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Dirk Van Hulle. *Modern Manuscripts: The Extended Mind and Creative Undoing from Darwin to Beckett and Beyond*. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2014. 274 pp. ISBN 978-1-4411-3316-8.

- 1 Dirk Van Hulle's rapidly growing body of work is always informed by a comparative and genetic approach that highlights the interconnections within modern literature and grounds critical statements on textual evidence. For both reasons, it would be hard to praise fully Van Hulle's laudable efforts in his field. As he makes clear in the introduction, *Modern Manuscripts* is imbued with the same approach, showing the ambition to establish a link between source- and discourse-oriented research (see Sternberg 1985, 14), and in particular among narrative theory and genetic criticism. Van Hulle here welcomes Andy Clark and David J. Chalmers' thesis of the "extended mind", based on a post-Cartesian model of cognitive interaction between mind and external environment (see Clark and Chalmers 1998, 10-23), to question the "inside/outside model of the mind" implied by the "inward turn" ascribed to literary modernism (see von Kahler 1957, 501-46; 1959, 177-220). A strict separation between Modernism and Realism, resulting from such premises, could easily conceal the modernist attempts to overcome the dichotomy between interiority and exteriority. Van Hulle advances instead "a method that combines genetic criticism and cognitive narratology in order to study [...] the production of narratives and the literary evocation of fictional minds" (3). Following on from this double aim, the book is

structured in two sections, each centered on textual exogenesis, endogenesis and epigenesis, and expounding two key ideas (4):

(1) From a post-Cartesian perspective, manuscripts are part and parcel of the 'extended mind'. Many modernists either intuitively or consciously exploited the interaction with their notebooks and manuscripts to stimulate creative cognitive processes (Menary 2007).

(2) Modernist writers' awareness of this mechanism, based on their own experience as "thinkers on paper", is part of their view on the human mind, and plays a considerable role in their methods of evoking the workings of characters' minds in their writings.

- 2 The first section of *Modern Manuscripts*, dedicated to point 1, focuses on the case-study of Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of Species*, drawing on the vast amount of sources now available on-line. Van Hulle's interest is stimulated not only by the exceptionally well-documented genesis of the *Origin* or by Darwin's role of precursor of modernism, but also by the author's dysteleological notion of evolution (see Beer 1983): a process lacking any preordained direction, as with the writing of several twentieth-century literary masterpieces. Or indeed of the *Origin* itself, despite Darwin's later attempts to present its genesis as linear. Within this section, it is perhaps Van Hulle's chapter on exogenesis that is the most striking, as it treats the role played by Darwin's readings on his meditations on, and consequent objections to, creationism and anthropocentrism. Van Hulle dwells in particular on the influence of Charles Lyell, Thomas Robert Malthus, William Paley, John Herschel and William Whewell, but also on Darwin's interest in the humanities, attested by his reading of Gotthold Ephraim Lessing and Joshua Reynolds, as well as of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, William Wordsworth and Edmund Burke. With the "Preface" to the *Lyrical Ballads* in mind, Van Hulle's chapter on endogenesis describes the progression of Darwin's writing, from the springing from emotion, through recollection in tranquillity, to the production of a new emotion in the mind (see Wordsworth 1802), all phases that Van Hulle dates back to the years 1837-39, 1839-42 and 1842-44 respectively. In the chapter on the epigenesis of the *Origin*, a perusal of its six editions (1859-72) reveals its multiple identity, and a reference to the famous variant "by the Creator", added to the closing sentence of the second edition, offers an opportunity to retrace the entire *avant-texte* of Darwin's work.
- 3 The second section of *Modern Manuscripts*, which explores the interaction between points 1 and 2, supports an enactivist approach in textual scholarship, taking the lead from reflections on Joseph Conrad, Franz Kafka and Virginia Woolf, as well as from Edmund Husserl's notions of analogy (*Analogisierung*) and empathy (*Einfühlung*) (see Husserl 1913). The sheer amount of textual references leaps out at the reader here, contrasting the trend in the first half of the book. Three examples are discussed in the chapter on exogenesis, which moves from an opposition between conversation- and communication-oriented forms of reading (see Jackson 2001). In James Joyce's *Ulysses*, Bloom's and Stephen's different angles on the cloud that "began to cover the sun", in "Telemachus" and "Calypso", seem to be an expression of contrasting poetics grounded in separate perceptive and mind models (epiphanies vs. extended mind). In Flann O'Brien's *The Third Policeman*, a reference to the notion of "parallax" might conceal the influence of passages from "Lestrygonians" and "Circe" in Joyce's *Ulysses*, as suggested by O'Brien's own notes in his copy of the Odyssey Press edition of the novel (1932). In Samuel Beckett's "*Whoroscope*" *Notebook* (UoR MS 3000), jottings on Immanuel Kant (through Ernst Cassirer) and Fritz Mauthner could imply a "cognitive turn" in Beckett's

work, which, at least since *Watt*, produced lacunae (an equivalent of Wolfgang Iser's *Leerstellen*; see Iser 1970) in order to convey the unspeakable, pointing to the act of writing itself. A following chapter on endogenesis begins with an examination of doubt and decision making in the drafting of the United States Declaration of Independence, to discuss the notorious omission of the paragraph on abolishment of slavery and Thomas Jefferson's hesitation between the words "subjects" and "citizens". Several paragraphs expand on the notion of "creative undoing" with reference mostly to the composition of Beckett's *L'Innommable*, whose initial teleological development, founded on a Cartesian model of the mind, was replaced by a dysteleological narration permeated by a rhetoric of "epanorthosis" (correction) (see Linnington 1833), where an end could be imposed only by the materiality of the notebooks. The chapter on textual epigenesis makes a case of Beckett's self-translation and self-staging to prove how even contemporary texts retain a transient state after their *bon à tirer*, how this process of revision is expression of a tradition of linguistic scepticism, and how it is incorporated in a "poetics of process". Van Hulle also notices how *Krapp's Last Tape* prefigured a post-Cartesian model of the mind in making a tape recorder and a dictionary an integral part of Krapp's mental activity and of the narrative of the play. There is also space, at the end of the section, to introduce the concept of allogenesi, brilliantly exemplified by Jonathan Safran Foer's *Tree of Codes*: a cutout experiment with Bruno Schulz's *The Street of Crocodiles*, which is also a visual example of creative undoing.

- 4 Following an epilogue that illustrates how the genesis of texts leaves material traces even in the digital age, Van Hulle reformulates his hypothesis in the light of the many cases discussed in the course of the book (see Ferrer 2011, Herman 2009 and 2011, Menary 2010):

If writers (not only modernist writers) can be regarded as "Umwelt researchers", they also construe their own *Umwelt* and work on their written invention by means of a manuscript or another "environmental vehicle" (Menary 2010a: 21), which is part of the extended mind. Their experience with, and awareness of, the workings of the extended mind is often instrumental in the strategies they use in order to evoke the workings of the fictional mind. To the extent that the interaction with modern manuscripts serves as a model of the extended mind, genetic criticism can therefore be made operational in post-Cartesian approaches to storytelling and cognition, or what David Herman terms the "nexus of narrative and mind" (2009: 137–60). (244)

- 5 As he emphasizes later on in the conclusion and in the title itself, Van Hulle relates to manuscripts as evidence of both a mind at work and of failure as a driving force of artistic invention. It is especially the second of the two aspects that proves most clearly the influence of Beckett's legacy on Van Hulle's entire book. The web of references in *Modern Manuscripts* is rich, but Beckett's influence is stronger, not only in the paragraphs specifically dedicated to him or in the reiterated references to Descartes' dualism, but, for example, in the description of the genesis of literary works as an endless "going on", or in the suggested pertinence of linguistic scepticism to the narratives of Joseph Conrad and Franz Kafka. Moving from this Beckettian starting point, Van Hulle's effort to avoid "an exclusively empirical approach, foreclosing any form of hermeneutics or theory" (19) aims at a multidisciplinary approach with the desire to avoid mere description and excessive specialization. In fact, *Modern Manuscripts* leaves theory for the most part to the introduction and the preambles to each of the two sections, with further references to binary oppositions that support Van Hulle's meticulous genetic enquiries: *critique génétique* vs. philology (see Ferrer

2011), *Kopfarbeiter* vs. *Papierarbeiter* (see Scheibe 1998), epanorthosis vs. epizeuxis (see Linnington 1833), etc. Rather than articulating a theory with the support of scattered examples, therefore, *Modern Manuscripts* presents a working hypothesis and examines at length how it works at textual level.

- 6 On the one hand, the predominance of source-oriented over discourse-oriented research, which I have just noticed, is consistent with Van Hulle's training and his outstanding results in the field of genetic criticism. On the other, the book raises questions concerning mind functioning that might deserve further treatment. The opening page of the conclusion, on the sense of incompleteness as a result of manuscript study, testifies to the incorporation of a sense of "unending" in the book itself. As a matter of fact, Van Hulle's monograph does not lack in references to theory, all particularly meaningful. If the most quoted are probably Pierre-Marc de Biasi and Daniel Ferrer (on the genetic side), and David Herman and Richard Menary (on the cognitive-narratological side), there is still space for vital allusions to Roman Ingarden and Jakob von Uexküll. A step forward could be to integrate binary oppositions into a more definite structure. An ambitious target could be to make use of the contributions to a theory of consciousness published, for example, by Gerald Edelman, Giulio Tononi or Antonio Damasio — the last of whom Van Hulle mentions in discussing Joyce and Beckett. Neurosciences would certainly be useful in broadening Van Hulle's questioning of Descartes as well as in his interpretation of Darwin. In which case, the second and more varied half of Van Hulle's monograph might reveal more clearly what I consider to be its most distinctive feature: the desire to link separate research projects, in support of an enactivist approach in genetic criticism. In other words, the book suggests a connection between separate experiences, which stimulates further enquiries that would explore the territories shared by cognitive narratology and genetic criticism.

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Stefano Rosignoli holds degrees in Modern Literature and Publishing, and is a PhD candidate at Trinity College Dublin. His current research project focuses on a comparative textual analysis of the ethics of James Joyce and Samuel Beckett. Together with Mark Byron, he has edited a dossier on Beckett and the Middle Ages for inclusion in a celebratory issue marking the 40th anniversary of the *Journal of Beckett Studies* (25[1]). He has also contributed to a collection of essays on Beckett and BBC Radio, which will be published by Palgrave Macmillan.