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Literature as a Deadly Performance Artwork

ABSTRACT

Starting from Tom McCarthy's statement that his literature should rather be regarded as performance artwork, as well as from his artistic manifesto, this paper analyzes the novel *Remainder*, paying attention to the elements that compose an alternative reality, articulated in the narrator's own post-traumatic visions. The focus is on the tension between the original trauma and its obsessive re-enactments, and on the subjective constructions of narrative and visual explanations of the apparent accidental events.

KEYWORDS

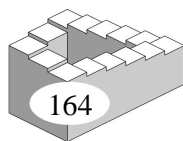
Tom McCarthy; *Remainder*; Necronauts; Narrative identity; Re-enactment; Autism.

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Motto: "...because this is how I understand literature – as a kind of remix or echo chamber. What's going on in a literary work are other literary things disinterred, cannibalized and recombined. The narrator is an anthropologist."¹

This paper analyzes the physical and emotional spaces created by the intricate trajectory of Tom McCarthy's protagonist, the narrative voice of the novel *Remainder*.² Considering that the performance space that such a novel engenders bears many resemblances to early postmodern literature as well as to the avant-garde tradition, I analyze the elements that develop in the protagonist's visionary projects and their consequences for his emotional state. Although hybrid, the overall conclusions prove that the borders between artistic genres are diffuse and that the exploration of this particular diffusion could be an appropriate manner to tackle contemporary subjectivity. In the mean time, certain tropes and motifs often used and developed by McCarthy reveal fears and emotional or cognitive disorders that present many similarities to autism spectrum symptoms, hiding thus a substratum worth exploring in connection to the interplay between narrative creativity and alternative perceptions of the outer world, as



tion.

***The Necronautical Manifesto* and the novel as artwork**

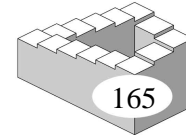
Published for the first time in 2005 by the Parisian *Metronome*, initially appreciated only within underground readers' circles, rejected by many editors, Tom McCarthy's novel *Remainder* appeared in Great Britain later, enjoyed an enormous success, reached great critical reviews and was classified as one of the best novels of the last decade, the author being one of the few writers that emerged from the contemporary art world. McCarthy is the promoter of an unconventional artistic movement, *International Necronautical Society*, in whose manifesto he explains the need to change the parameters of people's life and death, the mapping of the space that death creates, and to unveil the virtual avatars of death that bomb us inside an information-based society.³ Nonconformist both in content and in form, this novel confirms the parallelism between form and subject, bringing in the foreground the unexplainable and extremely strong experiences of a character who suffers a traumatic incident, around which the remainder of the narrative gravitates.

The initial trauma, the extreme sensoriality, the repeatable scenario, the self-reclusion into an individualized, built-up world that preserves its autonomy up to a certain point, the solipsism, the flawed communication and the apparent lack of empathy towards the others make this novel an excellent example of the synthesis of the themes already discussed in my doctoral thesis.⁴ Its narrative structure engenders eloquent formulas, filled with experiences that resemble the autistic autobiographies. Narrated in the first person, the novel challenges the

well as alternative means of communicating emo-

tion. relation author-narrator-protagonist, focusing on a narrator that seems to survive more than the protagonist whom it identifies with, while telling his story. The narrator gains self-confirmation precisely due to the liminal experience of crossing the barriers that separate him from actual death – the final point of existence. The end of the novel leaves suspended both the narrator and the protagonist since its final image shows the circular flight of a plane at a considerable distance above the ground. The narrative voice accompanies the protagonist until the moment the discourse is suspended, and its identity exists as long as the protagonist's actions leave it unhidden. Visibly influenced by the mechanisms of the society of the spectacle, the novel carefully cultivates an uncanny apprehension of time and space coordinates, subjectifying each sequence, challenging the reader to enter a reading act contaminated by diverse media images. A formal *mélange*, a hybrid formula, the *Remainder* turns life and death into speculums and spectacles by means of a discourse where the autism of the central character stays hidden at the borderline between norm and transgression. The narrator's trauma is a kind of ethical position, argues McCarthy when asked about it in interviews.

In one of these interviews,⁵ McCarthy speaks about trauma and writing as being the building blocks of subjectivity. He equates trauma with its Freudian legacy, connecting it to the pleasure deriving from the re-enactment that gives the traumatized heroes just as much pleasure as pain, while allowing the sensorial memory to access the images of a primal scene. The speed that connects all these experiences owes much to one of McCarthy's mentors, the Futurist Marinetti, whose visions he often quotes. The manifesto of INS is a pastiche of Marinetti's manifestos. The violence is followed by repetition and then by stylized violence.



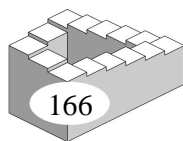
Other common references for McCarthy's artwork are Blanchot, Derrida, Heidegger, Kafka, Ballard (having *Crash* as a reference frequently mentioned) and many others, to the point that he associates his creation to a *Frankenstein-like, reassembled document*. McCarthy uses the avant-garde model as a defunct model, cherishing it for the intricate equilibrium between art, politics, philosophy and literature.⁶

Re-enacting the original trauma

Victim of a bizarre accident involving an unidentified object fallen from the sky, an object we know nothing about except the fact that it is mysteriously connected to telecommunication technology, the protagonist only remembers vague sensations and incomplete images related to the circumstances of the trauma; the event can only be traced to the space between the folds of memory, due to the fragmentary impressions it left behind. The post-traumatic healing process does not seem to end throughout the development of the novel, and the first pages depict the protagonist as aware of his derisive state and of his temporary incapacity to coordinate his own body. Fighting simultaneously with both mind and body memory, he recomposes his movements gradually and, in parallel with this attempt to regain his body, he tries to get his personal past back, too. In this context of memories and sensations that are always marked by weakness, the only true event seems to be the exorbitant money sum that the protagonist receives from *the other side* (named like this throughout the whole novel, leaving thus no possibility to decipher the one guilty for the accident) in exchange for his silence concerning the case. McCarthy's sense of absurd reminds us of Kafka and Beckett, but it also agglutinates numerous new elements that deepen the discursive and ontological

impasse. In the meantime, he inherits an interest for corporate structures from the works of Kafka, Burroughs or Pynchon, where he notices the encoding and replaying of certain philosophical tropes and motifs for which death is a central figure.⁷ It is particularly here that he justifies his choice for an artwork-like narrative, literature presenting a sort of impurity, since it is not a self-contained unit. Nevertheless, there is a certain sense of connectedness⁸ and this helps us think of the relationship between ethics and literature. The iconic example *par excellence* for such an event that reverberates in personal and collective narratives until it actually happens, was 9/11. To McCarthy, this provides the most appropriate example for the re-enactments of certain narratives that haunt the imaginary long before they happen on the real stage.⁹

The acceptance of the agreement that reduces the narrator to silence concerning the traumatic event is marked by a disturbing awakening to a totally new existence where visions of space are standardized just like in extremely meticulous elevation mappings that bring to mind Deligny's experiments in the 60s¹⁰ and the surprisingly accurate maps realized by autistic savants. The perpetual feeling of an interconnectedness of things, the alienating urban sounds (emphasized like echolalia in autistic symptoms), confer a rather disarticulated image of the whole, whereas the maps and the visual memory act as desperate attempts to capture the external coordinates of the real. In the absence of this possibility, a strange introversion follows, one marked by a desperate search for authenticity. The process of discovering the trajectory brain-command-execution is first of all physical and only secondarily doubled by a reflexive one. Therefore, the protagonist feels obliged to visualize strange circuits that were unconscious and instinctive until that moment.



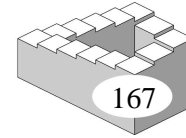
Nevertheless, the behavior *learned* during a therapy that brings him on the verge of obsession, does not confer any of the authenticity or honesty that he had been looking for inside the smallest actions decomposed, one by one, into infinitesimal units. In this moment of crisis, the revelation takes place in a cinema hall where the protagonist watches Robert De Niro acting in a movie scene. Strangely enough, the cinematographic reality seems more real than the immediate one, probably also due to the cinematographic mechanism of post-traumatic memory that the protagonist observes in his own case.¹¹ The contrast between the character evolving in front of the camera and the falsity of daily existence makes the narrator regard his own actions as being second-hand, totally inauthentic, and this attitude is gradually self-alienating.¹²

The subjective flow of events and the architecture of disaster

The disrupted-self, McCarthy says in the interview, is a self that is measured and validated by the authenticity of its emotion, and the re-enacting artist resembles a child with a Lego.

What the protagonist looks for is getting used to himself, the natural undivided state, a *here and now* of being in the world. The show offered for the viewers in the space he finds himself in (a *non-place*¹³ – the airport) is that of an infinite array of people regarded as involuntary amateur actors acting their own role, going through the same process like him, far from the possibility of an immediate relation to things.¹⁴ The intense feeling of being present and the actuality of the lived experience are thus revealed unexpectedly and the acute awareness of space causes the crucial moment that enhances the experience of one's own

presence. The reverse of this situation are the moments of extreme alienation, moments that transform the space once more, coloring it, intensifying it statically, similar to the mental landscapes described by Daniel Tammet.¹⁵ The intense observation of the surrounding world facilitates the discovery of certain patterns whose hallucinating repetition is being tested by the protagonist later in the novel. Until this moment only looked at, the show begins to ask for participation right when, noticing a crack on the wall, the protagonist goes through a strong *déjà-vu* that determines him to re-enact the whole scene that that particular image awakens inside his emotional memory, unexplainably and out of the context. What we are not told or even suggested is whether or not all the following re-enactments are successions of affective images, empty of any significance when re-enacted, or if their clearly determined order could lead towards epiphanies of a reality long searched for. From this moment on, the protagonist works on the creation of a space that would be identical to the one apprehended in the *déjà-vu* moment and for entering into this space – the only one capable of making him feel real again. As a consequence, his effort goes into fixing internally the vision he had just had in order to be able to retrieve it afterwards and to re-enact it. The narrative follows the hallucinating trajectory of the character delving deeper into building a developed vision starting from the initial image of the crack in the wall. All the excrescences added to this initial situation are either the fruit of the hero's traumatized imagination, or the elements that irrupt during the deliberate anamnesis process. Activated by a violent Proustian mechanism, memory and the flow of imagination, hidden in the expanding inner world, constitute the most suggestive elements in the narrative content of the first half of the novel. The image of the world as miniature, uncontrollably



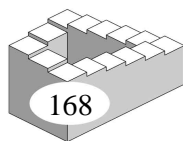
developed inside the protagonist's mind, is recurrent, preparing the way for an attempt to diminish the external world, for *making it shrink*¹⁶ in order to bring it to controllable dimensions. For the moment, the only elements that connect the inner vision with the physicality of the outside world are the schemes that the protagonist sketches meticulously, trying to capture each detail of his dreams in order to be able to transpose it into reality afterwards.

In the abovementioned interview, the author admits that we can only get "the echo of a stone being dropped in a pool originally in a past that's irretrievable."¹⁷ The absence of any known witness to the event related to above makes it difficult to have a clear statement concerning it. Therefore, we can only access reports, endless iterations and re-iterations of long forgotten events.¹⁸ And the Freudian death drive McCarthy often alludes to in his interviews, is similar to the one experienced by great characters of Western literature such as Don Quixote and Hamlet. There's a mantra one follows in this kind of attempts, McCarthy says, and the mantra tells us that everything must leave some kind of mark. The literature he creates consequently resembles a remix or an echo chamber. Surprisingly enough, McCarthy's references in terms of ethics also include Sade.

The ritual and its Facilitators

The passage to the second stage of the narrative, that of the confrontation between the protagonist (represented by his own visions) and the flow of events that undermine his plans, begins with the presentation of the Facilitators. Their figure condenses ritual and affective attributes many times discussed in connection to autistic narratives, and is superposed images that are clearly influenced by today's contemporary cinematography. Fatherly, discreet, mysterious, intelligent, potent, these Facilitators are personified by Nazrul Ram Vyas, an Indian man belonging to the upper caste of the Brahmins. Associated to the figure of the wise man, of the scribe, of the person recording, but also the one dealing with various transactions, facilitating the exchange and the business, he represents an underground company sought by an incredible amount of rich people, whose main field is that of realizing the most unusual services for the ones capable of paying no matter what sum in order to see their eccentric dreams turned into reality.

The sensation that one's own actions are duplicated, unnatural, acquired, compiled, makes the protagonist direct an entire context where, for just few fractions of a second, he could feel the plenitude of real existence, in an otherwise quite banal context – going down the interior stairs of a building, the unexpected sight of a neighbor lifting a bag of garbage, the smell of frying liver and the sound of the piano exercises of a composer living in the same edifice. As a result, the protagonist asks the Facilitators (who preserve an incredible database enabling them to respond promptly to any demand from their clients) to do something that, at a closer look, appears as representative for the narrative mechanisms of the

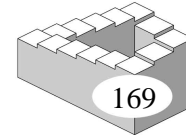


novel: the extremely detailed reconstruction of a world of the subjective past, populating it with individuals that do not just act, but participate actively, as if everything were real, happening for the first time, but not going too far from the original script. The re-enactment affects not only the elements inside the building, but also the landscapes, sounds, smells that were felt coming from the outside. This entire scaffolding must enable two modes – on and off, meaning it can be stopped and started whenever the narrator decides.¹⁹ During all this time, he can walk freely, in an endless series of permutations, inside this re-enacted world.²⁰

The paradoxical attempt to realize the successive re-enactments contains many subtle allusions to art history. The references to Michelangelo's poetics regarding the elimination of the remainder of the stone block and the freeing of the inner sculpture speak for themselves and also explain the novel's title. The irrelevant information has to be eliminated but, for the elimination to be possible, the flow of detailed information has to be lived.²¹ The discoveries made under these circumstances belong to a dialectics between logic, reason and the leap into the irrational, to an infiltration of the arbitrary and to the godlike status that, consciously or not, the hero assumes. In this quest for authenticity, the trajectory once thought of individually, subjectively, starts being interrupted by premonitory apparitions, electric shortages that the protagonist observes and anxiously waits for, trying to discover their dynamic inside the obsessive repetitions of the re-enactments. There is a very interesting moment when the mainly technical and visual discourse is interspersed by linguistic shortages: words that don't exist, but preserve a certain origin connection to key-words of the story, or others, of symbolic value, showing up out of the blue inside the many-folded pictorial

thinking of the protagonist. Thus, a concept such as *speculation* is being discussed, contextualized in its word family, in the light of its own etymology²² and of the implication for the present state of the protagonist – that of a high-degree exposure, doubled by an intense observation of things and by a duplicitous voyeurism. One mention is necessary: no camera records or sees whether or not the participants in the re-enactment accomplish their tasks, and the only guarantee is their own honesty towards the project.

In the apparent order established narratively, doubt creeps in due to the apprehension of an imminent catastrophe, already announced by premonitory visions. The protagonist delves into the vortex of the enjoyable sensation offered by the re-enactments of the sequences but, almost every time, he feels the existence of a subtle reality of things that remains inaccessible to knowledge. Therefore, his incursions into the re-enactable reality become increasingly violent, culminating with the hardly explainable decision to rob a bank, organizing the entire re-enactment of the robbery without letting the bank staff know what is happening. This re-enactment finally takes place, turning into an escape from the solipsistic world of autonomous re-enactments through a veritable incursion into the real. The world of the most famous bank robbers, reconstructed by the protagonist, next to his faithful Facilitator, faces the world of the daily bureaucratic masks, and the result is crime, committed by the protagonist himself, led by his fascination for the authenticity of the transgressive gesture. Up until this denouement, however, his attitude becomes strikingly similar to that of a detective, a reference already natural in all other cases of narratives of the autistic experience. The isolation of details, the composition of a puzzle inside which these pieces could work together, imagining all the possible scenarios, with or without chances of becoming



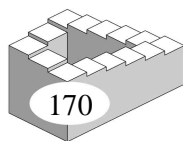
true, are elements that are part of the arsenal that the protagonist is armed with in order to answer the increasing need for reality, therefore for danger and for adrenaline.²³ The archeology of the investigation reveals the murder, the liberating violence, the pure gesture charged, as much as possible, with existential meaning. A whole past of art and ritual is hidden between the manifold demonstrations led by the detective. The only exception in this case is the fact that the protagonist's demonstration takes place inside his own person, regarding him as both subject and object, reducing the world to elements that could converge into a process of finding a lost personal identity.

Yet, the trauma prevents him permanently from coagulating a self-identity, and the violence the accident leaves behind is diffuse and repeatable. The choice of a specific way of committing the gesture is reinforced by a whole history diminishing the force that the personal history vainly looks for.²⁴ The obsessive idea of death enters the equation because of a fascination for dissolution into space, for an elimination of the barriers that distance the subject from the world he perceives through the senses, for the elimination of the acknowledgement of this separation.²⁵ The space of this re-encounter is a sacred one, and entering it is synonymous with an act of blessing. The protagonist's mission surpasses the individual dimension after this act of acknowledgement, and it becomes an attempt to cause something great for mankind, directing the attention towards the manner in which the soul leaves the body gradually.²⁶

The diagnostic and the dissolution into space

The narrative is counter-balanced by the well-placed considerations of the medical discourse. As a preamble of the denouement, a physician shows up and explains the character's propensity towards the endless intensification of the re-enacted sensations. The symptoms of trauma are manifest in his case, and could be related to an unconscious return to the source of the traumatic moment, meant to resuscitate the state of wellness and clarity.²⁷ Immediately after, nevertheless, the hypothesis is derisively framed by the use of a whole series of thaumaturgic techniques referred to in the narrative discourse, including the shamanistic practices where the re-enactment and the assuming of the violent gesture, of the trauma by the leader of the spirits could have liberating effects. Even the detective scenario that had been alluded to in the passages dealing with the criminal investigation, is turned upside down when, preparing the armed bank robbery, the narrator documents from one of the most famous bank robbers ever. Using this actual bank robber's clues concerning the possible reactions of the people inside the bank, the protagonist makes this last attempt to regain authenticity starting from the idea of committing something criminal. Thus, from a certain perspective, he joins the series of literature's famous murderers for whom crime had the force to make a destiny become authentic and to attest an identity, as mentioned by Dean Koonz in the novel *Odd Thomas*.²⁸

The end of the narrative exacerbates the visual dimension, thus supporting the parallel with the inner evolution of the protagonist. After fighting the external reification of the affective images haunting him, he starts to wish for the dissolution into the



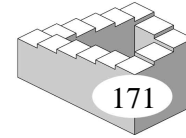
mental landscapes that never seem to satisfy him fully. The de-materialisation, the transformation into a diffuse, light, ethereal entity is the state he permanently looks for, and it is echoed textually by means of sequences that are often oxymoronic. The visions of his own extinction, along with the vanishing of the rest of the world, are uncannily beautiful and cathartic. The ascension the protagonist dreams of is meant to transform his last journey in the world into a page of history, his mission being perceived as redeeming for the ones around him.²⁹ The pictorial dimension and the force of example that surround the images he has of the others, simultaneously with his own apotheosis, wrap his personal destiny into a mythical dimension, sacralising it.

The final perceptible operation is that of an image out of focus. The photo camera functions perfectly until the moment when it is replaced by the blurred vision of things having margins which gradually vanish. The whole procession represents an echo of the previous re-enactment, and the actants seem to be part of an unconscious ritual.³⁰ The dimensions of reality become more ambiguous, and the process of delving into the real is just like a photo processing.³¹ While the image is processed in the protagonist's mind, generating the ecstatic experience of the event that appears suddenly on the film, the narrative flow stagnates, anticipating the repetitive process that the final brings for all the characters. The money, the blood and the light are leitmotifs of the last sequences of re-enactment that, for the given moment, cannot be stopped anymore. A whole history of Situationism and Actionism in contemporary art survives in the substratum of the reconstruction that becomes real while it actually happens. The question concerning what will happen to the narrative fiction inside this evolution towards authenticity stays open. The image persisting in the end

is that of the trails left by the plane between the clouds, next to the sensation of lightness that had never been felt until that moment. This way, the novel also constitutes a meditation on the lack of value of the liberating gesture, of the subjugation of any kind, of the social and psychological conditions that society induces. The passage towards invisibility is the final desiderate but, in order to reach it, one has to delve into the matter and into the mechanisms through which matter wraps individuality.

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<http://vimeo.com/43235421> *Literature and Violence*, interview given by Tom McCarthy in 2012 (last accessed in March 2013).

http://necronauts.net/manifestos/1999_times_manifesto.html (last accessed in March 2013).

Notes

¹ http://www.interviewmagazine.com/culture/tom-mccarthy#_, interview given by Tom McCarthy to Christopher Bollen (last accessed in March 2013).

² Tom McCarthy, *Remainder*, Ed. Alma Books Ltd., Richmond, 2011.

³ http://necronauts.net/manifestos/1999_times_manifesto.html (last accessed in March 2013):

“We, the First Committee of the International Necronautical Society, declare the following:

1. That death is a kind of space, which we intend to map, enter and, eventually, inhabit.

2. That there is no beauty without death, its immanence. We shall sing death’s beauty, that is – beauty.

3. That we shall take it upon us, as our task, to bring death out into the world. We will chart all its forms and media: in literature and art, where it is most apparent, also in science and culture, where it lurks submerged but no less potent for the obfuscation. We shall attempt to tap into its

frequencies – by radio, by internet and all sites where its processes and avatars are active. In the quotidian, to no smaller a degree, death moves: in traffic accidents both realized and narrowly avoided; in hearses and undertakers’ shops, in florists’ wreaths, in butchers’ fridges and in dustbins of decaying produce. Death moves in our apartments, through our television screens, the wires and plumbing in our walls, our dreams. Our very bodies are no more than vehicles carrying us ineluctably towards death. We are all necronauts, always, already.

4. Our ultimate aim shall be the construction of a craft that will convey us into death in such a way that we may, if not live, than at least persist. With famine, war, disease and asteroid impact threatening to greatly speed up the universal passage towards oblivion, mankind’s sole chance to survival lies in its ability, as yet unsynthesized, to die in new, imaginative ways. Let us deliver ourselves over utterly to death, not in desperation but rigorously, creatively, eyes and mouths wide open so that they may be filled from the deep wells of the Unknown.

Note: This term must be understood in the most versatile way possible. It could designate a set of practices, such as the usurpation of identities and personae of dead people, the development of specially adapted genetic and semantic codes based on the meticulous gathering of data pertaining to certain and specific deaths, the rehabilitation of sacrifice as an accepted social ritual, the perfection, patenting and eventual widespread distribution of Thanadrine, or, indeed, the building of an actual craft – all of the above being projects currently before the First Committee.”

⁴ Elena Butușină, *Narrative Identity in the Contemporary Novel – Psychopathology and Poetics*, PhD thesis supervised by Prof.

Corin Braga, Faculty of Letters, Babeș-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca, 2012.

⁵ *Literature and Violence*, interview given by Tom McCarthy in 2012, accessible at <http://vimeo.com/43235421> (last accessed in March 2013).

⁶ *Ibidem*.

⁷ *Ibidem*.

⁸ *Ibidem*: “we are always the network”.

⁹ *Ibidem*: “The re-enactment of a certain narrative that had been cached and fantasized and replayed in a million disaster movies (...). It was so embedded in the whole imagination that it was not something new”.

¹⁰ Gilles Deleuze, *Critique et clinique*, Ed. Minuit, Paris, 1993.

¹¹ Tom McCarthy, *op. cit.*, p. 22: “My memory had come back to me in moving images, as I mentioned earlier – like a film run in instalments, a soap opera, one five-year episode each week or so. It hadn’t been particularly exciting; in fact, it had been quite mundane. I’d lain in bed and watched the episodes as they arrived”.

¹² *Ibidem*, p. 23: “The other thing that struck me as we watched the film was how perfect De Niro was. Every move he made, each gesture was perfect, seamless. Whether it was lighting up a cigarette or opening a fridge door or just walking down the street: he seemed to execute the action perfectly, to live it, to merge with it until he was it and it was him and there was nothing in between (...). It’s about just being. De Niro was just being; I can never do that now”.

¹³ I use Marc Augé’s terminology concerning these sites specific for contemporary world, as conceptualized in his book, *Non-Places. Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity*, translated by John Howe, Ed. Verso, London, 1995.

¹⁴ Tom McCarthy, *op. cit.*, p. 27.

¹⁵ Daniel Tammet, *Born on a Blue Day*. A

Memoir of Asperger’s and an Extraordinary Mind, Ed. Hodder & Stoughton, Londra, 2007.

¹⁶ Tom McCarthy, *op. cit.*, p. 69.

¹⁷ *Literature and Violence*, interview given by Tom McCarthy in 2012, accessible at <http://vimeo.com/43235421> (last accessed in March 2013).

¹⁸ *Idem*: “So event is not a point in time, but a kind of dispersed spread-out structure that (...) is always happening”.

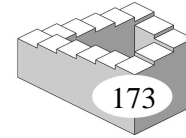
¹⁹ Tom McCarthy, *op. cit.*, p.81

²⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 84: “I shall move throughout the space (...) as I see fit. We’ll concentrate on different bits at different times. Different locations, different moments. Sometimes I’ll want to be passing by the liver lady as she puts her rubbish out. Sometimes I’ll want to be out by the motorbike. Sometimes the two at once: we can pause one scene and I’ll run up or down the stairs to be inside the other. Or a third. The combinations are endless”.

²¹ *Ibidem*, p. 88: “The movement that I wanted to do was already in place, I told myself: I just had to eliminate all the extraneous stuff – the surplus nerves and limbs and muscles that I didn’t want to move, the bits of space I didn’t want my hand or foot to move through. (...) the building was already there, somewhere in London. What I needed to do was ease it out, chisel it loose from the streets and the buildings all around it”.

²² *Ibidem*, p.116-7.

²³ *Ibidem*, p. 173: “Forensic procedure is an art form, nothing less. No, I’ll go further: it’s higher, more refined, than any art form. Why? Because it’s real. Take just one aspect of it – say the diagrams: with all their outlines, arrows and shaded blocks they look like abstract paintings, avant-garde ones from the last century – dances of shapes and flows as delicate and skillful as



the markings on butterflies wings. But they're not abstract at all. They're records of atrocities. Each line, each figure, every angle – the ink itself vibrates with an almost intolerable violence, darkly screaming from the silence of white paper: something has happened here, someone has died”.

²⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 178: “Each time a gun is fired the whole history of engineering comes into play. Of politics, too: war, assassination, revolution, terror. Guns aren't just history's props and agents: they're history itself, spinning alternate futures in their chamber, hurling the present from their barrel, casting aside the empty shells of past./ One other thing about guns: their beauty”.

²⁵ *Idem*, p. 185: “Then both mind and actions had resolved themselves into pure stasis”.

²⁶ *Ibidem*: “I started wondering where this black man's soul had disappeared to as it left his body. His thoughts, impressions, memories, whatever: the background noise

we all have in our head that stops us from forgetting we're alive”.

²⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 204.

²⁸ Elena Butușină, “Threatening the Intimate, Challenging the Social (a transdisciplinary approach to contemporary literary heroes)”, conference paper presented at *Public and Private in the Contemporary Age – Sliding Borders Conference*, Centro de Estudos Comparatistas, Universidade de Lisboa, Lisbon, Portugal, October 2011.

²⁹ Tom McCarthy, *op. cit.*, p. 255: “I pictured all my people lifted up, abstracted, framed like saints in churches' stained-glass windows, each eternally performing their own action”.

³⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 259: “I and the other re-enactors were like a set of devotees to a religion not yet founded; patient, waiting for our deity to appear, to manifest himself to us, redeem us; and our gestures were all votive ones, acts of anticipation”.

³¹ *Ibidem*, p. 261.