Ioana Zirra
University of Bucharest

DURABILITY AND TRANSIENCE IN THE TYPOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL PREFIX "POST": REVISITING THE MODERNIST AND POSTMODERNIST VERSIONS OF THE ARTISTIC PASTORAL TODAY

Keywords*: (post-)modern(ism); proper name; definite description; emblem; collage; consensus, durability, transience; intertextuality, radically modern reflexivity, self-reflexive metafiction.*

Abstract: *We are interested in the reconciliation made possible in modern (literary) art between durability and transience, trying to ignore the power of the prefix "post-" (in "post-modernism", as a marker of transience within the durable field of modernity.) We interrogate a number of canonical 20ᵗʰ c. British literature texts from the point of view of their handling of intertextuality, which actualizes the durable tradition, charging the moment with it. To account for the way intertextual reference works in recent literature, the paper draws upon the philosophy of language distinction made over 100 years ago by Bertrand Russell's "On Denotation", between acquaintance and knowledge about, between "the things we have presentations of, and the things we only reach by means of denoting phrases"* respectively. *Modern, artistic reference aims at creating uniquely referring proper names (or singularities), from universal designations - as we learn from Thierry de Duve's philosophy of (post)-modern(ist) art in Kant after Duchamp. But as for all proper names, the relationship with tradition as mediated by intertextuality is paradoxical, if not really unaccountable. In the applicative part of the paper, we illustrate the uses of intertextuality in high modernism and post-modernism, trying to compare them and show how they differ.*

Argument

In a figurative sense, the last part of the title equates the modern (and romantic) withdrawal from the durable world of outward, bourgeois modernization (which sociology theorizes as being a world "from whose bourne no traveller returns") with the pastoral, and transient, retreat: the retreat into the aesthetic space of specific artful conventions. We will study the convention of intertextuality as a participant in the self-naming, self-reflexive processes underlying modern art. We follow Thierry de Duve's description, offered in the 1996 study *Kant after Duchamp,* of the processes underlying some daring art exhibits. Thierry de Duve foregrounds modern art's intention of naming for claiming artistic uniqueness on behalf of individual objects whose claim to the status of art is made by exemplarily intriguing, contradictory declarations about their denotations. In the paper we wish to surprise the transformation of the intention into a convention, studying intertextuality from the point of view of Thierry de Duve's cognitive apparatus. The cognitive apparatus invoked by Thierry de Duve to make his case combines the linguistic approach to naming with a generous survey of avant-garde art, done, as his title declares, from the Kantian philosophy of art perspective. In our turn, we declare that art's objects are a particular class of proper nouns, definite descriptions, and use them to explain how some well-known 20ᵗʰ c. British literary texts declare, acquire and exert their denoting powers. While naming themselves, literary texts transform transient gestures into durable ones, whose enduring power we observe in order to define and evaluate.

Technically speaking, the first part of *Kant after Duchamp* analyses the performative naming momentum of Duchamp's urinal from the perspective of pragmatics. In his actually user-friendly theoretical narrative, Thierry de Duve describes the way the urinal at the same time creates and

implements[1] the felicitous conditions for being both named and accepted as an art object. Like all definite descriptions[2], the urinal claims to be a *bona fide* description of a unique art object. It fulfils such conditions as: making the assertion that it is a fountain and meeting the description of a fountain in a park, for example, because it is made of marble and it runs water; featuring a signature, like all legitimate art objects. By correct syllogistic thinking, since each of these two general conditions for something to be an art object are fulfilled in the particular case of the urinal, the resulting object can successfully fall under the incidence of art. But of course, the felicitous naming is ironical, as we all know, since R. Mutt was actually Duchamp framing not just a scandalous object as a fountain, but also framing the public, i.e., coaxing it to accept such an enormity as …a well wrought urn. The new object is art, nevertheless, by virtue of the denoting frame or label, because someone declares it to be art, not for reasons that usually acquaint people with fountains by acts of perception and of the sensibility[3]. An essential condition for art is, de Duve explains, that it has the capacity to move between the universal and the singular by creating, as it were, proper nouns, uniquely referring names, from common or universal nouns. But the contradiction between the *bona fide* framing and the object framed, causes the result to be a mere collage. Or, as we can say, drawing upon our own knowledge of noun classifications acquired from linguistics, the collage is a definite description rather than a simple and *bona fide* proper name.

This discussion, about collage in art, inspired by Thierry de Duve's theoretical outline of naming for aesthetic purposes, and our analogy with the definite descriptions, transferred to 20th century literature in Britain, permits raising the topical matter of durability and transience in connection to the "names" created by both (literary) art and the criticism and theory that invents labels for them. After the discussion of collage in art and of intertextuality in literature, the paper analyzes the historical and typological features of the theoretical labels "modernism" and "postmodernism" not in opposition, but as a succession of styles that lay stress on their naming momentum[4]. The common, intertextual component of their naming permits linking them historically and typologically, declaring them styles in a larger continuum, the modern one, which contains both of them. Next we want to see which of their characteristic differences endure when intertextuality is made their common denominator. We focus on the specific relationship between the intertextual frame and the resulting name for assessing the nature and the power of the modern literary art experiments.

Naming and Framing in Art

When, as in Duchamp's *Fountain* or Magritte's *Ceci n'est pas une pipe*, there is a contradiction between the framed image and what the naming frame denotes, we are in the presence of a collage whose universal, common part asserts one thing, while the local, particular case runs counter to the frame. This constructs a uniqueness made of two contradictory halves. By one of the halves, the universal conditions for an object to be art seem to have been successfully met, in so far as there was at least one half of the

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[1] If we use the word "installs" here, we can come closer to the postmodern mind.

[2] Definite descriptions are proper names which foreground their unique reference because they are framed by the definite article and by a head-noun which explains the meaning of the proper name by a common noun (see "the Empire State building").

[3] It is fair to say that beside the framing elements in Duchamp's art object there are also elements that address the sensibility, since a fountain is in itself a sufficiently poetic object and the brand-new urinal does shine with the clean lustre of marble.

[4] That the relationship of postmodernism to modernism is a mere succession, not an opposition, has been suggested by the fact that the term neo-modernism was put in circulation, to describe what we also teach in the English Department of Bucharest to undergraduate students as the mid-20th century dystopian parables in fiction, such as Orwell's *1984* or Golding's *Lord of the Flies,* or such as Auden's and Stevie Smith's intellectual vignettes in poetry (*Musee des Beaux Arts*, for example, and *Not Waving but Drowning*, respectively).

artistic connoisseurs who did accept it as an art object (authored by Marcel Duchamp, in fact) causing the object to be included in the canonical pantheon. Without discussing here how felicitous the naming conditions are, but just recalling the witty naming of Magritte's collage which reads *Ceci n'est pas une pipe* while featuring a pipe visually, we wish to look at the linguistic presuppositions of the artistic naming. It is obvious that what is exhibited is primarily *the knowledge about* what should constitute art, being denoted as such, and not an intrinsically perceivable object presented so as to secure one's *acquaintance with it*. Such an exhibit features the felicity conditions for the naming of artistically ironical unique objects. They are artful objects created by the felicitous ruse of the skilful artists when they turn critics. Consequently, these objects are omniscient, dictatorial[5], self-reflexive exhibits of speech acts, too. As self-descriptions they feature the knowledge of art criticism, namely they are self-reflexive, in, now, post-modernist terms. Which is the reason why the ironical artistic experiments create, whether in literature or in the visual arts, what Bertrand Russell called definite descriptions (and what Strawson explained further in his theory of descriptions, for which see his 1950 study "On Referring"). By focusing on intertextuality as a specifically modern device for literary cross-reference, it is possible to look more closely into this mode of signification. One can explain how the new, unique reference names of art's objects are constituted and how they insert themselves nominally and factually in the archives of the durable tradition. The modern, experimental literary game conveys *acquaintance with things* (through their direct presentation) side by side with *knowledge about things* (which makes us only reach things through denoting phrases). The model for understanding this transfer should take into consideration the following passage at the beginning of Russell's text "On Denotation":

> The distinction between *acquaintance* and *knowledge about* is the distinction between the things we have presentations of, and the things we only reach by means of denoting phrases […] In perception we have acquaintance with objects of perception, and in thought we have acquaintance with objects of a more abstract logical character (Russell 479).

What we could call "the manneristic naming" of experimental art creates definite descriptions which give both general artistic knowledge and particular acquaintance in the same gesture. They impart the momentary (but no longer transient) virtues of perception to thought, and vice-versa. They derive their uniqueness from the way they associate the acquaintance and the knowledge in the act of naming. The acquaintance with the proper name is mediated or granted, by the way it is associated with the knowledge frame. This frame draws upon the universal, common knowledge and therefore is to be received reflectively by its partakers (in the case of visual art, by the onlookers).The self-reflexive gesturing of the experimental *objets d'art* ensures that the power of the new is perceived as such; it ideally constitutes a durable way of being new and becoming emancipated from any kind of consensus. Since the self-reflexive naming is the way of evoking universal contexts for claiming uniqueness for whatever is offered also to the direct acquaintance in perception, this self-reflexive, definite part of the unique object's description installs uniqueness lastingly in the universal, consensual world we inhabit. Naming advertises any transient aspects of perception as durable.

For literature, we have singled out intertextuality as the means to install the new through a collage of critical and ironical naming. We shall compare the brands of critical and ironical self-reflexive naming in (literary) art's modernist and neo-modernist practices, which create different (literary) styles. Because art's naming is a means of thwarting the merely consensual acquaintance with things, in the act of creating new, proper names or unique reference objects (which have been called artifacts in literary modernism, and installations or ready-mades in postmodernism), and because this leads to the creation of a new set of "pastoral" names within the "sheepfold" of the modern civilization, our study sets out to

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[5] We recall Hugo Friedrich's study *Structure of the Modern Lyric* which put the term dictatorial imagination in circulation, as a general feature of the emerging and enduring modern in the poetic art.

explore the reconciliation made possible in (literary) art between consensual durability and artistic transience.

In what follows we look at some instances of the *ad hoc*, specialized techniques of denotation employed in modern literary art when it creates meaning by providing that species of lasting proper names called definite descriptions.

Intertextuality as a Constitutive Strategy of the (Post-)Modern(ist) Acts of Naming

Our work hypothesis is that intertextual reference can be used as a means for effecting the reconciliation between the modern styles, as it is the tool for specialized denotation in practically all recently modern literary art, just as collage is. Seeing intertextuality at work, we will consider the consequences of transiently ignoring the power of the prefix "post-"[6] in the otherwise time-resistant, durable label of post-modernism.

From the historical and typological perspective, the intertextual framing is constantly and characteristically employed throughout the 20th century (in what we would like to call the three distinctively modern styles: high-modernism, in the first three decades, neo-modernism in the middle, or inter-war period, and the self-styled durable trend of post-modernism, in the years after 1945). In view of this, intertextuality can be considered as a device for interacting with the modern tradition. In Britain, intertextuality was used in the 1920s copiously (and famously, too, in high-modernist texts such as *The Waste Land* and *Ulysses*, or less famously in Virginia Woolf's *Orlando*); it was used starting from the 1930s in the neo-modernist dystopian parables, in Huxley's *Brave New World,* in Orwell's *Animal Farm* and *1984*, in Golding's *Lord of the Flies* or Dorris Lessing's *Memoirs of a Survivor*; but it was also resorted to in the 1969 Darwinian *cum* Victorian post-modernist pastiche of Fowles's *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, becoming the state of the art device of all the British fictional productions of the 1980s: at the beginning, in 1981, Alisdair Gray's *Lanark* and Graham Swift's *Waterland*, in the middle of the decade, Angela Carter's 1984 *Nights at the Circus*, or Peter Ackroyd's *Hawksmoor* (1985), and at the end, Julian Barnes's 1989 *A History of the World in 10 ½ Chapters.*

Recalling that, from a formalist perspective, intertextuality creates its definite descriptions structuring them discontinuously, just as collage does, and serves exactly as the descriptive part of the definite descriptions, it is fair to start our analysis from one typological and historical implication of the intertextual-definite-description-model. Intertextuality gives (or features) the modern background universally at the same time when the new is announced as something unique (con)textually. The relationship between the foreground and the background in the intertextual descriptions of modern art amounts to a study of each individual text's relationship with what preceded it within "the tradition of the new", as it was called, in America, by Harold Rosenberg, in the homonymous book of 1959. The form of this relation with the tradition shapes art's new modes of denotation and, at the same time, the individual instances of new denotation.

Practically, while reading, if one follows the underpinning intertextualities, one can surprise the moment when the new meaning springs forth by carving and inserting itself in the tradition of the new (i.e., the experimental tradition). Expressing things in the linguistic jargon, we can say that this is so because the intertextual reading rule provides the context for the artistic recategorization or naming proposed spontaneously but not transiently, in order to last longer than the moment. The moment the reader, a knowledgeable perceiver of the literary art game, has paid due attention to the rational game of intertextualities, s/he is entitled to enter the literary naming game more durably, as a connoisseur of the

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[6] I have decided to tamper with the prefix "post-", which is a transience prefix in the wake of arguing, more extensively, in my PhD dissertation titled *Modernity after 1945: Argument in favour of Introducing an Architext of (Post-) Modernity,* The Bucharest University Press, 2008, that there exist enough theoretical narratives at the end of the 20th century that permit bracketing the prefix "post".

tradition, on a par with the (literary) artist. It is this moment that the study of intertextuality tries to capture, in proving how the reader is helped understand the meaning[7] of the traditional and local literary denotations which are woven into the structure of the individual literary artifacts of modernism, or which insinuate themselves in the postmodernist metafictional conglomerates, making them function just like the installations and ready-mades put in circulation in the galleries of the 20th century visual art.

Intertextuality at Work in the Metatext of the Modernist Epics and Emblems, in the Neo-Modernist Poetry Dystopian Parables and Vignettes, and in Postmodernist Metafiction

T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* is one early 20th century text famous for the way it used copious side descriptions in order to ensure that its new modes of intertextual denotation made sense for the readership. This text appeared as a macropedia of literature, with its copious Notes which indicated that it should be read as a text giving knowledge about things before it could hope to give acquaintance with them (in Russell's expression). The division of the reader's attention between the music of the verse and the allusions of the cultural background made the reading process painful, "over-durative" and made the processes of its spontaneous, transient perception monstrously difficult. The perception of the general, compositional lines was seriously impaired by the need to refer to the footnotes or endnotes to the poem all the time. In a way that cannot but shock the readers of the present text, this makes us feel like saying that, through its notes, Eliot's *Waste Land* read as a Victorian text! Firstly because it delivered its artistic message in two installments: the verse and the prose ones: the experimental *chef d'oeuvre* and the culturalist lesson which the Notes represent. The second (and last!) installment was the naming frame given in the notes. In this respect *The Waste Land* presented itself as a clumsy proper name of art, and a clumsy definite description, in so far as it came *followed* by its self-reflexive frame description, rather than *embedded* in it, or framed by it. Eliot "dubbed" the inherent artistry of his completed artifact by an appendix where he was actually quoting the things he had been successfully naming and had only just been naming them. In the age of postmodernism, the publication of such a rich "literary echo-chamber" (the term pertains to Dame Helen Gardner's *The Art of T. S. Eliot*, and we can safely call it today a metaliterary text or in short a metatext*)* accompanied with notes would have been self-defeating and unconceivable for the creative naming of this unique work.

Thinking about intertextuality historically, this indicates that at the time of Eliot's modernist heroic epic, the intertextual convention had not yet become entrenched, (durable enough to be perceived). Because he feared the name would not function felicitously, Eliot over-explained his local and transient intertextual dovetailing of literary allusion with literary explicit structures in order to make it durable. But need he have done so? Because of the copious notes to *The Waste Land*, and its mise-en-abîme symbolism and expressive technique, we cannot tell today at what moment precisely the accumulation of parallel intertextual associations[8] amounts to the perception of, acquaintance with, or desirable knowledge about, the strategies of imitation which constitute the new-naming structure of art objects in the modern age. The naming credibility of the (post-)modern(ist) literary work, its power and meaningfulness, depends upon its capacity to articulate coherently the intertextual choices from the tradition, to motivate them, to subsume them to an overall intention. In principle, the intertextually constituted metatext yields its meaning after the perception of the imitations/allusions and their analysis, both structural and notional; this will define the intention governing the text, just like the descriptive part of a definite description, explaining its nature as a metatext. This goes to show how the intertextual mode of denoting makes the

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[7] Allan Tate would definitely call it the texture of the literary denotations, and the early 20th c. structuralists would call it the overall connotation of the literary works!

[8] We need to stress that the intertextual association is by no means free, but intellectually motivated, deliberate, rational and aware, as the serious, monumental plan of the notes to *The Waste Land* demonstrates.

reader decode the background reference, or the descriptive part of the new name, before s/he can acquaint her-/himself fully or satisfactorily with the foreground.

The background, therefore, should not be made either too crowded with allusion, or too accessible, for striking a satisfactory balance between the background and the foreground. In view of this, we can compare what happens in various well-known British 20th century texts, as regards how and at what precise point in time they yield their intertextualities.

As is to be expected, the great shorter poems of high modernism install their intertextual gestures more easily, and so do the neo-modernist parables or vignettes[9].

The famous emblems[10] represented by Yeats' *Sailing to Byzantium*, *Leda and the Swan*, *The Second Coming* – which latter poem should be read in conjunction with an earlier and less well known poem *The Magi,* if it is to yield its full meaning as an intertextual emblem – proffer their intertextuality as early as the title. It goes without saying that this has a very satisfactory effect for the readers who are both instructed, as knowledge goes, and delighted, as the perceptive acquaintance goes, in a swift and smooth manner; for they receive the information and acquaintance in the same satisfactory gesture, both in the transient, or spontaneous ways, and by being made aware in an enduring way.

We will illustrate the self-contained eloquence of the intertextual literary emblem in *The Second Coming*. Like collages in general, and like all the other Yeatsian violent visions (or prophecies), *The Second Coming* yokes together, by little violence and a lot of hermeneutic prowess, the immediate present (the inter-war atmosphere of dejection and panic) to the Christian and pagan prophetic words. By its other, more hidden intertextuality, *The Second Coming* is tied to the Shelleyan image of the sonnet *Ozymandias,* which proffers at the same time an image and an intertext. The text's inspiration is drawn from the Shelleyan image of a remote cultural age, the age of the Pharaohs, which is made even more remote by its re-presentation in a waste landscape of scattered limbs. In general, the propensity Yeats feels for writing in intertextuality with remoter cultural ages and images has the effect of twisting every known thing with his dictatorial, modern imagination. In the philosophy of language terms, by his intertextual re-presentation and re-description, Yeats generates a striking, experimental and fresh acquaintance with the known (universal) world. In Thierry de Duve's sense, Yeats renames the images of the tradition(s), redefining, recategorizing them by a local, concrete, even unique reference in order to turn them into Yeatsian proper names. The proper name part at the poems' core, their perceivable image, is both visibly and durably embedded in the tradition. The denoting power of the part which constitutes the genuine proper name (the perceivable image) is enhanced by the recognition of the universal description part, or public part, by the implied consensus.

The analogy to collage indicates that there exists collaboration, not contradiction, between the frame and the image – so the local intertextuality is not ironical. The modernist intertextuality generates knowledge by the image's resonance and fusion with the frame. In *The Second Coming,* the panorama of the Christian dispensations and the Shelleyan panorama of historical loss and destruction resonate together to deepen the reflection upon the panorama of the scattered limbs of post-war Europe, resembling those of Pharaoh Ozymandias. Here, the intertextual self-reflexive naming is deeply

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[9] In the restricted space of this paper we can only state that the neo-modernist dystopian parables develop a single-minded intertextual relationship analogically. This makes them be as easily paraphrasable as the other sermonic, mid-20th century poems that we call vignettes: minor poems that often sound like disturbing convivial conversations in the margin of a general intellectual theme (for example the poem *Musee des Beaux Arts* by W.H. Auden or Stevie Smith's *Not Waving but Drowning)*.

[10] In teaching Yeats's artifacts to students, I have experimented with calling them emblems, considering both their aristocratic Anglo-Irish heraldic intentions and their observance of the pre-Raphaelites' palimpsestic fashion; to these I have added the knowledge of emblems put in circulation by the now fashionable 17th and 18th century studies of the visual and the written material combined in the emblematic tradition, followed by such studies since the early stages of the *longue durée* age of printing.

meditative – or simply reflexive (beside being technically self-reflexive). Or, in other words, the analogy of the two ages is complete, which is satisfactory both for the mind and for the perception, both for the knowledge about the named things, and for the acquaintance with them. This constitutes an example of intertextuality that supports critical reflexivity, extending a new thought from its core, creating meaning while naming, in the act of transmitting denotations. This intertextual reflexivity does not reflect the surfaces in a witty game of local irony; rather, it stages a tragic irony game. It represents a bottom-reaching reflexivity, at most being obtained by refraction, not by simple reflection or by the mirroring of tradition's *loci,* as it happens in post-modernist metatexts. In Russell's terms, the modernist metatexts foreground the acquaintance with tradition, not the knowledge about it with their deeply reflective intertextuality.

As we can see things today, after so much post-modernist reading, in the artistic game of transience competing with durability, the high-modernist encyclopaedic link with effective history, as Gadamer formalized it, grants that durability is stressed rather than transience. This is precisely as prescribed by T. S. Eliot in his essay *Tradition and the Individual Talent*. Art's action can perform the transfer between durability and transience. The tight intertextual connection provides the conditions for the felicitous, though paradoxical naming. Paradoxically[11], by the time the towers of London, Vienna and Alexandria are collapsing in the last part of *The Waste Land*, signaling the waste of the material, historical civilization, a durable link with the tradition has been established in the poem's text. One link is between the Western tradition, both literary and religious, and the Oriental spirituality. Another link is created between an enduring past and a collapsing present, which can be perceived at the same reading time. Through its open ending, the poem also allows its readers to soar over dejection into aesthetic catharsis: by being contaminated with the need to wait for rain outside the dungeon of the poem's echoes; by seeking the third cloaked figure walking in step, but further away than them, with the apostles on their way to Emmaus. (This is because, if it is read anthropologically, as the notes invite one, Eliot's poem is a ritual, or religious, one. And this means forgiving the merely sermonic power of the appended notes, while it does not constitute a full return to the lay, literary power that the text should have).

The centripetal proper naming of art, at the heart of the intertextual quotations that form the poetic frame, makes the reflexive and intuitive meanings resonate together. The modernist poem is based upon paradox which is a way of soldering meanings.

Similarly, the sermonic power of Yeats's reflection in *The Second Coming* solders the pastiche of Shelley's sonnet *Ozymandias,* with its panoramic historical dimension, to the triple literary dirge for the loss of the present, the loss of the past and the loss of the future. The panoramic vision concerning the irredeemable remoteness of dead civilizations is applied to the present, framing it intertextually. Consequently, the general literary *ubi sunt* theme gives a metatextual dimension to the present; this also bears upon the sermonic (and archetypal) Christian image about the modern people's heart of stone, which is worthy of no other Second Coming than that of a devouring Sphinx. Just as in Eliot's *Waste Land*, while declaring that the wasted centre cannot hold, Yeats was constructing a solid, durable aesthetic core of enduring meanings. Like all definite descriptions, the resulting poem holds a genuine and also a paradoxical proper name in between the conventional means employed for citing it. The intertextual link is responsible for the complete, durable transfer between the consensual, universal meanings and the completely new switches within the tradition, which yield new meanings and new names.

By a similarly typical opening towards the universal of the proper name framed by a definite description, Virginia Woolf's fiction extends the representation of a day, and of particular lives, in London so that her representation acquires typological, universal dimensions. By the same token, Joyce's *Ulysses* represents the artfully artistic extension of the local present life in Dublin and of modern

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[11] This recurrent use of the word "paradox" supports the American New Critics' intuitions about what constitutes modern literariness.

everyday life in the metropolis to the universal scale, superimposing on it the classical Odyssey metanarrative.

Just as collages, modernist emblems, on the other hand, resist reduction to monological meanings. Their meanings can be accounted for, but not exhausted (too easily). Whether they pertain to the epic genre in verse, or in fiction, or whether they represent intensely lyrical emblems, there is universal reflection radiating from inside history and not just historiographic commentary in the high-modernist metatexts.

In the postmodernist collages, by contrast, a more discursive kind of reflexivity is summoned to make a difference in the tradition. Here, the anti-ideological reflexive agenda gets the upper hand of art's free play (which, in terms of the present paper, could be termed "free naming"). Because postmodernism sets out to erode the grand narratives precisely with the narrative tools, its intertextualities are more difficult to decode. There is not enough distinctiveness of the media collaborating in the intertextual game, which risks making the naming collage hard to perceive. Firstly, because it is hard to articulate harmoniously two such long-winded narrativities: the textual one and the metatextual, discursive one. For this reason, the metafictional conglomerate of the historiographic metanarrative is heavy, ungraceful while being meaningful, over-meaningful even. Reading metafiction one risks having to put up with two kinds of discursiveness, situated in an intertextual relationship. On the one hand, you are forced to read an extensive prose-narrative that is artificially broken in order to make room for the intertextual, extra-diegetic comment. On the other hand, you must needs evoke the prototype metanarrative as imprinted on the broken – though not yet scattered! – limbs of the text.

The result is not a paradoxical name, but, as we contend, an under-determined definite description, caused by the necessity for the postmodernist collage to work by ironical framing. The intertextual means are played against each other on a very uncertain stage. It takes a lot of time for threads to converge in one point.

To illustrate these last remarks, we can consider, as invited by literary pragmatics, the relationships that obtain between some post-modernist novels' titles and the body of their text. The title, predictably, contains the stimulus for the proliferation of the books' strings of intertextualities. For example, in Angela Carter's *Nights at the Circus,* we are invited to read an inexhaustible series of circus-like transformations. But the transformations of Fevvers and Walser, the two pretexts for the fictional proliferation, are completely implausible – just as the sensational transformations in a circus are. The two protagonists are just like newspaper clippings: a sensational British trapeze aerialist of the 19th century and an impassive late 20th century professional American journalist[12]. This invites the reader to decode the first tier of the pastiches in Angela Carter's *tour de force*: Fevvers is the pretext for the Victorian popular pantomime show, while Walser's positioning in the circus at the turn of the 19th century inspires a pastiche of Henry James' staging of the Old World / New World oppositions. In the novel's first part, besides this framing of the story within a story, the characters and plots read as if someone had instilled life in them half-heartedly. (This is so paradoxically because of the sensational way in which the Cockney Venus is drawn and overdrawn to support the implied author's need to …compulsively repeat the metafictional question "was she fact, or is she fiction"; in …fact, or …in meta-fictional terms, this leitmotif only serves as a marker of the intertextual replication of the extra-textual revolution in the understanding of the literary art, which was theorized just a little while later, in 1986 and 1988 respectively, in Linda Hutcheon's *Politics* and *Poetics of Postmodernism*). As a result, the reader has no

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[12] Angela Carter's readers (especially the academic ones) will have already grown accustomed with the post-imperial sandwiches that articulated (more often than not in impossible plots, characters and settings) elements deriving from the 20th century and 19th century life-worlds after the publication of *The French Lieutenant's Woman, Waterland* or *Hawksmoor* (to quote only some of the historiographic conglomerates as British literary meta-forms playing upon the theme of national history).

need to remain in acquaintance with the characters (which are, nevertheless, supposed to accompany you throughout the longish narrative development).

In other words, the recognition of the self-reflexive fact that the narrative features a cheap, trifling romance plot with stock characters, just like plots in circus shows is not enough to justify the proliferation of the prose cast in the form of the long novelistic form. It feels as if the novelistic form could not accommodate the meaning. This metafictional construct stages a romance version of the literary history (that we can also call a pastoral metafiction, a literary historiography). But the stage of this defeatist literary document of the 20th century[13] is too frail, for all its culturalogical[14] metafictional ambitions). Consequently, one can grow tired of the shifting places and populations (of clowns, animals and their tamers) at random. This pageant of transience seemingly refuses to meet the felicity conditions for an enduring reading contract, while it defies the readers eager to get acquainted with its objects.

This suggests the second interpretation of the metafictional conglomerate: maybe the book is written intertextually so as taunt the reader by offering her/him for direct perception an impossible object, structured exactly like the cheap illusions in the circus. In the technical terms of this study's introductions, it can be said that Carter intended her book as an illustration engulfing the text, like a frame. It feels as if the pipe in Magritte's illusionist exhibit were trying to get itself over-inscribed as an impossible ironical object superimposed on the readable text. The effect is one of heavy charm deriving from the slippery, broken surface of the book on which the reader has to move. There are intertextualities underwriting each chapter, each part and each detail of the book, fragmenting it and making it extremely dense in allusions. The intertextual relationships between the parts show that they are constructed in the mirror with each other as variations upon the theme of popular entertainment, in several traditions. In this respect, the postmodernist use of traditions in intertextuality is polytropic.

But luckily for Angela Carter's never ending, never deceased book, it is not only the knowledge about the various traditions in literature that seems to justify the conglomerate. Another thing that keeps together its numerous intertextualities in a totalizing gesture, a gesture that is meant to dwell in our minds as a result of making its acquaintance is its sophisticated feminism. This is what eventually pastes together the multiple copy operations and copies (you can call them pastiches) of the national British tradition. In the book's first part, the postmodern literary circus applies its sometimes nauseatingly grotesque parody to the set of effeminate, feminine sentimental entertainments in which Fevvers acts like a lightning rod abating and thwarting all the sexist male clichés about women and all the grounds of hatred imaginable both for and of the feminine lot. In the book's second part, when the circus moves or migrates to Siberia, as all circuses do, we are taken to the opposite region of male paradigmatic pretense treated by a sadistic brand of feminism that amounts to the literary brand of savage irony. If in the first part the pastiches represent instances of mild, Horatian satire (with the British heritage and the national literary entertainments of the 19th century as targets for this irony), the pastiches of the second part

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[13] In passing we must note that the same predictable frame of 20th century historiographic skepticisms revisits the sites of historical and cultural romance pertaining to the Victorian age in *The French Lieutenant's Woman;* it revisits the police archives documenting the London sites of 18th century criminality in London's Spitalfields together with the chronicle of the 18th century architectural business and splendor in Peter Ackroyd's *Hawksmoor*; it casts us in the opposite of the magnetic trance in Julian Barnes's *History of the World in 10 ½ Chapters,* where the panorama of historical debunking reaches a universal peak. One ends up preferring the predictable density of the neo-modernist dystopian sermons in the mid 20th century to the diluted dystopias at the end of what Northrop Frye had called the ironical mode in literature in the first Essay of the *Anatomy of Criticism* or the mythos of satire and irony, in the Third Essay!

[14] According to the second chapter of the first part of my PhD dissertation (Zirra 97), culturalogies are interdisciplinary postmodern theories which shape anew a field of knowledge by creating figures or emblems and by associating images, motifs and themes pertaining to the respective fields. Most of the New Historicist accounts constitute culturalogies, for example.

amount to a satire in the vein of Petronius, being extravagantly savage, because, perhaps dominated by the *sparagmos* segment of the archetypal plot. In the second part we are confronted by a mock Christ cast as the all-powerful buffoon, Buffo the Terrible. The literary panorama we are invited to be acquainted with is somberer; but it is very gratifying as the knowledge of literature's conventions through intertextualities is concerned. This is so because by the time the second circus installment moves to the cold pole of Siberia, from the national haven of London, we seem to acknowledge the presence of a highly familiar, highly ironical device. Angela Carter's local literary panorama may well have been intended as a replication (you can read a postmodernist pastiche) of the "Oxen of the Sun" episode in *Ulysses.* On the other hand, we seem to hear, also from the background, the terrible prophetic voice of the Nietzschean Zarathustra almost all of the time.

The third part of the book can be acknowledged as a *tour de force* from the specialized point of view of the postmodernist logic not through its intertextualities, but through its infringement of the literal narrative level laws of plausibility (the entire plot thus debunked functions as a mere collage). At the first reading level, the escape of our protagonists to the third part of the book from the second part and its last episode is completely implausible: all our familiar/known characters and acquaintances and friends are allowed to escape in a toy train from the almost certain immolation scene set in a windowless space, where Fevvers' wings cannot exert their miraculous powers, so as to help her escape from the sacrificial scene planned by a would-be husband – who is just about to bring the moment to its crisis, by a consummation for him devoutly to be wished; he is about to kill her in a sacrificial ritual that intextually replicates Angela Carter's own short story in *The Bloody Chamber*. This huge incongruence by the plausibility standards invites the reader to take the leap from the intra-diegetic level where the fake bride is about to be subjected to a sadomasochistic rite of passage to the rite of passage (or the naming ritual that can single out the book) where the implied author of the text also saves the metanarrative, extra-diegetically, from the enormities of both the sentimental and the sexist traditions. It is only when such realizations in connection with the satirical text's reading have successfully been acknowledged (as parts of the felicitous naming) that we can also accept, as readers, the new set of parodies proposed in the third part, where the popular entertainment pageant moves to the cinematic Wilde West, and the genders are allowed to cooperate on the soil of the American Western circus. This makes us further accept the end of the book when, as first-level, intra-diegetic characters, Fevvers and Walser remain stuck in our minds as united in an impossible happy ending love-story between a self-willed virago and a too predictable, too conventional numbskull male. Although unable to make us perceive this (with our sensibility), because the book's design resembles a mimic diagram (or a pageant) of intertextual devices, at a general intellectual level, Angela Carter's book wishes its readers to reflect upon the theoretical, possible world accommodation of the male to the female paradigm and vice versa, so that the virago be tamed and become the virgin and angel she had always borne at the core of her being , and so that the stiff male be tamed too, to lose his prejudices and so as not to play any more stock roles. But in spite of the book's ingenious, rich intertextualities, and of its title that sceptically equates life not with a stage only, but also with a circus, this reader regrets the absence of the more genuine illusion fictionally extended, as a rule, by any really coherent, *bona-fide* literary work, a work which not only declares itself a narrative, but also refers to the world as narratives do.

Conclusion

To fulfil the first promise of this paper's title, which constituted the equivalent of an artist's proper name, a return to the historical and typological aspects of literature in an age declaring itself post-modernist is in order by way of conclusion. Historically speaking, after a sufficient accumulation of ambitiously skilful experiments in modern art, which caused its being instituted as the tradition of the

new[15] (that began with the 19th century intention of subverting the bourgeois taste, continued with the decadent aestheticism phase, and successfully turned into the avant-gardes' art of the 20th century), we are confronted with the dreamy and also raw ironies of surrealism. Here is inserted the 1929 exhibit by Magritte, in the salon whose theme was *Les mots et les choses*[16], of the picture with both the pipe and the words *Ceci n'est pas une pipe.* When reading today the desire to make an ironic collage of the durable commonsense and the transient gesture, we realize that by the beginning of the 20th century the shocking dictate of the artistic choice was no longer directed against the bourgeois mass spirit but it already had the power of a self-reflexive gesture wishing to indicate the nature of artistic communication inherent in the naming gesture. This means that postmodern art's self-reflexive gesturing uses precisely the same structural devices as all collages and emblems when it pastes texts that reflect each other in ironical or critical intertextual or reciprocal images. And the radical craftsmanship of postmodernism, just as that of modernism or neo-modernism, is directed at most against the non-artistic mainstream conventionalism threatening all artistically disposed onlookers – *des semblables, des frères*.

　　　Also, as a final homage to authorities that are both anti-traditionally and traditionally creative, we want to commend Thierry de Duve for enabling this paper to return from the self-proclaimed end of the modern (that the post-modern/ist/s claim) to the beginnings of modern mature philosophy (with Kant) so as to offer a convenient *longue durée* explanation of modern art's processes, looking at what is durable in the modern ways of courting and using transience for its surprising effects.

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[15] To borrow the title of Harold Rosenberg's 1964 book about the American post-war artists.

[16] And the name had not been given to it by Michel Foucault, for certain!