

# Telkens weer op zoek. In de sporen van de Recherche van Proust



Marcel Proust 1871 - 1922

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De grote werken uit de Modernistische periode nodigen wellicht des te meer uit tot navolging en imitatie omdat ze zelf vaak variaties zijn op oudere kunstwerken. *Ulysses* en *De dood van Vergilius* zijn sprekende voorbeelden die bewijzen dat mimicry en citationisme blijkbaar niet voorbehouden zijn voor een postmoderne aanpak. In deze bijdrage willen we aantonen dat het inhaken op beroemde voorbeelden om deze op eigen wijze te verwerken ook tot een soort 'vormdwang' kan leiden (of sterker gezegd - met een lacaniaanse ondertoon - dat deze dwang inherent is aan zo'n onderneming). In ons geval zal het daarbij - in het kader van de voorliggende bundel - vooral gaan om aan te tonen dat kunstwerken die tijdens de laatste decennia als voorbeeld, oriëntatiebron of uitgangspunt *Op zoek naar de verloren tijd* van Marcel Proust hebben gekozen, als vanzelfsprekend karaktertrekken van het modernisme hebben overgenomen. Uiteraard gaat het hier om complexere processen dan alleen vormdwang, zoals bijvoorbeeld een 'terugkeer naar het modernisme' of, genuanceerder, een innige verstrengeling van modernistische en postmoderne componenten.

Als Jacqueline Harpman in *Orlanda* (Prix Médicis 1996) op speelse wijze omgaat

met de gegevens uit Virginia Woolfs *Orlando*, gaat dit gepaard met allerlei auctoriale knipoogjes en postmoderne springerigheid (met betrekking tot personages en motieven, maar ook qua compositie en stijl). Toch kunnen deze flikkerende versieringen en huppelende danspasjes niet wegnemen dat de kern van de zaak het zoeken naar identiteit betreft, alsmede de crisissituaties die dat met zich mee brengt, waarbij verhaaltechnisch het perspectivisme de toon zet. Het feit dat Harpman zelf psychoanalytica is heeft overigens wellicht een royale duid in het zakje gedaan (de psychoanalyse is een bij uitstek modernistische discipline).

Wanneer Willem Brakman in *De bekentenis van de heer K.* (1985) in het voetspoor van Kafka's Josef K. treedt, wordt de trefzekere 'eenvoud' van diens proza behoorlijk gepimpt. Brakman transplanteert zijn visie op Kafka naar zijn eigen variant op *Het proces*. Die visie verwoordde hij ooit als volgt (in een essay over Kafka): "Zijn overkwetsbaar naturel, al in de prille jaren scheefgetrokken, verwrongen en vervormd, zorgde voor de zo nodige maniakale trekken" (in Brakman, 2001). Maar ook al krijgt de wereld van K. bij Willem Brakman eveneens maniakale trekken (een soort intertekstuele pervertering)[i], toch heerst in die tekst eenzelfde gevoel van 'unheimlichkeit', omdat achter de barokke stijlexercities de kilte van een gemechaniseerde wereld zich opdringt.

Een derde voorbeeld vinden we in de roman *Les Bienveillantes* van Jonathan Littell uit 2006 waarin een vroegere SS-officier tot in de gruwelijkste details verslag uitbrengt over zijn rol in de Tweede Wereldoorlog. Uiteindelijk blijkt dat familieverhoudingen uit zijn jeugd de verklaring tot zijn persoonlijkheid vormen. Enerzijds grijpen deze terug op een mythologische achtergrond (de Orestes-verhalen); anderzijds is een intertekstuele relatie met Musils *Mann ohne Eigenschaften* (met name wat betreft de broer-zus verhouding in dat werk) herkenbaar. Hoewel Littells roman opgevat kan worden als een gigantische stijloefening, een compositorische puzzel die bijvoorbeeld met Tolstoï wil wedijveren, kan men zeker ook door de verwijzingen naar de Oudheid en de daaruit voortvloeiende cyclische geschiedenisopvatting een modernistische gelaagdheid in het verhaal terugvinden.

Voor wat betreft de sporen en herscheppingen van modernistische kenmerken in het werk van Proust zullen we in het volgende een blik werpen op realisaties vanuit twee verschillende media om tevens aan te tonen dat deze tendens een transmediaal karakter vertoont, zij het met telkens specifieke eigenschappen.

Eerst blijven we bij de literatuur en bekijken de roman *Octave avait vingt ans* van Gaspard Koenig uit 2004. Vervolgens komt de stripbewerking ter sprake waarvan Stéphane Heuet tot op heden vijf delen publiceerde.

### *Octave avait vingt ans*



Ms. A la recherche du temps perdu

Het debuut van deze jonge auteur van 22 jaar oud werkt in principe een uitgesproken postmodern procédé uit. De schrijver nestelt zich in een luwte/leegte van de Proustiaanse tekst om daar een soort pastiche op te richten. Het is imitatie in de tweede macht want ook Proust was in zekere zin zijn carrière als pastiche-schrijver begonnen. Het lijkt er echter op dat Koenig verder wil gaan door eigen materiaal toe te voegen: zo wordt de pastiche tot een soort van collage of zelfs tot een meer vrije variant op een thema.

Octave als personage van Proust is het vertrekpunt voor Koenig. Octave doet zijn intrede in de *Recherche* tijdens het eerste bezoek van de hoofdpersoon en (latere) verteller Marcel aan Balbec en hij duikt ook weer op bij een tweede zomers verblijf in die (fictieve) Normandische badplaats.

Koenig heeft een vijftiental fragmenten hernomen die in grote lijnen alle tekst over Octave - op het eerste gezicht een vrij bijkomstig figuur - bij Proust beslaan. Hij heeft die lijnen uitgewerkt maar ook passages toegevoegd die zich tamelijk ver van de oorspronkelijke tekst verwijderen. Laten we daarom eerst eens kijken welke rol Octave in de *Recherche* speelt.

Wanneer deze in Balbec opduikt (in de gesprekken van de habitués van het badhotel) wordt hij gekarakteriseerd als een « Joli Monsieur » die elke dag luncht met champagne, « een orchidee in zijn knoopsgat »**[ii]**, en die vervolgens « bleek

en onbewogen met een onverschillige glimlach op zijn lippen in het Casino aan de baccarattafel enorme sommen geld inzet die hij eigenlijk niet zou mogen verliezen [...] » (II 38)[iii]. Zijn vader heeft uitgebreide bezittingen in Balbec, wat de grillen van zijn aamborstige dandy-achtige zoon mogelijk maakt. Op een goede dag komen Marcel en zijn vriendin Albertine hem tegen: « Koeltjes en zonder emoties te tonen - wat hij blijkbaar beschouwde als het toppunt van stijl - zei hij goedendag aan Albertine - 'Kom je van het golfterrein, Octave?' - 'Oh! Daar word ik zo moe van, ik ben in de bonen', antwoordde hij. » (II 233). En zo ontstaat een vreemde bijnaam: « Octave dans les choux », letterlijk 'Octave in de kolen'. Dan volgt een lange uitweiding waaruit blijkt dat Octave een goede danser is en zeer verfijnd wat betreft kleren, sigaren, Engelse drankjes en paarden, maar dat hij geen greintje intellectuele cultuur bezit. Albertine houdt hem voor een « gigolo ».

Maar dat is niet het hele portret. Allereerst gaat Octave een belangrijke rol spelen met betrekking tot het netwerk van relaties in de *Recherche*: hij is een neef van de Verdurins (prototypes van de 'haute bourgeoisie d'argent'), hij is een tijdlang de minnaar van de actrice Rachel, maar bovenal trouwt hij met Andrée, vriendin en rivale van Albertine. Uiteindelijk wordt er zelfs gewag van gemaakt dat hij Albertine zou hebben willen ontfutselen aan Marcel (wanneer deze haar van iedereen tracht af te zonderen in *la Prisonnière*) en dat hij haar vlucht zou hebben gestimuleerd (gevolg van een oud plan van de tante van Albertine om een huwelijk tussen haar nichtje en Octave te arrangeren).

Maar het ware belang van Octave is nog ergens anders in gelegen: hij wordt een toonaangevend auteur met zijn « petits sketches ». De verteller tracht dit fenomeen te verklaren. Onder anderen denkt hij aan een "fysiologische" ommezwaai die van de lompe botterik een "schone slaapster" heeft gemaakt (IV 184). De verteller geeft toe dat hij zich kan hebben vergist en komt tot het inzicht dat blijkbaar "misschien wel de mooiste kunstwerken van onze tijd hun oorsprong vinden in een geregeld verblijf op de renbaan of in de *grands cafés*" (IV 186).

Men heeft modellen gezocht voor deze Octave onder wie Jean Cocteau, maar hij is natuurlijk allereerst een dubbelganger van Marcel (het neefje van « tante Octave », zoals de beroemde tante Léonie ook wel genoemd wordt, naar haar overleden man). Het laatste optreden van Octave in de roman toont ons een auteur die rivaliseert met de *ballets russes* van Djagilev en die zich helemaal aan zijn oeuvre wijdt, terwijl zijn ziekte hem dwingt thuis te blijven en hij alleen nog voor "enige ontspanning" mensen ontvangt (we herkennen Proust in zijn latere

levensperiode).

Een van de merkwaardigste passages betreffende Octave gaat over de herinnering, centraal thema bij Proust, dat hier op een specifieke wijze naar voren komt:

*Een van de prominente figuren in die salon was Dans les choux, die zich ondanks zijn voorliefde voor sport had laten afkeuren. Ik zag hem nu zozeer als de schrijver van een schitterend oeuvre waar ik voortdurend aan dacht, dat ik alleen wanneer ik bij toeval de band legde tussen twee reeksen herinneringen, bedacht dat hij ook degene was die het vertrek van Albertine had veroorzaakt. Trouwens die dwarsverbinding liep wat betreft de resten van herinneringen aan Albertine uit op een dood spoor van jaren her. Want ik dacht nooit meer aan haar. Die herinneringen gingen een richting uit die ik nooit meer insloeg. Het werk van Dans les choux daarentegen was recent en dat spoor volgden mijn herinneringen voortdurend. (IV 309)*

Voor Marcel luidt de boodschap: scheppend kunstenaarschap overwint elke rouw, maar tegelijkertijd worden de resten ("reliques" in het Frans, met een religieuze ondertoon) juist in genoemde "dwarsverbinding" tussen herinneringen wel weer gezegd.

Terug naar Koenig nu. Hij schrijft over Octave een roman van 210 pagina's en er is dus sprake van amplificatie. De citaten (in cursief) leggen de nadruk op de dandy-achtige aspecten. Octave zal bij Koenig nooit tot een scheppend kunstenaar uitgroeien. Kunst speelt hier meer een rol in de persoonlijke relaties zoals die met de vader van Octave:

*Voor Octave was dat kunstwerk iets zo intiems, iets dat zo zeer leefde binnen zijn geheimste innerlijk, dat hij er nooit over zou kunnen praten zoals zijn vader voor wie kunst hetzelfde betekende als mooie auto's voor Octave. (61)*

Bij Proust kunnen we lezen:

*Voor Octave was kunst waarschijnlijk iets zo intiems, iets dat zo zeer leefde binnen zijn geheimste innerlijk, dat hij er nooit over zou kunnen praten zoals Saint-Loup bijvoorbeeld voor wie kunst hetzelfde betekende als een rijtuig met paarden voor Octave. (IV 186)*

In zijn proloog schrijft Koenig met betrekking tot de citaten: “Soms zijn ze enigszins aangepast aan de context om bijvoorbeeld anachronismen te voorkomen.” De vervanging van de vriend door de vader hier gaat duidelijk verder vooral omdat het schilderij dat die vader (‘el Torero’) verwerft een doek van Goya betreft, “Saturno devorando a un hijo”.

Een andere intimiteit schemert zo door. De dandy van Proust is wellicht ontleend aan het personage van Octave in de *Confessions d'un enfant du siècle* van Musset. Bij Koenig is er ook sprake van een “geheime verwonding” die zijn sexualiteit betreft en die eerder doet denken aan Octave, de held uit *Armance* van Stendhal, op wiens impotentie ook op die wijze wordt gezinspeeld. Voor Koenigs Octave zou Elise, de dochter van de « koning van de parfums », (als een soort Madeleine[iv]) dit gemis moeten opheffen. Zij wil voortdurend verrast worden, en Octave voelt maar al te goed dat hij als een « impuissant dévot » steeds tekort schiet (56).

Na de openingshoofdstukken over de kinderjaren en de tijd op school, volgen er vier gedeelten over zijn relatie met Elise, tekens gemarkeerd door de angst verlaten te worden. Wanneer het over zijn prestaties in het schermen gaat doemt de voornaamste rivaal op in de persoon van Louis Roger wiens superioriteit hij erkennen moet. Vervolgens opent de relatie met Camille een venster op de Oudheid (« Octave versloeg Marc-Antoine zoals eertijds het gevecht tussen de twee erfgenamen van Caesar was afgelopen », 108), maar ook deze relatie brengt geen vervulling. Steeds overvloediger wordt dan het arsenaal aan personages en gebeurtenissen zonder echter het existentiële gemis te kunnen opheffen.

Het volgende hoofdstuk speelt op de renbaan en Octave wint daar een belangrijke prijs vooral door zijn perfecte samenwerking met zijn paard. Na afloop onderwerpt hij Elise op soortgelijke wijze. Het hoogtepunt van hun relatie vindt plaats in Venetië waar Elise zich in dezelfde Fortuny-gewaden kleedt waar Proust zo dol op is. Het Canal Grande en het Casino vormen het decor voor hun omzwervingen, maar Octave ontkomt er niet aan hallucinaties waarin een bedreigende moederfiguur opduikt. In werkelijkheid gaat het om beelden van Botero die zijn uitgestald op de kades: “Een kolossale vrouw, donker en lekker, zo groot als de reus die Octave verslond [die van Goya], wellicht zijn nachtelijke gezellin” (170).

De zes etappes van Octaves ‘éducation sentimentale’ in Koenigs tekst zijn in feite

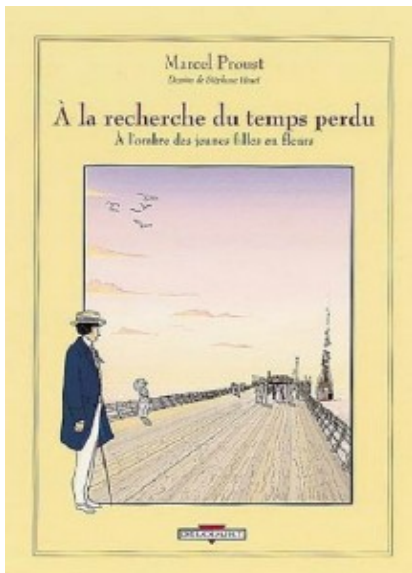
een flashback bij de proloog die door de epiloog wordt hernomen in een cyclische beweging die ook weer aan de *Recherche* doet denken.

In het begin loopt men over het strand waar in de epiloog Elise zich aan de rivaal van Octave overgeeft tijdens een soort archaïsche rite waarbij het strand in een kathedraal verandert. Proust vergelijkt eveneens de *Recherche* met een kathedraal en ook bij Koenig wordt de artistieke dimensie in het portret van Octave zo ingevuld. De kathedraal waar het hier om gaat is die van Antwerpen. De seksuele scène op het strand smelt op fantastische wijze samen met een uitvoering van *la Forza del Destino* tussen de doeken van Rubens die in die kathedraal hangen. De geëxalteerde dirigent, van der Voort, overleeft de climax van dit tijdloze *drama* niet. Kunst verbeeldt dood, geweld en genot waarna Octave achterblijft in zijn verlatenheid.

Postmoderne barokelementen waar pastiche en kitch zich verstrengelen vormen een opzichtige oppervlakte van de tekst waaronder echter modernistische motieven krachtig doorklinken: identiteitscrisis, de geboorte van het kunstwerk, de spiegeling van de autonome tekst. De metamorfose kan zo worden gedefinieerd: Octave is tot een muzikaal octaaf geworden: de acht etappes van zijn omzwervingen zijn uitgemond in de apotheose van de "octave supérieure". Het hoogtepunt is ook een verstening, een doodssculptuur, zoals bij Verdi in *la Forza del Destino*, of zoals in het laatste gedeelte van de *Recherche* (het 'bal de têtes' waar de Proustiaanse personages in een soort fantomen veranderen). De 'held' gaat bij Koenig ten onder, maar de kunst zegeviert. Wat is er romantischer, postromantischer, modernistischer?

Gaspard van de Nacht (zoals het hoogromantische cultboek van Aloysius Bertrand heet) die met de naam van zijn moeder (Anne-Marie Koenig) signeert, is wellicht ook de *koning* uit het oosten die Christus komt bewieroken. De mysterieuze Octave uit de *Recherche* is in zijn ongrijpbaarheid een dubbelganger van de auteur en die andere Octave die twintig jaar oud was volgens de titel staat ook heel dicht bij de schrijver van een nieuwe generatie.

*Proust verstript*



Stephane Heuet

Ook in andere media is de *Recherche* als uitgangspunt gebruikt. Vele schilders maakten illustraties (bijvoorbeeld zeer aansprekende Van Dongens) en als verfilmingen zijn vooral *Un Amour de Swann* van Volker Schlöndorff en *Le temps retrouvé* van Raoul Ruiz bekend. Chantal Akerman breidt in *La Captive* voort op het verhaal rond Albertine en verder zijn de scenario's van Visconti en vooral van Pinter interessant (deze laatste inspireerde ook ten zeerste Guy Cassiers voor zijn toneelbewerking bij het Ro-Theater)[v]. Ook het ballet "Les Intermittences du coeur" van Roland Petit uit 2007 dient vermeld te worden.

Net als film heeft het stripverhaal steeds een nauwe band gehad met de 'grote literaire' teksten. Vaak ging het daarbij erom die teksten voor een groter publiek toegankelijk te maken. Dat is ook een van de beweegredenen van Stéphane Heuet die tot nu toe "Combray", "A l'ombre des jeunes filles en fleurs" (twee delen) en "Un amour de Swann" (twee delen) bewerkte. Deze albums werden ook in het Nederlands vertaald en verschenen bij uitgeverij Atlas.

De vormgeving van de albums is traditioneel (*Combray* telt 72 pagina's van 32 bij 23 cm; de andere delen 48 pagina's van hetzelfde formaat). Het kader van de buitenkant is klassiek, monumentaal, met de gelige kleurstelling van oude foto's. Het lijkt op lijsttoneel waar verschillende omlijningen de scène inkaderen. Zo wordt de monumentale aard van de *Recherche* benadrukt maar ook de theatrale dimensie van het werk. Op de grens van de kaders begeleidt telkens een afgebeeld personage de overgang. Bij *Combray* is dat de verteller die de lezer vergezelt naar de wereld van het kind. Deze nadruk op de constructie is meteen



heel modernistisch van aard.

Bij *Les Jeunes Filles* 1 wordt de volwassen verteller die de belevenissen aan zee van de jongeman in het boek gaat verhalen geplaatst op een lange pier waarvan het perspectief de vluchtlijn van de herinneringen lijkt aan te geven.

In *Les Jeunes Filles* 2 combineert de omslag twee belangrijke gebeurtenissen: enerzijds het bezoek aan het atelier van de schilder Elstir, die een belangrijk voorbeeld zal zijn als kunstenaar, en anderzijds het verschijnen van de sportieve Albertine. Het spel met de kaders (en dus met de conventies van het stripverhaal) is hier geraffineerd: we zien een atelier waar de zeegezichten van Elstir hangen terwijl hij zelf net bezig is een zonsopgang boven zee te schilderen. Albertine duikt op in het kader van het raam, op één lijn met de jonge bezoeker aan het andere uiteinde van het atelier. Maar deze laatste zit in feite half buiten het beeld op een krukje en houdt een portret uit een andere periode van Elstir in de hand (Odette, de latere Madame Swann, als actrice). Elstir is de schilder van picturale metamorfoses tussen land en zee: naar die kunst van de metafoor gaat de jongeman toegroeien waarbij hij de liefdesrelaties achter zich zal laten. Met Albertine verkeerde hij eigenlijk nooit in hetzelfde kader. Deze allegorische uitbeelding strookt heel goed met de modernistische dimensie van de *Recherche*.

*Un amour de Swann* tenslotte toont ons Swann die het kader in/uitstapt dat door het huis van Odette wordt aangereikt, een kader waarbinnen schaduwen een ander koppel laten zien. Men kan het beschouwen als hallucinaties van Swann die zijn rivaal daar projecteert terwijl hijzelf door dat kader buitengesloten wordt. Zo vertelt de kaft al de kern van het verhaal in een soort 'mise en abyme', sinds Gide een modernistisch principe bij uitstek. Op de cover van *Swann* 2 vliedt in een soortgelijke spiegeling Odette henen, ongrijpbaar zoals vrouwen nu eenmaal ongrijpbaar zijn.

De paratekstuele aspecten wijzen op een hoogst gestructureerde aanpak. Dit is ook het geval voor de globale opzet: het doel is in dienst te staan van de Proustiaanse tekst. Dit komt allereerst naar voren in de citaten. Elke pagina staat er vol mee en ze bevinden zich in duidelijk afgebakende vakken met een specifieke kleur (eigeel). Het album wordt zo een soort *condensé* van de *Recherche*, een opeenvolging van kernpassages waarbij ook de stijl hernomen wordt (met lange series adjectiva bijvoorbeeld). Wanneer de lengte in de tijd als hoofdkenmerk van het werk van Proust zo verdwijnt, wordt dit in zekere mate

gecompenseerd door een goed gedoseerd gebruik van ritme en herhalingen. Met name het feit dat de *Recherche* is opgebouwd rond een aantal kernscènes wordt in de stripversie benadrukt. Vooral de scènes met een sterk toneelkarakter zijn in de meerderheid. Het eerste album van de *Jeunes Filles* is zo als volgt opgebouwd: de aankomst in Balbec; de intrek in het Grand Hôtel; de ontmoeting met Mademoiselle de Stermaria (object van één van de liefdesprojecties van Marcel); de kennismaking met madame de Villeparisis (oude adel en vriendin van grootmoeder die Marcel begeleidt); uitstapjes; Saint-Loup arriveert (de vriend bij uitstek); grollen van Bloch (een Joodse kameraad); eerste contacten met Charlus (de oudere homoseksueel); het verschijnen van de bloemenmeisjes (Albertine en haar vriendinnen). De gebeurtenissen betreffen vooral personen en zetten zo de deur open voor psychologische bespiegelingen en het werken met meerdere perspectieven, modernistische principes bij uitstek. Het herhalende karakter van Prousts tekst vindt zijn natuurlijke weerslag in de identieke weergave via simpele lijnen en trekken van de personages bij Heuet. In zekere zin kan dit corresponderen met de bedoeling van Proust: veranderingen grijpen plotseling en onverwacht plaats. Maar de karakterisering van de personages vertoont wel een behoorlijke simplificatie.

Het personage staat doorgaans centraal in het stripverhaal en heeft een repetitief karakter. De herhaling in gedragingen en de terugkeer van personages zijn ook heel belangrijk voor Proust. Voor de tekeningen van Heuet heeft Marie-Hélène Gobin opgemerkt dat de jonge Marcel sterk aan Kuifje doet denken en dat Françoise, de trouwe huishoudster, lijkt op Bécassine, een ander traditionele Franse stripfiguur.

Die conclusies kunnen worden doorgetrokken naar onder anderen Albertine, Charlus, Saint-Loup, de Verdurins, dokter Cottard of Swann. Tekeningen zoals bij Hergé met duidelijk afgebakende figuren en scherpe contouren, voorzien van slechts enkele kenmerkende trekken beantwoorden aan een eerste visie van Proust - zoals de jonge Marcel de wereld in eerste instantie bekijkt.

Maar bij Proust wordt het beeld al snel gecompliceerder: de bijfiguren behouden weliswaar 'levenslang' hun stereotype verschijning (en Heuet profiteert daarvan), maar de hoofdrolspelers ondergaan vele veranderingen en zijn ook geregeld omgeven door een waas van geheimzinnigheid. Bij sommige personages is de reden van hun veelzijdige verschijningsvormen gelegen in de uiteenlopende instellingen waarmee men (en allereerst hier natuurlijk de verteller) de ander

bekijkt met een blik gevoed door het verlangen; bij anderen (zoals Octave, maar ook Elstir en Vinteuil, de schilder en de componist) ligt het aan het feit dat ze als kunstenaar een belangrijke evolutie ondergaan

Heuet heeft er niet naar gestreefd om deze tweede dimensie weer te geven en een bescheiden poging in die richting bij het portret van Albertine is niet erg overtuigend. Een dansend vlekje kan maar heel gedeeltelijk de altijd wegvluchtende en ongrijpbare natuur van de geliefde aanduiden.

Marcel is het meest complexe personage van allemaal te meer omdat hij als vertellende instantie zoveel verschillende verschijningsvormen van de "ik" bijeenbrengt. Marcel is het knaapje in matrozenpak, hij is ook de nieuwsgierige, wat bangelijke adolescent, en verder de teleurgestelde man van de wereld maar ook de schrijver die helemaal in zijn werk opgaat. Hij is dat allemaal tegelijkertijd, want hij zoekt zichzelf, zijn eigen tijd en zijn roeping, een roeping die samenvalt met ons leesproces.

De *Recherche* van Heuet is daarom in zekere zin trouw aan de tekst van Proust, maar in een afgezwakte versie die (noodzakelijkerwijs ?) de verschrikking en de zaligheid van dat steeds weer verliezen van zichzelf uit de weg gaat.

### *Semantische ketens en verbanden*

In zijn studie van de 'bande dessinée' legt Thierry Groensteen terecht de nadruk op het belang van de macrostructuur waar de microstructuur van afhankelijk is, en hij onderstreept de rol van de combinaties (de « arthrologie », verbindingen tussen verschillende niveaus) als ook de vorming van semantische ketens (de terugkeer van bepaalde elementen als refrein of echo). De lezer brengt die verbindingen tot stand en vult de afstand tussen de afbeeldingen zo op. Voor wat betreft de relatie tussen de tekst van Proust en het stripverhaal zou het essentieel zijn een goede formule te vinden voor de o zo belangrijke vorming van ketens in de *Recherche*.

Herhaling is bij hem differentie. De terugkeer van het identieke is de utopie van het buitentijdelijke. De semantische keten heeft ook artistieke waarde: wat in de mensen uiteenvalt en verbrokkelt kan in het kunstwerk samenklonteren. De verschillende verschijningen van Swann, de omvorming van Elstir, Odette die evolueert van Miss Sacripant tot madame Swann, Albertine de ongrijpbare, de 'ik' die zich over zichzelf blijft verwonderen: bij Heuet verhindert het

eendimensionale karakter een weergave van deze constante verschuivingen en onzekerheden. Anderzijds is er wel geregeld sprake van een creatieve zoektocht om de mogelijkheden van de vormgeving zo goed mogelijk te exploiteren.

Combray, het eerste album uit de serie, volgt vrij trouw de tekst van Proust. Het familieleven in Combray met de bezoeken van Swann, met oom Adolphe, Françoise en de allegorische keukenmeid, de « Charité van Giotto », wordt genoemd; het lezen in de tuin, de wandelingen, de ontdekking van de schrijver Bergotte, de voyeuristische scènes in Montjouvain en het 'onfatsoenlijke' gebaar dat Gilberte, de dochter van Swann naar Marcel maakt, zijn enkele van de verwachte etappes. En wat gebeurt er met de beroemde madeleine die het herinneringsproces aanzwengelt?

We kunnen concluderen dat de beweging die gepaard gaat met het opkomen van de herinneringen de mogelijkheden van het beeldverhaal uitbuit. Wanneer het stripverhaal allereerst horizontaal en via sequenties voortgaat, is er toch ook sprake van een belangrijke verticale beweging: men 'leest' de pagina van boven naar beneden; maar deze verticale dimensie kan ook anderszins worden geëxploiteerd om dieptewerking te bereiken. Malcolm Bowy toont aan dat de verticaliteit behalve zijn rol als antropologische en mythologische dimensie in de 19<sup>e</sup> eeuw ook zijn beslag krijgt in de paradigma's van de toenmalige wetenschap (archeologie, historiografie, filosofie). Deze invulling van de verticaliteit valt ook overal bij Proust terug te vinden.

Sleutelmomenten zijn bijvoorbeeld de beschrijving van de klokkentoren van Combray, het aanbreeken van de dag, het naar boven gaan naar de slaapkamer of het afdalen in onderaardse ruimtes. Een moment dat bij uitstek met verticaliteit verbonden wordt is wanneer de herinneringen 'opstijgen'. Het stripverhaal kan op eigen wijze deze verticaliteit vormgeven. Bij Heuet treft men diverse voorbeelden aan van deze plastische dimensie: het naar boven gaan als inleiding op het drama van het naar bed gaan (13); de beelden van de kerktoren (22), het afdalen in de crypte (21) of het kijken naar de regen van boven af. Vaak zijn het panorama-achtige gezichten, van boven gezien, die de verticaliteit aangeven: bijvoorbeeld op pagina 5 waar de familie van bovenaf wordt gezien als hechte eenheid of wanneer de besloten wereld van het dorpje uit de hoogte wordt bekeken (45).

Bij de madeleine-scène wordt de materialisatie van het verleden ook zo vorm gegeven. Op pagina 14 herkennen we de winters aangeklede figuur van de

voorpagina die zo aankondigt dat er iets belangrijks gaat komen. Hij gaat bij 'maman' naar binnen en krijgt zijn thee met koekje. Van het lepeltje dat in de lucht lijkt te zweven beginnen weldoende dampen op te stijgen, terwijl de werkelijkheid van de theepot vervaagt en de tekst de ruimte gaat opeisen. Het afdalen langs de pagina wordt uiteindelijk omgedraaid omdat het laatste plaatje boven naar de volgende pagina 'reist' op het geurende wolkje dat dan overgaat in de haarlok van de extatische genierter.

De bijbehorende monoloog slingert zich over het gezicht via de plooiën van de wangen en het voorhoofd. Het recitatief dat boven aan de pagina begint met de woorden "wat diep in mij klopt" eindigt vreemd genoeg beneden aan de bladzijde als volgt "zal de herinnering tot aan het oppervlak van mijn heldere bewustzijn kunnen komen?" Men bemerkt dat de opeenvolging van de tekst en de iconische verticaliteit met elkaar rivaliseren. Dat is een epistemologische en een ideologische rivaliteit, maar vooral hun technische en materiële weerslag. Het modernisme weerspiegelt immers allereerst de historische en wetenschappelijke overgang tussen verticale (theo-teleologische) systemen en horizontale (technisch-immanentistische) modellen. Dan kunnen we de pagina wel omslaan om een eerste plaatje te ontdekken dat zich over de volle hoogte van de pagina uitstrekt: via tafellaken, theepot, kop, Marcel in trance, slierten geurige theedampen en opnieuw de tekst "Dag tante Léonie", komen we bij een goudkleurige hemel aan die dus niet naar buiten verwijst maar naar het universum van de tekst.

Na een stuk tekst komen we dan op een volle pagina die het dorp toont in een sprookjesdecor, met meidoorn en waterlelies omzoomd, en waar een krans van huizen de Sint Hilarius kerk omringt. De verbinding wordt expliciet gelegd door wolkenbanden die vanuit de kop van de pagina afkomstig zijn. Het recitatief staat als een soort wettekst boven het idyllische beeld van het dorpje en de pseudo-tekstbellen die opstijgen vanuit de theekop profiteren van de open ruimte en zeilen gracieus naar de wolken met als belofte het vervolg van het verhaal. Het dorp ademt met dit beeld harmonie, eenheid en geborgenheid uit. Eenzelfde soort geluksstemming gaat uit van pagina 27 waar een stralende Françoise een tafel vol lekker eten presenteert.

In *À l'ombre des jeunes filles en fleurs* 1 wordt de ruimte breed uitgemeten. Vooral het Grand Hôtel in Balbec geeft de tekenaar de gelegenheid om uit te pakken. Op pagina 13 zien we hoe de grootse raampartij het strand domineert: van daarboven beheerst men de wereld! De dubbele pagina 20-21 maakt het

mogelijk 's avonds rondom het grote gebouw te kijken, dan de eetzaal binnen te gaan met de geprivilegeerde gasten en vervolgens een meewarige blik te werpen op de dorpelingen die zich voor het grote raam aan hen vergapen. Het stripverhaal werkt met compartimenten en buit deze relatie uit. Zo bij het Grand Hôtel dat met zijn diverse locaties functioneert als draaischijf voor de opeenvolgende episodes en als ontmoetingsplaats voor de meest uiteenlopende personages. Voor Marcel is het hotel overigens allereerst een onbekende plaats waar zijn gewoontes hem wreed in de steek laten. Zijn kamer, doordrongen met de gehate geur van vetiver, bevindt zich op pagina 10 aan het eind van een angstaanjagend steile trap en slaat in al zijn enge beklemming op hol. Dan zien we de jongen van bovenaf in zijn bed liggen, verloren in een vijandig universum zonder houvast. De andere kant van deze dubbele pagina laat op specifieke wijze een contrasterend element naar voren komen zoals Proust die graag op zijn manier schetst. De volgende morgen gaat namelijk het raam open boven "de naakte zee" en de hele ruimte wordt dan gevuld met wind en wolken, rechtstreeks en ook in de ramen gespiegeld. Zee en land vermengen zich zoals in de schilderijen van Elstir en deze esthetische ervaring brengt redding. Heuet profiteert van de ruimte die de tekenaar ter beschikking staat, maar hij doet dit door tegenstellingen uit te werken (en niet door bijvoorbeeld een doolhof te creëren), en daarmee treedt hij resoluut in het voetspoor van de modernisten.

Een ander voorbeeld waar Heuet Proust imiteert treft men aan in het intermediale spel met de schilderkunst. Hij beeldt het portret van Zephora door Botticelli, waar de verliefde Swann zijn Odette in ziet, natuurgetrouw af en introduceert ook andere doeken in huize Swann; tegenover de striptekeningen fascineren deze 'realistische' schilderijen als echter dan echt, en dit geeft op wel heel bijzondere wijze een invulling aan het fetisjisme van Swann.

Liefde en kunst komen ook nog op andere manieren bij elkaar in het verhaal van Swann. Daarbij speelt vooral de sonate van de componist Vinteuil een belangrijke rol als "volkslied" van de liefdesrelatie met Odette. Een dubbele pagina 18-19 biedt alle ruimte om de muziek visueel weer te geven. Het resultaat is meervoudig gelaagd: tekstcitaten, beelden van de luisterende Swann en een achtergrond met een meer in de bergen alsmede een rozentuin met drie verlichte ramen daarachter, vormen een collage van boven en tussen elkaar geprojecteerde lagen. Aan de bovenkant van dat landschap hangen linten met muzieknoden erop die zweven als een bruidssluier. Nog verder daarboven bevinden zich de twee

muziekinstrumenten (viool en piano). Aan twee zijden gaan de muziekbalken even over het kader heen en zorgen zo voor een soort continuïteit die harmonieert met de aandacht van Proust voor esthetische fluïditeit welke ook het levende water van het meer weergeeft. De artistieke synesthesie die hier oplicht verwijst naar het belang van dit motief in de *Recherche*, nauw verbonden met de autonomie van het kunstwerk.

Ook in de episode rond de “catleyas” gaat het om de visualisatie van de gevoelens van Swann in een soort vreugde-explosie na een eerste periode van angst om Odette te verliezen (33). Een suggestieve passage gaat vooraf aan meer expliciete liefdesbetuigingen tijdens hun tocht per rijtuig door Parijs (waar men Emma Bovary op de achtergrond vermoedt). Het erotische gehalte van die beelden is nogal mager en het lijkt alsof de kunstenaar op zijn eigen manier hier wat aan heeft willen doen. Hij neemt eerst uitgebreid zijn toevlucht tot schetsen van Watteau waar Proust ook zijdelings gewag van maakt als hij ze vergelijkt met de uitdrukkingen op het gezicht van Odette wanneer ze lacht. Als uitdrukking van veranderlijkheid is deze visualisatie zeker interessant. Maar het beeld dat heel kenmerkend voor Heuet is en dat de serie afsluit beslaat vervolgens bijna de hele pagina 37. Odette ligt languit op de divan met rondom hoge boekenkasten vanwaar Swann op haar neerkijkt. Het is volstrekt duidelijk dat zij geen ‘boekenvrouw’ is, maar wel volledig een ‘vrouw uit een boek’. “À suivre” sluit dan de tekst van dit album af waar echter de voornaamste semantische keten eindigt met een laatste plaatje van een catleya waaruit in stippellijn naar de toekomst gerichte geuren opstijgen.

De hechte structuur en de frequente verwijzingen naar de eigen kunstvorm geven een uitermate modernistisch air aan deze creatie uit het universum van de stripverhalen dat vaker als laboratorium voor postmoderne tendensen kan worden aangemerkt.

Dat tenslotte deze strips niet alleen door Proustkenners op prijs worden gesteld, maar dat ze ook een commercieel succes zijn geworden, is natuurlijk te danken aan de faam van de brontekst en aan het vakmanschap van Heuet, maar wellicht dat de hang van het publiek naar modernistische (of retro-moderne) artistieke de doorslag heeft gegeven.

## NOTEN

**[i]** Zie Houppermans, 1987.

**[ii]** Cf het beroemde portret van Proust door Jacques-Émile Blanche.

**[iii]** Ik verwijs naar de Pléiade-editie van de *Recherche* uitgegeven Jean-Yves Tadié (Parijs, 1987); vertalingen uit het Frans in dit artikel zijn van mijn hand.

**[iv]** De ‘petite madeleine’ is de geurige gangmaker bij uitstek op het pad der herinneringen; maar Proust schrijft Madeleine met hoofdletter en naast andere associaties kan men dan denken aan het bijbelse geuroffer van Marie- Madeleine (Maria Magdalena).

**[v]** Zie Houppermans, 2007.

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# The Return of the Underground Retail Cannabis Market?



*Attitudes of Dutch coffeeshop owners and cannabis users to the proposed 'cannabis ID' and the consequences they expect.*

## *ABSTRACT*

The sale of cannabis to persons aged 18 or older is permitted in the Netherlands under certain conditions in commercial establishments called coffeeshops. The present Dutch government has proposed that access to coffeeshops be restricted to persons holding a cannabis ID, a mandatory membership card known colloquially as a 'weed pass' (wietpas). Recent interviews with 66 Amsterdam coffeeshop owners reveal that they expect mainly detrimental effects from the proposed measure. In particular, they predict customer resistance to compulsory registration, the discriminatory exclusion of tourists and other non-members, and a resurgence of cannabis street dealing. Two surveys of cannabis users (in a local sample of 1214 Amsterdam coffeeshop customers and a nationwide sample of 1049 last-month users) confirmed that many, but not all, users would oppose registration. The majority of respondents intended to look for other suppliers or to grow their own marijuana if the cannabis ID becomes law. Surprisingly, about one in ten said they would stop smoking cannabis.

## *Introduction*

Wide differences exist between Western countries in terms of national cannabis policies (MacCoun & Reuter, 2002; Decorte et al., 2011; EMCDDA, 2010). In the Netherlands, cannabis is officially an illicit drug, but the retail cannabis market has uniquely been decriminalised by measures providing for the legal toleration of hashish and marijuana sales to consumers via commercial venues known as *coffeeshops* (Box I). Most coffeeshops are cafés, but some function more as take-away shops, where cannabis can be bought but not consumed.

### *Box I - Coffeeshops and Dutch cannabis legislation*

The first Dutch drug law dates from nearly a century ago: the Opium Act of 1919. The import and export of cannabis was added to the act in 1928; possession, manufacture and sale became offences in 1953. The statutory decriminalisation of cannabis took place in 1976. De facto decriminalisation had set in earlier, as local authorities began tolerating 'house dealers' in youth centres in the early 1970s. Experiments with this approach were formalised in the revised Opium Act of 1976. It distinguishes between Schedule I drugs (such as heroin and cocaine), seen as posing an 'unacceptable' risk, and Schedule II substances (mainly cannabis products), which carry lower official penalties.

The legal basis for coffeeshops had been laid by the Dutch government when it decriminalised cannabis in 1976. Latitude was created for sales of small amounts of cannabis to consumers (though selling remained officially illegal), on the crucial condition that the sale of cannabis be strictly separated from markets for hard drugs. Coffeeshops were one result of the deriminalisation process, albeit not exactly what policymakers had envisaged. A series of later court decisions effectively subsumed coffeeshops under existing legislation.

Since the 1960s, the Dutch retail market for cannabis has gone through different stages, originating in the sale of cannabis in underground markets. During the 1970s, sales shifted to tolerated 'house dealers' in youth clubs and nightspots, and coffeeshops took over the market in the 1980s (Jansen, 1991; Korf, 2002). The number of coffeeshops expanded dramatically during the 1980s, peaking in the mid-1990s at about 1,500 throughout the country (Bieleman & Goeree, 2001). A new phase then ensued, and the number began to diminish. Although coffeeshops must meet nationally defined criteria (Box II), policy modifications in 1996 gave local governments the right to decide whether or not to authorise coffeeshops within their jurisdictions; they may now close down or ban coffeeshops, even if these do not violate national criteria. In the wake of that

policy change, many municipalities decided to close down all existing coffeeshops or limit their number. By 1999, the number of coffeeshops in the country had almost halved to 846. The downward trend continued, and the most recent national figures reported 666 coffeeshops by the end of 2009; 340 (77.1%) of the then 441 municipalities had decided not to allow any coffeeshops at all (Bieleman & Nijkamp, 2010).

### *Box II - National guidelines for coffeeshops*

Official national Guidelines for Investigation and Prosecution came into force in 1979. They stipulated that the retail sale of cannabis to consumers may be tolerated, provided that certain criteria were met: no advertising, no hard drugs, no nuisance and no young clientele (later defined in 1996 as under age 18). More recently, additional criteria were formulated: no large quantities (maximum of 5 grams of cannabis per client per transaction and per day; maximum of 500 grams of cannabis stock in coffeeshop at any one time); and no alcohol served on premises.

The newest criterion specifies minimum distances between coffeeshops and secondary schools. According to most current plans being discussed by the government, a nationwide minimum distance of 350 meters would be set, but the Parliament is still deliberating on this and other deterrent measures.

In recent years, the Dutch political agenda on coffeeshop policy has predominantly focused on issues involving the wholesale supply chains to coffeeshops (the 'back door problem'; Korf, 2011) and on the pull exercised by coffeeshops in border areas on customers from neighbouring countries, which is a source of considerable nuisance. In an attempt to combat the latter problem, the national government has proposed mandatory club membership for coffeeshop customers. This would make all coffeeshops into private clubs accessible only to residents of the Netherlands aged 18 or older who have been issued a cannabis ID, a membership card meanwhile colloquially known as the 'weed pass'. Persons wishing to patronise coffeeshops must register to do so, and this is intended to have a strong deterrent effect on cannabis users living in neighbouring countries (notably Germany, Belgium and France). Perhaps the most crucial question in terms of legal feasibility is whether the Netherlands would be entitled under EU treaties to exclude other EU citizens in such a way.

The future will tell whether and how the cannabis ID will be introduced. If that

should indeed happen, though, what consequences could then be expected for the retail cannabis market? The purpose of this article is to gauge the breadth of support for the cannabis ID among the immediate stakeholders in that market and to assess the potential consequences of the measure.

### *Amsterdam coffeeshop proprietors and their opinions on the cannabis ID*

One third of all Dutch coffeeshops are located in Amsterdam, though only 5% of the country's population lives there. About half of the 222 Amsterdam coffeeshops are found in the city centre, and many attract a substantial number of tourists. Unlike the situation in border towns, the foreign visitors do not come to Amsterdam primarily for coffeeshops. Most stay in the city for several days at least, and coffeeshop customers cause little or no nuisance. Coffeeshops outside the city centre cater mainly to local residents.

In view of the large number of coffeeshops in Amsterdam, whether or not frequented by tourists, the introduction of a cannabis ID could have relatively drastic consequences for such businesses. In the spring of 2011, we therefore conducted face-to-face interviews with 66 coffeeshop owners (or their managers). Their coffeeshops were found all over the city, both in the inner city and in more outlying districts; the sample reliably reflected the variation in Amsterdam coffeeshops in terms of size, number of customers and customer profiles.

Almost nine in ten of the interviewed owners expected the introduction of IDs to have exclusively negative consequences. The rest likewise foresaw mainly detrimental effects but did cite some advantages, such as guaranteed custom. 'Your regular customers will have to register at your coffeeshop and will be allowed to buy their grass or hash only from you. That ensures customer loyalty.' Virtually all respondents listed a range of drawbacks to the proposed system, falling roughly into three categories:

#### *1. The registration and privacy problem*

To many coffeeshop owners, it was patently self-evident that the registration system would spark disquiet amongst customers. 'People don't want to be registered for anything, let alone as potheads.' One proprietor with many doctors and lawyers in his clientele pointed to the detriment they might suffer if they were registered as cannabis users. 'Nobody needs to know how much and how often they smoke. Why would they?' A question many owners were asking is what would be done with the stored data. An additional drawback in this category is

the constriction of customers' freedom of choice if they can register for only one coffeeshop.

### *2. Exclusion of foreign tourists and other non-members*

Introduction of cannabis IDs would, according to proprietors, 'exclude tourists from participation', a prospect that caused considerable indignation. 'It's pure discrimination!' and 'Tourists can now buy safe, good-quality cannabis. Who in the hell would want to change that?' Since tourism is a mainstay of the broader Amsterdam economy, the measure might also deal a hard blow to the municipal coffers. Not only foreign tourists, but also shoppers and visiting relatives from other Dutch towns would be prohibited from buying cannabis in Amsterdam. People who only smoke cannabis occasionally would also be stigmatised; even if you only smoke once a year, you would still have to register as a pot smoker.

### *3. Revival of street dealing*

If tourists are banned from coffeeshops, proprietors said, the lively cannabis street trade of decades ago will resurface. Dutch customers who oppose registration will also seek their sustenance elsewhere, and that could well be from street dealers. The illegal market would generate crime and nuisance. Some also foresaw an increase in under-the-counter sales. 'Your customers will still be coming in to buy their joints from you, whether you're a coffeeshop, a pub or a snack bar.' A final objection was an expected black-market trade in cannabis IDs, which would provide tourists and minors with a good alternative means of procuring their drugs.

### *Two surveys of cannabis users*

Directly after our interviews with the coffeeshop owners in the spring of 2011, we conducted a site survey of customers in 59 Amsterdam coffeeshops, similarly dispersed across the city. The 1214 respondents did not constitute a representative sample of all coffeeshop customers in the city. In our recruitment strategy, the more frequent customers had a much higher probability of being interviewed than occasional customers. The sample did provide a reasonably reliable picture of the clientele present in coffeeshops on peak days and at peak hours. By concentrating on peak days (Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays) and peak hours (3 to 9 pm), we compensated somewhat for the overrepresentation of frequent or daily customers in the sample. The survey was further confined to customers who spoke sufficient Dutch, which in practice mainly excluded foreign tourists.

Subsequently, from May to mid-July 2011, we conducted a nationwide online survey entitled Sex & Drugs via the website of BNN, a Dutch public broadcasting organisation that targets mainly adolescents and young adults. A total of 3257 persons completed the questionnaire, of whom 1049 had smoked cannabis in the past month (current users). Questions on the cannabis ID were submitted to the latter group only.

The minimum age for entering a coffeeshop is 18. In our Amsterdam coffeeshop survey, the average age in the sample was 32.4, with a peak in the 25-34 age category. In the online survey, not confined to coffeeshop customers, the average age of the current cannabis users was distinctly lower (23.4), peaking in the 18-24 category (figure 1).

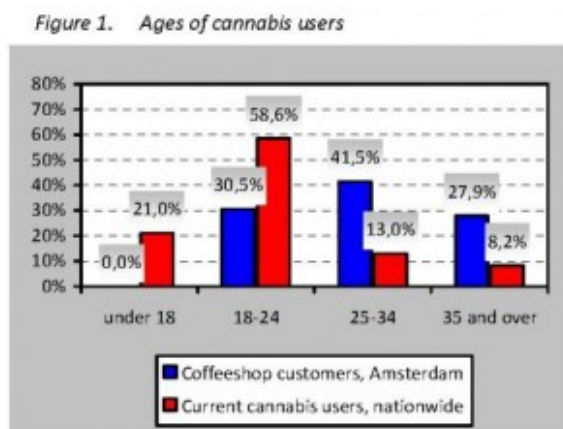


Figure 1 - Ages of Cannabis Users

The samples also differed in gender terms. A small minority of respondents in the coffeeshop survey were female (13.6%), whilst more than half (52.5%) of the current cannabis users nationwide were female. **[i]**

The Amsterdam coffeeshop customers we polled were also far more likely than the online respondents to be daily or near-daily cannabis users (figure 2).

Figure 2. Last month cannabis users

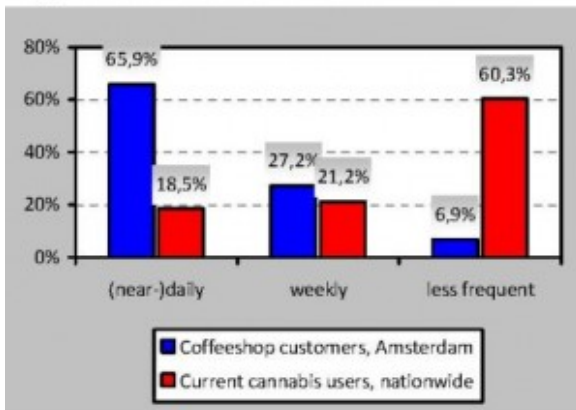


Figure 2. Last Month Cannabis Users

### Willingness to register for the cannabis ID

Both in the interviews with Amsterdam coffeeshop customers and in the online nationwide survey, we asked two questions about the proposed cannabis ID. The first was: ‘Imagine that a mandatory cannabis ID has just been introduced. You would then get registered at one coffeeshop and you would only be allowed into that coffeeshop. What would you think about that?’ Respondents could choose from three answer options (see table 1).

Table 1. Attitudes to mandatory registration for the cannabis ID

|  | Coffeeshop customers Amsterdam | Current cannabis users nationwide |
|--|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| I'd register and get a cannabis ID from a coffeeshop of my choice.     | 6.3%                           | 5.2%                              |
| I'd only register if the ID would allow access to several coffeeshops. | 10.3%                          | 20.9%                             |
| I'm against registration.  | 83.4%                          | 73.9%                             |
| Total  | 100%                           | 100%                              |

Table 1. Attitudes to Mandatory Registration for the Cannabis ID

Despite the large differences between the two surveys in terms of age, gender distribution and frequency of cannabis use, only a tiny minority in each survey indicated a willingness to register and obtain a cannabis ID from the coffeeshop of their choice. Slightly more respondents said they would register if the cannabis ID gave access to several coffeeshops of their choice. Large majorities came out against registration in the online survey and, still more strongly, in the Amsterdam customers' survey. **[ii]**

## Perceived consequences of the cannabis ID

We next asked both samples: 'Suppose that the cannabis ID were absolutely restricted to a single coffeeshop. What would you do then?' Out of eight answer options, respondents could choose the one that suited them best (see table 2).

Table 2. - Suppose that the cannabis ID were absolutely restricted to a single coffeeshop. What would you do then?

Table 2. 'Suppose that the cannabis ID were absolutely restricted to a single coffeeshop. What would you do then?'

|  | Coffeeshop customers Amsterdam | Current cannabis users nationwide |
|--|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Register at my regular coffeeshop                          | 24.6%                          | 28.8%                             |
| Register at a different coffeeshop                         | 7.0%                           | 1.7%                              |
| Refuse the ID and get others to buy for me at a coffeeshop | 7.9%                           | 13.9%                             |
| Refuse the ID and grow my own                              | 13.5%                          | 7.9%                              |
| Refuse the ID and buy from a cannabis grower               | 9.9%                           | 10.8%                             |
| Refuse the ID and buy from a non-coffeeshop dealer         | 21.0%                          | 18.2%                             |
| Refuse the ID and have cannabis delivered                  | 5.2%                           | 6.6%                              |
| Refuse the ID and stop smoking                             | 11.0%                          | 12.0%                             |
| Total  | 100%                           | 100%                              |

Table 2. Cannabis ID restricted to a single Coffeeshop

Notwithstanding small variations between the surveys on various answers, similar patterns emerged (figure 3).**[iii]**

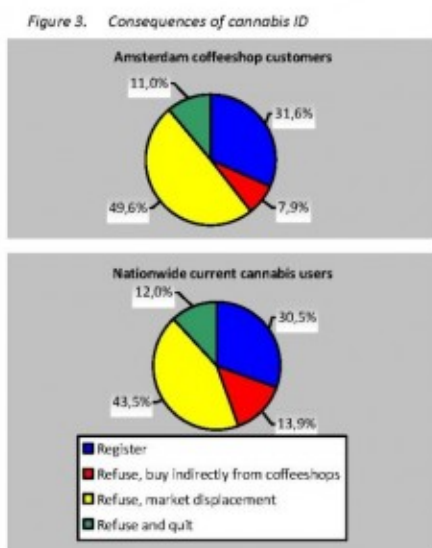


Figure 3. Consequences of



## Cannabis ID

The proportion that would now register despite earlier objections grew to just under one third, most of whom would opt for their regular coffeeshop. In contrast to them, a markedly smaller but noteworthy proportion (11%-12%) reported they would shun the ID and stop smoking cannabis should they be obliged to register with and patronise a single coffeeshop only.

The majority reported that they would refuse the cannabis ID and then obtain their cannabis from other sources outside the coffeeshops. Three types of intentions were distinguishable:

*Delegating.* These respondents would get someone else to go to the coffeeshop for them. Current cannabis users in the nationwide survey were about twice as likely to choose this 'indirect supply from coffeeshops' option as compared to the Amsterdam coffeeshop customers. The difference could be traced mainly to the non-daily users.

*Market displacement towards home growing.* Nearly one quarter of the Amsterdam coffeeshop customers and one fifth of the current users nationwide said they would grow their own marijuana or buy it from a grower.

*Market displacement towards other drug dealers.* Over one quarter of respondents in both surveys said they would buy marijuana or hashish in a setting other than coffeeshops (e.g. street settings), from a different source (e.g. a home-based dealer), or through home delivery.

### *Conclusions and discussion*

Amsterdam coffeeshop owners foresee almost no advantages from the introduction of the proposed cannabis ID. They predict that it will compromise the privacy of customers (many of whom are expected to shun registration); that it will impose a discriminatory ban on foreign tourists and other non-residents of the city, which could eventually also have a significant impact on the local economy; and that it will trigger a revival of street dealing in soft drugs, thus weakening the current separation of markets and making hard drugs more easily accessible to cannabis users.

The coffeeshop owners' prediction that many customers will resist the cannabis ID is confirmed by our survey of Amsterdam coffeeshop customers. When informed about the proposed ID, the vast majority of customers spontaneously answered that they would oppose registering to qualify for an ID, as did a substantial majority of current cannabis users throughout the country. Resistance slackened somewhat when respondents were presented with a strict scenario of compulsory registration; almost one in three said they would then register after all. The majority of refusers would opt for growing their own marijuana or buying directly from a cannabis grower, or for purchasing cannabis through other channels than coffeeshops, such as drugs delivery services, home-based dealers or street dealers. Some refusers would get others to go to coffeeshops for them, thus still indirectly patronising the coffeeshops.

Notably, over ten per cent of respondents said they would stop smoking cannabis if the ID becomes law. Coffeeshop owners did not appear to expect any such development, and it is questionable whether those who say they would quit would actually do so. After all, intention is no guarantee for real behavioural change (Ajzen, 1985; Bamberg et al., 2003; Bandura, 1986; De Vries et al., 1998; Prochaska & DiClemente, 1982). Similar uncertainty applies to the prediction – made by coffeeshop owners, customers and surveyed current users alike – that the cannabis supply would shift to the streets and other locations and to home grow.

A limitation to this study is that the surveys were based on non-normative convenience samples. Some caution is therefore warranted as to the generalisability of the reported percentages. That said, there were striking similarities between the two samples both in attitudes to mandatory registration and in the perceived consequences of the cannabis ID, despite differences between the surveys in terms of method (site versus online survey), geographical scope (Amsterdam versus nationwide) and respondent characteristics (age, gender, frequency of cannabis use). Displacement of the retail cannabis market to non-coffeeshop settings, as indicated by both surveys, therefore seems a very real possibility, although it is unclear to what extent and in what ways that might happen.

All in all, our surveys of cannabis users provide empirical evidence in support of fears, as expressed by opponents of the cannabis ID, that it will lead to a resurgence of the underground retail cannabis market and the accompanying

crime and nuisance. Proponents of the ID will undoubtedly be keen to argue in the political debate that introducing the ID will help curb the use of cannabis.

## Notes

**[i]** Women were somewhat overrepresented in the total *Sex & Drugs* sample (55.1% female versus 43.6% male). Males in that sample were slightly more likely to have consumed cannabis in the past month (34.3% versus 30.9%,  $p < .05$ ).

**[ii]** Some of the current cannabis users in the nationwide online survey were under 18 and hence too young to enter a coffeeshop. Amongst respondents 18 and older, the percentages were similar to those in the overall sample (6.0% and 22.7% would register and 71.8% would refuse; percentages for under-18s were 2.3%, 14.8% and 82.9%).

**[iii]** Confining ourselves to the nationwide respondents aged 18 or older, virtually the same pattern emerges as in the overall sample: 32.1% would register, 12.9% would refuse and get others to buy for them in a coffeeshop, 43.5% would opt for a non-coffeeshop supplier (market displacement) and 11.5% would refuse and give up smoking (percentages for under-18s were 25.0%, 18.1%, 43.1% en 13.9%).

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*Willem Adriaan Bongger (1876-1940) was one of the founding fathers of Dutch criminology and the first professor of sociology and criminology in the Netherlands. He argued that crime is social in origin and is causally linked to economic and social conditions.*

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## **ISSA Proceedings 2014 ~ Preface**

The *Eighth Conference of the International Society for the Study of Argumentation* (ISSA), held in Amsterdam from 1 July to 4 July 2014, drew again more submissions for presentations than any ISSA Conference before. After a strict selection procedure, 320 scholars were invited to present their papers at the Conference. In addition, the Conference attracted some 200 interested colleagues and students who attended the presentations and took part in the discussions.

The 2014 ISSA Conference was, like previous ones, an international meeting place for argumentation scholars from a great variety of academic backgrounds and traditions, representing a wide range of academic disciplines and approaches: (speech) communication, logic (formal and informal), rhetoric

(classical and modern), philosophy, linguistics, (critical) discourse analysis, pragmatics, law, political science, psychology, education, religious studies, media studies and artificial intelligence.

During the conference, papers were presented on academic argumentation, analogy argumentation, argument and computation, argument schemes, argumentation and cognition, argumentation and criticism, argumentation and culture, argumentation and epistemology, argumentation and ethics, argumentation and finance, argumentation and media, argumentation and norms, argumentation and probability, argumentation and religion, argumentation and speech acts, argumentation and style, argumentation in the public sphere, argumentation structures, argumentative strategies, critical discourse analysis, critical thinking, debate, definitions, education and learning, empirical research, ethos and pathos, fallacies, historical backgrounds, interpersonal argument, legal argumentation, medical argumentation, multimodal argumentation, narrative argument, political argumentation, political argumentation and national transitions, political discourse, practical argument, the Perelman approach, the Toulmin approach, theoretical issues and visual argumentation. In the opinion of the editors, the Proceedings of the Eighth ISSA Conference reflect the current richness of the discipline.

The Proceedings of the Conference are published on CD ROM by Rozenberg Publishers. For the reader's convenience, in the Proceedings the papers are arranged in the alphabetical order of the authors' surnames.

The four ISSA board members, Bart Garssen, David Godden, Gordon Mitchell and Francisca Snoeck Henkemans served as editors of the Proceedings. The editors were helped in their reviewing by members of the Department of Speech Communication of the University of Amsterdam. In addition, we received invaluable assistance in preparing the Proceedings from our research assistant Eugen Popa. We thank him very much for his help in getting the manuscripts ready for publication. Last but not least, we would like to thank our publisher Auke van der Berg for the production of these Proceedings.

For their financial support of the conference, the editors would like to express their gratitude to the Dutch-Belgian Speech Communication Association (VIOT), the City of Amsterdam, Springer Academic Publishers, John Benjamins Publishers, the International Learned Institute for Argumentation Studies (ILIAS), and the

Scientific International Centre for Scholarship in Argumentation Theory (Sic Sat).  
20 November 2014

Bart Garssen, ILIAS & University of Amsterdam

David Godden, Old Dominion University

Gordon Mitchell, University of Pittsburgh

Francisca Snoeck Henkemans, ILIAS & University of Amsterdam

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# **ISSA Proceedings 2014 - Toward Polylogical Analysis Of Argumentation: Disagreement Space In The Public Controversy About Fracking**

*Abstract:* This paper offers a new way to make sense of disagreement expansion from a polylogical perspective by incorporating various places (venues), players (parties), and positions (standpoints) into the analysis. The concepts build on prior implicit ideas about disagreement space by suggesting how to more fully account for argumentative context, and its construction, in large-scale complex controversies.

*Keywords:* argumentation, controversy, deliberation, disagreement space, fracking, polylogue.

## *1. Introduction*

Deliberation in the contemporary globalized, mediated environment presents an opportunity for reflecting on method in argument analysis. As we have argued before (Lewiński & Aakhus, 2014), one key conceptual issue is this: while multi-party and multi-position argumentation (*polylogue*) is prevalent, the analytic apparatus in argumentation studies tends toward dialectical analysis of dyadic disagreements. Such an analysis is posited on a set of often tacit assumptions

about argumentation: it typically takes place in a fixed and definable setting where two parties (proponent vs. opponent) exchange reasons and criticisms in order to justify (or refute) some standpoint over which they disagree. Argumentation is thus presumed to be a communicative activity which expands along the lines of a disagreement space co-constructed by the two parties through their argument-relevant speech acts (see Jackson, 1992; van Eemeren et al., 1993, pp. 95ff.).**[i]**

In this paper, we propose how to make sense of disagreement expansion from a polylogical perspective by incorporating various *places* (venues), *players* (parties), and *positions* (standpoints) into the analysis. We use a case about transporting oil by train drawn from the broader controversy about extraction of shale gas and oil resources using hydraulic fracturing (“fracking”), to which various players (e.g., companies, federal regulators, local communities, environmentalists, professional associations) contribute their conflicting views and arguments. In this way, the controversy develops as a polylogue, which is discourse (*logos*) among many (*poly*), that is, a dia-logue more complex than simple dialogue (discourse between two) typically used to model and analyze argumentation (Lewiński, 2014). The paper contributes to argumentation theory by developing polylogical analysis, which is important for advancing understanding of large-scale, multi-party argumentation (Aakhus & Lewiński, 2011).

## *2. Argumentation analysis of public controversies over energy production*

To see how the dyadic assumptions about argumentation hide the polylogical character of disagreement expansion in public controversies, we consider some analyses of argumentation over energy production, as it is a constant source of contemporary public controversy. The economic, social, political, and environmental impacts of various technologies (coal, natural gas, oil, nuclear power, hydropower, wind and solar energy, etc.) are hotly debated between all the parties involved: from producers, distributors, state regulators, environmental groups, consumers, to local communities affected by energy production.

A good example of such a controversy extensively analyzed with the tools of argumentation theory is Royal Dutch Shell’s involvement in the oil production in Nigeria in the 1990’s (van Eemeren, 2010, Ch. 6; van Eemeren & Houtlosser, 1999, 2002; Johnson, 2002; Leff, 2006; Tindale, 1999, Ch. 5). Among the key issues of this public debate was Shell’s cozy relationship with the Nigerian military regime, its lack of concern for the environment and local communities

and, in particular, its alleged complicity in the death of Ken Saro-Wiwa, a prominent Nigerian dissident and environmental activist. Shell decided to manage these issues by publishing an advertorial “Clear thinking in troubled times” in major world newspapers in November 1995 – which served as the basis for analyses mentioned above.

In their pragma-dialectical analysis, van Eemeren & Houtlosser clearly identify the complexities of the argumentative situation in this case. Shell addresses “the general public” with an attempt to refute the accusations leveled against the company by campaigners such as Greenpeace. Therefore: “Dialectically speaking we have here two opposing parties – Shell and the campaigners – and a third party – the public – that is supposedly neutral” (2002, p. 148). Later, using an updated terminology, van Eemeren argues that the skeptical “general public” is Shell’s *primary audience* accessed via an ostensible argument with the oppositional *secondary audience*, the campaigners. Indeed, careful management of disagreement with the two is “a crucial element in Shell’s strategic maneuvering at the confrontation stage” (van Eemeren, 2010, p. 169). This is achieved by “dissociating the general public [...] from the campaigners who reacted against Shell’s involvement in Nigeria. [...] This strategic separation between the public and the campaigners has the advantage to Shell that the company can treat the public as a possible ally” (pp. 169-170).

The pragma-dialectical study meticulously analyzes the textual and contextual elements in Shell’s advertorial, and precisely reconstructs the structure of its arguments. Yet, despite openly conceding there are (at least) three parties to the controversy, and that this fact is one of the main vehicles for Shell’s strategic maneuvering, pragma-dialectics still relies on a dyadic model of communication. For instance, in the *dialectical profiles* of the reconstructed discussion between Shell and its opponents, the primary audience – “the general public” – merges with the secondary audience – “the campaigners” – into a single category of “opponents”, presumably to clear room for a dyadic dialectical analysis (van Eemeren, 2010, pp. 171-173). We see this as a blind spot, which significantly weakens the purported goal of the entire analysis: the “determining of the strategic function of argumentative moves” in this controversy (van Eemeren, 2010, Ch. 6; see Lewiński & Aakhus, 2014).

What is evident in Shell’s advertorial is argumentative dynamics that goes beyond a simple dyadic clash between a proponent and an opponent. There are, instead,



numerous distinct groups which might oppose, doubt, or be concerned with Shell's position. Tindale makes this clear in his analysis of the case: Shell "can expect a wide audience ranging from the hostile to the sympathetic to the indifferent" (1999, p. 127). While "the indifferent" largely correspond to the neutral general public in van Eemeren's analysis and "the hostile" are "the campaigners", Tindale discusses yet another "subgroup of principal interest" for Shell's argument: the "sympathetic, but concerned" "members of the business community, particularly investors in the company, who have an economic interest in the issue" (1999, p. 127). Interestingly, for Tindale, Shell's argumentation is heavily driven by the appeal to "the business component of its audience", entirely left out from van Eemeren's study: "A bottom-line position that permeates the discourse is that Shell has no expectation of pulling out from Nigeria. The company's future economic success in the region rests in part on convincing investors of this." (1999, p. 128).**[ii]**

With this rhetorically-based analysis, we arrive at an understanding of a disagreement where at least four parties play a part: Shell, anti-Shell campaigners, Shell's concerned investors, and the general international public. This, arguably, is still a simplification. One can easily see Shell's competitors in the region, the Nigerian government, potential litigants (Saro-Wiwa's family), affected communities in Nigeria, and legal authorities in Nigeria and Holland (Shell's headquarters) as other possible stakeholders/players/parties in this very controversy.**[iii]** If Shell's text indeed "has been constructed with care and deliberation" (Tindale, 1999, p. 127), then we can reasonably expect that such (actual or potential) sources of doubt and disagreement have been carefully and deliberately managed in this one-page message.

The analyses of energy production controversies based on dyadic assumptions thus hide important complexities of argumentation as it happens in public controversies. Most notably, there are many players claiming a stake in the production process and its consequences, which leads to many positions being advanced and refuted in many places where energy production is carried out and discussed. If we want to analyze and evaluate such a controversy for what it is - a multi-party dispute, that is, multi-party argumentative interaction - we need a model of such an interaction. We call this model a *polylogue*. If the aim of argument analysis is only to assess the rationality of a single argument or evaluate the maneuvers of a particular arguer, then dyadic assumptions might

suffice. However, public controversies are dynamic, multi-party activities that unfold over time in a variety of places. Such controversies often take on a particular form of life that is in turn constitutive of the content, direction, and outcomes of the very matters and activity that gave rise to the controversy in the first place (e.g. Schön & Rein, 1994). Understanding the logic of an argument or the reasonableness of a particular move by an actor is necessary but wholly insufficient for establishing an argumentative analysis of the controversy. What is needed is an argumentative understanding of the logic of the controversy, which can be developed through analysis of the polylogical expansion of disagreement.

### 3. *Reconstructing argumentation as polylogical expansion of disagreement*

#### 3.1 *Public controversies as polylogues*

Some basic assumptions of argumentation theory are still greatly shaped by the way legal proceedings are conducted - a lasting influence that began with Aristotle and was perpetuated in the work of Toulmin (1958) and Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca (1969). Argumentation happens in a fixed venue (court of law), has pre-defined rules and a cast of characters, and amounts to a dyadic clash of two contradictory positions (guilty vs. innocent in a criminal trial) sustained by two confronting parties (accuser vs. accused). The analysis of Shell's advertorial using the pragma-dialectical model is a good example of this approach.

We argue that public controversies such as oil production and transportation quite clearly break these assumptions. The venues are constantly shifting and are strategically selected, designed, and argued about; players are numerous and fluctuating; and positions do not amount to a dyadic contradiction but rather involve a set of multiple contrary standpoints. In this way they become polylogues, that is, dialogues other than simple dialogues, or dyadic interactions. This, in itself, is unremarkable, given that most public interactions are in fact multilateral. What is remarkable, though, is that argumentation theory applies its dyadic, legally-inspired models to capture the strategic shape and rational quality of such polylogues.

Our main argument is that such complex situations - quite typical for public controversies - cannot be easily "fit into" the simple dialectical framework consisting of an opponent facing a proponent. As we argued before (Lewiński & Aakhus, 2014), it is possible for some localized episodes of argumentative exchanges, but it does not add up to an adequate account of the entire multi-party dispute. Similarly, the somewhat static and asymmetric rhetorical account of an *arguer qua speaker* facing (possibly multiple) *audience(s)* does not do full justice

to the interactive discursive dynamics of an ongoing public dispute of this sort (Lewiński & Aakhus, 2014).

### 3.2 *Activity breakdown and the emergence of argumentation*

A breach or breakdown in human activity provides an important point of entry for argumentation analysis as suggested in the pragmatic theory of argument advanced by Jackson and Jacobs (e.g. Jacobs, 1989). Argumentation from their perspective is not a standalone activity or practice but is woven into the very tapestry of communication. Central to their theory is that argument functions as repair in human activities - that is, argument arises because it functions as a method for repairing the content or process of some ongoing activity. The activity in which people engage offers the natural grounds for raising doubts, objections, and disagreement as well as for proof and justification (e.g. Jackson & Jacobs, 1981). Moreover, the substance and direction of any human activity is subject to the capacity of participants, and any third-parties or systems, to jointly manage the shape of the disagreement space through the relevant or digressive design of their argumentative moves (Jacobs & Jackson, 2006). While Jackson and Jacobs develop their account within settings of interpersonal argumentation, we find that the insight is remarkably scalable to any human activity (e.g. Aakhus, 2013).

Our point of entry into our current reflection on method for polylogical analysis is a news story published in the *New York Times* on January 25, 2014 entitled "Accidents surge as oil industry takes the train" (Krauss & Mouawad, 2014). Unlike Shell's advertorial, this is not a dramatic and carefully crafted piece of rhetoric but instead a news story reporting on a turning point event. By selecting this text, we move away from focusing on an exceptional speech or a speaker towards a text that openly reflects on the social, political, and technical infrastructure that enables large-scale coordinated human activity. This is important for polylogical analysis, which seeks to articulate not only the arguments made but the argumentative activity and the function of arguments and argumentation in human activities. Since the text used here reports a breach or breakdown in human activity, it provides the analyst a form of "infrastructural inversion" where what is otherwise taken-for-granted in human activity as normal and unnoticed is exposed and made temporarily strange and ready for examination (see Bowker & Star, 1999). Among other important methodological concerns for analyzing argument, infrastructural inversion is a method for a pragmatic analysis such as advocated by Jackson and Jacobs. In particular, it

draws analytic attention to making visible how argumentative activity is embedded within broad human activities and how argumentation shapes and is shaped by the conduct of human activity.

### 3.3 *Exploding trains*

Fracking (or: hydraulic fracturing) is a method of extracting natural gas and oil (the so called 'shale' gas and oil) from deep layers of 'shale' rock. It consists of an older technology and a new technology. The older technology involves fracturing rock by injecting high-pressurized liquids (water with added chemicals and sand) and thereby releasing the gas and oil trapped there. The newer technology involves drilling that can maneuver in nearly any direction rather than simple vertical drilling of prior eras. This method has been recently used on a massive scale in the USA, increasing its oil production by 50% (from 2008 to 2013). This has turned the USA into one of the biggest gas and oil producers in the world and changed the availability of petroleum resources for consumption around the world. Because of this, the fracking business has been hailed as the chief agent of the USA's energy security, a job creator, and provider of cheap energy to American industry and consumers. Yet concerns remain. There are environmental hazards (documented cases of water pollution, methane emissions, micro-earthquakes, etc.), questions about the actual economic impact on local communities, and shifts in energy policy and investment away from non-carbon based energy sources. Consequently, there is an ongoing public controversy over fracking's economic, environmental, social, and political impact that stretches from local communities around extraction sites to USA's oil-driven global politics.

An important but overlooked aspect of shale oil and gas production is its transportation. Fracking takes place in new areas otherwise disconnected from traditional oil and gas production pipeline infrastructure. Hence a massive surge in the amount of oil shipped by rail: from 9,500 carloads in 2008 to 400,000 in 2013 (4,200% more). Not unexpectedly, rail supplies can hardly keep up with the increasing demand for efficient and safe large-scale transportation. Tragic accidents occur, such as the explosion of a train in Quebec, Canada, in July 2013 which killed 47 people. In 2013 alone, there were more spills than in the entire 1975-2012 period (Krauss & Mouawad, 2014). One of such major spills occurred in the town of Casselton, North Dakota, on December 30, 2013 where a train carrying crude oil crashed into a derailed grain train causing a major fire and oil spill. This has been a widely reported accident that further fueled the public

debate about the safety of shale oil production and transportation.

Shale gas and oil production is a massive human undertaking made up of an interconnected web of activities coordinated through communication across time and space through many kinds of venues. The text of the news story thus opens up the landscape of the controversy and makes visible many parties and their beliefs and opinions about how the transportation of shale oil should be conducted. It is these beliefs and opinions that get drawn out and into the explicit discourse about transporting oil. The argumentative activities through which disagreement space around human activity is expanded and contracted can be understood by examining its possible venues, parties to the disagreement, and contended positions.

#### 4. *Analysis*

##### 4.1 *Places*

The news account reveals many places, or venues, where disagreement about the transportation of shale oil is managed. The news story provides some insight into and appreciation of a labyrinth of venues that are connected in more-or-less relevant ways around the matter of transporting shale oil.

There are five venues that stand out in the account. First, there is reference to informal public encounters, such as Kerry's Kitchen "where residents gather for gossip and comfort food especially the caramel rolls baked fresh every morning." **[iv]** Second, there is reference to formal closed 'disciplinary' meeting between principal actors in shale oil transportation: "Railroad executives, meeting with the transportation secretary and federal regulators recently, pledged to look for ways to make oil convoys safer - including slowing down the trains or rerouting them from heavily populated areas." Third, there is reference to formal private meeting where 'negotiations' between the industry representatives and regulators take place: "After the recent meeting with regulators, the American Petroleum Institute pledged it would share its own test data about the oil, which they have said is proprietary." Fourth, there is reference to private, informal deliberation: "Adrian Kieffer, the assistant fire chief, rushed to the accident and spent nearly 12 hours there, finishing at 3 a.m. 'When I got home that night, my wife said let's sell our home and move,' he said." And, finally, there is the news story itself which points to a privately structured public media space for communication about the incident.

While it is not possible to offer an extensive analysis of these venues referred to in the news story, it is important to note that the juxtaposition of these venues in the account suggests that there is no one institution, field, sphere, or conversation that defines and contains the disagreement. Instead we begin to see a complex infrastructure of venues where those with a stake in the shale oil production and transportation engage each other. Each venue is a means for argumentation to repair the breakdown in the shale oil production and transportation caused by the explosion. Each venue suggests argumentative conduct aimed at the various doubts, differences, and disagreements brought to life by the derailment and explosion.

While conventional pragmatic analysis of argumentation has begun to take into account the rules of the settings where argumentation happens by considering the formal argumentative activity types characteristic of various institutions (e.g. legislative assemblies in political argumentation), conventional pragmatic analysis treats these as stable social structures to better understand the arguments and maneuvers of particular actors within the setting. By contrast, the news account offers an infrastructural inversion that draws into light the dynamic relationship of venues that is otherwise tacit, taken for granted, and even hidden from plain sight. From this vantage point, an analyst begins to see the varying ways disagreement expands through the creative struggle among the parties to pursue and place argumentation. There are concerns by industry and government over where best to handle the issues, whether through formal judicial proceedings or, as in the present case, a private disciplinary meeting among regulators and industry. This may illustrate a form of *venue shopping* where parties seek the most favorable place to handle a difference (e.g., Pralle, 2003). There are concerns by industry over the information available about oil and gas production and, in the present case, there may be a form of *venue entrepreneurship* where some participants seek to strategically alter some rules of engagement, such as when an industry representative worked with government to create a site where industry controls the dissemination of official industry information to stakeholders. Closer analysis of additional background may also reveal efforts at *venue creation* where parties seek to create an entirely new place to engage in argumentation. Thus, venues become part of the argumentation as parties seek to shape and discipline the pursuit and expansion of disagreement by selecting, altering, or creating venues for argumentation.

## 4.2 *Players*

The initial framing of the controversy in the *New York Times* news report is noticeably dyadic. The journalist is clearly trying to put in motion some simple adversary dialectics between oil “producers” and their “critics”: “In the race for profits and energy independence, critics say producers took shortcuts to get the oil to market as quickly as possible without weighing the hazards of train shipments.” Such two-sidedness has become a landmark of modern journalistic writing as a vehicle for impartiality and comprehensiveness (Cramer, 2011).

In its entirety, however, the news story reveals a complex network of distinct players and their multilateral, rather than bilateral, relations: local residents (coffee shop owner, firefighters), North Dakota state authorities (state governor), federal “safety officials” (National Transportation Safety Board, NTSB chair) and “regulators” (Federal Railroad Administration, Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration, Department of Transportation, DoT Secretary), third-parties (former administrator of the PHMSA, rail transport consultant), and industry groups (Association of American Railroads, The Railway Supply Institute, American Petroleum Institute). At a certain level of abstraction, one can of course extract some basic disagreement between the pro-side (producers) and the contra-side (critics). This, however, is not a level interesting to an argument analyst who wants to understand the “logic” behind taking up particular lines of disagreement, design of arguments and criticisms, as well as constraints and affordances a given social or institutional role carries. Since these differ, so do different players’ positions and arguments. Take for example the difference between federal “safety officials” and “regulators”. The former are tasked with investigating the causes of accidents and suggesting adequate recommendations. The latter are to develop and implement concrete and binding regulations, something they do in negotiation with all the parties involved, including the industry. Regulators might be, then, “critics” of the “producers” but likely in a way different than safety officials are. Similarly, local residents, who care for the safety and well-being of their communities, cannot be taken to constitute one argumentative party with the state authorities concerned with having a sustainable, revenue-generating business at home. The former argue that “we should slow the production, and the trains, down”, the latter’s “first priority was improving tank cars” so that, supposedly, they can better serve the burgeoning oil business. Both, then, take up some disagreement with “producers” regarding the way oil is produced and transported, but take it into a markedly different direction.

To conclude, there appears to be no *Public* or *Opponent* in the classic rhetorical or dialectical sense - instead, the controversy involves a variety of stakeholders, as determined by those who call-out and make claims on actions of others.

### 4.3 *Positions*

The multilateral network of relations among the players makes it hard to reconstruct this controversy in dyadic terms also at the level of positions various players defend. Again, the dyadic tendency of argumentation theory would guide us into seeing it as, basically, a two-sided disagreement. The main bone of contention would be the activity of shale oil and gas production. On the one hand, we would get those who claim, "Yes, let's frack as much as we can!", on the other those who would want to ban fracking altogether (clearly, there are actual players who claim just that - arguments of some oil industry actors vs. radical environmentalists). Then, however, we quickly notice a variety of mediating "yes, but" positions: from "YES, let's frack, but improve slightly the drilling technology so that less spills occur" to "yes, let's conditionally frack BUT ONLY IF other sources of energy are unavailable." The disagreement space becomes populated with all kinds of incompatible positions and arguments that do not easily fit the simple pro-con divisions.

The *New York Times* report indeed reveals a complex, polylogical network of disagreements on the issue of transporting oil by train. The Railway Supply Institute, an industry group representing freight car owners, defends their current practices by maintaining that "existing cars 'already provide substantial protection in the event of a derailment'." This position is challenged by another industry group, Association of American Railroads (companies that manage the railroads). According to them, tank cars should be "retrofitted with better safety features or 'aggressively phased out'." Their arguments for this position seem purely prudential - without safer transportation, oil business will not grow as expected; in the words of a former administrator of the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration: "Producers need to understand that rail-car safety can become an impediment to production." Additionally, as other third-party consultants claim, "railroads and car owners can no longer ignore the liabilities associated with oil trains, which could reach \$1 billion in the Quebec accident."

Now, these disagreements *within* the oil transportation business are just a side dish in the broader controversy. The main courses are made of opposition from



government, local communities, as well as environmentalists (not referred to in this very report). Federal “safety officials” “have warned for more than two decades that these cars were unsuited to carry flammable cargo”, and their arguments are based in concerns over citizens’ and environmental safety, rather than prosperous business. Finally, local communities have a distinct position of their own: because they need now to restore “shattered calm and confidence”, “[m]ost people [in Casselton] think we should slow the production, and the trains, down.” They thus question not just the technical details of production and transportation, but rather the very rationale for these activities. This puts their position in opposition to all the above-mentioned, including the federal officials who might not be doing enough to protect the common people.

In this way, disagreement is not limited to contradiction. Accordingly, the expansion of disagreement space is not limited to a dyadic dynamics between two contradictions; instead, it involves a polylogical network of multilateral relations.

## 5. *Conclusion*

In this paper, we highlight how to make sense of disagreement expansion from a polylogical perspective by incorporating various *places* (venues), *players* (parties), and *positions* (standpoints) into the analysis. By articulating positions, disagreement expansion can be seen as something generated by players attempting to manage an interconnected web of commitments relative to their multilateral relations to others. Disagreement is not limited to contradiction. By articulating players, disagreement expansion can be seen as co-constructed through the calling-out actions of multiple players and the anticipation of being called-out. Disagreement is not limited to contending with one other party and thus argumentative strategy is not limited to message design but is opened to communication design as it is found in the variety of instruments for communication which parties develop to manage their role in a complex web of relationships. By articulating venues, disagreement expansion can be seen as something that happens through a network of communicative activities that develops in the course of managing broader human activities. The content, strategies, and parties to argumentation are not necessarily limited to the demands of one kind of communicative activity but are often relevant to and implicated in other communicative activities in the network. Disagreement is not limited to one given, fixed place but finds its way into a variety of places and often motivates the reconfiguring or invention of places for argumentation. Thus, by

articulating the polylogical expansion of disagreement space, argumentation analysis can engage the logic of controversies rather than taking context to be given or treating it as static for other analytic aims.

While disagreement space has been treated as a dialectical product from a dyadic perspective, the original conceptualization affords a polylogical analysis. It is not an inherently dyadic concept and the concept needs to be developed to address complex, contemporary argumentation. By introducing particular analytic concepts (positions, players, and places) for reconstructing disagreement expansion, we are suggesting that the reconstruction of argumentation can more fully take into account the infrastructure for communication, which makes argumentation possible, at a variety of scales. Moreover, we are articulating a means to account for how argumentative contexts are constructed and become a conscious target for strategic construction in order to shape human sense-making about broad human activities. For those interested in moving argumentation analysis beyond the assessment of a single argument or the evaluation of the maneuvers of a particular arguer, such conceptual and methodological considerations are needed (see Aakhus, 2013; Aakhus & Lewiński, 2011; Lewiński & Aakhus, 2014).

## NOTES

**i.** There is nothing inherent in the disagreement space concept that limits it to the dyadic presumption. Indeed, a close look at the examples and analysis in van Eemeren et al. (1993), especially chapters 5-7, suggests that disagreement space is a discourse-centric phenomenon that can incorporate many parties and positions (see Aakhus & Vasilyeva, 2008). We develop this intuition in our present paper.

**ii.** Johnson (2002, p. 41) and Leff (2006, p. 203, n. 2) both make a similar argument in their analysis of this case. Indeed, looking from the perspective of the strategic objectives of a modern corporation, the entire argumentation in Shell's advertorial is eventually subordinate to its claim of "future economic success". Shell is addressing various stakeholders with complex argumentation, stating that they are a growing and socially responsible company which, therefore, is worth dealing with, whether as an investor, government, business partner, community member, activist, or customer.

**iii.** In an endnote, Tindale himself recognizes that "we can imagine other interested subgroups", and mentions Shell's competitors and Nigerian expatriates

opposing the government (1999, p. 215, n. 1).

iv. All quotations in the analysis are from New York Times report “Accidents surge as oil industry takes the train” (Krauss & Mouawad, 2014).

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# Feed The Trolls: Straw Men And Iron Men

*Abstract:* The straw man fallacy consists in inappropriately constructing or selecting weak (or comparatively weaker) versions of the opposition's arguments. We will survey the three forms of straw men recognized in the literature, the straw, weak, and hollow man. We will then make the case that there are examples of inappropriately reconstructing stronger versions of the opposition's arguments. Such cases we will call iron man fallacies.

*Keywords:* Iron man fallacy, Straw man fallacy, Weak man fallacy

## 1. Introduction

As some of recent work has shown, there is more to the problem of straw manning than the *distortion* of an opponent's argument. Some forms of straw man, such as the *weak man*, rely on accurate, even *scrupulously accurate*, depictions of arguments for criticism. Other forms, such as the *hollow man* do not actually involve representations of anyone's actual argument or view. Nonetheless, these strategies, and others to be discussed here, are dialectically problematic for much of the same reasons the distortion form of straw man is, in that they, to use some metaphorical language, misrepresent the dialogical lay of the land. We will argue here that two further features complete the account of the fallaciousness of the straw man: (1) a move to close the argument with the straw man victim (and those with similar views) and (2) a move to paint the straw man victim as unworthy of being taken seriously. What makes the varieties of straw man fallacious can also be used to show that not all forms of straw men arguments ought to be considered fallacious. Finally, the considerations that distinguish fallacious from non fallacious straw men also uncover a related phenomenon, *iron manning*, or the practice of making an opponent's argument *stronger* than it is. We will argue that there are both appropriate and fallacious versions of this tactic.

## 2. Varieties of the straw man

Our aim in this section is to show that

(1) there is a variety to the straw man,

(2) there's more involved in the phenomenon than manipulation of commitments ploys, and

(3) that non fallacious, but formally identical variations of each of these forms exist.

### 2.1 *The representational form of straw man*

Let's call the textbook form of the straw man the "representational form." This consists in the first instance distortion of an opponent's argument, followed by a decisive refutation. Consider:

APA

*Philo*: A lot of people have suggested that the American Philosophical Association amend the practically obligatory Eastern APA interview on account of the expense, inconvenience, and stress for all involved.

*Sophia*: Come now Philo, I hardly think that completely abandoning the system is desirable, so we ought to reject their suggestions.

APA meets the basic schematic requirements for the straw man in that we have (1) two arguers and (2) criticism of one by the other. We can also tell that the criticism here hinges on the *representation* of the first arguer's position. The first arguer maintains that the APA ought to *amend* the Eastern APA hiring process because it is expensive, inconvenient, and stressful for everyone. But the second arguer attacks a related, but substantially different claim, namely that *abandoning* the system is ridiculous. Philo not suggested that the system be *completely* abandoned; rather, she has suggested that the APA *amend* the process. Sophia has misrepresented Philo's view, and dismissed the misrepresentation as weak.

### 2.2 *The weak man*

Consider another variation of the straw man argument. Call it the *weak man*. In its broad outlines, the weak man consists in

- (1) *selecting* the weakest of an opponent's *actual* arguments,
- (2) *actually* defeating it, and
- (3) then drawing or implying deeper conclusions about the argument or the arguer in question.

Consider the following exchange:

*Locavorism*

*Serenity*: The culinary and ecological movement known as "locavorism" maintains that favoring sustainably and ethically raised local and seasonal produce is

superior to the more dominant industrial model. After all, it does not depend on petroleum-intensive fertilizer, it's not transported across the country (or the world in many cases), and it sustains local agricultural economies.

*Archer:* The claims of the locavorism movement are ludicrous, the alleged fuel savings in food transportation amount to very little if any overall petroleum savings. Locavorism is loco.

In this case, the locavore maintains that a number of different reasons independently and convergently support the single conclusion that locavorism is a wiser policy than high intensity industrial agriculture. The critic singles out one of them, the alleged fuel savings, and refutes it, implying he has dealt a blow to the argument as a whole. The locavorism critic might even have an especially decisive and sound argument, but even granted that, much would remain to consider in favor of locavorism. The weak manner hopes to exaggerate the importance of the weak argument, but barring that, he can focus critical scrutiny on the ideological fellow travelers of the person making the weak argument

### 2.3 *The hollow man*

In a third variation of the straw man, one invents an entirely fictitious and decisively silly position, attributes it to a purportedly real, but vaguely defined opponent, knocks it down, and thereby suggests the opposition isn't worthy of rational discussion. The "tell" for this version of the straw man, is often the infamous "some say" or "some might say" phrase that obscures the identity and therefore absolves the speaker of the charge of lying. Many of you are likely familiar with the controversy surrounding Rush Limbaugh's tendency to make jarring remarks. Unsurprisingly many have rushed to his defense. Among them was the *Wall Street Journal's* Peggy Noonan:

#### *Peggy Noonan*

"Why would the left be worse? Let me be harsh. Some left-wing men think they can talk like this because they're on the correct side on social issues such as abortion. Their attitude: 'I backed you on the abortions you want so much, I opposed a ban on partial birth. Hell, I'll let you kill kids at any point until they're 15, I'm cool. And that means I can call women in public life t - - - s, right? Because, you know, I think of them that way.'" (WSJ 3/16/2012)

Like the weak man, the hollow man does not involve *distorting* any argument so much as *inventing* an entirely new one. In this example, Noonan does not bother

to identify the bearer of the view other than to say that “*some* left-wing men” think this.

### 3. *Are there legitimate uses of the straw man?*

The various schemes of straw men are defined by the way one arguer represents the views of another: badly, selectively, or falsely. The question is whether one can badly, selectively, or falsely represent someone’s views without being guilty of fallacy.

Consider: it would be very hard to teach philosophy without employing some variation on the straw man scheme frequently and energetically. With regard to this reason, Ribiero notes that (2008) that distortions formally identical to straw man distortions occur frequently in the classroom from pedagogical need:

- (1) historical interest,
- (2) pedagogical ease,
- (3) and practical availability. There seems, in fact, to be an intuitive case for using the various schemes of the straw man pedagogically. Representational straw men might be employed to drive home particular pedagogical points.

A teacher of music, for instance, might exaggerate the bad habit of her music student:

#### *Music Teacher*

Music teacher to student: you need to work on your intonation. At the moment it sounds like a tortured cat.

The teacher has distorted the student’s behavior by hyperbole, but the point is to fix the student’s awareness on her poor intonation. A similar case might be made for the other two straw man ploys. A weak man might be used as practice.

#### *Gay Marriage*

*Brad*: I’ve heard quite a number of arguments against gay marriage in the conservative press lately.

*Angelina*: I have too. I heard one particularly bad one from a blogger at RedState.com:he argued that if homosexuals are allowed to marry, nothing would prevent him from marrying his box turtle.

*Brad*: Wow, that’s hilarious.

In this example, Brad signals that there are several arguments against gay



marriage. We can imagine that some are better than others. Angelina responds by attacking what is likely to be weakest of them, a kind of textbook version of the slippery slope fallacy. Answering it first improves further discussion.

For a *hollow man case*, continue our pedagogical consideration. Open just about any introductory logic text, and one will find the exercise sections full of arguments few sensible people would make (though we're often disabused of this notion). It's just easier, however, to do it this way, for the point of the fallacy exercise is to get at the form of argument, not to pin failings on specific people.

Though all of these examples fit the straw man ploy in its various forms, none of them are in our view fallacious. In *Music Teacher*, the instructor attacks an exaggerated version of the student's performance to highlight a difficult to appreciate pedagogical point. In *Gay Marriage*, Angelina goes straight for the weakest of the arguments for the anti-gay marriage position, and so weak mans that view. But she does not draw the inference that this view is representative of the best of the opposition. Weak manning sometimes serves the dialectical purpose of clearing away weak arguments, which nonetheless may have a lot of adherents, and which nonetheless occupy much in demand dialectical space.

These representative, but non fallacious, straw man ploys highlight two important features about what makes most straw man arguments fallacious in the first place. The fallaciousness does not primarily consist in the distortion of someone else's argument (as in the representational straw man), in the purposeful selection of the weakest of someone's arguments (as in the weak man), or finally in the invention of weak arguments or arguers (as in the hollow man); all of these can be very useful dialectical tools. *What makes these tactics fallacious is how they are deployed.* The varieties of straw man are fallacious if they are deployed (1) to close off argument prematurely and (2) illegitimately impugn an opposing arguer's competence. So, for instance, the hollow man is fallacious when one makes up an idiotic argument, knocks it down, in order to suggest that the opposition, however vaguely defined, lacks sufficient critical skill, as in the *Peggy Noonan* example above. Such people's views are unserious and not worthy of further consideration. The other two examples show a similar tendency to tar the target with an accusation of a bad argument. In *APA*, the arguer is alleged to have made an extreme suggestion; in *Locavorism*, the arguer is alleged to be insufficiently reflective or to associate with insufficiently reflective people.

#### 4. *Iron manning*

If what makes the varieties of straw men fallacious is their exclusionary, or closing, function, then it is easier to distinguish fallacious cases of straw manning from non fallacious ones. The fallaciousness of strawman arguments is indexed to context. Views or arguments that warrant careful consideration in one situation may not deserve them in another. *This means at times it may be permissible (and necessary) to exclude some views from consideration on the basis of cursory arguments.* In other words, while fallacious straw men involve the exclusion of arguments or arguers from justly deserved consideration, in light of the function of the straw man to distort over time, there is good reason to think that unreasonably or overly charitable interpretations of arguments (of arguers) can also qualify as fallacious. It's certainly fallacious, in other words, to distort a person's argument in order more easily to knock it down (and malign the person as a competent arguer); however, by parity of reasoning, a charitable distortion to present an unserious arguer as serious is equally problematic. We call this the iron man. Consider the following cases.

##### 4.1 *Eric Cantor*

Eric Cantor is the Republican Majority Whip in the House of Representatives. In an interview with Leslie Stahl on CBS's 60 Minutes (1/1/2012), Stahl asked Cantor to square the fact that Ronald Reagan raised taxes during a recession with the current Republican Party view - allegedly inspired by Reagan - that taxes ought never to be raised. In response, Cantor denied that Reagan ever raised taxes. His spokesperson interrupted the interview, alleging that Stahl did not have her facts straight. She did. Coming to Cantor's defense, one blogger (Jim Hoft) made the following claim:

Stahl, was not being honest. When Ronald Reagan took office, the top individual tax rate was 70 percent and by 1986 it was down to only 28 percent. All Americans received at least a 30 percent tax rate cut. Democrats like to play with the numbers to pretend that Reagans [sic] tax increases equalled [sic] his tax cuts. Of course, this is absurd.

...Unfortunately, Steve Benen at the Washington Monthly continued to misrepresent Reagan's record on tax cuts. It's just soooo difficult for liberals to understand that tax cuts work. Sad.

Notice that Hoft has offered a different and (much more defensible) view on

behalf of Cantor: on aggregate, taxes were lower after Reagan's years in office than before. This was not the point under consideration. The net effect of this is to distort the proper evaluation of Cantor's claim and Stahl's criticism.

#### 4.2 *Westboro Baptist Church*

The Westboro Baptist Church is known for demonstrating at the funerals of fallen soldiers. At their protests, they hold up signs alleging that the death of the person is God's punishment for the tolerance of homosexuality in America. In light of this, consider the following exchange.

*Sally:* The Westboro Baptist Church boycotted my local synagogue, carrying signs that say "God hates fags." Their views are patently ridiculous; far from even the fringe of conservative Christianity. People should just ignore them.

*Priscilla:* Yes, but aren't they really suggesting that our fate as a nation is bound up with the moral fibre of the American people? As we lose our sense of commitment, steadfastness, and courage, we will not realize our plans.

Priscilla raises some interesting points, but they are vaguely related to the actual content of the Westboro Church's protests and Sally's objection. The question is whether these particular arguments from the Westboroites deserve consideration. And so iron-manning can be an occasion for broader discussion, but one iron mans so that we do not have to discuss this particular argument.

#### 4.3 *Philosophy student I*

We have discussed above how teaching philosophy to undergraduates often depends on strategically employed, non-fallacious straw men. As it is necessary sometimes to straw man views, it is also necessary to iron man the student's view. With this in mind, imagine the following teacher-student exchange.

*Alfredo:* Rawls' "Original Position" seems impossible to me. I mean, how are we to know what sorts of things we'll be interested in if we don't know anything about ourselves?

*Professor Zoccolo:* That's an interesting point, Alfredo, you're suggesting that Rawls's Original Position does not take cognizance of how we are constituted by our social relations. Thinking them through abstractly seems problematic.

Alfredo's view certainly trends communitarian, but it would be a stretch to suggest that this is what he meant. Unlike the previous cases, however, iron-manning Alfredo shows him how to improve his contributions to the discussion.

#### 4.4 *Philosophy student II*

The norm of iron-manning student views can yield good results. It shows students how to improve their thoughts. However, it can yield classroom disaster, as it can encourage more poorly stated views. Iron-manning the student makes it such that the teacher does the work in crafting the views. Moreover, time in the classroom is too short to take all the off-the-wall views seriously. Sometimes, iron-manning undercuts a serious classroom. Consider:

*Professor Barleycorn:* Descartes' argument in the First Meditation is that very little of what we take ourselves to know securely is certain. It may all be a dream. Or it may all be an illusion of a very powerful demon.

*Bradley:* Dude! I had a dream like that one night - that I was in the clutches of an evil demon. And he made me do things ... like terrible things ... to chickens. And then, when I woke up... it was all true. The terrible stuff to chickens stuff, that is. That was all after I drank too much cough syrup with my beers. Did Day-Cart have a Robitussin problem?

Bradley is way off base. For sure, his weird story deserves a moment of reply, but it is best for all involved that a lengthy analysis of Bradley's views on the matter aren't devoted class time. Some views are best left unexamined. Next time, Bradley should read. And lay off the syrup.

#### 5. *Discussion*

From these cases, the basic form of iron man argumentation can be discerned. First, as a dialectical form, the iron man requires two speakers, A and B. A proposes some argument  $a$  and/or some position  $p$ . But  $a$  and  $p$  are not defensible. B takes up with A's case with a reconstruction,  $a^*$  and  $p^*$ , that given the state of dialectical play are (comparatively more) defensible. Often this strategy is done for the sake of an onlooking audience, C, which may be interested in A's views or the issue of whether that  $p$ . So far, again, we can see that there is a dialectical distortion, just as there is with straw-manning, but instead of degrading the opponent's argument (as with the straw man), the opponent's case is improved. Hence our term iron man.

There are compelling epistemic reasons to regularly iron man one's opposition, as the truth will come out in contexts of maximally responsible and detailed argumentation. Since our epistemic objectives in argument are truth and its understanding, the most intellectually robust opponent is the best, and if one does

not encounter but must construct such an opponent, then so be it. Moreover, there are ethical (and political) reasons why iron-manning may be appealing. At its core, iron-manning is a form of interpreting others communicative acts with charity. The demands of recognition, further, for underrepresented groups obtain so that their interests can be heard and have effect. Iron-manning is in the service of this. Finally, again, there are pedagogical reasons why iron-manning may be required.

So what, then, could be wrong with iron-manning? We hold that there is a fallacy of inclusion for the same reason that there is a fallacy of exclusion.

Let us return to the cases. As we saw with *Philosophy Student II*, there are pedagogical reasons why iron-manning can be objectionable, as the point of class discussion is for students to improve their own views, not having it done for them. It is here that we begin to see the trouble with some forms of iron-man: in taking some poorly articulated views seriously, improving them and submitting them to scrutiny, one makes an investment of time and intellectual energy. The trouble is that there are many investments that are unwise.

Consider, further, a feature of discussion after content presentation. There is evidence now that suggests that rude or irrelevant online comments after a posting or story actually distort reading comprehension of the original piece. That is, the more comments that don't get the original point you are exposed to or the more rude comments in the discussion thread, the less likely it is that you will, afterwards, correctly recall the details of the posting. This is now being called, "The Nasty Effect." Derailed discussion not only is a waste of time, but it is miseducation.

Now consider the strategic use of iron-manning with the Eric Cantor case. The trouble is not with improving the view *per se*, but with the way the improvement is deployed. In this case, (a) the iron man is presented as Cantor's view, and (b) thereby it is used as evidence that Stahl is (and liberals generally are) fact challenged. But this is a distortion not only of Cantor's position, but of Stahl's, too. By iron-manning Cantor, one straw-mans Stahl, his critic. Her criticisms now seem off-target and ill-informed, when they, in fact, were not.

These two elements of iron-manning converge. When one iron mans a poorly presented view, one may encourage those who have posed the view by taking

them seriously, and thereby impugn their critics. Again, sometimes this is appropriate, as some views need time and patience for their development and some speakers require maximal charity in interpreting their communicative acts. But sometimes it is inappropriate, as one can be held hostage by these speakers. On blog comment threads and chatboards, there are many who are uninformed and contribute with unhinged criticism. They are out to hijack discussion, to hold forth, to be the center of attention. These are, in internet lingo, *trolls*. Taking the trolls seriously, interpreting them with charity, and responding to them thoughtfully yields only grief. *One must not feed the trolls.*

Indeed, too often philosophers and informal logicians overlook the fact we very often find ourselves having to evaluate just *this argument* from this arguer, even if this argument could be stronger, or *this arguer* could use some help. We have argued here that even charitable alterations of arguments or arguers distort the dialectical landscape are often unacceptable, for exactly the same reason why straw-manning is unacceptable. The only difference is that the straw man excludes arguments worth listening to; the iron man includes arguments not worth listening to. In all, we've identified a few rough criteria for knowing when iron-manning is fallacious:

1. When it is clear that the argument to be reconstructed is not likely to be either relevant or successful.
2. When it is clear that the improvement of and response to the argument will take more time than is allotted, and there are other, more clearly salient, issues.
3. When, even if 1 & 2 do not obtain (that is, when there may be something relevant and there is plenty of surplus time and energy), it is clear that responding to *this speaker* under *these circumstances* encourages further badly formed arguments.
4. When the positive reconstruction of the argument (iron man) in question yields mis-portrayal of the arguments prior critics as attacking a straw man.

This rough set of criteria are, in the end, an overlap of (a) issues in cognitive economy (maximizing epistemic efficiency), and (b) issues in maintenance of a properly run dialectical field. We hold 1&2 are epistemic questions, and 3&4 are dialectical questions. Hence, the basic thought that sometimes feeding the trolls is (a) a waste of time and energy, and (b) it ultimately isn't anything but bad for the way we argue.

## 6. Conclusion

We have argued in this paper that the dialectical phenomenon known as straw manning is much more varied than many accounts suggest. In the first place, straw manning involves more than simple distortion. It also includes forms of selection (weak manning) and invention (hollow manning). Second, not all instances of straw manning are fallacious. Finally, and somewhat ironically, charitable variations on an argument suffer from the same failings as fallacious straw men, though their mistake lies in the inclusion of arguments deserving of exclusion.

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