

CRITICAL NOTE

Literary Interventions in Justice: A Symposium

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The purpose of this symposium is to explore the ways in which literature, broadly construed to include poetry and narrative in a variety of modes of representation, can change the world by providing interventions in justice. Our approach foregrounds the relationship between the activity demanded by some individual literary works and some categories of literary work on the one hand and the way in which those works can make a tangible difference to social reality on the other. We consider three types of active literary engagement: doing philosophy, ideological critique, and necessary rather than contingent performance. Kate Kirkpatrick opens with Kamel Daoud's *The Meursault Investigation* (2013), reading the narrator as not only a critic of colonial and postcolonial discourse but also a literary exemplar of the search for justice when it is difficult to know to what level of explanation to attribute its absence. Rafe McGregor demonstrates how the final season of Prime Video's *The Man in the High Castle* (2015–19) makes a radical break from the previous three, exposing the misanthropy at the core of right-wing populism and calling for a fundamentally democratic response from the left. Finally, Karen Simecek argues that poetry in performance has a potentially reparative function for the ethically lonely – the vulnerable, the oppressed, and the persecuted – in society.

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I. Justice-Seeking and Attribution Anxiety in Kamel Daoud's *The Meursault Investigation*

Kate Kirkpatrick

Kamel Daoud's celebrated novel *The Meursault Investigation* – which 'writes back' to Albert Camus's *The Stranger* – tells the story of Harun, the surviving brother of the unnamed Arab murdered by Camus's absurd antihero. Within three paragraphs Harun has asked his reader: why does one of the dead men in that narrative get left out? Did the glare of the brilliant prose blind everyone to Meursault's indifference? All previous readers have gone wrong, Harun tells us, and he wants to set things right: 'I think it's just that I'd like justice to be

done.¹ In this overture, readers of Edward Said will hear a familiar refrain: in *The Stranger*, Camus put French values on trial – but not all French values. ‘Meursault kills an Arab, but this Arab is not named and seems to be without a history.’² So why do *all* readers go wrong? Harun invites us to wonder: did Said, too, go wrong in charging Camus with projecting imperial conquest into the composition of his texts? What does it mean, for the surviving brother of the unnamed man, for ‘justice to be done’? The answer to this question is given not in the form of a definition of justice but in the form of a search for it. And, in recounting the search, Daoud challenges both colonial and postcolonial discourses by invoking a much older, biblical lexicon – a lexicon of brotherhood and sin. After situating this novel in French colonial and literary history – as well as in debates about what, if anything, philosophy can learn from literature – I read Daoud’s Harun as a narrative exemplar of the anxiety of seeking justice when it is difficult to know to what to attribute its absence.

The relation of *The Meursault Investigation* to Camus’s *The Stranger* – one of the most written-about novels of the twentieth century – has been described variously as one of plagiarism, critique, and homage. It is an exceptional novel for many reasons, among them that it is a third-generation ‘writing back’: *The Stranger* responded to another great literary intervention in justice, Dostoevsky’s *Crime and Punishment*, in which conceptions of human and divine justice are put on trial.

To readers of Camus or the prophetic texts of Islam it should be no great surprise that Daoud’s work invokes a biblical lexicon. In *The Myth of Sisyphus*, Camus defined the absurd as ‘sin without God.’³ The experience of the absurd is central to Camus’s philosophy, identifying both a feeling and a notion that is discovered subsequently through reflection on the feeling. Like many of his contemporaries, Camus wrote philosophical and literary texts to express the same convictions in different ways. In the early cycle of which *The Stranger* was a part, as Jean-Paul Sartre put it, ‘We could say that the aim of *The Myth of Sisyphus* is to convey the *idea* of the absurd. And that of *The Stranger* to convey the *feeling*.’⁴

In Daoud’s novel, we meet Harun in a bar; the setting and structure of his story mirror another of Camus’s novels, *The Fall*, in which the reader is slowly drawn into an unreliable, non-linear narration – a confession about guilt and human judgement in which many readers catch glimmers of themselves. Poor Meursault, Harun tells us, was condemned by others for his indifference. His murder of ‘an Arab’ led to his imprisonment, trial, and sentence to death, which serves (according to Harun’s description of Meursault’s narrative) to prove the absurdity of life. But, Harun objects, Camus did not look the absurd in the face: ‘The absurd is what my brother and I carry on our backs or in the bowels of our land, not what the other was or did’ (*MI*, p. 6).

It’s not anger or sorrow that motivates this confession, he insists. What Harun craves, in the aftermath of his brother’s killing, is not ‘the justice of the courts’ but rather ‘the justice that comes when *the scales are balanced*’ (*MI*, p. 6). Definition is deferred, raising the question: which scales? A novel can be read in many ways – and different scales may be needed if it is about the problem of ‘the Other’, or the postcolonial self and the postcolonial other, the intelligibility of the self, or the problem of evil. On the reading I offer here, the ambiguity is the point. Part of justice-seeking, in the lives of particular individuals, is learning to face attribution anxiety in the actions of others and oneself.

¹ Kamel Daoud, *The Meursault Investigation*, trans. John Cullen (London: Oneworld, 2015), 6; hereafter abbreviated as *MI*.

² Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (London: Vintage, 1993), 225.

³ Albert Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus*, trans. Justin O’Brien (London: Penguin, 2013), 31.

⁴ Jean-Paul Sartre, ‘A Commentary on *The Stranger*’, in *Existentialism Is a Humanism*, trans. Carol Macomber (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2007), 85.

In psychology, attributional ambiguity is defined as ‘a psychological state of uncertainty about the cause of a person’s outcomes or treatment’ that occurs ‘whenever there is more than one plausible reason’ that could explain them.⁵ This phenomenon has been studied most in social interactions between people of different social identities where those identities are associated with stereotypes or valenced beliefs (whether positive or negative). For example, if person A belongs to negatively valenced identity X and is treated negatively by a person of identity Y, they may experience uncertainty about whether to attribute that treatment to their being person A or to impersonal prejudices about identity X.

I have used the phrase ‘attribution anxiety’ to acknowledge my debt to this concept and to indicate that I mean something more by it. In passages of Harun’s novel I take him to be an exemplar of the uncertainty that ‘attributional ambiguity’ picks out, but *also* of an ethical anxiety about the possibility of successfully seeking justice in view of the intersecting ambiguities of particular human histories. I take this to be the novel’s central provocation, and develop it through attending to its interweaving of ethico-political, psychoanalytic, and religious questions. Before doing so, however, it is important to situate it in debates about justice in Algerian history and debates about literature in philosophy.

In 1830, France invaded Algeria. The nineteenth century saw multiple changes of colonial administration and inequality before the law, including the exclusion of Muslims from French citizenship; in 1865, Muslims were granted the right to apply for citizenship but were required to renounce the right to be governed by the justice they recognized, Sharia. It was not until 1947, five years after Camus published *The Stranger*, that Muslims were granted citizenship without the renunciation requirement. In 1954, the war of independence began, in 1960 a UN resolution recognized Algeria’s right to independence, and in 1962 a referendum approved the Evian accords. On 1 July 1962, 99.72 per cent of the population voted for independence, and Algeria celebrated it on 5 July 1962. (Remember this date; Harun will bring us back to it.)

Interest in the Maghrebian novel grew in the half-century after Algerian independence, alongside interest in postcolonial studies. According to Abdelkébir Khatibi, the mission of ‘*Le roman magrébin*’ was to ‘express the drama of a society in crisis’.⁶ But bearing witness to that drama did not always involve straightforward depiction. Literary writing, as Jane Hiddleston writes, ‘does not have to provide an unmediated portrait [...] and may gesture rather more allusively towards experiences that are occluded by public discourse’.⁷ In the analytic tradition, a helpful lens through which to consider postcolonial literature can be found in Martha Nussbaum’s provocative claim that ‘[c]ertain truths about human life can only be fittingly and accurately stated in the language and forms characteristic of the narrative artist’.⁸ For Nussbaum, ethics is concerned with answering the question: how should one live? Her Aristotelian answer to that question resembles that of the existentialists Sartre, Beauvoir, and Fanon, who claimed that it depends on the practical context of each human’s concrete situation. Nussbaum claims that the typical Anglo-American analytic philosophical style is not conducive to fruitful investigations of the domain of ethics in which we conduct ‘our deepest practical searching’.⁹ Camus and many of his contemporaries held similar views, which motivated them not just to read literature but also to write it.

⁵ Brenda Major, ‘Attributional Ambiguity’, in *Encyclopedia of Social Psychology*, ed. Roy F. Baumeister and Kathleen D. Vohs (London: Sage, 2007), 1:72–73.

⁶ Abdelkébir Khatibi, *Le roman magrébin* (Paris: Maspero, 1968), 11.

⁷ Jane Hiddleston, ‘Francophone North African Literature’, *French Studies* 70 (2015): 83.

⁸ Martha Nussbaum, ‘Introduction: Form and Content, Philosophy and Literature’, in *Love’s Knowledge: Essays in Philosophy and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 5.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 24.

In literary narrative, on Nussbaum's view, life is represented *as* something, such that the style itself sets up certain reactions in the reader, and these reactions are particularly conducive to understanding truths about life. Many objections have been raised against her view, from literary scholars and philosophers. Most pertinent for our purposes are the *bad friends*, *plurality of aboutness*, and *through not in* objections. Against death of the author interpretations, Nussbaum thinks it is precisely the authorial presence in a text that animates the reader to think and feel as they read: 'when we follow him as attentive readers, we ourselves engage in ethical conduct, and our readings themselves are assessable ethical acts.'¹⁰ Nussbaum refers to certain books as 'friends' that have guided her to live more ethically by attuning her perception to the particularities of ethical situations. However, as Richard Posner has pointed out, 'literature offers a vast choice of friendships. Many of them are with evil, dangerous, or irresponsible people – *awful* role models.'¹¹ The existence of such *bad friends* raises a related objection about the *plurality of aboutness*. The same novel can be read in many ways, and what one sees a novel to be about is crucial to the question of what lessons may be drawn from it. For this reason, Peter Lamarque and Stein Haugom Olsen claim that what Nussbaum identified is not philosophy *in* literature but philosophy *through* literature. Moreover, they claim that if you read for moral illumination you are not reading a work as a literary work. A literary work might remind you of your convictions, open up your eyes to experiences or ways of seeing the world that you hadn't previously imagined – but that is philosophy *through* literature, not in it.¹²

In *The Meursault Investigation* the narrator claims outright: 'I'm philosophizing? Yes, yes I am' (*MI*, p. 89). For some readers this may provoke metaphilosophical disagreement, but for others it is an invitation to take Harun at his word, and do philosophy with him. Harun's mother was illiterate, and her grief was exacerbated by not being able to find a record confirming her son's death. The newspapers published Meursault's name, but not his. After learning to read French, Harun finds Meursault's book – and in Daoud's narrative Meursault is its author, prompting a different kind of ethical engagement with its content. As Grace Whistler has pointed out, Harun's story is among other things 'the story of a man learning to understand himself through reading'.¹³ When Harun read Meursault, he tells us: 'At one and the same time, I felt insulted and revealed to myself' (*MI*, p. 130).

In presenting Harun's search for justice as 'balancing the scales', I argue, Daoud brings attribution anxiety to life in a way that abstractly defining the phenomenon cannot. By combining Harun's reflective perspective with descriptions of his action, inaction, and interactions with other characters and texts – the form of the novel allows for multiple 'scales' to be invoked without resolution, mirroring the tensive uncertainty of human action and self-evaluation. For heuristic reasons, I will divide my reading into three non-exhaustive and overlapping families of claim about what the novel is 'about' – the ethico-political, the psychoanalytic, and the religious readings – before concluding that they are best understood as three inseparable faces of a prismatic provocation.

On ethico-political readings, this novel is 'about' the ethical question of 'the Other' or the political question of the postcolonial self and the postcolonial other. Harun's reflections on Meursault's 'version of the facts' are woven together with a response to Said, a history of 'the

¹⁰ Martha Nussbaum, 'Exactly and Responsibly: A Defense of Ethical Criticism', *Philosophy and Literature* 22 (1998): 344.

¹¹ Richard Posner, 'Against Ethical Criticism', *Philosophy and Literature* 21 (1997): 21.

¹² See Peter Lamarque and Stein Haugom Olsen, *Truth, Fiction, and Literature: A Philosophical Perspective* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1994), 391.

¹³ Grace Whistler, "'What-It's-Like" for the Other: Narrative Knowledge and Faith in *The Meursault Investigation*', *Literature and Theology* 32 (2018): 162.

Arab' – his name was Musa – and those who survived him. Harun's narrative is written in French in order to right the record by telling his story from 'right to left'. Given the significance of Camus's naming of characters, it is no accident that Musa is Arabic for Moses and Harun for Aaron: the Arab Meursault killed was named for the Hebrew prophet who led the Israelites out of slavery in Egypt and received the Ten Commandments from God, including the imperative 'thou shalt not kill'. His name is mentioned 136 times in the Qur'an – many more times than 'the Arab' was not named in *The Stranger* (the number is so important that Harun tells us twice: 25 times!). In the Torah, when Moses first confronted the Egyptian king about the Israelites, he worried that he could not speak well – so Aaron spoke for him, as his prophet to the Pharaoh. But the biblical Aaron is an ambiguous exemplar. Whether he is to be emulated or not depends on which part of the story you read, for he is also the high priest who was weak in the face of idolatry, who let the liberated people forge a golden calf.

Daoud's Harun, too, is an ambiguous exemplar. He wants justice, he confesses, but after a childhood of colonization, poverty, and his mother's unresolved grief he, like Meursault, killed an 'Other'. At 2am on 5 July 1962 he killed a *roumi*, a foreigner, a stranger, whose French name he knew: Joseph Larquais. On one level, *The Meursault Investigation* can be read as a kind of literary *lex talionis*: a postcolonial eye for an eye. The circumstances of Harun's murder are the mirror image of Meursault's: Meursault killed an Arab in the heat of the day, at 2:00 in the afternoon; Harun killed a Frenchman by moonlight, at 2:00 in the morning.

Harun was taken in for questioning by the newly independent state, but he knew that he wasn't there for murdering a man; his crime was 'not having done so at the right moment' (*MI*, p. 107). The justice Harun seeks is not that of a colonial or postcolonial legal system, where the language of a name or the hands of a clock work moral magic. Neither is it the ideal universe of Plato's virtues, or the Ulpian definition, where justice is a matter of rendering unto others their due. Rather, it is the moral universe of the Torah, with its lexicon of sin, guilt, anger, punishment, mercy, forgiveness – and God. Here, belief in the possibility of social utopia is not presupposed. Its focus is this age, this world, in which injustice is unequally distributed and the experiences of the *wronged* must be taken into account.

For the experience of the wronged to be taken into account, Harun's narrative implies, the experiences of some colonizers too must be counted: 'The truth is that Independence only forced people on both sides to switch roles' (*MI*, p. 11). That the book can be read as *about* the ethical problem of 'the Other' rather than the specifically 'postcolonial other' is supported by Harun's claim that the title of Meursault's book was not *The Stranger* but *The Other*. In the Algerian context, there is a long history of censorship – of Muslims by the French, and of post-independence Algerians by some Muslims. There is also disappointment that the reality of independence didn't deliver the promised dream, resulting in alienation and disillusionment.¹⁴ Whistler has argued that the contrasts between Meursault and Harun are 'part of a wider ethical venture' about postcolonial identity and the importance of 'a common humanity which transcends the dichotomy of colonised/coloniser'. Interviews with Daoud lend authorial support to her reading: he claims that 'what interests me is humanity, not their passports'.¹⁵

One set of 'human' approaches the novel invites is psychoanalytic. Throughout Harun's narrative he wrestles with the intelligibility of the self, especially in relation to his mother. Harun knows himself to be wronged, but not only by Meursault, *roumis*, or the colonial and postcolonial administrations, but by his own mother and his own actions. He is, in more than

¹⁴ See Sami Alkyam, 'Lost in Reading: The Predicament of Postcolonial Writing in Kamel Daoud's *The Meursault Investigation*', *Journal of Postcolonial Writing* 55 (2019): 463.

¹⁵ See Whistler, 'Narrative Knowledge', 174.

one way, bereaved: Meursault killed Harun's brother, but his mother never managed to dislodge the bullet of grief from her heart; she was incapable of loving the child who survived. Moreover, Harun claims to have lost his own ability to love in the aftermath of murdering Joseph Larquais. 'The other,' he writes, is a 'unit of measurement you lose when you kill' (*MI*, p. 90). Once committed, the crime 'forever compromises both love and the possibility of loving. [...] Indeed, my friend, the only verse in the Koran that resonates with me is this: "If you kill a single person, it is as if you have killed the whole of mankind"' (*MI*, p. 91).

Harun's self-discovery is made intersubjectively through encounters with others. He is aware that justice of the kind he wants cannot 'be done' without attending to *his* particular past and the particular others – including literary writers – who shaped him. By including his engagement with culture and with written texts especially, Daoud's narrator illustrates Frantz Fanon's claim that the subjective difficulties faced by the marginalized are not merely to be understood in psychological terms as the result of structures of the mind. If they are, in part, grounded in the collective unconscious, then a valuable means of exposing them is to analyse literature from the relevant context.¹⁶ When Harun reads Meursault, recall: 'At one and the same time, I felt insulted and revealed to myself' (*MI*, p. 130).

Harun is ambivalent about how to judge himself, we learn, not just because of political turmoil but because of what his mama did and did not do. If justice is to give others their due, and children are due from their mothers the respect of persons, then his mother failed to treat him justly. 'I feel bad about this, I swear, but I can't forgive her. I was her object, not her son' (*MI*, p. 39). In fragments we learn that what he called 'his secret' – the murder of the *roumi* – was really '*our secret*, Mama's and mine': 'I blame my mother, I lay the blame on her. The truth is, *she* committed that crime. *She* held my arm steady while Musa held hers and so on back to Abel or his brother' (*MI*, p. 89). Here we meet the second biblical brotherhood in Daoud's text – the first in the Torah itself – Cain and Abel. With Adam and Eve, sin entered the world, and with the first human brothers entered fraternal envy and murder. In attempting to understand himself through reading, Harun insists that the story of Cain and Abel isn't 'a trite story of forgiveness or revenge, it's a curse, it's a trap' (*MI*, p. 89).

The presence of this Abrahamic lexicon invites a plurality of readings. Before discussing the final face of the prism, however, it is worth noting the contrast between this novel's reception in Europe, where it was shortlisted for the Prix Goncourt in France and won a PEN prize in English, and in Algeria, where it brought Kamel Daoud backlash for internalizing 'the Western gaze', a fatwa, and charges of apostasy.¹⁷ The problem of evil is widely discussed in philosophy as a logical and evidential problem plaguing the major monotheisms, but this novel poses it existentially, from an Algerian Arab's point of view. Harun cannot accept the suffering of the human condition, but neither can he accept the shallow consolations offered by institutional religion and the sham of political justice. As he sees it, human beings are estranged from God and institutional religion is like a form of 'public transport' that never reaches its destination, ironically standing in the way of God Godself (*MI*, pp. 65–69). He abhors religions because 'they falsify the weight of the world' (*MI*, p. 69).

This brings us back to the absurd, which is often defined without any explicitly religious referent; Avi Sagi, for example, claims that 'the absurd is evil and injustice'.¹⁸ One consequence of defining it without Camus's qualification – 'without God' – is that it no longer captures the sense of lack and loss: lack of a metaphysical reason to expect justice, and loss of a target

¹⁶ Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. Charles Lam Markmann (London: Pluto Press, 2008).

¹⁷ Doreen Carvajal, 'An Algerian Author Fights Back against Fatwa', *New York Times*, 4 January 2015, <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/01/05/books/an-algerian-author-fights-back-against-a-fatwa.html>.

¹⁸ Avi Sagi, *Albert Camus and the Philosophy of the Absurd*, trans. Balya Stein (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2002), 107.

to whom to address one's theodicy rage – the rage that can arise from seeing or suffering evil, and living with the epistemic and ethical challenges and failures we face in attempts at redress. Harun implies that he is an atheist, but that doesn't stop him from raging. He refuses to pray, he tells his reader, because he sees God as 'a question, not an answer [...] I don't know why every time someone has a question about the existence of God he turns to man and waits for the answer. Ask *him* the question, put it directly to *him*!' (*MI*, p. 142).

As I see it, to read *The Meursault Investigation* as 'about' only one face of this prism is to miss its constellating provocation. It is not only about postcolonial politics or ethics, psychoanalysis or religion – its genius consists in depicting an attempt to untangle Harun's *particular* history from the murder of his brother and the history of his nation, and the role of his mother and his culture in supporting and distorting his desire for justice. Meursault did not grieve for his mother, and was condemned for his indifference. Harun, by showing his uncertainty about his own agency and passivity, highlights the role of narratives and intersubjectivity in coming to terms with injustice and its legacies. He is an exemplar of attributional ambiguity – and of the ethical anxiety that arises in the wake of the recognition that that ambiguity permeates moral life. But he is also a murderer. In the final chapter he asks for forgiveness and says he wants to be hated. The reader is left to judge: is he or isn't he a good friend?

II. Allegories of Social Justice

Rafe McGregor

Allegory is a convention in representation that combines duality with duplicity. The term is derived from the Greek word *allegoreo*, which means speaking otherwise, that is, pretending to speak about one thing while actually speaking about another thing.¹⁹ In *Allegory and Ideology*, Fredric Jameson contends that genuine allegories are both fourfold and thick. He is highly critical of the traditional model of allegory, in which there are only two levels of meaning (the literal and the symbolic), on the basis that it divides a narrative into two distinct lines with separate, hierarchical meanings.²⁰ Using examples such as Dante's *Divine Comedy*, Spenser's *The Faerie Queene*, Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, Goethe's *Faust: The Second Part of the Tragedy*, Marx's *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, and David Mitchell's *Cloud Atlas*, he argues that genuine allegory does not impose meaning on a representation but 'functions to reveal its structure of multiple meanings' (*AI*, p. 10). These meanings function at four levels: the literal level is the represented sequence of events in the narrative, whether they are real, imagined, or some combination of the two; the symbolic level is concerned with the hidden or secret meaning of the represented sequence of events; the existential level is the ethical meaning of the narrative, understood in terms of the individual; and the anthropic level is the political meaning of the narrative, understood in terms of the species. Jameson summarizes the levels at which meaning functions as: textual object, interpretive code, individual desire, and collective ideology. The significance of his conception is not merely that he identifies four rather than two levels of meaning, but that an allegorical narrative is a '*thick narrative*' (*AI*, p. 276).

Narrative thickness refers to the integration or intersection of different elements, axes, or levels in a representation and in Jameson's fourfold allegory there is a multiplicity of

¹⁹ Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Toward a History of the Vanishing Present* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), 430.

²⁰ Fredric Jameson, *Allegory and Ideology* (London: Verso, 2019), 4–5; hereafter abbreviated as *AI*.

intersections of levels of meaning.²¹ ‘The levels are not a collection of complete narratives superimposed upon one another. Rather they come at reality in an utterly different way, by a jarring and sometimes dissonant differentiation of their various dimensions’ (*AI*, p. 234). Allegorical thickness is characterized not merely by the abundance of available intersections among the different levels of meaning but also by their unpredictability: ‘Narrative goes transversally from one to the other, unexpectedly setting them in unpredictable contact with each other – by juxtaposition, by metaphoric identification, by repetition of dialectically ambiguous words – in a touching of all the bases’ (*AI*, p. 276). Jameson maintains that narrative thickness is a value of allegory and that this value is consistent with Marxist criticism, which approaches texts as both historical acts and static objects. His theory of allegory as fourfold and thick underpins a critical method in which the intersection of levels of meaning exceeds the representational capacity of narrative by activating an event in the reading (or viewing) process. The narrative event is formal (structural) rather than substantive (representational) as the allegory reveals the complexity of its architecture of multiple meanings. The event is initiated by the multiplicity, transversality, and unpredictability of the representation, which require active and sustained engagement by the reader (or viewer) who wants to both interpret its fourfoldness and appreciate its thickness.

The value of narrative thickness extends beyond its activation of the narrative event to an expansion of the reference and significance of that event, as suggested by Jameson’s mention of Marxist criticism. He argues that the narrative event is particularly useful for shedding light on the complexity of ‘our own moment of late capitalism’ (*AI*, p. 117), ‘late capitalist globalization’ (*AI*, p. 308), and ‘modern social life’ (*AI*, p. 347) by virtue of the way in which the interrelationship among the allegorical levels reveals otherwise imperceptible connections among the dimensions of late modern life. The relationship between the work and the world is that the fourfold allegory provides an ‘allegorical staging’ of the complexity of social reality by means of the narrative event (*AI*, p. 117). In other words, allegorical narratives hold up both a mirror and a microscope to everyday life and can thereby illuminate causal relations that might otherwise remain unnoticed. The combination of their representational and extra-representational capacities can activate a critique of ideology in the reader (or viewer) seeking to interpret the meanings and appreciate the values of the allegory. The relationship between the representational and extra-representational capacities is one of supervenience, with the latter supervenient on the former in consequence of narrative thickness, the integration rather than accumulation of the four levels of meaning. This claim is indicative of the uses to which Jameson’s model can be put as a literary or narrative intervention in justice, which I shall demonstrate with an example that refers to and has significance for contemporary American politics.

The Man in the High Castle (2015–19) is an allegorical television series produced by Prime Video, comprising four seasons (released in 2015, 2016, 2018, and 2019), each of which consists of ten episodes that vary from 45 to 70 minutes in length.²² The first two seasons are based on Philip K. Dick’s 1962 novel of the same name, set in a possible world in which the Axis powers won the Second World War.²³ I take the series rather than the novel as exemplary for two reasons. First, although the novel won the Hugo Award and manifests Dick’s considerable literary skill – most obviously, his ingenious interweaving of subplots and his presentation of rich thematic content within the confines of genre conventions – it is not an allegory, at least not in Jameson’s conception of the category, in consequence of lacking

²¹ See Rafe McGregor, *The Value of Literature* (London: Rowman & Littlefield), chap. 3.

²² *The Man in the High Castle* (Culver City, CA: Amazon Studios, 2015–19), Prime Video.

²³ Philip K. Dick, *The Man in the High Castle* (1962; London: Penguin, 2001).

both fourfoldness and thickness. Second, the fourfoldness and thickness of the series are primarily a function of its narrativity as opposed to its cinemacity. While the cinematic mode of representation contributes to and enhances *The Man in the High Castle's* allegorical staging of political reality, its literariness – as a complex narrative – is responsible for the extent to which it constitutes an intervention in justice. In the series, the Axis victory imagined by Dick created two superstates, the Greater Nazi Reich (GNR) and the Japanese Empire (JE), which divided the globe between them, and the *Alt World* (the term the fictional Nazis use to refer to the real world, but which I shall use to refer to the fictional world) exists in a state of cold war reminiscent of the Cold War in the *historical world* (my term for the real world). The GNR and JE have split America along the line of the Rocky Mountains, which form the Neutral Zone (NZ) between the western Japanese Pacific States (JPS) and the eastern Nazi America (NA).²⁴

As a textual object, the series represents the following sequence of events: the discovery that the American Resistance (AR) is inspired by cinematic evidence of the existence of the historical world (episodes 1 to 10); the revelation that there actually is a multiverse as the GNR and JE struggle for dominance of the *Alt World* (episodes 11 to 20); the development of *Die Nebenwelt*, a machine that transports people between the different worlds, by the GNR for the purpose of conquering those worlds (episodes 21 to 30); and the defeat of the JPS by the Black Communist Rebellion (BCR), which inspires the eastern states to secede from the GNR (episodes 31 to 40, but note my comments below). The series follows the allegorical tradition in that its interpretative code is not immediately obvious. Initially, it seems to be about American history, with the identity and difference between the historical and *Alt* versions of the 1960s thematically significant. The symbolism becomes more explicit as the seasons progress, however, reversing its focus from America's past to its future, to what life in an America run by White supremacists might be like. The context of production and reception is relevant here because season two was released a month after Donald Trump's election victory. By the time season four was released, three years later, his ultra-conservatism had moved contemporary America several steps closer to *Alt* America, with policies such as family separation having a distinct symbolic resonance.²⁵

The existential level of meaning, the series as individual desire(s), is concerned with the construction of subjectivity of the two White American protagonists, John Smith (played by Rufus Sewell) and Juliana Crain (played by Alexa Davalos). Smith is both a perpetrator of genocide and a man with admirable character traits. When the series opens, he is an *Obergruppenführer* (SS general), head of the American equivalent of the *Sicherheitsdienst* (SS Security Service) in New York, and his rise through the GNR ranks is synchronic with his growing distaste for the regime. The internal conflict is caused by the clash of the state's social construction of racial purity with Smith's loyalty to first his biological family and then his native country. Juliana is a civilian living in San Francisco who has little interest in politics and is initially only remarkable for her lack of anti-Asian racism. She is more virtuous but less complex than Smith, driven by intellectual curiosity, an empathetic imagination, and a spirit of tolerance. Her open-minded exploration of both JE and GNR culture provides her not just with the ability to move among different social worlds but to literally move from world to world within the multiverse. My previous work on the series as collective ideology, the anthropic narrative latent in conceptions of personal destiny, focused on its analysis of populism as a political

²⁴ For a definitive account of the *Alt World*, see Mike Avila, *The Man in the High Castle: Creating the Alt World* (London: Titan Books, 2019).

²⁵ See Office of Inspector General, *Separated Children Placed in Office of Refugee Resettlement Care*, US Department of Health & Human Services, 17 January 2019, <https://oig.hhs.gov/oei/reports/oei-BL-18-00511.pdf>.

strategy.²⁶ The representation of Smith as heroic and reprehensible demonstrates how a charismatic leader can achieve popularity in spite of behaving in a morally repugnant manner. In stark contrast to Smith's success, Juliana's increasingly important involvement with the AR exposes its insurgency as either impotent, futile, or both. The leadership of Irishman Wyatt Price (played by Jason O'Mara) appears to provide the movement with new hope in episodes 26 to 30, but this is extinguished swiftly and brutally at the beginning of season four. The representation of the perils and pressures faced by first the AR and then the BCR explains the cumulative causes of failure to resist in circumstances of complete moral certainty.

In order to articulate *The Man in the High Castle's* potential as a tool for social justice, one must move beyond its representational capacity, approaching the allegory as an act rather than an object – or, more accurately, as an object and an act. If the series is interpreted and appreciated as a historical act, then it stages a narrative event in which not only social reality but the universe itself is constructed and controlled by the powerful, epitomized in the two superpowers waging a clandestine war for the Alt World. Those who are not a part of or allied to one of the global powers have little or no opportunity to exert their influence and resistance to imperial hegemony is doomed to failure. This situation appears to change when Price takes advantage of Juliana's developing knowledge, assumes personal command of operations, and succeeds in shooting *Reichsführer* Heinrich Himmler (played by Kenneth Tigar) in episode 30. The AR's victory is spurious, however, with Himmler surviving and Smith launching a devastating blitzkrieg into the NZ in the following episode (set a year later). As Price and his comrades beat a hasty retreat, their alliance with the recently formed BCR is disclosed. African Americans in the JPS are at the bottom of the tripartite racial hierarchy and the aim of the BCR is to create an autonomous territory on the west coast that is free from both Japanese rule and White supremacist Jim Crow laws. As such, they constitute another new hope for resistance, which also appears short-lived when their leader, Equiano Hampton (played by David Harewood), is killed by the *Kenpeitai* (Military Police Corps) in episode 35. Episode 36 finds both the BCR and AR in disarray, but then something unprecedented and unexpected happens.

Bell Mallory (played by Frances Turner) and Juliana each suggest a new target for the insurgencies: the 'crimson pipeline' that transports oil to Japan for the BCR and Smith himself for the AR. Both women have been subject to the official sexism of the two empires, where a woman's place is in the home, and the casual sexism of their male comrades. Out of desperation, the BCR and the AR agree to the respective plans and the sudden and surprising elevation of marginalized individuals within the insurgencies initiates a dramatic reversal of fortune for the superpowers. The circumstances are exacerbated in the JPS, where Bell is at the bottom of the racial order and on the wrong side of the gender divide and her significance in the struggle for freedom eclipses Juliana's as the series concludes. The attacks on the oil infrastructure are launched at the end of episode 37 and, by the beginning of episode 38 (an interval of 48 hours), the JE is evacuating the JPS while Bell commands a victorious BCR. In NA, the AR are faced with a more determined enemy in Smith, but Juliana manages to recruit his wife, Helen (played by Chelah Horsdal), to their cause in episode 39. Bell and Juliana emerge as the leaders that have been lacking, inspiring resistance that is competent and constructive by virtue of originating with those who have the least to lose and are in a position of epistemic privilege with regard to the concrete realities of oppression.

²⁶ Though I did not use 'populism' in my discussion. See Rafe McGregor, *Narrative Justice* (London: Rowman & Littlefield, 2018), chap. 5. See also Rafe McGregor, *A Criminology of Narrative Fiction* (Bristol: Bristol University Press, 2021), chap. 5.

The Man in the High Castle constitutes a sustained and sophisticated survey of the pressures and perils of resistance to hegemonic injustice in which different strategies are tested and rejected in favour of a last-minute but all-encompassing revolution that is led by the lowest in the social structure on behalf of everyone in that structure. Angela Davis refers to this phenomenon as the need ‘to “lift as we climb”’.²⁷ If the most marginalized group achieves social justice, then society as a whole benefits. Bell’s significance to the extra-representational capacity of the allegory is not revealed until the final episode, in which she is seen planning the defence of what is now called the Western States with three men: a BCR comrade, a White American, and a Jewish American. The BCR is thus not just for African Americans but for everyone who is prepared to accept and respect their material equality, a mass struggle aimed at fundamental socioeconomic transformation, in Davis’s terms.²⁸ Several minutes later, Bell makes a public announcement that the BCR will tolerate neither German nor American White supremacist rule and asks the citizens of NA to join her in throwing off the yoke of oppression: ‘We have founded a new nation. If you can hear my voice you are already a citizen, but the first step to freedom you must take inside your own mind.’²⁹ That step is to recognize the ways in which racist oppression, sexist discrimination, and class exploitation are linked and to accept the need for radical means to secure the end of genuine emancipation.³⁰

Bell’s final appearance is five minutes from the end of the series, in a scene that lasts only a minute but is the most important in the whole series with respect to understanding its extra-representational capacity. The scene begins with Bell and her comrades taking aim at the bombers and troop transports flying overhead, shows the sky emptying as the pilots receive their orders to abort the attack, and concludes with Bell laying down her assault rifle. What is crucial is not just that Bell is a Black woman but that she is a Black woman defending the Western States from invasion by NA, that is, free America from White Americans. In the context of the season’s production, the series is a rejection of political reform in favour of political transformation, a social revolution that will undo Trump’s legacy.³¹ As a fourfold allegory, the series is an exploration of the harms of White supremacy, moral compromise, and strategic populism, as well as the ways in which they can aggravate one another to cause mass harm. A description of the multiplicity, transversality, and unpredictability of the intersections of the four folds would require a much more comprehensive account of each than I can provide here so I shall restrict myself to a précis of the extra-representational capacity facilitated by the intersections. Interpreted and appreciated as a narrative event, the series is a demand for radical social transformation that constitutes a critique of ideology. The specific ideology subjected to critique is the belief that incremental reform conducted within existing economic, legal, and political structures can reduce inequality and injustice effectively.³² *The Man in the High Castle* is an intervention in justice because it requires active and sustained engagement by the viewer to understand the exploration and the critique and to recognize the critique as emergent from the exploration. One cannot interpret the levels of meaning in the work comprehensively without appreciating the value of radical social transformation in the world to which the work refers and the world for which the work is significant.

²⁷ Angela Y. Davis, *Women, Culture and Politics* (New York: Vintage, 1990), 5.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 14.

²⁹ *Man in the High Castle*, episode 40, 20:07–20:18.

³⁰ Angela Y. Davis, *Women, Race and Class* (London: Penguin, 2019), 127.

³¹ For an explanation of why this might be necessary, see Karina V. Korostelina, *Trump Effect* (New York: Routledge, 2017).

³² Davis’s position on art as integral rather than supplementary to activism is relevant here. See: Angela Y. Davis and René de Guzman, ‘A Question of Memory: A Conversation with Angela Y. Davis’, in *Angela Davis: Seize the Time*, ed. Gerry Beegan and Donna Gustafson (Munich: Hirmer, 2020), 83.

III. Giving Voice to the Ethically Lonely in Performance Poetry

Karen Simecek

Hearing and listening are not ethically neutral activities, even if the content of what another is saying has no moral valence. To see the ethical demand of listening well to others it is not sufficient to focus on individual episodes of failing to hear, listen, and respond accordingly. For instance, taken in isolation it's not clear how or why the following should be considered morally relevant: I ask my friend for a cup of tea but instead they bring me a cup of coffee as a result of assuming that's what I would want (they didn't listen to my request attentively). In other cases, it can just be difficult to pay the close attention that every speaker demands when they speak, especially in contexts where there are multiple voices competing to be heard (in such a case, to listen well to all involved may be too demanding and therefore one cannot be held as blameworthy for not hearing, listening, and responding to all voices present). However, the moral issue emerges when one is *unjustly* and *systematically* left unheard, that is, where there is a repeated failure of others to listen to them and a consequent failure to respond. The moral issue arises not in the isolated case but in the repeated failure of others to hear (and failure to create spaces to hear), and so it's in this sense that the individual episode *can* have moral significance when situated in the wider context.

In particular, there are cases where there is an ethical need to be heard, for instance, for those experiencing 'ethical loneliness'. According to Jill Stauffer:

Ethical loneliness is the isolation one feels when one, as a violated person or as one member of a persecuted group, has been abandoned by humanity, or by those who have power over one's life possibilities. It is a condition undergone by persons who have been unjustly treated and dehumanized by human beings and political structures, who emerge from that injustice only to find that the surrounding world will not listen to or cannot properly hear their testimony – their claims about what they suffered and about what is now owed them – on their own terms.³³

As Stauffer notes, ethical loneliness arises not just from extreme cases of injustice, persecution, and oppression but also from everyday instances that result from systematic and institutionalized discrimination.

Ethical loneliness is a state that demands reparation, which can only be delivered by hearing those affected. The reparative act is to listen attentively to those who have been denied a voice in order to allow the self to find expression through their embodied voice (that is, by reconnecting words to their body). Although Stauffer argues that what's important is to hear their stories, there is a more fundamental need that is left unmet, which is simply to be allowed to have a voice, in other words, to be able to express (one's perspective) and have one's expression acknowledged by others. Elsewhere I have argued that the notion of perspective is more fundamental than narrative.³⁴ By perspective, what is meant is simply a network of values, beliefs, emotions, and so on that shape the way in which one experiences and engages with the world:

³³ Jill Stauffer, *Ethical Loneliness: The Injustice of Not Being Heard* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 1.

³⁴ See Karen Simecek, 'Beyond Narrative: Poetry, Emotion and the Perspectival View', *British Journal of Aesthetics* 55 (2015): 497–513.

The stakes are high here, because when no one listens, stories [and perspectives] get lost. But unaddressed harms do not disappear. They remain, and they color the affective relations between persons and communities, haunting the official sites of transition and reconciliation.³⁵

If perspectives are lost, then we lose different ways of configuring value, belief, and meaning. Not only does this further harm affected individuals but it also perpetuates the systematic discrimination that will harm others as well.

According to Stauffer, reparation for the ethically lonely demands others to listen well. The persecution and trauma cannot be undone, but one can help prevent further harm being caused by not denying such individuals the ability to speak about their experiences and be heard. Speaking without being heard does not address the ethically lonely; to mitigate loneliness, one must experience the response of another.

Hearing involves not simply hearing the words uttered and understanding their literal meaning, but understanding them as words spoken by a particular person. The loneliness experienced by such individuals is tied to the body both in terms of the location (centring) of the feeling of abandonment and the negation of the body (an invisibility). Words require a body to voice them but, in cases where the body is subject to persecution, the body is denied a voice because the words spoken by that person do not elicit the appropriate response in the hearer. To abstract the words from the speaker in such instances is to continue the denial of that person to their voice, that is, their embodied voice. Reparation necessarily involves making visible the body as the site of expression and understanding the words spoken as both centred in the body and contextualized by the body.

There are different levels of being heard:

Weak sense: hearing the words spoken and understanding their literal meaning.

Strong sense: hearing the words spoken by a particular person and understanding the meaning of those words with reference to the person who speaks them.

My claim is that poetry in performance³⁶ has the potential to empower an individual (or group of individuals) by virtue of the performance space by enabling one to be heard in this strong sense; consequently, poetry performance can serve as a site for reparation for the ethically lonely by creating a space to be heard in the strong sense. A surprising result of the coming together of words, voice, and body enables the potential for conflict and critique to take place through the performance and thereby represent the complexity of personal experience and identity.

Spoken word poet Raymond Antrobus, in his performance of 'The First Time I Wore Hearing Aids', addresses his experience of disability and highlights the issue of being denied a voice as a consequence of his disability:³⁷

³⁵ Stauffer, *Ethical Loneliness*, 7.

³⁶ My concern in this paper is poetry as performed to an audience, that is, live poetry, which includes slam poetry as well as other kinds of poetry in performance such as a poet reading their work to an audience that may have originally been published on the page. One of the claims implicit in this discussion is that live poetry takes on a different character to page poetry by virtue of the difference in relationship between poet, poem, and audience.

³⁷ Raymond Antrobus, 'The First Time I Wore Hearing Aids', video, 1:50, uploaded by Chill Pill Shorts, 14 November 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5G9dy8nCbuE>.

When Dominick asked if support teachers
 sit with me in class because I'm stupid,
 I wished I said something smart
 to clarify my intelligence.

I wished I could trust my ears
 to pick up the answers.

The performance of the poem marks an opportunity to be heard in a space that is not crowded out with sounds other than the poet's own voice. The performance demands attention to the poet's voice by virtue of the privileging of the poet's voice and makes visible the body in the expression of those words through the affective shaping of bodily gestures that enhance the meaning of the words (as an extension of the expression of the words). To separate his words from his body is to perpetuate the invisibility of him as a deaf person. The poem is a site to respond to the prejudice the poet has faced by virtue of his disability. With the final lines, the poem seeks out empowerment by celebrating the silence that hearing impairment offers that is only gestured at by the silence of the performance space:

I turned off my hearing aids
 to write this, because sometimes,
 hearing aids make you hear everything
 except

yourself.

The silence of the performance space is not an opportunity to hear myself but to hear Raymond Antrobus. The use of the second person in the final line is ironic; to hear the words and listen well demands not hearing 'yourself' but attending to his voice. The performance space can be a site to invert who is heard and who is silent, thereby serving an important role in rebalance of power and attention. The audience, for the duration of the performance, may come to appreciate what it is to listen to another and, in doing so, appreciate what it is to not be heard themselves. To put it another way, the audience becomes aware of the power of silence in how it enables a voice to be heard in the strong sense. Through the performance space, those who have been silenced in society can now be heard in a space that demands the silence of the audience (or, where the poet may call on response from the audience, this is within their control in performance).

So far, I have argued that there are two senses of hearing, and argued that ethical loneliness demands reparation in the form of the strong sense of being heard. Through the example of Antrobus's 'The First Time I Wore Hearing Aids', we can see how the body of the speaker is relevant to meaning of the words and how in order to address ethical loneliness it is essential to learn to hear words as tied to the speaker, that is, to hear them as embodied. But how do we learn to do this? It's not enough to be exposed to the voices of the ethically lonely since one can still fail to hear in the strong sense. In developing her notion of what it is to hear well, Stauffer builds on Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's idea of reparative reading and the openness this entails:

If hearing is meaningful, it has to be embedded in an openness where what is said might be heard even if it threatens to break the order of the known world for those to

listen [...] The person whose world and self have been destroyed will need to rebuild a sense of self, of her own sovereignty in the world.³⁸

Poetry in performance is not simply a poem read aloud but a live performance that necessarily involves audience response. And it is by virtue of the relationship between performer and audience that the performed poem can play an important role in helping the unjustly marginalized be heard and for the audience to learn to listen well (with that appreciation of the power of silence). Performed poetry should be thought of in terms of being a social event. It is something that unfolds in a (performance) space and over time but necessarily involves a social dimension between performer/poet and audience. The social dynamics of the audience and performer are as much part of the work as the words that the poet speaks:

[L]ive poetry is characterised by the direct encounter and physical co-presence of the poet with a live audience. The poet will predominantly perform his/her own poetry and is thus cast in the double role of 'poet-performer'. The story and images of the poem are conveyed through the spoken word rather than through theatrical ostension, as focus is placed on the oral verbalisation of the poetic text.³⁹

This marks an important difference in the expectations an audience has of page poetry and performance poetry; in the case of the latter, the audience expects the poem performed to be spoken in the author's voice. However, this still allows for the possibility of the poet creating a persona through their performance but such a persona is never divorced from their voice and so always bears some relationality to their body.

For example, in her book *The Cultural Politics of Slam Poetry*, Susan Somers-Willett discusses the poem 'Skinhead' by Patricia Smith, in which Smith, a Black American, gives voice to a White supremacist.⁴⁰ Susan Somers-Willett gives the following description: 'When performing this poem, Smith stands solidly, almost muscularly, in front of the microphone and makes few movements. The tone of her speech is in line with her character's: aggressive and tinged with her subject's sense of anger against blacks.'⁴¹

She then discusses what happened when Smith's poem was performed by Taylor Mali, a White male: 'Because Mali is visibly hailed as a white male himself, most of his audience could not readily recognize this voice as a persona and confused the supremacist's position with his own.'⁴² She comments that the performance was met with strong disapproval, including by those who recognized that the poetic persona was not his own: 'Such a reaction is evidence that Smith's embodiment of "Skinhead" is just as much a performance of her own identity as a black woman as it is of her persona's identity and views.'⁴³

Voicing the words of another is not just an act of identification ('these words represent *my* experience', where what one does is using the words of another to speak on one's behalf)

³⁸ Stauffer, *Ethical Loneliness*, 80. See Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, 'Paranoid Reading and Reparative Reading, Or, You're So Paranoid, You Probably Think This Essay Is about You', in *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003), 123–51.

³⁹ Julia Novak, *Live Poetry: An Integrated Approach to Poetry in Performance* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2011), 68.

⁴⁰ Patricia Smith, 'Skinhead', video, 3:37, uploaded by urbanrenewalprogram, 28 August 2010, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Klb5TniRGao>.

⁴¹ Susan Somers-Willett, *The Cultural Politics of Slam Poetry: Race, Identity and the Performance of Popular Verse in America* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2012), 93.

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ *Ibid.*

but is transformative ('I am *using* these words to represent *my* experience', using the words of another to highlight difference and to contribute one's voice to concept formation and meaning-making). This highlights important features common to live poetry performances – namely, the relationship between words, body/voice, and staging in meaning-making. Smith's identity as a Black American woman is relevant to her choice to voice the words of a (fictional) White supremacist. Her voice and body act as a powerful tension and critique of the poetic persona she creates, which adds another dimension to the meaning of the work. Such tension and critique are lost in Mali's voicing of the poetic persona by virtue of features of his embodied performance and the lack of tension in the use of the first person in referring simultaneously to the speaker and the persona.

In performance poetry, there is a dominance of the use of the first and second persons (or, even where first person isn't used, there is reference to the self of the poet), thereby creating a dynamic of address between poet and audience:⁴⁴ 'Even if poets do not openly address their audience they will generally face them in performance and thus recite their poetry directly to the audience and acknowledge their presence.'⁴⁵ A poem such as 'Skinhead' by Smith demands that the audience acknowledge the words of the poem, the persona represented by the words and the embodiment of those words. It becomes a problem for the audience to deal with in terms of the conflict between the voice of a White supremacist and a Black American woman.

I'm riding the top rung of the perfect race,
my face scraped pink and brilliant.
I'm your baby, America, your boy,
drunk on my own spit, I am goddamned fuckin' beautiful.

And I was born

and raised

right here.

The use of the second person emphasizes the challenge to the audience. The use of the first person in the final words collapses the two identities, both the White supremacist persona and Patricia Smith's herself, which helps to reinforce the sentiment that the conflict present in her work is a product of the society that enables such White supremacy to develop.

Returning to my two examples of not hearing, we can see what might be required to create the conditions for hearing and listening well. In the first example, my friend brings me a cup of coffee rather than tea because of a failure to attend to what was actually said and notice my pointing towards the teabags. This points to a failure of reception and what is demanded by the hearer, not just in their interpretation of words uttered by their attention to the speaker and allowing space for that speaker to speak and be heard. The second example, where one fails to hear as a result of too many voices, points to a failure of environment. Blame cannot be attributed to the person for failing to hear since giving the required attention to a speaker in such a case will necessarily involve not hearing another. Performed poetry addresses both the role of reception and environment in being heard.

⁴⁴ See Jonathan Culler's *Theory of the Lyric* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2015) for an excellent discussion of the nature of address in lyric poetry. He argues that there is a triangulation of address. Even in cases where the poem appears to have someone or something other than the audience as the object of address, structurally, this is an indirect way of addressing the audience since it is intended as an address to be overheard by the audience.

⁴⁵ Novak, *Live Poetry*, 58.

The important environmental features of the live poetry performance go beyond the silence that comes in the moment before and after the performance (during the performance, there is a degree of silence but, as we will see, there is also space for the audience's response to be heard). This acts as a frame to the performance, which creates a heightened sense of attention and privilege in whose voice ought to be heard. The experience of watching a performance of a poem heightens awareness of silence that amplifies the voice of the poet (as it stands in contrast to the silence). In the poetry performance, every word is privileged and treated as significant in the way in punctuates this silence.

Hearing the voice of the poet is relational: one encounters the voice of another – it is externally located both in the sense of being centred in the poet on the stage but also in how their voice reverberates around the room – but one always hears in relation to oneself (the location of the hearer).⁴⁶ As a consequence, the audience must resist separating the sound of the words from the speaker and actively attend to the words as centred in another.

The features of the staging of poetry and the way in which it demands the attention of the audience provide the poet with a unique position to shift focus with a shift from first-person to second-person pronouns.⁴⁷ In both examples (Antrobus and Smith), the first person is used for the majority of the piece but employs a powerful shift to the second person, which acts as a direct address to the spectator. As Culler notes, such a shift is from 'reflection to invocation'.⁴⁸ In that moment, the audience might experience the feeling of being caught out if they had not listened attentively and deeply enough to the poet's embodied delivery:

The poet rich in attention and privileged by the silence of those listening (or noise should they wish to invoke it), might direct everyone's attention onto the spectator. If that spectator is not entirely comfortable or engaged, they may feel implicated or unwelcomely involved in the politics of the eyes.⁴⁹

In such a moment, the body of the speaker becomes ever present in the addressing of the other for it draws attention to the affective relationality between speaker and hearer, and calls for a response from the audience. What a focus on poetry in performance can reveal is the value of the performance space not only in terms of offering a space for one to speak but also as a space to aid in the aesthetic education of learning to hear others well: not only hearing the words of the poem in a communal space in which one is aware of one's response in the context of other audience members but also the affective relationship between the words, voice, and body that come together to make meaning that is not reducible to the meaning of the words. It is precisely in one being able to be heard in the context of their own body that allows one to articulate certain aspects of their experience, and thereby opens the door to reparation.

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⁴⁶ A similar distinction is made by Ihde, who argues that there is a double dimensionality of auditory field: directionality and surroundability. See Don Ihde, *Listening and Voice: Phenomenologies of Sound* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2007), 77.

⁴⁷ For further discussion of the use of the second-person and first-person pronouns in poetry, see Culler, *Theory of the Lyric* and Karen Simecek, 'Cultivating Intimacy: The Use of the Second Person in Lyric Poetry', *Philosophy and Literature* 43 (2019): 501–18.

⁴⁸ Culler, *Theory of the Lyric*, 189.

⁴⁹ Pete Bearder, *Stage Invasion: Poetry and the Spoken Word Renaissance* (London: Outspoken Press, 2020), 228.

Competing Interests

The authors have no competing interests to declare.

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