Ex-changes

Ex-changes:
Comparative Studies in British and American Cultures

Edited by

Katarzyna Więckowska and Edyta Lorek-Jezińska

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INTRODUCTION: ON EX-CHANGE

KATARZYNA WIĘCKOWSKA AND EDYTA LOREK-JEZIŃSKA

The idea of exchange encompasses the notions of borrowing, adding, and constructing something different in place of the original out of which the new emerges. It also, however, implies dependence since the movement away from—or, as the prefix *ex-* indicates, beyond—the original points to the new construct's reliance upon the old, unmasking thus its uncertain status of a "mere copy." The mechanism of continual substitution and compensation, of taking away and giving back, is fundamental to the work of culture, itself a process of infinite re-production or transfer of ideas, texts, and conceptual frameworks, anchored in the past, yet always driven by a desire for a future transformation. This way of thinking about culture as ex-change uncovers the culture's underlying logic of complementarity, through which the hierarchical relation between the original and the copy is questioned, bringing to the fore the various political, economic, and social factors influencing the changes and making it possible to ask questions not only about what is ex-changed and how, but also about the actual benefits and interests these transactions serve.

The articles gathered in this volume take as their point of departure the belief that "[n]o thing is complete in itself and it can only be completed by what it lacks." However, as "what each particular thing lacks is infinite," "we cannot know in advance what complement it calls for" (Derrida 1981: 304). Despite the awareness of this uncertainty, the study of specific instances of supplementation yields significant insights into various social, historical, and ideological factors that condition and underlie such critical and conceptual transactions (Derrida 1981: 304). The analyses of change across a variety of cultural texts—such as fiction, film, drama, poetry, and critical thought—document the shifting ways of thinking about individual identity and social formations, describe the mobility of definitions of gender and nationality, and address the changing relations between various genres and disciplines through adaptation and re-writing. All of these

preoccupations can be located within the broad domain of Comparative Studies, drawing comparisons across time, space, societies, cultures, genres, media and disciplines.

The essays in the present volume are divided into four sections, each focusing on a different aspect of ex-change. **Part One**, "Time shifts: problems of authorship and the return of the past," comprises essays exploring the notions of writing and authorship in relation to the concept of time. Some of the articles in this section confront the writers' attitudes towards the writing process and genre conventions, while others consider the problems of retroactivity of neo-Victorian writing in the context of contemporary readership. The section opens with the essay by **Jadwiga Uchman** "Sameness and change of human identity," in which the author investigates the categories of time and memory in Samuel Beckett's *Krapp's Last Tape*. The author traces how the juxtapositions of tape-recorded memories split the dramatic persona into several separate identities paradoxically different and identical, irrecoverably distancing the main character, a writer, from the possibility of creative fulfillment.

Verita Sriratana approaches Virginia Woolf's writing as an instance of creative appropriation and traces the various changes the female writer introduces to the essay form and content in order to "make room" for the lives and voices of "the obscure" or the socially marginalized. As Sriratana argues, this subversive use of the essay form results in a fragmentation of an essayist's unified voice and creates revolutionary multiple consciousnesses which are always in the process of "becoming," thus opening the traditional masculine form to the forces of alterity.

The connection between authorship and gender is one of the major themes of the essay by **Agnieszka Setecka** who examines how Margaret Oliphant, the 19th century "queen of popular fiction," negotiates her position as a writer by juxtaposing her own literary career to those of other writers of the period, George Eliot and Anthony Trollope in particular. Focusing on Oliphant's autobiographical writing, Setecka shows how the writer attracts attention to the way economic situation might determine literary production and manages to construct her writing career as an activity incorporated into, rather than incompatible with, her domestic duties.

The first section concludes with two studies of contemporary literary returns to Victorian times. In "Women and children last: to what extent are houses homes in selected neo-Victorian novels," **Maciej Sulmicki** provides a case study of the house in recent neo-Victorian fiction by examining the ideological constructions of space and gender in the novels by Michel Faber (2002) and Sonia Overall (2006). From a slightly

different perspective, **Sławomir Konkol** reads the juxtaposition of the figures of a 20th century scholar and his Victorian ancestor in Graham Swift's *Ever After* (1992) as documenting the evolution of the notions of melancholia and mourning. Konkol's reading of these figures as indicative of wider cultural crises illustrates the contemporary rendering of mourning as an endless process, requiring the subject's embrace of his or her own contingency.

Part Two, "Politics of representation: political change, social issues and cultural texts," analyses the influence of political changes on literary and media narratives and focuses on the ways in which "artistic" production participates in local and global ideological (trans)formations. **Slávka Tomaščíková**'s comparison of British and Slovak media narratives, while drawing attention to the specific post-communist context of Slovakia, underlines the globalising trends in the post-modern narrative turn and emphasises the blurring of boundaries—between entertainment and information, as well as between reality and fiction—that erases local differences.

Robert Kielawski's essay "In the eye of the critic: British political drama in the second half of the 20th century" examines the concept of political change from the perspective of drama and theatre criticism, comparing and juxtaposing the interpretations and definitions of political theatre in Great Britain. Exposing the difference between the 1970/80s and post-1990s political theatres defined mostly through contrastive representational strategies, the article comments on the dynamics of what comes to be classified as political theatre in different times and contexts.

In "Contesting the (in)visibility of class: a comparative study of two American scripted television shows addressed to juvenile audiences," **Nelly Strehlau** studies popular media narratives to illustrate how the myth of American classlessness is reinforced by downplaying, or making invisible, serious economic constraints. Using Pierre Bourdieu's notion of symbolic violence, the article discusses the portrayal and achievability of social mobility in the television shows and points to the dangers of naturalization of social divisions.

In contrast to the previous article, **Anna Maria Tomczak**'s "In comparison: good and bad skinheads in Shane Meadows' film *This is England*" argues for the importance of class issues in the analysis of subcultural formations, such as skinheads. Discussing the changing ways of thinking about subcultures, Tomczak analyses the representation of skinheads in Shane Meadows' *This is England* as a divided group and points to the sense of alienation and exclusion felt by the working class

youth of the day as the film's explanation of the skinheads' rage and aggressiveness.

The importance of gender as a critical category is highlighted in **Part Three**, which focuses on the differences in the representation of gender identity in British and American fiction, and on its transformations in time. **Barbara Leftih** discusses the phenomenon of New Womanhood, which spanned the last decade of the nineteenth century and roughly two decades of the twentieth century, and its literary representation in order to outline differences and similarities between selected New (American) and Old (British) World writers' perceptions of marriage, motherhood, and female sexuality. A similar contrast between these two worlds is described by **Agnieszka Łobodziec**, who examines the juxtaposition of Old and New World experiences in Toni Morrison's *A Mercy*. Focusing on issues of class, race and the problems of recording history, the analysis of Morrison's novel shows how the formation of Anglo-American female identity, though entailing the transformation of the female English immigrants' status from objects to subjects, simultaneously justified racial slavery by its reliance on a binary logic of inequality.

In her article "The fairy tale visions of the world in Angela Carter's *The Bloody Chamber* and Eva Figes's *The Tales of Innocence and Experience: An Exploration*," **Małgorzata Godlewska** enquires into the ways in which the fairy tale genre is circulated in contemporary fiction. Although both writers studied in the article employ the fairy tale conventions to highlight the dichotomy of innocence and experience, the contrast is made between Carter's deconstructive redefinition of the genre and gender relocations, serving feminist purposes, and Figes's employment of the fairy tale in autobiography as a method of facing and embracing trauma.

Marta Werbanowska's "'No Black Male Show': Construction of African American male identity in Saul Williams' *S√he* and Carl Hancock Rux's *Pagan Operetta*" argues for the necessity to include such factors as gender, class, religious beliefs or sexual orientation in literary analysis. Werbanowska's approach to the poets' work as representative of New Black Aesthetics emphasises their departures from the African American literary tradition and shows the limits of focusing exclusively on questions of ethnicity in analyses of African American works.

Drawing on the Bakhtinian concept of the carnivalesque, **Anna Suwalska-Kołecka** explores the concept of gender in drama as the field of transgression and redefinition, confronting two plays from different epochs, Aphra Behn's *The Rover* and Caryl Churchill's *Cloud Nine*. The former text is placed within the concept of the carnival as a way of

overthrowing the patriarchal order, while the latter is primarily examined through the prism of the carnivalesque body foregrounded in the play's cross-dressing and multiple role-playing strategies.

The volume's last section, "Trade in concepts: cross-generic transactions," is dedicated to the study of cross-influences and exchanges of ideas and methodologies between genres and disciplines. It simultaneously exemplifies and problematises the postmodernist propensity for inter-disciplinary studies, blurring of distinctions, and unlikely correspondences. The first two essays in this section investigate the relationships between literature/drama and film. In his study of Joel and Ethan Coen's films, **Jakub Ligor** argues that the meta-cinematic devices employed by the directors strictly correspond to a number of strategies characteristic of postmodern self-conscious fiction. Drawing parallels between particular examples of postmodern fiction and techniques employed by the Coen brothers, the essay presents a number of metafictional games the directors engage in with their puppet-like characters. **Katarzyna Burzyńska**'s study of Jean Luc Godard's *King Lear* negotiates an uneasy relationship of the film to the original play by William Shakespeare through the application of existential philosophy as a conceptual framework. The seemingly fragmentary and bizarre appropriation of the original play gains conceptual coherence from the translation of individual scenes and characters into existential philosophical concepts.

Monika Włudzik places the television series *House, M.D.* at the intersection of disciplines and genres, confronting the programme's preoccupations, on the one hand, with medical discourses of certainty and uncertainty, attitudes to corporeality in medicine, or the concepts of illness and the suffering body and, on the other, with the characters and conventions of detective fiction. As Włudzik argues, the narrative of the show reinforces the existence of epistemological certainty in the clinical approach and devalues the humanistic perspective in a consolatory fiction of unparalleled diagnostic success.

The closing essay by **Bartłomiej Kuchciński** considers the implications of scientific consilience for social sciences and in particular for cultural and literary studies, confronting this tendency with the general postmodern paradigm. Referring to the analysis of pornography placed at the intersection of biological and literary studies, the author argues that the application of Darwinian approaches in cultural studies exemplifies the growing importance of interdisciplinary theories promising "to bridge the gap separating the humanities from the natural sciences."

The scope of the themes covered by the essays comprising this volume not only confirms the significance of comparative studies in contemporary

cultural research but also testifies to the validity of comparative methods both in individual critical analysis and the writing process. Beneath the well-defined divisions of comparative studies in their inter-disciplinary preoccupations, such as comparisons involved in translation, adaptation, cross-cultural studies or relationships between various arts, this volume exposes to what extent individual cultural texts are founded on comparative structures and concepts, conceptualised through analogies, changes and internal splits, or, in other words, it exposes the cultural texts' ongoing work of infinite complementation.

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PART I

TIME SHIFTS: PROBLEMS OF AUTHORSHIP AND THE RETURN OF THE PAST

SAMENESS AND CHANGE OF HUMAN IDENTITY: A STUDY OF SAMUEL BECKETT'S *KRAPP'S LAST TAPE*

JADWIGA UCHMAN

> The individual is the seat of a constant process of decantation, decantation from the vessel containing the fluid of future time, sluggish, pale and monochrome, to the vessel containing the fluid of past time, agitated and multicoloured by the phenomena of its hours. (Beckett 1987: 15)

Before starting to analyse Beckett's monodrama it is advisable to pay some attention to his essay devoted to Proust which makes it easier to understand his writings. Lee writes: "Beckett's *Proust* has the double fascination of throwing light on Proust while revealing Beckett himself [...] *A la recherche du tempts perdu* serves as a sort of Rorschach test in which the young critic discovers his own fetishes and his own *bêtes noires*" (1978: 196). The study on Proust, commissioned by a London publisher, written during Beckett's stay in Paris and published in 1931, does not present literary criticism proper until Beckett has allowed himself a long and not altogether relevant discussion on the "Time cancer" and its attributes, "Habit and Memory" (1987: 18). Let me start with his concept of "the double headed monster of damnation and salvation—Time" (Beckett 1987: 11). Beckett argues:

> There is no escape from hours and days. Neither from to-morrow nor from yesterday. There is no escape from yesterday because yesterday has deformed us, or been deformed by us. The mood is of no importance. Deformation has taken place. Yesterday is not a milestone that has been passed, but a daystone on the beaten track of years, and irremediably a part of us, within us, heavy and dangerous. We are not only more weary because of yesterday, we are other, no longer what we were before the calamity of yesterday […] The aspirations of yesterday were valid for yesterday's ego, not for today's [...] But what is attainment? The identification of the subject with the object of his desire. The subject has

> died—and perhaps many times—on the way. For subject B to be disappointed by the banality of an object chosen by subject A is as illogical as to expect one's hunger to be dissipated by the spectacle of Uncle eating his dinner. (1987: 13-14)

People are driven along through time on a current of habit-energy, an energy which, because habitual, is mostly automatic. Habit, according to Beckett's views, protects us from the world of feeling which guarantees only suffering:

> The creation of the world did not take place once and for all time, but it takes place every day. Habit then is the generic term for the countless treaties concluded between the countless subjects that constitute the individual and their countless correlative objects. The periods of transition that separate consecutive adaptations […] represent the perilous zones in the life of the individual, dangerous, precarious, painful, mysterious and fertile, when for a moment the boredom of living is replaced by the suffering of being. (1987: 19)

Thus life is a constant shuttle between the dull Boredom of a controlling Habit and the suffering, intensity of which springs from a clear, immediate perception of things as they are. Most people, preferring Boredom to suffering which is a punishment for "the eternal sin of having been born" (Beckett 1987: 67),[1] take refuge to the protective, falsifying Habit. Memory as such is strictly connected with and subject to the laws of Habit. Since all living is Habit,[2] Beckett wants us to be aware that this filters our perception and distorts our view of reality. For Beckett, memory becomes conditioned through perception. Rather than serve us as a moment of discovery and contemplation of reality, it becomes distorted through perception: "Strictly speaking we can only remember what has been registered by our extreme inattention and stored in that ultimate and inaccessible dungeon of our being to what Habit does not possess the key" (Beckett 1987: 31). This kind of memory is called by Beckett involuntary memory and is contrasted with voluntary memory which "is of no use as

[1] Knowlson (1996: 604) mentions that the phrase "original sin of having been born" may owe something to Calderón's sentence in *Life is a Dream*: "For man's greatest crime is to have been born," DOA: 13 March, 2010. <http://thinkexist.com/quotes/ pedro_calderon_de_la_barca/> which was later, as Libera (2002: 29) argues, propagated by Schopenhauer in his *The World as Will and Representation.* This might well be the case as Beckett was familiar both with the drama and the philosopher's ideas.

[2] "Breathing is habit. Life is habit. Or rather life is a succession of habits, since the individual is a succession of individuals" (1970: 19).

an instrument of evocation, and provides an image far removed from the real" (1987: 14) and which, furthermore, "is not memory, but the application of a concordance to the Old Testament of the individual" (1987: 32). Voluntary memory is

> the uniform memory of intelligence; and it can be relied on to reproduce for our gratified inspection those impressions of the past that were consciously and intelligently formed. It has no interest in the mysterious element of inattention that colours our most commonplace experiences. It presents the past in a monochrome. The images it chooses are as arbitrary as those chosen by imagination, and are equally remote from reality. Its action has been compared by Proust to that of turning the leaves of an album of photographs. The material that it furnishes contains nothing of the past, merely a blurred and uniform projection once removed of our anxiety and opportunism—that is to say, nothing. (Beckett 1987: 32)

Beckett discovered a new theoretical means of representing discontinuity in the existence of the self. The idea of dissolving the individual into a "being scattered in place and time" (1987: 58) is relevant to the apparent absent-mindedness of the characters and their irritation when questioned about details related to time and space. Beckett's ideas concerning Time, Habit, Boredom and Memory might help us in understanding the double, seemingly contradictory meaning of time as change and changelessness, its excess and simultaneous lack in his drama. Habit is not simply a fixed attitude towards an unchanging world. Rather it is a quality of mind that mechanically adapts the individual's perception to the changes which occur in reality and thereby it protects him against the shock of change, allowing him to see each occurrence separately, generically, and not in its disquieting uniqueness. On the other hand, however, by adapting himself so successfully, man simultaneously cuts himself off from the reality of changing or potentially changing conditions. His "countless treaties" made by Habit obliterate in the end the effect of constant change, and for him, the perceiver, the change ceases to exist: the result is sameness, a dull prophylactic of Boredom.

Krapp's Last Tape is the first of Beckett's memory plays[3] which investigate the influence of the passing time on the given individuals, the sameness and change of their identities, an idea pointed out, among others, by Winnie in *Happy Days* (1961: 50-51):

[3] For the discussion of memory plays see, among others, the chapter entitled "Be Again, Memory!" in Katharine Worth's study of Beckett (1999: 98-112).

> I used to pray. (*Pause.*) Yes, I must confess I did. (*Smile.*) Not now. (*Smile broader.*) No no. (*Smile off. Pause.*) Then ... now ... what difficulties here, for the mind. (*Pause.*) To have been always what I am—and so changed from what I was. (*Pause.*) I am the one, I say the one, then the other. (*Pause.*) Now the one, then the other. (*Pause.*)

Krapp's Last Tape, originally entitled *The Magee Monologue*, was written after Beckett had heard a radio broadcast of Pat Magee reading from his fiction, and was inspired by "the actor's distinctive whispering voice with its evocation of unrelieved weariness" (Cohn 1973: 165). Even though consisting of a cast of one man, the play is robbed of a true monodrama status because, due to the tape recordings of Krapp done at the earlier stages of his life, what is presented to us is a picture of a single character split into a succession of individuals—the one actually seen on the stage, the one whose voice is preserved on the tape from thirty years ago and, finally, the still earlier Krapp spoken about on the tape.

Thus, then, the tape recorder visible on the stage, whose tapes have preserved the past *egos* of Krapp, fulfils the function of a character or even characters. According to Bair, "Beckett claims he had never seen tape recorder before writing *Krapp* and had no idea how it operated. It seemed a novel way, but still the best to portray a man trying to recapture his memories" (1978: 490). Paying meticulous attention to detail, Beckett sets the play in "*the future*" (1992: 3), not because he intends to write science-fiction of any kind but due to the fact that, being so strict about details, he cannot allow his character to begin the recordings in 1913, when the tape recorder did not exist yet.

Beckett devoted quite a lot of attention to the machine in his directorial notes written during the rehearsals at Schiller-Theater Werkstadt, in Berlin in 1969, featuring Martin Held. His memoranda read:

> Tape-recorder companion of his solitude. Masturbatory agent [...] Anger and tenderness of Krapp towards the object which through language <becomes> has become the 'alternen Idioten' ['stupid bastard'] or [*erasure*] the girl on the lake.
>
> Krapp-tape-recorder relationship both fundamental and almost impossible to convey through the acting without descending to the level of the sentimental.
>
> Tendency of a solitary person to enjoy affective relationships with objects, in particular here with the tape recorder. Smiles, looks, reproaches, caresses, taps, exclamations [...] A little throughout. Never forced.

> Like many lonely people he tends to have an emotional rapport with material objects.[4] (Knowlson 1992: 181, 205, 248)

Commenting on his experiences while being directed by Beckett in the 1970 production of the play in Théâtre Récamier, Jean Martin wrote: "And he wanted Krapp to bend over more and more toward the tape recorder as the play went on, in order to end up completely lying over it, and almost to give the impression that Krapp acts with the tape recorder as he had been acting with a woman in the boat" (McMillan and Fehsenfeld 1988: 257). The tender attitude of the old Krapp towards the tape recorder and his beloved from the past is noticeable not only in Beckett's directorial approach but also in the very text, stage directions included.

In his notebook Beckett states: "Since there is a reference in the text to box 9 (Mein Gott) [good God] and to 5 reels of tape in each box, on the table there must be *at least* 9 x 5 = *45* recordings = birthdays = years. So when he began making the recordings, he must have been *at most* 69 - 45 = *24* years of age (Box 1, spool 1)" (Knowlson 1992: 53). In the course of the play, we get to know only three of the successive stages of Krapp as we watch him on his 69th birthday, making the "diaristic recording" (Aston 1991:162) and listening to the tape he created thirty years ago, also on "the awful occasion" (Beckett 1992: 4), containing not only his remarks concerning the year that has passed but also comments on having listened to the recording he made "at least ten or twelve years ago" (Beckett 1992: 5).

As the play opens, we watch "Sitting at the table, facing front, < > a wearish old man: Krapp. … White face. < > Disordered grey hair. Unshaven. Very near-sighted (but unspectacled.) Hard of hearing. Cracked voice. Distinctive intonation. Laborious walk" (Beckett 1992: 3). He takes out from a drawer a banana, peels and eats it, starts pacing at the edge of the stage, slips on the banana skin and nearly falls, takes another banana and eats it, having thrown its skin backstage, goes to the cubby-hole three times to bring the ledger, tin boxes containing reels of recorded tape and the tape-recorder. He sits down at the table again, takes the ledger to find the entry he wants to finally take out the spool he wishes to listen to—it is the spool number five—and threads it on the machine. Then, before starting to listen to it, he "reads entry at foot of page":

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[4] The typographical note states: "Text between square brackets [ ] has been added to the original English text. Text between pointed brackets { } has been revised. A pair of angle brackets < > indicates that a section of text has been cut from the original English text" (Knowlson 1992: 2).

> Mother at rest at last … Hm … The black ball (*He raises his head, stares blankly front. Puzzled.*) Black ball? … (*He peers again at the ledger, reads*:) The dark nurse … (*He raises his head, broods, peers again at the ledger, reads*:) Slight improvement in bowel condition … Hm … Memorable … what? (*He peers closer*.) Equinox, memorable equinox. (*He raises his head, stares blankly front. Puzzled*.) Memorable equinox? … (*Pause. He shrugs his shoulders, peers again at ledger, reads*:) Farewell to—(*he turns page* [*and raises his head*])—love. (Beckett 1992: 4)

Then Krapp switches the tape recorder on and starts listening to the tape. We hear "*[s]trong voice, rather pompous, clearly* KRAPP'S *at a much earlier time*" (Beckett 1992: 4). The initial moments of the play openly indicate not only the change of the voice of Krapp brought about by the passage of time but also the discrepancy between the past as he wanted to remember it and recorded on the tape (voluntary memory) and the past as he now recalls it (involuntary memory). The tape sheds light on the sameness and differences characterising the man at the three stages of his life.

The reactions of the visible Krapp while he reads the entry specifying the contents of the tape and then, when he listens to the tape, clearly indicate not only the changes he has undergone due to the passage of thirty years but also the discrepancy between what he considered necessary to chronicle at that time as worth remembering (voluntary memory) and what his involuntary memory has actually registered. At present, most of the elements of the entry have been forgotten: "the black ball," "the dark nurse" and "memorable equinox" do not seem to jog his memory and thus evoke his reaction expressing puzzlement or make him shrug his shoulders. While listening with him to the tape, however, we discover how important they were for him at the time when the recording was done:

> One dark young beauty I recollect particularly, ([*Faint head reaction*.]) all white and starch, incomparable bosom, with a big black perambulator, most funereal thing. Whenever I looked in her direction she had her eyes on me. [...] The face she had! The eyes! Like … (*hesitates*) … chrysolite! ({*Brief pause to permit head up.*}) ([*Stares front.*]) Ah well … (*Pause.*) ….
>
> - The blind went down, one of those dirty brown roller affairs, throwing a ball for a little white dog as a chance would have it. I happened to look up and there it was. All over and done with, at last. I sat on for a few moments with the ball in my hand and the dog yelping and pawing at me. (*Pause*.) Moments. Her moments, my moments. (*Pause*.) The dog's moments. (*Pause*.) In the end I held it to him and he took it in his mouth, gently, gently. A small, old, black, hard, solid rubber ball. (*Pause.*) I shall feel it,

in my hand, until my dying day. (*Pause*.) I might have kept it. (*Pause*.) I gave it to the dog. (*Pause*.)

(*Pause*.)

Ah well …

(*Pause*.)

Spiritually a year of profound gloom and indigence until that memorable night in March, at the end of the jetty, in the howling wind, never to be forgotten, when suddenly I saw the whole thing.

([*Impatient reaction from* KRAPP.])

The vision at last. This I fancy is what I have chiefly to ([*Violent reaction from* KRAPP.]) record this evening, against the day when my work will be done and perhaps no place left in my memory, warm or cold, for the miracle that … (*hesitates*).

([KRAPP *thumbs on table*.]) … for the fire that set it alight. What I suddenly saw then was this, that belief I had been going on all my life, namely—(KRAPP *switches off impatiently, winds tape forward* [*mechanical with gabble, 2 seconds*,] *switches on again.*)

- great granite rocks the foam flying up in the light of the lighthouse and the wind-gauge spinning like a propeller, clear to me at last that the dark I have always struggled to keep under is in reality my most—(KRAPP *curses, switches off, winds tape forward,* [*mechanical with gabble, 3 seconds*], *switches on again*.)—unshatterable association until my dissolution of storm and night with the light of the understanding and the fire—

(KRAPP *curses louder, switches off, winds tape forward* [*mechanical with gabble, 4 seconds*], *switches on again,* [*lowers head*].) my face in her breasts and my hand on her. We lay there without moving. But under us all moved, and moved us gently, up and down, and from side to side. (Beckett 1992: 7-8)

In all these three recorded memories the juxtaposition of black and white colours is discernible, this being the Manichean opposition, to which Beckett paid great attention in his theatre notebook, devoting a whole page to Mani and enumerating all the instances of images of light and darkness that occur in the play, calling them “light and dark emblems” (Knowlson 1992: 132-134). McDonald writes: “Manichean belief (deriving from the

teachings of Mani, a third-century Iranian theologian) holds that the world is caught in an unholy blending of good and evil, and the duty of the faithful is, through renunciation of the ways of the flesh, to liberate the imprisoned light or goodness from its debased entrapment in the evil world of matter" (2006: 62). McMillan and Fehsenfeld (1988: 244) also point out that "the dichotomy of spirit and flesh associated in Manicheanism with light and dark is basic to the structure" already in the early draft of the taped fragment. They continue (1988: 244-245):

> In the more developed presentations on the tape, Beckett makes clear that these three moments are all incidents from Krapp's life in which light and dark, spirit and sensuality, are mingled. But as portrayed in the ledger, they outline a progression of the three 'moments' central to Manichean belief: 1. The past when spirit and matter were separate and matter exclusively contained in a world of feminine darkness: 'mother at rest at last,' 'the black ball,' 'the dark nurse'; 2. The present when light and dark are mingled but the process of redemptive separation is in progress, 'memorable equinox'; and 3. The future, when the separation of light and dark is completed, 'farewell to love'. (cf. *Encyclopedia Britannica*, Vol. XVII, 11th edition, 573)

Furthermore, they argue (1988: 246) that in the recollections concerning "the memorable equinox" and "boat scene" Beckett employed "the five Manichean 'emblems' of light: zephyr, wind, light, quickening fire, clear water with the emblems of dark: mist, heat, sirocco, darkness, vapour, in the form given in the *Encyclopedia Britannica*."

While speaking about the ball, the voice recorded on the tape argues: "I shall feel it, in my hand, until my dying day," now, however, he has forgotten its touch and even the whole incident, as his puzzlement after reading the entry clearly indicates. The part concerning the "equinox" irritates him greatly and even though then he considered it to be memorable, now he does not want to listen to it and, with mounting impatience, rewinds the tape forward yet "we are still permitted to hear, through the rhetorical whirl, images of the light and darkness, and what they represent, in poise ('equinox') and even union" (Lawley 1996: 92). Knowlson writes:

> one element in particular of the Krapp passage relates it directly to Beckett's own experience; the darkness of an inner world was, indeed, an image that Beckett reproduced with friends to whom he spoke about his revelation. Beckett explained precisely what he meant by this part of Krapp's "vision." He wrote that the dark was "'in reality my most—' Lost: [that is when Krapp switches off the tape recorder and runs the tape forward] 'my most precious ally' etc. Meaning his true element at last and

> key to the opus magnum."[5] Light was, therefore, rejected in favor of darkness. And this darkness can certainly be extended to a whole zone of being that includes folly and failure, impotence and ignorance. (1996: 319)

Ironically, this moment of reconciliation of light and darkness (stressed by the use of a very specific day, one of the only two during the year, when night and day are of the same length) which brought about so much enthusiasm in Krapp in the past, for the present Krapp is of no importance whatsoever, which marks the split between his present self and his younger one. The situation is drastically different in the case of the part of the tape devoted to "farewell to love." While reading the entry on the ledger he is not surprised, irritated or puzzled by it—he has preserved the event in his mind thanks to the working of involuntary memory. It is still vivid in his memory and he starts the present recording by a reference to the girl "The eyes she had!" (Beckett 1992: 9). Slightly later on, he says: "Be again, be again. (*Pause*.) All that old misery. (*Pause*.) Once wasn't enough for you. (*Pause*.) Lie down on her" (Beckett 1992: 9). These are the last words of the on-stage Krapp. What follows is yet another listening scene—he puts the reel from thirty years ago on the tape recorder and once more listens to "farewell to love." We may presume that in this case the voluntary memory (the recording) and involuntary memory (what he actually remembers) have registered the episode in a very similar way.

Having a close look at the Krapp visible on the stage and his earlier *egos* preserved on the tape, we may notice that in some respects his characteristics have remained basically the same even though they have changed slightly. Such is the case, for instance, with his interest and indulging in drinking alcohol, eating bananas and contacts with women. Kennedy argues that Krapp has "withdrawn into an almost total solitude with sordid habits which include residual whoring, drinking and the excessive consumption of bananas" (1989: 67). The present Krapp eats two bananas before he brings the tape recorder, ledger and reels of tape. In the new recording he mentions "the sour cud and the iron stool" (Beckett 1992: 9). In the one from thirty years ago, he remarks: "Have just eaten I regret to say three bananas and only with difficulty refrained from a fourth. ([*He grunts.*]) Fatal things for a man with my condition. (*Vehemently*) Cut 'em out! (*Pause*.)" (Beckett 1992: 5). As we can notice at the beginning of the play he still loves eating bananas but has cut down the number from three to two. His long lasting bowel problems, present

[5] Notes sent in 1987 to JK [James Knowlson], who at the time was preparing an edition of Beckett's theatrical notebook on *Krapp's Last Tape* (Knowlson 1996: note 58, 686).

already in the Krapp of 27 or 29, "Unattainable laxation" (Beckett 1992: 6), remain.

Later, he leaves the stage twice to have a drink (6 and 8). On the tape, thirty years ago, Krapp says the following about the earlier recording: "And the resolutions! (*Brief laugh in which* KRAPP *joins*, [*without moving*].) To drink less, in particular. (*Brief laugh of* KRAPP *alone*. [*He looks at tape-recorder without moving*.]) Statistics. ([*Back to listening position*.]) Seventeen hundred hours, out of the preceding eight thousand odd, consumed on licensed premises alone. More than 20 per cent, say 40 per cent of his waking life. (*Pause.*)" (Beckett 1992: 5-6).

The 39 years old Krapp who makes this comment on his earlier self, however, registers earlier on the tape:

> Celebrated the awful occasion, as in recent years, quietly at the Wine-house. Not a soul. Sat before the fire with closed eyes, separating the grain from husks. [...] The new light above my table is a great improvement. With all this darkness round me I feel less alone. (*Pause.*) In a way. (*Pause.*) I love to get up and move about it, then back here to … (*hesitates*) ... me. (*Pause.*) Krapp.
>
> (*Pause.*) [*Long enough for impatient look at tape-recorder*.])
>
> The grain, now what I wonder I mean by that. I mean … (*hesitates*) … I suppose I mean those things worth having when all the dust has—when all *my* dust has settled. I close my eyes and try to imagine them. (4-5)

This passage contains the sentence "Not a soul" referring to the solitude of Krapp at his 39th birthday, this being a recurrent motif of the play. Slightly later on, on the same day, as he recalls on the tape, when he was sitting on a bench near the weir, looking at his mother's window, "wishing she were gone" there was "[h]ardly a soul, just a few regulars, nursemaids, infants, old men, dog" (Beckett 1992: 6). There were people there, the dark nurse, described slightly later on, among them, yet he felt as if he had been absolutely alone. Later on he says on the tape: "Past midnight. Never knew such silence. The earth might be uninhabited" (Beckett 1992: 8).

He has always felt lonely yet on all three occasions he mentions women who played a part in his life. When he was 27/29 years old there was Bianka from Kedar Street,[6] as he recalls having listened to the tape from thirty years ago: "At that time I think I was still living on and off

[6] Libera (1988: footnote 42, 641) discusses the telling names of the girl and the street, Bianca meaning in Italian white and Kedar denoting in Hebrew dark, black.

with Bianca in Kedar Street. ([*Faint head reaction*.]) Well out of that, Jesus yes! (*Pause*.) Not much about her, apart from a tribute to her eyes. Very warm. (*Pause*.) [*Raises head and stares front*.]) I suddenly saw them again. Incomparable!" (Beckett 1992: 5). At 39 there was the girl with whom he was on a lake in a punt, memorised in the episode entitled by him "farewell to love," to which he listens twice (Beckett 1992: 8, 10). Now there is also a woman: "Fanny came in a couple of times. Bony old ghost of a whore. Couldn't do much, but I suppose better than a kick in the crutch" (Beckett 1992: 9). Knowlson remarks that in the Berlin production "Beckett changed this line to 'better than the thumb and forefinger'" (1992: 35-36). The place of beautiful women with impressive eyes has been taken by "bony old ghost of a whore," he, too, is not so potent as he used to be in the past.

Krapp has deteriorated not only physically but also mentally. While listening to the tape, he is surprised by the word "viduity" and has to check its meaning in the dictionary (Beckett 1992: 6). In the past, being a writer, he found satisfaction in finding appropriate words ("equinox," "viduity"). Now he has diminished to the status of a child, deriving pleasure from the mere sound, as his behaviour at the beginning of the play indicates: "(*Briskly*.) Ah! (*He bends over the ledger, turns the pages, finds the entry he wants, reads*:) Box … three … spool … five. (*He raises his head and stares front. With relish.*) Spool! (*Pause*.) Spooool! (*Happy smile. Pause.* ...)" (Beckett 1992: 4). A few moments later, he again takes pleasure in repeating the word. What is more, he comes to the conclusion that it is worthwhile to record that experience and, towards the end of the play, he says into the microphone: "Revelled in the word spool. (*With relish*) Spooool! Happiest moment of the past half million" (Beckett 1992: 9).

The play also contains Krapp's comments on his earlier selves. Each age is scornful of those that precede it. At the age of 39 Krapp recorded the following; "Hard to believe I was ever that young whelp. The voice! Jesus! And the aspirations! (*Brief laugh* {*tape alone*})" (Beckett 1992: 5). Now, being 69, he says: "Just been listening to that stupid bastard I took myself for thirty years ago, hard to believe I was ever as bad as that. [The voice! Jesus!] Thank god that's all done with anyway" (Beckett 1992: 9). It is worthwhile to notice that the words in brackets have been added to the original English text so that Krapp's utterance at the end of the play includes two cases of repetition of the earlier text. Thus, then, while looking down at his earlier self as being inferior, Krapp clearly demonstrates both the changes and sameness of his identity.

Discussing the drama as "the alteration of solipsistic monologues," Aston points out: "The disjunction between the 'I' present and the 'I' past

constitutes the negation of a unified character history" (1991: 163). Krapp himself must be aware of the discontinuity of his self and on the tape he is recording at his 69th birthday, he avoids using the "I" pronoun in English and French version as well as in the authorised German version (Libera 1988: note 78, 647). This leads us back to Beckett's essay on Proust (1987: 26 and 74), where he wrote about the novel's narrator:

> and he thinks how absurd is our dream of a Paradise with retention of personality, since our life is a succession of Paradises successively denied, that the only true Paradise is the Paradise that has been lost [...]
>
> and we breathe the true air of Paradise, of the only Paradise that is not the dream of a madman, the Paradise that has been lost.

Krapp ends his tape done on his 39th birthday saying: "Perhaps my best years are gone. When there was a chance of happiness. But I wouldn't want them back. Not with the fire in me now. No I wouldn't want them back" (Beckett 1992: 10). Thirty years later, he contradicts this statement by suddenly ending the present recording after having said: "Be again, be again. (*Pause*.) All that old misery. (*Pause*.) Once wasn't enough for you. (*Pause*.) Lie down across her" (Beckett 1992: 7). The "farewell to love," recorded on the tape (voluntary memory) and his recollections of it which are the same, is an extreme case of his "Paradise that has been lost."

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"IN SO NARROW A SPACE YOU MUST CHOOSE YOUR NOTE AND STRIKE IT FIRMLY": VIRGINIA WOOLF'S ESSAYS AS SPACES OF JUXTAPOSITION AND CREATIVE APPROPRIATION

VERITA SRIRATANA

Introduction

This paper proposes that Virginia Woolf appropriates the essay-writing tradition of her time to create limitless spaces out of a limited space. Woolf consciously and painstakingly converts the essay from a didactic and "commonplace" genre into a "common" place for all. She "renovates" the essay form and content in order to "make room" for the lives and voices of "the obscure" or the socially marginalised which, for her, are deemed far from ordinary or commonplace. Her subversive spaces of alterity are constructed and reconstructed through her method of "scene-making." An equivalent to "place-making," Woolf's "scene-making" illustrates my concept of "technology of place," a theoretical framework which demonstrates how place is constructed and deconstructed through clashes and negotiations between the "concrete place" of sensory reception and the "abstract place" of imagination.[1] This paper also proposes that

[1] My idea of "technology of place" was inspired by Michel Foucault's concept of technologies of the self and Irvin C. Schick's concept of the technology of place in his book *The Erotic Margin*, in which he states that technology of place is "the discursive instruments and strategies by means of which space is constituted as place" (1999: 9). I propose that we come to understand place through an amalgamation of, as well as clashes and negotiations between, "concrete place" which we perceive through our sensory reception and "abstract place" which we imagine from shards of personal and collective memories, narratives, and representations. This paradoxical union parallels Woolf's visionary concept of the "granite" and "rainbow" in her essay "The New Biography," first published in the *New York Herald Tribune* on 30 October 1927: "And if we think of truth as

"making a scene" in Woolf's essays has two meanings: firstly, to creatively imagine an abstract place and set it down within the concrete confines of the essay's space and word limit. Secondly, to contest the social norms and hegemony of her time by bringing her tangible private experiences, her factual and fictional accounts of obscure lives, as well as the historical and political context of her own time into her essays—a sphere supposed to be exclusively "masculine," full of abstract debates and argument. This fragmentation of a conventional essayist's unified voice, this leading the readers in and out of linear lines of argument, creates a revolutionary multiple consciousness which is always in the process of "becoming" in Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's sense. Woolf's essays, therefore, function in ways which provoke thoughts and open up new possibilities of critical and creative thinking, instead of forcefully thrusting formulated "nugget of pure truth" (Woolf 1998: 4) to the readers, an act which she detests.

Essays as Spaces for "Scene-Making"

"[I]n all the writing I have done (novels, criticism, biography)," Virginia Woolf confesses in her memoir, "I always have to find a scene" (1989: 156). When we first look at the three writing genres she has listed, it is likely that we come to a conclusion that scene-making[2] features more prominently in fiction and biography than in essays. Such an assumption might be reinforced by the *OED* definition of "scene" as a dramatic and theatrical device "intended to give the illusion of a real view of the *locale* in which the action of a play takes place" (2008)[3] and also by the

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something of granite-like solidity and of personality as something of rainbow-like intangibility and reflect that the aim of biography is to weld these two into one seamless whole, we shall admit that the problem is a stiff one and that we need not wonder if biographers have for the most part failed to solve it" (1958: 149). For more explanation on the concepts of "technology" and "technology of place," see my essay "'Unleashing the Underdog': Technology of Place in Virginia Woolf's *Flush*."

[2] It is my contention in this paper that to "make a scene," for Virginia Woolf, is to weave into her writing the sketches of people and places as well as descriptions of actions and conversations. This paper focuses on her strife to "strike out a portrait to fill the little frame" ("Addison" 1938: 114) of limited spaces on paper in terms of essay and marginalia writing.

[3] This definition of "scene" connotes a sense of constructedness on its most concrete level. Theatrical scenes are often produced as microcosmic representations of "real" places. Therefore, our general idea of scenes is often based on creative elements which are less factually inclined.