and either doesn't hear her, or pretends he hasn't.

The semi-circle of chairs is four rows deep at the back, tapering down to two or three at the tips, a gigantic, scattered crescent moon, mostly of dark grey moulded plastic stacking chairs, with a few Victorian wooden kitchen chairs, with rounded seat.

The harpsichord is in the middle of the curve, its pointed Italian end towards the centre, the keyboard placed so that whoever sits at the keyboard will face everyone.

Barton comes in, clutching a sheaf of papers in his arms. His grey hair flows as he walks, tense with energy. Over the flowing chatter he raises his voice: 'Singers in the middle, please, wherever you like. Instruments - basses on my left - recorders, viols, sackbuts and the kitchen sink, and anything I haven't mentioned, please hide.'

The joke settles the chatter, so that Agnes can say loud and clear: 'Where would you like the descant recorder, Barton dear?'

'Don't tempt me,' retorts Barton. Agnes settles in her chair, and Barton flurries through a chord sequence - G major, D major, C major and back to G, then the same but with G minor this time. He senses something and looks round. Robert is standing by the door, hands in his pockets, watching. When Barton looks round, he comes over.

'Can you help me move this?' asks Barton.

'Aren't you going to conduct from it?'

Barton already has the keyboard end, holding onto the stand underneath it. 'If you take the sharp end, we can put it against the wall.'

Robert follows suit, Barton bashes a triumphant pair of chords - G major and C major and the hall rustles to silence. On his way back, he passes Agnes and stops: 'Agnes, may I borrow your music stand? You can share with Geoffrey.'

Torn between the compliment of Barton wanting to use her stand, and having to share with Geoffrey, she gives way to the first. Barton carries the stand over, raises it to a comfortable height, picks up his ring-bound file of music, opens it, puts it on the stand.

'We'll motor through the first chorus.' He sense an unspoken question from Robert. 'Anyone worried about tuning?' A few hands go up.

'Good,' says Barton, 'it's always a good idea to be worried about tuning. Instruments, choose your line. Basses, you have no option. Veni, Imeneo. Come, Hymen. Orfeo, Atto Primo. Tutti.'

As all the scores shuffle over, the sackbuts produce a cacophony of low notes and Barton flies back to the harpsichord. He holds up his hand for silence. Strings, please, you're a.'

He ripples an A Major chord across the instrument, and violins and viols produce their own thin mix of cacophony. Gradually the sounds merge into a more or less congruent pitch. Barton moves onto a D major chord,

'So,' says Barton, ' we have had the opening fanfare, played precisely and in tune by the sackbuts (laughter), as they promenade into the hall, then we have heard Laura give her La Musica (respectful movements), and we have just heard a shepherd bleating - sorry, singing (laughter) about Orpheus and Eurydice. You will gather that I have not yet cast the shepherd,

so Robert, perhaps you could look at the music (curiosity). A song fit for Orpheus is what he wants - the shepherd, not Robert - so let's go there.'

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Cesare Gonzaga's most important artistic achievement was the foundation and sponsorship of the Accademia degli Invaghiti, in 1562. In 1565 Giaches de Wert came to the Mantuan court as the maestro di cappella. The accademia, based in the Palazzo Ducale, patronised musicians from the start, as well as fostering poets and dramatists.

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Barton paces quickly over to the harpsichord, plays the opening chord of g minor, sings the notes of the triad as he returns to the centre, his arms raised, lifting himself onto his toes, and brings down a powerful downbeat. The sound is magnificent, loud, soprano and bass instruments dominating, notes wavering round their correct pitches, phrases staggering in, and he continues relentlessly and determinedly on until the celebratory hymn to marriage has finished.

Agnes' wobbly soprano recorder finishes a bar after everyone else; sympathetic and adrenalised laughter follow.

Barton turns over a couple of his pages. 'That was so good, we'll move on to the balletto.'

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The Accademia degli Invaghiti was very important because it offered an outlet for new ideas, new writing and new thinking. One of the most important things it did was to champion the 'volgare', the use of the vernacular as an effective medium for scholarly and poetic discourse, as against Latin, which was the language of the church, and therefore considered as the language most fit for high ideas.

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Barton sings the first soprano melody in G major: 'Lasciate I monte, etc. ready, and -'

He goes for a very fast speed and some of the singers fumble with their fast notes. The opening section is repeated, and then the music goes straight into triple time. Although the notes are relatively simple, the pace is breathtaking, and the music falls to pieces, with some remaining stalwarts. All the bass voices have dropped out, and Robert picks up the music and obliges in a resonant bass.

'Very good,' says Barton. 'That's what I like to hear. A complete mess. Otherwise, how can I earn my fee?' Everyone relaxes, Barton turns the pages back and begins to take sections through the music.

Mrs Dean, who has been hovering just outside the door, unseen, leaves, to go back to the kitchen.

The words of 'Orfeo', as we all know, are in Italian. It was the Invaghiti who sponsored the first performance of Monteverdi's 'Orfeo' in 1607, to a libretto by one of its own members, Alessandro Striggio.

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Carrying their cups of tea, with biscuits tucked into the saucers, with folders, papers and files and notebooks, the tutors gather in the library.

Gabriel is sitting in a chair with a deep leather back, stirring his tea, a biscuit in the saucer. He wears one of his many cardigans: hand-knitted by Nesta, in a sludgy green boucle wool, the pockets sagging with tissues, pencils, diary and notebook. His grey trousers are crumpled, and he is wearing moccasin-like shoes. Nesta sits near him, slightly back from the table, and passes him two pink pills, which he adds to the saucer with his biscuit.

Nesta smiles at people in the queues at supermarket tills. Her shining white hair waves softly over her face, in a deep, halo-like white bob. Her spectacles have heavy brown rims at the top, fading to transparency at the bottom - the up-to-the-moment style of the late 1950s. She wears a maroon jersey dress, even in the balmy spring weather, bunched into a belt over her comfortable middle. Her shoes are brown, sensible and laced.

Robert has changed into a rich brown corduroy jacket, with leather patches on the elbows, and a pair of loose white trousers. He wears a black cotton polo neck, and carries a shiny blue file, plump with papers.

Marla wears light-blue faded jeans, probably bought from M & S, and a blue and purple striped rugby shirt. Her hair swings down, determinedly straight to her shoulders, with a neat, severe fringe. A subtle scattering of grey nestles just by each ear, almost in protest at Gabriel's earlier joke. One of the recurrent topics of conversation on these courses is whether Marla dyes her hair.

She is a recorder player from the old, just postwar school, with a slightly wobbly tone, and careless articulation, but she knows the history of the instrument, and her musical education was founded on a solid, thoroughly grounded, grammar-school experience. Her school-teacherly manner manages to be both patronising and reassuring, especially to the elderly and loyal course members.

Barton and Catherine arrive last. Barton carries a bottle of whisky, and Catherine has a tray of glasses, which she balances so as not to dislodge the old brown school satchel she has over her left shoulder. As Gabriel swallows his pills, Barton pours glasses of whisky and hands them round. Robert and Nesta take theirs eagerly. Nesta fields Gabriel's, and Marla puts a hand up to refuse, showing no sign that she is thinking bloody hell, he should know by now. Know by now that once she was an acknowledged alcoholic, now she is reformed. Know by now that she knows that the whisky he has brought in, carefully purchased from the bar, is as nothing compared to the bottles in his and Catherine's room. Marla is well aware that Barton can't face his first morning group without a decent slug of red wine.

'How's college?' asks Gabriel.

'Well, wonder of wonders, no complaints this year. They have asked me to conduct a college performance of "Samson" at the Albert Hall. Soloists and orchestra from the college, and mass singalong in the tutti. Should be fun.'

Robert holds his glass out for a refill.

'Robert has suggested a lecture series to give the background to "Orfeo",' says Gabriel. 'You'll be able to fit that in?'

Barton nods. 'No problem.'

'What are you going to talk about, Rob?' asks Catherine.

'I thought I would do a talk about the Mantuan background. Just run through some history.'

Barton nods approvingly. 'And then,' continues Robert, 'I could do one talk on Monteverdi,

and perhaps another on early opera - ' he turns questioningly to Barton - 'unless you - ?'

'No, no,' says Barton. 'I'm going to need every second I've got on the notes.'

'Even with our trilly three?'

'Even with our trilly three,' says Barton.

'Ah,' says Nesta. 'I collected the casting sheets. Shall we go through them?'

Catherine holds her hand out. 'Barton and I can do that later,' she says.

'Oh,' says Robert. 'Don't we do that together?'

'No problem,' said Catherine, tucking the loose sheets of paper into her brown school satchel.

'I thought I could also talk about Ferrara a bit - just in the context of Renaissance spectacle and opera - the importance of the Concerto delle Donne - '

Barton snatches a quick look at his watch, gets up and makes for the door. Catherine picks up the whisky bottle and says: 'It's twenty past.', and Gabriel says: 'Well; same time tomorrow, folks.'

Barton opens the door, waves a goodnight and has gone. Catherine scurries after him, closing the door behind her.

Gabriel continues as if nothing has happened. 'Perhaps you could do your talks after coffee, at 11.15?'

'Of course,' says Rob. 'I'll put the titles up on the board, shall I?'

'Good idea.'

'There's one more thing.'

'Oh?'

'I've brought my viol - I haven't been playing for very long - but -'

'I'm sure one of the groups won't mind you joining in now and again. Barton and Catherine might even organise a session.'

'Oh, I'm hardly good enough for them.'

'You're a tutor. Anyway, you've pipped them to the post with your CD. Forqueray, is it?'

'Yes. On harpsichord, of course. That's why I want to play the viol properly, so that I can play the pieces on the instrument for which they were originally written.'

'Which reminds me: the harpsichord is in the drawing room upstairs. I suggest you tune it before breakfast finishes. In case Barton needs it.'

Nesta gets up and collects Gabriel's cup. The tutors' first meeting is over.

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The Invaghiti had an initial membership of thirty people, and their influence on Mantuan musical life was considerable. Membership was open to the clergy and non-clergy, and it was typical of similar aristocratic and courtly academies in its emphasis on chivalric ceremonial, and the arts of oratory and versification. Learned disputations were common. On some occasions, even members of the public were admitted.

A letter of 1568 notes payments to Leone Hebreo, presumably a reference to the Mantuan Jewish playwright, Leone de Sommi, author of an important treatise on stage production. Also known as Leone de Sommi Portaleone, he began writing his treatise in 1556, probably completing it in the 1560s, the decade in which Shakespeare was born. De Sommi acted as the scrittore, the scribe, to the Invaghiti. He died in 1592.

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At 10 pm tea and coffee are served in the dining hall, along with thick, sticky slices of the Yorkshire brack, which is the only thing that links Mrs Dean to her origins. Currants and tea-



flavoured flour, with a dash of ginger to add her own touch of eastern spice. The brack is most easily eaten with the fingers, leaving musicians hurrying for the sinks, to wash their hands before dwindling into the bar, back to public and private rooms for more playing, to take a turn round the gardens, or to bed.

At eleven o'clock, Mrs Dean makes her final tour of the house before closing and locking the large, double oak front doors. As she looks out of the front door, for a glimpse of the slim crescent moon, she hears a recorder playing an unaccompanied sonata by Telemann. In d minor, she thinks, but she hasn't got perfect pitch, so she can't tell. She recognises it. Many years ago, she spent weeks working on it. With her teacher.

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The excitement in the house finally hushes into silence at around midnight. Mrs Dean, so attentive to arrangements throughout the day, now finds she can't sleep. She puts on her pale blue candlewick dressing gown, and comes down the main staircase. There is a window open in the hall, and a pale ivory curtain furls in the night breeze. Softly she closes the window, and walks along the long corridor, now lit only by night lights along its walls, like a monastery cloister, towards the big hall.

The hall doors are open. As she nears them, she hears the gentle sound of a viol, the bow drawn slowly along one open string after another. She stops at the door. At the other end, sits a man, his silhouetted back to her, his long hair curling down over his shoulders.

*An opening g minor chord splays across the viol, exploding with resonance, gently and firmly. The bow lingers on the top D string, the low open G string still resonating as the bow reaches up to a high b flat, a semitone above the highest fret on the top string. Mrs Dean remembers 'Captain Hume's pavan', 1605, written in tablature. The man playing has no music in front of him, no sign of tablature, no six line stave with letters of the alphabet placed along the lines, with the duration of each note indicated above the stave. The pavan is stately, with a rhapsodic melancholy, tiny trills at cadences, chords and melodic shapes hurrying, held back, catching the heart at two points where there is an interrupted cadence, first from A to b flat, then from D to e flat. These surprises are the more startling, sneaking as they do between the simple chord progressions of I IV V I. Excitement and reassurance alternate in leaps across the instrument, notes displaced in different octaves, the juxtaposition and resonance of double and triple-stopped chords against single-note melodic phrases. Amateurs do not play chords on the viola da gamba, nor do they rise above the frets. They lodge comfortably within the*

*instrument's simplicities, never testing it to any limits. They do not decorate their cadences, because that would be showing off, and they certainly do not improvise, nor dare with rubato, or allow their fingers to lean into a vibratoed note. This is not within the requirements of the Golden Age which they believe they are recreating, the authentic rendering of the music as the composer intended it. Whatever that is. This man has all the time in the world. As Mrs Dean stands by the door, she feels the regular, steady pulse which underpins every phrase he stretches, then hurries on. always with a deep, steady, regular pulse, unheard, as he lingers on the first note of a semi-quaver run, before completing the race to the main note, as he lingers in the silences at the ends of each section, before he returns to its repeat. The hall is in darkness, lit only by a security light outside the window, in front of the figure. The back is broad and tense, rounded forwards over the viol, the right arm elegantly out at the elbow, to allow for maximum flexibility across the seven strings of the viol. The third and final section comes out into the open spaces of G major. The chord is gently touched, hardly sounding the third, the b natural at the top of the chord, as though the player can't quite believe the note after the previous minors. Then the section is repeated, falling back into a more melancholy g minor, growing in confidence as he sounds the b flat below middle C, and then reaches up for its octave companion, again the b flat above the frets. She hears his breathing as he prepares for the beginning of the next phrase, and again, when he touches a low b flat, on the open G string, she feels her upper body contract. She can feel his body on hers, his warm breath full in her ears. Mrs Dean turns and walks rapidly away from the hall, back up the stairs, her slippers soft and silent, her heart pounding, knowing that she must reach her room before the music stops.*

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HAMLET: The Mouse-trap: marry how? Tropically: this play is the image of a murder done in Vienna: Gonzago is the Duke's name, his wife Baptista: you shall see anon.

*(Act 3, Scene 2)*

## List of Contributors

**ajaykumar** is a poly-tekhnekian. He lectures at Goldsmiths College and undertakes research in the Department of Painting, at the Royal College of Art, London. ajaykumar's field of research concerns an inter-relation between art and ontology. Specifically he is investigating themes a propos the nature of being sought, based on the concept of dependent origination, within the dynamic interrelation of body-space-nature-art-science-technology. In this context, over the last two years, he has been undertaking field research at the rock-cut edifices at Ellora and Ajanta, in India, and at the Honpukuji Water Temple in Japan a temple of the Shingon (esoteric) Buddhism, designed by Tadao Ando, and inspired by the aforementioned Indian sites. This research supported by the U.K. Arts and Humanities Research Board, has most recently found manifestation in foyer, an exhibition at Riverside Studios, London. His current project - pages of madness - is a web-art-science work exploring creative responses, in terms of experimentation with narrative construction, to the perceived link between racism and mental illness.

**Konstanze Kutzbach** teaches at the English department of the University of Cologne; her fields of interest are cultural studies, poststructuralist theory and twentieth century literature and film. She is co-editor of *The Abject of Desire: Gender and the Aestheticization of the "Unaesthetic" in Contemporary Literature and Art* and is currently working on her dissertation on identities in dystopic literature and film.

**Tina Wald** has studied English and German Literature, Drama, TV and Film Studies at the University of Cologne and at the University of Warwick. She is currently working for *gender forum* as editorial assistant. Apart from writing her PhD thesis on *Gender and Madness in Contemporary Anglophone Drama* she teaches at the English department of the University of Cologne.

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**Micheline Wandor** is a playwright, poet, short story writer, reviewer, broadcaster, theatre historian and musician. She does readings of her own work, and performs Renaissance and Baroque music with her early music group, The Siena Ensemble. She also teaches Creative Writing. <http://www.mwandor.co.uk/>