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The Collage Novel's Uses of the Readymade in Tom Phillips's *A Humument* and Graham Rawle's *Woman's World***

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Theft is a sine qua non of collage, a form which depends on a juxtaposition of elements wrenched from diverse contexts. The appropriated fragments, or readymades, in the form of newspaper cuttings, objects of everyday use or photographs, are planted into a new environment, that of a canvas or a sheet of paper. However well the stolen elements are integrated with the other components, collage remains, according to Rosalind Krauss, “sustained by an absent origin” (1981: 20). The source, although eradicated, tends to persist in subtle ways. The aim of this article is to examine the uses of the readymade and the absence/presence of the original source in two unique collage works: Graham Rawle's *Woman's World: A Novel* (2005) and the final edition of Tom Phillips's *A Humument: A Treated Victorian Novel* (2016)¹. The appropriated material will be examined with regard to its visual representation, the degree of its acknowledgement and its function in the work.

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** The part of the article concerned with *Woman's World* draws on the research that went into the publication of my monograph *Collage in Twenty-First-Century Literature in English: Art of Crisis*, which was released in 2020 by Routledge.

¹ *Woman's World* was originally released with the subtitle “A Novel” and then reissued in paperback as “A Graphic Novel”, which the publisher believed to be a better marketing label (Personal interview). *A Humument's* subtitle signals its generic status as a treated novel, whose characteristics are discussed in the next footnote.

Woman's World is a product of five years of arduous work consisting of arranging a 437-page novel out of close to 40 thousand cut-ups from British women's magazines from the 1950s and 60s. The result is a highly readable first-person narrative set in a small town in England in the 1960s. The protagonist and focalizer is Norma, whom the reader gradually discovers to be the feminine self of transvestite Roy Little. The Norma he regularly impersonates is Roy's younger sister, who died as a child and for whose death he feels responsible. The radically appropriative form of *Woman's World* reflects the constructed nature of Norma's femininity, which she bases on the tips offered by the women's magazines of the time. Rawle was praised in *The Guardian* as a "Stakhanovite of the scissors and paste". The author of the enthusiastic review was none other than Tom Phillips. His laudation of the novel's rare achievement in combining formal experimentation with readability concludes with the following statement, "I once saw the virtuosic John Tilbury play, recognisably, the opening movement of Tchaikovsky's First Piano Concerto with his back to the keyboard. It was a feat I never thought to see equalled, but this ... eats everything" (Phillips 2005).

The origin of Phillips's own *A Humument* can be traced back to his discovery of W.H. Mallock's forgotten Victorian novel *A Human Document* (1892) in a second-hand London bookshop in 1966. For the five consecutive decades, Phillips completed a number of artistic projects – literary, visual and operatic – based on appropriations of Mallock's novel. The final edition of *A Humument* is his sixth "treatment" of *A Human Document* to be released in book form. Each of its 367 pages retains the layout of the original publication but becomes the site of Phillips's unrestrained play with the erasure of original text and the superimposition of numerous images, many of them appropriated. The practice of placing foreign elements on the page (including photographs and postcards) was adopted only in the two last editions of *A Humument*. For that reason, I would argue that it is legitimate to consider them not only as examples of altered fictions and treated novels but also as collage novels².

Both Phillips and Rawle come from the visual arts environment and have produced artworks that have gained them wider recognition in Britain. Phillips, the more famous painter, had an exhibition of his paintings in the National Portrait Gallery in 1989. Today, the museum holds as many as 22 of his artworks in its collection ("Tom Phillips"). Rawle's visual collages were acquired by several celebrities, including Roger Ebert, Will Self and Peter Gabriel (Personal interview). What earned him popularity was his collage column called "Lost Consonants", which appeared in *The Guardian* between 1990 and 2005.

² Altered fictions, altered books and treated novels are all experimental genres rooted in the poetics of erasure. They draw on a single text (often canonical) which they rework and modify, accentuating certain elements and obliterating others. In his analysis of Jonathan Safran Foer's *Tree of Codes* (2010) – itself a treated version of Bruno Schulz's *The Street of Crocodiles* – Barry Schwabsky distinguishes between two major strategies of altered books' "subtractive composition": "erasure through superimposition" and "erasure through removal". He points to *A Humument* as the epitome of the former and to Ronald Johnson's *Radi Os* (1977), a blanked-out version of the first four books of John Milton's *Paradise Lost*, as an example of the latter.

Collage novel

The collage novel is a rare generic label³ which dates back to Max Ernst's book-length narratives composed of Surrealist visual collages, including *La femme 100 têtes* (*The Hundred Headless Woman* [1929]) and *Une semaine de bonté* (*A Week of Kindness* [1934]). Whereas the former features brief, often elliptical, verbal commentary at the bottom of each page, the latter does away with text altogether. In both works, Ernst constructs the images out of cut-ups of nineteenth-century illustrations. In *Le septième face du dé* (1936), Georges Hugnet appropriates text as well as images (Cran 2014: 23). Later examples of works referred to as collage novels – by William S. Burroughs, Kathy Acker, Lance Olsen, Steve Tomasula and (most recently) Jeremy Gavron – have had a much greater textual component. Burroughs's *The Ticket That Exploded* (1962), Olsen's *Head in Flames* (2009) and Gavron's *Felix Culpa* (2018) are composed exclusively of text, most of which has been appropriated from numerous sources.

There is no widely accepted definition of the collage novel. David Madden, Charles Bane and Sean M. Flory describe it as a genre in which “images are lifted from various publications and linked together through theme to form a narrative” (2006: 43). While that statement is applicable to Ernst's books, it fails to accommodate the more recent examples. In *The Routledge Companion to Experimental Literature*, Alison Gibbons offers a definition of “collage fictions” which is more suited to the later works; she describes collage fictions as operating in a similar way to altered books in the sense that “text is extracted from a source and given new meaning in a new context” (2012a: 430). Gibbons also calls them inherently “dialogic”, “polysemous” and “polyvocal”, which she illustrates by quoting her own empirical research on the reader reception of *Woman's World* (ibid.: 431). For the purpose of this article, I will use the term “collage novel” to denote book-length works which draw extensively (if not exclusively) on appropriated material, visual or/and textual, and exhibit a degree of the following characteristics: fragmentariness, multimodality and a paratactic arrangement of components.

In collage, the appropriated elements – newspaper cuttings, old photographs or commercial labels – are referred to as readymades⁴. David Banash defines them as “what we pluck off the shelves of a store or find cast off in a street or a dumpster. [...] what other human hands have worked over, shaped, formed, completed, and almost always at some point sold as a commodity” (2013: 19). Collage, whose intention is to “represent the intersection of multiple discourses” (Brockelman 2001: 3), frequently enacts a confrontation of incompatible readymades – differing in content as well as style. An example of that strategy is Joe Brainard's series of collages featuring devotional images of the Virgin Mary combined with objects of everyday use, such as the packaging of the *Good & Fruity* multicoloured candy. In contemporary collage novels, readymades usually take the form of textual fragments or various kinds of images. Their relationship may vary from predominantly harmonious, as is

³ In *Collage Culture*, David Banash notices that “there are relatively few collage novels” and that those which merit that name are “quite illegible to the uninitiated” (2013: 166).

⁴ The term originates in Dada aesthetics. Its pioneer was Marcel Duchamp, who famously appropriated a porcelain urinal, placed it upside down, signed “R. Mutt 1917” and presented as a work of art called *Fountain* (1917).

the case with *Woman's World*, to conflicting, as in *Head in Flames*, where the words of anti-Muslim social commentator Theo van Gogh are consistently pitted against quotations from his assassin – Muslim fundamentalist Mohammed Bouyeri.

Collage depends on the removal of the readymade from its original environment and on grafting it onto a new plane. That process is discussed by Ryszard Nycz as reducible to two correlated operations: “the *repetition* of a unit coming from a given context” and a “semantic transformation resulting from its *juxtaposition* with the elements of a different context” (2000: 11; emphasis original, my translation). In effect, the readymade is “de-contextualized”, or “freed from original contexts”, and “resemantized” when the “extensive connotational process” is activated. The resulting procedure is compared to the Formalist strategy of defamiliarization (12). While Nycz speaks of readymades as being “freed” from their natural habitat, Rona Cran emphasizes their continued presence in collage: “whilst the origin may be, or at least seem to be, absent, it nevertheless retains a significant bearing on the product, in the manner that an absent parent may retain unavoidable characteristic influence on their child’s personality or appearance” (2014: 8). According to Cran, that “present absence” can be illustrated by Pablo Picasso’s collages, whose meaning is “derived from missing letters, from simulacra, and from sections of newspaper, often political responses to the events prefiguring the First World War”, which are intentionally withheld and conspicuous by their absence (ibid.: 7).

What has a significant bearing on the alterity of the appropriated element in the new environment is the manner of its incorporation, which ranges from seamless integration to an incongruous affixation that exposes the stitches. The former practice is exemplified by Ernst’s collage novels, whose images are so meticulously cut and pasted that it is close to impossible to note the work of scissors unless one is examining the original with a magnifying glass. The visual collages of Sergei Sviatchenko, Andrew Lundwall and Nicholas Lockyer, who cut or even tear out readymades with apparent hastiness, illustrate the latter strategy (Krohn 2013: 4). Their literary equivalent can be found in works that, among other operations, surround the appropriated textual fragment with a lot of blank space (*Head in Flames*) or use the facsimile technique to accentuate the contours of cut-up fragments (*Woman's World*).

The persistence of the original context in collage was addressed in the Group Mu Manifesto, which argues that “each cited element breaks the continuity or the linearity of the discourse and leads necessarily to a double reading: that of the fragment perceived in relation to its text of origin; that of the same fragment as incorporated into a new whole”. “The trick of collage”, the Manifesto continues, relies on “never entirely suppressing the alterity of these elements reunited in a temporary composition (qtd. in Brockelman 2001: 2). As a result, according to Thomas P. Brockelman, each appropriated element “exists in two ‘worlds’” at the same time and thus “speak[s] with two voices” (2001: 31)⁵. When a single work contains readymades from various sources, as is the case with most literary collages, the polyphony is further reinforced. In view of that, dialogism and heteroglossia, which

⁵ Rona Cran insists on the need to examine the origins of each readymade when interpreting a collage work. “In order to understand the language of collage”, she argues, “the viewer must also understand the context in which, and indeed out of which, it has been created” (2014: 32).

Mikhail Bakhtin sees as the novel's natural attributes, emerge as the quintessential properties of the collage novel.

Multimodal presence/absence of the readymade

In the case of textual readymades, the most tangible presence of the found text's origin is ensured by the retention of its visual attributes, such as typeface, colour and layout. Besides *Woman's World* and *A Humument*, Joseph Kosuth's artist's book *Purloined: A Novel* (2000) offers an excellent example of that strategy. Kosuth's project, which spanned more than three decades, consisted in juxtaposing individual pages from over a hundred novels to create a new novel. Offered in the form of facsimile, each page retains its original layout and font. Besides selection and ordering, Kosuth's role involved replacing original page numbers with new pagination (Dworkin & Goldsmith 2011: 331). An example of a similar collage novel which creates a sequence exclusively out of appropriated fragments but chooses to renounce their multimodal alterity is Eduardo Paolozzi's *Kex* (1966). The book's various readymades – “passages of text culled from thrillers, film reviews, advertisements for electronic equipment and articles on history, physics, interior decoration, ornithology and atomic weapons” – have been turned into a uniform text and arranged in such a way that the boundaries between successive fragments have been obliterated (“Kex” 1996). Other examples of that strategy can be found in the works relying on the cut-up method devised by Burroughs and Brion Gysin.

In *Woman's World*, each page is replete with the visual remnants of numerous readymades. Since Rawle weaves the average page of the novel out of over a hundred cut-outs – each of which retains its original typeface and size, as well as its distinct shade of grey – the effect is that of visual chaos. Gibbons observes that the typographic overkill creates a challenge in processing the text and substantiates her argument by the results of an empirical study, whose participants found a text sample difficult to read and eyestrain inducing (2012b: 173). The operation of Rawle's collage strategy can be exemplified by a closer analysis of page 142. Although its number of constituent cut-ups, 58, is significantly lower than that of the average page of the novel, it features most of the book's characteristic multimodal qualities. Among them are the use of images (a small parcel next to the word “parcels”), an unconventional layout (lack of right-justification at the top and bottom of the page, as well as a sudden narrowing of the text in the middle) and varied typography (four different fonts in the opening sentence).

When he had finished, **Roy** carefully folded the *waxed paper wrapping* and put it in his pocket. Like me, *Roy* abhors thoughtless littering, and besides, Mary **LIKES HIM TO save the paper so it can be used for next day's SANDWICHES.** He would never dream of simply throwing it down like so many other young men would do.

I WONDER if motorists realise how dangerous it is to throw objects from car windows?

The other day, on a busy road, Roy saw a motorist throw

a banana skin away, and drive on, unaware that it had hit a girl cyclist in the face.

She completely lost control of her bicycle and skidded right across the road, falling heavily a few feet from the kerb.

Only swift action by a following driver averted a nasty accident.

AFTER lunch, when **ROY** opened *up* the back of the van to check his delivery sheet against the number of **PARCELS**,



he noticed that the string securing one of them had slipped its knot so that the brown-paper wrapping had become loose. **The parcel was destined for a Mrs. Wintergarden on**

one 'Four-Two'

Fig. 1. Graham Rawle, *Woman's World* (2005: 142)

Although the original contexts of any of the 58 fragments constituting page 142 are virtually untraceable and irretrievable, Rawle retains the singularity of each cut-up by adopting the facsimile method. As a result, the appropriated elements are offered in a variety of sizes and typefaces. However, while the original manuscript of *Woman's World* bursts with colour (as women's magazines did and still do), Rawle favours the black-and-white look of a photocopied document⁶. That levelling device is balanced by the author's meticulous light adjustments, which enable the reader to identify the rectangular contours of each cut-up.

The readymade which has been granted the most conspicuous contextual presence is that of the mini-article pasted in the middle of the page. As can be deduced from its shape and formatting consistency, the text is offered in its entirety and with only two minor modifications – the replacement of “ze” by “se” in “realise” and of “I” by “Roy”. Thanks to its length and self-contained status, the readymade preserves its alterity from the rest of the text on the page. Even its embeddedness in Norma's monologue, which makes the reader identify the opening “I” with her, does not obliterate the text's distinctness. The visual evidence of its integrity sparks the reader's interest in the text as an artefact – most likely, an entry from a reader's column in a British women's magazine from the 1960s. As a general rule, the shorter the cut-out, the lesser the alterity of the readymade. For instance, the noted fragment with the letters “se” carries virtually no trace of its original context. In the case of cut-outs given in block capitals or in a disproportionately large font size, the reader may suppose that they come from the titles of articles, or else from the magazines' covers. The word “Roy” is a case in point, which exemplifies another characteristic of Rawle's method – the construction of the characters' first names out of popular words. “Roy” is frequently acquired from references to the Royal Family, “Eve” – from “Every”, and “Norma” – from “normal” (Personal interview). As can be noticed, the first cut-out with “Roy” on page 142 is cut along the right-hand edge of the closing “y” – at an angle which obliterates the succeeding “-al”, which demonstrates that the significance of the cut-out is not limited to its textual content but may also encompass its visual aspects.

Unlike *Woman's World*, *A Humument* has one dominant readymade which is exploited – rearranged, erased, adorned and mocked – on every page of the novel. Despite the visual havoc consistently wreaked by Phillips, *A Human Document* persists in several aspects, which are, for the most part, left intact: the running head at the top of the page with the title of the original novel⁷, the page number in the top left or right corner, the layout of the page and the chapter divisions. Among the few exceptions to that rule is page 42, where Mallock's words have been cut up and completely reordered in a manner invoking Rawle's ransom-note method. Otherwise, the scope of play with *A Human Document* is restricted to blotting out the vast majority of the text by painting over it and retaining individual words and phrases as well as narrow winding lines of white, which connect the salvaged fragments into a sequence. As a result of the superimposition of paint, some of the original text is completely obliterated while some remains legible. In the latter case, it serves the role of a pa-

⁶ In a personal interview, Rawle explained that the reason for the suppression of colour was not primarily economic but aesthetic. Otherwise, Rawle believes, the visual richness and variety of cut-ups would be too distracting.

⁷ Only occasionally – on pages 115 and 156 – does Phillips blot out the cluster “AN DOC”, which enables him to turn it into “A HUM ... UMENT”.

limpsestic remnant – a mere reminder/remainder of the former layer, which is meant to be acknowledged rather than meticulously reconstructed. The select few words which have escaped complete or partial obliteration – additionally highlighted by a surrounding black contour – emerge as the figure against ground, the latter’s visual richness enhanced by the verbal noise.

One of the most often reproduced panels of *A Humument*, and one which can serve to illustrate its method, is page 4 in the last two editions. Of the approximately five hundred words on the original page 4 of *A Human Document*, Phillips retains only 17 and arranges them into two sequences: “pasted on to the present, see it is nine eleven” and “the time singular which broke down illusion”. The rest of the page is entirely or partly obliterated by two superimposed postcard-shaped images, two equally-sized abstract images painted over the text and several black and blue lines and frames. The embedded pictures on the right are fully appropriated vintage postcard images: the one in the bottom-right corner shows King Kong embracing the Twin Towers and saying (in a speech balloon) “I LOVE NEW YORK!”, while the one above fuses Francisco de Goya’s *The Colossus* (1808–1812) with a retro image of the New York skyline featuring the World Trade Center. Both pictures are reprinted and discussed in Phillips’s earlier book *The Postcard Century: 2000 Cards and Their Messages* (2000).

As regards the visual presence/absence of the readymade(s), the page in question preserves the original layout and typeface of *A Human Document* and saves from obliteration about a thirtieth part of its text. Approximately a quarter of the remaining words remain legible but their function, again, is reduced to a palimpsestic background. The saved words are not subject to any distortion, as is the case, for instance, on page 271, where some words (all of them French) are assembled out of individual letters. Whereas the vast majority of Mallock’s text is consistently erased in *A Humument*, some visual appropriations (such as the King Kong postcard and several photographs) are offered in their entirety. That applies also to Phillips’s pastiches of numerous works of nineteenth- and twentieth-century art. Among them are miniature paintings modelled on works by Marcel Duchamp, Paul Cézanne, Jean Arp, Francis Bacon and many others (Pfahl 2015: 412). Such is the frequency and variety of Phillips’s visual quotations that, according to his patron and collector Marvin Sackner, *A Humument* “encompass[es] all of contemporary and modern art history” by featuring “images representing visual poetry, abstract expressionism, constructivism, visual/verbal art, expressionistic portraits, pointillism, color stripes and calligraphic markings”. While the citational intention is evident in the case of most of those pictures, the fact that they are not pure appropriations but Phillips’s reproductions renders their status as readymades problematic.

Source acknowledgement

Literary collages, unlike collages in the visual arts, often acknowledge the source of their appropriated material. That is most often the case with textual quotations, whose authors can be signalled in a variety of ways. The most common strategies involve placing bibliographical information either directly before or after the quoted part:

208. Cornell's diary entry for February 28, 1947: "Resolve this day as before to transcend in my work the overwhelming sense of sadness that has been so binding and wasteful in past". (Nelson 2009)

The greatest lesbian poet since Sappho, Auden called Rilke. (Markson 2001: 29)

"Television functions by implanting a simulated, electronically monitored, and technologically controlled identity in the flesh".

Arthur Kroker & David Cook, *Television and the Triumph of Culture* (Olsen & Olsen 2000: 15)

As the above examples from Maggie Nelson's *Bluets*, David Markson's *This Is Not a Novel* and Lance Olsen's *Sewing Shut My Eyes* demonstrate, the degree of acknowledgement may vary from a mere invocation of the author's name to something resembling a bibliographical note. The alternative is to attach a footnote or an endnote. Doug Houston's *Vast: An Unoriginal Novel* (1994) – a collage of 957 individual sentences culled from westerns – offers full bibliographic information about each of its components in the footnote section, as a result of which it tends to occupy half of the page. Source acknowledgement is much less prominent in David Shields's plagiaristic book-length essay *Reality Hunger: A Manifesto* (2011), which comes with an appendix (to which Shields reluctantly agreed under the publisher's pressure) composed of terse endnotes (occasionally confined to the mere surname of the quotation's author).

Given its consistent reliance on a single source text, *A Humument* does not follow any of the above strategies of acknowledgement. Despite the already mentioned retention of the original running head, Phillips credits *A Human Document* in the peritextual material, including the front-flap blurb and the author's afterword. Whereas the origins of the visual appropriations in the novel are not signalled, the source of the last photograph incorporated in the final edition of *A Humument* is unambiguous. The bottom part of its last page features a superimposition of a photo of Mallock's grave upon the conclusion of his novel, of which Phillips saves only the following textual strands: "TO THE SOLE AND ONLY BEGETTER OF THIS VOLUME", "by whose bones my bones my best, perpetuate", "page for page", "your grave in mine fused" and "THE END" (2016a: 367). Rather than being another form of acknowledgement, the ending of the final edition – the crowning of Phillips's half-a-century-long engagement with Mallock's book – reads like a eulogy to an artistic collaborator across a century.

Woman's World, on the other hand, does not provide any kind of acknowledgement in the text. Since Rawle has used forty thousand cut-ups (some involving a mere punctuation mark or a single letter) to construct the novel, the task of documenting them would be beyond the realms of possibility. A very general concession of their appropriated status is offered in the peritext (the author's two-page afterword called "The making of the book" and the back-cover blurb) and the epitext (interviews with Rawle and academic criticism). On their basis, the reader may learn that Rawle's vast archive of women's magazines was composed of such titles as *Woman*, *Woman's Own*, *Woman's World*, *Woman's Realm*, *Woman's Journal*, *Wife* and *House Beautiful* (Gibbons 2012b: 169). Paradoxically, while the exact source of the individual readymades is not revealed and, effectively, cannot be identified (even by the author himself), the novel's complete reliance on appropriation is its most prominent and most discussed quality. Not indicating the sources of its many readymades

situates *Woman's World* in the tradition of such literary collages as Burroughs's cut-up novels, Eduardo Paolozzi's earlier mentioned *Kex* and, more recently, Sally Alatalo's *Unforeseen Alliances* (2001) – a collection of poems whose each line is a pure appropriation of one of 1,878 titles of romance novels accumulated by the author (Dworkin & Goldsmith 2011: 32).

Function of the readymade

The degree of the presence/absence of the readymade is also determined by its significance and function in the collage novel. As a general rule, the lower the number of appropriated elements, the greater their potential importance to the work. In that respect, *A Humument*, largely dependent on a single work, and *Woman's World*, composed of 40 thousand fragments derived from, most probably, several hundred or even a couple of thousand magazine articles, are polar opposites. While not exactly a homage to *A Human Document*, Phillips's work engages with the text of Mallock's stodgy Victorian novel on a number of levels and with a great deal of attention and ingenuity:

I have so far extracted from his book well over a thousand segments of poetry and prose and have yet to find a situation, sentiment or thought which his words cannot be adapted to cover. That Mallock and I were destined to collaborate across a century became quite clear when I tested other fictions and discovered nothing to equal him in the provocation of fresh confluences and conjunctions of word and phrase. (Phillips 2016b: 377)

Despite the careful scrutiny to which Mallock's book is subjected, its status is confined to that of a quirky verbal reservoir. As a novel in its own right, *A Human Document*, with its obsolete plot and character construction and its insular ideas, means very little to Phillips, who has admitted to never having read it from beginning to end (ibid.: 373). That sense of disregard for the machinery of the original work – including plot and characterization – is evident in Phillips's method, which consisted in working on individual pages in isolation and in no chronological order (ibid.: 381)⁸.

In "After the / unauthor": Fragmented Author Functions in Tom Phillips's *A Humument*", Courtney A. Pfahl interprets the project in the context of the Barthesian death of the author and the replacement of "author" and "work" by "scriptor" and "text". Phillips, she argues, "rejects Mallock's authorial authority, intention, and autonomy by selectively reading other possibilities into the available words on the page" (2015: 399). Among the most daring challenges to "authorial authority" are the numerous racy puns and sexual innuendos which Phillips culls from a text entirely devoid of the sense of humour⁹. He occasionally plays with the meanings that words such as "come", "ejaculate" and "rouse" have acquired since the end of the nineteenth century. Page 261 narrates the appearance of a "Princess" who "came long and wild and came hard", whereas page 116 features a cameo of Paulo Veronese, who in "a moment no fresco reflected" "suddenly ejaculated" "above the sideboard",

⁸ The first page which Phillips reworked, back in 1966, was page 33 (Phillips, 2016b: 373).

⁹ In his "Notes on *A Humument*", Phillips remarks that Mallock's "complete lack of humour" was helpful, as it is "fun to fish the odd joke out of a dry text" (2016b: 372).

“up in the cupboard”, “on the wall”. Other ribald jokes include references to “the great Fanny” (ibid.: 19) and “sex with a capital f” (ibid.: 20).

One of the subtler ways in which Phillips defies the authority and autonomy of *A Human Document* is by asserting its intertextuality, rooted less in Mallock’s overt reliance on other works than in its being a product of language. From the single pages of the 1892 novel, Phillips is able to “excavate” quotations from John Donne (“batter my heart” [80]), E.M. Forster (“only connect” [8]), Ezra Pound (“make it new” [158]) and Samuel Beckett (“fail better” [33]), as well as a near-accurate rendition of the closing words of *Ulysses* on the book’s penultimate page: “And I said yes – yes, I will yes” (ibid.: 366). The invocation of “make it new” – the Modernist call for artistic originality – is ironic in a work entirely dependent on appropriated text and marked by what Marjorie Perloff has called “unoriginal genius” (2010: 1–23).

In certain ways, however, the Poundian injunction still operates in *A Humument*. Kristina Jipson proposes to view Phillips’s project in the context of “the ancient rabbinical process of midrash, in which the sacred text is brought to life only through active and ongoing interpretation” (2013: 321). Midrash does not limit its scope to unearthing the original intention of the studied work but is open to “text [being] put into play” (Bruns qtd. in Jipson 2013: 321). Phillips’s most striking way of “bringing” *A Human Document* “to life” is by teasing out of it references to words and people that did not yet exist at the time of its writing. Besides the literary quotations from twentieth-century works, *A Humument* features such found clusters as “nine eleven” (Phillips 2016a: 4), “face book” and “app” (ibid.: 9), as well as the phrase “text him now” (ibid.: 263) and the surname of George W. Bush (ibid.: 266). Despite the outlined parallels with the practice of midrash, there appears to be a crucial difference between its attitude towards the examined work and that of Phillips’s towards Mallock’s novel. Although both pay an enormous amount of attention to their object, the former aims to assert the continued relevance of the sacred text whereas the latter uses the original work merely as a playground for its own ingenuity. The failure of *A Human Document* as a novel, completely forgotten by the time Phillips chanced upon it in 1966, echoes in the words “Can it be in my Barren garden that you flower?” (191), which can be read as an imaginary question that Mallock asks of Phillips. The “barrenness” of *A Human Document* stands in sharp contrast to the infinite fertility of the sacred text celebrated through midrash.

While *A Humument*, despite the occasional mockery, shows a degree of respect for the alterity of its readymade, *Woman’s World* treats the women’s magazines as textual matter open to be remoulded. When Rawle employs longer passages from a single source and thus retains the aura of the original, the predominant effect is amusement or ridicule. The climax of an intimate scene between Roy and his new girlfriend Eve is rendered in the following way: “Overwhelmed by their feelings, they practically fell into each other’s arms. *This was the genuine article. 100% pure*” (Rawle 2005: 169, italics added). The romantic description is thus comically disturbed by a sudden intrusion of blatant commercial speak, which is conveyed through a single passage from a magazine (italicized)¹⁰. As can be noted in the above example, Rawle frequently emphasizes the oppressive ideological agenda of his ready-

¹⁰ The italicized sequence is not offered as a single cut-up, because the original passage featured the present form of the verb “to be”. Thus Rawle’s sole intervention is confined to replacing “is” with “was”.

mades. *Woman's World* is composed of many phrases that are recognizable to the reader as staple ingredients of advertisements, as exemplified by “Everything must go! (ibid.: 289) and “apply now while stocks last” (ibid.: 395). Occasionally, Rawle incorporates longer advertisements, whose banality and utter dispensability from the narrative point of view can be a source of merriment: “A glass of Lucozade might have helped. Lucozade is a very delightful way of giving glucose, a rapid source of energy. It does not upset the most delicate stomach. Invalids take Lucozade willingly because it is so delicious and refreshing” (ibid.: 277). The appropriation of copious instances of pestering commercial speak (most often about clothes, jewellery and food) accentuates the extent to which the women’s magazines’ industry is blatantly sustained by consumer enterprises.

Another apparent feature of such magazines is their prescriptivism, manifest most vividly in advice columns and editorials (Gibbons 2012b: 170). Their zeal to educate is so conspicuous that Rawle has compared them to “an instruction manual for how to be a woman” (qtd. in Gibbons 2012b: 199). Indeed, Norma admits that magazines were “an invaluable source of advice” during her long journey towards “the fulsome splendour of womanhood” (Rawle 2005: 415). Her magazine education prompts her to formulate numerous upbeat statements about stereotypically female topics, such as “Housekeeping is, after all, the most thrilling work in the world” (ibid.: 5) and “As a woman, you must never look less than your loveliest” (ibid.: 5–6). The suffusion of Norma’s voice with the language and ideology of those periodicals has prompted Michael Leong to call her “the collective unconscious of the women’s magazines personified”, while Banash has labelled her rhetoric as rooted in the “aggressive discourse of normative femininity” (Personal interview).

In an interview, Rawle has admitted that what he “love[s] about collage” is the fact that “both visually and in terms of the content” words can “retain the essence of their original context” (qtd. in Gibbons 2012b: 170). Even though Rawle and Phillips perform violent acts of excision and erasure on the appropriated material, they manage to preserve much of its characteristic idiom and – in the case of *Woman's World* – its ideological input. Their works capture the collage novel’s paradoxical capacity for accommodating the singularity of multiple readymades despite their status as building blocks of an altogether different work. The partial or complete eradication of their original contexts – the earlier noted “absent origin” – paves the way for new inter-textual connections, as asserted by Phillips’s artistic motto exhumed from the opening page of *A Human Document* – “I have to hide to reveal”.

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