Introduction:
Against Assimilation
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> *Wolf (to an audience of other animals):* "You and you and you: come back here tomorrow morning, and I will eat you!"
> *Rabbit (raises its paw)*: "Can I also *not* come?"
> *Wolf (indifferently)*: "Sure."
>
> (Russian joke)

> "What is a shoe?"
>
> (Watson)

More Action in the Reading Zone!

A scan of the MLA convention program or of recent titles published by academic presses will generate a fair number of hits for the word 'reading.' Literacy is recognized as an important 'basic skill' for school children and college students alike, and it is presumably also something we as literary scholars still do. Yet only rarely will our search yield an interrogation of the process of reading itself: its constraints, its freedoms, its embodied nature, its strategic potential, and its utter indispensability to any effort to *make sense*. Instead of consciously exploring and embracing those possibilities, instead of flexing our readerly muscles and putting our imaginations into play, current interpretive practice tends to remain flat and unreflectively text-centered.[1] An untold wealth of other possibilities remains almost entirely off the radar, unclaimed. Texts or literary works are once again customarily treated as documents from which readers are to retrieve 'information,' or even as a set of data to be processed and mined by computers.[2] Analyses of how language, tropes, rhetoric, and various textual signals can

shape our thinking and our readerly responses are severely underdeveloped, as existing approaches are cast aside instead of being developed further.[3] Entirely missing from the current conversation is also the inverse discourse, one that recognizes and explores the many ways in which readers act upon, shape, and *transform* the texts they read or cite.[4] To remedy this, we have to free ourselves from the fixation on the textual 'object,' its primacy and putative 'content,' and explore the many different ways in which we interact with, transform, and *do things* with texts. Books, tropes, canons, institutions, reading economies, and readers themselves form complex, mobile, and affectively charged assemblages, play-grounds for action where power both is exercised and can be resisted. As we will see below, for instance, citations can take on completely new aspects if we dispense with the notion that to cite a sentence is merely to *say again* what its 'author' already said earlier, and instead probe the agency that is involved in *deciding to repeat* it. Critical and imaginative thinking about our interactions with language is needed to open such new possibilities.

Discipline and Power

Nor is reading only about the interactions between ourselves and the written signs before us. It is also, at least as importantly, about the interactions between us. Meaning, significance, truth are negotiated socially between readers, and in that process, power relations are brought to bear, credibility is conferred or contested, voices are amplified or silenced, interpretive practices are declared obligatory, dismissed as unacceptable, or anything in between.[5] Much is at stake when, in such conflicts, the louder voices, the socially and symbolically empowered ones, arrogate to themselves the right to decide what an important text 'actually says,' and to decree which competing readerly perspectives do or 'do not make sense.' Texts do not and cannot 'mean' by themselves. What they are allowed to signify in a larger cultural, social, or political field is always the outcome of such negotiations. But despite their utter importance, we do not know how to read *for* the roles of these readerly strategies, *for* the struggles to establish one kind of sense against another, and *for* the very radical shifts we

can effect by including these concerns in our thinking about language and textuality. The exaggerated focus on the textual object and the 'information' to be found 'in' it, eclipses those struggles and makes us oblivious to the agency of other readers and, even more detrimentally, our own.

Writing Encodes not Information, but Processes

And finally, we need to perceive the dynamic relation of mutual reinforcement between texts, literary traditions, and certain readerly habits. Writing was invented by human civilizations to support our memories, store information, keep accounts, and write everything from receipts and contracts to graffiti, from holy books or experimental poetry to computer programs. Written on clay, papyrus, silk, bamboo, stone, paper, or encoded as rows of zeroes and ones, the many scripts of the world have given rise to archives, libraries, and literary canons. But they also have generated codices of law, bureaucracies, Twitter bots, Google, and killer drones. Writing pervades and utterly shapes the worlds we live in, and it has for millennia driven not only technological, but also social, psychological, and even physiological processes: it has shaped both our societies and cultures, and our very brains (cf. e.g. Goody, Dehaene, Malabou). Its impacts and consequences by far exceed the humble purpose of 'notating information' for which we thought we invented it. Writing systems give rise to what we can call *autopoietic* dynamics (cf. Luhmann, 1990). They distribute their benefits unevenly and create feedback loops that further exacerbate the resulting differences.

Anything written needs us, the living. Without coming to life and to mind— our minds—by being read, cited, applied, actualized, and enforced, any conventional type of writing is un-signifying and inert. The "world on paper" (cf. Hawkins, 2002) depends on us, its significations must be conferred and negotiated. That is why any system of writing, as well as any literary tradition, strives to reach beyond the page into our minds, lives, and societies. It does so most successfully—and this is the crucial feedback loop driving its autopoiesis— by cultivating a select population of initiates: from the scribes and priests in Mesopotamia or Egypt to the inner circles of Google, Facebook, or Amazon.

Writing systems confer clout on those who serve as its functionaries, and this synergy further reinforces the sway of these initiates over the rest of us. The list of those interests is topped by the desire *to keep the apparatus going*, since that is the central interest shared both by the apparatus and those it cultivates and who benefit from it. In short: we may have invented writing to make use of it, but it has always also been *making use of us*. Written language, literary language, has long *mit Lesern gerechnet* ("anticipated / calculated with readers"). We have to fully take in the ambiguity of that verb. Literary traditions (and the cultures they engender) domesticate and discipline the populations they circulate in, and that circulate through them. They program us.

To do so, they have given rise to intricate mechanisms for controlling, directing, disciplining, and harnessing human populations in their service. They are *apparatuses,* and as long as we do not know how to read them *as such*, we will be helpless to resist.[6] We need to realize, therefore, that *all* writing*,* not just digital writing, is a type of programming. It encodes not just information, but *processes.*[7] And secondly, we need to realize that *we have always already been part of those processes*. We have been programmed to keep the apparatus going that has domesticated us.

We are the Target

We are the contested targets of writing systems—as individual human beings and as whole populations. This, too, has always been the case, but it comes into ever sharper focus in our current digital age. The goal of collecting and then crunching our data is not to enlighten the algorithm about our shopping preferences. It is to nudge *us* into one behavior rather than another, be it when shopping or voting. At stake are our own minds and actions. This is increasingly apparent in what has been called the *attention economy* of the internet. We are beginning to wake up to the ways we are enclosed in information bubbles, and to the fact that our digitized world, with all of its networked devices, our smart cars, homes, refrigerators, and vacuum cleaners, is morphing into the most inescapable surveillance apparatus in the history of the world. But once again,

what interests us here is that what is true of Google & Co. applies in comparable ways to most other writing systems, including literary traditions. All writing systems are to a large degree biopolitical apparatuses that steer the actions of living human beings and—in the context of literature—readers.

Realizing that we ourselves are the contested prize should give us pause—but also some leverage. Because these apparatuses *work the better the less we are aware of them.* Waking up to them is therefore a first step towards change. To begin to discern these processes requires critical, imaginative, self-reflexive, and theoretically circumspect thinking that takes into account that *how we read*, and *what we do with and to texts is already part of the apparatus.* We must become mindful of the ways in which we have been *scripted*—distributed and corralled by the apparatuses of writing. We must learn to experiment with our reading practices, probe new possibilities open to us, and test the consequences of divergent decisions. We also must think about our own needs, especially insofar as they differ from those of writing, and figure out how to assert them. And ultimately, we have to make strategic decisions regarding the design and re-design of those apparatuses: how have they developed, and how do we want to develop them from here on?[8] We have to begin by de-programming ourselves. The first step is to scrutinize the relation between the signals to which texts invite us to respond, our habitual responses, and alternatives to them.

U-Turn and New Readabilities

To reclaim our unpredictability and self-direction, we need to make a U-turn from our ingrained reading habits and wake up to our *difference from the text*. Only then can we make conscious use of our share in the workings of that apparatus. We need to break with the habit of self-distributing according to the grid-lines of interpellation and stop letting ourselves be used against each other. In our daily fencing matches with language, we must learn to consciously parry its interpellations, apostrophize its apostrophes, elude its lures and elide them instead. Instead of reading as though the texts were somehow entitled to our subservience, let us conceive of our embodied thinking and reading practice as

the "ground" (Bachmann; cf. Gölz 2012) that gave rise to writing in the first place, and that can shape and re-shape it. Writing is not a container, but a *means of production* for making sense. It invites our interpretive "action" (cf. Arendt).

In the articles below, we explore such a more conscious and strategic relation to texts: the complex terrains they lay out for readers, and the options we have to respond to or rewrite these. Training our attention not on not what a text "says," but how it endeavors to script our actions and shape our world, we discover ruses that have long been allowed to operate in obscurity—interpellations, rhetorical tropes, prefigurative scenarios, apotropaic feminizations, and indexical hot spots. As we see readers fall in line, the symbiosis between writing and its conscripts becomes readable. In rare but delightful cases, we also find evidence of decisions that support rather than hinder our efforts: texts that join and support our effort to break with that collusion and free ourselves from those apparatuses. The essays below begin to bring into view the powerful, coherent, and finely tuned apparatus designed to take us in. It is time to take it on, and to take it down.

For anyone who manages to turn this corner, the shift is enormous. The ruses that characterize even (or perhaps especially) some of the most canonical of texts become discernible. What we mistook for 'content' falls away, for there is no content.[9] What emerges instead is the airy scaffolding through which all things circulate, and that is designed to draw us, the living, into its net. We begin to notice the taut strings of habit, rote, and convention that rope us in and keep us tied to that skeletal mechanics, until we realize that we ourselves have created them. We begin to see the *process,* the mechanisms that were targeting our bodies and minds, and we can begin to extricate our imaginations.[10]

Now, poetic texts and literary histories take on a new appearance. Not only do hitherto unnoticed dimensions of figurative language and literary textuality emerge from the fog and stand out in stark contrast. We also begin to be able to read the decisions other readers (and writers). A sharp divide emerges between those who (in whatever capacity) perpetuate that apparatus—be it that

they are merely caught in it, be it that they do so knowingly and cynically—, and those who break with it and instead embrace their freedom to redesign the apparatus of language itself.

And yet, to term the type of reading we call for "new" is far from correct. As a matter of fact, it is not new at all. Its traces can be found throughout history. But those traces remain indiscernible to us unless we ourselves claim and enact our liberation from a regime of reading that has dulled our minds and conscripted our lives. Which brings us, finally and briefly, to the question of gender: the apparatus we begin to analyze here rests heavily on *gendered* signals both to attract readers to one and apotropaically to 'curse' other sites, and to distract from and cover textual sites that might otherwise provoke indexical readerly *consciousness*. Gender can be used in this way in a fundamentally patriarchal and often misogynist culture that is founded on the destruction of *her* right to think and read.[11] This bottom line can be traced through the deepest layers of the rhetorical and figurative makeup of European literary history. As a result, those who break with that order are very often (although not always and by no means necessarily) women writers. Faced with an apparatus that undermines, traps, destroys, and silences them at every turn, women have a strong motivation to develop critical analyses of the problem and revisionary strategies to counter it. Women writers are therefore the most helpful guides in our effort. Inversely, as we think along with and learn from them, we develop a conceptual framework that is indispensable for bringing to the fore the crucial contributions that many other women writers have made throughout literary history, contributions that have for the most part remained unreadable in a culture based on their dismissal. We have much to gain from reading the works of women in new ways and *for* the revisionary models they have already developed.

Overview over the Essays

The first essay, "Apostrophe's Double," was the keynote presentation at the conference. It uses an analysis of the trope of apostrophe to set the agenda for this issue. Apostrophe is the trope that has been explicitly said to intervene in

"the communicative circuit itself" (Culler *Pursuit* 135). Tropes, rhetorical devices, figurative language are all key to the workings of the apparatus we set out to analyze, and we must learn to read them and turn them (*verwenden*) in new ways. Rhetorical and literary tropes do not represent. Instead, they give subliminal hints that shape the symbolic and readerly spaces we inhabit.[12] When they manage to capture our imaginations, they prefigure the contours of our world. The trope of apostrophe, for instance, engineers our relations to each other by effectively installing a hierarchy between differentially interpellated subjects: it bribes some to disenfranchise others. The resulting pattern of destruction for the latter arguably is what Ingeborg Bachmann consistently calls the "war" and "murder" that pervades society even in peacetime. The chapter shows that Bachmann's poem "Anrufung des großen Bären" ("Invocation of the Great Bear") provides a critical analysis this function of apostrophe. It offers a step-by-step critical model of the workings of the trope that clarifies precisely how that disenfranchisement proceeds and ends on a surprising twist that shows how to respond to it: in the last stanza, apostrophe (as invocation) is turned on itself and re-read as apostrophe-as-deletion. Bachmann's poem points to the possibility that we, like the bold rabbit in the epigraph to this introduction, might simply *not show up* when language calls on us. That we might answer the summons of the apparatus with a disappearing act, turning *from* rather than *to* those interpellations. Only such a 'tearing loose' can free us from the grip of the apparatus, and *for* a critical perspective on it. It opens a radically different perception of the texts: only now, and if we extricate ourselves from its sway, can we begin to read the apparatus that used to subjugate and discipline us all. Only now can we see that the mainstay of control on which that apparatus used to rely were our own obedient responses to it: our dulled self-awareness, our mechanically performed mimesis. We let ourselves be turned into metaphors and anthropomorphisms, into foot soldiers in the *conquista* of writing.[13] It is time to de-colonize ourselves.

The next section of the article offers an analysis of Bachmann's practice of citation in her "Frankfurt Lectures." Her citation of a passage from Céline's

Journey to the End of the Night illustrates another aspect of her innovative practice with language. In a brilliant act of self-reflexive citation, Bachmann turns a passage from Céline's text (via selection, deletion, and allegorization) into a complex model for a new relation to and use of language. Here, too, the performance hinges on an elision, although in this case, what disappears is a piece of Céline's text. Bachmann edits, carefully selecting what she will cite and what she will not repeat. But even in its silenced and submerged form, the deleted passage—for those willing to seek it out—articulates the dangers it used to pose and thus shows why it had to be edited out. The part of the passage that is admitted into Bachmann's text also comments on that act of elision and points out why it was needed: it was necessary to survive the discovery of the "whole war."

The citation as a whole, just like the poem earlier, thus functions as a complex, layered, and self-reflexive *model* (rather than a mere flat "representation"). It articulates not states, but interdependent relations. The existing rhetorical regime confronts a writer like Bachmann with unacceptable choices. Her response is to relate to that whole complex consciously and sovereignly: she analyzes the problem, then edits and redesigns the apparatus itself.

What emerges by the end of the article is a clean break, a rift between two radically incompatible modes of interacting with language: one mode of reading continues to submit to the hierarchical discipline of Western writing, benefits from it, and both dutifully and mechanically enforces it on others. The other, by contrast, radically breaks with that discipline, claims its irreducible freedom, and invites us to do the same. The former exhort us to submit to the baton of the text as though it were a law of nature, *because those caught in it themselves cannot see any other way*. The latter bring to light the mechanisms of oppression, refuse to perform their share in them, and put alternative possibilities into action. The former are slaves of language, the latter can help free us to fundamentally redesign (our relation to) language. The titular "double" of apostrophe marks the turn from the former into the latter. The apostrophic interpellation and its attempt

to lay claim to our observance is edited out and replaced by a mark of disappearance: by the diacritical mark of apostrophe— ' —or by an ellipsis— …—. Both indicate that we have reached the limits of representation and will start thinking for ourselves.

Barbara Agnese's article "*War in Peacetime. Authorship between Bachmann and Ungaretti*" focuses on the theme of "war" and "murder," terms familiar to any reader of Ingeborg Bachmann's work. These words are frequently repeated in the scholarship on her work, yet rarely do critics seem to grasp the exact nature of the systematic destruction that those words signal, and even less do they tend to realize how immediately their own practice—*our* practice—may be implicated in the patterns of violence those terms decry, patterns that are in no way limited to what we conventionally recognize as "war." Barbara Agnese takes up these unrecognized "crimes in peacetime":

> In Bachmann's projected "series of novels," one leitmotif that unfolds from one novel to the next is a meticulous literary exploration of these "peacetime crimes," of crimes that are part and parcel of our daily lives, yet invisible through normalization. (Agnese 82)

Agnese's analysis shows that here, too, Bachmann's effort to trace this normalized and 'invisible' violence relies on a complex and self-reflexive practice of citation that invites us to trace a half-submerged and uncanny pattern of seemingly unmotivated deaths that share certain recurring characteristics. An important key to this web is Giuseppe Ungaretti's poem "In Memoria," which Agnese identifies here for the first time as an important intertext, and which turns out to be tightly woven into the fabric of Bachmann's novel *Malina.* In following the leads of Ungaretti's poem, Agnese traces a web of citations and allusions that opens onto a panorama of 20th-century wars that continue to reverberate through the novel and into the so-called "peace": Ungaretti's own exile from Egypt is echoed by that of his friend Mohammad from Algeria, who, renamed Marcel, becomes a character in the novel's Parisian topology that also inscribes Bachmann's own exile from Vienna, and that is thick with allusions to the Algerian war, the Second World War and the Holocaust, as well as haunted, last

but not least, by oblique but insistent references to Paul Celan and his suicide. Agnese shows how deeply and consciously the novel uses a web of citations and allusions to engage the history of 20ᵗʰ-century traumas and displacements.

In addition, all of the characters involved are, in so many different ways, exiles and displaced persons. All have changed cultures, languages, and even their names. All are wanderers between cultures and languages. None are fully literary nor fully historical, and none are merely past. They all cross multiple boundaries, and none of them is pure, clean, or entirely represented. To insist that sentences become univocal, citations be committed to one context, and each of us be cleanly placed, *is* precisely what is murderous: the clochard "Marcel," struck down by sudden death while 'merely' being 'cleaned,' bears witness to the murderous implications of such 'cleansing.' And what is true of the character is also true of the citations or allusions: they, too, point beyond what they appear to say, never fully present or represented in the text. Here, too, Bachmann's practice models and invites a conscious and "utopian" actualization:

> The act of quotation actualizes the text, recasts it, and infuses it with a new breath. In her *Frankfurt Lectures on Poetics* Bachmann refers to "literature as utopia," to literature as an art which "sets the Incomplete in motion" ("bringt das Unvollendete in Gang") … Literature is utopian precisely because it is never closed, never complete, always '*unvollendet*.' (Agnese 95)

Literature needs us, the living, for it to become significant again and again. The "Murder" takes place whenever this incompletion that gives us room to breathe *is denied*. Bachmann's utopia becomes a reality as soon as we learn to inhabit and embrace it, and to give the same breathing room to others.

Patrick Brown's article **"*Moderne Spiele*: Play and Gender in Walter Benjamin's 'Berlin Chronicle'"** contributes several key elements to our larger argument. Brown sets the stage with a scene from René Clair's film *Entr'acte:* two men are playing chess on a Paris rooftop. Suddenly, they see "Paris appearing in microcosm on their game board" (Brown 104). When water begins

to pour onto the game board, Paris is soon inundated as well: "The flood happens first in simulation, then in reality: the city has become strategically mapped game-space, and the game-board has become the origin point of everyday phenomena." (Brown 104) This scene models the concept of the "game-space" (*Spielraum*) that is at the heart of Brown's paper. It also aptly illustrates the relationship of *prefiguration* that reigns between textual configurations and social actualizations. The textual and rhetorical arrangements we encounter on paper are models—*Vorlagen*—that our mimetic practice is invited to follow.[14] If we keep obediently and uncritically reproducing the arrangements and hierarchies prefigured by the rhetorical game boards before us, they *become* our social reality. If we want to change our reality, we also need to reconfigure the scripts that our cultures and literatures confront us with.

The second important element that Brown's article brings to the table is an analysis of the gendered nature of the interpellative hierarchies that structure the reigning textual empire. In his reading of Benjamin's *Berlin Chronicle*, Brown points out how, much as in the film scene before, the built environment of the city of Berlin comes to model the textual space. Both function as 'habitable territory,' as game boards, as fields of possibilities for our mobile practice, and both contain meta-markers that are designed to direct our actualizing practices. They do not represent information but rather encode *processes* and *actions.* Benjamin's text recounts his childhood apprenticeship to the city, its sections, parks, thresholds, and signposts that demarcate different zones, and thus creates a textual labyrinth in which those spaces and figures recur. In reading, we, too, are being led through a spatialized and strategically structured labyrinth. However, as Brown convincingly argues, the territory Benjamin lays out is not level. Rather, the zones are demarcated with the help of gendered figures. Sexualized female figures in particular function as orienting signposts and markers, while movement and sovereignty are offered only to the reader miming the (male) subject.

Like the Dadaist film, Benjamin's memoiristic "Berlin Chronicle" (1930) conceptualizes the modern city-text in the age of cinema as a spatial

> game—a game dependent on the player's acceptance of a strict gender divide that positions feminized figures in fixed positions within the space of the text, and genders the reader, like Benjamin's author, as the masculine game-player. (Brown, 105)

This strict and operationalized gender divide, I would add, is strictly observed throughout Benjamin's poetics. It is a fundamental feature of his work to which the entire world of Benjamin-criticism has so far remained blind for precisely the reasons analyzed in this collection of essays. Benjamin scholars, too, need to become cognizant of the role gendered figures play in these strategies, rather than repeat and perpetuate them by obediently performing in terms of their binarism as they do now. Only a fundamental shift in perception of the kind we advocate in this issue can bring those hierarchical prefigurations—and their murderous consequences—to readability.

The third element, and the main focus of Brown's paper, is the concept of "play" and "*Spielraum* (variously translated as 'field-of-action' or 'leeway,' but literally 'room-for-play'" (Brown 104), which he situates in the context of the discourse on "play" in the Weimar Republic, but also in historically more distant areas, such as (via Arendt) in Greek antiquity. Especially important for our purposes here is, once again, the emphasis on the mimetic quality of our ludic practice:

> Benjamin's own theory of play is closely linked to his exploration of the concept of mimesis, which is the basis for his model of the origins and function of language. As he indicates at the outset of both "The Doctrine of the Similar" and the later "On the Mimetic Faculty" essay, play is an important facet of mimesis, the will to imitate that forms the basis of both language and *techne*." (Brown 106)

Nor is this mimetic exercise a mere harmless childhood game: "[T]he text, the city itself is a game, arranged as if it were the board of a *Kriegsspiel* as a means of the control of life" (Brown 117). The game board of both the city and of texts lays out a strategic "war game" designed to "control … life." Our mimetic readings

will reliably turn us into the tin soldiers on that board—unless we learn to act *otherwise.*

For, of course, the term *Spielraum* also names the *leeway* that is there for us to claim. The diagnosis, laid out so lucidly by Brown—that textual strategies are set up to elicit mimetic responses that are part of a war game—should make us wary of mechanically assimilating our lives to those game-boards. Instead, we would do well to find ways for our readerly practice to maintain and reclaim its mobility. Ultimately, it is up to us, not the text, to decide which games we are willing to play, and which ones we will prefer to redesign or to drop altogether. Brown's article is a helpful reminder that we need to keep our *Spielraum* open.

Sonja Boos's article "'She couldn't simply write a letter.' Scenes of Reading in Ingeborg Bachmann's *The Book of Franza,*" also contributes to our effort to re-focus literary critique self-reflexively on the regimes of reading to which we conform. Boos argues that "Bachmann anticipates and significantly advances feminist critiques of writing and authorship by exposing and effectively deconstructing scenes of reading as the sites where discursive power is exercised and significations are enforced." (Boos 56). Specifically, her analysis focuses on a novel in which Bachmann investigates the destructive scenario in which the *Spielraum* discussed in Brown's contribution is denied. The novel *The Book of Franza* traces the destruction that a murderous reading practice has wrought on the female title character. While the hegemonic master-reader does not himself appear in the novel, we learn of his insistent interventions in her reading process. By systematically dismissing Franza's interpretations and replacing them with his own, he destroys her ability to make sense of, for, and to herself:

> In addition to exploiting his wife as an object of research, Jordan also reduces her to a text only he has the power to read. He "handles" Franza like a book, "paging" her so forcefully that she feels violated and annihilated— *zerblättert* (208). What is more, Franza is made to disappear

from her husband's book, as he fails to grant her the status as a co-author and erases her name from the list of acknowledgements. (Boos, 56)

Jordan's readerly interventions actively disrupt Franza's ability to function as a subject. But here, too, the story is not univocal. As Boos convincingly argues, this destruction is answered by a corresponding pattern of active disappearances:

> Martin muses about the 'disappearance' [*Verschwinden*] (132) of his sister while he travels through the darkness of a tunnel, the train lit only by a blue lamp that is incapable of bringing light into the "Coupé"—the compartment, but perhaps also the cut and severance that has occurred" (Boos, 55).

Boos goes on to suggest what this severance, which remains unreadable to Martin, may have been about: if we readjust our reading, Franza's disappearance can be read as an another instance of an active withdrawal from representability, and thus another apostrophe-as-elision.

> But who is it that "dies" in the novel? How can a literary character disappear from a novel that bears her name? And to what degree is "death" a successful metaphor for such a disappearance? Is not perhaps the more significant disappearance marked by the elision in the early passage just quoted: "since she . . ." The three little dots signal a disappearance, the one after which the person is "no longer her and no longer she." After this disappearance, all variants of the feminine pronoun cease to refer to this living person, and need to be collected and disposed of like so many discarded clothes. (Boos, 56)

In her innovative reading of the strange scene in which Martin finds his sister as a contorted figure in a Tableau, a visual citation of the iconography of domestic femininity, Boos argues that this scene visualizes the discomfort and distortion of the female *character.* The passage stages, she argues,

a subject who is no longer willing to perform presence through embodiment. At the same time, it visualizes the textual paradox of a novel that is about an "I" who has vanished, but who is made to return whenever someone reads or looks at "her." In the performance as in the visual tableau, the "I" is not represented but rather enforced as a reluctant, interpellated, and yet elusive presence. (Boos, 72)

The point of Bachmann's novel is not so much to 'represent' the murderous patterns in Jordan's behavior—in fact, these actually lie entirely outside of the frame of the narrative, which only begins when Jordan has already been left behind. Jordan is thus not "in" the novel, but only appears as the recollected cause of the main character's devastation.

The narrative itself is situated in the transitional zone in the wake of Franza's departure, and it shows her struggle to escape the legacy of destruction, to complete her departure. As Boos astutely points out, the elisions and disappearances which the text signals invoke an entirely different order: Franza's disappearances, her *aversion* or apostrophe-as-elision, and finally the departure from the text itself ("suicide") lead *out of the novel itself*. Read as such, they have the potential of re-opening our *Spielraum* in reading.

Adrienne Rose's "*[it] shakes my whole breathing being*: Rethinking Gender with Translation in Anne Carson's "A Fragment of Ibykos Translated Six Ways" is the last—but certainly not the least—article in this collection. It brings another practice of readerly repetition into view: translation. Anne Carson's provocative six-fold (re)translation of the ancient Greek poem "Ibykos Fragment 286" may be the most obviously experimental set of texts studied in this special issue. But far from being the odd one out, Carson's radical practice offers stunningly precise confirmation of all of the tendencies we have outlined in our readings of the work of Ingeborg Bachmann.

Each of Carson's six translations has a constraint placed on its vocabulary: each is to use vocabulary exclusively taken from a specific inter-text. The latter are as wildly diverse as Bertolt Brecht's FBI-file or a microwave

manual. This flow through the translations of radically different vocabularies, none of which have any detectable connection to the original poem, erases any expectation we might still have harbored that translation must in any way convey the source-text's 'content' or 'say the same thing it says.' What Carson's iterative translations do faithfully retain, however, is the rhetorical 'skeleton' of the poem, which emerges as the only constant throughout the serial transformations: "vocabularies and scenarios shift—from Romantic love to microwave operations—but the structural and rhetorical gestures of the fragment are retained" (Rose 126). Rose furthermore makes a compelling case that Carson's translation series progressively leaves behind the usual emphasis on gendered textual signals, and shifts attention to the *performative* in reading and translating, to the point where, in the last translation, the apparatus directly confronts the reader with the threat to "burn your nose right off!" That should help us snap out of our assimilative habits!

Especially noteworthy is Rose's comparison between Carson's translations of Ibykos and the one by Ezra Pound. Rose demonstrates that Pound's decisions are the exact opposite of Carson's at every turn. Where Carson (like Bachmann) progressively deletes whatever gendered or erotic topoi are found in the original, Pound by contrast strengthens these to the point of hallucination, when in the last lines of his translation, he inserts the "spectral figure" of a "she." It appears that without an apostrophic "O" and a spectral female in it, he cannot think how to write a poem, or translate one. Far from letting the Ibykos fragment shake his *whole breathing being* and opening it up to some readerly self-awareness, he is clinging to the oppressive apostrophic apparatus we analyzed at the outset. And finally, "Pound confounds the structural features and the force of their rhetorical effect by changing the order of the components of the poem" (Rose p. XXX). Here, again, his choice is the precise opposite of Carson's who, far from rearranging the structure in her successive translations, distils it as the poem's only firm element. This divergence illustrates the uncanny precision with which each translator instantiates one or the other the

two contrasting readerly modes described earlier—subservient to the gender-dependent apparatus, or sovereign, experimental, and revisionary.

As Rose shows, when Carson has the vocabularies circulate freely such that words become interchangeable almost to the point of irrelevance, we learn to perceive that what truly holds things together is the airy scaffolding of rhetorical gestures and spaces. This rhetorical scaffolding is what organizes our signifying spaces. It emerges and becomes discernible as soon as we give up the chimaera of "content" in language and learn to read the apparatus that has been right in front of our noses for centuries, and from which we had better reclaim our lives right *now.*

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[1] The Presidential Theme of the 2019 MLA Convention appears to break with this pattern of neglect by explicitly inviting an exploration of the "mutually constitutive" relation between text and reading. This incipient return to the question of reading is, of course, to be welcomed. However, the terms in which it is introduced give pause. The formulation of the theme—"Textual Transactions"—casts the question in the aesthetics of a bank statement and eclipses actual readers behind the textual and calculable (https://www.mla.org/Convention/MLA-2019/2019-Presidential-Theme).

[2] Alexander Galloway has some interesting comments on the question of "data." He points out that the word "information" contains the word "form": "Information [...] stems from the Latin for the act of taking form or being put into form. So, in contrast to data, information stresses less a sense of presence and giving-forth, and more a plastic adoption of shape. Information exists whenever worldly things are 'in-formed', or 'put into form'. As Vilém Flusser put it once in an illustrative vignette, the leaves that fall in the autumn have no information because they are scattered to and fro, but if one puts them into form—for example by moving them around to spell out a word, or simply by raking them into piles—the leaves gain information (Druckrey, 1999). The worldly things, having been previously given, have now been given form. Thus if data open a door into the realm of the empirical and ultimately the ontological (the level of being), information by contrast opens a door into the realm of the aesthetic. With this in mind, and since information differs from data in a more immediate and dramatic way, we begin with the first of two theses: *Data have no necessary visual form*" (Galloway 2011, 88). From here, Galloway proceeds to his second thesis, which posits even more provocatively that "*data have no necessary information*" (Galloway 2011, 89). We may want to add that when Galloway calls that which is needed to turn data into information an "aesthetic," he is invoking the etymology of that word, and thus not only form, but also sensation or perception, and thus, *reading.*

[3] Although they, too, for the most part neglected to theorize the *readerly* dimension of the process of signification, deconstruction and rhetorical criticism have offered powerful impulses for thinking the steely hold that language, and especially metaphors and other tropes, have on our thinking.

[4] Michel de Certeau's work is helpful here. Linguists and philosophers of language, too, have occasionally been emphasizing the role of readers or listeners in language. See for example Grossmann and Polis (2014, 29-30): "The importance of the listener for language change has been reaffirmed in recent research on pragmatics. For example, Schwenter and Waltereit (2010, 77) propose that: "[h]earers have a clear 'regulatory' role in innovation, as their ability, or willingness, to follow speakers' innovations places a cap on an innovation's likelihood to be propagated in the linguistic community. However, the contribution that hearers make to semantic change is not limited to constraining speakers' creativity. Hearers can indeed have a very active role in that process, namely by assigning novel interpretations to forms, constructions, or utterances they hear and by using these interpretations in their own subsequent use as speakers." Beata Stawarska's exciting revisionary work on Saussure's manuscripts is also relevant here (Stawarska).

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[5] This, too, is nothing new. Nietzsche, as usual, was there first—in this case when he argued that truth is nothing but an obligation to *lie gregariously*: "wahrhaft zu sein, das heißt die usuellen Metaphern zu brauchen […], nach einer festen Konvention zu lügen, herdenweise in einem für alle verbindlichen Stile zu lügen" (Nietzsche, "Über Wahrheit und Lüge im außermoralischen Sinn," 314). Stanley Fish's "interpretive communities" are, of course, also useful in this context.

[6] Cf. Agamben, *What is an Apparatus?* 14: "I shall call an apparatus literally anything that has in some way the capacity to capture, orient, determine, intercept, model, control, or secure the gestures, behaviors, opinions, or discourses of living beings. Not only, therefore, prisons, madhouses, the panopticon, schools, confession, factories, disciplines, juridical measures, and so forth (whose connection with power is in a certain sense evident), but also the pen, writing, literature, philosophy, agriculture, cigarettes, navigation, computers, cellular telephones, and—why not—language itself, which is perhaps the most ancient of apparatuses [.]"

[7] How this encoding of processes works can be illustrated very clearly through the example of the DNA-RNA pair, the writing/reading pair that engenders us. DNA encodes not only sequences for the production of proteins, but also signals to the RNA, e.g., when to start and finish producing one. It governs the process of its own being read.

[8] Helbing et al. make an impassioned plea for the urgency such of strategic attention to how we design technology: https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/will-democracy-survive-big-data-and-artificial-intelligence/

[9] Kafka's famous early parable "Wunsch, Indianer zu werden" ("Wish to Become an Indian") captures precisely this type of moment: we cast away spurs and reins, only to realize that there *are no* spurs, no reins, nor even horse or heath.

[10] What we are calling for here is, of course, an extremely challenging task. Vilém Flusser writes about the difficulty of maintaining the level of consciousness ("Bewusstseinsebene") required here: "Betrachtet man die Erzeugung und Entzifferung einiger charakteristischer Technobilder näher, dann stellt man fest, dass sie auf einer Bewusstseinsebene kodifiziert werden, die sogar für die Erzeuger dieser neuen Codes außerordentlich schwer aufrechtzuerhalten ist. Was die Empfänger betrifft, so sind sie gar nicht willens, diese Bewusstseinsebene ins Auge zu fassen. Sie ziehen es vor, schlechtgläubig in Vorgeschichte zu fallen, anstatt zu versuchen, die Krise der Geschichte zu überwinden. Darum funktionieren Technobilder so, wie sie gegenwärtig funktionieren: in Richtung totalitärer Verfremdung. Eine Ausnahme bilden elitäre Kommunikationen: Dort wird die neue Bewusstseinsebene, wenn auch noch nebelhaft, tatsächlich erkennbar. Es ergibt sich demnach die Notwendigkeit, diese Ebene irgendwie in Worte zu fassen." Vilém Flusser, *Kommunikologie.* Frankfurt a.M.: Fischer, 2003, S. 208

[11] The misogyny of Nietzsche's rhetoric can stand in to exemplify the strategy, foundational in Western cultures, that disqualifies half of humanity to corral the other. To think what it would take to leave behind this mode of functioning is one of the main goals of this collection.

[12] "Gleichnisse sind alle Namen von Gut und Böse: Sie sprechen nicht aus, sie winken nur. Ein Thor, welcher von ihnen Wissen will!" Friedrich Nietzsche, *Also Sprach Zarathustra,* in: *Kritische Studienausgabe*, ed. Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari. Munich/Berlin/New York: dtv/ deGruyter, 1988/1993, vol. 4, p. 98.

[13] Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life,* 1984: 131–2): "I am trying to hear these fragile ways in which the body makes itself heard in the language, the multiple voices set aside by the triumphal *conquista* of the economy that has, since the beginning of the 'modern age' (i.e., since the C17th or C18th), given itself the name of writing . . . The installation of the scriptural apparatus of modern 'discipline', a process that is inseparable from the 'reproduction' made possible by the development of printing, was accompanied by a double isolation from the 'people' (in opposition to the 'bourgeoisie') and from the 'voice' (in opposition to the written)." The invocation of the "voice" in this passage marks the place where an uncalculable and unpredictable readerly *action* can assert itself, unheard of by all except for those who engage in it themselves.

[14] Cf. Gölz 2008.

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