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Editorial

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Editorial

It is a pleasure to launch a special themed issue of *Text Matters*, dedicated primarily to “Re-visioning Ricoeur and Kristeva.” Apart from being a contribution to Ricoeur and Kristeva studies, to be introduced in detail below, the issue will, traditionally, include materials unrelated to the main theme. Opening *Text Matters* no. 4 is the interview with Mieke Bal, a special guest of the journal, an internationally acclaimed and widely known critic in visual studies, and a visual artist herself. Mieke Bal and Michelle Williams Gamaker’s video installation *Madame B* was premiered in Łódź from December 2013 till February 2014.

In writing on texts by, about, and after, Julia Kristeva and Paul Ricoeur the contributors to this special themed issue of *Text Matters* have played parts in a process of “re-visioning.” The term, “re-vision” with a hyphen, has a technical meaning which I have elsewhere appropriated from Adrienne Rich’s “When We Dead Awaken: Writings as Re-vision.”¹ Here re-vision is “the act of looking back, of seeing with fresh eyes, of entering an old text from a new critical direction.”² What is significant in this themed section of *Text Matters* no. 4 is the process of entering a text “with fresh eyes” and “from a new critical direction”: this is how “text matters” for those of us reading “text” in the process of “re-visioning Ricoeur and Kristeva.” Although each contribution on Ricoeur and/or Kristeva to follow is written independently, it is important to notice the threads, making up the themes of this section. Themes of violence, loss, blood, separation and horror are accompanied

¹ Pamela Sue Anderson, *Re-visioning Gender in Philosophy of Religion: Reason, Love and Epistemic Locatedness* (Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2012), ix–xiii, 1–4, 25–27; and see the next footnote.

² Adrienne Rich, “When We Dead Awaken: Writings as Re-vision.” *College English*, 34.1, *Women Writing and Teaching* (Oct. 1972): 18.

by themes of vision, life, birth, recognition, imagination and transformation. Each essay has its uniqueness and speaks to different, critical textual and contextual issues, including sexuality, gender, religion, education, ethics, alterity, difference, intellectual practice, literature, feminism, art and literary genre.

To begin with, I introduce gender and its re-visioning, as a feminist response, to Paul Ricoeur's hermeneutic phenomenology of the capable subject. My essay aims to bridge Ricoeur's early and later writings, while also introducing the intertext of Julia Kristeva, where she re-visions the position and vocation of Antigone from Sophocles' ancient text. This first contribution to the section gives the sense that Ricoeur and Kristeva each create texts which remain strongly gendered by their paternal and maternal vocations as male or female subjects within phenomenology and/or psycholinguistics (where patriarchal language conditions all meaning and values). Yet subsequent contributors will challenge these traditional accounts of heterosexuality and patriarchy with new possibilities for difference in re-visioning with Kristeva in particular.

In "Eyes wide shut": Paul Ricoeur's Biblical Hermeneutics and the Course of Recognition in John Milton's *Paradise Lost*," Małgorzata Grzegorzewska also explores Ricoeur's conception of human capability in his later texts; yet she relates capability back to fallibility in one of Ricoeur's earliest texts. Grzegorzewska argues that ultimately Ricoeur's dual-focus, on the one hand, in *Fallible Man* (1965), on the precarious fate of the "fallible man" and, on the other hand, in the *Course of Recognition* (2005), on the destiny of the "capable man" enables a re-visioning of Milton's evocations in *Paradise Lost*. Grzegorzewska engages with biblical and literary hermeneutics, as well as Ricoeur's philosophical anthropology, continuing the sense that we are confronting the traditional roles played by men and women in Ricoeurian texts.

In "To Look at Things as if They Could Be Otherwise: Educating the Imagination," Laurie Anderson Sathe introduces the themes of vision and transformation, along with the highly significant role of imagination in the texts of Ricoeur. Anderson Sathe engages with Ricoeur, in order to contribute to discussions of narrative theory in the context of education studies, or pedagogy, in holistic health. She brings in a strongly positive vision for educating the imagination of those, especially, who work in health-care, confronting illness, suffering and pain with Ricoeur's wholly positive strategies for opening new worlds through, as she sees it, the configuration of texts and the reconfiguration of contexts. Anderson Sathe reminds us how much Ricoeur believed in hope and horizons where there are always new possibilities to be created by the productive imagination through the telling of (our) stories and the quest for narrative identity.

In “Testimony, Responsibility and Recognition: A Ricoeurian Response to the Crises of Sexual Abuse,” John Crowley-Buck turns to a harsh reality—to a paradise lost—with the crises of sexual abuse, as exposed in the Roman Catholic Church since 2002. Crowley-Buck returns to Ricoeur’s texts on testimony and responsibility, searching for constructive resources to re-vision the tragedy of sexual abuse. He brings up the tragic themes of human violence, loss of innocence, broken lives, horror and faithlessness; he is, then, bold to suggest new possibilities for justice in recognition and forgiveness. Here rather than vision and truth winning the day, the reader is reminded of the deep wounds created by deception and corruption in religious institutions.

9 In “Reading *The Road* with Paul Ricoeur and Julia Kristeva: The Human Body as a Sacred Connection,” Stephanie Arel eagerly engages both Ricoeur and Kristeva in reading the fiction of Cormac McCarthy: her text is McCarthy’s novel, *The Road*, which Arel re-visions in imagining how body and spirit might sustain life after the world’s “fiery destruction.” *The Road* appears to tell a story about a father and a son who are “carrying the fire,” uniting human and divine. But Arel admits the glaring absence in this text of the mother; and she seeks the help of both Kristeva to subvert this absence and Ricoeur to imagine new possibilities beyond McCarthy’s fiction. In this way, Arel draws on a Ricoeurian threefold-mimetic approach to the text, recognizing what is prefigured and configured, while seeking to reconfigure life—body and spirit—after a cataclysmic event.

In “‘When China Meets China’: Sinéad Morrissey’s Figurations of the Orient, or the Function of Alterity in Julia Kristeva and Paul Ricoeur,” Grzegorz Czemieli offers the reader a path to engaging the texts of both Kristeva and Ricoeur, in order to discover new visions in Irish poetry. Here the poet is Sinéad Morrissey and the focus is poetic exploration of alterity, foreignness, and the Orient (China) meeting the Occident in artwork (china). Czemieli’s essay is ambitious but no less than many of Kristeva’s own works on intertextuality in reading and writing about not only alterity (in China and china), but about human subjectivity. Moreover, alterity and its relation to the subject generate common ground for a productive conversation between Kristeva and Ricoeur.

In “Kristeva: The Individual, the Symbolic and Feminist Readings of the Biblical Text,” Joshua Roe takes us back to biblical studies, but also returns to a feminist response, this time, to Kristeva’s textual readings of the (Hebrew) Bible. Roe raises a critical problem of the individual and “the symbolic” for Kristeva’s psycholinguistic account of (any) literary text, whether biblical or not. He helpfully introduces the psychoanalytic role of desire in Kristeva’s reading of texts, but also her psycholinguistic conception of language as a relation of the semiotic and the symbolic. Again

the implicit theme of vision emerges in Roe's text, but now, as "coming to light," appearing, illuminating and (re)presenting: this theme is developed in his fascinating discussion of the constructive role of "fantasy" in Kristeva's account of human understanding. Subjectivity, as in the previous essay, comes into Roe's assessment of Kristeva's account of sexuality and difference; this also unwittingly anticipates the next essay on the place of sexual difference in Kristeva's texts.

In "Kristeva, Ethics and Intellectual Practice," Sylvie Gambaudo offers a wonderfully engaging account of Kristeva's contested place in critical debates: these include debates about "diversity," "French theory" and feminism. Gambaudo argues that Kristeva's significance rests in her "discreet form of subversion," contributing to an ethics and "a forward-thinking" intellectual practice on the question of difference. In fact, Gambaudo focuses on Kristeva's considered contribution to sexual difference and social unrest. She also—similarly to Roe—does not dismiss, or try to sever, Kristeva's psychoanalytic training. Instead, Gambaudo commends Kristeva for sticking to her "psychoanalytic guns," especially when it comes to social concerns, rather than "uncritical speedy fixes" to deep social unrest. Here the re-visioning and transformation of sexual difference are reached by going the long way of Kristevan understanding before taking action.

In "Abjection and Sexually Specific Violence in Doris Lessing's *The Cleft*," Dorota Filipczak returns the reader to the imagery of "cleft" which appears in the quotation from Kristeva at the beginning of this section: Kristeva's vision of Antigone is one of being "cleft" between "the logic of the political" and "the blood of an instigator of transgressions." Filipczak discovers in Lessing's text, *The Cleft*, imagery and concepts resonating profoundly with Kristeva's psycholinguistic writings; psycholinguistics becomes the condition of all meaning and value as seen in this novel. Just as Kristeva associates Antigone's state of "being cleft" with a maternal vocation—in taking up the position of her mother, Jocasta, of care and tenderness in the burial of her brother—Lessing creates a community of "Clefts" who, as Filipczak explains, are associated with "their gift of creating new life"; they are pre-cultural in their motherhood; togetherness and communal being are implied by Cleft motherhood. Imagery of water, of nature and natural instinct, recalls Kristeva's psychoanalytic conception of the maternal vocation, or "function," and its associations with fluidity and the semiotic; but sexually specific violence arises in the process of abjection, whereby the maternal body is expelled, and after which "Squirts" will evolve into a different, symbolic realm. The psychoanalytic themes in Lessing's texts become—in Filipczak's expert hands—part of a Kristevan re-visioning: this creates intertextual connections, giving the text a life of its own. Vision, imagination and transformation equally become implicit themes—for new possibilities—in Filipczak's reading of abjection

and sexually specific violence in Lessing's fiction. Thus, vision and violence come together in illuminating ways for understanding sexual relations, revealing why "text matters."

In "Taking Sides on *Severed Heads*: Kristeva at the Louvre," Alison Jasper has fun with her reading of Kristeva's unusual text, its subtexts and the various resonating concepts. Jasper produces a fascinating review of what is basically an exhibition catalogue—but in Jasper's hands it is so much more! No nuances are missed when it comes to the psychoanalytic resonances of the art, the imagery and the concepts which come into Kristeva's text, *Severed Heads*. Yes, the exhibition is about heads without bodies! Jasper follows the order—chronologically—of the head(s) as the privileged object in this exhibition and in the (western) history of human societies. No trouble with, nor any tendency to dismiss, Kristeva's psychoanalytic connections appears in this essay. Just the opposite: Jasper brings out the richness and depth of Kristeva's text; the understanding gained concerning the worship of skulls plus the murder and decapitation of the Father inform a familiar Freudian reading of the role of the phallic object in religious or social rituals. As Jasper makes clear, in killing their father, the sons act out of the fear of castration and impotence; but the vision of a mother's power and its loss is equally implied in a cannibalistic ritual, quoting Kristeva:

I try to cry out in the face of this loss to name it, to envision it; I also appropriate it, consume it, I do not want to lose it. I rediscover the pleasure of the archaic orality that this breast, this mass, this head provided me.

Jasper further offers us a re-visioning of art-history as she runs through the exhibition of bodies without heads. So, vision, violence, loss, life, imagination, horror, recognition all oscillate through the twists and turns of Kristevan psychoanalytic imagery in her text about the western art of severed heads. In the end, as Jasper reminds us, Kristeva's own re-visioning takes its point from her role as an analyst, as much as a writer or intellectual. Kristeva as a therapist constantly confronts the suffering from loss, horror, fear and the silence of melancholia—each of which creates the pain which can lead to "mindless/headless violence."

In "Convention, Repetition and Abjection: The Way of the Gothic," Agnieszka Łowczanin gives a fitting conclusion to this section on "Re-visioning": we have Kristeva placed alongside Gilles Deleuze, who almost twenty years after his death is now one of today's most popular twentieth-century philosophers. Even Ricoeur wrote, near the end of his own life in this century, that Deleuze was one of the two French twentieth-century philosophers who he most admired. But here Łowczanin does not speak of Ricoeur. Instead she engages in a re-visioning of texts, returning with fresh eyes and a critical openness to the Gothic genre and its conventions.

Through the eyes of Kristeva and Deleuze, she shows us a novel process of re-visioning—that of “Gothicism.” Łowczanin considers how the survival of “a potent cultural form” in Gothic texts has been possible for more than three centuries. Of course, not all Gothic fiction would meet the Deleuzian principle of “theft and gift” which, as Łowczanin demonstrates, implies a transformation of something specific. Łowczanin sets out a Deleuzian transformation of the specific as “what is repeated becomes modified, and the repeated incorporates a necessary ‘gift’ of novelty.” Kristeva comes into Gothicism, according to Łowczanin, because Kristeva’s abject is “mapping the same territory”: the attributes of which are otherness, the sublime and the ambiguous. Well-known is the Kristevan claim that “the abject is edged with the sublime”³; but elsewhere she calls the abject “the ambiguous.” Fear and the real threat of the abject, then, follow the repetition of the principle which Deleuze helps Łowczanin to describe as “Gothic fiction.” Again, in this essay, the reader finds themes of violence, loss, horror accompanied by vision, life, birth of the new, and the transformation of the old. These seem to complete what, I might wager, is a proper Deleuzian repetition as “a necessary and justified conduct in relations to which it cannot be replaced”: something which Kristeva exemplifies in her re-visioning of the abject in a range of texts across centuries of western thinking.

Thus, I end this introduction to the themed section, “Re-visioning Ricoeur and Kristeva,” with a confident conclusion, that violence and loss do not have the last word. Old and new life are repeatable, as we transform our vision through an act of “looking back, of seeing with fresh eyes, of entering an old text from a new critical direction.” This is why *Text Matters* names a journal, and a truth about our ability to imagine the new in a text, even while still repeating what is most singular in the unmatched texts of the past.

The section “Re-visioning Ricoeur and Kristeva” is followed by the section “Continuities” that takes up some topics from Issue 3, whose title was *Eroticism and Its Discontents*. The latter focused mostly on mediaeval literature and drama throughout the centuries. The “Continuities” section includes an article by Małgorzata Dąbrowska, a historian specializing in the Middle Ages, concerned, among others, with the encounter between Byzantium and the West. Her text “A Cypriot Story about Love and Hatred” focuses on King Peter I Lusignan from Cyprus, whose love affair culminating in disaster found its way into the folk song that is alive today. Significantly, the author also touches upon the themes of this issue: “violence, blood, loss and horror.”

Another section with distinct identity focuses on Irish themes. An article by Jan Jędrzejewski entitled “Anthologizing Sir Samuel Ferguson:

³ *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*. Trans. Leon S. Roudiez. New York: Columbia UP, 1982. 11.

Literature, History, Politics” engages with the output of Sir Samuel Ferguson, “one of the key figures of mid-nineteenth-century Irish literature.” Basing his argument on extensive evidence, the author contends that Ferguson’s contribution is not adequately reflected in anthologies of Irish verse which include his poems. This is followed by a text on Yeats’s poetry “Recalling all the Olympians: W. B. Yeats’s ‘Beautiful Lofty Things,’ *On the Boiler* and the Agenda of National Rebirth.” Its author Wit Pietrzak deals primarily with the poem “Beautiful Lofty Things.” His contention is that “the poem is organized around a tightly woven matrix of figures that comprise Yeats’s idea of the Irish nation as a ‘poetical culture.’”

In his review of Christina M. Gschwandtner’s *Postmodern Apologetics? Arguments for God in Contemporary Philosophy*, Michael D’Angeli looks at what he identifies as “a compelling study of how twentieth-century philosophy stemming from the phenomenological tradition has impacted on, and enabled, contemporary trends within philosophy of religion.” In particular, D’Angeli pays careful attention to Gschwandtner’s chapter on Ricoeur, “A God of Poetry and Superabundance.” From this title alone, it is clear that Gschwandtner studies the poetic dimension of Ricoeur’s texts, conveying divine love as “superabundance.” D’Angeli praises Gschwandtner’s exploration of textual polyphony and limit expressions in Ricoeur, while questioning her failure to consider how these matters necessarily inform Ricoeur’s account of biblical polyphony and parabolic limit-expressions. In other words, D’Angeli concerns himself with text matters, especially the re-visioning of biblical texts which is made possible by Ricoeur’s linguistic understanding of non-religious texts.

Finally, the issue includes two interviews by Joanna Kosmalka. In the first one she talks to a prominent Irish writer Roddy Doyle born in Dublin; and this connects to the articles on themes Irish. The next interview concerns the fiction of Joanna Czechowska, a British writer of Polish origin. Both interviews tackle the issue of Polish immigration to Ireland and the United Kingdom. They refer specifically to the recent immigration wave which followed the expansion of the European Union, but also to the previous migrations, i.e. in the aftermath of World War II, and the state of martial law in Poland (1981–83), respectively. The emphasis on Polish migrations in the interviews connects with the Polish location of Mieke Bal and Michelle Williams Gamaker’s video installation premiered in Łódź, and discussed in the opening conversation. Thus *Re-visioning Ricoeur and Kristeva*, as well as the discussions refiguring things mediaeval and things Irish are “framed” by the Polish locatedness.