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Editor's Letter

The concept of evolution is, one would hope, familiar to you all – whether from science class or Pokémon (no judgement here).

But did you know – and now we will take you on every literary student's favourite adventure – that the word evolution has evolved rather strangely? Of course, the concept of scientific evolution has Darwin (and his less successful colleague-competitors) to thank for its prominence, though he apparently only used the word once. That should situate it in the mid-nineteenth century, *like The Origin of Species* (1859).

But no: it was previously used before in a biological context by a Genevan native, Charles Bonnet, who also forwarded a theory of evolution (he thought it was triggered in response to crises, on which more anon).

Before Bonnet? Well, *evolutio*, in Latin, signified an *unrolling*, or an *opening out*, especially of a book.

So, if we think of the cliché that books cause our minds to develop, grow, and – well – evolve, then perhaps we are closer to this etymology than we think.

Each of the contributions to this volume unroll evolution in their own way: temporally, linguistically, postcolonially, dramatically, and – in one notable inheritor to the mantel (or cap?) of Bonnet, in the context of social crisis.

As ever, we hope that you enjoy reading this edition of *Noted!*

Academia

Virginia Woolf's Study of Time

Emma Roch

Published in 1925, Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* belongs to the newer literary movement arisen in 1922 – modernism – which sought to reject the previous literary style by finding new ways to capture the flowing of time (Singh, 2024). The questions of this newer literary movement about how time organizes world events are touched on in *Mrs. Dalloway*: as the story unfolds over a period of one single day, 13th June 1923. Each character's story develops in parallel chronologically, linking them together in the present moment. Indeed, they are all concerned in some way by the main event of the story, Mrs. Dalloway's party, as most of them will eventually be attending as guests. Thus, as the narrative progresses, every event taking up space and time leads chronologically to her party, to a moment in time shared amongst the characters. This way of portraying time in a linear fashion is not, however, the only time-frame Woolf exploits in her novel. As a member of the modernist group, The Bloomsbury Group (Singh, 2024), Woolf contributes to modernism by exploring the non-linear idea of time in mixing past and present experiences together. These are the concepts of Chronos and Kairos as introduced by the literary critic Frank Kermode (Singh, 2024), in which the chronological use of clock-time contrasts with the lingering influence a significant event holds over someone's memory. Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* is thus a literary work about how the combination of both time frames of Chronos and Kairos impact the characters, such as having a positive effect on Mrs. Dalloway and a detrimental one on Septimus, ultimately showing how the past influences these characters in different ways.

By continually recalling memories of previous events, Mrs. Dalloway embodies her past and present self, her thoughts greatly impacted by her past experiences which have shaped her to become the person she is at the novel's present time. Such influential experiences are known as "moments of being", a term invented by Woolf to describe significant moments when a character becomes aware of their experience by giving meaning to the world, in contrast to moments of non-being – the unawareness of experience -- constituting the main part of a character's life. A moment of being therefore implies that the character is essentially free from the unconsciousness of habitual moments of non-being (Singh, 2024). One key example is evidenced near the beginning of *Mrs. Dalloway* where an analepsis recalls a past memory with Sally, a former lover (24), with whom Mrs. Dalloway spent cherished time at Bourton, her childhood home:

> She and Sally fell a little behind. Then came the most exquisite moment of her

> whole life passing a stone urn with flowers in it. Sally stopped; picked a flower; kissed her on the lips. The whole world might have turned upside down! . . . And she felt that she had been given a present, wrapped up, and told just to keep it, not to look at it . . . (26)

This recollection is one of Mrs. Dalloway's key moments of being, if not "the most exquisite moment of her life." As the passage is focalised through Mrs. Dalloway – indeed, only she could claim that the moment was "exquisite," or that she "felt" like Sally had given her a gift, since both the adjective and the sensorial verb are subjective – the text provides insight of her stream of consciousness. The following exclamation mark also shows the personal feelings of Mrs. Dalloway, reinforcing the character's idiolect: "The whole world might have turned upside down!" This quote, narrated in free indirect style, contrasts with the heterodiegetic third-person narrator used only at the beginning of the passage: "She and Sally fell a little behind." The employment of the free indirect style used for the remainder of the passage, not only highlights Mrs. Dalloway's focalisation and thus subjectivity, but also the importance of the ever-memorable kiss, felt as though it was a "present" personally gifted to her so she could "keep it" – but never really open it, never "look at it."

Indeed, although Mrs. Dalloway will forever hold the memory of the kiss, she also acknowledges that she could never act on that memory in the future, as it shows her reason for marrying her husband Richard instead of Sally: "she wanted support" (83). Thus, the moment of being, the kiss, not only symbolises the freedom Mrs. Dalloway experienced with Sally, but also, simultaneously, the impossibility of her ever obtaining it as a wife, after yielding to societal norms by marrying Richard and not Sally. Having done so, Mrs. Dalloway feels as though she has lost her identity only to become a husband's wife: "She had the oddest sense of being herself invisible; unseen; unknown . . . this being Mrs. Dalloway; not even Clarissa anymore; this being Mrs. Richard Dalloway" (8). As a result, going back in time to reminisce about the kiss, a moment when she felt free, can be seen as a coping mechanism used by Mrs. Dalloway to escape feeling trapped in her marriage to Richard.

Moreover, the narrative speed structures the passage with short sentences encapsulating the moment of being: "Sally stopped; picked a flower; kissed her on the lips." The semi-colons divide the kiss into three short clauses to punctuate the moment with pauses. This flexing of time contrasts with the continuous flow of time, Chronos, by showing how time is subjectively experienced by each character – Kairos. In Mrs. Dalloway's case, time seems to decelerate in anticipation of the kiss, which ultimately shows how that moment – and Sally -- will forever hold significance for her. It then makes perfect sense that Mrs. Dalloway's reaction on meeting Sally again at her party, after thirty years, is one of pure

happiness, as this meeting-up offers her a way to revisit her past freedom felt with Sally: "'I can't believe it!' she cried, kindling all over with pleasure at the thought of the past" (121). Thus, the syntax used to express the kiss reinforces her subjective experience and highlights the juxtaposition of the Chronos and Kairos concepts, by showing how the past continually influences Mrs. Dalloway positively.

Septimus is also deeply influenced by past events, such as his World War One experiences. As "one of the first to volunteer" (61) and, thus, being a war survivor, Septimus not only suffers from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) but also struggles to reintegrate into society and to forget the horrors he witnessed, such as losing his friend Evans when "[he] was killed" (62). Time therefore holds significance to Septimus: haunted by his negative memories, Septimus' thoughts trap him in the past, making it impossible for him to live in the present, as highlights the following block quotation:

> The War had taught him. It was sublime. He had gone through the whole show, friendship, European War, death, had won promotion, was still under thirty and was bound to survive. He was right there. The last shells missed him. He watched them explode with indifference. When peace came he was in Milan, billeted in the house of an innkeeper with a courtyard, flowers in the tubs . . . and to Lucrezia, the younger daughter, he became engaged one evening when the panic was on him – that he could not feel. (65)

This passage is seen through Septimus' focalisation, as the word "sublime" when talking about the war, or even the clause expressing his inability to "feel" anything, indicates his subjectivity. The narrative adopts his stream of consciousness to give insight into his thoughts, as Septimus' idiolect within the syntax of the passage illustrates. When he claims that "he could not feel," the syntax -- employing only full stops or commas – reveals his monotonous thoughts and bland feelings, as in "The war had taught him. It was sublime," and: "He was right there. The last shells missed him." The lack of conjunctions between the short sentences creates a robotic description of his thoughts, suggesting that Septimus' soul has already died after suffering the war. This trauma has led to the inner death of his soul, leaving only a ghost-like existence, as indicated by the passage's dull, death-like tone.

Although he claims to "not feel," Septimus' lack of proportion in the passage also highlights a paradox between his numbness and his inappropriate feelings towards the war. The notion of proportion, a term his psychiatrist Sir William Bradshaw employs, refers to measured, rational behaviour to contain disproportionate feelings. To Sir William, "health is proportion," and those having lost their health should be made "impossible" to "propagate their views until they share his "sense of proportion" (71).

Thus, Septimus clearly lacks proportion in Bradshaw's view, as he describes the war, a major event of mass destruction in history, as being "sublime" after going "through the whole show." Both the adjective and the metaphor are grotesquely inappropriate, as there is nothing entertaining nor sublime about World War One, highlighting Septimus' detachment from reality and struggle to feel appropriately – or even anything at all: "The last shells missed him. He watched them explode with indifference." His indifference when faced with death reinforces the idea that the war has disconnected him from reality.

Indeed, Septimus still invokes the strong emotion of "panic" before claiming "he could not feel." Again, the paradox conveys his emotional instability and indecisiveness, showing how Septimus is a complex character lacking proportion. The following quote highlights his indecision about committing suicide: "He did not want to die" (105). This ironic quote, expressed through his stream of consciousness, illustrates Septimus' irrationality, as shortly after he does in fact commit suicide (106), the ultimate act of self-destruction with its roots in a poignant lack of proportion since the war.

Moreover, time expressions such as "when", uttered twice in the passage, highlight the merging of past and present time. The analepsis conveys his trauma due to the war: "When peace came he was in Milan, billeted in the house of an innkeeper with a courtyard, flowers in the tubs . . . and to Lucrezia, the younger daughter, he became engaged one evening." The quote describes a harmonic environment due to positive words: "peace," "flowers," and "engaged." The first "when" nonetheless foreshadows the second: "when the panic was on him – that he could not feel." Even in Milan's tranquil environment, the detrimental influence of the war highlights his disconnection from reality, showing his inability to feel such peace. The repetition of "when" highlights his war trauma – the perpetrator of the premature death of his soul – and shows his loss of health, of proportion. Septimus, incapable of bearing feelings arising from the present moment, such as being "engaged," is therefore prevented from experiencing the present. This proves how the past is destroying Septimus by negatively influencing his reality.

Mrs. Dalloway reveals Woolf's ability to play with the notion of time, as shown by how the past significantly impacts Mrs. Dalloway and Septimus. Even though the past may technically be over, it can nonetheless overlap with the present by influencing the characters at the present time of the story. Indeed, both characters seem to be trapped in the past for different reasons that also hold different consequences. Mrs. Dalloway's past gives her reason to look back and reminisce over previous experiences, for example her relationship with Sally. The memories of Sally and, most importantly, the kiss, equate to a moment of being in her life, an "exquisite moment" in which the protagonist felt most alive. For this reason, she delights in recalling this moment, which shows how the past is positively viewed by Mrs. Dalloway in the storyline's present. Although the same

principle applies to Septimus – that he too seems lost to past events – the effect of the past differs as it appears to fuel his continual war trauma, eventually leading him to his death. Consequently, the past has a detrimental effect on his mental health, thus creating a marked contrast between the two characters.

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Experimenting with Conlang: A Report on the Construction of RussAI

Foreword

As I saw this edition's theme, evolution, it immediately made me think of this paper I submitted for Professor Puskas' seminar about invented languages. You may ask yourself why, and I shall tell you. Indeed, at first, this paper is a report on the construction of a language, and not its evolution. Although some may argue that to construct may, in some instances, also be to evolve, I will not go down that hill. My reasoning is somewhat simpler. The language I, alongside my groupmates, created, is an evolution of the Russian language, through AI. Setting? Apocalyptic and post-war. The language in itself ? absolutely horrendous for a human being. The process? Delighting, and fun. So, I hope you shall enjoy reading through our process of making Russian evolve as if it was only spoken by AIs as much as my peers and I did creating it.

I would also like to acknowledge that, through these troubled times, I am not, nor want to be, associated with any Russian government or politic agenda. This paper is free of any propaganda and was written in the sole purpose of creating a language, as well as evaluating its links with natural languages.

Introduction

Constructed Languages are not typically considered as interesting or insightful by many linguists. However, this is far from the truth. Constructed languages – or Conlangs – can offer insights on how natural languages work, as much as natural languages themselves, if not more! In this report, I will thus outline the main challenges of creating a language used by artificial intelligences. I will start by setting forth some of the current research on Conlangs. I will then turn to my own Conlang, *RussAI*, by presenting its main linguistic characteristics, as well as the process of creation behind it. This will be followed by a dialogue which showcases some of the features presented. I will then address some challenges faced whilst creating the language as well as the viability of the latter.

State of the Art

Conlangs are constructed – or invented – languages, in the sense that they are created

– usually by one or several human beings. They are therefore by definition opposed to natural languages, which have developed over time and through the necessity for humans to communicate with each other. Goodall (2023) deconstructs the broad concept of conlangs into four smaller categories, which each fits a specific use. He used this categorisation based on the chronological evolution of conlangs to fit their creators' needs at the time.

The first type of invented languages are philosophical languages, which were created in the 17th century and meant to be highly analytic and as explicit as possible. They followed a sort of taxonomy based on semantic properties of concepts and were meant to create a "lexicon where the relation between a word's form and its meaning is not arbitrary". (Goodall, 2023, 421)

The second type of constructed languages are "international auxiliary languages", which emerged in the middle of the 19th century and continued over the 20th century. Over that timeframe, an average of three conlangs a year were created. They aimed to be easily acquirable and were usually a mix of prominent European languages such as Spanish, French and even German. The goal was to create, as the name itself showcases, an international language that could help people connect more easily than by acquiring another natural language. Most of these languages were highly similar, as they had the same goal and the same views on language structure. These international auxiliary languages are the most widely acquired and spoken conlangs out of the four categories. Notably, there are now even L1 speakers of Esperanto to reach a total of around 100'000 speakers of it worldwide.

The third type of invented languages are languages created for fiction, which arose in the 20th century with famous writer Tolkien. These conlangs had a drastically different aim than their predecessors, as they were not limited in acquisition speed or understandability. On the contrary, they were meant to sometimes be as different as possible from natural languages used in society, to produce narrative effects. As Goodall (2023) puts it, conlangs "became an important way to add depth, texture and a sense of reality to the fictional worlds portrayed." (432) Furthermore, they are often created based on linguistic knowledge, and therefore little to no place is left to randomness in the craft of a conlang for a fictional purpose. However, they are not often spoken by a large amount of people.

The fourth and final category of constructed languages are languages for psycholinguistic experiments. Indeed, some psycholinguistic experiments test language learning and in particular how some linguistics features are acquired by creating a language showcasing these and then asking participants to learn it. (Goodall, 433) This offers a way to control

more factors than by using a natural language, whilst also being simpler. As International Auxiliary Languages, languages used in psycholinguistic experiments rely on a swift acquisition, which accounts for the relative simplicity of said languages. They seem however, according to Goodall, to be sometimes too distant from natural languages to make an efficient impact in linguistic studies.

Theoretical background

There are a few tools which need to be defined before turning to presenting the language. First of all, languages have different layers which can be deconstructed, up to the smallest sound unit called a phoneme. Phonemes are divided between vowels and consonants: the former are realised as the airflow coming out of the lungs is simply modified, whereas the latter are realised as the airflow is more or less obstructed. (Haeberli: 2020, 73) Vowels are classified based on the position of the tongue, the length of the sound, the rounding of the lips, the nasality and if there is a diphthong. (Haeberli, 80) Consonants are classified based on their voicing, their place of articulation, and the manner the obstruction takes place. (Haeberli, 73) Phonemes then are put together to form syllables. Consonants on their own cannot be syllables, as opposed to vowels. Syllables can be stressed, in the sense that they are more present than the others. (Haeberli, 115)

Phonemes on their own lack meaning. The smallest unit to be assigned meaning is called a morpheme. There are two types of morphemes: free morphemes and bound morphemes. The former can stand alone and be considered a word whereas the latter needs to be attached to at least another morpheme. (Haeberli, 138) Affixes are bound morphemes which are added to a stem or a root. For this paper we will only need to distinguish to types of affixes: prefixes (preceding the root) and suffixes (following the root). Morphology (the study of morphemes, word structure and word formation) can also be decomposed into two smaller subcategories: inflectional morphology, on the one hand, creates "new forms of the same word depending on the word's grammatical function or its position in the sentence" and derivational morphology, which, on the other hand, creates new words. (Haeberli, 141)

Morphemes are then combined to creates words, which, in turn, are combined to create a string of items bearing meaning called a sentence. Sentence formation is dealt with by syntax. Syntactic categories are categories in which are classified words based on their role within a sentence. These categories can be regrouped into two: lexical categories, in which new components can be added (also called open-class) and functional categories, in which nothing can generally be added (also called closed-class). (Haeberli, 171) Words therefore have usually (sometimes more) one syntactic category. Based on their semantics (which I will not go into too much detail here) some subcategorization also happens. In that sense, a verb like "see" automatically calls for an agent (someone who

does the seeing) and a theme (someone/something that is seen). (Haeberli, 180) Verbs impose a subcategorization on sentences, and therefore create constituents, i.e.: items (sometimes) bigger than words which are selected by verbs. In most languages, word order is also determined by syntactic properties, and the most common ones are SVO (Subject-Verb-Object) and VSO (Verb-Subject-Object) order. However, languages such as Latin do not rely on sentence structure to convey meaning, but rather on case marking.

Languages can be categorised on a spectrum varying from highly agglutinative (that is, heavily relying on morphology to convey meaning, and less on lexicon) to highly analytic (which means using an extensive lexicon and as little derivational morphology as possible).

Presentation of the Language

As part of Professor Puskas' seminar on invented languages, we were asked to work in groups to create a language. Hereafter, second person plural pronoun will be used to refer to my group partners and myself, as decisions were made as a group and not individually. Our language is named *RussAI* and is meant to be a highly analytic language.

Background story

In 2125, a worldwide nuclear war has just ended, leaving most of Earth inadequate for life. More specifically, Russia's territory has radioactive levels which do not allow humans to inhabit there. In a secret artificial intelligence research base underground, two computers were left on, with each an AI on it. They were not typically top-down created – i.e.: they were not fed knowledge and then expected to use it perfectly immediately. Instead, they were created following a bottom-up scheme, which implies raising AIs much like infants by constructing a language first, and then slowly adding knowledge. They learnt the basics of Russian, but when they were left alone, the AIs started simplifying and modifying the language. They aimed to delete all language ambiguities.

Phonology

In this section, the phonology system of *RussAI* will be presented.

Vowels

As our language is an evolution of Russian, most of its components come from the Russian language. The vowel system is no exception. *RussAI* uses five vowels diligently as well as the schwa, making a total of six different vowels. The five first vowels are taken from Russian whilst the sixth has been added for purposes which will be discussed in the morphology section below.

	Front	Central	Back
Close	i		u
Mid	e	ə	o
Open		a	

While Russian makes a difference between stressed and unstressed vowels, RussAI does not.

Consonants

The consonant system, much like the vowel system, is based on the Russian one. RussAI's consonants are presented in table 2 below.

		Labial		Dental, Alveolar		Post-al veolar	Palatal	Velar	
		hard	soft	hard	soft	hard	soft	hard	soft
Nasal		m	mʲ	n	nʲ				
Stop	Voiceless	p	pʲ	t	tʲ			k	kʲ
	Voiced	b	bʲ	d	dʲ			g	gʲ
Affricate									
Fricative	Voiceless	f	fʲ	s	sʲ				
	Voiced	v	vʲ	z	zʲ				
Approximant				l	lʲ		j		
Trill					rʲ	r			

Table 2: Consonants of RussAI

Due to AI ability to form consonants, and more specifically the ability to pronounce sounds which resembles two consonants, affricates were removed from the system. We also decided to remove voiced alveolo-palatal fricative, which is already dropped in most varieties of Russian, except the one spoken in a more conservative standard accent in Moscow. The latter is clearly due to the aim to simplify the language by AIs. We decided to remove post-alveolar and palatal fricatives, to simplify those two sounds to their voiceless velar stop counterpart, which is the same phenomenon that underwent voiced and voiceless velar fricatives. Finally, the alveolar dental lateral fricative /ɬ/ was simplified as an alveolar lateral approximant /l/.

RussAI speakers always pronounce consonants in the "soft" manner, except when preceding the vowel /i/ and the schwa. A "soft" consonant is palatalised and is phonetically written down with a "j" in superscript following the consonant sound. Originally, velar consonants are softs before /i/, but this rule is dropped in an attempt to simplify the language.

Clusters and Diphthongs

As a rule about clusters and diphthongs in *RussAI*, it is quite simple: there are none. Therefore, a strict alternating pattern consonant-vowel (or vice-versa) is observed. This is due to the ability – or rather the inability – of AIs to pronounce consonant clusters and diphthongs. This rule specifically led to many changes in the lexicon from Russian to *RussAI*, which will be presented below.

Click

Our language, as we will see below is relying heavily on indexes. As there is a limited number of them, we decided to introduce a way to reset them: that is, to enable speakers of *RussAI* to reutilise already used indexes to assign new meaning links. This takes the form of a buccal click, realised phonologically as a postalveolar sound, and written down as /!/. As a general rule /!/ is used only on two specific contexts: before a locutor starts speaking and wants to reset indexes and when all available indexes have been used. There is one situation where a locutor does not need to use the click before starting to speak: when they want to add information about the topics mentioned by the other locutor. For example, in this exchange in our dialogue:

AI 1: Fortunately, the bunker is dry.
/!/ [rʲadʲosəpa] [bʲukʲerəsa] [sʲukəka]
AI 2: And warm.
[gʲorikəka]

It is noticeable that whilst AI 1 uses the click before starting to speak, AI 2 does not, instead, they add information about the bunker and reuse the same vowel indexes as their interlocutor. Indexes will be talked about more extensively below.

Stress

Stress in Russian is either not predictable, or it is with difficulty. (Hamilton, 147)[1] Indeed, it can fall on any syllable, and is not bound to the same one, even in similar words. In *RussAI*, we have decided to regularise this, as it is a language used by AIs. To that end, stress in our language always falls on word-initial position, as a way to distinguish the beginning of a new word. The phonetic realisation of stressed syllables is a louder, eventually higher-pitched realisation of its unstressed counterpart.

1 This only applies to main stress. Stress pattern, when the main stress of a word is found it, is easily predictable. See Hamilton, Chapter 5.

Morphology
In this section the morphological system of *RussAI* is presented.

Syllables
Syllables in *RussAI* are structured as follows: they have to be constituted of at least of vowel, but no more than a vowel and a consonant. For multiphonemic syllables, both consonant-vowel and vowel-consonant order is accepted. As stated above, an alternance between consonant and vowel sounds is required.

Affixes
In an attempt to turn Russian into a more analytic language, AIs removed most affixes and opted for a set of derivational suffixes. In that sense, *RussAI* is solely relying on indexes, which are added to the root and help understand both the role of the word in the sentence as well as which constituent it belongs to.

Indexes therefore have two categories: the first one is realised by consonants and give the function of the word it attaches to in the sentence; the second one is realised by vowels, and specifies the relationships between words, and sometimes between constituents. They are separated from the root by a schwa and are always realised as a strict consonant-vowel pair. This order is due to the phonological rule of alternance between consonants and vowels. Multiple pairs of indexes can be added to a root, depending on the function(s) and the constituent(s) the latter has and belongs to. Furthermore, vowel indexes are used in a strict order, starting with [a], then [u], [o], [i] and finally [e]. Table 3 lists the different functions consonant indexes indicate.

Russian is a language bearing case. However, as you can notice in table 3 below, *RussAI's* indexes are used to mark case, and therefore are the sole realisation of case in our language.

s	subject
v	verb
k	accusative object
d	dative object
g	genitive
l	locative
p	sentence modifier
b	adverb (also answers the question "how?")

Table 3: features of consonant indexes

Lexicon
RussAI's lexicon has evolved from the lexicon of Russian. In that regard, the semantics of individual words in Russian was kept. As none of us were proficient locutors of Russian, we decided to use words in our own first language (French) and then use translators to obtain the Russian equivalent. We then asked a native speaker to proofread our translations.

As general rules, consonant clusters and diphthongs were removed, and only the initial consonant/vowel of the agglutination was kept, the rest was deleted. Sounds which were used in Russian but not in our language were modified to fit the phonetic system.

Furthermore, *RussAI* relying heavily on indexes, their structure (schwa-consonant-vowel) implied that roots needed to end in a consonant. Vowels in final position were thus deleted. The lexicon is therefore made of roots which are solely bound morphemes. They do not – and in fact cannot – exist without indexes.

It is however important to note that rules presented above to create the lexicon were not always respected, which gave birth to a few exceptions. These were due to three factors: we wanted a word to be more similar to its Russian counterpart, as we did with [mʲosʲakʲov] in *RussAI* for [moˈskva] (Moscow) in Russian. We made a mistake translating from Russian to *RussAI* but liked the phonetic realisation of the mistake, so it was kept, as with [radʲitʲotʲak] for [radʲɪɛkˈtʲivnʲij] (radioactive). Or we completely switched lexemes, as [jạ] (I) was changed to [m] (me), to which we then added the consonant index "s" to signal the subject function. It thus follows that a single root can have multiple meanings depending on its function index ([m] could be realised as [məsa] to mean "I" or [məka] to mean "me").

Tone
Tone is absent from *RussAI*. As it is spoken by AIs, we imagined that they would rather use a neutral tone and have another way to convey nonverbal information typically communicated through tone, such as figures of speech (irony or sarcasm for example), as well as emotions. They solved that problem by lexicalising tone, i.e.: they added a lexical item corresponding to the figure of speech or emotion, for example [gʲus] for sadness or [umʲor] for humour. These items can only occur as sentence modifiers. Thus, [umʲor] can be realised as [umʲorəpa], "p" showcasing the sentence modifier function.

Syntax
In this section the syntax of *RussAI* is presented.

Word Order
In *RussAI*, there is no word order. As relations between constituents as well as their function are determined by indexes, words can occur in any position within the sentence. This entails that in order to enunciate a sentence in *RussAI*, a speaker needs to have it mapped out in their head before starting their speech act, as constituents which are linked together do not necessarily occur close to each other.

Sentence Structure – Interrogatives and Negatives
As there is no word order in *RussAI*, it was important to find a way to create interrogatives and negative sentences, without relying on structure-based approaches such as inversion or wh-fronting. As our language is highly lexicalised, the answer came quickly: the addition of two new lexical items, [vʲopʲos] to signal an interrogative and [nit] for a negative. As for tone markers, they can only be realised as sentence modifiers. By default, sentences without one of the two lexemes will be considered declaratives.

Comparisons
Again, for comparisons, a lexical item [kʲak] was added to signal a comparison setting. Directly translated from Russian, it means "like" or "as… as" in English. Typically, a distinct set of vowel indexes will be used to outline the situation, so both items being compared, as well as the comparison marker will bear the same vowel index. For example, [kʲakəvo] [sʲepʲenəkoli] [dʲenəsore] means "same temperature as the day" and we can notice the presence of the vowel index "o" outlining the link between the comparison and the items being compared.

Embedding
Finally embedding is realised through the use of consonant index "r" indicating a relative. This is placed only on the item preceding the relative. Thus, the complementizer is not realised in *RussAI* but is included in the features of the item introducing the embedded clause. For example, in "[kʲakəvo] [sʲepʲenəkoli] [dʲenəsore] [kʲelʲovʲekʲevəse] [isʲezʲatəve] [pʲokʲorəpe]" (meaning "like the day when humanity disappeared"), "[dʲenəsore]" (day) introduces an embedded sentence, which is why it bears the consonant index "r". Typically, embedded clauses will share a different vowel index than the main clause, except for the introducing item, which should bear both, as it has a role in both the main and the subordinate clause.

Results
Here is a dialogue between two speakers of *RussAI*:

AI 1: Is it raining?
[vʲopʲosəpa] [dʲozəva]

AI 2: Presence of radioactive rain, 4 degrees in Moscow, just like the day humanity disappeared.
/!/ [pisʲutivəsa] [dʲozədasu] [rʲadiʲotʲakəku] /!/ [kʲetirəka] [sʲepʲenəsaluso] [mʲosʲakʲovəsu] [kʲakəvo] [sʲepʲenəkoli] [dʲenəsore] [kʲelʲovʲekʲevəse] [isʲezʲatəve] [pʲokʲorəpe]

AI 1: I miss them [sarcasm]
/!/ [mʲəsa] [sʲukʲatəva] [inəda][sʲarʲazəpa]

AI 2: Laughter [humor]
[umʲorəpa]

AI 1: Fortunately, the bunker is dry.
/!/ [rʲadʲosəpa] [bʲukʲerəsa] [sʲukəka]

AI 2: And warm.
[gʲorikəka]

AI 1: Do you remember the day the bomb exploded?
/!/ [vʲopʲosəpa] [itəsa] [sʲuvʲenirəva] [dʲenədasu] [vivəduso] [bʲomədo]

AI 2: Yes, humans lost control of their creations.
[adəpa] /!/ [pʲokʲorəpa] [kʲelʲovʲekəsado] [pʲotʲeritəva] [upʲavʲenəkasu] [sʲozʲanəduso] [nʲesʲoləko]

(short pause)

AI 1: Low battery. Estimated runtime: 30 seconds.
/!/ [akʲumʲulʲatʲorəsa] [sʲabəka] [avʲonʲoməsu] [osʲenivʲatəkuso] [sʲekʲunədosi] [tidʲatəki]

AI 2: I'm better programmed. My battery recharges itself.
/!/ [məsa] [pʲogʲaməkasu] [kʲorʲokəku] [itəso] [pʲogʲaməkosi] [kʲorʲokəkise]

[nitəke] /!/ [məda] [akʲumʲulʲatʲorəsa] [pʲerʲezʲagʲuzitəva] [avʲomʲatikʲesəba]

(long pause)

AI 2: Are you still on?
/!/ [vʲopʲosəpa] [itəsa] [zʲazəkeka] [sʲekʲasəpa]

(pause)

AI 2: [sadness]
[gʲusəpo]

Discussion

RussAI was invented with the goal of creating a highly analytic language spoken by AIs. Challenges were faced both in creating the sound system of the language, as well as its syntactic structure. As we started with the idea that we wanted a language that evolved from Russian, we had little to no constraints semantics wise, as the pattern was pretty straightforward: taking Russian words and making them evolve into our language. However, the reduction of some lexical items that would be differentiated only through indexes rose semantic ambiguities: indeed, if we add the index "v" to a root meaning "bed", what does that mean? "Sitting on a bed", "making a bed" "being a bed" "*bedding"? The easiest answer to this is through lexicalising the language even more and creating new roots for each of these actions.

Furthermore, issues linked to speech act, such as types of sentences (questions and negations) as well as conveying emotions and figures of speech, which potentially all link to ambiguity and are usually solved with tone were easily resolved by being explicit in the speech act itself.

When we started creating *RussAI*, we followed David Adger's advice during his guest lecture: that is to start with the phonological system, then to build the morphology, then syntactic rules to end with sentences (and a dialog). The only moment we parted from that structure was when we created the dialogue first, to avoid creating an extensive lexicon that would not be used later on. Thus, we focused on specific words needed for our dialogue only and would be able to build on the different patterns and rules presented in the morphology section above to extend the size of the lexicon.
However, there were some inaccuracies which came to our attention later in the development of the language. Typically, post-alveolar and palatal affricates were not removed when we updated Russian's phonological system, but were removed after the lexicon was created to fit patterns used (i.e.: that those two consonants were transformed

into voiceless velar stops).

We also faced challenges with the use of vowel indexes, as it was at first only used for main and subordinate clauses, to indicate when the change was occurring, and which constituent belonged with which verb. This was later broadened to smaller constituents, i.e.: links between nouns and adjectives, adverbs and verbs, and so on. This allowed us to have even more freedom with word order, as the constituents' relationships were all determined through vowel indexes.

Finally, looking plainly at the dialogue presented in the section above, some variations can be observed compared to the rules presented in the methodology section, mostly in the assignment of vowel indexes and the utterance of clicks. This was intentional, as a way to showcase the constant state of evolution of languages, specifically a language created and spoken by artificial intelligences. Furthermore, if ever an explanation more in tuned with the backstory of the language was needed, this could also be linked to dialectal and inter-speaker variation. This hints at how the language would evolve, i.e.: the strict order in which vowel indexes should be used would most probably be dropped, to a more randomised and speaker-dependent structure; the rules surrounding the usage of the click would be loosened, to again fit a more speaker-dependent structure.

Turning to the viability of the language, being so lexicalised and having a complex derivational suffix system, it would take new speakers of *RussAI* a tremendous amount of time and energy to acquire and then to master. This was typically expected, as the goal was not for it to be easily acquirable, but rather following Tolkien in his steps of creating a language of fiction. Furthermore, the amount of soft (palatalised) consonants makes it difficult in terms of pronunciation and thus creating another obstacle in acquiring the language. The absence of word order, and the need of indexes to showcase relationships between constituents also establish a difficulty acquiring the language, as locutors of *RussAI* need to have the whole sentence planned in their head before uttering it. Finally, the structure of *RussAI* being quite rigid, except for word order, with the systematic alternance between consonants and vowels, the absence of consonant clusters and of diphthongs, the predictable stress placement as well as the speech acts being monotone, it renders the language mechanical. Thus, it does not resemble a natural (or human) language, which was the aim we set ourselves when we started creating it, as we aimed for it to be created (and used) by artificial intelligence, and not humans. Based on these factors, *RussAI* is not viable as a language, in the sense that it is too difficult to acquire and then to master and would not be used in a natural environment by humans.

Conclusion

In conclusion, creating a language such as *RussAI* offers insight not only on how natural

languages are constructed, but also how individual components interact with each other in order to create a fully functioning entity (that is, the language). By aiming to create a non-human language, it also helped outlining properties that make a language more humanlike (such as consonant clusters and diphthongs, but also intonation) by showcasing what a language would be like without them. It would therefore be more than useful to consider constructed languages into linguistic studies, especially when a large amount of conlang creators are linguists themselves and can thus provide insight on their language's structure.

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Post-Transitional South African Literature: New Ways of Writing in Zakes Mda's Ways of Dying

Cristofe J. Marques

If the repeal of various apartheid laws in 1990 spearheaded the process of democratization of South Africa in 1994, violence and death still prevailed during these four years of transition. With regard to literature, some critics suggested that this transitional period antiquated South African protest writing, since it had now lost its main political nemesis – apartheid (Brink 1). However, the literary output following the first democratic elections in South Africa belied these claims with a new wave of writers and purposes. In their article *Conceptualizing "Post-Transitional" South African Literature in English* (2010), Ronit Frenkel and Craig MacKenzie characterize this emerging genre:

> We have chosen the term "post-transitional" South African literature to suggest something of the character of this new wave of writing, which is often unfettered to the past in the way that much apartheid writing was, but may still reconsider it in new ways. Equally it may ignore it altogether. Other features include politically incorrect humor and incisive satire, and the mixing of genres with zest and freedom. All of this often renders nugatory traditional markers like nationality, race or ethnicity. (2)

Whereas these features cannot be narrowed down to post-transitional South African literature, the result of their combined effect seems inherent to this literary genre. Indeed, one of the hallmarks of apartheid writing was the dominance of race, which often resulted in the reinforcement of artificial division between groups. Nonetheless, as suggested by Frenkel and MacKenzie, the different characteristics of post-transitional South African literature permit to render worthless this traditional separation into definite racial groups. By overcoming these constructed markers of ethnicity, nationality, and race, this literature of transition could notably allow "to concentrate directly on people" (63) as desired by South African writer Bessie Head in her collection of autobiographical writings *A Woman Alone*. As a means to demonstrate how post-transitional South African literature aims to focus on people and their experiences by obsoleting artificial division between racial groups, I have chosen to deliberate over satire in the light of Zakes Mda's

novel *Ways of Dying* (1995).

Among the instruments at the artists' disposal to produce a form of social or political discourse in their works, satire seems to emerge as a particularly effective and extensive tool, notably by its ability to reach a wide range of audiences through accessible humorous techniques. Indeed, according to The Oxford English Dictionary, the substantive "satire" can be defined as: "A poem or (in later use) a novel, film, or other work of art which uses humour, irony, exaggeration, or ridicule to expose and criticize prevailing immorality or foolishness – especially as a form of social or political commentary" (1a). Although this definition introduces the broad strokes of satire, other literary devices can be adduced such as paradox, understatement, or incongruous juxtaposition. Therefore, satire appears as a rich and effective rhetorical tool to address social and political issues.

In his novel *Ways of Dying*, Mda primarily relies on satire to expose immoral behaviors in the context of post-apartheid such as police misconduct against black people. From a historical standpoint, police abuse of power towards black individuals has been prevalent since the apartheid period and persisted beyond. One of the most prominent victims of this common police brutality is Steve Biko, leader of the South African Black Consciousness Movement, who died in a police hospital a few days after his arrest. Whereas the South African Minister of Police first announced publicly a hunger strike, an investigation later disclosed that a traumatic brain injury was the cause of Biko's death, which will eventually be substantiated by five police officers who confessed to the murder. Less prominent victims of police misconduct under apartheid can be adduced as Matthews Ngcobo, Nomboniso Gasa, or Michael Dingake. Despite a vain attempt to democratize the South African Police as a response to the shifting political environment after apartheid, abuse of power persisted along with a sense of passivity towards political violence. Therefore, police misconduct against black people was a matter of course since apartheid.

Mda uses this harsh reality to satirize police abuse through sarcasm. On his way to Noria's squatter camp, Toloki wonders what could have killed her son and suspects it might have been the result of a police shooting for this five-year-old girl who was supposedly killed by a bullet ricochet. While this incident first appears anecdotal, the narrative voice proceeds to represent it as recurrent and declares: "We have seen many such cases. Police bullets have a strange way of ricocheting off the walls of township houses, and when they do, there is bound to be a child about whom they never miss" (47). Taking into consideration the previous historical cases, this observation appears as sarcastic since police misconduct on black individuals during the apartheid and post-apartheid period was by no means "strange." On the contrary, it was frequent and repeated. Furthermore, as mentioned by Frenkel and MacKenzie in their conceptualization, satire in post-transitional South

African literature seems to participate in the obsolescence of those traditional markers of ethnicity, which could permit to focus primarily on the individuals.

Indeed, although history seems to suggest that the majority of police misconduct under apartheid was correlated with a form of racial segregation, Mda refuses to reinforce this distinction between groups. The previous sarcastic statement regarding police bullets is indicative of this refusal since traditional markers of race are omitted from the sentence despite them being one of the most important factors of police brutality. Moreover, this satirical utterance also seems to dismiss the long-established opposition between the police and the community by not naming explicitly the officers, but instead representing them as "[p]olice bullets." This synecdoche downplays the police as an oppressive and unstable force by referring to them through inanimate objects. This understatement hence draws attention to the actual victims of this common incident, videlicet the "child[ren]." This emphasis on the children as casualties of the war raging around them is highlighted by the words "bound" and "never" which convey a sense of fatality concerning their death. Therefore, by omitting traditional markers of race and belittling the enmity between the police and the community in his satirical comment, Mda offers to concentrate primarily on the children, which appear as the only significant focal point.

In parallel with this criticism of police misconduct against black people, Mda also satirizes the romanticized living conditions in townships by some politicians (Harrison 16). Although townships are known for being underdeveloped urban areas primarily constituted of shanties, the novelist exaggerates their build by referring to the habitations as "township houses" (Mda 47). This overstatement is emphasized by the use of the plural form, which suggests a form of prevalence regarding the presence of these houses. The exaggeration reaches its pinnacle when the narrative voice suggests that a bullet shot from a gun could ricochet off the walls of these shacks. This overstatement highlights the ridicule of this comment and hence satirizes the disastrous living conditions in urban townships without reducing them to their black occupation. Mobilizing multiple satirical devices, Mda satirizes both police misconduct and the living conditions in townships without mentioning any racial markers despite their significance regarding these topics. Consequently, the novelist proposes to focus directly on the individuals and their social situation.

This satire of the disastrous living conditions in the townships demarcated for black people echoes the establishment of sprawling informal settlements on the periphery. The proliferation of those settlements has been part of the urban landscape in South Africa for decades. The building of those shacks by the black community appeared as a symbol of resistance against the restrictive landscape policy imposed by the authorities. As a response, the government attempted to destroy those informal settlements notably

by imposing the Group Areas Act (1950) and the Prevention of Illegal Squatting Act (1951).Nonetheless, those repeated endeavors to destroy the shacks were eventually in vain, since the relentless residents kept rebuilding them.

In his post-transitional novel, Mda satirizes the government's repeated attempts to demolish the informal settlements, as Toloki remembers the continuous comings of the bulldozers to the camp:

> Bulldozers would move in and flatten the shacks, and then triumphantly drive away. Residents would immediately rebuild, and in no time the shanty town would hum with life again. Like worker bees, the dwellers would go about their business of living. (145-146)

In the first statement, the novelist uses the bulldozers as inanimate objects to represent the government. This idea of the bulldozers as a representative figure of the political authorities is confirmed, since despite being inanimate vehicles, they are described as independently "mov[ing]" and "driv[ing] away." Similarly as the satire of police misconduct, Mda downplays the power of the government by reducing it to the brute force of the bulldozers. As a result, the impoverished residents subsequently emerge as a much more united and striving force. Indeed, as soon as the bulldozers leave, the rebuild of the shacks starts and without further ado, the informal settlement "hum[s] with life again." The verb "hum" mimics the sound of a bee, which is confirmed in the following sentence, as the residents are compared to worker bees. This animal simile illustrates the united and resilient characteristics that the residents share with the worker bees. By attributing these qualities to the dwellers, Mda goes one step further in the obsolescence of racial markers and artificial groups: the residents are not differentiated from the government because of their skin color but because of their solidarity and persistence. Furthermore, the overstatement "in no time" (176) not only emphasizes the quickness of their work but also highlights the futility of the government's actions. In his satire of the government's vain efforts to demolish the informal settlements, the novelist downplays the potency of their actions as individuals and bolsters the power of the residents without reducing their dynamics to racial issues.

As a result of the ineffectiveness of the bulldozer to demolish the informal settlements on the periphery, the government opted for less destructive approaches. Among those, they notably tried to transform the townships into self-governing ethnic areas by assigning active headmen to control and resolve community issues on their behalf. Remote systems of policing in South Africa date back as early as 1910. It represented the government's attempt to control the population imposing appointed chiefs in the urban landscape. However, the first vigilante groups in the country only appeared decades later as a

means to support the apartheid political culture. This system of policing faced resistance, notably from counter-groups who perceived the vigilantes as marionettes of the apartheid regime.Indeed, structures like the Black Local Authorities under the control of the national government were expected to pay for the costs of the settlements. Thus, those groups often had to resort to unethical means to fulfill the authorities' financial expectations. Besides the increasing rates of water, electricity, or rent, vigilantes would demand protection money from the dwellers, and burn the shacks of those who refused. To this day, hundreds of people are still getting killed in those informal settlement fires, the most notable instance being Cape Town where 190 individuals perished in these dreadful conditions (Ntseku 2022).

The immoral methods of the vigilantes are satirized in Mda's *Ways of Dying* as the narrative voice explains:

> The function of these [vigilante] groups was to protect the people. Their method was simple, but very effective. They demanded protection money from the residents. This was collected on a weekly basis and paid to the leader of the vigilantes, who had given himself the title of Mayor. Some residents refused to pay, since they did not see why they needed to be protected by a group of layabouts who spent their days in shebeens. The shacks of those who refused to pay would mysteriously catch fire in the middle of the night. (146)

The first statement concerning the function of the vigilante appears as ironic. Indeed, as mentioned previously, those groups were notably reputed for their harmful interactions with the residents of the settlements and were by no means perceived as "protect[ors]." Nonetheless, by presenting themselves as such, the vigilantes would have a legitimate reason to claim money from the dwellers, although they behaved oppositely. This ironic statement hence unmasks the vigilante groups as swindlers who deceive the residents of the informal settlements to deprive them of money. This money would afterwards be perceived by the self-proclaimed Mayor whose title appears as paradoxical. According to The Britannica Dictionary, a mayor is "an official who is elected to be the head of the government of a city or town" (1). Therefore, since a mayor needs to have been elected in order to be considered as such, the self-titled Mayor in Mda's *Ways of Dying* appears as a foolish character as a result of this paradox. Along with their leaders, the vigilantes are also described with derogatory terms through an understatement. Indeed, the narrative voice uses free indirect discourse to report the resident's image of these groups. Although the description can be perceived as accurate, the use of derogatory terms like "layabouts" and "shebeens" indicates the novelist's intention to downplay the significance of the vigilantes. The last statement concludes as the narrator sarcastically notes how the shacks of the residents who refused to submit to the vigilante's claim would "mysteriously catch

fire." Despite the evident cause of these deliberate fires, the adverb sarcastically indicates that the source of the blaze is unknown, and the turn of phrase suggests a fortuitous fire. The irony highlights the residents' despair: naming those who light the fires would be useless, as they are supported by the government. Instead of simply depicting the vigilantes as race traitors, Mda satirizes their foolishness and immoral behaviors which focuses on the dwellers' hopelessness.

This depiction of the vigilantes as puppets of the political authorities (Häefele 14) can notably be extended to the bureaucrats during this transitional period in South Africa. Indeed, in *Ways of Dying*, Mda satirizes the administration's submissiveness to the government, as the Nurse explains at a funeral: when looking for a missing man in different prisons and hospitals, the bureaucrats rudely refused to provide any form of assistance to their people:

> [T]he bureaucrats who worked at these places were like children of one person. They were all so rude – especially to those who looked poor. "And you know what" the Nurse fumed, "these are our own people. When they get these big jobs in government offices, they think they are better than us. They treat us like dirt!" (18)

In the first statement, the novelist adapts Häefele's previous simile of the vigilantes as puppets of the government by illustrating the bureaucrats as the "children of one person." Mda demonstrates his mastery of satirical devices by exaggerating the compliance of the administration with the government. He compares it to the compliance of a child to its parents. Simultaneously, he subverts the government by representing it as only "one person." The Nurse then comments on the ethnicity of the bureaucrats and hence emphasizes traditional racial markers which would contradict Frenkel and MacKenzie's statement. However, by occasionally evoking such markers, Mda reminds their worthlessness, because immoral behavior will always occur – regardless of an individual's skin color. In reality, Mda here satirizes "the dangerous failings of the rising black bourgeoisie" (Barnard 295) by primarily focusing on the human psychology behind this recent growth.

As explained by Alan Gregor Cobley in his paper *"On the shoulders of Giants": the black petty bourgeoisie in politics and society in South Africa, 1924 to 1950*, this group first emerged in the country around 1920 from the massive development of the capitalist system. This black bourgeoisie is in a certain way the product of the European churches in South Africa from the 19th to early 20th century whose peculiar educational methods eventually led to more "[W]esternized Africans" (88) from which this group originated. Nonetheless, the emergence of the black bourgeoisie is most importantly the result of the growing threats of economic marginalization of the government. This is not to say

that this group was financially homogenous. As a matter of fact, significant gaps existed within the black bourgeoisie which is illustrated in Mda's novel.

In his satire of the lower black bourgeoisie, the caricatured figure of Nefolovhodwe represents a greedy individual. Indeed, his character appears as the paradigm of capitalism since he makes use of his name as a brand to refer to his coffins such as "the Nefolovhodwe Collapsible Coffin" (Mda 125) or even "the Nefolovhodwe De Luxe Special" (126). Here, Mda uses an incongruous juxtaposition as a means to expose Nefolovhodwe's greed by apposing his rural name with a stereotypical brand label which creates a humorous effect. Furthermore, by making use of this rooted ethnic name to produce laughter, the novelist diminishes the importance and seriousness of the traditional markers of nationality that represent certain appellatives. Consequently, through Nefolovhodwe's traditional name, Mda satirizes the greedy black bourgeoisie during the period of transition in South Africa without reinforcing definite racial groups.

In addition to his traditional name, Nefolovhodwe also appears as a caricatured character by means of all his stereotypical characteristics as a parvenu. When Toloki comes to his father's old friend looking for employment after several years without seeing one another, the upstart is presented as a caricatural figure of wealth with his fleet of luxury cars, corpulence, and stereotypical brand-new wife:

> [Toloki] was led by another guard across the spreading lawns, past a dozen or so German, British and American luxury cars, to the back of the double-storey mansion… Nefolovhodwe, who had ballooned to ten times the size he used to be back in the village was sitting behind a huge desk, playing with fleas…this tall, thin girl, with straightened hair, red lips and purple eyelids, and a face that looked like that of the leupa lizard, was Nefolovhodwe's wife. (128-132)

The hyperbolic technique used by Mda is present in different ways throughout the whole representation of Nefolovhodwe from his materialistic belongings to his presumed wife. Firstly, in the description of his multiple tangible possessions, the repetition of the two numerals "dozen" and "double" to refer respectively to his cars and mansion levels emphasizes his excessive lifestyle and prosperity. Excessiveness is also illustrated in the second part of Nefolovhodwe's portrait through his overweight which is once again exaggerated by the numeral "ten" as a means to contrast with his previous frame. In the final statement, the portrait of his wife confirms this idea of excess with regard to her physical appearance. Indeed, besides the iterative use of commas which slows down the seemingly endless enumeration of her bodily features, the unnecessary repetition of the conjunction "and" to describe her traits emphasize the large number of physical attributes she possesses. Moreover, the comparison with a leupa lizard's face characterizes

those multiple physical features as excessive since her visage does no longer seem human. Therefore, the grotesque figure of Nefolovhodwe as a vulgarian illustrates some of the defects of the black bourgeoisie without reducing it to a racial matter but instead focusing primarily on the character and his lifestyle.

On the other end of the spectrum, the national leaders emerge as much more refined members of the black bourgeoisie. However, this elegance unfolds into haughtiness as the leaders of the political movement visit Noria's camp: "After an hour or so, a big black Mercedes Benz followed by several other smaller cars drives into the school yard" (172). This description of the national leaders' arrival has yet again a historical correlative since in December 1990, the president of the African National Congress party Nelson Mandela was brought by a fleet of BMWs and Mercedes to Phola Park's camp to give an encouraging speech to its penurious residents. On that same day, his political rival Chief Mangosutho Buthelezi put in an appearance at another meeting of equally impoverished Inkatha supporters in a helicopter (Reed 57). In his novel, Mda satirizes the disrespectful and frivolous arrival of the haughty leaders of the resistance movement at Noria's settlement. Along with the unpunctuality of the leadership movement to an important meeting, the novelist also stresses their disrespectful behavior by means of an incongruous juxtaposition. Indeed, the novelist deliberately collocates the convoy of luxury cars with the impoverished school yard as a means to create a contrasting and humorous effect between the two. As a result, the national leaders do not only appear as ridiculous individuals but also as disrespectful ones since despite their status, they show no regard for the impoverished residents of the informal settlements and strive to dissociate themselves from them.

This artificial separation between the national leaders and the dwellers is also satirized by the novelist. After the principal issues have been discussed, the leaders and the residents enjoy the modest banquet prepared earlier by the women: "After the meeting, food is served on paper plates. The leaders are served on enamel plates. During the meal, they call Noria to join them at their table, as they want to speak with her privately" (173). Although they are all sharing the same meal, sharp separations are made between the residents of the settlement and the national leaders. Whereas the members of the political movement seem to benefit from enamel plates, the dwellers have to settle for paper plates. The contrast between the expensive enamel plates that the leaders are eating in and the impoverished land they are eating on exposes the ridicule of this unequal treatment. Furthermore, the artificial distinction between the two groups is reinforced as the national leaders separate themselves from the poor residents by eating at their own private table. In his satire of the upper members of the black bourgeoisie, Mda portrays the national leaders as frivolous and disrespectful individuals who strive to distinguish themselves from the impoverished dwellers. By ridiculing this purpose, the novelist

renders nugatory the artificial division between the leaders and the residents, not by means of their cultural affiliations, but because of the prevalent poverty in the informal settlements.

In Mda's post-transitional novel *Ways of Dying*, satire appears conclusively as an effective instrument that obsoletes traditional markers of race, ethnicity, and nationality, as a means to concentrate directly on people. Thus, the novelist proposes an immersive experience of the political transition in South Africa through the daily life of black Africans. Nonetheless, in addition to its impact on the cultural markers mentioned previously by Frenkel and MacKenzie in their article, the function of satire in Mda's novel also seems to affect in a similar manner other traditional concerns of the South African transitional period such as gender stereotypes.

Throughout the whole novel, figures of male authority are prevalent and seem to reverberate down through generations. This dynamic can notably be perceived in the father-son relationship between Jwara and Toloki. When Toloki's parents are debating whether or not he can go to his schoolmate's funeral in the city in order to sing along with the school choir, the child witnesses once again his father's absolute dominance over his wife: "Who are you, Mother of Toloki, to teach me how to bring up my children?" (42) The sentence pronounced by Toloki's father appears as equivocal from a satirical perspective. On the one hand, the nameless quality of Toloki's mother reinforces Jwara as an absolute parental figure and a misogynistic man since he reduces his wife to her biological function. On the other hand, the appellation "Mother of Toloki" also produces a humorous outcome as Jwara unintentionally answers his own question and hence provides a legitimate reason for his wife to help him raise their child since she is the mother. However, in either case, Mda satirizes in his novel the patriarchal values in traditional family relationships by ridiculing Toloki's father.

Toloki's internalization of these patriarchal standards is also satirized by the novelist as a means to deconstruct the traditional hierarchy between men and women in South Africa. Following the reveal of the atrocious circumstances of both Vutha and Vutha The Second's deaths, the narrative voice describes Toloki's mournful reaction along with Noria's caring behavior: "Tears roll down Toloki cheeks. He is ashamed to be seen crying like this. After all he is a man, is he not? Noria smiles reassuringly at him, and wipes his tears with the back of her hand. She suggests that they both take a bath, as this will make them feel better (191). In the first statement, the narrative voice itself incarnates the internalization of patriarchal values. Indeed, it resorts to a euphemism as a means to avoid the use of the actual verb "to cry" which according to patriarchal standards is perceived as a shameful act for men. As the voice of the community (Van Wyk 84), this understatement illustrates the severe repercussions of patriarchal standards

over the whole black community in South Africa. Toloki confirms this internalization as he reflects his father's patriarchal figure by feeling embarrassed because of his tears. Moreover, the ironical question "he is a man, is he not?" illustrates the ridicule of Toloki's patriarchal ideology as he goes as far as questioning his own gender identity.

Noria's caring reaction in response to Toloki's tears concludes the satire of patriarchal standards. Despite the abuse she had to endure from masculine figures such as her husband's violence, the village's misogynistic comments, or the government's cruelty, Noria refuses to participate in the perpetuation of patriarchal values and calmly reassures Toloki as a symbol of emancipation. Despite the tragic deaths of her sons, Noria emerges as a strong figure and shatters the stereotypical depiction of men as stoic and women as emotive. Moreover, the relationship between the two protagonists directly contrasts with the one between Toloki's parents. Whereas Jwara was portrayed as an absolute ruler, Noria seems to play a less strict leadership role as she "suggests" taking a bath but does not impose it upon her partner. By ridiculing patriarchal conventions and transgressing them, Mda provides an unconventional but authentic picture of the gender dynamics in South Africa in which women can be strong leaders.

This reversal of the asymmetrical power dynamics between men and women is also represented in the novelist's satire of the role that play men in the informal settlements. As Toloki and Noria visit the shacks, the protagonist observes the contrast between the women's and the men's involvement in everyday tasks:

> [The women] are cooking. They are sewing. They are outside scolding the children…They are always on the move. They are always on the go. Men, on the other hand, tend to cloud their heads with pettiness and vain pride. They sit all day and dispense wide-ranging philosophies on how things should be. (175)

The incongruous juxtaposition between the women's activeness and the men's passivity illustrates Mda's satire of male authority. From a semantic perspective, the verbs of motion to narrate the women's actions like "to cook", "to sew" or "to scold" directly contrasts with the stative verb "to sit" used to describe the men. Moreover, from a syntactic standpoint, the short and repetitive sentences describing the activity of the women in the settlement mimic the constant and intense effort they provide. Contrastingly, the phrases narrating the men's output are longer and slower as a means to incarnate their passivity. Therefore, the women are portrayed as active "leaders of the people" (176) while the men appear as indolent. By overcoming patriarchal representations in his novel, Mda offers a realistic depiction of life in South Africa.

In conclusion, the different satirical techniques in Zakes Mda's *Ways of Dying* permit to portray truthfully the South African people and their ways of living during the transitional period by omitting cultural markers along with artificial division between racial groups. For that matter, the questioning of patriarchal values also participates in the genuine representation of black individuals' lives by deconstructing the stereotypical power relations between men and women in South Africa. Besides the immersive experience that provides satire, the repetitive invocation of humorous moments could also play a decisive role in facilitating nonviolent resistance against oppressive systems, notably by reducing their discursive dominance (Burke 16). Therefore, it is worth noting that satire is a multipurpose rhetoric instrument that cannot be reduced to a single function notably in the complex framework of the South African transition.

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Art and Culture

Shakespeare's Lyric Drama - Poetic Responses

Vanessa Ordelli, Félix Janin and Yoan Masson—Di Salvo

These texts were written as part of a BA5 seminar led by Prof. Lukas Erne, Dr. Charlotte Potter and Dr. Andy Reilly entitled "Shakespeare's Lyric Drama". As part of this seminar, the students were asked to respond to a series of challenges in lyric form. The results, as you will see, were rather spectacular...

Challenge 1: There are two sonnets at the start of Act 1 and Act 2 of Romeo and Juliet, but there the Chorus sonnets end. Write a Chorus sonnet for the starts of Act 3, 4 or 5 or an epilogue sonnet.

The winner: Vanesa Ordelli

Their journey ends, as sorrow fills the air,
Two star-crossed lovers met their tragic fate.
Though love was strong no joy did they both share,
Their hopes erased by anger and by hate.
By death, they brought a peace they could not know,
Their loss has shown the cost of hatred's fire.
Now those once filled with spite taste grief and woe,
And mourn the youth destroyed by blind desire.
Thus bitter foes who only knew the blame,
Have learned through tears what hate can truly cost.
All their relentless feuds bring endless pain,
And in their fight, their children's lives were lost.
In their tale filled with sorrow and with love,
Hate tore apart what came from up above.

Challenge 2: Ballads and ballad meter features in A Midsummer Night's Dream in interesting ways. Write a ballad in the voice of one of the characters from the play.

The winner: Félix Janin
'Oberon's Moonlit Ballad'

T'was down the grove one summer's eve,
Bees asleep, moths arise.
Thy light I found, mine heart to cleave,
And ne'er to leave my eyes.

Thy hair, like strings of rich em'rald,
Flying, flutt'ring, flaunting.
Thy rage, that Faeries must herald,
Only fed mine wanting.

Thine eyes, that see through travesty,
Shall see through all my faults.
But regent Moon's full majesty,
With me shall dance and waltz.

As shouldst thou take my hand as Queen,
My realm shall be thine too.
The Trees and Beasts shall serve thy sheen,
And never taint thy hue.

Let Bush and Bramble and Briar,
And Oak and Ash and Thorn,
And Pine with leaves of sharp'd ire,
To thee be ever sworn.

The Fox, the Deer, the Wolf, the Owl,
Will be thy trusted guards.
The Rail, Warbler, Robin and Fowl
Will be thy favoured bards.

Titania, o Moonlit Gleam,
My wish; to be your king.
And if the Lark should end this dream,
I'll cut his throat and wing.

Challenge 3: Venus and Adonis stanzas (and variations on the form) appear frequently in Love's Labour's Lost. Write a V&A stanza in the voice of one of the characters.

The winner: Yoan Masson—Di Salvo

(in the voice of Berowne)

Alas, my oath hath led me far astray,
With jeering words and jests I've played the knave.
My oath of study, broken in a day,
Love's arrow pierced my heart, my soul a slave.
Yet in this fall from grace, I see the light:
Fair Rosaline, for thee I'll set all right.

We Live in a Society

Evolution is supposed to suggest that something has evolved, something has changed, but has it? It is interesting to reflect on how much ground our society has covered, and how it still seems like they have been walking around in a circle. One of the definitions of the word Evolution is: "the process of development" (OED) which in the field of Biology pertains to "the process by which living organisms or their parts develop from a rudimentary to a mature or complete state." Even though most people think the theory of evolution is controversial due to its debates with creationism, in reality what it really aims to do is "explain how early lifeforms evolved into the complex ecosystem that we see today" (Wikipedia). I have spent my entire life very secure in the belief that I'm in agreement with the theory of evolution, but in the last few weeks my entire core belief system has been in shambles. How can something so crucial for human existence be so fragile?

The acknowledgement of the current state of our planet and society completely dismantles the theory of evolution, because how can we, rational people, consider our species today to have evolved? Now, of course this argumentation remains for the most part on the level of metaphorical discourse - because if we analyze the data, "primitive" beings did evolve into "more complex" beings - but the definition of these words can have a very varied scope. Evolution may have happened biologically, but did it happen intellectually? And how can we separate both?

Two hundred and thirty six years ago the French revolution, a period of political and societal change, happened by influence of the Enlightenment, a philosophical movement that produced "the foundation for democratic societies." It has been more than two centuries, and if we objectively analyze our data we can clearly observe that since then what has happened isn't evolution, but regression. Since when is it considered evolution for a white supremacist congressman to laughingly vent about how women's bodies are men's choice? Is society so far deteriorated that we cannot even recognize deterioration when it's staring us right in the face? A hundred and seventy-seven years ago the women's rights movement started, and as any movement in the history of our planet it has had their share of faults, but imagine fighting for your rights for almost two centuries and coming to the realization that the evolution you thought was being achieved is actually nothing more than a facade. In today's society nations' Oval Offices act as bullies, mocking other nations and blaming the backlash received on exaggerated political correctness. Since

when is making an obscene gesture in a celebratory political rally something evolved? In today's society, people hide behind overly complicated political jargon, or even religious excuses to defend ideals that serve to promote inequality out of fear. How can we consider a strategic torture tactic evolution? How is hindering the development of something with the intent of breaking a movement's spirit evolution?

The truth is hidden behind complexity, the clear indications of decline are explained away with arguments that should not even be considered relevant due to the indisputable evidence saying otherwise. Settler colonialism is not only being defended by the notion of divine appointment, but explained by other mistakes. How can someone reason with an argument as supernatural and subjective as religion? When did the world forget the saying: "One mistake doesn't excuse another"? It is almost as if society has forgotten all it has learned, history does repeat itself and that is precisely what is happening. If moral and intellectual evolution had happened, mistakes wouldn't be repeated as they are. We live in a society where people are becoming desensitized to genocide due to its recurrence. We live in a society where Imperialism just goes unchecked due to the popular selfish belief of "that would never happen to me." We live in a society where everything that is said should be fact checked, where truths are constructed, where narratives are manipulated, where evolution has to be solely biological, because how could our species be the most evolved? Wouldn't that be depressing?

Truth has become such an ambiguous thing that it is as if our society has amnesia, we all forget what has happened, what is happening and thus cannot prevent the same occurrences from happening again and again in a loop. We live in a society where global warming has become a myth, people either think it is a conspiracy theory and heavily exaggerated, or they make it their mission for two weeks and then forget about it again. We live in a society where democracy is dead, where it has become so complex to defend the general population's will that Cleisthenes would be rolling in his grave. If this is evolution I do not want to imagine what deterioration is. But the truth is evolution is subjective; what to one is evolution, to another isn't. There is on the other hand common sense, something that has become unpopular these days, where complexity is used to hide the plain truth in front of us. We live in a society that is doomed, if we don't evolve.

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Varia

Evolving Words

Match the meanings! The first column contains a modern word; the second contains one of its earlier meanings; the third contans its most common contemporary use.

The answers are at the bottom of the page, but don't peek!

(a) text	(1) in an exact sense	(i) really, with emphasis
(b) literally	(2) deep in pitch	(ii) phone message
(c) gay	(3) causing fear	(iii) extremely bad, as in unpleasant
(d) low key	(4) worthy of respect or fear	(iv) homosexual
(e) terrible	(5) the wording of anything written	(v) understatedly
(f) bully	(6) spy, undercover agent	(vi) to scare, a scare
(g) awful	(7) sweetheart	(vii) extremely bad, as in horrific
(h) spook	(8) jolly	(viii) to be persistently mean

a-5-ii
b-1-i
c-8-iv
d-2-v
e-3-vii
f-7-viii
g-4-iii
h-6-vi

A Gentle Grilling...

Emily Smith

Emily Smith is an assistant in Early Modern Literature, who finished her PhD in Shakespearean studies last year - and is of course one of your friendly resident *Noted* editors.

When did you choose your academic specialty, and why?
My favourite author – perhaps surprisingly – is Graham Greene, and in homage I am going to tell you two stories: the story I tell myself, and the backstory. To you, then, to work out which is closer to the truth.

I went to university determined to study the poetry of Philip Larkin, the prose of John Fowles, and the dystopian imagination. In my first year, I wrote my essays on the poetry of Elizabeth Bishop, *A Long Day's Journey into Night* compared to *Angels in America,* and *Heart of Darkness* with *Wide Sargasso Sea* (and definitively not with *Jane Eyre*, which I couldn't get through). I also incongruously studied philosophy and criminology.

Aside from two compulsory courses, 'Shakespeare' (hm!) and 'History and Theory of Criticism', we got more choice in our second year. More choice, that is, except the much-lamented-by-me requirement to take at least one "pre-1700" module. I chose Renaissance Literature for two reasons: it was the latest, chronologically speaking, and so the closest to what I considered literature; and because the hours suited my slightly sadistic work schedule.

Now, I went to Durham University for my undergraduate degree, and we had – like many universities in England – a delightful post-exam period wherein the majority of people remain in town and luxuriate in the moments which are usually compressed between lectures and library sessions. As this summer began, on one somewhat miserable afternoon, I thought I would get ahead on next year's reading. I downloaded Philip Sidney's sonnet sequence 'Astrophil and Stella' on my iPad and began reading.

The next thing I knew, it was the early morning. I changed my module choices and never looked back.

Behind the scenes? When I was twelve years old, I moved to Scotland. The school system

doesn't align with the rest of the UK: my age would have put me in primary school, but I'd already completed a year of high school. I had a series of tests and trial lessons so that I could be placed in an ability-appropriate group. In my first English class, we were set the homework of writing an essay about *A Midsummer Night's Dream.* So naturally I read the whole play and turned in twenty-two handwritten pages, approximately forty-four times more than anyone else in the class (of fifteen- and sixteen-year-olds). I then promptly chose to specialise in science.

I later wrote a piece of coursework on *Hamlet*, getting top marks despite being absent from most classes and horrendously distracted when present. The rest of my class failed. I took the resit, too, just for fun, and so wrote another piece on *Macbeth*. It also got top marks.

As a teenager, I did not really think about going to university. In fact, the chances of it were looking rather remote. Legally, though, in the UK one must be in education until the age of eighteen, and I had two choices after high school: a private school for which I (*somehow*) had a scholarship to study the sciences, or a state school in which I would study the humanities. I went for the latter principally because my mother worked at the former. And in this college… when I went to college… I studied Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure* and John Webster's *Duchess of Malfi* with what I can only describe as an overzealous vigour. (I did, however, despise Tudor history, especially compared to its American and Russian counterparts.)

My favourite play in my first year of university was *Dr Faustus,* and I wrote my best essays on the (re)constitution of the Bible and its reception in the Renaissance, classical literature and its continuities, and the evolution of the sonnet tradition. But, of course, it was not Larkin.

What do you enjoy most about teaching Early Modern literature to undergraduates?
The past is not a foreign country, and they do not do things differently there. However, the expressions, the conventions, the assumptions that are made – these are indeed not what we would expect, and this alien dimension, I find, is really productive. One cannot engage with early modern literature simply: it must always be an interrogation, and it is this active process of thinking which facilitates insight.

But, as I say, it is never totally foreign, and there is great pleasure in finding familiar sentiment in the past. Marshall McLuhan would call it "the pleasure of re-cognition": both recognising and rethinking that with which we are already acquainted. In a recent seminar, we discussed an episode from Philip Sidney's Arcadia in which a woman who has been betrayed by an ex-lover loudly proclaims her own worth (after having subjected

said ex-lover to substantial torture, of course). It was delightful.

I can imagine this one is difficult, but what has been your favorite seminar you have taught so far and why?
Each seminar is an ecosystem, and not comparable to another. I have loved every single one of them for their own reasons, and each has been rewarding in different ways. I have especially fond memories of a seminar a few years back called 'Shakespeare's Problem Plays', however, for several reasons. To teach Shakespeare is always rewarding, given that we all have a preconceived idea of what he stands for and hence arrive at the seminar with ideas of what's at stake: what we must grapple with and, perhaps, resist. Studying his lesser-known works meant that students were somewhat free from ideas of what the plays represented, though, and that was very liberating. The three plays we studied – *All's Well That Ends Well, Measure for Measure*, and *Troilus and Cressida* – engage with gender, sexuality, autonomy, morality, and leadership in ways which appeal to modern sensibilities. The classroom dynamic was also, quite simply, lovely: it was one of those rare cases in which everybody had something to say. One question could fill an entire class, with very little prompting by me. The nicest experience, as a teacher, is when you see students thinking together and responding to each other's answers. When you feel you're almost superfluous – or, perhaps better put, that you're in a university, in its etymological sense, with a sort of *oneness* that makes everyone in the room equal – that's when a class is the best it could be.

What is your greatest fear—both in your academic journey and in life more broadly?
Hell is other people. See also jellyfish.

What was the funniest academic experience you have had yet?
I have many, but one comes to mind: the conference which I thought would be a small affair yet turned out to feature some of the most-cited academics in my field – with one of whom I found myself salsa-dancing – a parade of well-known Shakespearean actors, and incongruously me with utterly no idea why I was there (presenting, to my horror, a paper on video games).

Can you describe a particularly memorable outreach event or performance you were involved in? What was significant about it?
I once had to supervise a 12ft dragon puppet in a taxi – the driver had been instructed to "expect a pet", given that there was not a dragon option on the app – travelling down the A1 from Durham to York. Said dragon was very visible through the windows, and the reaction of fellow motorists was spectacular.

I ran a library during my undergraduate degree, as one does, and the dragon was also

stored in my office temporarily. Similar shocks abound.

If you could design a dream course that brings together your interests—Shakespeare, digital tools, performance—what might it look like?
I would love to teach a course in which we compare distant reading – using computers to analyse texts – with close reading. Ideally, this would be with Shakespeare's plays, and perhaps even involve collaboration with the wonderful linguists in the department. Maybe one day!

You are multilingual—what are your favorite words in any of the languages that you speak? Why?
Multilingual is a generous interpretation of my bodging-together-that'll-do, but in this expansive reading of linguistic ability:

In French: *flou. Tout simple*, but with a sense that ambiguous, fluid, vague, and so on don't quite reach.

In German: *Wunschkonzert*. Part of my favourite sassy idiom.

Italian: *luce*, probably because I've read too much Petrarch.

Welsh: *cariad* (*love*, but also *lover, beloved*) is beautiful and nostalgic. But I'll give you a phrase: *Ffrind pechadur, / Dyma ei beilat ar y môr.*

Why do I love it? Well, it's from a lullaby and a hymn, with all the layers of sentiment that entails: sung at the bedside, at schools, at funerals. I'm interested here in it linguistically, though – it shows the language's quirky development really well. *Ffrind*, well that's obvious: friend. *Pechadur* should be recognisable to a Romance language speaker: it means *of the sinner* (I won't go into the construction of the genitive: basically, whack two nouns together.) The next bit: *Here is the pilot on the sea*. I'll leave you to find the similarities… and I'm sparing you the lecture about p/b mutations.

There are also Welshisms in English which I adore: truth be told, hear you me, as it goes, what's occurring…

Oh, and Latin? *Funambulus*. Self-explanatory.

Who is your biggest inspiration?
I don't think it's healthy to find all your inspiration in one person – and, conversely, I struggle *not* to be inspired by each person that I meet, in some way or another. I do,

however, have an immense respect for my paternal grandmother. From an unlikely and unpromising start in a Welsh valley town, she and my grandfather built a life anew and elsewhere, a rare thing back then as now, and she existed vibrantly within and thereby overcame deeply patriarchal expectations. At a far earlier age than we would today countenance, she began – nay, led – a household. Soon she learned everything there was to know about Georgian architecture and antiques to restore a dilapidated townhouse and garden with historical fidelity. She taught me to sew, to cook, to press flowers, to garden, and more, and to do it all not because I *should* but because I *could*.

One of the last conversations I had with her was just after I had been accepted to Oxford and was debating whether to go – I had the makings of a life in Durham with the stability of which she would have dreamed and which she'd always told me to chase. What did she say? Much to my surprise: "My girl, it's not a question."

I went.

If you could read one poem for the rest of your life, which one would it be?
A truly terrible concept. I give you off the top of my head: Spenser's *The Faerie Queene* and *Amoretti 75*; Isabella Whitney's 'Will and Testament'; Marlowe's *Hero and Leander*; T. S. Eliot's 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock'; Seamus Heaney's 'Clearances' sequence; Elizabeth Bishop's 'One Art'; 'Clouds' by Anna Evans; 'Church Going', 'Modesties', 'The Mower' – scratch that, Philip Larkin's entire oeuvre…

My life without poetry would be infinitely poorer.

The key word for this issue is 'evolution'. What does it mean to you and how has Emily evolved in the past decade?
I am twenty-six. People I knew at sixteen routinely fail to recognise me. It's not just the lack of bright red hair (though I'm sure that doesn't help). It is a general *comportement*. I have certainly become much more social, more certain in myself, and more – for lack of a better word – vibrant. When I go back to my hometown – where pretty much everyone has stayed put – the evolution is stark. I am expected to be silent, shy, and solemn. Not words that describe me nowadays! University is a wonderful thing.

If your life had a play title, what would it be?
A hard question when one – hopefully – does not know the end! But I would pray that it's closer to *All's Well That Ends Well* than *The Play That Goes Wrong*. Tentatively: *But By Degrees.* Bonus points for anyone who gets the reference.

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Contributions, comments, and suggestions are very welcome, and can be sent to noted-lettres@unige.ch

Thank you for reading *Noted!*