

“... these foolish, yet dangerous Books”:
Fashionable Sociability and the Circulating Library
in Classic Modernity

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Abstract

In or about the 1770s human individuality changed. This handy paraphrase of Virginia Woolf’s formulation could serve as an introduction to the revolution brought about by the established circulating library in Classic Modernity, aka the Enlightenment. With the novel settled in as commonplace, a growingly variegated and relaxed reading public enjoying extensive reading and delighting in what up until recently had been called dubious printed matter, the circulating library gradually won the battle for useful and amusing matters. Where it had been deemed “an evergreen tree of diabolical knowledge” (Sheridan *The Rivals* I. 2) comparable to brothels and gin shops, this modern type of library fitting the public sphere like a glove was snowballing into a sociable space where the great and the good were now impressive numbers of chic ladies advertising their knowledge as emotional and sartorial extravagance. Novels inundated the public and private spaces of the day: they were everywhere in salons, coffee houses, on shop and bank counters, on fashionable toilette or tea tables and kitchen ranges, in carriages and on board ships voyaging into, across and out of Britain, in English, French or Italian, devoured by aristocratic ladies and domestic maids and very often read in the midst of something else. Fiction and the circulating library revolutionized the book trade, the book and trade in 1700s’ Britain, as they saw a sea change in the attitude towards reading that had not been witnessed after the trail-blazing invention of print in the 15th century. As the royalty, the aristocracy and the higher ranks of 10 East-West Cultural Passage the clergy were erecting huge libraries recalling ancient mausoleums, these new reading centres paved the way to modern individual freedom and were instrumental in expanding the reading classes across the country, between the sexes and down the social ladder.

This essay will look into the fashionable sociability offered by the new reading practices, values and preferences cultivated in the negotiations between public and private spaces, male sense and female sensibility, serious and frivolous options, scientific-to-be and would-be artistic choices, educational and sentimental outlets. In so doing, it will analyse what in the late 1790s came to be defined “depots of learning,” as well as “stores for rational amusement” – an exciting anticipation of consumerist means in our Late Modernity.

Keywords: the Enlightenment, circulating libraries, the novel, reading, the materiality of the book, the public and the private spheres.

Reading Early Modern Theatrical Performance and a
Skimmington at Horn Fair: Evidence from Sibiu

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Abstract

A painting of about 1700 by Jan Griffier in the Brukenthal Museum in Sibiu, Transylvania, shows a view of London with Horn Fair, near Greenwich, in the foreground. At Horn Fair, held each year on 18 October, cuckolds with their wives and lovers, all wearing horns, processed from Deptford to Charlton, where the fair was held. At its entrance a large effigy of a male figure, wearing antlers and holding bull's horns, is erected above the gate. Behind there may be a two-storey building for sexual assignations. The procession includes a skimmington with 'rough music.' Originally a ritual humiliation for wayward women and their unfortunate husbands, skimmingtons often became triumphal celebrations of sexual liberty. Beyond the procession is a booth theatre, with actors on the stage – one of only two portrayals of this widespread form of representation. I relate Horn Fair to relevant pamphlets and ballads, to other Early Modern inversion rituals, the Shrovetide apprentice riots, for example, to details of other paintings held in the Brukenthal, to the skimmington inserted into Brome and Heywood's *The Late Lancashire Witches*, and to *The Merry Wives of Windsor* and *As You Like It*. I conclude with an account of a recent booth theatre production of *King Lear*.

Keywords: Horn Fair, booth theatres, skimmingtons, Jan Griffier, William Shakespeare

Shakespeare Performances in 18th and 19th Century
Sibiu/Hermannstadt

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Abstract

The essay sets out to trace the history of German performances in Sibiu – called Hermannstadt in the 18th and 19th centuries. At the same time, it sketches the dissemination of German Shakespeare adaptations in the Eastern part of the Habsburg Empire. Particular emphasis is placed on the cultural and political life of Sibiu/ Hermannstadt in this period, as the city was the capital of the Habsburg province of Transylvania until 1813. The paper further accounts for the decline of Shakespeare productions and their subsequent revival in the last decade of the 19th century.

Keywords: Shakespeare, Sibiu/ Hermannstadt, German adaptations, Brukenthal library

Shakespearean Matters Reread in the Dramatic Musical
Adaptations of Romeo and Juliet

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Abstract

Four centuries after his death, Shakespeare thrives not only in the theatre, but also through what Bolter and Grusin call remediation: newer media achieve cultural significance by paying homage to, and refashioning, earlier media. This essay analyses how opera, symphony and musical reread veteran Elizabethan drama. Its main approach is comparative and relies on the history of mentalities. Rereading is dictated by the cultural context, the conventions of the lyrical theatre, social and political factors, as well as reception. Romeo – the icon of male romance – is interpreted by a mezzosoprano in Bellini's *I Capuleti*, as the audience had become accustomed to equating male characters with a woman's timbre due to the castrati. The confusing religious configuration of Shakespeare's England (Greenblatt's *Will in the World*) is reread, in Gounod's 19th-century France, according to staunch Catholicism, and the lovers ask God to forgive their suicide, adding a Christian dimension absent in the play. Bernstein's *West Side Story* moves the action to New York in the mid-50's, and the Capulets and Montagues are replaced with rival Polish and Puerto Rican gangs. Translation is also tackled as the rereading of English effects within the new linguistic richness of the foreign libretto.

Keywords: Shakespeare, music, libretto, adaptation, mentalities, religion, translation, theatrical convention, opera, musical

Quixotic Readers of Human Nature; Or, the Misprisions
of Sympathy in
Henry Mackenzie's *The Man of Feeling*

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Abstract

Rising to prominence in the latter half of the eighteenth century, the man of feeling readily became a virtuous model of liberal and charitable benevolence. Nevertheless, his moral epistemology – which translates feeling per se as virtue – proposed a model of masculinity that gradually absorbed feminine characteristics such as sympathy, sentimental effusions, tears and, ultimately, delicate feeling. This article places the man of feeling within the paradigm of delicate feeling, which interprets public responses in line with the protagonist's innate benevolence taken as a quixotic *idée fixe* propagated through sympathy, the very engine of ethical motivation and judgement within a social context marked by mercantile interests. Understood as an arbiter of the other's sentiments, sympathy – as understood by Scottish Enlightenment philosophers such as David Hume and Adam Smith – is grounded in the imagined perspective on the others' similar sentiments or emotions and is seen as having powerful social effects, once it manifests itself in a morally judicious manner. Failing to do so, it engenders excessive, unorthodox sympathetic feelings that are conducive to a misreading of fellowship. In this light, my task is to delve into Henry Mackenzie's *Man of Feeling*, a 1771 novel whose eponymous hero is an ultimately passive observer of life who epitomizes sympathetic feeling as failure caused by virtual forms of sympathy.

Keywords: man of feeling, sentimental morality, quixotism, sympathy, benevolence, David Hume, Adam Smith.

William Blake's "The Tyger" as an Expression of
the Reader's Futile Search for Authorial Intent

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Abstract

Reader Response criticism warns against the literary interpreter's endeavor to uncover the author's intention in order to reconstruct the original meaning of the literary text. The present essay aims at providing a way of understanding this fundamental critical fallacy from the perspective of reader response criticism by allowing for this critical stance to be emphasized with the help of literature, and more specifically, of William Blake's famous "Songs of Innocence and of Experience" poem "The Tyger." In this perspective, the poem can be seen as stressing the potential futile quest for authorial intent in the process of literary interpretation, as well as the consequences of perceiving the literary text as an echo of its creator rather than a reader-reflected image and the interpretative perils associated with an insistent quest on the part of the reader to discover the origin of the text to the detriment of a creative construction of meaning.

Keywords: William Blake, "The Tyger," Reader Response Criticism, authorial intent

Reading the Bible with and against the Oppressor:
Nineteenth-Century Slavery and Scriptural (Ab)uses

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Abstract

Reading the Bible has never been exclusively a spiritual exercise in learning the allegedly divinely inspired precepts of JudaeoChristianity; on the contrary, biblical passages have often been marshalled to endorse often divergent, sometimes infamous social practices. This essay investigates nineteenth-century American pro and anti-slavery texts which document the traditional Christian strategy of argumentum ad verecundiam through appeal specifically to biblical authority, used to buttress arguments in the abolitionist controversy. American ministers tailored their selection of biblical passages so as to persuade the black converts that submissive docility complied with divine imperatives and emulated Christ's; slave owners extolled their paternalistic care for slaves and vindicated bondage as a/the biblically sanctioned human condition. Not only did educated freed slaves, some turned ministers, expose the Christian slaveholder society's iniquity, but they would sometimes read blacks (back) into biblical stories which mention civilising heroes. My aim here is not to provide a definitive answer, if any should ever be possible, to the (for me) haunting question whether Christianity could and/or aimed to empower the converted slaves – and generally the subaltern. However, with the benefit of European hindsight as offered by the Holocaust, I would suggest that historically the practice of reading the Bible to vindicate one's position may have had disempowering effects on "the other" of white Christianity rather than providing the catalyst for long-term socio-political self-empowerment of the oppressed. Estella Antoaneta Ciobanu 121

Keywords: Bible, Christianity, American slavery, argumentum ad verecundiam, abuse, disempowerment

German-American Religious and Ethnic Bridges:
The Rhetoric of German Readers for Catholic Schools
in the United States (1870-1910)

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Abstract

In the second half of the nineteenth century, the German Americans, one of the largest immigrant groups at the time, were actively involved in the process of re-negotiating their linguistic and ethnic identities in the American environment. Consequently, particularly after 1850, they started setting up German-language schools in order to maintain their language and cultural heritage. Between 1870 and 1910, the Catholic schools for Germans in the United States used textbooks/readers in German to help their students to acculturate successfully to the American mainstream, while also maintaining their ethnic, linguistic and religious ties. This essay explores the ways in which the secular and religious information in a set of four fourth-level Catholic readers/textbooks reflects issues related both to the German Catholic education and to the Americanization trend at the turn into the twentieth century, from a synchronic perspective, as same-level readers, and from a diachronic one, by looking at their progression in time - 1870, 1874, 1897, and 1910.

Keywords: German Americans, religious and ethnic identity, acculturation, readers/textbooks, Catholic education, rhetorical choices

Reflexivity in Filmic and Literary Fiction:
Marc Forster's *Stranger than Fiction* and
Robert Grudin's *Book*

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Abstract

The virtues of self-reflexivity in fictional texts have become something of a critical orthodoxy: texts doing (or purporting to do) away with the transparency of their own medium have been hailed as 'new,' 'original,' 'revolutionary,' politically 'progressive,' fostering 'active' readings, etc. – in short, everything that sounds critically correct. This complacent view has been challenged of late from a variety of vantage points, notably film studies and literary criticism. This essay engages with two self-reflexive texts, one literary and one filmic, in an attempt to illustrate the reductiveness of certain still prevalent critical truisms. The choice of *Stranger than Fiction* and *Book: A Novel*, the former not a filmic adaptation of the latter, has been made with a view to eschewing the pitfalls of 'fidelity criticism,' another quondam critical commonplace. Nevertheless, envisioning what their respective counterparts in the other medium could possibly look like will prove to be a productive imaginative exercise.

Keywords: self-reflexivity, realism, Victor Shklovsky, Bertolt Brecht, Linda Hutcheon, Patricia Waugh, film theory, classical Hollywood cinema, Robert Stam.

Senior Attachment or What Love Turns Into

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Abstract

My essay puts forward a reading of John Barth's most recent short fiction keyed on the biographical element that governs the ideology of his late fictional output, old age. It endeavours to identify the instances in which affection functions as a catalyst for tracing the outline of the golden years of the characters, as the pretext to release the political and parodic slants of the fictional fabric. These instances range from the less profound, such as physical love or tenderness to the ones that compensate for the associated tragedies of the inevitable demise: deep attachment, terror of being left behind, temptation to commit suicide or misgivings over eternal life.

Keywords: indispensable, irreplaceable, unimaginable, unassimilable, companionship, love, eternity.