We commence this issue of our journal with a foray into the world of politics. Passion for politics inevitably comes up from time to time. One cannot spend one’s life studying social sciences, theorizing a certain form of society— or, rather, trying to ‘understand’ society— and, at the same time, dwell exclusively in a world of ideas. We cannot in fact dispense with considering what society actually is, what historical change is, what difficulties democracy has to fight against in order to conquer the hearts and brains of men. And the fight for democracy is, no doubt, a hard one. Moreover recent events tend to cloud our optimism.

The “Arab spring”

When seeing the ‘Arab spring’ we hoped that, finally, democracy was conquering Northern Africa and the Middle East, but our hope was soon followed by deep disappointment. While democratic institutions seem now to have taken root in Tunisia, where there was a long tradition of French domination and culture, they immediately faded away in Egypt and Libya and, much more dramatically, in Iraq. When the latter country was liberated from a bloody dictator, many hoped and believed, that the country had finally found its own way to democracy. But democracy, in countries that have been recently liberated, needs assistance. Americans possession as the supreme or the sole happiness of our being.1 This quotation could serve as a motto for a longer study about experiencing love in the eighteenth century. Such a study cannot be undertaken here, but something must be said about it to justify the title of this essay. It is extremely difficult to know how our ancestors experienced love. We have the classical literature on famous love affairs of course, but did they mirror everyday life? The official rules about what was permitted in sexual relations were clear. Only married couples are allowed to have sex, and not so much for pleasure as for the duty of procreation. We know at least that in the salons of the French Enlightenment no one took these rules seriously. They


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functioned as a shield behind which everyone made his own choices. Many opted for the aristocratic solution. One married to secure offspring and the continuity of the family line. After marriage the man (and often his wife) sought a new partner in love. The sober minded Montesquieu was married (curiously enough) to a protestant lady. Love was not an issue in their partnership. She managed his affairs and he had a mistress in a village nearby La Brède, his castle. Of course this breach of conjugal fidelity could be an invitation to promiscuity – *libertinage* as it was called – but purer souls saw a love affair as a means of separating business and emotional involvement. Love for the philosophers of the Enlightenment was an opportunity to discover the possibilities and constraints of human nature. They regarded love as the human motive that could promote agreeable relations between human beings. I have been struck by the love affair of Voltaire and Mme du Châtelet. Voltaire moved in with her at Cirey, her seat in provincial France. Her husband, the Marquis, was also present in this *marriage à trois* and apparently he did not mind Voltaire’s presence. Later, when love had petered out, Voltaire remained her loyal friend. He was at her bedside, when she was dying, expecting a baby from St Lambert, the poet. Voltaire could turn love into friendship and he showed a degree of sophistication, which regrettably is lacking in many modern couples.

Love for Gibbon was an emotional investment in the unique other person. The French noblemen were notoriously unfaithful to their wives and the British nobility will not have behaved very differently, I suspect. However, the British bourgeoisie more and more made it their objective to invest this emotionally in marriage. We have no conclusive evidence for this statement nor do we know how their behaviour compared with that of the French bourgeoisie. In his *Centuries of Childhood* Philippe Ariès makes the point that the well-to-do bourgeoisie started to focus on the privacy of their domestic lives and began to pay particular attention to the education of their children and –of course– in the first place their sons. A professional education became at least as important as the cultivation of manners. This is an extremely interesting thesis though Ariès does not really manage to substantiate it in historical terms. The same is true

Our predecessors lived without our modern anxieties. We have no conclusive evidence for this statement nor do we know how their behaviour compared with that of the French bourgeoisie. In his *Centuries of Childhood* Philippe Ariès makes the point that the well-to-do bourgeoisie started to focus on the privacy of their domestic lives and began to pay particular attention to the education of their children and –of course– in the first place their sons. A professional education became at least as important as the cultivation of manners. This is an extremely interesting thesis though Ariès does not really manage to substantiate it in historical terms. The same is true


**Contrarian by nature**

We are contrarian by nature, and are unconvinced that easing the sanctions against Cuba has been a wise act. It is true that the Cuban people will be relieved by the new relations established with America, and also with Europe, possibly, but we still remember, and very well, the Cuban crisis, when Fidel Castro tried to put a knife to the throat of America, and of the West- the knife of Russian atomic missiles that were about to be installed in Cuba. Castro betrayed the spirit of the Cuban revolution, that was liberal. He starved the island of Cuba with his so called Marxist policy and, no doubt, that island, if it had been a democratic country, would have greatly benefited from American tourism and commercial exchanges. Cuba, by contrast, has long been, and still is, in misery. It has been such a paradise that, if you tried to flee from it, if made prisoner, they would have sentenced you to death. The policy of the incumbent American administration means betraying all those who have fled that unlucky island and who are fighting for freedom. It means also surrendering to dictators whose power is in any case fading away, and would soon disappear, as a historical necessity. In spite of those who are of a different mind, our heart is with the Cuban exiles, whose ideals should not be betrayed.

**The grandchildren of Stalin**

Last, the grandchildren of Stalin. All of us know what communism represented for Eastern Europe, how it destroyed the hopes of half a continent. Imagine, for a moment, what Russia nowadays would be, if the social democratic Kerskij government had not been toppled by those professional guerrillas, Lenin and Stalin, and had been able to lead that nation towards democracy and progress. That scenario has long been, and still is, absent from historical books in the West. The ‘rhetoric of the winners’ claims its own rights. Nevertheless the end of Com-
Les Liaisons Dangereuses was Laclos' first and only novel. At the time he wrote to his wife he was thinking of writing a sequel, presumably, on marital bliss. Even writing his first novel Laclos was influenced by Pamela and Clarissa, two novels by Richardson. His novel was about the dangers of libertinage, but at the back of his mind was a concept of marriage in which man and wife married for love. He almost certainly wanted to celebrate a new type of marriage – bourgeois marriage – in his new novel. And Sade? For him love did not exist and marriage was an obsolete institution. A call for cooperation was hypocritical for homo homini lupus. His idea of man and society contrasted sharply with that of the philosophes. Hence the title of this essay.

Laclos and Sade were both influenced by Jean-Jacques Rousseau. He argues that romantic love was an essential element of the modern family. Again his argument that the bourgeois marriage, as inspired by romantic love, was an innovation which turned marriage into a very successful and much discussed nineteenth-century institution, is important and probably true. However, I remain dubious about his historical evidence. So the motto derived from Gibbon raises an important point and not only because the emotional investment in love tells us something about the modern family. The philosophers of the Enlightenment regarded love as a tonic for the health of human transactions.

In what follows I will discuss novels of Samuel Richardson and Choderlos de Laclos. Laclos, the writer of Les Liaisons Dangereuses, wrote to his wife from Italy in 1801:

Le motif de l’ouvrage est de rendre populaire cette vérité qu’il n’existe de bonheur que dans la famille.5

Richardson makes no attempt to explain why she had to die. I suspect her death suited his moral purpose.

4 (Glasgow 1977; Fontana).
5 J. Grape, Les Liaisons Dangereuses de Choderlos de Laclos (Paris 1997; Gallimard).

1. Defining Marital Bliss, Richard-son’s Pamela and Clarissa

A novel of course is no sociological report on human conduct. It betrays the preferences of the author on how people should or should not behave. Richardson’s message in this respect is clear. At the end of 1500 pages of fine print (in my edition) he writes that Clarissa answers to the “religious plan” of God’s providence. This providence sees to it that virtue will be rewarded as with Clarissa and sin will be punished as in the case of Lord Lovelace who raped Clarissa. Lovelace is killed in a duel: “This wilful transgressor [is]condignly punished” (1498) and which truthful Christian will not envy “Clarissa’s triumphant death”?6

Whose piety from her early childhood, whose diffusive charity; whose steady virtue; whose Christian humility; whose forgiving

munism has shown the reality of Eastern Europe, of half our continent that has been prevented from naturally developing by the bloody policy of a bloody dictator and of his court.

The grandchild of Stalin is Mr Putin, the aggressor against the Ukrainian people, commonly known, in Eastern Europe, as ‘the liar’. He is one who ‘starves people in order to build weapons’, and in Italy is well known as the great, intimate friend of Mr Berlusconi. He now wants to challenge the West with a militaristic policy which borders on the insane. Is it unclear, in fact, how he can in the long run challenge the West with its science and technology, and its industrial output. What he can do is to concentrate upon the construction of weapons. He can easily launch, from the Caspian Sea, missiles against the ‘enemies’ of his great friend, the Syrian dictator, showing how powerful Russia is. In the meantime the Russian economy remains terribly backward, the airplanes of the Aeroflot are 95% American Boeings or European Airbuses, with a few, old Ilyushins. Even the electronic equipment of the recently highly praised tanks of the once ‘Red Army’ - whose task is, obviously, that of threatening neighbouring countries - is largely Western, and in particular American.

In the meeting of the heads of states held in Australia, months ago, no one wanted Putin to sit at the same table with them, and the last, little tyrant of the Kremlin, had to leave Canberra one day before the end of the conference.

Mr Putin nevertheless consoles himself with the friendship of Mr Berlusconi, the disgraced ex-Italian Prime Minister, sentenced to one year of prison, which he did not serve, being over 75 years old. He was condemned to the alternative penalty of community service, ousted from Parliament, and obliged to return to the President of the Republic the knighthood that had been conferred upon him years ago.

Two gentlemen, upright people

The two gentlemen, upright people, as our readers know well, used to meet a couple of times a year somewhere in Russia, recently, for several days, in Crimea. There Berlusconi praised Putin as the leading statesman of the world. In response, the Ukrainian government banned him from entering their country for the next three years.

We are not sure that the friendship of Mr Berlusconi, (also known, in Italy, as ‘the former Knight’, or the ‘previous offender’), actually flatters the little Russian dictator, because, after all, everybody knows that one has the friends one deserves.

The conclusion is that, happily, things change in the world, and must change. We have seen the result of the last elections in Iran. There young people marginalized the old periwigs, and half buried the past, because they want peace and progress. Progress is now represented by the internet, which is spreading into the island of Cuba by its dictators. Similarly in Russia, where there are young people who use the internet, and there is an opposition that is said by those in power to be limited to the intellectuals. In reality it involves large strata of the population, who are not taken in by the propaganda of the regime and its ‘disinformatja’, in which the media of that country traditionally excel, and to which only a few voices are raised in opposition. History teaches us that people cannot be deceived for long, and that ideas of liberty root deeply in the consciences of men. It is up to young people to bring them to victory, after too long a period during which they have remained, apparently, silent.

Spectator
Spirit; whose meekness; whose resignation, HEAVEN, only could reward? (1498).

This is Richardson's conventional message, but he has another one, which is more interesting and which makes it worthwhile to discuss his novels in this essay.

Richardson published *Pamela* in 1740 and 1741. The subtitle indicates his second message: *Pamela or Virtue Rewarded*. What is the reward? Pamela is a lady's maid who was inherited by a nobleman at the death of his mother. She is a beauty with a modest back-ground and she is harassed and intimidated by her 'master' who has taken a fancy to her and wants to make her his concubine. Defending her virtue like a lioness she beseeches him to send her home to her parents. He imprisons her instead in one of his country seats, but she remains adamant in her desire to return home. Eventually he gives in and agrees to send her home. He does so in a letter in which he declares his love for her and that letter changes everything. Pamela writes her parents:

O my dear parents forgive me! but I found, to my grief before, that my heart was too partial in favour; I found, to my grief before, that my heart was too partial in favour; but now, to find him capable of so much openness, so much affection, nay, and of so much honour too, I am quite overcome (283).

So the master and his maid marry and Pamela becomes the mistress of the house to the consternation of his family and friends. That sudden switch from intimidation to a declaration of love on the one hand and from frantic resistance to the acceptance of his love is a bit artificial, even though she confesses that she had some feelings for him. Cynically one might say that her steadfast resistance brought her a good party. However, this is not what Richardson meant by reward. He only writes about love between the two when they are married, and suggests that the proper channel of love is marriage; and Richardson's message has a sequel. In her "high condition" (386) she lists an impressive list of charities, which she plans to undertake. Furthermore she formulates 48 rules for treating her husband. The last rule gives her quid pro quo for obeying her husband at all times:

That a husband, who expects all this, is to be incapable of returning insult for condescension; and ought not to abridge her of any privilege of her sex (480).

Clearly she is the dynamic force that reforms her husband's life and she introduces the norms of a bourgeois style of living in his noble family.

The tragic story of *Clarissa* is that she first is the victim of the greed of her family that wants her to marry a man she loathes. Lord Lovelace helps her to escape from home, but he has the sinister plan to seduce her. So he lodges her in a (rather posh) brothel (it takes her a long time to find out where she is). Lord Lovelace is a rake who rapes her after she has been drugged, because he cannot reach his objective in another way. The unravelling of the plot is that Clarissa pines away till she dies and Lovelace discovers to his horror that he genuinely loves her and that he has gambled away his chance to be loved. In a moment of truth he writes to his friend Belford: "Shall I give thee a faint picture of the horrible uneasiness with which my mind struggles? And faint indeed it must be; for nothing but outrageous madness can exceed it, and that only in the apprehension of others; since, as to the sufferer, it is certain that actual disfruction (take it out of its lucid intervals) must be an infinitely more happy state than the suspense and anxieties that bring it on.

Forbidden to attend the dear creature, yet longing to see her, I would give the world to be admitted once more to her beloved presence (1333-1334)".

Clarissa only pities him with the damning words: "Poor man, said she! I once could have loved him." (1341).

This then is the story of unfulfilled love. *Pamela* has a happy ending and *Clarissa* is a tragedy, but the message in both novels is the same. Love between man and woman is a case for mutual esteem and can only prosper in the married state.

3. Richardson's Reception in France

Richardson's novels were well received in France. Diderot wrote an *Éloge de Richardson* and was impressed by Richardson's treatment of semblance and reality. History is full of lies, Diderot wrote, and Richardson's novels are full of truths.

Le cœur, qui a été, est et sera toujours le même, est le modèle d'après lequel tu copies ... Sous ce point de vue, j'oserai dire que souvent l'histoire est un mauvais roman; et que le roman, comme tu l'as fait, est une bonne histoire. O peintre de la nature! C'est toi qui ne mens jamais.

Semblance equals the hypocrisy of human relations. The French aristocracy could indulge in libertinages as long as the semblance of the conventional moral code remained unimpaired, but true love unmask this hypocrisy. In his *Éloge Diderot is not acting the moralist, but being a student of human nature he concludes that true love is the dynamic principle of history. He is not thinking of the social effects of love in the first place, but of what insight true love affords us into the character of human nature. Clarissa for Diderot is a heroine, because her honesty and purity shows her rapist in the true light of a perverted soul.

Laclos' only novel immediately became a classic (though Gustave Lanson only mentions it in a note in his authoritative *Histoire de la Littérature Française*). Who regards lovemaking as a game

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and mistakes pleasure for happiness is bound to be disappointed and will feel empty and bored in the end.

Laclos was an artillery officer in the royal army and he had only to look around him to notice the antics of the society in which he moved. He himself lived a happy bourgeois life with his wife and children. He had a brilliant inventive mind, but his achievements were not noticed in the army during the Ancien Régime or the Revolution. He played an important role during the victory of the revolutionary army at Valmy, but it was Carnot, not he, who earned the reputation of being the saviour of the French nation. Under Napoleon he served as one of his generals. While on duty in Italy he died near Taranto in 1803. He earned his reputation of being the author of a saucy novel by mistake. In no way is his book pornography. No bawdy word came from his pen. He gave a cool and precise analysis of sexual relations in the upper class circles of the Ancien Régime, and to accentuate his objective approach he used the model of the epistolary novel. Laclos wrote about what had happened, not about what did happen. That gives his commentary on events a reflective air. The epistolary model was common in his time. Richardson used it, so did Rousseau, but Laclos used it in a masterly fashion. Every correspondent is given his or her own style of expression. He also had a fine sense for the paradoxes imbedded in human relations and that also determined his craftsmanship. René Pomeau wrote a study called Laclos ou le Paradoxe. In what follows I will use his interpretation of Les Liaisons Dangereuses.

The Count of Valmont and the Marchioness of Merteuil, two ex-lovers, plan a scheme (projet in Laclos’ military terminology) to seduce Céline de Volanges, introduce her to the lifestyle of libertinage and prepare her for marriage to the count of Gercoul. That project succeeds. Valmont seduces Céline and she learns the pleasures of libertinage and to feign love. The second project is much more difficult. Valmont must also seduce Mme de Tourvel, the young wife of an elderly president of the parliament at Paris. Her virtuous and pious behaviour is an obvious obstacle.

Valmont writes to Mme de Merteuil that for him it is not enough to force himself on Mme la Présidente “et d’en faire une nouvelle Clarisse”. “Ce n’est pas assez pour moi de la posséder, je veux qu’elle se livre.” Eventually he succeeds in his mission and then things go horribly wrong. Mme de Tourvel believes she has found the love of her life, but soon discovers that she has been tricked. She finds refuge in a nunnery, where she languishes away in true Clarissa-fashion. While she is dying Valmont becomes desperate. He besieches Mme de Volanges (the mother of Céline) to deliver his letter to the mortally sick woman. I have put a knife in her heart, but I am the only one who can pull it out and save her, he writes. Laclos omitted the letter from the printed version of his novel. Instead he suggests that Valmont discovers that he loves Mme de Tourvel, but as in the case of Lovelace that realization comes too late and he also dies in a duel.

Mme de Merteuil, the other principal character in the novel, is an impressive woman, notwithstanding her depraved manners. She pays back her lovers in kind. She describes to Valmont how she got married and participated in “le tourbillon du monde.” Then she becomes a widow and decides never to marry again. She loves her independent status and her motto becomes “que l’amour qu’on nous vante comme la cause de nos plaisirs, n’en est plus que le prétexte.” I have acquired a reputation of being unapproachable and that façade allows me to choose my lovers on my conditions. Her luck also runs out. When her intrigues become common knowledge the audience jeers at her when she visits the Opera. At that moment small pox has covered her with black spots and she has become a monster. She, however, accepts her fate with stoic resignation. Laclos depicts her as a strong woman until the end. Earlier I cited Laclos’ letter to his wife that happiness can only be found in the family. The main objective of Laclos is to point out the risks of libertinage, but in the way he pays homage to Richardson it becomes clear that true love goes together with fidelity and affection, and those were the main ingredients of the bourgeois marriage. So Laclos himself a nobleman at the lowest level, an écuyer—became the propagandist of the modern family.

4. The Biography of the Marquis de Sade

Sade spent most of his adult life in prison or a lunatic asylum. It was his mother in law who had him locked up by royal decree, the so-called letter de cachet. This stamped letter made it possible to lock up people without due process, simply because they were considered obnoxious. Sade was kept in the fortress of Vincennes, then in the Bastille, and he had the sad luck of being transferred to the asylum of Charenton, days before the Bastille was stormed by the crowd, on July 14, 1789. Shortly afterwards he enjoyed a short period of freedom till again he landed, this time, in a revolutionary prison. He escaped execution, because the revolutionaries forgot to bring him before the tribunal the day before Robespierre was executed and the period of Terror ceased. When he was again put away Charenton indeed became an asylum for him, because he could no longer take care of himself. Royer-Collard, a civil servant, wrote to the chief of police under Napoleon, Fouchez, that Sade was not mad but utterly depraved and that he had to be transferred to an ordinary prison (fortunately for Sade, this did not happen). Sade, indeed, was not mad; being a nuisance was reason enough to lock him up under the Ancien Régime. Mirabeau, the famous revolutionary tribune, spent time in the Bastille, when Sade was also an inmate. The son of the writer of L’Ami du Peuple was an inveterate gam-

9 For this reason alone Roger Vadim’s film made after the book has an entirely different format. 10 (Paris 1993; Hachette).
ble, and his father hoped to cure him by lettre de cachet. We owe to Sade's imprisonment a great number of curious novels and plays, among them Les 120 Journées de Sodome, ou l'École du Libertinage, which may be regarded as Sade's philosophic textbook. He wrote this voluminous work in a month's time at night. He glued the sheets together and turned the manuscript in a scroll, which he kept carefully concealed in his cell. After the fall of the Bastille, Sade lost all his books and personal belongings, when the mob vandalized the fortress, but his scroll remained undetected. Somewhat later a member of the staff discovered it and the manuscript stayed in a family archive till it was sold at the beginning of the twentieth century. It was almost immediately published and helped to fortify Sade's reputation as a writer and philosopher. The editor of the English translation dedicated his edition to Maurice Heine, who greatly contributed to Sade's rehabilitation, with the words: “To the memory of Maurice Heine, who freed Sade from the prison wherein he was held captive for over a century after his death.” Sade has had many critics who defended his works in recent times. Amongst them, curiously enough, a number of women. Sade, after all, regarded women as objects. I must confess I have little sympathy for the man and consider him a dull philosopher, but whether Sade was nice or a deep thinker is not the point. Imagination, Sade wrote, is a powerful aphrodisiac. It is one of his better statements. The imagination is the strongest impulse to the generation of ideas. In Sade's case this impulse had a sinister tendency, but it is to this tendency that Sade owes his importance as a writer.

5. The Philosophy of the Bedroom and the 120 Days of Sodom

Sade left an impressive written legacy, but his philosophy is repetitive, and the two works I have chosen for further discussion are representative of the lot. In his Philosophie dans le Boudoir (boudoir is strangely translated as bedroom??) the young girl Eugénie is initiated in the delights of libertinage. In the process she loses all sense of shame and she is trained in all the practices dear to Sade. Part of the initiation is of course that she loses her virginity, but ordinary sex is not the point of Sade's libertinage. Sade had a preference for anal sex, masturbation, and so on. And then of course we have coprophily. The word was new to me. My edition of the Oxford Concise Dictionary mentions coprofagous as the habit of dung eating beetles. Eating the excrement of your partners in lust seems to create a paroxym of sexual excitement. Actions in the lady's boudoir are coupled with commentary on man and society. The Chevalier de Mirval gives a long discourse on the free republic (the novel was published in 1794 during the Revolution). Freedom means that there are no limits to pursuing your own ends. Parents are not responsible for their children—let them be raised in special institutions—nor are children for their parents. Love does not exist, only lust does and so we must have brothels for men as well as women. In the Chevalier's republic men as well as women must unconditionally submit to the cravings of members of the other (or the same) sex. Crime is not important nor is calumny, and what in fact is profanity? Theft is a method of taking from the rich, and murder to further your sexual pleasures is a necessity rather than a crime. Cruelty, the infliction of pain, must be accepted as a natural form of behaviour. After the philosophical discourses the partners bring the philosophy into practice. The mother of Eugénie, who comes to save her child, is raped by a servant infected with syphilis and to prevent the poisonous seed leaving her body, Eugénie, now an accomplished libertine, sews the vagina of her mother. The mother is led away by the Chevalier and the rest of the party stays behind in rapture.

If after reading this we recover from the first shock, it is time to ask what we should think of this extraordinary set of events. Our sexual mores have become more tolerant, but cruelty and murder? Simone de Beauvoir writes about Sade:

His chief interest for us lies not in his aberrations, but in the manner in which he assumed responsibility for them. He made of his sexuality an ethic; he expressed this ethic in works of literature. It is by this deliberate act that Sade attains a real originality. Sade as the moralist of evil? That sounds as a beautiful paradox, but what has that to do with ethics? For that, as I see it, deals with the mutual benefits of those involved. Sade can only think of himself. A second conclusion of Beauvoir is more to the point:

The supreme value of his testimony lies in its ability to disturb us. It forces us to re-examine thoroughly the basic problem which haunts our age in different forms: the true relation between man and man. Indeed Sade's writing hurts us deep in our souls. Sade was not a great thinker but the 120 Days of Sodom has the nature of a sinister prophecy.

In the remote castle of Siling four gentlemen organize 120 days of orgies. Their retinue consists for the greater part of small boys and girls who will become the innocent victims of these perverse men. Day by day we get the elaboration of their repertoire. Sade makes it clear that these children are victims and feel themselves to be victims. A small girl is caught praying to God for her deliverance. She is in double jeopardy. Praying to God is a heinous sin, for God does not exist. And wanting to get away spoils the pleasure of the four gentlemen. She is punished, but she is not the only one. Most of the objects of lust are murdered in the end. Sodom ends in an orgy of torture and murder. Sade's laconic summing up of these tortures and murders is almost unbearable to read.

There is a gradual unfolding of the scenario. It starts (n.b.) relatively innocently and ends with the annihilation of all the flesh which has been abused.


15 S. de Beauvoir, "Must we Burn Sade?", Sade, The 120 Days of Sodom, 6.

16 S. de Beauvoir, "Must we burn Sade?", 64.
This is Sade’s message: lust goes together with a craving for power over others, not to direct but destroy them. Sade is a nihilist and that nihilism points uncomfortably at modern tyrants, such as Hitler, Stalin and Pol Pot. Freud, reflecting on Hitler’s emergence to power in Germany, wrote about eros and thanatos. Eros means love and approaching others; thanatos is the lust to destroy all that is within the power to destroy as victims.

6. The Dark Side of the Mirror
Hume writes:

In general we may remark, that the minds of men are mirrors to one another, not only because they reflect each others emotions, but also because those rays of passions, sentiments and opinions may be often reverberated, and may decay away by insensibly degrees.17

His point is that, analysing our own feelings, we learn to recognize them as being akin to those of others and he uses the metaphor of the mirror to explain how we can recognize the other by analysing the self. This recognition (through sympathy, the term Hume uses) is the basis of fellow feeling and cooperation, and those two terms were of crucial importance for the philosophers of the Enlightenment.

Sade’s arrogance, his extravagancy and sexual behaviour mark him as a representative of the Ancien Régime rather than of the Enlightenment. That regime punished him rather mildly. He was on several occasions guilty of extreme forms of sacrilege. Others received the death penalty for less.

His radical opinions have a certain relationship with those of the Enlightenment. Like Hume, he appealed to human nature to justify his philosophy. Yet there the comparison stops, for Sade is only interested in exploring his human relationship. Elaborating his fantasies in prison he only finds himself. Sade the egotist argues that nothing is important outside of him. Virtue is a straitjacket, applied by the established powers. As such it does not exist in nature. How different is the verdict of Voltaire, Hume and Rousseau! All three distanced themselves from the Christian definition of virtue. For them virtue is not a sacrifice, but a bonus, because it brings people together. Sexuality was an important theme for the philosophers of the Enlightenment, because it made people approach each other in friendship. Love did not only serve the purpose of procreation, but it was the yeast in human relations. After his survey of libertine behaviour Laclos concluded that love is only safe within marriage. This was at the time more a British than a French opinion, but in the nineteenth century it became a main ingredient for the success of the bourgeois marriage everywhere in the Western world.

For Sade this idea of channelling sexual feeling within marriage was ridiculous. Sex can only serve perfunctory encounters in which every individual is on his own. Sade is sometimes compared to Max Stirner, the writer of Der Einzige und sein Eigentum, because both were solipsists in the extreme. However, from his solipsist position Stirner was prepared to negotiate with society, Sade was not. Other people remained for him other people. Sade’s sinister message is that the impulse of thanatos is lurking in all of us and that under certain circumstances lust is an efficient way of unleashing the impulse to destroy. That message is the dark side of the mirror. If for the philosophers of the Enlightenment cooperation leads to a better and more civilised life, Sade regarded cooperation as a fiction and a ploy.

F.L. van Holthoon
University of Groningen

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Time’s Rhetorical Excesses in Goethe’s Early Poem

An Schwager Kronos

The year is 1774, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe is sitting alone in the post chaise taking him back home. He has just left Friedrich Gottlieb Klopstock who had come to see him in Frankfurt and whom Goethe had accompanied for some miles to Darmstadt. Could it be that Goethe had Klopstock in mind when he began to write to Kronos? Klopstock stands for a new concept of German poetry: the author no longer has to follow strict metrical standards. He can shape rhythm and time however he likes. This new artistic liberty has influenced most famous German authors like Friedrich Schiller, Friedrich Hölderlin and of course Goethe.

As an example of an innovative way of dealing with textual time, An Schwager Kronos uses diverse metrical feet creating totally different rhythms in each stanza. Seeing this connection between Goethe and Klopstock, between Klopstock and time/Kronos, it is not surprising that Kronos and Klopstock are connected by formal equivalences: the vowel ‘o’ appears twice in each word and evoke a strong assonance between the two words. Furthermore, Klopstock and Kronos are linked by alliteration (the letter ‘k’). Thus it seems plausible that this poem is devoted to Klopstock as the master of time/Kronos.

The lyrical I not only addresses a person in the title, but also fixes the place and date in the subtitle:

An Schwager Kronos
in der Postchaise d 10 Oktbr 1774
(Johann Wolfgang von Goethe: An Schwager Kronos)

[To Father Kronos
Written in a post chaise, 10th of October 1774]

(Unless otherwise noted, all translations are my own, but adapted from Alfred Bowring: The Poems)
of Goethe and from Lieson Miller: "German Lieder"

Using these three elements - addressee, place and date - the poem emphasizes its epistolary function; it is simultaneously a poem and a letter. Defining a general communicative situation when writing a letter, it is normal that time and place separate sender and receiver. This very rule is violated by the poem’s constellation: "Schwager" in German around that time has the twofold meaning of brother-in-law and postilion. Taking brother-in-law, the poem follows the rule, but using postilion, the poem violates it. Sender and receiver are together on the same coach, time and place coincide. The communicative frame implodes.

The intention of this written communication is evident: the sender of this message writes to the postilion, because he wants us as readers to receive and analyze this written message too. Thus, the poem faces not only three addressees, but four: Klopstock, the deity Kronos, the postilion Kronos and the reader. It is impossible to decide which one of these four persons has time/Kronos at his disposal.

In Greek mythology, the deity Kronos was a Titan and father of Zeus. Kronos ruled during the period of The Golden Age. The etymological origin is unclear, but the name Kronos is not linked to the term Chronos meaning time. One should therefore distinguish between the deity Kronos and Chronos as the personification of time. Unfortunately, the two deities have merged in all periods since antiquity. In this poem, both Kronos and Chronos are implied. In the final tally, then, Kronos is a fivefold authority: Klopstock, the two deities Kronos and Chronos, the reader, and the postilion Kronos.

Focusing on the deity Kronos, he represents the father of the Golden Age within the poem too. Exactly in the middle of the poem, in stanza 3 and 4, the lyrical I feels the beauty of life.

**Seitwärts des Überdachs Schatten
Zieht dich an
Und der Frischung verheisendes Blick
Auf der Schwelle des Mädgens da.
Labe dich - mir auch Mädgen
Diesen schäumenden Trunk
Und den freundlichen Gesundheitsblick.**

(Unless otherwise noted, bold type is my emphasis)

[Wide high glorious the view
Gazing round into life
While from mount unto mount
Hovers the spirit eternally
Life eternal foreboding]

The hardships of life have disappeared, the lyrical I divines eternity and is attracted to the maiden. This idealized middle part contrasts with the journey’s exhausting beginning and the poem’s ending, where the lyrical I announces his arrival at Orcus.

Certain rhetorical figures of speech mirror the content of this middle part. “Gebürg”-“Gebürg” (“Mount”-“Mount”) is a geminatio, a pure duplication of one word; “ewige”-“ewigen” (“eternal”) a polyptoton, the archaic and the common forms of the adjective create a paradigm; “Mädgen”-“Mädgen” ("maidenly"-"maiden") a figura etymologica, meaning that a word changes its word class. All these figures of speech illustrate duplications in various ways. The idea of partnership, of being connected to the world’s beauty, is not only a semantic topic in this middle part, but also a formal one. The words find their partners. Rhetoric and time are closely connected to each other. A brief excursus on Roman Jakobson, linguistic pioneer in analyzing the formal characteristics of poems, helps us to understand this connection.

Jakobson’s approach to poems culminates in the definition of the “poetic function”. He says that the “poetic function” projects equivalences from the axis of selection, i.e. the vertical axis, to the axis of combination, i.e. the horizontal axis. This definition needs further explanation. Each word is member of a word family, which is held together either by semantic equivalences or by formal equivalences. An example: instead of ‘fish’, one could write ‘salmon’, ‘trout’ or ‘predatory fish’. All these words belong to the same semantic word family. Instead of ‘fish’, one could also write ‘dish’ or ‘wish’. All these words belong to the same formal word family, because a similarity of sounds connects them. Each word that is read opens up a virtual space that contains other formally or semantically related words. This space is called the vertical axis. In general texts, the word’s neighbors are absent. In poetic texts, it is different. Formal equivalences are visible on the horizontal axis, which is the syntagmatic axis of time. When we read the rhyme ‘fish’-‘dish’, the space of the word ‘fish’ is made visible. The crux of the matter is that the virtual space surrounding the word is made visible on this axis of time. All poetry emphasizes the flow of time, because an equivalence, which is mostly a similarity or difference in sound, is only recognized when both parts of the equivalence are put in a linear order. In sum, poetry is a genre that deals extensively with time.

Focusing on Chronos as the personification of time, the reader is in touch with the unreliability of time from the very beginning: Chronos accompanies the lyrical I in the coach to all the narrative’s places as it moves up and down in a hilly countryside. Moving up slows down the flow of time: there is barely

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1 Benjamin Hederichs gründliches mythologisches Lexicon, Entry "Saturnus", column 2163-2169.
3 Referring to the poem’s lines.

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* Roman Jakobson: Linguistik und Poetik, 94.
a development as every second implies a struggle; release is far away. Reaching the heights, the situation changes fundamentally and one second of perception reveals the beauty of the world. Looking at these different perceptions, time becomes a relational and dynamic construction rather than a fixed and stable entity. Time is at Chronos’ disposal. Looking at the fourth meaning of the polysemous Kronos, it is the reader who takes over the role of a time-giving authority: he rhythmizes each line, stresses syllables and inserts pauses on the syntagmatic axis. An Schwager Kro nos does not integrate a constant metric foot or meter, and this emphasizes the role of the reader. He has to be aware of rhythmic changes, of diverse enjambments and ellipses: (6-8)

Frisch, den holpernden Stock, Wurzeln, Steine den Trotz Rasch ins Leben hinein.

[Quick, rattle along, Over stick, root, stone let thy trot Into life rapidly lead]

Dactyls determine the rhythm of these lines. They accelerate the process of reading, because the meter includes one long and two short syllables. This rhythm consisting of dactyls exactly mirrors the action: the lyrical I is in a hurry. The post chaise moves down the hill and the scenery passes by quickly. The rhythm changes substantially in the following stanza: (9-11)

Nun, schon wieder? Den erathmenden Schritt Mühsam Berg hinauf.

[Now once more Up the toilsome pace Hasten, panting for breath!]

Here it is the trochee that determines the rhythm. The meter consists of only two syllables, one long and one short. The process of reading is decelerated. This change is not surprising because the road ascends now and reduces the speed of the post chaise. So again, the rhythm relates to the action. The “erathmenden Schritt” (“toilsome pace”) converts into a metrical hint that describes not only the speed of the post chaise, but also the speed of the trochees. Whereas the first two connotations focused on the semantic implications of Kronos, this fourth aspect is more fundamental. The poem constructs a reading theory, in which the poem’s two roles coincide: on the one hand, the poem constructs a theory, on the other hand it is affected by its own theory. In linguistic terms, meta language and object language concur. My analysis does not attempt to discuss an extra-textual reality which the poem, in assuming the role of a theoretical metatext, might be seen as engaging with. Instead, my analysis is concerned with time as an intra-textual phenomenon, which is constructed through reading. Following this thought, the poem takes the poem as its own reference, becoming self-referential.

A close reading of stanza 3 elaborates on this thesis. The lyrical I reaches the heights and says: (14-18)

Weit hoch herrlich der Blick Rings ins Leben hinein Vom Geburt zum Geburt Über der ewige Geist Ewigen Lebens ahndevoll.

[Highly glorious the view Gazing round into life While from mount unto mount Hovers the spirit eternal Life eternal foreboding]

No conjunction connects the three adjectives in the first line of stanza 3. The rhetorical figure of asyndeton circumvents the syntagmatic organization of time in which the missing conjunction ‘and’ or ‘or’ would mark the end of a sequence. Lacking such a marker, the adjectives figuratively overlay each other and are simultaneously present. Hence, asyndeton transforms into a figure of time that interrupts the consistent flow and symbolizes a syntagmatic time excess.

A similar rhetorical figure of speech has appeared in the opening stanza too: (7-8)

Stock, Wurzeln, Steine den Trotz Rasch ins Leben hinein.

[Over stick, root, stone let thy trot Into life rapidly lead]

The rhetorical figure asyndeton “Weit hoch herrlich” (“Wide high glorious”) is replaced by “Stock, Wurzeln, Steine” (“stick, root, stone”), the line “Rings ins Leben hinein” (“Gazing round into life”) by “Rasch ins Leben hinein” (“Into life rapidly lead”). Thus, asyn deton is used to illustrate an associative kind of writing. It mirrors an acceleration of perception insofar as the lyrical I perceives various impressions simultaneously. The lyrical I shapes the syntactic time to his own advantage and expresses how exciting and beautiful life could be.

Taking the figure of asyndeton as a starting point, the whole stanza 3 emphasizes this associative kind of writing and perceiving. One clause spans five lines, but no punctuation mark helps to organize the involved time on the syntagmatic axis. Instead, another system of orientation appears on the scene: the stanza as a graphic element offers a borderline at the top, at the bottom, on the left and on the right. The stanza changes into a pictorial frame involving loose letters and words.

A picture presents a conception of time which differs from that of a text. When reading a text, one follows element after element in linear order. This continuity of time contrasts with the conception of time in a picture, where one perceives many elements simultaneously. There is no reading direction from left to right, from top to bottom. One second of perception gives an idea of the whole picture. After briefly perceiving a text and a picture, the reader can tell what he saw in the picture, but he might be incapable of paraphrasing the text. In the picture, the linearity of time is not extinguished, but considerably reduced.

The grammatical core of each clause is the verb. Omitting such grammatical cores, omitting any verbs and even particles, the syntactic relations in stanza 3 become loose, become polysemous. Polysemy is another characteristic of pictures. They might give an accurate impression of the moment, but they do not explicitly say anything about what happened before and what will happen afterwards. Their vagueness exceeds the vagueness of texts, where each word has a lexical meaning defined by a language code.

Numerous adjectives replace the missing verbs. Instead of verbs evoking an action, the adjectives are used to describe something. German-speaking children in school have to call verbs ’Was-Wörter’ (‘How-words’) and adjectives ‘Wie-Wörter’ (‘How-words’). This transformation of verbs into adjectives, of action into description, corresponds to the semantic topic of this stanza. The lyrical I’s view wanders over the surrounding landscape and creates a mental picture.

One last lexical quality completes the idea of a texture converting into a picture. Focusing on the word class of particles, the subgroup conjunctions is to-
tally absent. This observation is surprising, because conjunctions would help to organize causal or temporal relations within this complex clause. Instead, another subgroup of particles is omnipresent: the prepositions: “Rings ins… hinein”, “Vom”, “Zum” and “Über” (“round upon”, “from” and “unto”). All these prepositions emphasize spatial relations and spatial directions. Comparing a text to a picture, a picture can represent spatial relations better than a text. When using so many prepositions illustrating relations and directions, the text is using its own resources to approach the territory of the picture.

Reading the text as if it were a picture, one can expand the idea of the polysemous Kronos: the vowel ‘o’ is the only vowel in this word, and appears twice. It builds the tonal and graphical base of the whole word. This ‘o’ has an iconic connotation: visually it represents a clock, which is the most famous metonym of time: Kronos

Kronos

Töne Schwager dein Horn
Rassle den schallenden Trab
Dass der Orkus vernehme: ein
Fürst kommt,
Drunten von ihren Sizzen
Sich die Gewaltigen lüften

[Blow, then, gossip, thy horn,
Speed on with echoing trot,
Töner Schwager dein Horn
Rassle den schallenden Trab
Dass der Orkus vernehme: ein
Fürst kommt,
Drunten von ihren Sizzen
Sich die Gewaltigen lüften]

So that Orcus may know a prince is coming;
So that our host may with joy
Wait at the door to receive us

The lyrical I tells the postilion or brother-in-law Kronos to blow his horn. Everyone in Orcus should know that a prince is arriving. The inhabitants should stand up and prepare for his arrival. Of course, this last stanza is proof of an emancipated lyrical I being an imagined prince. Prince gives orders to his “Schwager Kronos”, who is at his service. Bearing in mind that the polysemous “Schwager Kronos” implies the reader himself, the figure who blows the horn turns into the reader too. Thus, blowing the horn is a poietological metaphor. Such a rhetorical trope says something about textuality and literaricity rather than about an extra-textual reality. Bearing this definition in mind, it is the reader who lends his voice to the text, who phonemizes each letter and who produces an echoing rhythm in each line. This function is implied by the order: “Speed on with echoing trot” (38), which means poietologically: speed on with rhythmizing, using metrical feet.

If the reader blows the horn correctly, the inhabitants of Orcus will get the message and accept the lyrical I as a prince and as a member of their group. The success of the whole speech act depends on the reader. The author is no longer responsible for his afterlife; he hands over responsibility. Extending this point of view, the reader is in a Sturm and Drang position, whereas the author is in a position of weakness and impotence. This conceptual shift is an innovative perspective on the Sturm and Drang period.

There are mainly two points that connect auctoritas to the reader. On the one hand, he has to lend time to the text; on the other hand, he has to lend his voice to the text. He reads and creates a syntagmatic axis, he reads and phonemizes each letter. Focusing on both tasks, the key word Kronos involves a rhetorical figure that explicitly emphasizes these two functions: the word’s partial palindrome sonor is a Latin lexeme meaning sound or noise. Every palindrome perverts the syntagmatic axis, because the sequence is analyzed backwards. Looking at Kronos from left to right, it means time; looking at Kronos from right to left, it means sound. Textual
time results from phonemized letters, phonemized letters result from time. My starting point was the diversification of the polysemous lexeme Kronos: Kronos as Klopopstock, as the deity Kronos, as the personification of time Chronos, as the postilion Kronos and finally as the reader. Time itself becomes a polysemous phenomenon that depends on the point of view from which one looks at the text. Nonetheless, one structural phenomenon comes to the fore. The reader constitutes time within a text. One cannot analyze time without producing textual time on a syntagmatic axis. Goethe’s poem An Schwager Kronos exactly faces this overlap of time. The poem talking about time becomes self-referential as soon as it is read.

The poem is a mixture of a travelogue, an allegorical life’s journey and an elaboration on the process of reading. The journey in the poem starts in a hilly countryside and ends up in Orcus. Real world experiences meet the hereafter. The transition between the two worlds is fluid. Nevertheless, stanza 5 emphasizes the crossover. The path goes down from the real world into Orcus: (26-31)

[Down, now! quicker still, down! See where the sun sets Ere he sets, ere old age Seizeth me in the morass, Ere my toothless jaws mumble, And my useless limbs totter.]

The syllable “ab” (“down”) appears in the first and last position on the syntagmatic axis of the first line. Beginning and ending are rhetorically connected. The syllable “Sich” (“See”) alliterates in “sinkt” (“sets”), again a repetition that connects the line’s beginning and the line’s ending. Even in the stanza’s third line, this scheme of duplication is repeated: “Eh” (“Ere”) connects the first and last part of the third line. All these duplications include a movement that goes backwards. The reader mentally links the second part to the first, breaks through the linear organization of time, and reads backwards. Thus, rhetorical figures of speech create mental images which inevitably say: time stands still; going forwards means going backwards too. It is only after one has read the second element of a rhetorical figure of speech that one recognizes the first element as a part of this figure. One could even argue that the second element becomes the first element of the rhetoric sequence, since it marks the starting point of the whole constellation and changes the first element into something else, by defining it as part of the whole rhetorical constellation.

Generally speaking, all rhetorical figures of speech that are based on two elements on the syntagmatic axis of time are concerned with time, since they reverse the linear flow of time which normally runs from left to right, from top to bottom. The second element changes the first, the present changes the past. Using a common rhetorical term, figures of speech are based on a structural hysteron proteron, which is a Greek term meaning ‘latter before’. All figures of speech deny the existence of an absolute history; the earlier element is only activated through the present. Because the present modifies the past, it makes more sense to speak of historicity than of empirical history.

Following this idea of reversing time, real life and Orcus could changes their positions too. Orcus could be the first element and the real world the second element. The end of this poem, where the lyrical I arrives at Orcus, could become the poem’s beginning. The concept of a linear life, starting in the real word and ending in Orcus, contrasts with the concept of a life that is based on a circular movement, where no distinction can be made between beginning and ending. The iconic vowel ‘O’ in Orcus faces this problem: the end and the beginnig of the graphical line are not marked. Thus, the ‘O’ illustrates an ongoing circular movement.

Going back to the poem, these numerous duplications in stanza 6 not only connect the beginnings and endings of lines, but also the young and the old lyrical I. The young one decides to go to Orcus, because he is afraid of becoming old and weak. The duplicated conjunction “eh” (“ere”) exactly faces and emphasizes this frightening future. Again, the linear axis of time is turned upside down. The future defines the present. Something that is not yet reality changes reality, just as present reality changes the past. Thus past, present and future are not organized chronologically. All three stages of time are present as a mental picture, as a rhetorical figure of speech, where the second element changes the first.

Paraphrasing stanza 6, the lyrical I wishes to die before his body starts dying, before he loses his teeth and his limbs fail him. He would like to take charge of his own life span, to end his life and to play Kronos. Suddenly, a sixth connotation of Kronos is possible: time is at the lyrical I’s disposal. This poem is a letter to the writer himself. The lyrical I and Kronos coincide; sender and receiver are exactly the same person. If we extended this idea, the lyrical I would sit alone in the post chaise and would control its speed. He does not depend on an external deity; he is the ruling deity.

This sixth connotation involves a paradoxical structure. The lyrical I wants to control time, but he seems to forget that everything he is saying has to be read. In fact, he depends on the reader. Semantically, he can control time, but structurally, he expresses something with written words that we as readers have to read. We have to lend time to the poem. Only this process makes the lyrical I’s wish understandable. Willingly or unwillingly, the lyrical I depends on us as readers.

The next stanza goes on describing the lyrical I’s descent to Orcus: (32-36)

Trunken vom letzten Strahl Reiss mich, ein Feuermeer Mir im schäumenden Aug, Mich geblendet, taumelnden, In der Hölle nachtliches Thor.
Whereas the lyrical I met a maiden and felt the beauty of life shortly before, he is now in a dreadful state of mind and wants to descend to the portal of hell. Both moods are linked to each other rhythmically. Whereas the maiden refreshed the lyrical I with a “schäumenden Trunk” (“foaming drink”) in stanza 4, he is now “Trunknen vom letzten Strahl” (“drunk with his farewell beam”). “Trunk”-“Trunknen” (“drink”-“drunk”) is a figura etymologica, because the noun turns into a participle. Not only this figura etymologica connects stanzas 4 and 6, but also the adjective “schäumend” (“foaming”), appearing in “schäumenden Trunk” (“foaming draught”, stanza 4) as well as in “schäumenden Aug” (“foaming still in mine eye”, stanza 6). To sum up these findings, some parts of the vocabulary of stanza 6 are based on the vocabulary of stanza 4. The elation experienced earlier on might be the cause for the lyrical I’s sudden longing for night and death.

This sequence of transition, of going from life to death, from earth to Orcus, prefigures the extinction of the I. The polyptoton “Mich”-“Mir”-“Mich” (“Me”-“mine”-“me”) swirls the I around and illustrates a last, desperate rebellion against night and death. In the last stanza of the poem, the I or a related form does not appear again. The I is formally extinguished and appears only as a prince who will soon be one of the inhabitants of Orcus.

Coming to a conclusion, it might be helpful to summarize the most important findings. Kronos is not a fixed entity, but an entity that depends on the point of view from which one looks at it. There are six connotations that change Kronos into a highly polysemous term. Among all these connotations, one has been examined in detail: Kronos as a self-referential element that describes the process of reading, the process of putting one element after another on the syntagmatic axis of time. This is the focus of the poem’s rhetorical organization. On the one hand, there is the rhythmic organization that characterizes time within a poem; on the other hand, there are many figures of speech that deal implicitly with time.

Every figure of speech consisting of two elements on the syntagmatic axis of time alludes to the phenomenon of time in a self-referential way: the first element does not become a component of this figure of speech until it is turned into one by the second element. In each figure of speech there is a movement that goes backwards, against the normal reading direction, against the linear axis of time. All figures of speech become mental pictures. This change of medium, from text to picture, is important, because the medium of pictures is based on a different time organization. In texts, there is a strong linear tendency, whereas in pictures all parts are simultaneously present. The similarities between text and picture have been analyzed in the keyword Kronos. The vowel ‘o’ resembles a clock and even a wheel of the post chaise. Although An Schwager Kronos was written many years before concrete poetry was established as a sub-genre of poetry, I would argue that the poem was aware of its pictorial representation. Every letter is not only a phoneme but also a grapheme. Doubleness is the nature of all written language.

An Schwager Kronos is a poem of the German Sturm and Drang period and was written in 1774. But in many points, this poem is a forerunner of modernist and even contemporary poetry. It deals with the mediality of language as contemporary poems do. Although the poem tells a fascinating story, it also tells something about art and the nature of art. Time becomes an intra-textual phenomenon rather than the pure philosophical issue the poem deals with. Thus, a poietological tendency characterizes the whole poem.

It is not a coincidence that Kronos is the keyword of this poietological tendency. Kronos means time and has as its palindrome sonor (“sound”). Time and sound are the elements that strongly depend on the reader. He lends his voice to the text; he lends time to the text as soon as he starts reading. The author is no longer responsible for his text; it is the reader who creates the text every time he reads it. The author I turns into a reader You, as if the poem were stating: You can do whatever You like to do with me. My former writer, my creator is dead; You take over his role, You lend time and voice to the written letters, You become Kronos.

Daniel Alder
University of Zurich

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A Final Interview with Boris Nemtsov

A version of this interview originally appeared in Newsweek Polska. Text and interview translated by Piotr Milo Milewski.

Newsweek: The opposition takes to the streets, but the regime holds on tight as ever. Is Russia going to change?
Boris Nemtsov: For now, we’re drowning. Everyone. Due to the policy of Vladimir Putin, a country with unparalleled potential is sinking, an economy which accumulated untold currency reserves is collapsing. We used to have $500 billion of savings! For the first time in our history we had a chance to make a great developmental leap. No Russian leader ever had such a comfortable situation. And today we are in a slump. What do we have? Double-digit inflation, devaluation of the ruble, flight of capital—$150 billion is already gone!

The West, the U.S. and Europe are moving forward, and what is our government doing? It comes up with some desperate ideas, wants to regulate prices, subsidizes state-owned companies to let its people on the boards earn even more. And worst of all, this government wades into a costly, fratricidal war in Ukraine and into pointless confrontation with the West. We all feel the effects of this insane policy. We can’t remain indifferent. That’s why we take to the streets. This is the protest against a collective suicide of Russia. And it is not instigated by the opposition, it is supported by all the Russians.

Newsweek: Apparently not by all of them. Even if tens of thousands were to march in Moscow, it would still be nothing compared with the 80 percent of Russians who support Putin.
Nemtsov: I have no doubt that the struggle for the revival of Russians will be tough. People see what this crazy politics led to, they see widespread corruption, they have firsthand experience with the inadequacy of the state. But they still believe in the leader because for the past several years, the leader was doing one thing very well: He was brainwashing the Russians. He implanted them with a virus of inferiority complex towards the West, the belief that the only thing we can do to amaze the world is use force, violence and aggression.

[Putin] programmed my countrymen to hate strangers. He persuaded them that we need to rebuild the former Soviet order, and that the position of Russia in the world depends entirely on how much the world is afraid of him. He managed to do all these things with Goebbels-style propaganda. If we are talking about the responsibility for spilling both Russian and Ukrainian blood, it lies not only with Putin, but also with such gentlemen as Konstantin Ernst [director general of Channel One] or Dmitry Kiselyov [head of the new, Russian-government-owned news agency Rossiya Segodnya]. They operate in accordance with the simple principles of Joseph Goebbels: Play on the emotions; the bigger the lie, the better; lies should be repeated many times. This propaganda is directed to the simple men; there is no room for any questions, nuances. Unfortunately, it works. The hysteria reached unprecedented levels, hence the high level of support for Putin. Therefore, we need to work as quickly as possible to show the Russians that there is an alternative, that Putin’s policy leads to degradation and a suicide of the state. There is less and less time to wake up.

Newsweek: Why?
Nemtsov: Because Russia quickly turns into a fascist state. We already have the propaganda modeled after Nazi Germany. We also have a nucleus of assault brigades, such as the SA. What else would you call this Anti-Maidan thing, this pseudo-civic initiative, which two weeks ago gathered to torpedo the anniversary of the revolution on the Maidan. Tens of thousands of mercenaries, thugs and all kinds of suspicious individuals were brought to Moscow. They tried to intimidate us. With portraits of Putin they swore that they would fight and even kill any rebels. As in Hitler’s Germany. And that’s just the beginning.

Newsweek: But it was the Russian authorities that warned against fascism in Ukraine.
Nemtsov: Someone once said that the future fascists will be ardent antimedics. Fascism in Ukraine? Nonsense! Let’s look at Russia. We have one party, the majority of society. These are the characteristics of a fascist regime, aren’t they? But Putin is not a fascist. He just cynically uses some elements of the past, mixes them with others—for example with Soviet traditions—and the hybrid is born, the contemporary hybrid fascism. It’s like the war in Ukraine. The war is going on, Russian soldiers are there, but the Kremlin denies it and pretends [the government] has nothing to do with these tanks and regiments in Donestk. The same is true of fascism— it exists in Russia, but the authorities say that we are fighting the fascism in Ukraine. If we do not stop this madness, the consequences for all of us will be devastating.
Newsweek: Putin is shifting his position on Ukraine every five minutes, but he's not proclaiming fascist ideas...

Nemtsov: Really? But he simply despises the whole world order! He openly says that the West is worse than us, evil, weak. He says that Ukrainians are unable to build the state and only he, Putin, can help them. He talks about the need to rebuild the world order, about the Russia birthright to its own sphere of influence, about the necessity of protecting the Russian minorities abroad. The Kremlin uses minorities, language and cultural issues to blow up the neighboring countries from the inside. And this is the most horrible thing: People who control the Kremlin are convinced that they have a recipe for happiness for this enormous country. They gathered a handful of slogans and ideas from the most authoritarian regimes of the past and integrated them into the present world order. They mixed it all up and they see themselves as geniuses.

Newsweek: Many Russian citizens feel that the government is creating order and stabilization, because there is the leader and there is structure. And the opposition? Who is the leader? You or Alexei Navalny, who is sitting in jail?

Nemtsov: I am one of the leaders of the United Democratic opposition. In our ranks there are many bold and charismatic people, representing different views and political options. But we share a desire for change, and a need for the restoration of democracy and for the removal of these mad men from power. Yes, sometimes the government runs over us like a bulldozer. Alexei Navalny is now locked in prison [for handing out leaflets in the Moscow subway] in order to isolate him from the protests. But the Ukrainian Maidan hasn't had a single leader either, and those who were considered to be the leaders argued all the time. Personalities are not important. The most important thing is the idea of great change and renewal of Russia.

Newsweek: Being the opposition, you don't have the media, so you don't have as large a voice. You took to the streets, and you were shown as the fifth column of the enemies of Russia and equated to U.S. agents and troublemakers. Putin says there will be no Russian Maidan. How do you want to win?

Nemtsov: We are realists. It is true that the government branded us as enemies a long time ago. Therefore for many Russians we are enemies, traitors. Even in my wildest dreams I would not try to organize the Maidan in Moscow. Putin is not Yanukovych. For years he was preparing himself for the fight with his own nation, if the nation would try to fight him. He has a powerful security apparatus, and now he has these fanatical militants. Each major protest can be easily drowned in blood. Despite this, we will try.

Newsweek: The Russians are not Ukrainians; it seems that they are much further from this breaking point.

Nemtsov: Therefore, first we need to focus on those who are already convinced. Marches are intended to enable us to count ourselves, to let us see that we are not some fringe group, but a real force. Taking to the streets in today's Russia requires great courage. A brave man, an active man counts more than the one who out of convenience or fear doesn't do anything. This is just the beginning. And then maybe we will be able to put our people into Moscow municipal government. In the capital, we have more citizens who are open-minded, who are contesting the authorities. Even getting a couple of the City Council seats would be a success, a breach in the monolith of power.

Newsweek: These are quite minimalist goals, and you yourself said that time is short.

Nemtsov: Time is now running faster. The economic crisis will accelerate the political processes in Russia. Many Russians support Putin, because in the last few years he improved their living standards. But the Russians are not stupid, as it is often believed in the West. Large numbers of pensioners, workers and officials would never believe in the imperial propaganda, would not let Putin to deceive them, if it wasn't for the better living they suddenly had. They are not thinking how all this prosperity came to be. And even if they knew that their standard of living increased due to high oil prices, they thought it was good. They weren't thinking that their lives would be even better if oil reserves were well managed and invested, not stolen. Now, when it turns out that pension or salary is not enough to make ends meet, people will start to wake up.

Newsweek: And stop blaming the West for the deterioration of their living standards?

Nemtsov: Yes, for now they blame the West, they complain about the sanctions, but they are beginning to understand that the real reasons are different than those given by the government. The West acts reasonably and fairly gently. It must restrain Russian aggression in Ukraine. The crisis in Russia is not the result of sanctions, but the result of Putin's insanity. He immediately began to introduce the so-called counter-sanctions. And who was punished by them? Us, the Russians. Not only that, he also proved that his great country can't produce basic things. Putin himself shows that the emperor has no clothes. But I know that he will not depart from this path. He won't leave the Ukraine alone. He will be risking further sanctions. He will spend more billions on the army, the police and his bodies. And on the containment of inflation, because he understands that rising prices will anger the people.

Newsweek: The economic crisis in Germany elevated Hitler to power, but Putin already has the power.

Nemtsov: So he can only lose it. For this to come true, you need an alternative vision, a different idea of Russia. Our idea is the one of a democratic and open Russia. A country which is not applying bandit methods to its own citizens and neighbors. But, as I mentioned, Russian fascism is a hybrid. And hybrids are extremely resistant.

Michał Kacewicz
Vincenzo Merolle takes Theodor Mommsen to task for his verdict on Cicero as a weakling, an opportunist and a thinker without ideas of his own.\(^1\) It is easy to see that Mommsen's verdict is ridiculous. Mommsen's hero was Julius Caesar as the example of a strong leader. Whatever we think of Caesar's and Cicero's political actions, except stating the fact that both were murdered, Cicero's influence on Western thought was wide spread and immense. All of us who learned Latin in school have read *De Bello Gallico* because it was easy, not because it was particularly interesting. It has been said that Cicero's political *persona* was in his works, not in his actions and the secret of these works, even the *ad hoc* ones, is that their messages transcended the confines of Roman history.

Merolle is an Arpino patriot. In one of his appendices he claims the birthplace of Cicero for Arpino and not for neighbouring Sora. Cicero to him is the quintessential liberal, while Mommsen favoured authoritarian democracy which could collapse into despotism (p. 45). At the time (and the time was 1856, when the third volume of his *Römische Geschichte* appeared, not 1870), Mommsen, like many German liberals, believed in the monarch as a strong leader who acted with a mandate of the people. Later Max Weber was of the same opinion. It seems far fetched to suggest that Mommsen ever favoured despotism. He was indeed a nationalist (p. 17), but also a liberal as the name of the party to which he belonged suggests: a national liberal. Whether he would have approved the decision of the Kaiser to go to war in 1914, we shall never know. He died in 1903.

Was Cicero a liberal? Merolle makes the distinction between political and philosophical liberalism (p. 45). Cicero was no political liberal. The term does not fit in the vindictive Roman culture of 46 B.C. and rather than calling Cicero a philosophical liberal I would promote him to being the ancestor of liberalism as a philosophy. The fact that he had an eclectic mind possibly was an advantage. He appealed to a wide range of thinkers. If I try to summarize his impact on Western thought I would say that his texts were ideal for the education of a liberal gentleman. Through Cicero he learned that freedom meant that everybody could say what he wanted and that those who mattered (i.e. those that did not work with their hands: gentlemen) should have a say in government. And from Cicero's incomparable rhetoric he would have known that taste is an important element in public debates.

Merolle than shifts in a second gear and asks 'what is alive and what is dead in the philosophy of Cicero?' (p. 53). He mentions Cicero's cosmological views, as expressed in his *De Natura Deorum*, to illustrate his pervasive influence on eighteenth-century writers such as Newton, Hume and Adam Smith. Now the last two mentioned certainly paid lip service to Cicero's cosmological views, but as innovators they were interested in how human beings could create order on their own. Hume expressly said that morality was the business of man and not of God and Smith agreed with him. So their reference to Cicero was more a cliché than an alive experience.

And Newton? If I understand the author well, Newton was the last in the line of a cosmology inspired by Cicero. The new cosmology, according to Merolle, starts with Kant and Hegel. I beg to differ. Newton, in my opinion, did not have a mechanical view of the universe. He tried to explain the working of gravitational force. What gravity is, he professed not to know. As an innovator he offered an open invitation to nineteenth-century natural scientists and that was how they (including Einstein), accepted his message. Kant's and Hegel's cosmological views are irrelevant. Newton's theological views were highly offensive to the orthodox and the deist alike. According to Newton the universe was full of imperfections and his God was more a busy tinker restoring order than a relaxed architect who looked back at his creation with pleasure.

There is much more in this little book: quotations, a mention of books and views. Sometimes I have the feeling that Merolle, as we say in a Dutch idiom, does not manage to keep his frogs in one basket, but the diversity of his interests acts as an inspiration to pursue our own thoughts. And he has certainly vindicated Cicero's reputation. That reputation leads to a last remark on his legacy.

Matthew Arnold, when he accepted the chair of poetry in Oxford, said that a classical education has no practical value. All it does is to create detachment by our confrontation with a foreign culture. Detachment can help us to create a critical distance to our classical past. In the case of Cicero we must conclude that *virtus* as the equivalent of the manly courage of the soldier no longer is useful to us. *Virtus* was still, though transformed by the passage of time, in the luggage of the liberal gentleman, but just as taste regrettably has disappeared from politics, so should warmongering in any form. We need peace under almost any condition, and war, at best, is a distraction from the goal to maintain peace and at worst a recipe for disaster.

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Cordialement

Vincenzo Merolle

P.S.: The Directory is now on the internet under www.directoryeuropeanstudies.com. The e-mail address is directory.european.studies@gmail.com; all the correspondence should be sent to this address.

Directory of Scholars in European Studies

Editor: Vincenzo Merolle (Rome, ‘La Sapienza’), private office: viale Grande Muraglia 301, 00144 Roma, e.mail 065291553@iol.it; co-editors: Andrea Gobol (Graz), an.gobol@uni-graz.at; Andrea Gobol (Graz), an.gobol@uni-graz.at; Erhard Steller, Köl n.e.steller@EuroLSJ.eu.

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To contributors: essays should not exceed 3000 words, reviews should not exceed 700 words. They can be sent via e-mail to the editor, in Viale Grande Muraglia 301, 00144 ROMA, E-mail vincenzo.merolle@gmail.com