

A Dialogue between Dialogism and Interality

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ABSTRACT *Dialogue and dialogism offer one of the most promising paths to interality in the West. Concentrating on the Renaissance tradition of the Humanist dialogue and more recent philosophical practices and theories of dialogue in the twentieth century, this article argues—most notably through a close examination of two major literary and philosophical works: Thomas More’s Utopia and Robert Musil’s Man without Qualities—that one can trace an (interrupted) line between these two transitional historical periods, set at both ends of the “Gutenberg parenthesis,” when relational, dialogic, and thus potentially “interalogical” modes of writing, thinking, and being came to the forefront.*

KEYWORDS *Dialogue; Dialogism; Interality; Literature; Interology*

RÉSUMÉ *Les figures du dialogue et du dialogisme offrent une des voies les plus prometteuses pour approcher la notion d’interalité en Occident. En évoquant la tradition humaniste du dialogue de la Renaissance et les formes plus récentes de pratiques et de théories dialogiques du 20^e siècle, cet article trace—à travers notamment une analyse plus approfondie de deux œuvres littéraires et philosophiques majeures : L’Utopie de Thomas More et L’Homme sans qualités de Robert Musil—une ligne (interrompue) entre ces deux périodes historiques transitionnelles, placées à chaque extrémité de la « parenthèse Gutenberg », alors qu’ont émergé des formes d’écriture, de pensée et d’être relationnelles, dialogiques et donc aussi potentiellement « interalogiques ».*

MOTS CLÉS *Dialogue; Dialogisme; Interalité; Littérature; Interologie*

In the West, dialogue is most certainly one of the key paths leading to interality. Indeed, in some ways, Western dialogic practice and modes of thought, when at their best, could be seen as the black dot in the proverbial *taijitu* symbol: the more receptive-relational yin intertwined with the otherwise predominantly yang entity and subjectivity-oriented philosophy of the West. This article attempts to show that, at certain junctures of Western history, these dialogical modes of thinking and writing came to the forefront, prefiguring perhaps our current electric and acoustic moment where, as Eric McLuhan and Frank Zingrone have suggested, the “age-old conflict between the Eastern integrity of the interval and the Western integrity of the object is being resolved” (McLuhan, 1995, p. 208).

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Transitional dialogues

It might not be surprising to note that the most interlogical moments in the history of the West—when the relational and reciprocal perspective of dialogical modes of thinking and writing dominated—have been, as Suzanne Guellouz (1992) has noted regarding the more specific use of the written dialogue genre, “transitional” historical periods. Interestingly, these pivotal historical moments also coincide with what French philosopher and mythocritic Gilbert Durand (1988) has identified as periods dominated by the mythological god (and interlogical figure *par excellence*) Hermes (or Mercury)—messenger (*angelos*) of the gods, deified “trickster,” god of commerce, communication, travellers, and border crossings.¹ In these periods, Durand argues, “a previously dominating society’s epistemological, philosophical, religious or political structures are unsettled” (p. 23, my translation). The main historical eras of resurgence of such hermetic/mercurial myths include, he continues: sixth to third centuries BCE in Greece, third century BCE to third century CE in Rome, the Gothic Renaissance of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries in Western Europe, the Renaissance, the eighteenth century, and, predictably, the second half of the twentieth.

Not so coincidentally, these same historical periods are also all ripe with dialogues and/or marked interest in dialogism and dialogical modes of thinking. Let us take a closer look, for example, at the period that I am the most familiar with: the European Renaissance.

The interality of the Renaissance

As many commentators have noted, the Renaissance—often included now in the longer and historically debatable “Early Modern” period—could be seen as an exemplary “period of transition” (Kristeller, 1990, p. 21), a true *interregnum*: between the Middle Ages and Modernity *per se*; between an oral/aural/scribal era and what McLuhan (1962) has called the Gutenberg Galaxy, dominated by the more visual and linear world of typography; between the imperium of Latin and the rise of vernacular national languages; between a relatively unified Christian world and the fragmented and fractious Christianity that followed the so-called Fall of Constantinople (the city straddling Europe and Asia, the West and the East) and the Reformation; between a theocentric worldview and the more rational-scientific perspective that truly emerges in the seventeenth century; between feudalism and capitalism; between the geocentric-Ptolemaic and the heliocentric-Copernican views of the cosmos; between the incompletely mapped old world of the Ancients and the New World geography redrawn by European navigators and mapmakers; between a more plastic and social conception of the personal *ethos* and the emerging notion of the autonomous modern “subject” and individual, *et cetera*. Clearly, the Renaissance, traditionally seen as the “discovery of World and Man” (Jacob Burckhardt, 1860, p. 280, my translation), could be better understood as the discovery of an “in-between two worlds” (“*un entre deux mondes*,” Fragonard, 1990, p. 21).

On this historical and epistemological ground of thoroughgoing in-betweenness, the figure of dialogue becomes highly significant. This doubly mediated genre—straddling fiction and non-fiction, a written imitation of oral speech, built on a two-level rhetorical structure through which the conversation of the characters in the dialogue

guides, in various and sometimes sophisticated ways, the interaction of the author and the reader “outside” of the book—was extremely popular especially with Renaissance Humanists, who were themselves self-described “mediators” undertaking (through imitation, edition, translation, adaptation, commentary, philology) a *translatio studii* (a transfer of knowledge) between the Ancients and the Moderns.

In the period from the Italian Trecento to the late sixteenth century in Northern Europe, roughly from Petrarch to Montaigne—with whom, as François Rigolot (2004) has shown, we find an “inward turn” of dialogue—there is a multitude of written dialogues in all European literatures, either in manuscript or print form, in Latin and in the vernacular languages. All major writers of the Renaissance—in Italy first (from Petrarch to Galileo through Alberti, Valla, Pico, Ficino, Aretino, Speroni, Machiavelli, Campanella, and Giordano Bruno, to name just a few) and elsewhere in Europe (Nicholas of Cusa, Erasmus, Thomas More, Cervantes, Juan-Luis Vivés, Guillaume Budé, Spenser ...)—and many lesser-known writers wrote and published innumerable dialogues. In fact, in this era, which also sees the rise of Western polyphonic music, even narrative works (from Boccaccio to Rabelais) were suffused with dialogue.²

The phenomenon is so pervasive that, in her historical survey of the dialogue genre, Suzanne Guellouz (1992) concludes that the Renaissance is most certainly “the period where the dialogue as a genre became universally triumphant” (p. 166, my translation, emphasis in original). These dialogues—most often inspired less by the Platonic model of Greek philosophical dialogue than by its Latin, rhetorical (especially Ciceronian), counterpart or its satirical late Hellenistic (Lucianic) avatar—could be seen as didactic, monologic imitations on paper of true interactive conversations, but the best examples of the genre show that, even in the context of the rising print culture that McLuhan and others associate with the linear, homogenized, and closed off mental patterns of the Modern West, there was—at least for a moment (in the first half of the sixteenth century in Northern Europe, and somewhat earlier in Quattrocento and even Trecento Italy)—a thrust in another direction that attempted to preserve some aspects of the relational nature of oral communication on and around the printed page itself. To give only one telling example, let us examine closely the early editions of Thomas More’s *Utopia*, a peculiar book that displays many interlogical features.

The dialogical (no-) space of Utopia

As shown in more detail elsewhere (Vallée 2013), the countless modern editions of Thomas More’s *Utopia* are very different from the first editions published in the early sixteenth century. For example, all the letters, poems, and engravings contributed by other Humanists (such as Erasmus) that frame the main text on both ends in these early editions have been almost systematically eliminated from modern editions, as is also the case for the numerous annotations that one finds in the margins of the early avatars of the book. These modern amputations and reconfigurations of More’s book are symptomatic of the individualistic, linear, and sealed-off conception of the “book” and the “author” that came to dominate the Gutenberg Galaxy from the seventeenth century on. A more careful look at the four earliest editions of *Utopia* (published between 1516 and 1518), however, reveals the highly sophisticated (and interlogical) textual and editorial structure of this fundamentally “dialogocentric” (Vallée, 2015)

Humanist work that also invents the interlogical idea of utopia which Louis Marin (1973) has equated with the “realm of the neutral [that] stands outside as something separate but is also a transition ... a gap, a space that has no knowable ontological ground” (Hetherington, 1997, p. 67).

In fact, Marshall McLuhan (1962) too described *Utopia* as an essentially transitional work in his book *The Gutenberg Galaxy*:

St. Thomas More offers a plan for a bridge over the turbulent river of scholastic philosophy. ... As we stand on the frontiers between the manuscript and the typographical worlds, it is indispensable that a good deal of comparison and contrast of the traits of these two cultures be done here.... Writing in 1516, More is aware that the medieval scholastic dialogue, oral and conversational, is quite unsuited to the new problems of large centralist states. A new kind of processing of problems, one thing at a time, “nothing out of due order and fashion,” must succeed to the older dialogue. For the scholastic method was a simultaneous mosaic, a dealing with many aspects and levels of meaning in crisp simultaneity. This method will no longer serve in the new lineal era. (p. 129)

But this “new lineal era” was then still in its very early stages, far from taking over from the already waning scholastic dialogue. In the middle, or on the “bridge” that McLuhan sees in the book of *Utopia*, the new reader encountered *another* form of dialogic interaction, neither the scholastic-dialectic model of disputation nor yet the monologic-linear methodic line of discourse that will emerge later, that is the Humanist dialogue that had been retrieving, remixing, renovating various forms of classical dialogues, since Petrarch at least in the Trecento (hence even *before* the invention of movable type).

The lengthy description of the *island* of Utopia in the second book, for which the work is mostly known today and which can, with many caveats, be seen as a precursor of modern rational, lineal, and homogenized space, is in fact only *one* element of the book of *Utopia* that, on closer examination, could be seen as an extremely complex, multilayered, and profoundly dialogical attempt at “exploding” the book, a fact that is not visible in the modern (non-scholarly) editions that, as we have mentioned already, leave out or displace much of the original textual and iconographic material.

One can identify no fewer than seven layers and four axes of dialogue in and around *Utopia*:

1. Thomas More’s *Utopia*, as a book, forms a diptych and enters into an external dialogue with another legendary Humanist book published five years earlier (1511) by his famous friend Erasmus: *The Praise of Folly* or, in Latinized Greek, *Moriae Encomium* (dedicated to More, the *morosophos* or “wise fool”). Originally written as a response to *The Praise of Folly*, that is as a “praise of wisdom,” *Utopia* is published for the first time in 1516, the same year that Erasmus’ *Moriae Encomium* appears in its revised and augmented edition by the same publisher, Froben, that will soon—in 1518—provide a similar regal treatment to *Utopia* under the guidance of Erasmus himself. Hence, there is a sophisticated dialogue going on between these

two books written by two very close friends (on the importance of the topic—and *topos*—of friendship in and around *Utopia*, see Vallée, 2004b).

2. In the four early editions of *Utopia* (1516–1518), this “external” dialogue of the books and of humanist friends is reflected and amplified in what has been called the *parerga*—the letters, poems, and engravings from Humanist comrades and supporters (including Erasmus himself in the two 1518 Froben editions)—that frame the main text on both ends and that carry out what could be called a “metadialogue” with the text of *Utopia* itself, corroborating or questioning its ideas and playfully alluding to its sophisticated and paradoxical fiction. This textual and iconographic material, generally not included in modern editions, clearly shows that *Utopia* is part of a wider dialogue with other authors, politicians, and artists of the nascent and thriving trans-European Humanist Republic of letters.
3. More’s own preface—a letter addressed to his and Erasmus’ friend Peter Giles that is usually included in modern editions—must be considered separately from the other previous letters between Humanists since it is a part of the body of the work (confirmed by the fact that the marginal annotations one finds throughout the two following books start to appear in the margins of this introductory letter). This extremely sophisticated and paradoxical introduction to *Utopia* by the “author” More, as has been shown at length by Elisabeth McCutcheon (1983), is at once a dizzying rhetorical tongue-in-cheek play on the fiction of *Utopia*, an ode to friendship, and a *modus operandi* for the good and friendly reader who is the true addressee of this letter:

The work signals its own duplicities, then, and More is not, finally, trying to deceive us but to delight us at the same time that he startles us into inquiry, inviting us to discover his own art and to participate in an ongoing dialogue which he initiates. (p. 51)

4. Book I then finally opens with the “narrator” and “character” More, sent to Flanders as an ambassador (as he had been in real life), meeting his humanist friend Peter Giles, who introduces him to the fictional character Raphaël Hythloday, a traveller-philosopher, at once “guide” (like the archangel Raphael) and “sayer of nonsense” (*Hythlodæus*). The three characters move on to More’s Antwerp home to hear the story of the many journeys of Raphael (especially that of the island of *Utopia*), but engage instead in a heated conversation that has been called the “Dialogue of Counsel,” a lengthy debate (more than 50 pages in the Froben editions) about the role that learned men can play with regard to the power of the prince. The character Thomas More (supported at times by his friend Giles) defends a more pragmatic Ciceronian view of Civic humanism against Raphael’s idealistic Platonic perspective rooted in the tradition of Christian humanism. Without entering into the subtleties of this intricate debate, we can summarize it by saying that Raphael thinks it is useless for a philosopher to counsel the prince since it would lead to hypocrisy and to no results, while More and Giles still believe in the possibility of influencing power, be it through more indirect methods. This dialogue, typical of *pro et contra* debates and of the tradition of *disputatio in untramque*

partem (arguing both sides of a question) also opposes two forms of “dialogue with the prince”: the direct, unadorned, and perhaps even insolent philosophical discourse of Raphael (*sermo tam insolens*) and the more subtle, rhetorical, indirect (*obliquo ductu*) dialogue favoured by the character More. It is important to note that this dialogical debate about dialogue remains unresolved at the end of Book I. Hence the reader after having read the sophisticated and playful epistolary exchanges of the *parerga* and having been invited to partake in the game of Utopia through the “author” More’s paradoxical prefatory letter has now become a spectator and judge in this controversial and unsettled dialogue (set in the most typical setting of Renaissance dialogue, a garden).

5. The dialogue of Book I has more than one dimension: in the middle of it, Raphael launches into a flashback, a retrospective retelling of yet another dialogue held many years before at the court of Cardinal Morton. This relatively lengthy “dialogue within a dialogue” (20 pages in the Froben editions) shows Raphael counselling the cardinal and interacting comically with courtiers (including a court jester). Used by Raphael as an argument to show that it is useless to attempt to counsel princes, this dialogue *mis en abyme* actually shows, to the contrary, that some men of power, such as Morton, could in fact be open to new ideas and perfectly receptive to counsel, thus demonstrating to the (good) reader that Raphael’s discourse and arguments must not be taken at face value.
6. It is in this framework, and after all these dizzying dialogues and preparatory interactions, that Raphael Hythloday, at the beginning of Book II and at the invitation of the characters More and Giles, launches into his protracted monologue about the island of Utopia (which formed the kernel of the first draft of *Utopia* when it was still called *Nusquama*—that is “nowhere” in Latin). This monologue about a fictional no-space, to which the book of *Utopia* has often been reduced after the early editions, should not, however, be read as a “treatise.” Not only is it a mere “utterance” of a dubious fictional character ensconced in all the previously mentioned layers of dialogue, but it follows the rules of a rhetorical genre, the *declamatio*, that has many dialogical features (for example, Erasmus’ *Praise of Folly* is also a declamation, a *mock encomium*, to be more precise): it is held in front of a fictional audience (More and Giles) within the book, and its use of second-person pronouns throughout can also be seen as attempting to carry on a dialogue with the reader. Of course, this monologue does institute a rupture with the dialogue of the first book, just as the gap between the two books, and between the dialogue and the monologue, seems to reflect the elimination, by the Utopians, of the isthmus that is said by Raphael to have connected the island to the mainland in its early history. But if this gap, this breach could be read as prefiguring, in some ways, the coming breach that would lead to the “island” of Modern rationality, linearity, and homogenized space, it must be underscored that at the end of Book II the reader is brought back to the scene of the dialogue: More takes Raphael by the hand to bring him inside while questioning—in a very ironic and paradoxical way—the very basis of Raphael’s thesis (about the

abolition of private property), thus letting the reader again be free to decide how to receive Raphael's monologue.

7. Finally, another axis of dialogue, not present in modern editions, is instituted from the very margins of these early editions: the *marginalia* (written, it seems, by More's friend[s] Peter Giles and/or Erasmus), where one finds no fewer than 194 annotations (170 of which are in Book II) that "carry on a dialogue with the text" (McLean, 1988, p. 94) and create what I have called a *paradiologue* with the body of the text, sometimes highlighting a passage, sometimes revealing a source or reference, sometimes playfully hinting at the fiction of Utopia, sometimes praising or even criticizing other passages (Utopian habits, for example, which are either praised or mocked ironically most of the time), as if the commentator himself had an *ethos*, a "character" (McKinnon, 1970) that establishes yet another axis of dialogue within and around the book.

Moreover, one could also consider the hugely fruitful, ubiquitous, and multifaceted reception of More's *Utopia* as another potential axis of—after the fact—"dialogue," since this work gave birth to a common word in many languages, a literary and philosophical genre, and a social and political concept that still resonates five centuries later. Indeed, countless imitations, parodies, counter-imitations (dystopias), intellectual and philosophical debates, et cetera have replied to and are still "answering" More's dialogue of five centuries ago.

Hence, beyond the better-known social and political utopia of the island Utopia, the book itself could be seen as an (utopian) attempt at creating a transnational and transhistorical dialogue in and around its pages. This example eloquently demonstrates what could be called the "dialogocentric" perspective that is at the root of early European Renaissance Humanism. It shows how the relationships, the actual or potential interactions and intervals, hence what lies "in-between," are of tantamount importance to these Humanists. This is made evident also, to give only one other example, in More's friend Erasmus' new translation of the Bible, the *Novum instrumentum*, first published the very same year as *Utopia* (1516).

In the beginning was dialogue

Indeed, in the 1519 second edition of this first Greek *New Testament* published in the Renaissance—the edition that Martin Luther himself will use for his German translation (as will other vernacular translators)—Erasmus proposes a highly controversial and very revealing new Latin translation of the incipit (first words) of John's Gospel.³ Instead of the traditional *In principio erat Verbum ...* (In the beginning was the Word ...) of Jerome's translation in the canonical Vulgate, he opts for *In principio erat sermo*, that is: *In the beginning was discourse, speech, conversation* (*sermo* could also be used in Latin to describe the written dialogue genre). It is as if Erasmus rewrote the original Greek, *In the beginning was Logos*, to make it read *In the beginning was ... dialogos*. Hence, according to this view, the dialogical relationship precedes everything, it is the Son of God, and even the very incarnation of God: *In principio erat sermo, & sermo erat apud Deum, & Deus erat ille sermo* (In the beginning was dialogue, and dialogue was with God, and God was dialogue).

The end of the Renaissance interval and the rise of an historical interlude with fewer intervals

In the second half of the sixteenth century, however, and more consequentially in the seventeenth century, this type of dialogic thinking (and writing) tended to wane, as Virginia Cox (1992) has shown, to give only one example, about the Italian tradition of written dialogues. Indeed, in her last chapter about Seicento Italian dialogue, “From the Open Dialogue to the Closed Book,” Cox shows that late-sixteenth-century dialogues become more and more “visually” and typographically organized (including even subtitles, tables, et cetera) and increasingly obsessed with “method,” which, she writes, “may be seen as one symptom of the vast shift in patterns of thought occasioned by the diffusion of print” (p. 103).

Cox here is channelling the work of Walter Ong, Marshall McLuhan’s student, who has provided the most convincing analysis of this late-sixteenth-century shift in the modes not only of writing but, more importantly, of thinking in his seminal book *Ramus, Method, and the Decay of Dialogue: From the Art of Discourse to the Art of Reason* (1958), a book which is sometimes said to have influenced his thesis advisor’s own *Gutenberg Galaxy* (McLuhan, 1962).

Ong uses the, apparently trivial, example of the then extremely popular pedagogical methods of Pierre de La Ramée to demonstrate how Ramus’ anti-Aristotelian forms of logical spatialization and quantification actually played a significant transitional role toward the emergence of the “art of reason” that would beget modern science and the “discourse of method” in Western Europe.

The gradual dominance of such new methodological-rational-visual modes of cognition, fundamentally analytic and classificatory, combined with—or created through, as McLuhan has suggested—the rising power of the new typographical culture could also be linked to the rise of nation-states, the emergence of the individual-autonomous (Cartesian) subject and dualism, the waning of practical philosophy and interest in emotions and the body, the appearance of new conceptions of (homogenous) space and (linear) time, et cetera, et cetera, hence the new Modern rationalist paradigm—and clearly less interlogical perspective—that is generally seen as more typical of Western modes of thought (and being). This period lasted three to four centuries, barring some exceptions (including an important moment of dialogic resurgence in the late eighteenth century, most notably, where one finds, once again, a new wave of popularity of the dialogue genre, although in a more philosophical and rational guise, with the likes of authors and philosophers such as Hume, Berkeley, Shaftesbury, Diderot, et cetera). It lasted all the way into the twentieth century, when a host of different philosophical, scientific, and literary figures reopened the debate, not so coincidentally just as the “Gutenberg parenthesis” (Pettitt, 2007) was starting to close with the rise of electric, electronic, and audiovisual media.

The Renaissance of dialogue and dialogic thought in the twentieth century

Such broad stroke historical views are, of course, extremely problematic—and full of shortcuts and gaping holes—but what is lost in the details is gained in our view of the

big picture: indeed, it is impossible to deny that starting in the second half of the nineteenth century (e.g., Nietzsche, Kierkegaard) and especially at the beginning of the twentieth century, numerous thinkers, writers, and artists question, criticize, and attack, from many different angles, the rationalist homogenous fortress of Western Modernity that had given rise to the dualist subject/object perspectives, to the detriment of contextual, practical, relational modes of thinking and being that were more open to what lies in-between.

For example, one of the most engaging of the early-twentieth-century dialogical philosophers is Martin Buber, whose 1923 *Ich und Du* (*I and Thou*, 1937) “constitutes a revolution by opening up the Between beyond the impasses of subjectivism and objectivism with which modern thought has been so mightily struggling” (Wood, 1969, p. 3). But Buber’s dialogic interest in this human “sphere of between” (“*das Zwischenmenschliche*”) is only one instance of what could be described as a “dialogical turn” that one finds in different more or less dialogic guises, in the next decades of the twentieth century, in the work of thinkers such as Mikhail Bakhtin, Hans-Georg Gadamer, Jürgen Habermas, Francis Jacques, and many other philosophers, writers, and artists. However, this article concentrates, in much more detail, on another deeply utopian and important “literary” work to illustrate how this dialogical turn could also be seen as interallogical.

The dialogical new space of Robert Musil’s utopian “novel”

Robert Musil’s *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften* (*The Man without Qualities*), originally published from 1930 to 1943, sits atop the mountain of the most significant high modernist literary adventures of the mid-twentieth century in the West, rivaled only perhaps by Joyce’s *Ulysses* and Proust’s *À la recherche du temps perdu*. The Austrian writer’s sprawling essayistic novel is at once a hugely ambitious—and tellingly unfinished—intellectual excoriation of the failures of the Western Modern mindset and a tireless, uncompromising search for a new mode of apprehending the disintegrating self and the rapidly changing Modern world.

Set in Vienna in the year preceding the start of World War I (a historical event that epitomizes the end of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and the crisis of Modern Western ideologies), it depicts, in its first half (of over a thousand pages), the encounters and interactions of the main character, Ulrich, the “man without qualities” (*Eigenschaftlos*), a mathematician taking a “year off from life,” with various Viennese representatives of European ideologies or “qualities” (aristocratic, bourgeois, economic, military, scientific, aesthetic, philosophical, criminal, et cetera). Ulrich himself realizes that his own personal qualities “had more to do with one another than with him” (Musil, 1995, vol. 1, p. 157). He becomes secretary of the Parallel Campaign, a comically idealistic structure created to find a “big Idea” in honour of the 70th anniversary of the Austro-Hungarian emperor Franz Joseph I in 1918.

The narrator and the main character’s relentless irony and ruthless analysis—borrowing from highly rational and scientific concepts derived from mathematics, statistics, thermodynamics, and epistemology (especially that of Ernst Mach, on whom Musil had written his PhD dissertation in Berlin)—progressively dissect and disintegrate the various ideological, idealistic, romantic, pragmatic, or pathological perspec-

tives expressed by the other characters and most notably the Parallel Campaign, which, as the reader well knows, will not in reality lead to a celebration of the emperor of Austro-Hungary, but rather to imperial demise, national fragmentation, and the First World War. Similarly, the main character's "utopia of the exact life," based on his impersonal, rational, probabilistic, and analytical relationship to the world and to other characters, will also fail to satisfy his quest for a new way of being.

This lengthy first volume (containing 123 chapters), published in 1930, constitutes only the first—"ratioid"—part of this ambitious literary and intellectual adventure. In the unfinished and during Musil's lifetime only partly published second volume of *The Man without Qualities*, the "non-ratioid" realm was to be explored by the main character when, on the occasion of his father's death, he rekindles his relationship with his lost sister, Agathe. After this major narrative caesura, a slow-moving, ambiguous, and potentially incestuous rapprochement between the sister and the brother gradually takes over the novel, even if parallel characters and stories are still pursued on the side. Though still touching on scientific concepts, these "Holy conversations" between Ulrich and his sister Agathe are chiefly concerned with love, religious mysticism, contemplation, *unio mystica*, altered states of consciousness, and other experiences that Musil classifies under the umbrella term of the "utopia of the Other State (*andere Zustand*)."

Hence, after having investigated various aspects and possibilities of the impersonal, rational "absence of qualities," the novelist and his characters explore the "suprapersonal," non-rational world "beyond qualities" (one of Musil's main sources for these discussions, by the way, is Martin Buber's *Ekstatische Konfessionen*, a collection of mystical writings from different eras and cultures selected and published by Buber in 1909). This exploration requires a complex literary choreography including many sophisticated reflections laden with images and metaphors, protracted essays on the nature of sentiment (in its double "senti-mental" nature—at once sensory and cognitive), dialogues interrupted by eloquent silences or abstract temporizing, and a complex narrative ballet that constantly moves one step forward, two steps back. The prospectively incestuous love relationship of the main characters becomes a symbol of the fusion of contraries, the *coincidentia oppositorum*, and constantly refers to myths of twins, doubles, Plato's Androgyne, Isis and Osiris, hermaphrodites, et cetera, myths that all, in various ways, aspire to abolish human duality and/or sexual difference. Most interestingly for us, many of the conversations are interested—with several caveats and careful distinctions—in the opposition between the rational, active, "Faustian," "Western" mode and the non-rational, contemplative, "Oriental" mode of being, even if the main character is careful not to take these overly simplistic categories (popular at the time, it seems) at face value.

In the early plans of the novel, Agathe and Ulrich's mystical-incestuous adventure—hence the Utopia of the other state (or the other condition, depending on the translation)—was to end in disappointment and failure, after they were to consummate their relationship on an island in a chapter entitled "The Journey to Paradise" (*Die Reise ins Paradies*). However, later on in the writing process, it seems Musil could not in fact bring himself to follow this original plan and put an end to this storyline within his sprawling novel. It could be argued perhaps that, had it not been for his

premature death in 1942 while in forced exile in Switzerland during the war (the Nazis had banned his books), he would have managed to bring all the strands of his titanic literary and intellectual enterprise together ... if it were not for the fact that in his last years—and even up to the very last days of his life—he was endlessly and obsessively working and reworking on multiple versions of these chapters in which Ulrich and Agathe were still, hesitantly, only “considering” the possibility of their union.

To understand the importance of this fact for the interpretation of Musil’s masterwork, and for our dialogic and interlogical reading of it, it is necessary to give a general idea of the very complex issues surrounding the editions and translations of *The Man without Qualities*, a task that can only be broached superficially here. To put it briefly, after the publication (to critical acclaim) of the 123 chapters of the first volume in 1930, only the first 38 chapters of the second volume were published during Musil’s lifetime (in 1933) and can thus be considered in their “final” version. One then finds 20 chapters (known as the *Schlussblock*), initially numbered 39 to 58, that were ready to be published ... until Musil retrieved them at the last minute from the printer because he was not satisfied and wanted to rework and even rewrite completely some of them.

All the rest of the material—thousands of pages of finished or unfinished chapters, variants of chapters, fragments, notes, thoughts, plans, et cetera written between 1919 and 1942—is called in German the *Nachlass* (the “bequest”), a huge number of texts organized by Musil with a sophisticated system of letters and numbers, links and annotations. A CD-ROM version including 5,000 pages of this *Nachlass* was published in the 1990s (Musil, 1992) and an even more ambitious DVD containing tens of thousands of facsimile images of these and other materials (the *Klagenfurt Ausgabe*) was published more recently (Musil, 2009). This “open architecture” of Musil’s novel, its complex genesis and sophisticated system of interconnected characters, storylines, ideas, possibilities, utopias, configurations ... has led some critics to see it as a prescient vision of the currently open, interconnected, multilinear, perpetually transforming textual environments such as the Web and other hypertextual artifacts that only started to be conceptualized 20 years after Musil’s death. Indeed, if we look at this material retroactively, it is as if Musil was—perhaps unwittingly—“exploding” the closed form of the printed book at the closing end of the Gutenberg parenthesis.

However, non-specialist readers generally encounter “complete” versions of *The Man without Qualities* in traditional fixed and linear paper editions. And the editorial choices made in these editions and translations have a profound effect on the readers’ interpretation of this expansive novel.

The first attempt at publishing such an edition of the two volumes was made by Adolf Frisé in the early 1950s. This edition gave much importance to the above-mentioned plan devised by Musil in the early 1920s, when he thought, as we have said, that the “utopia of the other state” would be a failure, Ulrich’s sister Agathe would commit suicide, most other characters’ faith would end in death or madness, Ulrich’s main utopias would all fail, and the First World War would commence. This 1952 German edition—which thus ends on a disillusioned and pragmatic version of the “ratioid” utopia—formed the basis of many translations, including the 1957 French translation that was the only available edition until 2004.

In English, the first translation by Ernst Kaiser and Eithne Wilkins, published in three volumes (Musil, 1953–1960), offered the same material (though the announced fourth volume with the unpublished material was never published). The translators proposed a different editorial perspective and interpretation of the unfinished novel. Since, as we have seen, Musil had been working and reworking the Agathe-Ulrich chapters until the very end of his life, Kaiser and Wilkins were convinced that Musil had abandoned his “juvenile” plans for the second volume and had become mature enough to adopt a mystical and contemplative perspective, and thus pulled the reader in the direction of a “non-ratioid” reading of the novel’s “end.”

In 1978, Frisé provided a new German edition of *The Man without Qualities*, where he organized a selection of about 1,000 pages of the unpublished material in its second volume (titled *Aus dem Nachlass*) though not, this time, according to the early plan he had used in his edition of the 1950s. Instead, he opted for a reverse chronological order, starting—after the 38 published chapters (which he included in the first volume of this new edition)—with the 20 chapters that Musil had withdrawn in galleys from the printer, followed by six of these same chapters that Musil was rewriting in his last months in 1942, then more variants of these sometimes renumbered chapters that the author had worked on in 1939–1941, then 1938 versions, and then older or less advanced material (notes, sketches, drafts), and so on. In 1995, Sophie Wilkins and Burton Pike provided a new English translation and a completely new edition of *The Man without Qualities* (Musil, 1995) mostly based on this new German edition, but without completely following the reverse chronological order of Frisé for the posthumous material: rather, in volume 2, after the “galley” chapters and some of the late variants, Burton Pike translated and rearranged a selection of the rest of the posthumous material “according to character groupings, narrative sections, and Musil’s notes about the novel” (Musil, 1995, p. xi).⁴

These new editions and translations provide a more faithful and “neutral” picture of the state of the posthumous material of *The Man without Qualities* without imposing an interpretation, neither the “ratioid” interpretation of the first Frisé edition, nor the “non-ratioid,” mystical reading of Kaiser and Wilkins. At the same time, they open the possibility for new readings.

Most importantly for the dialogic and interlogical interests here, and as argued elsewhere (Vallée, 2004a), these editions, by attributing more weight (in the order of their appearance) to the late reworking of the Agathe-Ulrich chapters, give much more prominence to a series of chapters that are, it could be argued, neither “ratioid” nor “non-ratioid” (and perhaps both at the same time). Indeed, in these chapters, Agathe and Ulrich seem to be hanging *in between* two worlds, between dream and reality, between science and mysticism, between themselves and others, between identity and difference ... and beyond separation or union, they remain—as the title of the penultimate chapter numbered by Musil before his death illustrates—“unseparated and not united” (*Die Ungetrennten und Nichtvereinten*). In the following chapter, the last one that was renumbered by Musil, this highly significant phrase is explained in relation to the iron fence that separates the garden, where brother and sister hold their conversations, from the outside world of the city:

the name that, for its symbolism, they had given to the iron fence and to the place they found themselves in—“unseparated and not united”—had since taken on more substance, because they themselves were unseparated and not united and they thought that they understood, or somehow perceived, that everything in this world could bear the same name. (Musil, 1978, vol. 2, p. 1351, my translation)

These reflections take place in chapters that are suffused with dialogue, “conversations that reached no end and yet burst out again” (Musil, 1995, vol. 2, p. 810), such as in the stunningly beautiful chapter “Breaths of a Summer Day” (*Atemzüge eines Sommertags*), where sister and brother hold intellectually and erotically charged conversations—interrupted by silence and inner thoughts, as they wind up lying in the grass under a “noiseless stream of weightless drifting blossoms” (p. 1382)—about love, mysticism, the “kingdom of emotion,” and the message of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount!

However, these sprawling dialogues of the late chapters are also, and even increasingly, interested in other subjects and ideas that shun the aforementioned fusional myths for themes that are characterized rather by paradoxical configurations that celebrate the “magic of being identical and not identical” (Musil, 1995, vol. 2, p. 983), *gleich und nicht gleich* (Musil, 1978, vol. 1, p. 906): metaphors, copies, images, reproductions, still life paintings, analogies, comparisons, et cetera. Hence, a third way, a third form of “absence of qualities” emerges in these dialogues, neither ratioid nor non-ratioid, neither impersonal nor suprapersonal, but *transpersonal*. And this is reflected in the dominating *dialogic* form and mode of writing of these chapters. Anne Longuet-Marx (1986), in her book on Proust and Musil, is one of the only critics to have noticed this momentous dialogic turn in Musil’s novel:

If the novel reverses into dialogue, it is because dialogue becomes the ideal figure of openness, of the infinite, of incompleteness. Dialogue is openness but it also transcends the self. Indeed, the two protagonists, that had entered in dialogue at first because “they did not know how to act”, imperceptibly move on from demonstration to enchantment, their self gradually being modified and losing all its power and even its reality. Their respective distinct self disappears behind the rhythm of their exchanged words in a tension that comes close to ecstasy. ... The ideal of the impersonality of the hero is accomplished here in the efflorescence of speech, with dialogue guiding this passage from distinct self to the impersonal “I” of language. (p. 167, my translation)

Hence, through his uncompromising literary, intellectual, and ethical quest, Musil comes to (re)discover the unending process and radical in-betweenness of dialogue. For this reason, it can be argued that he deserves to be seen as one of the most significant twentieth-century representatives of the dialogical turn and of the renewed interest in the realm of the “in-between” in the West.

In fact, the paradoxical alliance of “precision and soul” that Musil brought to literature was already heading in this interalogical direction from his very earliest writing, such as in his first novel, *The Confusions of Young Törless* (*Die Verwirrungen des Zöglings Törleß*, Musil, 1955), as can be seen in the main character’s reflections on irrational numbers:

Isn't that like a bridge where the piles are there only at the beginning and at the end, with none in the middle, and yet one crosses it just as surely and safely as if the whole of it were there? That sort of operation makes me feel a bit giddy, as if it led part of the way God knows where. But what I really feel is so uncanny is the force that lies in a problem like that, which keeps such a firm hold on you that in the end you land safely on the other side. (1955, pp. 106–107)

As Achille C. Varzi (2014) has seen, the “bridge image”—the same metaphor McLuhan used to describe More's *Utopia*—is a “key intuition” here:

The standard reading is that we have, here, a metaphor of the central dilemma of the novel—possibly the dilemma that underlies Musil's entire literary production: the unfathomable link between the rational and the irrational, the visible and the invisible, the overt world of manifest happenings and the hidden world of inner life. (p. 34)

This is precisely how Musil himself, in an essay about a possible new aesthetic, distinguished “art from mysticism”: “[art] never entirely loses its connection with the ordinary attitude. It seems, then, like a dependent condition, like a bridge arching away from solid ground as if it possessed a corresponding pier in the realm of the imaginary” (1925/1990, p. 208). Thus, it is not surprising that this highly interlogical understanding of the essence of art led Musil to dialogue.

The interality of the twentieth century in the West

Of course, Musil's exceptionally significant literary and intellectual exploration of the realm of interality is only one example in the twentieth century among philosophers, writers, artists, and scientists of the West who have either explored “other” realms (the unconscious, relativity, abstraction, et cetera) or have attempted to bridge different worlds or perspectives through various forms of relational, systemic, or dialogic apprehensions of reality and life.

As regards dialogism more specifically, the most renowned contribution is often seen to be that of the Russian philosopher and literary critic Mikhail Bakhtin (or the “Bakhtin circle,” with Voloshinov and Medvedev), whose concepts of polyphony, heteroglossia, and dialogism appear to be rooted squarely in the realm of interality, though some philosophers, such as Francis Jacques (1985), have argued that Bakhtin's philosophy is still a “moderate” form (“*thèse moyenne*”) of dialogism, stemming from literary intertextuality and a limited understanding of true dialogue. Jacques himself (1979, 1985), inspired by a modified Kantian philosophy, linguistics, pragmatics, and phenomenology, proposes an even more radically “intersubjective” and “interlocutory” conception of what he calls dialogics (*dialogiques*).

Again, these are but a few examples among many of the “dialogical turn” of the past century in the West (Hans-Georg Gadamer, for one, is another important dialogic philosopher who warrants more attention). One cannot help but wonder whether the multiplication of such dialogic—and interlogical—perspectives is a sign, as Peter Zhang (2015), following McLuhan, has argued, of an “Orientalization of Western thinking in the age of postliteracy or secondary orality” (p. 94) or whether it is simply *tem-*

porary and related again to the highly transitional state of our era—straddling mechanical and electronic, analog and digital, paper and screen, print and electronic, written and audiovisual, industrial and postindustrial, national and global (or “glocal”), patriarchy and postpatriarchy, centralized and decentralized, linear and cyclical, fixed and flowing, sedentary and nomadic, mass media and networked media, individualistic and connected, Neolithic and Anthropocene, human and post/transhuman ...

Indeed, perhaps we find ourselves now in an era similar to what Karl Jaspers (1953) described as the Axial Age, an “interregnum between two ages of great empire, a pause for liberty, a deep breath bringing the most lucid consciousness” (p. 51). If we are lucky, and wise enough—and if the forces of empire as well as the fervent supporters of an unnecessary clash of civilizations are kept at bay—perhaps we will remain suspended in this highly fertile historical moment of the in-between, of the perpetually transitional, so that the new and promising philosophy of interalogy can foster continuous dialogue between individuals, species, communities, nations, civilizations.

Post(inter)script: Provisional remarks

To conclude, I would like to briefly interrogate the difference(s) “between” interality and dialogism beyond their common ground rooted in relational thinking. Being new to interalogical studies (even if I have also worked from the seemingly neighbouring perspective of “intermediality”), I do not have the pretension of defining this new (intermediary) field of knowledge (or field of the intermediary?), but it seems, from what I have learned so far, that interality’s purpose could, at first glance, be seen as more radically set “in between” than the realms of dialogue and dialogism. The Greek prefix *dia-* (“translated” as “trans-” in Latin) involves a potential crossing, a transformation across or beyond previous states, while the Latin prefix *inter-* seems more content with staying in between, with unending interaction, with a “willing suspension of belief” in either pole and thus with states of being (*wu, ma*) that are at ease with emptiness, interstitial spaces, and other such states. Dialogue however involves a back-and-forth movement, an alternation, a continuing transformation, a reciprocity between mutually transformed entities or beings that could imply that it is only *partially* interalogical—unless, for these very same reasons, dialogue could be seen as paradoxically *more* interalogical than interality, since it never completely abandons itself either to the pure rational-Western mindset or to a more spiritual-Oriental perspective.

But I might be completely lost here in the world of the in-between! I fear further studies—and dialogues—in and about the very promising philosophy of interalogy will be necessary.

Notes

1. Writing of one of Hermes’ traditional epithets, *Stropheus* (“the socket” in which the pivot of the door moves), Karl Kerényi (1986) states that the god governs

a middle realm [*metaxy*] between being and non-being. ... The primordial mediator and messenger moves between the absolute ‘no’ and the absolute ‘yes’, or, more correctly, between two ‘nos’ that are lined up against each other. ... In this he stands on ground that is no ground, and there he creates the way. (p. 77)

2. On the importance of dialogues in narrative works in France, for example, see Pascal Mounier (2007). The other major written genre of the period is also a very communicative and interalogical

genre, based on a relational, hybrid conception of writing: the (published) letter, especially the “familiar letter” extremely popular also in Humanist circles. On the familiar letter, and its waning in the early seventeenth century, see Vaillancourt (2003) and Vallée (2011).

3. In fact, Erasmus is reverting to a very early patristic tradition, as Marjorie O'Rourke Boyle (1977) has shown in “Reopening the Conversation on Translating JN 1.” On the controversy surrounding Erasmus' translation, see O'Rourke Boyle's “A Conversational Opener: The Rhetorical Paradigm of John 1:1” (2003).

4. It was only in 2004 that the recently deceased philosopher Jean-Pierre Cometti provided a French edition (Musil, 2004) of the new material that was added in the 1978 Frisé edition. Contrary to Pike, Cometti follows Frisé's order and organization of the *Nachlass*. The previously published chapters remained in the beautiful translation of the French poet Philippe Jacottet, while the previously unpublished material was translated by Cometti and Marianne Rocher-Jacquín. Regarding the English translations, it must be specified that some readers still prefer the style of the Kaiser/Wilkins version of the 1950s to the 1995 Wilkins/Pike rendering, even though the new edition has a lot of new material and provides a less biased organization of the posthumous material in volume 2. Pike himself offers a more open and somewhat interlogical interpretation of the (possible) end of the novel: “Musil intended to have Ulrich and Agathe somehow rejoin the world after the failure of their attempt to achieve a unio mystica, but as the reader will see, this was left completely up in the air among a welter of conflicting possibilities” (preface to “From the Posthumous Papers,” Musil, 1995, vol. 2, p. xii).

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