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Voice and Generations in Grace Paley's "Goodbye and Good Luck," "The Immigrant Story" and "Dreamer in a Dead Language"

Régine Camps-Robertson

I'm interested in generational relations
I'm interested in how people live at this
particular moment in time and history.

Grace Paley (Interview with Kathleen Hulley 36)

- 1 An American born of Jewish Russian parents, Grace Paley writes with an acute sense of her place in history, which has led her to engage actively with contemporary issues through political action as well as in her artistic work. Her voice resonates through her short stories as a sustaining strength amid "little disturbances" and "enormous changes" alike¹—a paradox in a work where showing prevails over telling. Indeed, even in dialogues leaving apparently little room for authorial comments,² a sense of voice is created by the somewhat systematic juxtaposition of contrasting elements. As Ronald Schleifer aptly observes:

[T]he play of voices in Paley's stories offers what could be called, following Socrates and Kierkegaard, the maieutic function of discourse, the role of the midwife in the dialectic of (in Paley's words) "two events or two characters or two winds or two different weathers or two ideas or whatever bumping into each other in stories."
(Schleifer 42)

- 2 The reader is in fact led into a universe poised between past and present, between Old World and New World, between the burden of history and the dream of a brighter future. As young and old keep conversing with each other, or as a person is shown and heard at different periods in his/her life, it becomes clear that they carry the traces of their past (or of the past of others) which influences their present with the subtle, fascinating force

of a mystery.³ Meanwhile silence creeps between the lines as if to point out the difficulties of intergenerational dialogue.

- 3 The aim of this article is to look into the links between voice and silence on the one hand, and old and young on the other hand in order to show how their "bumping into each other" makes for a dynamic interpretation of voice and generations. We will focus on Paley's very first story, "Goodbye and Good Luck" (LD⁴ 3-13), "The Immigrant Story" (EC 238-41) and "Dreamer in a Dead Language" (LS 265-83), three narratives which, though written over two decades, published in separate collections, and different in terms of length, point of view and characters,⁵ have a lot in common. All three stories stage a problematic dialogue between generations, one full of omissions, understatements or ironic allusions where the said matters as much as the unsaid. In "Goodbye and Good Luck" Grace Paley draws on her Jewish heritage to create the memorable character of Aunt Rose, a middle-aged woman who tells her young niece (who remains silent throughout the story)⁶ about her romance with Volodya Vlashkin, an actor of the Yiddish theatre she is about to marry. In "The Immigrant Story," an argument between Faith Darwin and her boyfriend, Jack, about their respective outlook on life opens onto a poignant evocation of the tragedy that once befell the young man's parents as they immigrated to the United States. As for "Dreamer in a Dead Language," it opposes three generations since it evokes Faith taking her children to visit her parents now living in a retirement home.
- 4 First the contrast between speech and silence as well as between young and old will be analyzed in structural terms. Then the linguistic marks that point to the links between voice and generations will be traced. Finally, the interplay of voice and age will be viewed in the broader context of Paley's representation of a daunting challenge: measuring death against the individual's potential for renewal, within the space of the short story.

The Shadow Voice as Structural Pattern

- 5 In her dedication to the *Collected Stories*, Grace Paley evokes her friend Sybil Clairborne's very last words before she died: "*Grace, the real question is—how are we to live our lives?*" The question will keep ringing in the memory of the reader who feels invited to anticipate a possible answer. Likewise, in the stories, it is always as if one voice were rising against the backdrop of another. Thus Rose Lieber's address to her niece in "Goodbye and Good Luck" turns out to be a response to her sister's condescending comment, "poor Rosie" (3), as she seems to pity her for having long remained unmarried. The reader is led to imagine the conversation that took place between the two sisters before the story starts, as if Rose's voice allowed the echo of another voice to resonate through her own words.⁷ Besides, as the niece, Lillie, is never to be seen or heard in the course of the story, one can infer what she says only through her aunt's reactions: "don't laugh, you ignorant girl!" (6); "Now Lillie, don't be surprised" (10). These function like stage directions referring to a voice "off stage."
- 6 The theatrical quality of Lillie's totally transparent presence is part of Paley's forceful dramatization of the link between speaker and listener, as well as between speech and silence. The locale of the story, the Russian theatre, provides a metaphoric framework for the representation of silence within a speech situation: during a performance, the actor's voice is silenced as he speaks for another while the audience sits in silence like a witness

overhearing the characters' conversation. At one point in the story, however, the situation is reversed as an enthusiastic tumult in the public causes the actors to fall silent (6).

- 7 A theatrical situation can be suggested indirectly too. In "The Immigrant Story" Faith's voice suddenly stops as she listens to Jack recalling his parents. This passage is detached from the rest by a blank on the page, imitating the curtain being lifted on the scene from the past. Not only is Faith silent, but Jack, who takes over telling the story, has become strangely quiet, and no longer screams or argues. His voice is hushed as he first etches the sharp silhouettes of two solitary figures on either side of the ocean, separated by the threat of violence and death:

My father decided to go to America [...]. In America [...] he put his money away for the day he could bring his wife and sons to this place. Meanwhile, in Poland, famine struck [...] Famine ate up the bodies of the little boys pretty quickly. My father met my mother at the boat. He looked at her face, her hands. There was no baby in her arms, no children dragging at her skirt [...] He took her by the hand and brought her home. (241)

Without any transition Jack then draws the contours of a family scene glowing with warmth in the midst of darkness, a scene which has remained engraved in his memory as it seems to epitomize his lonely childhood ("in the shadow of another person's sorrow" [238]).

They [my parents] are sitting at the edge of their chairs. He's leaning forward reading to her in that old bulb light. Sometimes he smiles just a little [...]. Just beyond the table and their heads, there is the darkness of the kitchen, the bedroom, the dining room, the shadowy darkness where as a child I ate my supper, did my homework and went to work. (241)

- 8 As if through a series of mirrors cutting across time, everyone features in this silent picture: Jack as a child and as an adult; Faith as listener and the reader as an overhearing listener.⁸ This powerful effect gives depth to silence, like an echo suggesting the never-ending repetition of a sound and deceiving the ear into confusing sound and silence. Another echo comes from the parallel between the two couples in the story. Paley offers a reading of past and present by confronting them and leaving the reader to make sense of this dual representation. Two generations enter into a kind of silent dialogue, about love and about the impact of history on individual destinies.
- 9 Similarly, old and young often seem to merge in Paley's description of her main characters. Like the heroine of the following story in the collection (14-25), Rose is, "a woman, young and old," depending on whom she relates to. She is much younger than Vlashkin, who calls her "little girl" (7), yet much older than Lillie. Generational roles are ironically reversed, however, since Rose is the one getting married, rather than her young niece. Likewise, Vlashkin is all the younger for being old and experienced: "What youngest man knew enough about life to be as young as him?" (9). Old people are endowed with the same vitality in "Dreamer in a Dead Language": Faith's eighty-year-old father is still writing poems and dreaming to start life anew while the old often outlive the young in the ironically branded "Home for the Golden Ages."
- 10 Throughout the stories, speaking and listening, and being young and being old seem to be interwoven, so that any attempt at interpretation calls for a dynamic approach of their links and of the way the story-teller dramatizes them. A case in point is Faith's reaction (in "Dreamer in a Dead Language") to her son's remark that if she felt any sense of

responsibility towards her parents, she would immediately take them away from the retirement home:

She wanted to scream, Help!

Had she been born ten, fifteen years later, she might have done so, screamed and screamed.

Instead, tears made their usual protective lenses for the safe observation of misery.

(283)

- 11 While Paley is here referring to women's lately acquired freedom of expression, she turns silence into an even more powerful signifier than a scream, through the periphrasis opposing voice to silent tears on the one hand, and Faith's older and her younger self on the other; and through the inclusion of a potential witness, safely observing Faith's despair through protective lenses. While the character remains speechless, the narrator's voice is perceptible in her poetic understatement of strong feelings and in the bitter-sweet tone conveyed by the juxtaposition of the prosaic ("protective lenses") and of the tragic (Faith's sense of vulnerability and injustice). The implicit narratorial intrusion functions like an aside overheard by the reader, along with the words uttered by the character, so that the final impression is that of a voice being "shadowed in," just as the shadow of another self, either younger or older, or the shadow of another person, is made to be seen or felt alongside a character.

A Rhetoric of Echoes

... the word does the dreaming for you. The word.

Grace Paley ("Enormous Changes at the Last Minute" 213)

- 12 The dynamic link between voice and generations is also at play in Paley's rhetorical use of language. Each character is in fact depicted as a potential story-teller likely to pass on a story or a message (whether explicit or implicit) to an older or to a younger generation. In "Goodbye and Good Luck," a metonymy, "young mouth" (13), turns the character of the listening niece into a mouthpiece similar to a mask in a Greek tragedy: "So, now, darling Lillie, tell this story to your mama from your young mouth. She don't listen to a word from me" (13). Throughout the story, in fact, Rose seems to draw an implicit parallel between young age and listening. This parallel is stressed in her humorous remark that, when younger, she herself "had friends among interesting people who admired [her] for reasons of youth and that [she] was a first-class listener" (7). It is this capacity to listen and observe which enables Rose (now a middle-aged woman and a story-teller rather than a listener) to resurrect for the sake of her young niece (and that of the reader) not only the various stages of her life-long romance with Vlashkin but also the good old days of the Yiddish Theater, now forever gone.⁹
- 13 In "The Immigrant Story," the very title points to the need for each generation to understand the story of the preceding generation. The use of the singular rather than the plural in the title makes the story of Jack's parents emblematic of that of many other immigrants forced to leave behind a whole chapter in their life when they migrated to the US. The rejection of other potential syntactic forms, such as "the immigrant's story" or "the immigrants' story," places "immigrant" and "story" on the same level, as if one defined the other, and, as if to highlight the story of deprivation and loss which, whether

he likes it or not, infiltrates—almost “migrates” into—the life of the immigrants’ son, Jack, forever preventing him from seeing things “in a rosy light” (239).

- 14 In “Dreamer in a Dead Language,” a rhetorical question stresses from the start the links between speaking and bringing together the young and the old. The opening scene takes place in a tavern where Philip and a group of friends are discussing old age:

Now, why at that lively time of life, which is so full of standing up and lying down, why were they thinking and speaking sentences about the old.

Because Faith’s father, one of the resident poets of the Children of Judea, Home for the Golden Ages, Coney Island Branch, had written still another song. (265, emphasis in original)

- 15 Though it is the very topic of the conversation, the song appears only in the second part of the story (“later that same night in Faith’s kitchen” [266]) when Philip, Faith’s boyfriend, reads it aloud to her. Voices thus merge in a spiral pattern that constantly displaces the origin of the words uttered, alternating the voice of the young and that of the old in an incremental effect giving even more substance to the exchange of voices. A similar process is at work in “Goodbye and Good Luck” when Rose, upon watching Vlashkin perform *The Father-in-Law* by Tchekhov (“an older man in love with a darling young girl” [10]), recognizes the same loving words he would lavish on her in real life. Language is duplicated from reality to the stage, and this deepens Rose’s feelings for her lover.
- 16 The link between the young and the old is also highlighted by the image of the body as a language. Rose reads quite an explicit message on her mother’s face in “Goodbye and Good Luck”: “the rotten handwriting of time, scribbled up and down her cheeks, across her forehead back and forth—a child could read—it said old, old, old” (10). In “The Immigrant Story,” Faith recalls that, as a school girl she used to speak out her gratitude for America and even had an American flag tattooed on her arm: “it has gotten dimmer but a lot wider because of middle age” (240). While replicating her spoken assertions of her patriotic creed, the inscription on her body introduces an ambiguous note: has her faith in America diminished (“gotten dimmer”), despite the implicit promise that her very name may evoke, or increased (“wider”)? Body language is just as expressive in “The Immigrant Story”: it conveys aggressiveness and violence between Faith and Jack (who points a finger at her and calls her an enemy, [239]), but tenderness and a sense of mutual need in the old couple (“[he] takes both her hands in his as if they needed warmth” [241]). Body language may be quite puzzling and oxymoronic at times: Jack claims that one day he saw his father asleep in the crib, “scrunched like an old gray fetus” (“The Immigrant Story” 239)—as if in a symbolic yet preposterous attempt to occupy the place left empty by the missing children. In the old people’s retirement home where “people’s brains, I notice are disappearing [...] everyday” (“Dreamer in a Dead Language” 275), bodies tend to function as ambiguous sites of memory, as they try to compensate for the impossibility of reaching meaningful verbal exchange (“There was no way to talk” [273]). The soft, tender touch of Faith’s hand first reminds her mother of the mischievous little girl her daughter used to be (“Ach! What I know about this hand ... the ways it used to eat applesauce, it didn’t think a spoon was necessary” [273]). Yet the mother is soon appalled by a boil on her daughter’s wrist, which she ascribes to lack of hygiene. Mrs Hegel-Shtein, a hilarious caricature of the sententious Jewish old lady, then proposes a psychosomatic interpretation (“Sickness comes from troubles” [273]), soon followed by a long litany of her own ailments, which ends, however, on pure tautology: “If that’s what I mean, that’s what I mean” (274). As Katherine Hulley aptly observes, the disseminating effects of

Paley's writing are "produced [...] by the dislocated presence of voices and bodies, surfaces which mutually displace one another at the level of narration and hold open the possibility for indeterminacy which permits multiple levels to exist" (12).

- 17 Much of the comedy in Paley's stories stems from the characters' eager, yet soon defeated attempts to make sense in a world replete with clichés (be they linguistic, political, psychological or pseudo-scientific). As if, dimly aware of the inadequacy of all signifiers, Paley's "dreamers in a dead language" kept repeating themselves, in their urgency to be heard and understood. The extensive use of repetitions contributes to the sense of a common voice emerging from all stories. "Listen!": this is the pressing call to be found under various forms in all three stories—whether in a direct question ("who is listening?"; "Goodbye and Good Luck" 3), as a reminder ("Rosie, are you listening?"; "Goodbye and Good Luck" 9), as an insistent invitation ("listen," "just listen"; "The Immigrant Story" [238, 240]), or as an attempt to sound more convincing: "Listen, I'd love to meet your daddy and your mom" ("Dreamer in a Dead Language" 267). The urge to listen is, of course, inseparable from the need to tell. Such verbs as "tell" and "talk" function as leitmotifs in "The Immigrant Story" and "Dreamer": "I'm trying to tell you something, he said" ("The Immigrant Story" 238), "Who told you that?"; "I'll tell you"; "anyone could tell you"; "tell me what?"; "who told you that?" ("The Immigrant Story" 239); "when will I talk to my girl?"; "Boys, stay here, talk to your grandma. Talk to her friend" ("Dreamer in a Dead Language" 274). Sometimes this makes for a dense cacophony:

"Tell her, Sid, she has to be more sensible." [...]
 "Please, don't tell me what to tell her, Celia" [...]
 "I have to tell you a fact." (275)

- 18 Another striking example of repetition is Rose's parting address to Vlashkin, "goodbye and good luck"(13), which constitutes the title of the story and which follows the ups and downs of the lovers' relationship ("goodbye, good luck" [8]; "we said only hello and goodbye" [8]; "I thought, 'Goodbye, dear friend' [11]), or recalls Rose's father's flitting existence ("goodbye and good luck" [6]) and ties in a final flourish the end of the story to its beginning: "Hug Mama, tell her from Aunt Rose, goodbye and good luck" (13). These words seem to find an echo in other stories: in Faith's jibe at Philip for example ("Well, goodbye, said Faith. I've known you one day too long already" [266]), or in Mr. Darwin's reaction to Heligman, the old man losing his mind ("goodbye, my dear friend, my best enemy, Heligman, forever goodbye" ("Dreamer in a Dead Language" [276]). Paley's stories are so saturated with repetitions and "incantatory verbal echoes" (Perry 9) that despite the abundance of terms referring to communication ("listen," "talk," "tell," "goodbye"), meaning is no longer the centre of the dialogue. Instead a musical effect is created by the echoing words, as they imprint a rhythmic and sound pattern to the ear.

"In the grave it will be quiet"

- 19 The ongoing verbal performance uniting the young and old is also a means to counteract finitude and death. This is most striking in "A Conversation with my Father," where the daughter's stories provide oxygen to the dying father. Most striking also is Shirley's and her father's relentless prolixity in "The Loudest Voice," which, when begged to be quiet, they justify as follows: "In the grave it will be quiet" (34). This sentence itself reads as a mimetic act of dying: the impersonal pronoun "it," evokes a disappearance of the subject

and a trade-off between voice and silence, between life and death. As for the implied pronoun, "we," it acquires universal value.

- 20 This ironic, yet anguished statement does not call for an answer. What counts is that the young and the old should unite (both being reassured in the process, as the young see in the old a sign of continuity while the old long for renewal) in a vibrant assertion of vitality and hope as they become aware of their common frailty. This is the meaning of the father's songs in "Dreamer in a Dead Language" ("you could call them songs or poems, whatever, I don't know" [269]), an apt reaction to the omnipresent disintegration of body and brain at work in the retirement home—an antechamber of death from which Faith flies in horror after a disheartening conversation with her father: "you look black, her mother said. Breathless, Mr Darwin gasped" (281). There, death strikes the old and the young alike. Old people sit on benches dedicated to the memory of those who died at a young age (275), and the third floor is reserved for "the incurables," who exemplify death's extended reach in the midst of the living:

thirty-year-old people in the ward, with healthy hearts and satisfactory lungs. But they lay flat or curved by pain or they were tied with shawls into wheelchairs. Here and there an old or middle-aged parent came every day to change the sheets or sing nursery rhymes to her broken child. (272)

- 21 As Faith's father puts it, however, "incurable did not mean near death necessarily, it meant, in most cases, just too far from living" (272). These sick people may exemplify a condition of living death, which terrifies the old man and which, to a certain extent, he recognizes in his own daughter who, in his opinion, has "suffered so much from changes" (278) and has just been wasting her life ever since her divorce.
- 22 Mr and Mrs Darwin's obtuse misunderstanding of Faith points to the apparently unbridgeable gap between generations, a gap which is reiterated in Richard's cruel remark that his mother has fallen short of her duty to her parents whom she ought to take away from that dreadful place. The story ends on Faith's mock burial on the beach which used to be her "territory" (282) when she was a child and which she now shows to her children, as if to teach them a lesson about love and transmission.

So bury me, she said, lying flat as a corpse under the October sun.
Tonto immediately began piling sand around her ankles. [...] I mean bury me only up to here, like this, under my arms, you know, so I can give you a good whack every now and then when you're too fresh. (283)

- 23 This powerful *dénouement* is both a vibrant assertion of life and a moving homage to all those "just too far from living" and condemned to "silence in unrecorded time" (Sorkin 5)—be they young or old. One of them is Faith's Russian grandfather, this fascinating figure skating on the Baltic Sea "for miles and miles and miles along the shore" with a frozen herring in his pocket, without ever making it to America: "There was no boat. It was too late" (282). Another "Long-Distance Runner,"¹⁰ the man was no "crazy old nut" (282), contrary to what young Tonto is tempted to believe, but the very embodiment of obstinacy and perseverance in the face of hostile circumstances. "That's why I never laugh at that story when Grandpa tells," Faith reproachfully declares (282).
- 24 The grandfather's tragic fate—dying on a distant shore, cut off from his family—equates distance and separation with death. It is of course reminiscent of the poignant vision of the mother, in "The Immigrant Story," stepping off the boat cloaked in the shadow of her dead children. Will she ever be able to return to life, as hinted by the final image of her forever holding hands with her husband? Will Faith and Jack learn from the old couple

and prove able in turn to preserve, whatever happens, a bond which is the very source of life and meaning?

- 25 More often than not, Paley merely hints at the possibility of closeness and reunion between human beings. Couples are seen at various stages of being separated or contemplating divorce, like Mr. Darwin, who sees it as the only chance to survive the stifling life he leads at the Home for the Golden Ages. Most stories highlight the characters' awakening to a sense of their own helplessness, and of the distance which separates them from those they love most. Viewed from that perspective, the echoes of "goodbye and good luck" take on a deeper resonance. Rose Lieber evokes long periods of estrangement from her beloved Vlashkin, during which she could envision only solitude and death for herself: "Finished. This is your lonesome bed. [...] From this lonesome bed you will finally fall to a bed not so lonesome, only crowded with a million bones" ("Goodbye and Good Luck" 11). Her dialogue with her niece also gives a measure of her estrangement from her own sister, whom she views as blind to her own version of happiness. As for the silence of the "listening young ear" throughout the story, it leaves open the question of whether Lillie will be able to draw meaning from her aunt's story. "Dreamer in a Dead Language" highlights the difficulties of intergenerational dialogue; solitude and longing seem to prevail ("My lungs are full of water. I cannot breathe" [266]), while love, companionship and peace amount to a dream "in a dead language."
- 26 Even though the young girl imagined by the father in his poem ("*wait[ing] in a special time and place/ to love me, to be my friend and lie beside me all through the night*" [266]), functions as a purely symbolic entity—as shown by Faith and Jack's comic debate about who she might be (266-67)—she does appear as a protection against helplessness and death. Youth is to be embraced and celebrated as the source of creativity, story-telling, and poetry, lifting the individual out of the crushing consciousness of his limited span of life. Does not the grandmother in "Ruthy and Edie," another story in *Later the Same Day* embrace her granddaughter so as to keep her from "falling out of her brand-new hammock of world-inventing words onto the hard floor of man-made time" (334)?
- 27 Youth also partakes in the dream of the individual entering into a form of communion with his family and the community around him, as Rose witnesses when Vlashkin acts and she "was given the pleasure together with cousins, in-laws, and plain stage-struck kids to be part of a crowd scene and to see like he saw every single night the hundreds of pale faces waiting for his feelings to make them laugh or bend down their heads in sorrow" ("Goodbye and Good Luck" 6). The voice of the actor and that of the story-teller counter the silence of that crowd of "a million bones" so dreaded by Rose. Likewise, Faith's children on the beach allow her "lots of room for wiggling and whacking" (283), despite the layers of sand covering her. This final scene points to a similar opposition between voice and silence on the one hand, and movement and obstruction to movement on the other.
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- 28 "That woman lives across the street. She is my knowledge and my invention. I'm sorry for her. I'm not going to leave her there in that house crying," declares the narrator in "A Conversation with my Father" (237). Giving characters of her invention room to change—"in order, you might say, to save a few lives" ("Debts" 133)—is at the heart of Paley's literary choices. Allowing room for her characters to shape the story through their own

voices is yet another facet of her sense of responsibility. When referring to the composition of "The Immigrant Story," Grace Paley remarks: "I knew the story for maybe twenty-five years, but I didn't know how to tell it. One day, I was going through my papers and I found this dialogue between two people, and I realized that I had the form for the story" (Paley, Interview with Hulley 20). When Paley's stories are read in continuity, the prevailing impression is that of a unique voice insistently calling out to a listener and eager to tell its story. In its pattern of rhythmic and vocal echoes, it confronts the young and the old in an ongoing dialogue which is part and parcel of the act of narration and which parallels the dialogic relation between author and reader. When distance, separation and death threaten to cut off the bond that links the individual to his community, family and friends, the narrative voice compellingly weaves a network of echoes between generations,¹¹ and makes it possible for each voice to be heard against the background of another voice, even a shadow voice. "Remember dat?," keeps asking the little girl, who is such a source of appeasement among the group of old friends arguing about the past on Ruthy's fiftieth birthday in "Ruthy and Edie." "The child, you know, is the reason for life" (204), writes Paley in "Imagining the Present," one of her essays in *Just As I Thought*.

- 29 The child's "world-inventing words" allow the adults to turn their awareness of time and death into a dream, which opens onto an intent form of silent listening. The answer to the opening question, "how are we to live our lives?" may be found in Paley's describing the task of the story-teller as synonymous with that of the story-listener, since "a lot of people cannot begin to speak out of their own throats until they have listened enough, and heard enough the stories of others" (Interview Michaels 6).

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NOTES

1. See the titles of Paley's two collections of short stories: *The Little Disturbances of Man* (1985), *Enormous Changes at the Last Minute* (1979).
2. "I was interested in that idea of using my own voice to make someone else's voice. Or actually using someone else's voice to get to my own" (Paley qtd. in Arcana 84).
3. See Grace Paley's "The Value of Not Understanding Everything": "In the end, probably all I'll have to show is more mystery—a certain juggled translation from life, that foreign tongue, into fiction, the jargon of man" (*Just As I Thought* 189).
4. For the sake of convenience, references to the collections have been abbreviated here: *LD* for *The Little Disturbances of Man*, *EC* for *Enormous Changes at the Last Minute* and *LS* for *Later the Same Day*.
5. While Faith Darwin seems to be the first-person narrator in "The Immigrant Story," "Goodbye and Good Luck" does not belong to the cycle of stories related to her. As for "Dreamer in a Dead Language," it involves Faith but it is told in the third person.
6. It is as if the silence of the reader were mirrored in this character. Silence is written into the narrative as on a musician's score.
7. The voice of the fictional character is an echo of the author's personal experience since Grace's old aunt did pronounce the first sentence of the short story, as the author recalls in an interview with Leonard Michaels: "that is an example of a story which began with an absolute true sentence spoken to me by a person" (qtd. in Michaels 5).
8. As Judith Arcana observes, the impression of overhearing someone is frequent in Paley's stories (104). In "The Immigrant Story" Jack replies to Faith: "You fucking enemy" (239) as if Faith, the narrator, had actually pronounced the sentence that precedes this statement: "He lunged at me as though I was an enemy." Another interesting example is "The Seneca Stories" in which Paley recounts a conversation she has overheard between a young woman and her mother on the phone (*Just As I Thought* 156). The author's evocation of the scene reads like the seed of an unwritten story, reminiscent of Rose's one-sided dialogue, and it highlights the author's keen interest in the intricate interplay of the said and the unsaid in dialogues.
9. The lot of each member of the theatrical company is summed up in a series of factual statements: "First the company fell apart. The theater ended. Esther Leopold died from being very aged. Krimberg had a heart attack. Marya went to Broadway. Also Raisele changed her name into Roslyn and was a big comical hit in the movies. Vlashkin himself, no place to go, retired" (10-11).
10. "The Long-Distance Runner" is the last story in *Enormous Changes in the Last Minute*.
11. See Victoria Aarons: "In her commitment to the saving of lives, Paley, both structurally and thematically, emboldens her characters with the strength to stave off death—if only fictionally—through the telling of stories" (33).

ABSTRACTS

Dans "Goodbye and Good Luck", "The Immigrant's Story" et "Dreamer in a Dead Language", trois nouvelles centrées sur les rapports difficiles entre les générations, le lien intergénérationnel s'affiche avec une insolente vivacité, dans un registre mêlant empathie et ironie, humour et tendresse, colère et curiosité tandis que les personnages endossent tour à tour le rôle du conteur. L'échange se conçoit alors comme une dynamique associant les jeunes et leurs aînés dans une mise en scène du dire sans cesse renouvelée où le silence a pourtant toute sa place. Si la communication échoue, les flottements énonciatifs et le rapprochement des voix opèrent pourtant un renouveau salutaire. L'écriture ouvre un espace de liberté où le sens exacerbé de la finitude, d'une part, et la fougue créative de la jeunesse, d'autre part, sont portés par une voix forgée à l'écoute des autres.

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