



[Return to Contents](#)

‘The Influence of Kalidasa on Shakespeare’: the genre of the keynote address and the story of a lie

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Two truths are always told. Let me begin with epigraphs from two great writers.

Ham. Lady, shall I lie in your lap?

Hamlet III. ii. 110

Ham. – Whose grave’s this, sirrah?

Grave. Mine sir....

Ham. I think it be thine indeed, for thou liest in’t.

Grave. You lie out on’t, sir, and therefore ’tis not yours.

For my part, I do not lie in’t, yet it is mine.

Ham. Thou dost lie in’t, to be in’t and say ’tis thine. ’Tis for the dead, not for the quick: therefore thou liest.

Grave. ’Tis a quick lie, sir, ’twill away again from me to you....

Ham. [to Horatio] How absolute the knave is. We must speak by the card or equivocation will undo us.

Hamlet V. i. 115 – 34

I would not have gone so far as to fight for Kurtz, but I went for him near enough to a lie. You know I hate, detest, and can’t bear a lie, not because I am straighter than the rest of us, but simply because it appals me. There is a taint of death, a flavour of mortality in lies, –

Conrad (1995: 49)

Every discourse has its genre. And every literary discourse, to reprise Roman Jakobson, represents an ‘organized violence committed on ordinary speech’ (1983: 2). We ask a primary question: ‘To which genre does this belong’ and more specifically in this instance, ‘What is the genre of a keynote address?’ Polonius taught us not to be scared of the hyphen and we can follow the courtier’s advice: scholarly-speech, scholarly-writing, scholarly-oratory, oratory-scholarship-lecture-polemic, and so on. However we define the genre of the keynote address, its pre-eminent place in the hierarchy of conference presentations remains undisputed. It has been said that the

doyen of Commonwealth literature in India C. D. Narsimhaiah (he never called it postcolonial literature) refused to give anything other than keynote addresses at conferences; once when he realized that his paper wasn't and made his anger known, the organizers quickly redefined all of the day's papers as keynote. At the 2004 ACLALS Conference in India there were 5 keynote speakers but all being the crème-de-la crème of postcolonial studies – Spivak, Bhabha, Ashis Nandy, Aijaz Ahmad and Helen Tiffin – there was no way in which they would have come without the prestige given to keynote speakers. Before that at a conference on Indian diasporas at the University of Saarland, Germany, the relative merits of keynote addresses vis-à-vis other presentations turned out to be the most important subject of discussion. This was a near week long conference and the organizers here unlike the organizers of the one-day seminar which C. D. Narsimhaiah attended could not retrospectively graduate all presenters as keynote speakers.

To get the generic specificity of a keynote address right I need to reflect on a great keynote address. But even so my account of it has to be presented as a lie of sorts, with names transposed so as to defend the memory of the dead and defer the wrath of the living. It was again a conference on Commonwealth Literature dominated by the likes of William Walsh and C. D. Narsimhaiah both of whom were, as T S Eliot said of Dr Johnson, dangerous people to disagree with. The keynote address at this conference held in India (in the mid seventies I believe) was delivered by Professor Hirday Nath ... who hailed from one of the older universities of Bihar, a state better known for dacoits, Lallu Prasad Yadav and peculiar names such as Badlu, Sookhia, Boodhaie, Biptee, Gheesa, Maikoo, Phoolbosea, Soomeria, Ulfat – names of emigrants on the *Leonidas*, the first indenture ship to Fiji, 1879 – which survived until recent times as names in Indo-Fijian families. The topic of his keynote address, which I have brazenly borrowed for my own, was 'The influence of Kalidasa on Shakespeare.' The Professor was not only a Shakespeare scholar having started single-handedly a journal devoted to only one Shakespearian play, namely *Hamlet, Prince of Denmark*, which appeared in its complete title form in all the issues of the journal, but also a renowned Sanskritist who had argued that Sanskrit was not an Aryan language but an Indian language which had traveled westward. I recall the sweeping gestures, the pointed finger, the spectacles desperately hanging from the tip of his nose as he looked around, accusingly at times, to remind the audience of the seriousness of the enterprise. It was a magnificent performance which stretched out from an hour to an hour fifteen, then an hour thirty and beyond. He spoke about the textual evidence which indicated beyond all doubt that Shakespeare must have heard plays and poems of Kalidasa, the great dramatist of the Gupta courts (fourth-fifth century A.C.E.), recited in the original from Sanskrit texts taken back to Europe by Vasco da Gama and his kin. And scholars that the Jesuits were, it would stand to reason that the texts would have been translated, in part, even as they were being recited. There may be no documentary evidence for this but the textual evidence is strong, the Professor argued. He referred to the loss of 'powers through his master's curse' a line from the *Meghaduta* ('The Cloud-messenger') which was paraphrased in *The Tempest*. He spoke about the *sutradhāra* (the director) speaking to actors in *Shakuntala* and connecting it to Hamlet's directives to the Player Queen and King. He spoke of the use of oracles (here Hindu gods) in *Kumarasambhava* ('The Birth of Kumara') and their presence in *The Winter's Tale*. He referred to much else besides, the recognition scenes, the coincidences, and even occasionally explained obscure references in Shakespeare through their Indo-European roots, for which the great source language was Sanskrit. There was no end in sight to this extraordinary hypnotic keynote address. It was then that the spell was

broken. C. D. Narsimhaiah, for the moment dislodged from his godlike status, stood up even as the Professor was in the middle of a line from *Shakuntala* (suṣṭhu gītam! eṣa hi gīta rāga anubaddhacita avṛttir ... 'Beautifully sung! For this audience all around me ...') even as the Professor spoke, Narsimhaiah said, 'Professor Hirday Nath ... Sir, what is this?' Pin drop silence for a fraction of a second and then, the audience exploded into laughter. Narsimhaiah need have said no more. Later another participant, an Irishman and a Joyce scholar suggested that perhaps the Professor should have re-titled his paper 'The influence of Shakespeare on Kalidasa.'

Does this story help us with the genre of the keynote address? We can play with it and come up with a number of characteristics – dramatic display, erudition, excess, self-assuredness and the like – but these do not give us a theoretical template, an entry point, a structure such as that found for epic and tragedy in Aristotle. Curiously as I thought about this paper for the past few months, a theoretical entry came from a student. Recently a student in an Honours Literary Theory class of mine gave a reading of a proto-deconstructionist text, Sigmund Freud's essay 'The "Uncanny"' (Jennipher McDonald, Murdoch University 26 March, 2007). She asked the class, 'Has anyone ever noticed, the structure of Freud's essay follows a hypnotic induction?' I have read a lot of psychoanalytic criticism and much of my theoretical work has echoes of it but no I had never come across a reading which effectively said that if you listen to Freud carefully in this essay, this is the work of someone who, trained as a hypnotist, harbors the dream of returning to it except that as a psychiatrist too much water had flowed under the bridge since the publication of *The Interpretation of Dreams* where, of course, the epigraph was a hypnotic line from Virgil: Flectere si nequeo superos, Acheronta movebo ('If I cannot bend the Higher Powers, I shall move the Infernal Regions,' *Aeneid* 7. 312). (The words are spoken by Juno who alone retains her instinctual faculty in Virgil's great epic).

Hypnotic induction therefore may well hold the key to a keynote address and I shall be using, in part, Freud's essay on the 'Uncanny' as my model. In terms of the ficto-critical anecdote about the Kalidasa professor's keynote address as hypnotic induction, may we not argue that judgment, more precisely critical judgment, actually verges on a lie? Let us then speak about the genre of the keynote address, which is hypnotic induction, with the substance of this paper, the story of a lie, which now, with this introduction, takes me back to the epigraphs from *Hamlet* with which I began this presentation. Apart from the implicit homage to the Kalidasa professor (whose interest in Shakespeare was deep), it is the use of the word 'lie' in *Hamlet* which struck me. I want to follow this through by strictly adhering to Freud's essay on the 'Uncanny' so that, as Lacan said of writing, there are anchoring points, points de caption, to keep us from going astray.

Two strategies, following Freud's essay on the 'Uncanny,' are immediately available to me. The first, a reading of the uses of 'lie' in the epigraphs from *Hamlet* already quoted; the second, the meanings of the word, in the case of the English 'lie,' with the help of the monumental Oxford English Dictionary. The first epigraph, Hamlet to Ophelia before the play within the play. A bawdy joke it is, since Ophelia's answer in the negative leads to Hamlet's not a little self-righteous reply: 'Do you think I meant country matters?' where 'country matters' refers to sex with a play on the first syllable of the word 'country'. The word 'lie' here is in its verb form but may it not carry as well the noun form, to tell an untruth, 'Lady, shall I tell an untruth in your lap?' And by implication perhaps as well the idea that Ophelia's lap is the site of untruth, the place where lies are played out. This is a work of great literary art, and we may be forgiven if we overdo

critical judgment here. But what is the truth of critical judgment itself? Charles Taylor in his powerful essay on the politics of recognition made the observation which carries a lot of force: 'If the judgment of value is to register something independent of our own wills and desires, it cannot be dictated by a principle of ethics.' (1994: 69). In other words, we cannot evaluate with reference to ethical propriety or shall we say even religious dogma- offensive as the text may be in these terms. And if it is not dictated by ethics, does it follow that truth conditions do not matter? In short can we lie our way through critical evaluation?

Our second epigraph from *Hamlet* has greater possibilities for a meditation on the word 'lie.' Hamlet has returned 'set naked on your kingdom' as he had warned Claudius in a note. This is the gravediggers' scene. Hamlet's opening question is innocent enough. 'Whose grave is it?' he asks, to which the gravedigger replies that it is his. Hamlet, quick-witted as usual, agrees, saying yes of course since you are lying in it. But 'thou liest in it' is also, 'you are telling a lie even as you are lying in it.' And in reply to Hamlet's play on words, the gravedigger, not to be outdone, comes up with, to paraphrase, 'I am not lying even as I dig and yet the grave is mine.' But if the grave is for the dead and not for the living, to say that it is yours is surely a lie, says Hamlet. And so goes the verbal parley. The joke is understood well by the gravedigger who replies, 'it is a quick lie' where it is both an easy lie (noun) as well as an easy place to lie (down). Hamlet gets his match here and acknowledges the gravedigger's verbal wit. The latter, he says, is 'absolute,' in other words he is both very precise and pure in language which means that one has to speak very accurately or else 'equivocation' or the ambiguous use of words would 'undo' both Hamlet and Horatio. Shakespeare uses 'lie' to dramatic effect here but also suggests, as elsewhere in the corpus, the uncanny nature of the word, which, as seen in *Hamlet*, functions at the cusp of truth and untruth. We find support for this when we turn to our second strategy, again keeping in mind Freud's model of hypnotic induction.

The hardcopy of the *OED* carries some 17 columns for the word 'lie', making this word amongst the most heavily glossed in the *OED*. The two words spelt 'lie' (the first producing both its noun and verb forms, the second only the verb) although both originating in the vernacular, that is Old English and its Old High German forms, clearly had divergent roots, their sounds coalescing later as a result of phonetic convergence. So 'lie' as noun and verb (originally OE *lyge* (noun), *leogan* (verb)) and 'lie' as verb alone (originally OE *licgan*) began as different sounding words with different meanings. The verb form (from OE *licgan*: hence *Beowulf* 3082 'Lēte hyne licgean þær hē longe wæs' ['let him lie dead there where he had been lying for long?']) equally difficult to gloss given its lengthy entries in the *OED* may be dispensed with here as it is really outside the scope of this presentation. The form that interests me is the one derived from the OE *lyge/leogan*. Here the initial meaning of lie as a substantive is clear: '1. An act or instance of lying; a false statement made with intent to deceive; a criminal falsehood. Phrase *to tell* (formerly *to make*) *a lie*.' In Kantian terms this is determinant judgment (a dictionary determines meaning). But in this case the dictionary also reflects (Kant's reflective judgment) when immediately after this definition we read: 'In mod. use, the word is normally a violent expression of moral reprobation, which in polite conversation tends to be avoided, the synonyms *falsehood* and *untruth* being often substituted as relatively euphemistic.' As intransitive verb 'lie' is defined as: 'to tell a lie or lies; to utter falsehood; to speak falsely.' It is interesting though that while the stand alone verb 'lie' combines with adverbs ('lie along, lie abroad, lie by, lie down, lie in') or at least performs an adverbial function, the other 'lie' (meaning both noun and verb)

also produces proverbial expressions such as ‘to lie in one’s teeth, to lie like a trooper.’ It is reflective judgment which is the key to critical meaning and to interpretation. Before I move on to examine ‘lie’ in three other languages, two features stand out for analysis. First, ‘lie’ is very much a vernacular word, with roots deep in languages which formed the base for English and if, indeed, we were to follow links between language and ideology it would appear that vernacular words, as opposed to borrowings, have a nitty-gritty aspect to them; they come closer to actual lived experience, and often, as in the case of English, are more likely to be mono- or bi- syllabic. Note though the word ‘true’ goes back to the Old English *tréowe* but not the word ‘false’ which comes to late OE (‘fals’) probably via Old Norse from the Latin *fals-us*. Modern High German adopted the word in an altered form (*volsch*). The *OED* we have noted refers to *falsehood* (formed by the addition of a suffix) and *untruth* (the addition of a negative prefix) as ‘relatively euphemistic.’ Second, lie (as in a ‘white lie’) may in fact be seen as truth; its two very different roots creating ambiguities of such high order that, like Hamlet, we too have to be very ‘absolute’ if we are to avoid equivocation which, of course, we can’t.

I turn to an ancient language, Sanskrit. Here the most common word for ‘lie’ is in fact a literal negation of ‘truth,’ hence from *satya*, ‘that which is true,’ *satyam* ‘truth,’ are formed their negatives, ‘*asatya*,’ ‘*asatyam*.’ This formation, however, carries a very different meaning from ‘lie’ as in English for ‘*satya*’ is formed from the root verb ‘*as*’ (‘be’) which has the meaning of being, presencing, and the like. By extension then an *asatya* statement is contrary to being itself. Hence in the grand lines of Drona to Yuddhisthira when he tells him that he will lay down his arms only when Yuddhisthira, the follower of absolute truth, of Dharma, lies, the words used by Drona carry echoes of *satyam*: *śāstram cāham rane jahyām śrutvā sumahad apriyam/ śraddheyavākyāt puruṣād etat satyam bravīmi te* (‘And I swear to you, I shall lay down my weapons only when I have heard a great untruth from a man whose word I trust’) (*Mahābhārata* VI (64) 41.61)).

Indeed Drona’s phrase ‘And I swear to you’ is presented as ‘And in truth I say to you’: *etat satyam bravīmi te*. Lie here has determinate meaning, and is linked to metaphysical conditions of being. Two other commonly found words in the literature may be examined. The first is *anṛtam* which means ‘wrong, fraud, lie.’ Hence *anṛtikal/anṛtin*, a liar. Here again the prefix ‘an-’ is used to make *ṛta* (past passive participle of $\sqrt{ṛ}$) ‘law, sacred or pious action, truth, righteousness’ into its very opposite. The second word is *mithyā*, ‘wrongly, falsely, untruly, deceitfully,’ which combines with *vad* to mean a lie (literally false speech) or is used with other nouns. Hence *mithyā-jñāna* (‘false conception, error, mistake’), *mithyā-darśaṇa* (‘false appearance’) or *mithyā-dṛṣṭi* (‘false doctrine, heresy, atheism’). In the *Rāmopākhyāna* (‘The Story of Rama’) section of the *Mahābhārata* (III. 258-275) Yudhisthira speaks of his *jñātibhir mithyā vyavasitair* (‘falsely resolved relatives’ or ‘relatives who were resolved on falsehood’) where his Kaurava relations are defined as being congenitally predisposed towards lies.

To modern readers there is something more than a little remiss in the use of words for ‘lie’ Why can’t a lie be called a lie? Why this heavy metaphysical baggage and why the need to construct a lie in terms of a negation of something else, a positive turned into a negative? Along with the definition from the *OED* we have quoted, we ask the question, ‘Is Sanskrit afraid of the moral reprobation the “real” word for lie carries and hence it is erased from the language?’ Does language compulsively avoid the lie? Is the body of the word itself, its corporeality, its utterance, its force far too threatening? Hindi, our next language, derived in large part from Sanskrit, carries this semantic over-coding or

unease too. Hindi carries both *asatya* and *anṛta* in its lexicon and their uses and meanings are indistinguishable from the earlier Sanskrit. But it has another word, which is closer to the definitions of ‘lie’ (noun) we find in English. The word is *jhūṭh*, and the word is more likely to have originated from the vernacular Prakrit *jhūṭṭa* rather than from the Sanskrit *juṣṭa*. In other words, it has indigenous or vernacular origin as is the case with the two ‘lies’ in English. This word carries no metaphysical baggage: it means what it says, *jhūṭh* perjures oneself, it is a lie, the opposite of which is *sat*, which of course goes back to Sanskrit *sat* and its derivative *satya*. There is another word which echoes *jhūṭh* and which is formed by the non-aspirate phoneme *j* and a long *ā*. This word *jūṭhā*, in many spoken versions of Hindi, and perhaps even in Fiji Hindi, echoes *jhūṭh* and both are often voiced as homonyms. *Jūṭhā* refers to food defiled by eating or drinking or deemed to have been contaminated as it had been touched by unclean hands, which would also include unclean castes. In Brahmanical rituals food that is *jūṭhā* is impure; for Indians generally the slightest insinuation of *jūṭhā* in an object defiles it. So if words can echo each other, then the lie as *jhūṭh* cannot be decoupled from lie as unclean, as *jūṭhā*, a point made, as we shall see later, in Conrad’s metaphor, ‘[there is] a flavour of mortality in lies’ (49). I suspect that for someone like the Mahatma that coupling was very real indeed – hence the extended discourses on both in his autobiography (Gandhi 1959). If we return to the interesting but less likely Sanskrit derivation (from *juṣṭa*) – the *Hindī Śabdsāgar* is more sympathetic to this derivation though (the dictionary specifically directs the reader to look up the word *jūṭhā* after defining *jhūṭhā*) – then we need to rethink both these words (*jhūṭh*, lie and *jūṭhā*, defiled food) as being derived from the same root, a possibility which would then explain an expression such as *jhūṭhai bhojan*, literally ‘false food’ for ‘defiled food.’

My fourth language is Fijian for which I am not particularly well adept having lost so much of the spoken form after these forty-five years of wandering. My references are also limited to A. Capell’s 1941 dictionary and what I have to say needs to be corrected by native informants amongst you. A further regret, unlike the other languages, I have not invested sufficient cultural capital into this language. The word which comes to mind, and one every child in Fiji regardless of race understands, is *lasu*. As in English (though not in Sanskrit or Hindi, where an additional verb is necessary, hence *jhūṭh bolnā*)) by itself it can be both a noun and a verb. Hence as a transitive verb *lasu-taka* means ‘to deceive, to lie to.’ In its reduplicative form (as *lasulasu*) it functions as the noun for ‘liar’ as well as a word for an impersonator: *vaka-lasulasu-ya* (‘to impersonate’). There is another word, *lawaki* which has the meaning of a deceiver or a betrayer, though perhaps not a liar, although when qualified it begins to gather other meanings around it: *lawaki vinaka* ‘a thoughtful man’ and *lawaki da*, which if memory does not betray me, is often used for a rotten (perhaps even a skillful?) liar. But I may be wrong here.

Language equivocates about ‘lie’ because the word is far too visceral; it defines something almost akin to absolute evil, which is why we skirt around it when it comes to using it, a point noted in the *OED* itself. And in a culture where the *talanoa* can exist only as laughter around events rendered fictionally, perhaps the word *lasu* has less moral force than say ‘lie’ or *jhūṭh*, let alone *asatya*. The word lie enters a complex social semiotic in Fijian.

We have heard though that lying is a compulsion and there are compulsive liars or there is a scene of lying to which we return as criminals do to the scene of the crime. The genre of a keynote address in many ways establishes a scene to which we return; its

substance often a lie, in this case substantially so- its form hypnotic induction. So far, may I suggest, the hypnosis has worked; from Kalidasa and Shakespeare to lexicography as 'absolute' evidence the keynote speaker builds up his case. The first mode of anecdotal narrative (the Kalidasa/Shakespeare scholar's speech) breaks the listeners' resistances; the second mode gives him or her scholarly evidence and a sense of security. But the story of the lie as part of the genre of hypnotic induction following Freud's 'The "Uncanny"' model also requires scholarly referencing, archival evidence beyond the dictionary (in itself rather lifeless). As part of the genre, Freud made extensive use of E. T. A. Hoffmann's 'The Sand-Man' to explain the true meaning of that story against, shall we say, the 'lie' that the effect of the uncanny in the story arises out of an intellectual uncertainty about the scene or the event. For Freud the meaning of Hoffmann's story (and Hoffmann Freud suggests is 'the unrivalled master of the uncanny' (Freud 1985:355)) lies in the uncanny reminding us of an inner compulsion to repeat. Writes Freud: 'an uncanny experience occurs either when infantile complexes which have been repressed are once more revived by some impression, or when primitive beliefs which have been surmounted seem once more to be confirmed'(372). It has nothing to do with 'intellectual uncertainty' (351) as Jentsch had concluded and as Todorov (1975) was to conclude later about the fantastic. Is Freud correcting a lie about what constitutes an uncanny experience or is he in fact making a statement, as I am suggesting, which is also an explanation of a lie: a compulsion to repeat which is pathological in origin? This is different certainly from the way in which Sanskrit seems to handle 'lie.' There as *asatyam* a lie is directly linked to *adharma* (and hence to immorality) which leads one to 'the Judeo-Christiano-Kantian hypothesis of the lie as radical evil and sign of the originary corruption of human existence' as Derrida puts it (Derrida 2001: 98). This is, after Kant, a determinate (or determined) definition of the lie, an absolute or transcendental definition (arising out of a determined judgment) where a lie lacks the stability of 'truth.' I pause here to think through the imperative of scholarly referencing embedded in Freud's essay rather than, by extension, reading 'lie' itself as a compulsion to repeat what has been repressed: here the lie becomes a symptom of a negation which the unconscious cannot entertain. The negation therefore can only exist as a lie in its positive vernacular form not as a negation of truth. A bridge may be established between what I've said already and what follows through another bit of scholarly evidence.

As I wrote this address memory took me back to Dilkusha (Fiji), where I spent the first seventeen years of my life (before going to New Zealand) and to the Dilkusha Methodist Church, where I read the Bible in Hindi. I returned to my copy of the Hindi Bible, the *Dharmaśāstra*, as I researched this address. I open the Book of Genesis. Its title is 'utpatti,' its description 'sṛṣṭhi ka varṇan'. The first word, utpatti, is from Sanskrit – ud + √pat, 'origin, birth'; the second again the Sanskrit word for creation followed by the Sanskrit word for description or account. What follows is the opening verse: ādi mem parmeśvar ne ākāś aur pṛthvī kī sṛṣṭhi kī ('In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth'). Re-reading it, I'm struck by the ease with which the line and the preamble (title, description) locate themselves in already existent high-Sanskritic religious discourses. For the 'genesis' here is indistinguishable from other Hindu origins. The first word is 'ādi' which links directly with the ādi kavi, with Valmiki, author of the *Rāmāyaṇa*, the Bible of Hindi speakers. The word for God (parmeśvar), for world (pṛthvī), for creation (sṛṣṭhi), are non-threatening to the Hindu and indeed present the Bible not as an alien, a different text, but as a continuation of Vedanta (the monistic version of Hinduism). What kind of psychology is at work here? One wonders why the missionary translators did not use Urdu words, words whose substantives are largely derived from

Arabic or Persian, languages which could more readily advance the idea of a monotheistic God. For after all the *Qur'ān* echoes the Bible almost everywhere. So is the Hindi Bible a lie, craftily making the Bible yet another Hindu holy book, so that heathens without a monotheistic God could be easily converted? After all, it is styled the *Dharmaśāstra*, the treatise on Dharma, which already exists in Hinduism as a book. All those years ago, did I, unawares, imbibe a text which, falsely, informed me that it was an unthreatening text which may be unproblematically added to Hindu canonical texts? As a discourse is the Hindi Bible a lie, a recoding to make the text less alien, less threatening? There is much work to be done here, work which would require considerable skills in comparative philology. But I must move on.

I turn to my final literary archive, one of the great texts of English literature to bring determinate and reflective judgments to a head. I speak of Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* and begin with the Conrad epigraph to this paper. Let me repeat it here: 'I would not have gone so far as to fight for Kurtz, but I went for him near enough to a lie. You know I hate, detest, and can't bear a lie, not because I am straighter than the rest of us, but simply because it appalls me. There is a taint of death, a flavour of mortality in lies, –.' Literature has many conventional equations (sex and death in the case of Jean Rhys' Antoinette, truth and beauty in the case of Keats's meditation on the Grecian urn, and so on); here we get another: for Marlow in *Heart of Darkness*, lying is a kind of dying. Of course, phonetically, one letter transposed makes all the difference here. Garrett Stewart who made the equation in an essay published in 1980, went on to suggest 'there is a corollary to the proposition that lying is a kind of dying. Truth, even grasped only in death, is a defiance of death....' (1980: 330). What is missed in Stewart's reading is the metaphor 'flavour of mortality' – flavour as taste combining 'lie' with unclean food, the Hindi *jhūṭh* (lie) echoing *jūṭhā* (impure food). And this takes us to the heart of the lie in Conrad's novel, the 'scene' of the lie which is also a meditation on a truth grasped by Kurtz only in death and which truth embodies a hidden lie about the world. Back in that ivory-like 'sepulchral city' (its third usage here), basking in the after-glow of imperial wealth, Marlow looks up Kurtz's intended. Kurtz 'had something to say' (Conrad 1995: 113), he had 'pronounced a judgment upon the adventures of his soul' (112), these are the thoughts that come to Marlow. Kurtz, it seems, was buried not as a name but as 'something in a muddy hole' (112). The judgment he had made about the world (reflective rather than determinate since it is not definitional) had all the hallmarks of truth; it was not a lie as 'The horror! The horror!' (112) was 'the expression of some sort of belief; it had candour, it had conviction, it had a vibrating note of revolt in its whisper, it had the appalling face of a glimpsed truth' (113) which contrasted ever so dramatically with city walkers (faces full of 'stupid importance') whose 'knowledge of life' was to Marlow 'an irritating pretence' (114). The word 'appalling' ('the appalling face of a glimpsed truth') strikes us because earlier, in the passage quoted as an epigraph, it was the lie that appalled Marlow ('because it appalls me'). Here Kurtz's utterance ('the horror! the horror') receives the nominalised form of the verb, the 'appalling face'. But was Kurtz deluded by self-deception or did he possess the capacity for self-deception as the journalist who turns up anxious to know something about his 'dear colleague' suggests: 'he could get himself to believe anything – anything' (116). In Kantian terms, self-deception, of course, is not a lie.

It is at this point – after Marlow had met his aunt, the company official, the cousin and the journalist – that the novel moves towards its final scene, the scene with Kurtz's Intended. The road to it needs establishing. Marlow is left with the slim packet of letters and the girl's portrait which looked, for the moment, flattering as we get a suggestive

explanation: 'the sunlight can be made to lie too' (116). That adverbial afterthought with 'too' – does it suggest that other matters do lie and the sunlight, source of clarity, can too? He awaits in a 'lofty drawing-room' struck by the 'tall marble fireplace' cold and 'monumental in its whiteness' (118), and the grand piano with keys one suspects made of ivory. The Intended comes forward; a little over a year had passed since Kurtz's death and she is still in mourning. Her first words to Marlow are, 'You knew him well' (119). Each question, each answer, each statement, as they echo each other, is marked, it seems, by a growing darkness: 'he was a remarkable man'(Marlow), 'I knew him best'(the Intended)/'You knew him best' (Marlow), 'You were his friend', 'I understood him better than any one on earth' (the Intended), '[He had] the gift of the great' (the Intended)/ 'Yes I know' (Marlow), 'His words, at least, have not died' (the Intended)/'His words will remain' (Marlow), 'Yes, his example' (the Intended)/'His example too'(Marlow), 'I shall never see him again' (the Intended)/'Never see him!' (Marlow), 'He died as he lived' (the Intended)/'His end ... was in every way worthy of his life' (Marlow) (118–22). Chiastic performatives all, and it is growing dark – the Intended's 'forehead, smooth and white,' alone remained 'illuminated' (120). In the 'stream of darkness' stood the Intended, another tragic figure, like Kurtz with whom Marlow had been 'to the very end.' Words to which he adds, 'I heard his very last words ...' At this point Marlow says to his immediate audience of four on the *Nellie* as it awaited the turn of the tide, 'I stopped in fright' (123), just as he had stopped during his first meditation on the concept of the lie much earlier.

'I stopped in fright.' This is a memorially constructed narrative and Marlow knows the ending, an ending which will end in a monumental lie, a lie which becomes necessary because the truth of the world (the metaphysical essence of which is essentially nihilistic, an apocalyptic sublime, hence Francis Ford Coppola's title of his film, loosely based on Conrad's journey) because the truth of the world can only be reconfigured as a lie or else living in it would become unbearable. The dialogue needs to be repeated verbatim; paraphrasing or critical commentary just won't do, even though the passage is among the best known in literature.

"Repeat them," she said in a heart-broken tone. "I want – I want – something – something – to – to live with."

'I was on the point of crying at her, "Don't you hear them?" The dusk was repeating them in a persistent whisper all around us, in a whisper that seemed to swell menacingly like the first whisper of a rising wind.

"The horror! the horror!"

"His last word – to live with," she murmured. "Don't you understand I loved him – I loved him – I loved him!"

'I pulled myself together and spoke slowly.

"The last word he pronounced was – your name." (123)

Marlow's language is at breaking point here; another chiastic construction follows – 'I knew it – I was sure!' says the Intended to which Marlow adds, 'She knew. She was sure.' The horror of the classic definition of a lie hits him, a lie as an absolute wrong, an act of sacrilege. 'The heavens did not fall' says Marlow and here, at this point, the editor of my edition (Robert Hampson) reminds us of the 'Latin maxim "Fiat justitia, ruat coelum" ("Let justice be done, though the heavens fall"), which Conrad had quoted in a letter to Marguerite Poradowska in March 1890, shortly before he set out for the Congo' (139). But even in its negation – the heavens did not fall – there is a taste of death: lying is a kind of dying. For a moment, a fleeting moment – 'and then my heart stood still,'

says Marlow – there is a sense of death as Marlow, one suspects, internalizes as best he can St Augustine’s argument about the intentional lie: ‘there is no lie, whatever one may say, without the intention, the desire, or the explicit will to deceive (*fallendi cupiditas, voluntas fallendi*)’ (Derrida 2001: 68). The point here is that Marlow did not go to the Intended with the explicit intention to lie, to deceive. The lie emerges out of a dramatic necessity; it grows out of the dialogic situation and becomes, as it happens in art, a matter of reflective judgment.

And upon reflection, had Marlow rendered Kurtz the ‘justice which was his due?’ It is a question which he asks himself and he replies he couldn’t have done proper justice by telling the Intended the horrifying truth for the truth would have been ‘too dark altogether.’ Kurtz had arrived at a frightening truth about humanity; to reinforce that truth Marlow has to act out the lie because it is a lie to which being is bonded, which indeed is responsible for the frightening insight about the world as ‘horror.’ For Marlow to lie is an act in performance: metaphysics acting itself out, because this is the essence of being. ‘The horror! The horror!’ comes only to people who know that the world and its people are liars. This is one reading, and not a particularly happy one; a reading which I arrive at upon the first narrator’s commentary at the end of Marlow’s narrative: ‘Marlow ceased, and sat apart, indistinct and silent, in the pose of a meditating Buddha’ (123). The point here, the departure point, is that for the Buddha the condition of being was suffering: ‘To be is to suffer.’ In *Heart of Darkness* it is inflected to read ‘To be is to lie,’ a frightening, dark truth about our being. The solution, the middle, the *madhyamika*, path is what Marlow follows.

In his essay on the ‘History of the lie’ Derrida notes that the classic concept of the lie is at odds with the idea of ‘lying to oneself,’ of ‘internal self-deception’ (2001: 96). In the rigorous, classical definition ‘to lie will always mean to deceive the other *intentionally* and *consciously* and while *knowing* what it is that one is *deliberately* hiding, therefore while not lying to oneself’ (96). And this, in a clear homage to St Augustine, fits into the Kantian doctrine of the lie as ‘absolute decline’ (97) and the lie as ‘radical evil and the sign of the originary corruption of human existence’ (98), definitions that affirm as I have suggested the point that there is something visceral, something almost chthonic about the word lie as seen in the origin of the word in the vernacular, at least in two of the languages (English and Hindi) we have cited. However, Derrida, locating the meaning of lie within a system of *différance*, cannot buy outright the Kantian, originary, classical definition since built into it is the teleology of truth and the sacred belief that truth will always triumph. In other words, there can never be a history of a lie since, well, it is tautologous; there is after all a ‘stable and metaphysically assured opposition between veracity and lie’ (92). In terms of this argument, an argument which, after Kant, emphasized absolute duty to tell the truth, a juridical formulation (‘a lie always harms another ... does harm to humanity ... as it vitiates the source of right’ (75)), there is ‘an immanent necessity to tell the truth, whatever may be the expected effects or the external and historical contexts,’ as Derrida glosses (75). In terms of this determinate Kantian argument, Marlow’s reflections on the lie has no place.

‘In order to lie, in the strict and classical sense of this concept, one must know what the truth is and distort it intentionally’ (Derrida 86). But does fiction define the lie determinately? Marlow, as the interlocutor, is in a sense outside of fiction: indeed it is only when we move from ‘Marlow’ to ‘Conrad’ as author-function that Marlow himself becomes a function of fiction. But this is the lie of fiction – ‘the most beautiful of lies.’ So how can I bring my argument together, an argument which on the one hand suggests

that as a performance a keynote address is a hypnotic induction so that you are slowly enchanted into believing the truth of the discourse; and on the other hand follows a clearly defined scholarly writing technique, both of which come together in the address's prototype, Freud's remarkable essay on the 'Uncanny'? Either way, the effect is the same, and I must now summarize quickly.

First, culture insofar as it is represented through language, always represses harsher truths about itself and these truths are contained in words which are vernacular in origin and therefore more likely to undergo semantic deferral or are avoided. Hence in both English and in Hindi words for 'lie' when drawn from the vernacular have a finality about them; they are indeed irreducible, they have a performative function, which is why Marlow recognizes in them 'a taint of death, a flavour of mortality' (49). In reality though they do not remain as performatives, they move into J. L. Austin's constatives, they undergo qualification, they are shadowed by modalities, they become reflective judgments. Sanskrit does this so clearly as it places 'lie,' the concept, in opposition to truth and fiction shifts from classical, rigorous and determinative judgment to reflective judgment, moving away, on philological analogy, from lies in the vernacular ('lie,' *jhūṭh*) to untruth, *asatya*. Both come together with such graphic force in Conrad where on this matter, the determinate in Marlow's first extended account of the lie becomes reflective judgment at the end. The determinate, that is the first definition of the word 'lie,' comes at the end of conversations Marlow has had with the first-class agent, an aristocrat it seems, whose job it was to make bricks, as he, Marlow, awaits the arrival of rivets with which to fix his 'wretched, old, mangled steamboat' (51). This judgment on the 'lie' is followed by a pause in the narrative as the first narrator's voice intervenes. For a moment Marlow is silent and then tells his four immediate listeners about the difficulty of conveying 'life-sensation ...that which makes its truth, its meaning – its subtle and penetrating essence' (50) in words. But here in his meditation on the lie we do get precisely the determinate, the exact, the exclusive judgment on it, for the lie is detestable, it is appalling, it carries the 'taint of death' (49). And yet Marlow lies, and when he does so he never refers to the act as a lie; instead the act is transformed into the impossibility of conveying a life-sensation, the point he had made to the listeners of his story on the *Nellie*. And the first narrator had noted Marlow's thoughts: 'He paused again as if reflecting' (50). The discovery of the word 'reflecting' on our part is fortuitous; it is not consciously part of the symbolic design of the novel. And yet it has critical significance because the lie when told (but the word 'lie' is not used) is not condemned as a classical, originary, final, lie; it is converted into reflective judgment. True, the heavens did not fall, the house did not collapse; but there is none of that deathly self-condemnation, the 'flavour of mortality in lies' alluded to earlier either. 'Let justice be done, though heavens fall,' Marlow recalls the Latin maxim when he asks 'Would they have fallen, I wonder, if I had rendered Kurtz that justice which was his due?' (123). And the justice? The truth about the world as a lie: 'The horror! the horror.' This was the truth which effectively said that the world itself is a lie (the Buddha we recall had defined being itself as suffering, and the world as an illusion). But the word 'lie' cannot be uttered, it is in the vernacular (and the use implies an originary, sacred transgression); it has to be displaced, metaphorically displaced, deferred in the work of art, for art, as my argument goes, can only make a reflective judgment, not a determinative one. To confront the word 'lie' – in English – is too great an 'horror'; and this is precisely what Kurtz had done.

'The influence of Kalidasa on Shakespeare' is not a lie in a keynote address which, as hypnotic induction, as fiction, does not deal with determinate judgment. We are in the

domain of reflective judgment of the kind offered by Conrad. It takes us to something Derrida does not mention directly but about which he is certainly aware. There is a history of the literary lie but more generally there is a history of literature as a lie as there is, too, a history, philologically available, about a degree of cultural coyness about the word lie, which in English is from the vernacular. More interestingly in as much as 'lie' enters into reflective rather than determinate judgment, one could write about the lie as part of the enterprise of fiction which, of course, likes to fake truths. Here we come across a Horace Walpole declaring that his Gothic tale *The Castle of Otranto* is a translation of an Italian story found in manuscript or a Laclos making it quite clear that he is not responsible for the text's amorality because all he's done is edit letters that came his way and to which he gave the collective title *Dangerous Liaisons*. But would one therefore call either Walpole or Laclos a liar? Would one call Adela Quested a liar for making the claim that she had been sexually molested in the 'extraordinary' Marabar Caves? Or E.M. Forster for not telling us what exactly happened there as David Lean did in the film version? When Rushdie corrects a lie by changing 'white troops' to 'crack troops,' (in writing about the Amritsar massacre) does this really make any difference to the tenor of *Midnight's Children*, especially when other lies are not corrected? Is literature itself the exemplary genre of the lie or are these errors factual errors arising out of ignorance, which are not to be confused with lies? These may be argued but perhaps to little philosophical ends as, after Plato, literature after all is an imitation, and what it imitates is already a fake anyway. All philosophy is a footnote to Plato; all literature footnotes to a great lie. Let me conclude differently, bringing the two-pronged strategies used thus far together, suggesting that lies in literature are not determinate but reflective judgments on the lie. To oppose veracity and the lie in literature is to distort how meaning is constructed in the work of art. A keynote address hypnotically induces you to believe in literature as a lie, which is not a lie.

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[Return to Contents](#)

