

Echoes and Ghosts: An Ironic Footnote to Repetition and Re-presentation¹

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Summary

In one of the footnotes Kierkegaard added to his treatise on irony (1841) the old opposition between the cold north and the sunny south is deconstructed. This deconstruction is carried out by means of the echo: the Greek nymph Echo is called Bergmund or Zwergmund in the north; in the north Echo *is* a Troll. Echo is therefore echoed in the north as a Troll – the happy Greek south and the cold Denmark are echoes of each other. The relationship between the echo and that which it echoes is problematic and involves notions like irony, repetition, representation and fragmentation. The disembodied, ghostly voice of the unfortunate nymph from happy Greece comes as a voice from the past – or from the future – to haunt Hamlet and to haunt Leonce in echoes as they echo each other.

Georg Büchner's *Leonce und Lena* (1836) was written two centuries after *Hamlet*. And yet it is echoed in *Hamlet* as much as *Hamlet* is echoed in it. The echoes of ghosts and subordinates, of melancholy, idleness and boredom, of masks, mechanical puppets and plays within plays which never stop, are signs of meaningless in-difference or – perhaps – of a voice that is ironically saved.

Opsomming

Die ou teenstelling tussen die koue noorde en die sonnige suide word gedekonstrueer in een van die voetnotas wat Kierkegaard by sy verhandeling oor ironie gevoeg het (1841). Hierdie dekonstruksie word uitgevoer deur middel van die eggo: die Griekse nimf Echo word genoem Bergmund of Zwergmund in die noorde; in die noorde *is* Echo 'n Trol. Echo word dus in die noorde geëggo as 'n Trol – die gelukkige Griekse suide en die koue Denemarke is eggo's van mekaar. Die verhouding tussen die eggo en dit wat geëggo word is problematies en betrek sake soos ironie, herhaling, representasie en fragmentasie. Die liggaamlose, spookagtige stem van die ongelukkige nimf van gelukkige Griekeland keer as stem uit die verlede – of van die toekoms – terug om by Hamlet en Leonce in eggo's te spook soos wat hulle mekaar eggo.

Georg Büchner se *Leonce und Lena* (1836) is twee eeue na *Hamlet* geskryf. En tog word hierdie teks net soveel in *Hamlet* geëggo as wat *Hamlet* daarin geëggo word. Die eggo's van geeste en ondergeskiktes, van melancholie, niksdoen en verveeldheid, van maskers, meganiese poppe en van dramas binne in dramas wat nooit ophou nie, is tekens van 'n betekenislose onverskil(ligheid) of – miskien – van 'n stem wat ironies gered word.

In dem glücklichen Griechenland war die Natur nur selten für andres Zeuge als für die zarten und sanften Harmonien einer ebenmässig gestimmten Seele, denn selbst die griechische Trauer ist schön gewesen, daher war Echo eine freundliche Nymphe. In der Mythologie des Nordens hingegen, allwo die Natur von wilden Klageschreien widergehalten, wo die Nacht nicht licht und klar, sondern düster und verhangen, voll von Angst und Grauen gewesen, wo das Leid nicht gesänftigt ward durch stilles Gedenken, sondern durch ein tiefes Seufzen und ewiges Vergessen, da war Echo ein Troll. Im nordischen Volksglauben heisst Echo darum Zwergmund oder Bergmund. . . .

(Sören Kierkegaard 1984)

Die Ironie ist eine permanente Parekbase.

(Friedrich Schlegel 1967)

Because echoes belong to language itself, every text is exposed to the possibility of differing from itself.

(John Sallis 1990)

1 Introductory remarks

As it might be said to examine the footnote in terms of in-different Echo(es), this article (un)fortunately has many footnotes. It is a polemical reflection on the nature of the echo which seeks playfully to reflect (on) the problematic relationship between the echo and that which it echoes by tracing – as a footnote to repetition and re-presentation – the figur/ation(s) of the nymph Echo.²

This is done in terms of a footnote in Kierkegaard, which leads us to Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, to the boredom of eternal in-difference grounded in the inability to act meaningfully in Georg Büchner's *Leonce und Lena*, and thus to the enactment of ghostly revenge in *Hamlet*.³ The problem of self-contradiction – of deconstructing one's argument by not doing what one is saying – is of special importance.

The relationship between the echo and that which it echoes involves notions like irony, repetition, representation, fragmentation, identity, difference and self-definition. Repetition is involved in representation, and in both irony and echoing as – perhaps – special forms of representation. The relationship between these three expressions of repetition is fraught with difficulty.

The Ghost in *Hamlet* will illustrate the point. Who or what is the Ghost? Is the Ghost a representation, an ironization, or “merely” an echo of Hamlet's father?

Each possibility assumes, of course, that the Ghost is *not* Hamlet's real father, that the Ghost is not identical to Hamlet's father, but stands in some relation to his father. If the Ghost were Hamlet's father, then the Ghost would, precisely, not have been a ghost. The relation between the Ghost and Hamlet's father can be defined broadly as one of repetition, and this repetition cannot be the same as that which it repeats, as it would then be that which it repeats, and would, therefore, no longer be a repetition of that which it seeks to repeat, but would be the original (in other words, that which is repeated).

This means that no repetition can ever be complete. If it were complete it would no longer be a repetition, but would become a replica. A replica in this sense is, then, not a repetition, but another example of that of which it is the replica. Put another way, copies, replicas, or complete repetitions can only be made of other copies, replicas, or complete repetitions.

2 Echoes and the nymph

In one of the copious footnotes (1984: 259–260) scattered through his master's dissertation on irony, Kierkegaard explains that contemplative irony could also be called dramatic irony. In this type of irony must be included

what Kierkegaard calls the irony of nature because, according to him, whatever irony there is in nature is there only because – ironically – it is found there. Nature is “zu natürlich und allzu naiv” [too natural and far too naive] (1984: 259)⁴ to be involved in creating irony. In order to see irony in nature one has to be “ironisch entwickelt” [ironically developed]. Because irony in nature is, therefore, produced by whoever has “ein Auge für sie” [an eye for it] – because, rather than as it were spontaneously emanating from the object, it is generated by the subject – Kierkegaard includes this type of irony under the rubric of romantic as opposed to classical irony. Kierkegaard refers to “[der] griechische[n] Harmonie” [the Greek harmony] and to “dem glücklichen Griechenland” [happy Greece], where nature was seldom witness to anything but “die zarten und sanften Harmonien einer ebenmässigen gestimmten Seele” [the tender and soft harmonies of a constantly attuned soul], and where “selbst die griechische Trauer ist schön gewesen” [even Greek sorrow was beautiful].

In the north, on the other hand, in Kierkegaard’s Denmark – or Hamlet’s Elsinore, for that matter – one’s senses are inevitably jarred by the violent oppositions in nature.

Because of – ironically – the nature of nature, the mythology of the north is frighteningly discordant to the existentialist Kierkegaardian romantic and is typified by the troll, while Greek mythology is harmonious and typified by the nymph Echo.

There are different Grecian legends relating to echoes. Common to many accounts of the legend of the nymph Echo, and of other legends relating to echoes, is that the figures in question pine away until only their voices are left.⁵ Hollander (1981) and Sallis (1990) each distinguishes between the two main legends regarding the Greek nymph Echo. The one is told by Daphnis to Chloe in Longus’s third century romance. The other account, perhaps better known, is told in Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*.

In Longus’s account Echo is a nymph who sings and plays the pipe and the lute. She evokes the wrath of Pan because she denies all sexual advances. Pan

sent a madness among the shepherds and goatherds, and they in desperate fury... tore her all to pieces and flung about them all over the earth her yet singing limbs. The earth in observance of the nymphs buried them all, preserving in them still their music, and they by an everlasting decree of the Muses breathe out a voice (Longus, *Daphnis and Chloe*, 3: 23. Translation cited is that of George Thornley).

(Quoted in Sallis 1990: 3; cf. Hollander 1981: 8)

In the earlier Ovidian story, which deals with Echo’s unrequited love for Narcissus (*Metamorphoses* III: 339–510; Miller 1956: 149–161), Echo uses her voice to chatter to Juno in order to allow Zeus time to flirt with the nymphs, and to allow the nymphs he has been flirting with time to escape. Juno as a result never manages to catch Zeus *in flagrante delicto*.

The punishment Echo receives from Juno is that the power of normal speech is taken away from her, with the consequence that she

nec reticere loquenti
 nec prior ipsa loqui didicit, resonabilis Echo.
 Corpus adhuc Echo, non vox erat et tamen usum
 garrula non alium, quam nunc habet, oris habebat,
 reddere de multis ut verba novissima posset.

could neither hold her speech when others spoke, nor yet begin to speak till others had addressed her.

Up to this time Echo had form and was not voice alone; and yet, though talkative, she had no other use of speech than now – only the power out of many words to repeat the last she heard.

(Miller 1956: 149)

Echo's restricted vocabulary causes many misunderstandings and one of the consequences of this is that her love for Narcissus goes unrequited. As a result Echo pines away:

et tenuant vigiles corpus miserabile curae
 adducitque cutem macies et in aera sucus
 corpores omnis abit; vox tantum atque ossa supersunt:
 vox manet, ossa ferunt lapidis traxisse figuram.
 inde latet silvis nulloque in monte videtur,
 omnibus auditur: sonus est, qui vivit in illa.

her sleepless cares waste away her wretched form; she becomes gaunt and wrinkled and all moisture fades from her body into the air. Only her voice and her bones remain: then, only voice; for they say that her bones were turned to stone. She hides in woods and is seen no more upon the mountain sides; but all may hear her, for voice, and voice alone,⁶ still lives in her.

(Miller 1956: 153)

Echo becomes an echo of herself, and this Echo is still heard in echoes.

On a superficial level it is odd that Kierkegaard chooses specifically Echo as the one nymph to typify happy Greece, because, according to legend, Echo was *unhappy*. The echoes we hear, or read in written texts, are the remnants of a dissipated, desperately unhappy woman cursed by Juno for protecting Zeus against her, and thus enabling him to flirt with the nymphs.

Kierkegaard is, however, aware of this: he says that Echo was a friendly nymph in the context of stating that “selbst die Griechische Trauer ist schön gewesen” [even Greek sorrow was beautiful].

People who echo others are commonly viewed as plagiarists, copyists, thieves, imitators of the supposedly original and therefore of that which is worthy of notice. Nobody takes those who echo others seriously. Those who echo, those who do not contradict, who are seen to play, are taken to be unserious and therefore not worthy of serious attention.

This is because an echo is the opposite, or the absence, of a contradiction. While the principle of difference is inherent in contradiction – contradiction as dissent: from the Latin *contradicere*, to speak against; compare the German *widersprechen* – echo is unquestioning repetition. Contradiction generates meaning because in it the principle of difference is given scope for play; the echo dissipates if not degenerates meaning because it is absolutely

fragmented repetition and therefore in-different to meaning. Echoes are not ironical, if one understands irony as an insistence on difference, even if this is the difference inherent in similarity.

But in a sense all we do is echo. We are all situated in language, and we all use – or at least have access to – the same words as everybody else situated in that language.

On the one hand the nymph Echo cannot be ironical – she can no longer play games. Yet – ironically – she is the type of the jarring, discordant sound of a disembodied voice, of an unperson who is not taken seriously because she is *thought* to play and is the unhappiest of creatures, of something that pines away in its difference. Echo is different in her in-difference.

There is thus an interesting duality inherent in Echo as the one who is incapable of difference and yet forever is the reminder of difference in her repetition of the same. Ironically, she makes the same different (from itself) precisely because she cannot be different from the same.

This paradoxical duality inherent in Echo also comes to the fore in that an echo can be *vocem reddere*, the restoration and salvation, the answer of the voice. It is not necessarily only repetition, but could very well be *widerhallen* in both its senses: the ringing against as much as the ringing again. It is this ringing against, this difference in in-difference, which makes the echo akin to irony. Echoing becomes a form of resistance, of subversion in its changing that which it re-presents. It answers back in its echo that of which it is the echo.

In the semantics of its etymology the echo is intimately related to that myth of ringing, of repeating the same and in repetition making it other than itself, other than its supposed original self. In this sense, then, echo must be understood as a radical differing, a definite *ringing against* precisely in repetition, in non-difference, in in-difference.

This is where, on a second level, Kierkegaard's choice of specifically Echo as the nymph to typify happy Greece comes to seem so odd that it becomes totally understandable. Kierkegaard seems to be contrasting happy Greece to the cold north. He seems to be contrasting them in terms of what typifies them. The south is typified by Echo. As we have seen, this comparison is not quite apt. Echo is by no means a simple figure; she most definitely does not represent an uncomplicated, happy, arcadian utopia. Echo is, in fact, a split being. And this is precisely the point: the other side is not opposite to the happy, the utopian Greece. To quote Kierkegaard again:

In der Mythologie des Nordens
da war Echo ein Troll. Im nordischen Volksglauben heisst Echo darum Zwerg-
mund oder Bergmund. . . .

[In the mythology of the north
there Echo was a Troll. In Nordic popular belief Echo is, therefore, called
Zwergmund or Bergmund. . . .]

In the north, Echo is a Troll. She is *called* Zwergmund or Bergmund. These are other names for Echo, not figures *other* than Echo. They are the same as Echo, or, to put it more precisely, they are other Echoes, they are echoes of

Echo. The supposed opposite is an echo of that to which it is opposed. Echo duplicates herself, not by a process of similitude or difference, but by ironizing notions of what is same and what is different.

To Kierkegaard Echo is, therefore, not the type only of a happy Greece, a warm Arcadia. In fact, he is not contrasting but *identifying* the supposedly opposite entities with each other. This is stressed by the differences between Greece and the north which Kierkegaard constructs – the “opposites” to the horrible north which he provides do not at all coincide with what must be recognized as the plight of the split subject Echo in the legend: according to those opposites the happy Greece of Echo must be “licht und klar” [light and clear], while suffering is “gesänftigt [. . .] durch stilles Gedenken” [alleviated by quiet memories]. In fact, as the legend makes clear, the description of Greece that applies to Echo is the description that is supposed to apply to the north: it is not only in the north, but also precisely in the Greece of Echo that

die Natur von wilden Klageschreien widergehallt, wo die Nacht nicht licht und klar, sondern düster und verhangen, voll von Angst und Grauen gewesen, wo das Leid nicht gesänftigt durch das stille Gedenken, sondern durch ein tiefes Seufzen und ewiges Vergessen. . . .

[nature echoed with wild plaintive cries, where the night was not light and clear, but dark and overcast, full of fear and horror, where suffering was not alleviated by the quiet memory but by a deep sigh and eternal oblivion. . . .]

This is as much a sign of an ironic Kierkegaard as it is a sign of a dystopian Kierkegaard. Kierkegaard is radically questioning the very viability of a utopia. A utopia is possible only where opposites echo eternally in one another and where there is a complete understanding found in full irony, where oppositions (the north which is and is not the south; nowhere which is an everywhere etc.) are collapsed into one another to such an extent that chaos is all that remains.

Ironically, only where understanding ends can there be a full, complete, meaningful utopia. Understanding is here understood as the necessary discrimination between alternative meanings – and as being the other side of irony.⁷ Irony undermines understanding as it is the recognition that this necessary discrimination between alternative possibilities is not necessarily possible, as the possibilities are not alternative. This is why the only possible “utopia” is to be found, when at all, in death as a sublime nothingness:

Für die Ironie wird alles ein Nichts. . . ein Nichts, welches doch ebenso inhaltsreich ist, als das Schweigen der Nacht Stimme hat für den, der Ohren hat zu hören; das ironische Nichts endlich ist die Totenstille, in welcher die Ironie als Wiedergängerin Spuk macht. . . .

(Kierkegaard 1984: 263).

[To irony everything becomes a nothing. . . a nothing which has, all the same, as full a content as the silence of the night has a voice for the person who has the ears to hear; the ironic nothing is ultimately the silence of death, in [from] which irony walks [returns] as a ghost. . . .]

Death as life; irony as – ironically – understanding. . . . Albert’s view that irony is “the simultaneous presence of two meanings between which it is not

possible to decide" (1990: 2) defines irony as *aporia*,⁸ rather than as a rhetorical term to indicate a mere stylistic figure available to be used to express the opposite of what is said (cf. Albert 1990: 2ff.; Dane 1991: 136).

One of the many definitions of irony attempted by Schlegel is:

Die Ironie ist eine permanente Parabase (1973: 289).

[Irony is a permanent parabasis.]

According to Albert (1990: 29) "[t]he parabasis is the part in the ancient Athenian comedy in which the chorus temporarily steps out of the plot of the play and addresses the audience directly making reference to figures and events of contemporary reality".

Irony is, according to Schlegel, a permanent parabasis, that is, a permanent interruption. But an interruption cannot, in the case of the parabasis, be permanent, as the parabasis implies that the drama will continue. The parabasis is per definition temporary.

The footnote is related to the parabasis. It might be viewed as a type of "internal" parabasis. Where the parabasis interrupts the course of the dramatic text to refer to a "reality", a "world"⁹ outside the text, the footnote *interrupts the course of the text to refer to a part of the text*. It is, therefore, an echo of the text – it is a repetition of a part of the text, and, therefore, a fragment of the text. The footnote is at once outside and inside the text to which it refers: it is a part of the text which falls outside that text. It is an interruption of the text by itself. As it falls outside the text, and interrupts the text, it is other than the text. As it is part of the text which is other than the text, it makes the text other to itself, causing it to differ from itself. A footnote, therefore, in principle is an example of the text echoing itself. Where a text interrupts itself in order to refer not to a reality outside of the text, nor to a part of itself but to itself *in toto*, one can speak of the text being a footnote to itself, a complete echo of itself: the text becomes other to itself. Such a text will be endless. It will always at the point of the first interruption interrupt itself again to echo itself *in toto*. This points to the ironic nature of self-reflexive texts: at the point where it interrupts itself it starts again. The point of interruption is, therefore, always at the same time an end and a beginning. Two mutually exclusive possibilities are both true: the interruption is an end and a beginning, and it is impossible to choose between the two. As the text spirals on, one is left with a sickening sense of vertigo.

This point can be elucidated by examining the nature of the parabasis. Whereas the ancient Greek parabasis is a temporary irruption of an outside reality into the play and refers to people (the audience) in that outside reality, the parabasis with which one would be able to compare the process of the play becoming a footnote to itself, would be a parabasis which would refer to characters in the play rather than to people outside of it. This would suspend the temporary nature of the parabasis, as the audience become part of the play.

3 The text as a footnote to itself

Like ghosts from a nowhere which is an everywhere, texts ironically echo other texts, and as echoes echo (within) themselves. Because texts echo other texts, they cannot be complete, and must in turn echo their own parts.

I would like to read Georg Büchner's *Leonce und Lena* and Shakespeare's *Hamlet* in terms of each other because they haunt each other – and if they are read in terms of each other one can find them echoing themselves to the extent that they are instances of “death” as understood by Kierkegaard, of Schlegel's “permanente Parekbasse”. When read in terms of each other, the abyss opens and it becomes clear that *Hamlet*, as much as *Leonce und Lena*, is a never-ending footnote to itself. Each text is present in itself through the other, and this present is the past which eternally becomes the same future. Each text becomes an enactment of that which it fears – that there is no end, and no beginning, that there is no difference, and that it makes no difference. Each becomes an instance of eternal, cosmic boredom.¹⁰

According to Malte Fues, *Leonce und Lena* is at first glance

ein mit leichter Hand hingeworfene Abklatsch der romantischen Literaturkomödie, auf den zweiten eine scharfe Satire gegen das pseudo-konstitutionelle Ancien Régime.

(1992: 695)

[a poor imitation, dashed off with a light hand, of the romantic literary comedy, at second [glance] a sharp satire against the pseudo-constitutional Ancien Régime.]

This play enacts the story of Leonce, a prince, and Lena, a princess, of two small, virtually indistinguishable feudal city states. The one is called Popo (backside), and the other Pipi (wee-wee). It is the story of their rebellion against the traditional ceremonies inherent in perpetuating the absolute power of kings and noblemen in feudal societies (cf. Berns 1987). Leonce and Lena are being forced into an arranged political marriage with each other. They have never met each other and, independently, decide to flee their respective constricting fiefdoms. In the south, in Italy, they meet and fall in love, each without knowing that the other is the partner s/he has fled from. They return on the day that they were supposed to have got married to each other, and get married in effigy. Valerio, Leonce's valet, has masked them as *themselves*, and presents them to the court as automatons. König Peter, Leonce's father, insists that a marriage take place, even if only in effigy:

PETER. (*den Finger an die Nase legend*). In effigie? in effigie? Präsident, wenn man einen Menschen in effigie hängen lässt, ist das nicht eben so gut, als wenn er ordentlich gehängt würde?

PRÄSIDENT. Verzeihen, Eure Majestät, es ist noch viel besser, denn es geschieht ihm kein Leid dabei, und er wird dennoch gehängt.

PETER. Jetzt hab ich's. Wir feiern Hochzeit in effigie. (*Auf Lena und Leonce deutend*.) Das ist die Prinzessin, das ist der Prinz. – Ich werde meinen Beschluss durchsetzen, ich werde mich freuen. Lasst die Glocke läuten, macht Eure Glückwünsche zurecht, hurtig, Herr Hofprediger!

(p. 156)

[PETER. (*placing his finger on his nose*). In effigy? in effigy? President, if one hangs somebody in effigy, is that not as good as if he were hanged in reality? PRESIDENT. Excuse me, your majesty, it is far better, because then he does not suffer any pain, and he is hanged all the same.

PETER. Now I have it. We celebrate the wedding in effigy. (*Pointing at Lena and Leonce.*) That is the princess, that is the prince. – I shall carry through my decision, I shall be pleased. Let the bell ring, prepare your congratulations, quick, Mr Court Chaplain!

A complicated echoing structure is apparent here. In the case of Leonce, for instance (the same would apply to Lena), an actor plays Leonce, who, masked as himself, plays himself as a representation of himself (an automaton; in effigy). The echoic trope of transumption (or metalepsis¹¹) is at work.

The automaton representing Leonce-in-effigy is taken by König Peter and the other characters on stage (and in the audience?) to be Leonce, and this is indeed the case in as much as “Leonce” exists. The missing term in the trope is the “real” Leonce who might be said to stand “in actual fact” in a synechdochal¹² relation both to the actor playing Leonce, and to the automaton (Leonce-in-effigy). In this rhetorical construct both terms (the actor and Leonce-in-effigy) need to be present for the reference to the middle term (the character Leonce in the play) to be efficacious. Just like iconic similarity between a portrait and its subject is not usually taken to cause confusion, there is nothing to link Leonce *literally* with Leonce-in-effigy. But, even though König Peter is aware of the convention that a representation is *not* the thing represented, and that the effigies of Lena and Leonce are not *really* Lena and Leonce, he decides that the wedding should take place in effigy, because an execution in effigy (a common enough practice in feudal European societies) has legal binding power. By a rhetorical sleight-of-hand the marriage does take place: Lena and Leonce-in-effigy for the king and his court become Lena and Leonce in reality.

Leonce is masked as Leonce – this implies that the masked Leonce (Leonce-in-effigy) is not-Leonce; but he is Leonce. Leonce is therefore not-Leonce, which would point to the ironical structure of the trope at work here. The mock-marriage mocks marriage as it is a marriage which is not a marriage.

It is extremely ironical that Lena and Leonce’s mock-marriage in effigy has the legal binding power of an execution in effigy. And in a sense their marriage in effigy is, perhaps, an execution. As Berns (1987: 238) notes, Leonce is now prepared to repeat everything he has suffered once again:

Gehn Sie jetzt nach Hause, aber vergessen Sie Ihre Reden, Predigten und Verse nicht, denn morgen fangen wir aller Ruhe und Gemütlichkeit den Spass noch einmal von vorn an. Auf Wiedersehen!

(p. 158)

[Go home now, but do not forget your speeches, sermons and verses, because tomorrow we start the fun in peace and conviviality once more. Goodbye!]

Leonce becomes the king (his father abdicates once the continuation of the family line is assured), and this sets the scene not only for a perpetuation of the feudal system but of the play repeating itself, as the theatrical diction

makes clear: the play *Leonce und Lena* will be repeated, and the actors in the sham that is feudal society – and in the play in which that society is repeated by actors – will commence again. Ironically, in the nature of the “permanente Parekbase”, it is not only the audience who have viewed the mock-real marriage “inside” the play, but the audience “outside” the play who are addressed. The play becomes as it were, a footnote to itself as it repeats itself.

Leonce und Lena repeats in itself the structure of Kierkegaard’s deconstruction of the north/south typology. The south – Italy – which has afforded a means of escape and a means of reconciliation is echoed in the feudal north in order to destroy the status quo of the cold northern society. But an eternally self-reflexive play is maintained, ironically by deconstructing that north/south typology.

In a kind of parabasis (epilogue/prologue), after the play has ended, and before it is to start again, utopia is evoked by Leonce, Lena, and Valerio. Leonce wants to change his cold feudal north by artificially creating a utopia of eternal summer:

Aber ich weiss besser was du willst, wir lassen alle Uhren zerschlagen, alle Kalender verbieten, und zählen Stunden und Monden nur nach der Blumenuhr, nur nach Blüte und Frucht. Und dann umstellen wir das Ländchen mit Brennsiegeln, dass es keinen Winter mehr gibt, und wir uns im Sommer bis Ischia und Capri hinauf distillieren, und das ganze Jahr zwischen Rosen und Veilchen, zwischen und Orangen und Lorbeer stecken.

(p. 158)

[But I know better what you want, we shall have all clocks smashed, all calendars banned, and count hours and moons only by the flower clock, only by blossoms and fruit. And then we shall remodel the little country with mirrors, so that there is no longer winter, and so that we can repair ourselves in summer to Ischia and Capri, and hide among roses and violets, among oranges and laurels all year long.]

Leonce suggests a fantasy world without time, so that one can ironically go back in time (as it were by means of the trope of transumption).¹³ The time is echoed when years were marked by harvests, “nach der Blumenuhr, nur nach Blüte und Frucht”.¹⁴ Utopia is, however, impossible, as Kierkegaard reminds us. Despite the echoic structure of the trope which Leonce employs, Echo cannot but remain a Troll, the north cannot but be echoed in the south as the south is echoed in the north. The sickening vertiginous echoing of difference has to continue. The death which Lena and Leonce (and Danton in Büchner’s historical drama *Dantons Tod*) desire and dread so passionately¹⁵ is still the condition for full meaning in an ironical world of meaning without difference, where understanding is possible because discrimination is neither possible, nor necessary.

This process – of repeating itself eternally as a type of footnote to itself; of death as the precondition for full ironic understanding – is, when the play is read as containing echoes of *Leonce und Lena*, as clear in *Hamlet*. There are many echoes between the plays which can be made to speak.¹⁶ The link between *Leonce und Lena* and *Hamlet* is made explicit already by the very

similar dialogues the two Princes have with in-different courtiers. Some of the clearest examples of this complication of the echo are found in the echoing of Leonce by the Hofmeister,¹⁷ and of Hamlet by Osric and especially by Polonius.¹⁸ The dialogues bear some striking similarities, both regarding structure (mindless, obsequious, in-different non-replies) and content (compare, for instance, the issue of the clouds in the dialogue between both Hamlet and Polonius and Leonce and the Hofmeister).

Both Leonce and Hamlet attempt to change these empty worlds of echoes (as in-difference) which would seem to prophesy the death both desired and dreaded from which the Ghost of Hamlet's father returns to tell Hamlet the unbearable truth. Both princes try to create some sense by taking recourse ironically to the play of echoes – they act like fools. This implies becoming radically other to themselves, as a fool is not being bound to rules, but to breaking them.¹⁹

There are, thus, many echoes in *Hamlet*; and there is more than one *Hamlet*. It is an ironically echoing structure consisting of ironically echoing structures. There are different Shakespearian versions (Q1, Q2, and Folio). The text not only echoes an earlier *Hamlet* (perhaps by Thomas Kyd), as well as the anonymous *Der Bestrafte Brudermord*, (cf. Frye 1986: 82–83) but is famously echoed in so many later texts (cf. Frye 1986: 99–100). Furthermore, the text repeats parts of itself in Hamlet's dumb show, in the rewritten *The Murder of Gonzago* which in *The Mousetrap* echoes Claudius's murder of Hamlet's father. In terms of the genre of the revenge tragedy, another echoing may be invoked – that of the revenge ethic, which consists of targeting the one who has targeted, of repaying by making the subject of action the object of action,²⁰ as well as the echoing in “the three concentric rings of revenge tragedies” (Frye 1986: 90) in the play.²¹

What happens quite explicitly at the end of *Leonce und Lena* also takes place in *Hamlet*. Ironically, the earlier text of *Hamlet* echoes the later text of *Leonce und Lena*, or rather, that *Hamlet* is never-ending will become more apparent when read in terms of *Leonce und Lena*.²² This may be illustrated by the final masquerade of the play, the final serious game, when the play ends in the death of the characters and, therefore, in the resurrection of the actors, who will get up to play the same parts again in the following performance. Horatio says to Fortinbras:

Give order that these bodies
High on a stage be placed to the view,
And let me speak to th'yet unknowing world
How these things came about. So shall you hear
Of carnal, bloody, and unnatural acts,
Of accidental judgments, causal slaughters,
Of deaths put on by cunning and forc'd cause
And, in this upshot, purposes mistook
Fall'n on th'inventors heads. All this can I truly deliver.

(V ii 382–391)

This amounts to making explicit the nature of the play *Hamlet* as a play, which is repeated night after night, which is re-presented with ironic twists or

other echoes again and again. In the aporia of its own existence as the narration of itself, as the repetition of itself, the play is exposed to the possibility of differing from itself. It is, echoing the structure of the footnote discussed earlier in *Leonce und Lena*, not only the audience “inside” *Hamlet* consisting of Fortinbras and “the noblest” who are addressed, but also the audience “outside” the play, something extremely disconcerting in its capricious questioning of Northrop Frye’s confident assertion that

Hamlet [is] the most stifling and claustrophobic of plays. Not for us, because we’re outside it, but for the characters caught up in its action.

(1986: 84)

Horatio narrates to Fortinbras and “the noblest” what has happened in the play. Obviously he tells them what the audience have just seen. He tells them what has happened in a play called *Hamlet* and, most likely, by means of a play known as *Hamlet*. The play never ends. The bodies are put upon the “stage”, where they are resurrected as actors, acting the parts of the play for the benefit not only of Fortinbras, but for an audience “outside” the play.

Frye is right when he says that this is a summary of a “tragedy without a catharsis” (1986: 90, 98). This is so not only because the play is “smothered under ferocious revenge codes” and thus consists of “vengeance pattern[s]” engendering other “vengeance pattern[s]” (1986: 90), but because the play is cursed metatextually never to end.

Echo is a Troll, and Echo is the Ghost.

The play can never rest in the Ghost’s Echo(ing) quest for revenge, which demands that the text must always narrate itself again and again, that both the play and the characters “inside” and “outside” it return from death as Ghosts to haunt themselves in re-enacting their revenge. It sickens us to see a seamless whole of oppositions. In this sense, then, this text re-presents itself into eternity. It is a footnote to itself as it echoes itself in a disembodied voice, the voice of a voice. It is a voice from a nowhere which is an everywhere, and thus the text is condemned to be, ironically, as much an example of in-difference as of a vertiginous *vocem reddere ad nauseam*.²³

Notes

1. Versions of this paper were read at the SAVAL conference held at Broedersroom (19–21 March 1992), and at the BCLA conference “Across Europe” held at the University of Warwick, Coventry, United Kingdom (13–16 July 1992).

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2. In the myths echoing forth through time, Echo in a manner of speaking loses her figure, and becomes figural (cf. Sallis 1990: 6–14). Her bodiliness disintegrates into language. This does not mean that I am tracing the history of Echo, but that I am interested in tracing the figure of Echo, or perhaps the trope of the echo – metalepsis or transumption (cf. Hollander 1981). In this regard it is useful to distinguish between the rhetorical terms “figure” and “trope”. In the mediaeval

Rhetorica ad Herennium by pseudo-Cicero

forty-five figures of speech (*verborum exornationes*) and nineteen figures of thought (*sententiarum exornationes*) [are defined and exemplified]. The figures of speech are further divided into two groups, one of thirty-five figures and a second of ten. These latter ten figures of speech are not given a special name by the author, although later tradition assigned them the title of *tropi*, or “tropes.” They are distinguished from other figures of speech in that language “departs from the ordinary meaning of the words and is with a certain grace applied in another sense”.

(Murphy 1981: 20)

The distinction between the rhetorical terms “figure” and “trope”, however, is controversial. Murphy states that rhetorical devices bore in the Middle Ages “a multitude of names, such as ‘colors’ or ‘tropes’ or ‘schemes’ or ‘permitted faults’” (1981: 182). The last phrase is particularly suggestive in the present context. Cf. also footnotes 3, 7 and 8, below.

3. Paul de Man’s speculation (1979/1987; 1980) on the principle of non-contradiction, and on the logic of rhetoric’s deconstruction of itself as performance and enactment, might be said to haunt the figur(ation)(s), as do Friedrich Schlegel’s attempted definitions of irony (1973), as well as his playful investigation of the relation between irony and understanding (1967). Hans-Jost Frey’s excellent book has been most important for this article, especially in terms of the eternal presence of texts (cf. 1990: 7–23), the notion of incompleteness (cf. 1990: 155–167), and play(fulness) (cf. 1990: 262–294).
4. I am responsible for all German/English translations.
5. According to the *Dictionary of Classical Mythology*:

CANENS was a nymph, who when her husband was changed into a bird, pined away and became only a voice.

ECHO was a nymph, who, because she diverted Hera’s [Juno’s] attention from Zeus’ dalliances with other nymphs by constant chatter, was changed into an echo. The most famous story about her is that she was in love with Narcissus, who, because he was in love with his own image, did not return her love. She pined away till only her voice was left.

HYLAS. When Heracles went searching for him and came to the well where Hylas had disappeared, the voice of Hylas was heard from the bottom of the well like a faint echo. Some say that he was actually metamorphosed into an echo.

(Bell 1982: 76)

6. Perhaps Rösch’s translation should also be considered: He renders “sonus est, qui vivit in illa” as “Was in ihr noch lebt, ist der Klang nur” [What still lives in her is only sound] (1979: 109).
7. One could in this regard refer to a rhetoric of understanding. If rhetoric is understood as discourse using argumentation in addressing specific audiences in situations within which there is “rivalry between opposite discourses between which it is important to choose” (Ricoeur 1989: 138), then understanding may be understood as being the (perlocutionary) result of rhetorical discourse (cf. Ricoeur 1989: 139–141). The following well-known formulations by De Man on rhetoric and irony are significant, even though De Man does seek to deconstruct rhetoric understood as persuasion:

Rhetoric is a *text* in that it allows for two incompatible, mutually self-destructive points of view and therefore puts an insurmountable obstacle in the way of any reading or understanding. The *aporia* between performative and

constative language is merely a version of the aporia between trope and persuasion that both generates and paralyzes rhetoric and thus gives it the appearance of a history.

(1987: 277)

For De Man irony becomes a condition of (the rhetoric of) language, and is thus irrevocably linked to undecidability and the play of identity and difference:

Irony is no longer a trope but the undoing of the deconstructive allegory of all tropological cognitions, the systematic undoing, in other words, of understanding. As such, far from closing off the tropological system, irony enforces the repetition of its aberration.

(1979: 301)

8. This definition is obviously indebted both to the work of Paul de Man (particularly on the principle of non-contradiction and *aporia* with regard to Nietzsche – cf. footnote 7, above). Another important influence is that of Friedrich Schlegel (the German Romantic, and theoretician of Romanticism). The dialectic nature of irony (cf. Burke 1952: 511–517), or at least of Romantic irony, comes to the fore strongly in Schlegel's writings. According to Schlegel,

Ironie ist Analyse der These und Antithese.

(1973: 289)

[Irony is the analysis of thesis and antithesis.]

and:

Die wahre Ironie, – da es doch auch eine falsche gibt, [...] ist die Ironie der Liebe. Sie entsteht aus dem Gefühle der Endlichkeit und der eignen Beschränkung, und dem scheinbaren Widerspruche dieses Gefühls mit der in jeder wahren Liebe mit eingeschlossenen Idee eines Unendlichen.

(1973: 294)

[True irony – as there is, after all, also a false one – ... is the irony of love. It originates from the feeling of finiteness and one's own limitation, and the seeming contradiction of this feeling with the idea of infinity inherent in any true love.]

According to Heimrich (1968: 63), irony is a function of this contradiction. In fact, irony may be said to be that which contradicts the principle of non-contradiction in logic (cf. Albert 1990; De Man 1987).

9. Cf. in this regard Ricoeur's assertion that the "poetic work" "discloses" or "unfolds" a world in *itself*:

I maintain that the power of reference is not an exclusive feature of descriptive discourse. Poetic works point to a world as well. . . Indeed, the poetic work only unfolds a world under the condition that the reference of descriptive discourse be deferred. The poetic reference may thus be characterized, as Jakobson has said, as an *undoubted [dédoublée]* reference. There is some truth in the widely accepted thesis that in poetry, language only has a relationship to itself.

(1989: 147)

In this sense, irony may be viewed as the representation of representation.

For a lucid exposition of possible and fictional worlds, cf. Pavel (1986).

10. On boredom, difference, and meaning cf. Malte Fues (1992), who discusses *Leonce und Lena* in terms of the boredom of the bourgeois subject. Cf. especially the different types of boredom, and specifically the boredom which makes one desire to be (come) someone else (1992: 690).
11. Generally speaking, in the trope of transumption the sign is taken as the signifier, or the representation as that which is represented. According to Hollander,

rhetoricians

are in confused disagreement about its function [i.e., that of metalepsis or transumption]. It can be the effect for the cause, the subsequent for the antecedent, the late for the early, for example, but there is a general sense that it is a kind of meta-trope, or figure of linkage between figures, and that there will be one or more unstated middle terms which are leapt over, or alluded to, by the figure.

(1981: 114)

Later medieval rhetorics generally try [in the case of the trope of transumption] to accommodate three principles. . . :

- (1) There is a transition from one trope to another;
- (2) The tropes in question are in some way anterior and posterior;
- (3) There will be one or more unstated, but associated or understood figures, transmuted by the trope, but which are to be reconstructed by interpretation.

(1981: 140)

See Hollander (1981: 113–149) for an in-depth discussion of the trope of transumption.

12. Kenneth Burke distinguishes “four master tropes”:

The “literal” or “realistic” applications of the four tropes usually go by a different set of names. Thus:

- For *metaphor* we could substitute *perspective*;
 For *metonymy* we could substitute *reduction*;
 For *synechdoche* we could substitute *representation*;
 For *irony* we could substitute *dialectic*.

(1952: 503–517)

Even though an actor “represents” a character on stage, the character cannot be said to be a “representation” of that particular actor. The “representation” is of the character, and therefore the character might be said to stand in a synechdochal relation to *itself*.

13. The trope of transumption refers to the absent term diachronically rather than spatially by echoing a term which is not only missing on the page, but which forms part of a tradition – and thus of a convention – of being a missing term (cf. Hollander 1981: 134).
14. This in turn echoes one of the most famous of transumptions, from Virgil’s first eclogue:

Post aliquot mea regna videns mirabor aristas?
 ([after a long time] shall I, beholding what was my empire, marvel at a few ears of grain?)

(Quoted in Hollander 1981: 138)

Here “aristas” (“ears of grain”) becomes years, as the humanist Susenbrotus gives it . . . : “We take beards of grain for the ears themselves, ears for harvests, harvests for summers, and summers for years.”

(Quoted in Hollander 1981: 139)

15. Cf. the seminal II iv (pp.148–149). Lena speaks metaphorically – she uses one metaphor, namely that of death. After she leaves, Leonce attempts suicide. The scene is characterized by ironic statements equating that which is mutually exclusive – love and death, gold and darkness, angel of death. . . (cf. Malte Fues 1992: 692–694).

16. Rosetta and Ophelia are the spurned, singing maidens; in both plays Nero and Caligula are evoked as the types of bad rulers; court fools and jesters are important; there are echoing courtiers and melancholy princes.
17. LEONCE. [...] Ja, es ist traurig. . .
 HOFMEISTER. Sehr traurig, Euer Hoheit.
 LEONCE. Dass die Wolken schon seit drei Wochen von Western nach Osten ziehen. Es macht mich ganz melancholisch.
 HOFMEISTER. Eine sehr gegründete Melancholie.
 LEONCE. Mensch, warum widersprechen Sie mir nicht?

(pp. 127–128)

18. *Ham.* Do you see yonder cloud that's almost in shape of a camel?

Pol. By th'mass and 'tis – very like a camel indeed.

Ham. Methinks it is like a weasel.

Pol. It is backed like a weasel.

Ham. Or like a whale.

Pol. Very like a whale.

(III iii 367–373)

Osr. Sweet lord, if your lordship were at leisure, I should impart a thing to you from his Majesty.

Ham. I will receive it, sir, with all diligence of spirit. Your bonnet to his right use: 'tis for the head.

Osr. I thank your lordship, it is very hot.

Ham. No, believe me, 'tis very cold, the wind is northerly.

Osr. It is indifferent cold, my lord, indeed.

Ham. But yet methinks it is very sultry and hot for my complexion.

Osr. Exceedingly, my lord, it is very sultry – as'twere – I cannot tell how.

(V ii 90–100)

19. The motto to the first act of *Leonce und Lena* makes explicit both its connection to Shakespeare (it is a quotation from *As You Like It*), and the importance of the fool in the play:

O wär ich doch ein Narr!

Mein Ehrgeiz geht auf eine bunte Jacke.

(p. 127)

O that I were a fool!

I am ambitious for a motley coat

(II vii 42–43)

The fool (Narr) plays an important part in both texts, and in fact in the broader work of both Büchner and Shakespeare. Madness, sanity and play are made explicit in *Leonce und Lena* by Valerio in his playing on the possibility of German “Narr” having a double sense: a “Narr” can be either a jester or a fool; in the last sense one can use the archaic “Narrenhaus” for a lunatic asylum (p. 129).

20. As Frye says, “if you adopt the methods of your enemies you become like your enemies” (1986: 89). Revenge itself thus implies a reflexive repetition – to avenge a killing the killer has to be killed.

21. In the centre is Polonius murdered by Hamlet and avenged by Laertes. Around it is the main action of the play, Hamlet senior murdered by Claudius and avenged by Hamlet junior. Around that again is the background story of Fortinbras senior, killed by Hamlet senior in a duel on the day that Hamlet junior was born. . . .

(Frye 1986: 90)

22. Hans-Jost Frey (1990: 8–9) argues succinctly the point that texts can – and cannot but – be read in terms of one another, and that this interrelatedness is not dependent on *any form* of historical causality or chronology. Texts are historical, but in their relation to one another they are simultaneous. The idea that (the reading of) a later text may influence (the reading of) an earlier text, and leave (the reading of) that earlier text changed is not disconcerting as long as one accepts the idea that texts are never final, because they never stop (being read and interpreted).
23. As it might be said to examine the footnote in terms of in-different Echo(es), this article (un)fortunately has many footnotes. It is a polemic reflection on the nature of the echo. It seeks playfully to reflect (on) the problematic relationship between the echo and that which it echoes. . . It is a footnote to itself as it echoes itself in a disembodied voice, the voice of a voice. It is a voice from a nowhere which is an everywhere, and thus the text is condemned to be, ironically, as much an example of in-difference as of a vertiginous *vocem reddere ad nauseam*.²³

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