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Shaping words into fiction: The Grotesque Clay Head in Elizabeth Bowen's *Eva Trout*

Céline Magot

- 1 *Eva Trout*, Elizabeth Bowen's last novel published in 1968, is probably also the most difficult to grasp. Maud Ellmann writes that "*Eva Trout*, in particular, has disconcerted critics with its outsize heroine, implausible plot, inconsistent characters, dizzying scene changes, contrived set-pieces, farcical coincidences, and melo-dramatic finale" (203).¹ Victoria Glendinning sees the novel as a turning point in the writer's career and a deviation from her stylistic landmarks: "In *Eva Trout* there is no longer a cracked crust over the surface of life. People say and do extreme things. There is one major conceptual shift in *Eva Trout*, and that is that instead of responding and reacting to situations, as most of Elizabeth's heroines do, Eva creates the situations herself" (225-26). A rich heiress and a hopeless liar, *Eva Trout* leads an eccentric life. She illegally adopts a child, Jeremy, who soon turns out to be deaf and mute. In his introduction to the 1999 edition of the novel, the critic Eibhear Walshe seems to justify Bowen's work and wonders:

Why does Bowen abandon her habit of social observation and comedy in this final novel? A number of circumstances from her own personal life contributed to the starkness and directness of the novel. [...] Writing without the secure base of her homes and without the protection of her domestic life with Alan Cameron, *Eva Trout* is starker than her other work. (vii-viii)²

- 2 Though both events must have undoubtedly been long-lasting shocks to Bowen –one must remember that she "preferr[ed] places to people", as she herself claimed (Glendinning 209)–the reference to biographical details may reveal more about the reader's bewilderment in front of this "uncompromising portrayal of the gap between self and society" (Walshe xi) than about the novel itself. Neil Corcoran underlines the paradox at the heart of *Eva Trout*: it is thematically and stylistically in continuity with her previous works, but transforms this heritage to reach deformity: "It is [...] as though some of the essential elements and attributes of the plot, theme, and

characterization in the earlier novels are here placed in front of a set of distorting mirrors" (130). He concludes: "So *Eva Trout* is, I would argue, intertextually anamorphic" (134).³

- 3 This article focuses on precisely one of the "contrived set-pieces" described by Maud Ellmann, which has often been overlooked. The brief, isolated scene situated towards the end of the novel is neither introduced nor referred to again later in the text. It is set in a potter's studio and describes a clay model that Jeremy has made. The child is now 8 years old.

Yesterday, calling at Primrose Hill for Jeremy at the end of the afternoon, she had penetrated into the studio-shed in which he was at work on the head of her. This was the first view of it; she had not sat to him. It was a large knob, barely representational-only, he had gouged with his two thumbs deep, deep into the slimed clay, making eye-sockets go, almost, right through the cranium. Out of their dark had exuded such non-humanity that Eva had not known where to turn. There stood the sculptress, noncommittal, beside her. Jeremy, in one of his silent silences, cryptically stood away from his work. The sculptress, a person of some integrity, did not say that Jeremy was original; all she did volunteer was: 'He has something in mind-he's feeling his way.' (*Eva Trout*, 190)

- 4 This ekphrastic passage is of course a powerful and terse account of a child's extremely violent relationship to his mother, but it is also a scene of artistic creation. In fact, it explores language and literary creation, following the "intertextually anamorphic" process described by Corcoran, but going beyond the boundaries of Elizabeth Bowen's previous novels.
- 5 In *The Jealous Potter*, Claude Levi-Strauss insists on the fact that pottery, together with weaving has been "one of the two major arts of civilisation [...] [f]or thousands of years".⁴ It is probably one of the most ancient forms of art, to the extent that some myths distinguish nature from culture through the advent of pottery.⁵ It is also the epitome of primitive creation since it requires the four elements to come into shape: earth must be supplemented with some water to be modelled; it is later fired in a kiln—a process which requires air—to be hardened. The piece is then vitrified, which means that it is able to hold water. Considering this primitive, material, and concrete quality, it may seem rather surprising that a writer who is well-known for her depiction of sophisticated façade and social consciousness would choose such a form of art to give shape to the relationship and confrontation between two characters—all the more so as the piece is extremely raw: "he had gouged with his two thumbs deep, deep into the slimed clay". Gestures are given real substance as the text seems to mimic the progression of thumbs pushing down into the clay with the repetition of "deep". The words acquire a visual power, they suggest the grip of the hands forcing their way into the clay, pushing it into shape like in a hand-to-head fight. The reader is made to see energy and matter. The primitive quality of the work is reinforced by the hollow eye sockets reminiscent of ancient statues on which eyes are holes instead of being shown as protruding eyeballs.⁶
- 6 The raw primitiveness of the clay figure connects it to the idea of an early stage, a beginning. The shaping of a figure in clay is a re-enactment of God's earliest actions, a new Genesis. God-like Jeremy shapes the figure of the first woman. Yet, that new Eve is called *Eva Trout* so that, in a way, she's more primitive than the first woman: she also emerges from the depth of water, close to the biblical "fish of the sea" (Gen 1:26). The

studio thus becomes a place of origin, of primal mythical creation, as suggested by its situation in Primrose Hill, the hill of the first rose.

- 7 Yet it is the place of a perverted Genesis since life is created with inverted generations: Jeremy begets his own mother. Moreover, as a mute god, he shapes his own matrix according to a new starting point opposed to the biblical one, "in the beginning was the word" (John 1:1). Bowen's Creation narrative suggests that in the beginning was silence or, to quote the passage, in the beginning was "silent silence". Jeremy and Eva are enclosed in a silent Eden in which hands replace tongue and in which matter precedes language. The description of the distorted head strangely echoes the biblical text: "In the beginning [...] the earth was *without form and void*; and *darkness* was upon the *face of the deep*" (Gen 1:1-2, my italics). Jeremy's shapeless "large knob" of clay is described in similar terms ("face", "deep", "dark") as it is perceived through Eva's eyes. She sees the creator "at work"—another expression evoking the Book of Genesis, when God beholds "the work which he had made" after creating heaven and earth. Jeremy's work is thus both a woman and a fish, but also the earth in its primal state. The ekphrastic passage is an altered echo of the biblical text, in which the world and mankind are created all at once. It is as if the text was holding a distorting mirror reflecting the Book of Genesis. When facing her clay replica, Eva seems to stand aghast: "Eva had not *known* where to turn" (*Eva Trout* 190, my emphasis). The character's reaction may remind us of Adam and Eve's hiding away from God after they have eaten the fruit of the tree of *knowledge* of good and evil and realise they are naked.
- 8 This Creation scene takes a new parodic turn when the narrator seems to suggest that Jeremy's work is not original. Moreover, it does not result in the creation of mankind but instead of "non-humanity" since, as the sculptress suggests, Jeremy "has *something* in mind", instead of "someone". Eva's double is also dehumanised because of the two deep eye sockets, a detail which is reminiscent of the serpent's promise when tempting Eve to eat the forbidden fruit: "your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil. [...] And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked" (Gen 3:5-7). Jeremy has dug his mother's eyes open and has revealed her nakedness, that is to say her true nature—which is her "non-humanity". Eva is indeed a monster, "the monstrous heiress" (*Eva Trout* 63), a moral and social monster in the sense that she is a misfit whose behaviour causes not only incomprehension but also disaster around her. Jeremy thus shows what should not be shown—the loathsome face of the monster. Revealing the truth, Jeremy speaks far too loud in his silent way and in an ironical reversal, Eva is then the one who remains silent, literally "dumbfounded". The text plays on the contrast between saying and not saying, words, silence and remote echoing voices. Eva's monstrosity is disclosed through a piece visual art, in a scene which may recall the revelation of Dorian Gray's abhorrent soul. Oscar Wilde's novel also explores creation and stages a distorting mirror: the canvas that reflects the truth of "a face without a heart" (Wilde 235, Shakespeare IV, 7).⁷ The pottery scene associates the biblical intertext with other narratives connected to creation; but the Garden of Eden situated in Primrose Hill turns out to be nightmarish, as it is intermingled with a more subtle reference to the Frankenstein theme in which the innocent creator gives birth to a monster. Paradoxically, the creation scene is thus tainted with an idea of imperfection, and even of death, as the terrifying deep eye sockets reveal Eva's mortal state: the childish clay work becomes a *memento mori*, as if death, rather than life, was coming into shape in this perverted Genesis. The head pierced with two holes is reminiscent of a skull, that is to say a head deprived of skin,

therefore naked. Eva sees herself “dead and turned to clay” (Shakespeare V, 1), a traditional association since earth symbolises both the final destination and petrification or, to quote Bachelard, “suspended life”, “the very moment of death”.⁸

- 9 Other writers' words resonate in the passage as if Eva's earthenware head was an echo chamber. As echoes, they are repeated and transformed. In the same way as Eva's replica is made in her own image but is yet a misrepresentation of her features, intertexts are duplicated, quoted and deformed at the same time. Eva's own voice also echoes from one scene to the next. The studio passage ends abruptly: as the sculptress is still attempting to interpret Jeremy's work, she seems to be interrupted by Eva's voice, shouting: “More wine!” (*Eva Trout* 190). The reader only gradually comes to understand that those words belong to the next scene that takes place in a completely different setting. The action occurs much later: Eva is then sitting in the restaurant of her hotel and addressing the waiter. The whole novel unfolds along such “fits”: a new situation suddenly barges in while the previous one is still unfolding. Hermione Lee considers that the structure of *Eva Trout* reveals a loss of mastery: Bowen's “last fiction, in its uneasy struggle with its own language and structure [...] describes an almost unbearable present, with which the traditional novel of order and feeling can no longer deal” (Lee 203). On the opposite side, Andrew Bennett and Nicholas Royle do not see *Eva Trout* as outdated or failing to come to terms with reality. Instead they praise an innovative construction—the novel's “unlikely convulsions” (Bennett and Royle 141)—which questions the nature of fiction. *Eva Trout* may in fact be Elizabeth Bowen's ultimate realization of one of her stylistic aims: in a letter to her editor Daniel George in 1948, Bowen wrote: “In some cases I want the rhythm to jerk or jar—to an extent, even, which may displease the reader”.⁹ In her last novel subtitled *Changing Scenes*, not only does the rhythm jerk but so do the plot and the succession of scenes. This stylistic and narrative choice creates an impression of jagged, superimposed scenes. I would argue that this device seems to suggest that scenes should not be treated separately but that instead, each new situation is likely to shed light onto the surrounding ones even though they occur in different contexts and contrast with one another. Hence Eva's words in the restaurant, “More wine”, may be analysed in relation to the studio scene and to the biblical intertext. In the Book of Genesis, wine appears in a revelation scene, when Ham sees his father Noah naked because “he drank of the wine and was drunken” (Gen 9:21-24). Once again, Bowen's genesis is a distortion of the original text, an “intertextual anamorphosis”: in the Bible Noah's drunkenness is the reason why his son sees him naked; here, the son shows his mother her own nakedness and, in a low and trite parody, she drinks wine as if to get over the shock. In an anticlimax, the text thus brings an absurd conclusion to the revelation scene and resorts to bathos to turn the studio scene into a grotesque mirror of the Book of Genesis. A clay replica is precisely a silent, grotesque mirror. Rémi Astruc explains that the grotesque duplicates the existing world by showing an altered, mad and senseless reflection of it.¹⁰ He argues that the grotesque is based on the representation of duplication, hybridity and metamorphosis.¹¹ The studio scene contains those three elements since the hybrid, siren-like Eva Trout faces a distorted replica of her features. It is mad and senseless because it is a human being turned into a thing, a dead representation in which earth stands for flesh, in which lively features and expressions are stiff.

- 10 While Eva stands gaping speechless at her lifeless *doppelgänger*, the mute child invents an organic language. For in fact, this silent, visual scene stages the linguistic exploration of a mute God whose only means of expression is to force his creation into

shapelessness. The passage emphasizes the materiality of language in relation to the divine performative words. The clay head becomes a rough, material version of God's word, but also of the child's first word, "mum", as if moulding was mumbling.

- 11 To spread his voice, God speaks through the prophet, who becomes the embodiment of the Word. Jeremy is precisely a distant echo of the prophet Jeremiah who answered God's call by a strong protest "I cannot speak for I am a child" (Jer. 1:6). The character is thus a literal version of his biblical counterpart, which turns him into a parody of the original prophet. If a prophet is God's words made flesh, Jeremy stands for God's words put into a voiceless body. Beyond the character, the place and action are also a literal transposition of the Book of Jeremiah in which God speaks thus:

Arise, and go down to the potter's house, and there I will cause thee to hear my words. [...] O house of Israel, cannot I do with you as this potter? saith the Lord. Behold, as the clay is in the potter's hand, so are ye in mine hand, O house of Israel. (Jer. 18.2-6)

- 12 The characters and the action of the studio scene thus stem from the primary, explicit meaning of the Biblical words. The scene is grotesque precisely because it shows a literal representation: the excessive faithfulness to the original produces a senseless copy.
- 13 The prophet child who delivers a cryptic message to his mother is close to the figure of the oracle in the Greek tradition. This polyphonic passage may also be connected to the myth of Oedipus: the deep eye sockets, too deep to ever catch the light, may evoke blindness. The violence of the ancient myth as it is related in Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*, seems to be enacted in a single gesture summarising the whole action: instead of marrying his mother, killing his father and tearing his eyes out, the fatherless child pushes his mother's eyes into her head and metaphorically kills her. Eva's clay figure becomes the concrete representation of the myth and of Sophocles' play. Drama is precisely another instance of the word made flesh, when cues are given an expression through the actors' bodies. In ancient drama, the actors wore a mask to cover their faces, hiding their features behind a rigid expression epitomising the character they were representing in the same way as Eva's clay face is a still representation of the monstrous and grotesque dimension of the character.
- 14 The resonance of intertexts reveals the way Elizabeth Bowen conceived of literary creation and the genesis of a text: it is a concrete process that collects voices of the past and distorts them into different shapes. Clay modelling is a metaphor that Bowen used in a conversation with Charles Ritchie about writing:

Elizabeth was discussing her method of writing the other night. She says that when she is writing a scene for the first time she always throws in all the descriptive words that come to her mind. She overdoes the situation, puts in everything which will heighten the effect she wants to get, like, as she says, someone doing clay modelling, who smacks on handfuls of clay before beginning to cut away and doing fine modelling. Then afterwards she cuts down and discards and whittles away.¹²

- 15 Bowen's comparison strikingly emphasises the importance of the artist's hands, concrete gestures. Words are a material that you need to put into shape in an organic process, just as the hands of the mute child, his only source of communication, model a clay word. Elsewhere in the novel, Eva's words are described in relation to architecture: "her outlandish, cement-like conversational style had set" (*Eva Trout* 17). Bennett and Royle insist on the rigidity involved in this comparison, "a figure which makes the abstract 'concrete', a metaphor which sets, immobilizing as concrete" (Bennett and

Royle 147).¹³ Language and literature materialise in the novel through what they call “mouth-events” which are the physical and concrete occurrences of “the novel’s central trope of orality” (142-43). The passage set in the restaurant follows the studio scene and should be analysed in connection to it: Eva is sitting in the restaurant of her hotel called Palley, a name which sounds like the verb “parler”. The reference to the French word is significant since Jeremy is sent to French doctors, the Bonnards, who teach him to “formulate, or attempt to formulate, French words” (*Eva Trout* 215). The verb “formulate” describes language as a form, lip shapes. Like Eva’s “cement-like conversational style”, like the word “mum” uttered through clay, the name of the hotel points to language as a spatial construction. As she is in the restaurant, Eva is called on the phone by Iseult, her former teacher who embodies poetic language in the novel.¹⁴ Their conversation deals with communication: “I wanted a word with you”, “Nothing had been heard from Henry. Not a word, not a postcard” (*Eva Trout* 191). Iseult Smith happens to call from *Reading*—a pun further developed as Eva later recollects her phone conversation and doubts its authenticity. In a senseless reflection, she thinks she may have spoken to an impersonator, a sort of profane prophet endowed with shifting and multiple identities:

A further possibility had occurred to her—the impersonator of Miss Smith had been Miss Smith, a deceased person purporting to be a living one. Not that she necessarily was in her coffin; no, she could well be walking about in Reading. (‘Charles the First walked and talked half an hour after his head was cut off.’ You put in a comma somewhere, then that made sense but was not so interesting.) (*Eva Trout* 193)¹⁵

- 16 The expressions “walking about in Reading” and “walked and talked” suggest that language is a movement in space. Bennett and Royle analyse the double meaning of this sentence: “Iseult, whom Eva imagines to be dead, may be walking about in Reading. But she may also be walking about in reading. The distinction is typographical, the difference between upper- and lower-case letters” (151). Beyond the meaning, the text thus draws the reader’s attention towards visual details on the page, the very craft of type: the capital letter but also the comma in the conundrum that draws a thin boundary between life and death, between the meaningful, logical and reasonable world and a senseless, grotesque world. Reading, like Parley, turns language into an architectural construction, but the pun only functions if the name of the city is not pronounced. Like for Jeremy’s clay words, silence reveals the material quality of language. Literary material comes to life within the fictional world when a *page* informs Eva she is wanted on the phone: “the page stood at her elbow” (*Eva Trout* 191). It is as if the character’s body was in close contact with the metatext it is part of and with its own substance as a fictional character. Eva is then confronted with a literary genre in the form of a figure which is reminiscent of the way Death playing chess with the knight in *The Seventh Seal*: “Hers was a table for two: something was suddenly trying to sit down opposite her at it: tragedy” (*Eva Trout* 190). The succession of colons opens new segments in the sentence like a series of embedded realities. Eva faces with her own tragic outcome, as if the character’s story and fate was being written around her, materialising in the fictional space through a proleptic allegory. Bennett and Royle write that “*Eva Trout* ends with a cinematic culmination” (Bennett and Royle 155), a scene in which all the characters (including the secondary ones) are gathered on a platform of Victoria Station to witness the departure of Eva and Henry on a mock honeymoon. Eva’s last lie performed in a “staged event” (Bennett and Royle 155) can

also be reminiscent of the tradition of the curtain call in drama, when actors shed their fictional characters and take their final bows in front of the audience at the end of a show. On that occasion, Jeremy turns up with a gun and kills Eva, in a final shooting scene (both in the explicit sense of the term and in the cinematographic sense enhanced by Bennett and Royle). This abrupt mock dramatic ending—based on puns and literal meanings like the studio scene—could be read as an ultimate distorted reference to Oedipus's *fatum* and an echo to the pottery scene in which Jeremy undoes Eva's existence by turning her to clay, a final occurrence of the immense power of the mute child.

- 17 The intertextual anamorphosis described by Neil Corcoran operates on a broader scale: not only are the themes and styles of Bowen's previous novels disfigured. The process also applies to external voices, creation narratives or tragic plays, which are altered through rewritings, parody, puns and shifts in meaning. Everything is duplicated and distorted: Eva becomes a grotesque clay figure in a Genesis performed by a Godlike child. Jeremy stands for the literal embodiment of the words of the prophet Jeremiah in the echo of "one of his silent silences". Words reverberate within the novel and shed meaning from one scene to the next when the rhythm and style seem to "jerk or jar". This scene of embedded creation stages the distortion of the original as an instance of literary creation: in the beginning was the word, but that word is a soft material which must be reshaped.
- 18 In fact, the studio scene explores two ways of representing literary creation—based on the two major arts of civilisation as described by Levi-Strauss: weaving and pottery—to unite them in a single image: *texts* are woven material emerging from a web of voices; but *fiction* etymologically refers to a shaped artefact.¹⁶ The tension between the immaterial echo and the material, concrete word concentrates in the clay figure, a densely shaped sculpture which materialises the source of language and memory. Eva's earthenware head becomes the image of the "cement-like conversation" that the novel holds both within itself and with its forebears.

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NOTES

1. Ellmann explains elsewhere: "[...] the novel consists of a mosaic of scenes, presented as autonomous set-pieces, such as the scene where Iseult and Eva meet at Bleak House where Dickens did not write *Bleak House*. [...] Despite the jerky rhythm, Shandian digressions, and blatant unreality of the events, we still want to know what happens next" (210).
2. Bowen lost her husband 15 years before the publication of *Eva Trout* in 1952 and sold her family home Bowen's Court in 1960.
3. In addition to the intertextual consistency within Bowen's fiction mentioned by Neil Corcoran, a multiplicity of major intertextual influences coming from other writers' works have also been analysed. Corcoran notes the Shakespearian references (126) while John Coates underlines the influence of Henry James and Charles Dickens on the concerns, tone and the themes of the novel (61-2, 77). Bowen's last novel particularly abounds with references and quotes: Eva recites a poem by George Herbert to her teacher, the aptly-named Iseult (65-6), she hears about Browning's "rather long poem called 'Pippa Passes'" (179), attends a boarding school located in a castle with a roommate called Elsinore (52) or claims she has sat in Dickens' chair (114).
4. My translation. *La potière jalouse*, 17-18: "Pourtant la poterie est avec le tissage un des deux arts majeurs de la civilisation. Depuis des millénaires, la poterie sous une ou plusieurs formes-terres vernissées ou non, faïence, grès, porcelaine-figure dans toutes les demeures, humbles ou aristocratiques [...]"
5. "Qu'il s'agisse bien ici de faire le départ entre la nature et la culture, mais par l'intermédiaire de la poterie" (*La potière jalouse*, 111, the italics are in the original text).
6. One may think for example of the Nok terracotta figurines (Nigeria) characteristically showing human heads with perforated eyes.
7. Shortly before he dies, Dorian expresses his hatred of the portrait which reminds him of "those curious lines in some play-*Hamlet*, I think-how do they run? 'Like the painting of a sorrow, A face without a heart.'" (Wilde 235).
8. My translation. "Cette vie soudainement suspendue, c'est autre chose qu'une décrépitude. C'est l'instant même de la Mort, un instant qui ne veut pas s'écouler, qui perpétue son effroi et qui, en immobilisant tout, n'apporte pas le repos" (Bachelard, 199). This is one of the possible interpretations of James Joyce's short story "Clay" in *Dubliners*.
9. The content of the letter, written in June 1948, is quoted by Maud Ellmann (166).

10. "[...] le grotesque procède par dédoublement du monde, en présentant un monde altéré, reflet du monde 'normal' mais obéissant à une logique devenue folle ; ce qui a pour conséquence d'obliger le lecteur à opérer un décentrement de sa perception, un déplacement de son sens, pour pénétrer la 'para-logique' de ce monde grotesque" (Astruc 53).

11. [Le grotesque] est un cadre au moyen duquel il devient possible de penser l'altérité, de penser la transformation du monde et de soi-même, et ce parce qu'il met en jeu les outils logiques qui permettent de représenter le mystère du 'deux en un' contenu dans toute altérité et toute transformation, à savoir *le redoublement, l'hybridité et la métamorphose*. En effet, ce sont là les trois opérations fondamentales permettant de penser l'altérité et le changement, en même temps que ce sont les trois moteurs principaux de l'esthétique grotesque" (Astruc 60, emphasis in the original). Eva's dehumanisation, her being turned into a figure of clay, also connects the scene to the genre of the grotesque: "tout personnage grotesque est dans une certaine mesure un personnage conceptuel [selon un] processus qui condui[t] au bout du compte à un dégagement de l'humain en général (désocialisation, désincarnation, délocalisation et donc déshumanisation)" (Astruc 143). The grotesque character is, Astruc argues, a figure, which is precisely a character deprived of its humanity ("la figure, c'est le personnage moins l'humanité" Astruc 144, emphasis in the original).

12. This passage is in the entry dated from 3 March, 1942 (Ritchie 137).

13. Eva is also linguistic "monster". Her teacher, Miss Smith, considers her as "partly foreign [...] and partly handicapped" (*Eva Trout* 62-63), mainly for the reason that she cannot relate to others through language: "she was unable to speak-talk, be understood, converse" (*Eva Trout* 63). Jeremy's muteness is thus a more radical version of Eva's own impediment. For an analysis of Eva's speech, as well as her reluctance to speak, see Bennett and Royle 147-48.

14. Earlier in the novel, Iseult teaches Eva poetry, a form of language opposed to the girl's static "cement-like" words: "You see how pure language can be? Not more than two syllables—are there?—in any word" (*Eva Trout* 66).

15. Again, this scene sheds light onto the previous one: the reference to the King's beheading echoes Eva's clay head, making its connection to death and language explicit. The theme of the double also reappears in relation to a grotesque world in which people could be both dead and alive.

16. The word "text" comes from the Latin *textus* which means "texture" (from *texere*, to compose or weave), whereas the term "fiction" relates to the figure of the potter (latin *figere*, to shape).

ABSTRACTS

The fragmented composition of Elizabeth Bowen's last novel *Eva Trout* displays scenes which may seem isolated and disruptive in the plot. This article focuses on one of those scenes in which the mute child Jeremy confronts his mother Eva with her own representation in the form of a clay head he has modelled. The argument is based on the "intertextual anamorphosis" described by Neil Corcoran but it applies this notion outside the limits of Bowen's previous works. It appears that the action turns the characters into archetypal figures in a text that resonates with a multiplicity of distorted intertexts. In fact, the ekphrastic scene explores the process of literary creation as a duplication and transformation of the original, to the extent that the copy sometimes becomes a grotesque caricature.

Le dernier roman d'Elizabeth Bowen, *Eva Trout*, possède une structure fragmentée qui révèle de nombreuses scènes qui peuvent paraître isolées, comme fonctionnant en vase clos dans un récit heurté. Cet article examine l'une de ces scènes dans laquelle Jeremy, un enfant muet, révèle à sa mère une sculpture de terre représentant son visage qu'il a lui-même modelée. L'argument se fonde sur "l'anamorphose intertextuelle" telle qu'elle est décrite par Neil Corcoran mais il l'applique au-delà des limites des romans antérieurs de l'auteur. Il apparaît que l'action transforme les personnages en figures archétypales dans un texte qui résonne d'une multiplicité d'intertextes profondément déformés. En réalité, la scène ekphrastique explore le processus de création littéraire comme duplication et transformation d'un original qui peut aller jusqu'à la caricature grotesque.

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