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Pivot

A Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies & Thought



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About Pivot

Pivot is a biannual multidisciplinary journal dedicated to publishing innovative critical writing from emerging and established academics. Each issue encourages scholars from a wide-range of fields to engage with a focused but multifaceted central topic, bringing into conversation their various disciplinary perspectives. By juxtaposing viewpoints and theoretical approaches that may otherwise remain disparate, Pivot creates a space in which readers can explore the intersections between various fields and modes of thought. Our mandate is to showcase scholarly work by graduate students and working academics, and to foster communication and cooperation between students and faculty across disciplinary boundaries. The topic of one issue per year corresponds with the theme of the York University English Graduate Program's annual interdisciplinary conference. The journal invites contributions of scholarly articles relevant to the upcoming issue's topic, in both English and French, from authors in all scholarly disciplines. ©

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**Legible Liars: Thackeray’s *Barry Lyndon* as Professor of
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Thackeray’s eponymous, comedic antihero rightfully earned his reputation as one of the most notoriously unreliable narrators in English fiction, not least for his portrayal as a gentleman scoundrel and roving confidence man. Scholars have long assumed that Victorian readers found the highly mobile gambler with dozens of aliases both frightening and irredeemably bad. I wish to suggest that Barry’s literary appeal as well as his commercial liability were rooted in Thackeray’s decision to cast him as a professing philosopher in imposture and identity play.

This essay analyzes two scenes in *Barry Lyndon* (1844) to demonstrate Barry’s swift education in the art of personal narrative manipulation and to describe a model for interpersonal literacy in which Barry both expressly and implicitly offers instruction. Though Barry claims to be educating readers in the finer points of professional gambling, he is actually delineating the rules for playing with one’s identity, an endeavour far more universally interesting, and alarming, than the ostensible tutoring in how to circumvent the original readers’ growing middle-class work ethic. Barry labours hard and constantly, but he is manufacturing personal narrative—something many Victorian readers may have wished was authentic, unique, and thus beyond the grimy reach of industrial production.

Barry’s wins and losses in identity manipulation have little to do with *The Luck of Barry Lyndon*, the title under which the novel was originally published, and everything to do with Barry’s increasing but perpetually inadequate grasp of the complex of skills that forms the *modus operandi* for successful impostors: interpersonal literacy, recursive scripting, and confidence networking. Tracing Barry’s experiments in narrative propagation reveals both a discipline in which one can be educated and a generative process by which a subject inhabits a narrative that takes on a life of its own.

**Power by Deception: Mamet's Matters of Confidence by
Christophe Collard 43**

This essay addresses David Mamet's ambivalent attitude towards deception along the cases of his play *The Shawl* (1985) and his film *House of Games* (1987) – two works revolving round and structured as a con game. Based on the reasoning that the con man, like the dramatist, capitalizes on language's power to connect and confuse, my argument seeks to establish dramatic deception as an engine of reflection. Moreover, given Mamet's idiosyncratic, almost didactic rejection of a clear, agonistic division between winner and loser, true and false, good and evil, the concept of deceit itself can be tentatively repurposed from pejorative product to productive process by shifting focus from morality to machination. Ultimately, this should produce a frame of assent capable of integrating diversity, processing morality, and stimulating reflexivity.

On Truth and Falsity in their Intertextual Sense:

Adaptation as Dissimulation by Nico Dicecco 69

While critics have rejected fidelity as a ground for the analysis of adaptations since the seminal work of George Bluestone in 1957, the logic of source-faithfulness nonetheless persists in popular discourse. This essay considers the persistence of fidelity idealism by positing its basic assumptions as a necessary component for the interpretation of adaptations as such. It argues that fidelity discourse depends on the fallacious assumption that, at some level, an adaptation can replicate elements of a source text in a new medium. By shifting focus from the ostensibly inherent features of the adaptive text to the perceptions of the reader or viewer, it can be seen that adaptation is a class of metaphor, depending on what Nietzsche calls "equating the unequal." Thus adaptation is paradoxical; it is necessarily different from its source text, but must be understood as partially replicating that source in order to be meaningful as an adaptation.

The Aesth/ethics of Imagination and Deceit in Guare's

Six Degrees of Separation: A Foucauldian-Aristotelian

Reading by Unhae Langis 83

By examining the actions of Paul Poitier in John Guare's *Six Degrees of Separation* as an aesth/ethic subject, this essay explores the possibilities and challenges of integrating the aesthetic and ethical imperatives of self-formation within the limits of one's historical and cultural

situation. In Guarian terms linking art and life, how does one find the salutary balance between chaos and control: how does one give structure, or teleological purpose, to a life of random color? While the scholarship on Guare's play readily includes discussions on race, class, and sexuality, notably lacking are rigorous ethical examinations that explore the play's signature concerns of aesthetics and ethics embedded in the issues of race and economics. A discerning examination of Paul's aesth/ethic pursuit within the framework of Foucauldian and Aristotelian ethics illuminates the play in unprecedented ways, at the same time offering valuable ethical insights into our own endeavors to live the good life.

Whose Words?: Text and Authorship in *Pierre Menard, Autor del Quijote* by Brandon Moores 107

This article argues that Jorge Luis Borges' story *Pierre Menard, Autor del Quijote* is profoundly troubling to theories that invoke the author or other aspects of context to interpret a text, and for that reason useful in probing more recent conceptions of the relationship between author and reader. After a brief summary of the relevant portions of Borges's story, I investigate the theory of authorship that lies behind the narrator's understanding of Menard's text, arguing that it rests upon a conception of words as symbols or signs of an underlying thought. I then discuss the implications the story has for two other texts intimately concerned with the problem of authorship: Roland Barthes' *Le mort de l'auteur* and Gérard Genette's *Palimpsestes*. Neither employs the same conception of words or of authors, but both are nevertheless deeply affected by the story's suggestions. The last section takes up Borges's own attitudes towards the problem he has raised.

"A dynamic of blaming and counterblaming": J.M. Coetzee's Analysis of Self-deception in South African Resistance Literature by Minna Niemi 125

The aim of this article is to introduce briefly some of the more prominent aspects of these complex questions regarding the interplay of art and politics in the context of the South African literary discourse in the early 1980s. I explore South African resistance literature, and more particularly André Brink's ideas, and his commitment to political struggle vis-à-vis Jean-Paul Sartre's notion of politically committed art. I read Coetzee's challenge to resistance literature as a response with striking similarities

to Theodor Adorno's criticism of committed art, which Adorno leveled at Sartre in his two-part essay "On Commitment." As both Coetzee and Adorno demonstrate, committed art remains close to the power it criticizes, and does not break free from it. Coetzee maintains that it is the constant task of the writer to resist the binaristic logic of the state by avoiding the lure of self-deception and maintaining an awareness that he, too, is implicated by state violence.

**Unconscious Dissemblance: The Place of Irony in
Psychoanalytic Thought by Julie Walsh 143**

In this paper I work from the premise that the Freudian dialectic of honesty and deception challenges the order of 'authentic' expression by positing unconscious dissemblance as primary to the structure of the mind. The device that facilitates my reading is irony. I explore the place of irony within psychoanalytic discourse and formulate a distinction between a reading of irony as conscious application (a technique for living), and a reading of irony as unconscious mechanism (the dissembling unconscious).

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