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THE ECONOMY PRINCIPLE IN ENGLISH: LINGUISTIC, LITERARY, AND CULTURAL PERSPECTIVES

Proceedings of the XIX Conference of the Associazione Italiana di Anglistica (Milan, 21-23 October 1999)

Edited by
Giovanni Iamartino, Marialuisa Bignami, and Carlo Pagetti

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Volume pubblicato con il contributo dell'Università degli Studi di Milano

Prima edizione: maggio 2002

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E-mail: unicopli@galactica.it
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Fotocopie per uso personale del lettore possono essere effettuate nei limiti del 15% di ciascun volume dietro pagamento alla Siae del compenso previsto dall'art. 68, comma 4, della legge 22 aprile 1941, n. 633, ovvero dall'accordo stipulato fra Siae, Aie, Sns e Cna, Confartigianato, Casa, Claai, Confcommercio, Confesercenti il 18 dicembre 2000.

ISBN 88-400-0785-7

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CULTURAL STUDIES WORKSHOP

INTRODUCTION TO THE CULTURAL STUDIES WORKSHOP

Carlo Pagetti and *Daniela Corona*

Since 1983 one of the regular workshops of the A.I.A. has been dedicated to the discipline of Cultural Studies, as an acknowledgement of the importance that this branch of research and didactics has acquired within the University (in large part thanks to the application of the new regulations concerning the teaching of English at University, the so-called *Decreti d'area*). In October 1983, at the A.I.A. conference held in Pavia, Lidia Curti and Carlo Pagetti co-ordinated the workshop "Analysis and History of the English Culture: Phenomena, Practices and Texts". Another important watershed was marked by the A.I.A. conference of Pescara (October 1986), where Fernando Ferrara gave the key address, "Metamorphoses of the Tradition". The recent volume *Gli Amici per Nando*, edited by Lidia Curti and Laura Di Michele, not only commemorates the figure and the activities of this deceased colleague – who, from the *Istituto Universitario Orientale* of Naples, was the promoter of Cultural Studies in Italy – but also indicates the remarkable prominence gained by this critical field. By now Cultural Studies have won the battle for visibility and independence, often finding fitting allies in the fields of New Historicism and Gender Studies. To some they have grown into a fashion or even a threat: Harold Bloom regards their academic ascendance as one of the causes of the vulgarization of literary criticism. However, these claims tell us something only marginally relevant to the Italian case, for Cultural Studies in Italy have been grafted very smoothly onto the solid tradition of literary studies.

While attempting to bring together the many scholars who worked alongside Fernando Ferrara (yet without overlooking the contribution of new voices), our workshop has not tried to point to an ideal of impossible homogeneity. Rather it has searched, in a diversity of approaches, for some recurring patterns within the many directions taken, respectively, by postmodernism and postcolonialism, by the reflection on literary history and by the analysis of the languages and cultural phenomena representative of our contemporaneity. All this has been carried out in full respect of the proposed theme of the Milan conference, a theme on which Iain Chambers focused his key-lecture. In the analytic identification of the "economy of culture" as an arena within which the relation between politics and poetics is given articulation, Chambers has delineated a ground plan for the field of *Cultural Studies* and has brought into focus its crucial theoretical points by problematizing the relationship between aesthetics and economic politics. Indeed, the reflection on the relations between power strategies and

textual economy has taken within its scope the larger field of the ideological paradigm of the Humanities, a paradigm that has legitimated the epistemological systems of Modernity as well as the presuppositions of Idealism and Positivism that have so dominated the Western discourse. Chambers' analysis links Ruskin's idea of art to the propositions of German Romanticism, the tangle of the relationship/separation between aesthetic and ethic judgement that is coming back into popularity today within the new co-ordinates of Modernity. Chambers' is an analytic itinerary, one that has been oriented – in the light of postcolonial critical guidelines – towards a perspective that is open to the dialectical relocation of the literary and artistic text within the new limits of differentiated contexts. Motifs related to these issues have emerged within the various sessions, as is well mirrored by the titles given to the various meetings. These "titles" were chosen to catalogue the topics of the various papers according to both the issues raised by colonial and postcolonial criticism and the confrontation with literary tradition and Western epistemology, as well as according to the thematics linked to the role of the new technologies and to the political function of cultural, particularly literary, institutions.

The first of the sessions (all enriched by the expert presentations of their chair people: Lidia Curti, Alessandra Marzola and Laura Di Michele) gathers together papers dealing with "The Economies of Colonisation". Elio Di Piazza opens the volume. In his paper Di Piazza brings into focus the changes in the notion of value from Aristotle to nineteenth-century Pragmatism, and analyses the epistemological breaks in the narrative treatment of the motif of "treasure" through a close reading of the adventure novel of the late nineteenth century. Carmen Concilio moves on to consider the economic effects of colonialism as seen in the case of the political refugees of Botswana, whose land appears as a "refuge/garden" in the novels of Bessie Head. By way of a reflection on the word "pula" (both rain and coin), Concilio investigates the pair "agriculture/culture" and "production/reproduction", and she sees the women field-workers as symbolising "progress" and the edification of "Eden abitabili". Through a reading of the most remarkable positions in postcolonialism, Itala Vivan examines the issues of hybridisation and cosmopolitanism as dealt with in the "aesthetic and cultural discourse" of the colonial writer, a writer who is seen as at once a stranger and a "figure of ambiguity and mediation".

"Writing and Knowledge Schemes" was the topic of the second meeting, opened by Carla Locatelli. Starting from the notion of "textual economy" as it emerges in Virginia Woolf's "Essays", and questioning the idea of co(n)text and the (im)possibility of representation, Locatelli explores the questions given articulation in poststructuralism concerning "hermeneutical undecidability", a critical path that sees writing, within the "economy of the sign", as an "inevitable auto-bio-graphical trace". Woolf is again the object of analysis in Maria Laudando's paper, which considers Woolf's work from the perspective of "the economy of the fragment" and links its genesis and its forms to the "bankruptcy of the Western Tradition". Silvana Carotenuto, examining Octavia Butler's novel *Dawn*, whose protagonist's relationship with extra-terrestrials is "played out through a *sui generis* gene trade", explores the implications of new models of cognitive and distributive

economy of the "future perfect", a model suggested by the text in its setting against mnemonic atrophy new ways of learning "participatory forms" of communication.

The next session deals with "Consumption of Image/Imaginary as Consumption". Caroline Patey uses illustrative materials that bring to light the role played by *The National Trust* and *English Heritage* in the construction of *heritage culture* and in the constitution of the cultural industry with which it is connected, as this "transforms the actors and the texts of English culture" by promoting a popular image of national literature. Mirella Billi in turn focuses her critical attention on the contamination and intermixing of both "behavioural" and formal models of the *romance* of literary fiction and cinema and television *fiction*.

In the next session the focus shifts to an examination of the relation between "Discursiveness and Cultural Traditions". Maria Maddalena Parlati studies a selection of *conduct books* of the seventeenth century. She links the themes of courtesy/propriety and profit through an analysis of textual rhetoric, and through this she offers a reflection on the rules of the epistle. The texts examined by Giuliana Iannaccaro are illustrative of the ideas of radical groups during the English Revolution, groups that identify in linguistic economy a curb on degeneration and propose a "regenerated" word able to express truth "transparently" within a project aiming at the "elimination of signs in favour of the signified thing." Michele Stanco pauses to examine anachronism as a form of linguistic-cultural "economisation" and shows how historic-cultural forms of hybridisation respond to "the need to limit the alterity of the past, underlining, beside the breaks, the epistemic continuities". Federica Troisi considers the category of "wonder", typical of ancient colonialism. By examining the canon of wonder and its changes within the different traditions, she traces the varying and contrasting cultural connotations as they run through the complex path of the confrontation of old and new colonialism.

The session on "Texts, Contexts, Institutions" is opened by Marina Vitale's "Reducing Texts and Widening Readership", a paper that revisits the issue of economy considered in light of the role in Modernity of cultural communication within the processes of "democratic connotation of society". She does so by exploring what Raymond Williams describes as the "long revolution" alongside of Richard Hoggart's contribution to the field; and through this she offers some illuminating case studies of the cultural activity of text adaptation in the early 19th century. Francesca Cuojati links the psychiatric institution to the poetic writing of John Clare (1793-1864), a real victim of the *enclosures*. Cuojati establishes a connection between Clare's textual economy and the specific experience of folly, and she links the phase of Clare's "inner poems" to internment as a way of "running away from the laws of the market." Shaul Bassi's paper takes into consideration the relationship between poetry and publishing institutions by analysing the process of the publication in India, particularly in the 1950s, of poetry anthologies. Bassi examines the features of this "publishing phenomenon", both in its material and textual aspects, in order to reconstruct the cultural strategies adopted by "the representatives of a new Anglophone literature".

Thus, looking at these "new" issues from various perspectives, the different papers gathered in this volume offer studies in the field of contextualised – ethnically as well by now – analysis of the ways of articulating the resistance/integration of texts of high or hegemonic culture and those of popular culture or of the micro-cultures that have historically characterised Cultural Studies. The debate has been intense and lively, and – though the space of this introduction does not allow one to give full detail – it is important to state that the discussion which followed each one of the meetings testified to the richness of the papers. In spite of the time limitations, the discussions led to the articulation of new hypotheses and questions concerning the theoretical and methodological implications of the issues raised in the papers. The thematic focus of the conference was summed up brilliantly by Laura Di Michele in her final address. Her masterly synthesis of the wider issues discussed in the Milan A.I.A. Conference insisted on the need for the critic to treat the aesthetic dimension of the literary text as inseparable from the cultural-epistemological shape of the work as well as from the economic politics underlying the processes of inter-cultural communication.

UPON HISTORICAL FICTION.
THE ANACHRONISM AS A FORM OF REPRESENTATIONAL ECONOMY*

Michele Stanco

> But to give their conversation in the original
> would convey but little information to the modern reader,
> for whose benefit we beg to offer the following translation.
> (Walter Scott, Ivanhoe, ch. I)

All kinds of historiographical texts – including chronicle reports – associate at least two main components: the "telling" and the "interpretation" of *facts*. Those two constituents are actually inseparable, since telling itself is based on interpretative and ideological procedures. It follows that *facticity* as such remains inaccessible, facts only being approachable as cultural constructs. As implied by the very etymology of the term, which is linked to an Indo-European root meaning "to see", "history" was believed to be based on (eye-)perception[1], that is not on facts as such but on the cultural – visual – filter through which the historian "sees" them.

The inaccessibility of facts has been particularly highlighted by New Historicism. It has been argued by Hayden White and other new historicists that neither historiography nor fiction convey nude facts, but factual narratives – i.e., organization or emplotments of facts in narrative texts (White 1973-87; Veeser ed.1989; Hamilton 1996). From the late seventies and early eighties it has become more and more common to speak about the "narrativization of history" and the "revival of narrative" (White 1973-87; Stone 1979). The past, it has been argued, is not available as a referent, but only as a series of successive textualizations. This premise, right in itself, has led some new historicist critics – as well as a host of acritical followers – to question or even deny the existence of a demarcation line between historiography and fiction[2].

Nevertheless, as has been more convincingly argued by other critics and cultural historians with a linguistic-structuralist background, although historiography may share some common traits – such as plot or narrativization – with other narrative types, it can be formally distinguished

* The syntagm "historical fiction" is here used in its widest meaning, referring to novels, romances, short stories, poems, plays, movies, paintings, statues (etc.) representing the past and aiming to create an illusion of pastness. Quotations from Shakespeare are to *The Riverside Shakespeare*, gen. ed. G. Blakemore Evans, 1997 (second edition), 2 vols., Houghton Mifflin, Boston and New York. In all quotations italics are mine, unless otherwise indicated.

[1] It was Emile Benveniste (1969) who traced the expression "historia" to the Indoeuropean root **wid-*, **weid-*, which means "to see": a witness is such not so much because he "knows", but because he "has seen". Cf. also Lozano's comments on the question (1987).

[2] Even when a distinction is "admitted" to occur, what it *formally and functionally* amounts to is often left largely unexplained. For instance, following Huizinga (1936), Oboe (1994) symptomatically limits her analysis of the difference between historiography and fiction to the discovery of an "element of play" which is said to oppositionally distinguish the latter.

from them because of its specific textuality (Genette 1991; Pugliatti 1994). It is not so important to determine whether a historiographical text is veridical or not. What really matters is that this aim of veridicality requires different expository devices from those of fiction. In other words, it is not referentiality *per se* that stands as a differentiating principle, but the textual forms and assertive strategies involved in referential claims.

Content-units culturally coded as "historical" are textualized in a different way in texts that we would label as "historical-fictional", and in texts that we would define as "historiographical". Let us give a few examples, imagining how a given historical content – such as "Bolingbroke's murder of King Richard II" – could be hypothetically coded in two different text-types:

1) King Richard II was murdered in Pomfret Castle
2) On being murdered, King Richard II thought to himself: 'God have mercy on me'

Even at a merely intuitive level it appears that while 1) does not lack any of the formal requisites which characterize a historiographical assertion, 2) shows itself as purely fictional. What is, then, the main difference between the two sentences, and in what way does this difference determine a dividing line between historiographical and fictional texts? While the first sentence rewrites a historical content from an apparently visual-external-testimonial perspective, the second sentence fictionalizes it by adopting an inner focalization, which manifestly excludes any direct view of the event. While the first sentence could be the hypothetical report of a "historian" who had been a witness to the scene (once again, attention must be called to the "visual" element present in the term's etymology), the second one clearly shows itself as the product of historical imagination (who, if not a fiction writer, could have known what was going on in someone else's mind?). Of course, what is presented as testimony must have the textual form of an assertion. Historiographical texts – even if they lie – are constitutively (as said, almost etymologically) associated with assertive forms.

Some observations in Sir Philip Sidney's *Apology* (1583c; publ. 1595) can help us trace the difference that separates fiction from historiography. A peculiar element of poetry is that it "nothing affirmes, and therefore neuer lyeth" (in Smith, ed. 1904, I: 184), and that the poet "telleth [things] not for true" (p. 185). This view of poetry makes an ideal counterpart for some remarks on history where the verb "to affirm" is similarly emphasized: according to Sidney, Herodotus

> and all the rest that followed him either stole or vsurped of Poetrie their passionate describing of passions, the many particularities of battailes, which *no man could affirme*, or, if that be denied me, long Orations put in the mouthes of great Kings and Captaines, which it is certaine they neuer pronounced (p. 153)[3].

[3] Sidney's observations also had contemporary relevance, since sixteenth-century *chronicles* – such as Holinshed's (1577-87) – did not refrain from incorporating "long Orations" and dialogic forms.

Sidney suggests that the distinction between history and poetry is made thinner when/if history transcends the visual-testimonial function proper to historical texts and, thus, undermines the credibility of its assertions. His observations about Herodotus' "fictionalisation" of history do not aim to obscure, but serve to highlight differences. By criticizing Herodotus' historical method, Sidney implicitly tells us that history is supposed to affirm and that it can be assimilated into poetry when it fails to do so – that is, when its sentences cannot be interpreted as proper assertions. In short, history is distinguished from poetry (we could say, from fiction) in that the former asserts, while the latter does not. In times much nearer to us, Roland Barthes has analogously argued that historiography "asserts at every moment: *this happened*" – so that one of the meanings conveyed is that "someone is making that assertion" (1970: 154).

Sidney's reiterated emphasis on the implicit assertive (or non-assertive) value of certain text-types may be said to forerun intuitively some important developments in twentieth-century linguistics, particularly Austin's and Searle's philosophy of language.

The distinctions between history and poetry (or fiction) posited in the *Apology*, as well as their "linguistic-philosophical" background, have been – albeit indirectly – revived by Gérard Genette. Taking as a starting point Searle's linguistic taxonomy of speech-acts (1969; 1975; 1979), Genette (1991) has maintained – in terms substantially similar to those of Sidney and of Barthes – that historiography and fiction are distinguished by the different textual strategies through which they validate (or, in the case of fiction, omit to validate) their respective linguistic acts – i.e., by their different illocutionary implications (see also Pugliatti 1994).

From this perspective, we could try to draw a distinction between "historical" and "historiographical". Let us imagine that, on the basis of further evidence, the assertion

1a) King Richard II was murdered

is found to be false and changed into the new assertion

1b) King Richard II killed himself.

Although the contents conveyed by 1a) should necessarily be recoded (so that we should rearrange our historical knowledge about King Richard II's death), its expression plane would not cease to be acceptable. Therefore, while the term "historical" can be used to indicate "factual contents" encyclopaedically accepted as veridical, the term "historiographical" can be restricted to designate the "expression devices" which convey a historical-factual content.

From the above examples it could be – wrongly – argued that, while our historical knowledge about any topic can virtually change (since we can always find new evidence that belies what we used to accept as true), historiographical forms on the contrary transcend cultural conventions. However, it must be specified that the forms that regulate historical assertions are, themselves, no less subject to cultural changes.

Thus, the felicity conditions of a historiographical text reside in the combination of two factors – expression devices and factual contents – both of which are liable to redefinition, transformation or negotiation over time. When those felicity conditions are not fulfilled in the content organization and/or in the expression forms, we have not historiography but *historical fiction*.

As regards the content plane, historical fiction, although it re-uses a number of contents encyclopaedically accepted as "historical", also goes beyond them by mingling historical matters with others stemming from "historical imagination". (In Shakespeare's *Richard* II, references to historical individuals or facts textually coexist with the representation of imaginary characters and situations, such as the gardener, or the garden scene). As for the expression plane, historical fiction freely transcends the limits of historiographical accounts by adopting a number of discursive procedures and textual forms which – as had been marked by Sidney – are denied to historiography proper. (For instance, the dialogue expression-form of Shakespeare's *Richard* II is, in itself, fictional). Therefore, historical fiction seems to be "freer" than historiography, both in content and expression[4]. While a historian – supposedly – "sees" his facts and is, thus, limited by his visual perspective, a historical novelist or dramatist "imagines" them and, thus, virtually encounters no creative limits.

The "greater freedom" which historical fiction apparently enjoys permits the creation of a sort of *introspective and private* history, a micro-history that is allowed to go where the macro-history cannot: the exploration and analysis of the historical subject. As Sidney had clearly observed, the "passionate describing of passions" pertains to poetry rather than to historiography. Indeed, one of the main tasks of historical fiction is to recreate imaginatively the behaviour of a subject in historical circumstances, to reconstruct the *historical formation of identity*. A Roman emperor would presumably fashion himself in a different way from a Plymouth adventurer or an Italian partisan[5]. In *I Promessi Sposi*, Lorenzo Tramaglino historically shapes his identity in relation to the abuse of power by the "bravi", to Spanish rule, Milanese riots and, more generally, the seventeenth-century world picture. Historical fiction ideally "appropriates" the introspective method of the *histoire de mentalité* and imposes a narrative form, or an emplotment, on it. To emplot a historical mentality or cultural model means to adopt textual strategies different from both those of the historians of *mentalité* (who do not narrate, but analyze and describe), and those of factual historians (who, as already remarked, narrate but only from an external, witness-like perspective). Better than any theoretical study, Constantinos Kavafis' poem *Darius* (1920) brings out the goal of a historical fiction writer. Kavafis imagines the poet Fernazes writing an epic poem. As

[4] However, the very distinction between *expression* and *content* is, at least in this case, merely heuristic: if speeches are themselves *acts*, fictional speeches (as those attributed to Richard II) are not only fictional expressions, but also fictional acts – and, thus, fictional contents.

[5] The Plymouth adventurers in Clarence Brown's film (1952) (or in E. Gebler's novel), as well as the partisans and the nazis in Roberto Rossellini's *Roma città aperta* (1945) may be said to exemplify ideally what György Lukács (1957), following Hegel, defines as historically "typical".

is suggested by Fernazes' meditations, the construction of the subject is mediated – indeed, made possible – by historical events and situations:

At this point, we are to philosophise, we are to
analyze carefully what feelings Darius must have had:
pride, perhaps, and elation; or maybe
something like a sense of the vanity
of greatness. The poet ponders this deeply (*my tr.*).

Kavafis' verses not only apply to his Darius, but seem perfectly cut to define other poets' historical representations of royal "personae". In his *histories*, Shakespeare "pondered deeply" what it must have been like to be a king in fifteenth-century England; he has "analyzed carefully" what "feelings" a king must have had on being dethroned (Richard II's "sense of the vanity of greatness"), or on winning a great battle (Henry V's "pride and elation" at Agincourt). A "historical" situation has provided the dramatist with the opportunity to bring to light weaknesses, strengths and all those emotional and psychological constituents that make up historical subjectivity. The shaping of subjectivity is thus shown as being intrinsically related to historical situations.

In short, a writer of historical fiction has to capture the mentality or the cultural alterity of that past he tries to represent, and how this alterity affects the construction of the self. The represented past gives the modern reader or public a sense of estrangement, which has great aesthetic potentiality[6]. This is, perhaps, one of the reasons for the popularity of the historical drama and the historical novel. The sense of estrangement, which we feel with regard to the past indirectly, suggests that we are viewing it from a present perspective, and present human experience. In Catherine Belsey's oft-quoted remarks (which virtually apply not only to historiography, but also to historical fiction):

it is always from the present that we produce [our knowledge of the past]: from the present in the sense that it is only from what is still extant, still available that we make it, and from the present in the sense that we make it out of our understanding formed by the present (1985: 1; see also Fortunati and Franci 1995: 7-28).

Belsey's conclusions are substantially in line with some much earlier observations by Lukács in his study of the historical novel: "[w]ithout a felt relationship to the present, a portrayal of history is impossible" (1957: 53). If, on the one hand, it is our relationship to the present that enables us to look at the past, on the other hand the present cultural models through which we represent the past to us might distort our view of it, or contaminate its alterity. By imposing on the past our present language and

[6] On historical estrangement, see Kemp 1991. From Puttenham's *The Arte of English Poesie* (1589) up to Sklovskji and other Russian formalists, *estrangement* has been constantly regarded as a marker of "aestheticalness". The "necessary" estrangement of a historical representation may be one of the reasons for the popularity of historical fiction in general (the particular reasons for the *extreme* popularity of some sub-genres, such as "pepla" or westerns, should of course be looked for in more specific socio-political questions: from nationalistic to gender issues).

cultural perspectives, we inevitably misrepresent it[7]. As an explorer or colonizer who cannot help viewing the newly discovered lands from his own geographical perspectives (and transferring onto them the culture, language and names of his own mother-country, such as New England or Virginia), similarly a historian or a writer of historical fiction cannot help thinking of the past from his or her own present perspectives. As philosophers of all ages have argued, the human mind cannot embrace otherness without projecting onto it its own selfness. In *The Tempest*, Trinculo can only make sense of Caliban's alterity by reducing it to a combination of two "familiar" images ("man" and "fish": II.ii.24-25). A somewhat similar reduction of alterity intervenes in the historical reconstruction of the past. In spite of the already noticed differences, historiography and historical fiction share a common way of approaching the past: they both assimilate it into the linguistic-cultural codes of the present. Therefore, historical fiction is constitutively based on the co-textual presence of two historically different codes: the "present" codes pertaining to the time of representation and the "past" codes pertaining to the represented time.

In this sense, historical fiction may be defined as an intrinsically or wilfully imperfect recreation of the past. It is this wilfulness in "imperfection" that separates it from forgery. Forgery, in fact, being meant to be indistinguishable from the products of that past which it attempts to imitate, is based on the concealment of all traces of the present. An analysis of forgery – which is in its own way a fictionalization or, better, a falsification of the past – could undoubtedly help us to understand more clearly some of the semiotic mechanisms which inform historical fiction. Of course, a thorough study of forgery would be impossible here (on fakes and forgeries, cf. Eco *et al.*, 1987). Suffice to say that, in some cases, the dividing line between historical fiction and forgery is not so easy to draw. In fact, some authors of fiction have tried to erase completely all signs of the present in order to produce a mirror-like image of the past. There are forms in the preromantic revival of medievalism that seem to stand halfway between historical fiction and forgery. This is, perhaps, the case with Thomas Chatterton's historical poems, *Rowley Papers* (1768-70). They were written by Chatterton himself on a parchment, although he allowed the credit for them to go to a fifteenth-century priest and poet, Thomas Rowley, "living in a bustling and interesting world of church and chivalry, plays and patrons" (Johnston 1993: 338). From the perspective of our present analysis, Chatterton's use of an old-looking parchment is in no way negligible and should not be dismissed as a futile or meaningless oddity since, as we shall see, even the material aspects of historical-fictional texts have their own importance as markers of the present.

However, apart from very few cases, as a rule authors of historical fiction consciously leave clear and unmistakable signs of the present in their representations of the past. (Chatterton himself, for all his efforts, could not completely mask those signs and deceive his

[7] Yet, some forms of misrepresentation imply the presence of a cultural filter which facilitates seeing "more" than any sterile attempt at pure, unmediated, historical mimesis.

readers[8]). The projection of present codes of representation into the represented past gives historical fiction an anachronistic patina. Indeed, it is in the very nature – i.e., in the poetics – of historical fiction to generate anachronisms.

Anachronisms can thus generically be defined as forms of intrusion of the present into the past. Those signs of the present, as we shall also try to show, can be distinguished into – at least three – different types. As anticipated, viewing the past from the present involves a reduction of cultural alterity – since the past can only be made meaningful by means of present interpretative patterns. On the other hand, however, the dialectic interplay between present and past may point to an amplification of cultural differences – since the past appears, by contrast, almost irremediably lost in its remoteness. There is no easy or univocal answer to the question whether anachronisms *reduce* or *emphasize* historico-cultural otherness: what is certain is that, in either case, they obey a sort of *economy principle*. It can more analytically be argued that the principle of "*representational economy*" which is at the basis of anachronisms minimizes differences (in order to make the past "intelligible") and/or maximizes them (in order to show the "pastness" of the past).

Anachronisms may be said to respond to different sorts of economic demands: linguistic, cultural or "material". It is therefore possible to elaborate a corresponding tripartite typology, so as to distinguish between *linguistic*, *semantic* and *paratextual anachronisms*. Needless to say, this classification is – as most distinctions are – merely heuristic. An easy objection is that, in a general sense, all anachronisms are in some way or other semantic. However, as we shall attempt to demonstrate, only the type of anachronism which we have labelled as "semantic" directly involves the *content plane*. In fact, linguistic anachronisms concern the *expression plane*, whereas paratextual anachronisms pertain to the *material aspects* of texts. Thus, unlike semantic anachronisms, linguistic and paratextual ones involve the content plane only at a secondary or connotative level.

In the history of criticism, linguistic-formal and – particularly – material aspects of texts have been much less discussed or analyzed than questions of meaning. So, while a certain amount of critical attention has been focused on semantic anachronisms, linguistic and paratextual ones have been almost completely ignored. A further, complementary reason for this critical silence is that linguistic and paratextual anachronisms are so constitutively rooted in historical-fictional texts – being part of a vaster, and mostly implicit, author/reader pact – that their presence has often been taken for granted. Yet, significantly, a few authors – among whom Manzoni and Scott – took the trouble to make them explicit, in order to underline that their textual occurrence should in no way be overlooked or regarded as merely accessory.

[8] Chatterton "created a distanced, impersonal, objective, artistic world, not without anachronisms in detail" (Johnston 1993: 338). Ultimately, it is the presence of those anachronisms that has made possible to solve any doubts about the authenticity of Chatterton's poems and documents.

Linguistic anachronisms characterize almost all works – dramatic, narrative or cinematographic – of historical fiction. They may be defined as the "replacement" of the past (or dead) linguistic codes of the represented time with the present (or living) ones of the time of representation[9]. Historical credibility would apparently require a harmonic correspondence between the setting of the action and the language spoken by characters. Nonetheless, this rule is hardly ever respected in historical-fictional texts. It is quite common, even obvious, for the reader and public to find Roman or Anglo-Saxon characters who speak modern languages. Not only are historical characters attributed modern – and, therefore, anachronistic – speech, but the narrative voice itself is analogously a modern one[10]. When two rules clash with each other, it is the more important one that prevails: thus, the reliability of historical representation is – at least partially – sacrificed in the name of communicative effectiveness. And, anyway, since linguistic anachronisms are part of a widely accepted coding convention – and pact of authentication – the reader is ready (and supposed) to forget or minimize their anti-realistic or anti-historical effect. As anticipated, this pact between author and public is mostly implicit. So, for instance, the Elizabethan audience took it quite for granted that Roman characters could or, indeed, should speak modern English, and the characters themselves were probably quite "happy" to speak their author's language rather than the somewhat more complicated Latin.

A few texts, nevertheless, give an explicit turn to their pact of authentication. In *Ivanhoe* (1820), Walter Scott lets his readers know that he has "translated" the Anglo-Saxon conversation of his characters (Gurth and Wamba) into contemporary English language:

> The dialogue which they maintained between them was carried on in Anglo-Saxon [...]. But to give their conversation in the original would convey but little *information* to the modern reader, for whose benefit we beg to offer the following *translation* (pp. 30-31).

In *I Promessi Sposi* (1840), Alessandro Manzoni similarly informs his readers that he has modernized the "dicitura" of the assumed seventeenth-century manuscript he has drawn his story from. In spite of some differences (Scott presents himself as a witness who "sees" facts, Manzoni as a historian who "finds" texts[11]), both writers take pains to communicate to their readers something that they already know: the language of the past has been anachronistically modernized. However, the explanations which they provide for their linguistic "interventions" on supposedly older discourses or texts are in no way pleonastic or redundant, but are meant to

[9] A few, real or apparent, exceptions to this rule shall be subsequently dealt with.

[10] An important aspect within the analysis of linguistic anachronisms is the fact that a text is made up of a number of different, and differently hierarchized, voices and speeches. Those different voices can be characterized by different degrees of linguistic anachronism. This is, however, such a wide and open field of analysis that it would require a study of its own.

[11] While Scott is nostalgic towards his past, Manzoni sets his past at a distance. In Manzoni's case, the linguistic "revision" of his alleged manuscript is also due to his repudiation of the past he represents.

shed light on the communicative mechanisms of historical fiction, its strategies of authentication, the special agreement it establishes between author and reader. In particular, two nouns occurring in the passage quoted from *Ivanhoe* may be regarded as a condensation of critical theories on historical fiction: these are "information" and "translation". Scott's – or the narrator's – need to convey "information" aptly synthesizes the principle of communicative economy which is at the basis of all reconstructions (either historiographical or fictional), and linguistic manipulations, of the past. For evident needs of "information", the past is brought back to life by means of present linguistic codes. (Thus, studies of historical fiction have at least something to do with information theories[12]). Figuratively, the past is "translated" into the present. (Indeed, the analysis of historical fiction also shares some common ground with translation theories[13]). In a strict sense, to "translate" means to reproduce the content-units of a given language (language 1) by means of the expression-units of another language (language 2). In *Ivanhoe*, Gurth and Wamba do not speak Anglo-Saxon (as they historically "should"), but the author's English. In much the same way, the heroes in Shakespeare's Roman plays, or Shaw's fifteenth-century characters in *Saint Joan*, all speak anachronistic languages. Linguistic anachronisms can be metaphorically defined as "translations" from an old, dead language into a newer, living one: in the above cases, from Latin, Anglo-Saxon or late middle English (L1) into Elizabethan, early nineteenth-century or early twentieth-century English (L2).

The metaphoric definition of linguistic anachronisms as "translations" helps us define *semantic anachronisms* as well[14]. What is left implicit in Scott's metanarrative remarks is that all translations are constitutively imperfect. The imperfection originates from the fact that the linguistic passage from any L1 to any L2 necessarily involves some semantic shifts, since no two languages convey the same cultural contents or share the same associations between the expression plane and the content plane[15]. It is this imperfection in translation that marks an ideal boundary line between

[12] On information theories, see Eco 1976.

[13] On translation theories, cf. the recent issue of *Textus: Translation Studies Revisited*, Bassnett, Bollettieri-Bosinelli and Ulrych (eds.) 1999.

[14] Some works exhibit noticeable forms of linguistic hybridization. The modern, authorial language is linguistically contaminated by expression traces of the represented past. Evidently, the author uses a modern language for communicative reasons, yet at the same time tries to evoke some linguistic aspects of the past. The effect is sometimes nostalgic, sometimes parodic, often both. In Shakespeare's *Richard* II, the characters' – especially the king's – language, in its inflated diction and lyric quality, reveals an archaic patina and a sort of medieval nostalgia which is quite in line with the Elizabethan revival of medieval antiquities. On the other hand, texts using a macaronic language aim at an ironic revisitation of the past. Much in the line of macaronic poetry is the unforgettable cross-language used in Monicelli's *L'armata Brancaleone* (1966). All examples of linguistic invention of a cross present-past language are very interesting and would deserve a separate analysis, since those inventions seem to transcend the mere expression plane and have important reverberations on the content plane as well – so that they apparently constitute an indefinite category, half-way between linguistic and semantic anachronisms.

[15] As Hjelmslev has pointed out by means of a comparative diagram (confronting the Danish *træ*, *skov*; the German *Baum*, *Holz*, *Wald*; and the French *arbre*, *bois*, *forêt*), "each language lays down" its own "boundaries" (1943: 54-55). See also Eco 1976. The specificity of semantic segmentations in different languages necessarily makes any translation act imperfect.

linguistic and semantic anachronisms. In fact, if linguistic anachronisms are hypothetically perfect translations from a dead L1 into a living L2, semantic anachronisms can be defined as imperfect or faulty translations. Of course, since there is no such thing as a perfect translation, the distinction between linguistic and semantic anachronisms is merely conventional. Yet, it seems to throw light on some basic differences. A few examples may, perhaps, clarify our argument. The characters in Shakespeare's Roman plays know small Latin (and less Greek), so they prefer to express themselves in modern English. According to our typology, this virtual – and virtually correct – translation from Latin into Elizabethan English can be defined as a form of linguistic anachronism. However, in those plays one can also identify some speeches that have been, so to say, translated improperly. For instance, there is a line in *Coriolanus* in which Cominius suggests that he will report Martius' deeds "where *ladies* shall be frighted" (I.ix.5): the expression "ladies" appears out of place within a Roman context, where "matrons" would perhaps have been more appropriate and historically plausible. While the hypothetically correct translation of the Latin expression "matronae" with the English equivalent "matrons" would have represented a first, merely linguistic level of anachronism, the use of the term "ladies" represents a further, semantic, level of anachronism. This impropriety in translation is understandably due to the fact that the semantic system of ancient Rome is different from that of modern England and that, more specifically, the Latin expression "matrona" conveys some semes – such as "woman", "married", "of rank" – which are also conveyed by the English expression "lady". As Cominius' speech indirectly reveals, the Roman language and world have not been simply translated, but have been mistranslated – that is, out of metaphor, they have been viewed from a modern, Elizabethan standpoint. Therefore, if linguistic anachronisms are the intrusion, within the represented past, of the expression plane proper to the present of representation, semantic anachronisms can be regarded as the *further* intrusion, within the past, of content-units pertaining to the present. In other words, in representing the past the present also represents itself since it almost inevitably projects into the past meanings or contents which the past had not yet elaborated[16]. George Bernard Shaw's historical tragedy *Saint Joan* is significant in this direction. In it, Joan of Arc is anachronistically defined as a "nationalist"

[16] The fact that semantic anachronisms go beyond, or transcend, the merely linguistic level is implicitly demonstrated by some works of historical fiction which attempted to reproduce faithfully the language of the represented historical time. Among those, some seventeenth-century plays (William Drury, *Alvredus sive Alfredus* 1619; Thomas Carleton, *Fatum Vortigerni* 1619; An., *Sanctus Edoardus Confessor* 1653) and, in recent times, Derek Jarman's movie *Sebastiane* (1976). I shall not venture into an analysis of the Latin language used in those texts and shall assume that it is philologically correct. Nonetheless, even granting that the texts' linguistic surface does not show any anachronistic sign, anachronisms come out at other levels – semantic and paratextual. From a semantic point of view, the Roman-Christian setting of Jarman's film – in spite of its use of the Latin language – is anachronistically permeated by aspects of British gay culture in the seventies. And, of course, from a paratextual viewpoint, the very visual elements of a modern motion picture in their turn create an anachronistic contrast with the pastness of the represented time.

and a "protestant"[17]. The presence of those two expressions in the play suggests that Joan was so much ahead of her own contemporaries that we can only define her – or, indeed, think of her – by means of content-units which were still to be invented in her own time. What Shaw probably means to show is that Joan's behaviour leads to epochal semantic changes: directly or indirectly, the *pucelle* transforms the existing codes and *invents* new ones[18].

In Shaw's play, the projection into the past of anachronistic content-units seems to respond to an intentional authorial design. However, it is hard – or even impossible – to trace a dividing line between *wilful* or *unwilful* anachronisms. Apparently, at a first glance, the notorious (and often ironically commented upon) presence of modern objects – such as watches – in historical movies could be considered as unintentional, as the result of an authorial oversight[19]. Matters, however, may be less straightforward. After all, from Freud onwards, it has been widely ascertained that a lapsus should not be taken lightly. In addition to that, as, from structuralism onwards, empirical authors have been dead and buried, it would be rather problematic to resurrect them and investigate their minds. From a strictly textual point of view – i.e. from the *intentio operis* perspective – it does not make sense to distinguish intentional from unintentional anachronisms: all anachronisms are *textually* intentional in that they point to necessary, inescapable, forms of contamination between present and past.

Obviously, not all forms of cultural hybridization are immediately evident and many of them simply pass unnoticed. Indeed, it is not always easy to determine whether a given content is anachronistic within a given context. To decide whether the so-called "pepla" are historically accurate or plausible one has to be an expert in Latin culture. Besides, even for an expert, historical evaluations may sometimes prove difficult. One could be puzzled by the well-cut fringes which embellish the Roman foreheads in Mankiewicz's *Julius Caesar* (1953), or the vaseline sweat drops which run on the characters' faces (cf. Barthes 1957). Decidedly, watches had not yet been invented in Roman times, but what about vaseline? And, if anything similar existed, was it used to suggest a sweat effect on people's faces? And what about the actors' well-shaped bodies? Did the Romans spend all their time in weight-lifting sessions? How good were their hairdressers and tailors? And were their temples made of cardboard?

While the representation of modern objects (or the reproduction of old objects by means of modern materials and techniques) in historical-fictional texts falls within the analysis of semantic anachronisms, an altogether different account must be given of all those modern objects or materials which are not *part of* the representation – that is, they are not

[17] It is Warwick who uses the anachronistic expression "Protestantism" in relation to Joan, while the other neologism defining Joan's "heresy", "Nationalism", is invented by Cauchon. Both characters show full awareness of the innovating – linguistic and semantic – aspects of the terms (Warwick: "I should call it Protestantism if I had a name for it"; Cauchon: "Call this side of her heresy Nationalism if you will: I can find you no better name for it "). (*Saint Joan*, Ed. Dan H. Laurence, scene IV, pp. 98-100).

[18] For a semiotic study of "invention", see Eco 1976.

[19] A wide repertory of anachronisms in historical motion pictures is in Bertelli 1994.

represented contents – but make up the very instruments or *means of* representation. The historical-cultural friction between the represented past and the present means of representation determines what – in the wake of Genette's terminology – we may term *paratextual anachronisms*. Genette (1987) uses the term "paratext" to refer to the *seuils* of a text – that is, those threshold or transition areas which are halfway between the "within" and the "without" of a text. Genette's analysis is too long and complex to be outlined in a few words. However, what mostly interests us for our present purpose is that by the term paratext he refers, among other things, to those aspects of texts – the pages, cover and so on – which constitute the material means of representation. Although Genette limits his use of the term to verbal texts, the expression paratext may be conveniently extended to all forms of sign-production. It is thus possible to deal with various forms of paratext – and paratextual anachronisms. Books, motion pictures, theatrical performances, paintings, statues representing historical subjects are all paratextually anachronistic. Indeed, all forms of historical-fictional texts – both verbal and non-verbal – can only recreate the past thanks to modern means of representation. We read about the life and the seditions of lower class people during Henry VI's reign in the pages of some edition of R.L. Stevenson's *The Black Arrow* (1888), we meet with the famous profile of Cleopatra thanks to a plastic bust which is exposed in some shop-window, we ideally enter the climate of the Henrician Reformation through the cinema images of Lubitsch's *Anna Boleyn* (1920). In short, we are introduced into a fictional past through the pages of a book, the plastic shape of a bust, the projection of a motion picture: that is, through modern techniques, tools and materials of representation which connotatively mark a cultural difference or distance from the represented past. It is this historical-cultural difference between the means of representation and the represented contents that we call "paratextual anachronism". Like linguistic and semantic anachronisms, paratextual anachronisms too respond to a need for representational economy. No doubt, it would be rather anti-economic in terms of communication to represent the past through its own means of representation. In fact, the representation of the past through its own instruments of representation has more to do with forgery than with historical fiction proper. For some (para-)texts, however, distinctions are not so easy to draw. As already noticed, this may be the case with Chatterton's *Rowley* poems and the old stained parchment they were written on.

By resorting to seemingly "period" means of representation, forgers aim to create an illusion of pastness. Viceversa, this virtually complete illusion of pastness is broken in historical fiction. Unlike forgery, historical fiction is constitutively based upon the ambivalent *interplay between the creation and the rupture of an historical illusion*.

Some short concluding remarks

All forms of anachronism – each in its own way – break the illusion of the past. They do so by using a present expression plane (linguistic anachronisms),

by introducing present content-units (semantic anachronisms), by resorting to present means of representation (paratextual anachronisms).

Paradoxically, though, it is only thanks to the rupture of the illusion that the illusion itself can be created.

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b) Historical novels
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Derek Jarman, *Sebastiane* (1976)

ISBN 88-400-0785-7

€ 39,00