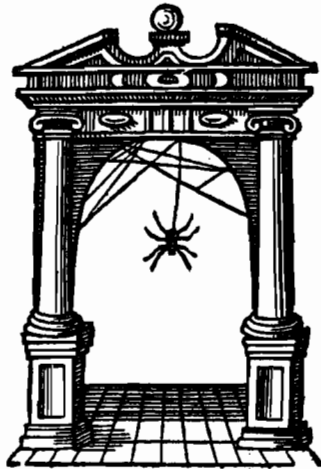


Connotations

A Journal for Critical Debate



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Connotations: A Journal for Critical Debate

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The House of Fame: Tripartite Structure and Occasion

JOHN M. STEADMAN

Like many other allegories, Chaucer's dream-vision is an extended enigma; but (unlike the majority of such poems) it is a riddle without a key. The poem breaks off abruptly at the climax of the narrative; and the nature of its conclusion (which might have illuminated the meaning of the entire dark conceit) must itself remain conjectural. One must not only guess at the meaning underlying the allegory as it stands; one must also guess at the nature of the final key to the allegory—if indeed the missing conclusion actually provided a key. Under the circumstances it would be superfluous to apologize for indulging in conjectures; for they are, in fact, unavoidable. The facts are so few, the uncertainties so manifold, that one can at best achieve hypotheses. Though some theories may seem more plausible than others, none of them can possess demonstrative certainty. Therefore a healthy skepticism is indicated toward the best of them, not excepting one's own hypothesis.¹

Among the problems which still remain unsolved are the tripartite structure of the poem and the significance of the date of the poet's dream. In the following pages I shall examine the possibility that these problems may be interrelated and that the Dantesque associations of Chaucer's eagle may have a bearing on both problems. In the present state of our knowledge² the solution proposed—a recitation on three successive days in association with the feast of Saint Lucy (December 13)—must necessarily remain hypothetical, and largely speculative; but one hopes that it is not altogether "fantome and illusion."³

I.

Chaucer's dream takes place on the tenth day of December, the tenth month. Though several explanations have been advanced for this detail,

For debates inspired by this article, please check the Connotations website at <<http://www.connotations.de/debsteadman00301.htm>>.

the reasons for his choosing this particular date have never been ascertained and will, in all probability, remain conjectural. Is the date itself symbolic, either astrologically or liturgically? Does it have a personal and autobiographical meaning for the poet, as April 6 did for Petrarch? Does it derive its significance from an historical event that is still unknown to us but that may have been the subject of the mysterious love-tidings? Or is it primarily related to the occasion of the poet's recitation?

Elsewhere Chaucer's dates are usually significant for the theme of the poem—May morning, Saint Valentine's Day, the unlucky day or *dies mala* (May 3) on which Pandarus feels "a teene / In love" and on which Chaunticleer encounters the fox.⁴ We may logically assume that the choice of date in *The House of Fame* was equally significant. Perhaps the simplest explanation would be that December 10 was not in itself symbolic,⁵ but merely denoted the night prior to the first formal recitation of the first book of the poem (or possibly the actual date of its presentation).

The underlying conceit of Chaucer's fable is (apparently) that the announcement by the man of great authority is merely part of his dream. In actuality the "tidings" that the latter presumably delivered may have been the real occasion for the narrative, and perhaps for the festivity in which the poet was himself a principal participant. The theme introduced in the Proem and artfully elaborated by numerous figures of amplification and repetition—the validity of dreams⁶—would be resolved by the final annunciation of tidings that the poet has prepared his audience to expect. This is a "true" dream, accordingly, and its truth is decisively vindicated by the real events for which the dream-narrative is merely a fictive and allegorical framework. The heavy and perhaps over-laboured emphasis in the Proem on the truth of dreams serves as ironic preparation (or *parascève*) for the final disclosure. The dream is indeed "true" because the occasion the poet pretends to be dreaming about is the actual festivity at which he and his audience are present in person. Nevertheless, it is also, in a sense, a "false" dream, for (as he and his audience are well aware) it is not a dream at all, but a fictional framework for the real situation. This interplay between dream and reality, fiction and fact, is (in the literal sense of the word)

"occasional" humor, centered on the concrete social occasion in which poet and audience are alike participants.

Chaucer's dream occurs three days before the festival of Saint Lucy of Syracuse (December 13), the shortest day and longest night of the year.⁷ In England her day was honored as a festival of the second rank until the Reformation. She is patroness against eye-diseases, just as the eagle is traditionally the most keen-sighted of birds; and in the *Purgatorio* Dante brings both of these figures into close association. While he is dreaming of an ascent to the element of fire in the clutch of a golden eagle, Lucia (as he learns later) actually lifts him up to the threshold of Purgatory. Commentaries on the *Commedia* often identify her with illuminating grace, and her patroness (Rachel) with the *vita contemplativa*. The eagles of Chaucer and Dante function as contemplative symbols in dream-visions; and the scene in the *Purgatorio* has generally been accepted as one of Chaucer's sources. The proximity of the date of his dream to Lucia's feast suggests that he may be drawing on the eagle-Lucia association that he had encountered in the *Commedia*.⁸ As a symbol of the intellect or of illuminating grace, Lucia had been associated in medieval exegesis both with the eagle of the Ganymede and the eagle of Dante's purgatorial dream. Chaucer's exploitation of these symbolic associations would be seasonally appropriate.⁹ We should not exclude the possibility that his echoes of Dante's *Purgatorio* and its imagery are related to the date of his dream, and that both allusions are related to the date and occasion of the recitation of his poem. The vision (or at least its climax in Book 3) would conceivably have been read aloud on the eve of St. Lucy or her festal day, only three days after the ostensible date of the dream. If read aloud in successive installments, moreover, the climax of the narrative would coincide with the feast-day of the saint whom Dante and his early commentators had associated with the eagle as a symbol of the intellect.

Let us assume tentatively that on the night of December 11 Chaucer read the first book aloud—possibly to Richard's court, to the court of John of Gaunt, or (as R. J. Schoeck suggests) at an entertainment at one of the Inns of Court. In this case he pretends to be recounting a dream that he had experienced the previous night. The journey with the eagle would be recited on the eve of Saint Lucy, and the core of the poem—the

vision of Fame's dwelling and the concluding announcement—would be delivered on the saint's festal day. On each of these days the eagle—the only character besides Chaucer himself who plays a role in all three books—is introduced; and the Dantesque associations of this image make it an indirect and symbolic tribute to the saint whose feast-day coincides with the climax of the poem. On the first day he merely makes his appearance, shining like the sun and appropriately suggesting the root-meaning of *Lucia* (light or *lux*). On the eve of Saint Lucy he carries the poet on his aerial journey, meanwhile delivering a scientific lecture, a scholastic demonstration of the nature of sound. In this passage the eagle (a traditional symbol of the intellect itself or of various intellectual virtues) rationalizes the myth of Fame's aerial dwelling in terms of the principles of natural philosophy or physics. Utilizing both deductive and inductive proofs, he employs arguments from definition and from analogy, to establish (on what appear to be logical and scientific grounds) a point that is, of course, a mythological commonplace but a scientific absurdity. The comic impact of this scene derives not only from its parody of scholastic logic (a traditional rival of poetics and rhetoric in the Middle Ages as well as in the Renaissance), but also (and more specifically) from its burlesque treatment of at least one principal mode of classical and medieval allegoresis: the explication of myths and the justification of poetic fables as symbolic statements of the truths of physics and natural philosophy. In both respects Chaucer could conceivably be making sport of the demonstrative and exegetical methods of the friars. The lecture also serves (albeit humorously and ironically) to enhance the credibility and probability of the marvels that the poet is about to relate to a potentially skeptical audience.

On Saint Lucy's day (December 13), the eagle performs his final office as guide, bringing the dreamer into the actual house of tidings, where the latter will hear in person the news that he has journeyed so far (in contemplation) to hear. At this point the dream-milieu of the vision merges into reality, into the actual festivities. The concluding revelation would thus occur on the day sacred to the patron saint of vision and the symbol of Illuminating Grace. Whether the concluding announcements are made by the great man *in propria persona* or in disguise as part of a mumming we cannot know. The significant point, however,

is that the truth of the poet's dream—an issue emphasized in the Proem by extensive repetition—has been vindicated. The "causes" of his dream are now quite clear. His dream on the "double-tenth"—the tenth day of the tenth month—was a prophetic dream, divinely sent by Jove himself through the agency of his messenger. Through a clever poetic invention and an equally skilful manipulation of suspense and irony, Chaucer has made the occasion for reciting his dream the ostensible proof of its validity, and the solution to its allegorical significance.

II.

In suggesting a possible connection between the fictional date of the poet's dream, its tripartite structure, the feast of Saint Lucy, and the Dantesque associations of Chaucer's eagle, one should not overlook other associations which may elucidate several of the major images and motifs within this work. Recent scholarship has called attention to the eagle's conventional role as a symbol of Saint John the Evangelist, to the possible significance of the Advent season, and to a potential link between *The House of Fame* and the Christmas revels at one of the Inns of Court.¹⁰ The pretended date of the dream-vision is exactly a fortnight before Christmas Eve, and the feast of the Evangelist (December 27) follows that of Saint Lucy by precisely the same interval. Chaucer's audience was, in all probability, already making preparations for Christmas festivities; and it is possible that certain motifs in his poem—such as the emphasis on tidings—may have involved seriocomic allusions to the imminent celebrations in honor of the Nativity and the first proclamation of the gospel "tidings of great joy." There would appear to be a certain seasonal decorum, albeit parodic, in the dreamer's quest for tidings. The contrast between the kind of love-tidings the poet expects to hear in his dream and those that he and his audience will be listening to in earnest some two weeks hence might enhance the underlying ironies of his vision. In less than two weeks after celebrating the feast of St. Lucy—the saint whom Dante had allegorized as intellect or prudence or "Illuminating Grace," in the opinion of the earliest commentators—Chaucer's audience would be rejoicing in the advent

of the *Lux Mundi*, hailed as the "true Light" (John 1:9) by the evangelist whose conventional symbol was an eagle.

The analogy with the eagle of St. John the Evangelist (and of the gospel-lectern) acquires greater relevance for Chaucer's poem, moreover, through its specific associations with tidings (*evangelium*).¹¹ Lessons from the gospel (i.e. "tidings") were, of course, normally read from the eagle-lectern. The symbolic eagle of St. John the Evangelist was accordingly literally a "bearer of tidings"; and in the gospel lesson for Christmas Day the tidings (not inappropriate for a keen-sighted eagle) are the tidings of the true light and the testimony of another John (the Baptist) who bears witness to the Light.¹² Like the eagle, however, St. John the Evangelist was a visionary, commonly regarded as the author of Revelation—a book which seemed, in the eyes of readers like Boccaccio, to approximate the allegorical methods of poetry and which poets themselves frequently utilized as a partial model for their own dream-visions and as a source for their own allegorical symbols.¹³ Figuratively, as "bearer of tidings" the Evangelist is himself a speaking eagle, like the eagle of *The House of Fame*.

Chaucer's eagle thus possesses a variety of associations, secular and Biblical, literary and iconographical, which the poet might conveniently utilize in accomodating his allegory to time and place, occasion and season. The eagle's role in bearing the poet to the heavens at the behest of Jove derives partly from the Ganymede myth and partly from Dante's *Purgatorio*. Through the *Purgatorio* he is also linked with St. Lucy of Syracuse. Both St. Lucy and the eagle of the bestiaries are associated with keenness of sight, and (allegorically) with intellectual illumination. His association with tidings connects him with the eagle of the gospel-lectern and St. John the Evangelist. Finally, the motif of tidings¹⁴—so intimately connected with the festivities that are the occasion of the poem—suggests a possible link between the eagle who promises to take the dreamer to a place where he will hear love-tidings and the man of great authority who (if we may judge from the context) relates them.

The conscious mystifications in the earlier books—the speculations on whether dreams are true or not, the poet's ignorance as to the meaning of his dream, his doubts as to whether Venus' temple may not be a phantom or illusion—are partly designed to arouse and maintain

suspense, puzzling the audience and increasing their eagerness to hear the continuation of the story at the next recitation. If the poem was indeed designed for recitation on three successive days, Chaucer must somehow manage to make each episode a more or less self-contained narrative, yet at the same time arouse interest in the next installment by breaking off at a crucial point in the story. This was how Scheherazade saved her neck, how Ariosto entertained a ducal court, and how nineteenth-century serial-writers supported their families. Each of the three books of *The House of Fame* is virtually a unified whole—the vision of Venus' temple with the summary of the Aeneid; the flight-scene with the digression on air and sound; the visit to the palace of Fame and the house of tidings—and could accordingly provide a substantial and satisfying evening-fare in itself. The concluding lines of the first two books, however, are proleptic; they provide the preparation for the next episode and are intended to stimulate the audience's expectations. The golden eagle appears at the end of the first book, but we are not told who he is, what he signifies, or why he has come. At the end of the second book the traveller arrives at his destination and receives the preparatory instructions for his visit, but the account of Fame's dwelling and its marvels is postponed until the little last book. Chaucer's narrative art would seem to be admirably adapted to the demands of the occasion we have suggested—a series of recitations on three successive days culminating in festivities held either on St. Lucy's day or on the preceding evening. This is occasional poetry of a very high order indeed.

The apparent lack of coherence in Chaucer's plot, its tripartite structure, and the seeming lack of continuity between one episode and the next have frequently been deplored as artistic flaws. In actuality, however, these would appear to have been deliberate, the poet's conscious response to the conditions of his "performance". The poem falls into three virtually discrete parts because it was apparently intended to be read in three separate installments. The apparent discontinuity between the episodes of the temple, the flight, and the palace would surely puzzle the audience, just as it has puzzled modern readers; and, as so often in allegorical narratives, the mystery would itself enhance suspense. Their interconnection would ultimately become intelligible on the allegorical plane, if not on the literal level; and the concluding announcements

would probably resolve much of the uncertainty and ambiguity inherent in the symbols. The fourteenth-century audience could enjoy this type of allegorical mystification in the same way that sixteenth and seventeenth-century courtiers delighted in enigmas and emblems and in the "court hieroglyphics" of the masque.

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NOTES

¹I am indebted to Professor J. A. W. Bennett for helpful criticism of an earlier draft of this essay.

²Among full-length studies of *The House of Fame*, see W. O. Sypherd, *Studies in Chaucer's House of Fame* (London: Chaucer Society, 1907); J. A. W. Bennett, *Chaucer's Book of Fame: An Exposition of The House of Fame* (Oxford: Clarendon P, 1968); G. B. Koonce, *Chaucer and the Tradition of Fame: Symbolism in The House of Fame* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1966); Sheila Delany, *Chaucer's House of Fame: The Poetics of Skeptical Fideism* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1972). Among other studies, see R. J. Schoeck, "A Legal Reading of Chaucer's *House of Fame*," *UTQ* 23 (1953): 185-92; Reginald Berry, "Chaucer's Eagle and the Element Air," *UTQ* 43 (1974): 285-97; Kay Stevenson, "The Endings of Chaucer's *House of Fame*," *ES* 59 (1978): 10-26; and Lisa Kiser, "Eschatological Poetics in Chaucer's *House of Fame*," *MLQ* 49 (1988): 99-109, which compares Chaucer's poem with Dante's *Commedia*.

³Though there is evidence of folk customs associated with St. Lucy's day, it remains uncertain whether there were court festivities associated with this day. Accordingly, this study must of necessity remain largely conjectural rather than factual.

⁴See F. N. Robinson's notes on the *Nun's Priest's Tale* 3190; *Troilus* II.55; and the *Knight's Tale* I.1462. Robinson observes that "according to the usual understanding," Palamon escaped from prison on the night of May 3, but that Manly interprets Chaucer's allusion as a reference to the night preceding May 3; *The Complete Works of Geoffrey Chaucer*, 2nd ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1957). R. K. Root cites an additional reference to May 3 in *The Cuckoo and the Nightingale* and observes that the third of May was one of "Egyptian days" or "dismal days" on which "it was unlucky to begin a new undertaking"; *The Book of Troilus and Criseyde* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1945) 437. See also George R. Adams and Bernard S. Levy, "Good and Bad Fridays and May 3 in Chaucer," *ELN* 3 (1966): 245-48; John P. McCall, "Chaucer's May 3," *MLN* 76 (1961): 201-05; *OED*, s.v. *dismal*, Ducange, s.v. *dies*; John Matthew Manly (ed.), *Canterbury Tales* (New York: H. Holt, 1928) 550-51. The English or Anglo-French term *dismal* apparently derived from Old French *dis mal* (or *mals jours*).

According to *OED* and Manly the Egyptian or "dismal" days in each month were as follows: January 1 and 25, May 3 and 25, June 10 and 16, July 13 and 22, August

1 and 30, September 3 and 21, October 3 and 22, November 5 and 28, December 7 and 22—i.e. two days in each month. Other lists, however, sometimes designate more than two unlucky days in the month, and the composition of these calendars often varies considerably. On the whole, the variations would appear to be more pronounced in the English calendars *before* 1100 than in the manuscripts after that date; see Francis Wormald (ed.), *English Kalendars before A.D. 1100* (London: Harrison, 1934) 13, 27, 97, 111, 153, 195, and *passim*; Wormald, *English Benedictine Kalendars after A.D. 1100*, vol. 1 (1939; London: Henry Bradshaw, 1946) 111, 179, and *passim*. In one of the earlier calendars the days identified as *Dies Egyptiacus* or *Dies mala* are January 2 and 25, February 6, April 4, May 4 and 25, June 20 (identified as the summer solstice), July 6 and 13, October 4, November 24, and December 12. (In this instance May 3 is not an unlucky day, but the day preceding Saint Lucy's day is an Egyptian day.) In another calendar the unlucky days are virtually the same as in the OED-Manly list; in the case of December, however, the evil days are identified as the 12th and 15th. In another early calendar Saint Lucy's day itself (the 13th) is a *Dies mala*, while a fourth applies this designation to December 11 and December 27 (the day of Saint John the Apostle). Most of the calendars in Wormald's second volume, however, conform to the same pattern as the OED-Manly scheme.

⁵An alternative explanation—that the date is primarily symbolic—would derive support from the analogy with Chaucer's use of symbolic dates (notably May 3) in other poems. Chaucer's reward for his services to the god and goddess of love would thus appear to be associated with a lucky day, just as Pandarus' fruitless pains and Chauncleer's perilous and all but fatal reward for his service to Venus would be linked with a "dismal" day, a *dies mala*. In Koonce's opinion, astrological evidence establishes December 10 as an auspicious date. The fact that this is the double tenth night also reinforces this interpretation. Inasmuch as ten was regarded as a perfect or complete number, the tenth day of the tenth month might seem a fitting occasion for the poet to receive a reward for his hitherto unremunerative labors on behalf of lovers; see Vincent Foster Hopper, *Medieval Number Symbolism* (New York: Columbia UP, 1938). Nevertheless, since we do not know precisely what year Chaucer is referring to, we cannot be certain that December 10 was an auspicious day. The dismal days not only varied in different calendars, but were sometimes associated with the ten plagues of Egypt. If (as we have suggested) the poem may have been read aloud on three successive days, concluding on Saint Lucy's day or its eve, it is probable that one of the installments occurred on a *dies mala*. Several of Wormald's calendars apply this term to either the 11th, the 12th, or the 13th of December. Chaucer's journey may not be a fortunate voyage. It may terminate in disillusion and (as the eagle's discourse concerning the aerial substance of tidings might suggest) in a reward of empty air. On the significance of the date of Chaucer's "dream on 'the tenth day of the tenth month'" and its "Scriptural context," see Koonce 182, 184.

⁶The time of Chaucer's dream may also suggest an ambiguity as to its validity. In *The Book of the Duchess*, Alcione's dream occurs "Ryght even a quarter before day"; but in *The House of Fame* the dreamer falls asleep "Whan hit was nyght. . . ." Whereas the timing of the former suggests that it may be a true dream (and such it subsequently proves to be), the omission of any reference to a morning dream in the latter poem (although the narrator dreams that he is waking at dawn) may suggest that it is in actuality a false illusion. See Sapegno's notes on *Inferno* 26.7 and on *Purgatorio* 9.16. Dante's vision of the golden eagle occurs in an early morning

dream: "Nell' ora che comincia i tristi lai / La rondinella presso alla mattina . . . " Dante Alighieri, *La Divina Commedia*, ed. Natalino Sapegno, vol. 1, *Inferno* (Firenze: "La Nuova Italia" Editrice, 1955) and vol. 2, *Purgatorio* (Firenze: "La Nuova Italia" Editrice, 1956). I am indebted to Professor Bennett for his suggestion concerning the time of the narrator's dream in Chaucer's poem.

⁷Alexandre Masseron, "Quelques énigmes hagiographiques de la *Divine Comédie*," *Analecta Bollandiana* 68 (1950): 369-82, observes that in Dante's heaven Saint Lucy plays a role analogous to that of Iris (or, one might add, Mercury) in the pagan Olympus. In accordance with Dante's belief (*Vita nuova* 13) that "*nomina sunt consequentia rerum*," Masseron observes that Lucy's name signifies light and that its proper effect is light. An early commentator on the *Commedia*, Graziolo de' Bambaglioni, stressed Dante's "*maximam devotionem*" to this saint. Saint Lucy was one of the four principal patronesses of the Western Church and the protectress of "the labouring poor, or tillers of the ground, of sight and the eyes, against dysentery and hemorrhage of all sorts." According to popular legend, her eyesight had been miraculously restored after she had plucked out her eyes in literal obedience to the Scriptural injunction ("if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out") and presented them to her lover in a dish. See Agnes B. C. Dunbar, *A Dictionary of Sainly Women*, vol. 2 (London: G. Bell & Sons, 1904); *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, s.v. *Saint Lucy*; Osborn Bokenham, *Legendys of Hooly Wummen*, ed. Mary S. Serjeantson (London: H. Milford, 1938) 243-44, derives the saint's name etymologically from light, for it is the nature of light that "in syht þer-of ys gracyous consolacyoun. . . ." Invoking her aid, Bokenham declares that the saint has been called "lyht / Or lyhtys weye" by the singular property of "specyal grace," for the Holy Ghost had given her so great a might that a thousand men and many yokes of oxen "in no degree / To the bordelous myht not drawyn þe" Against this background of legend, the poet might appropriately be delivered from the illusion of Venus' temple by a contemplative symbol that had already served Dante as a figure of Lucia.

William B. Hunter, Jr. has discussed affinities between John Donne's "Nocturnal" and the "Evening Prayer lectionary for the evening before" St. Lucy's Day. See Hunter, "Donne's 'Nocturnal' and Isaiah 38," *AN&Q Supplement*, vol. 1, *Studies in English and American Literature*, ed. John L. Cutler and Lawrence S. Thompson (Troy, NY: Whitson, 1978). In *Chaucer and the Liturgy* (Philadelphia: Dorrance, 1967), Beverly Boyd has reexamined allusions to religious ceremonies and the ecclesiastical calendar in Chaucer's work.

⁸Cf. Cino Chiarini, *Di una imitazione inglese della Divina Commedia: La Casa della Fama di Chaucer* (Bari: G. Laterza e figli, 1902) 95-97; Charles Muscatine, *Chaucer and the French Tradition* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: U of California P, 1957) 110; Robinson 781-82. Lucia is mentioned in Dante's *Inferno* 1, *Purgatorio* 9, and *Paradiso* 32. Sapegno observes that, for early commentators on the *Purgatorio*, the eagle who bears him to the sphere of fire while Lucia carries him to the threshold of Purgatory symbolizes Illuminating Grace. According to Buti, "la grazia di Dio illuminante . . . fa l'omo cognoscere quelle che li è bisogno alla sua salute, e dimandare lo dono dell'amore dello Spirito Santo, lo quale rape l'anima e portala in alto e falla ardere dell'amore"; Sapegno 2:98-100. Elsewhere in the *Commedia*, however, Dante attributes other symbolic functions to the eagle; it may figure divine justice (*Paradiso* 19 and 20) or more specifically the *Imperium Romanum*. In the penultimate Canto of the *Purgatorio*, its descents (the first, symbolizing the persecution of the Church by imperial authority; the second, figuring the Donation of Constantine, which Dante

regarded as largely responsible for the corruption of the Church) occur in a decidedly pejorative context, in sharp contrast to the beneficial role of the eagle in Canto 9.

In the *Commedia* the "donna . . . gentil nel ciel" describes Dante to Lucia as "il tuo fedele," and Beatrice refers to Lucia as "nimica di ciascun crudele." C. H. Grandgent regards her as a symbol of Illuminating Grace; *La Divina Commedia di Dante Alighieri*, rev. ed. (Boston: D. C. Heath, 1933) 21-22. Natalino Sapegno endorses the same interpretation, but notes that other commentators on this passage have interpreted the three heavenly ladies as charity, hope, and faith. The symbol of Lucia as "Gracia illuminante" involves etymological word-play ("Lucia lucens"), while the references to Dante as her "fedele" refers to the eye-trouble he mentions in *Convivio* (3.9) and *Vita nuova*; *La Divina Commedia* 1:25; cf. *The Divine Comedy of Dante Alighieri* (New York: Vintage Books, 1950) 20-21. In commenting on the *Purgatorio*, Jacopo della Lana interprets both Lucia and the golden eagle as figures representing the intellect. For Pietro Alighieri, both represent the science of mathematics, which comprises music and astronomy as well as arithmetic and geometry; see my "Chaucer's Eagle: A Contemplative Symbol," *PMLA* 65 (1960): 153-59. On the symbolism of the eagle and Lucia in Dante's *Purgatorio*, see Koonce 134.

⁹Traditionally Saint Lucy's day (December 13) coincided with the sun's entrance into Capricorn and hence with the winter solstice. In actuality, however, the date of the winter solstice sometimes varied widely in medieval calendars. According to one calendar of c. 969-978 (Wormald 27), the sun entered Capricorn on December 18, while the winter solstice occurred on December 21. In the Sarum missal the winter solstice (and *a fortiori* the sun's entrance into Capricorn) took place on December 14.

For folk customs associated with Saint Lucy's day, see Alban Butler, *The Lives of the Saints*, ed. Herbert Thurston, vol. 12 (London: Burns, Oates & Washbourne, 1931-1942) 150-51, and Hanns Bächtold-Stäubli et al., eds., *Handwörterbuch des deutschen Aberglaubens*, vol. 5 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1933) col. 1442-46. D. W. Robertson, Jr., *A Preface to Chaucer* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1962) 184, calls attention to a thirteenth-century sermon on Saint Lucy which stressed her firmness in prosperity and adversity and her altitude of mind, "soaring above the heavens in contemplation . . ."

In view of the popularity of etymological interpretations of names in late classical and medieval rhetoric (the *argumentum a nomine*), it is hardly surprising that the saint herself (like her Renaissance namesake, the Countess of Bedford) should be praised as light (*lux*), or that astronomical and etymological associations should contribute to her symbolic interpretation in terms of intellectual illumination and the act of contemplation.

Nevertheless, there may have been a further association which could have made the seasonal allusions in Chaucer's vision appropriate. The fact that the solstices were sometimes associated with demonic activities—frequently of a strongly erotic nature—could have possible significance for the character of the poet's dream as well as for his dread of "fantome and illusion." In commenting on John Holywood's discussion of the colure distinguishing the summer and winter solstices, Cecco d'Ascoli declared that the princes of the demons occupy the four signs associated with the solstices and equinoxes. Incubi and succubi inhabit the colures. The former "dominantur in somniis coitus hominum," while the latter assume bodies of air "in forma mulieris" and deceive "quandoque hominem agendo in eum." See Lynn Thorndike, *The Sphere of Sacrobosco and Its Commentators* (Chicago: U of Chicago P,

1949) 387-88. Cf. also Cecco's etymological interpretation of the word *colurus* in terms of the erotic dreams sent by the demonic spirits who dwell in the colures. Though it is doubtful whether Chaucer knew the work of the condemned astrologer who had dared to cast the horoscope of Christ, he may have encountered elsewhere similar superstitions concerning the demonic associations of the solstices. If so, he would have had ample reason to fear demonic illusion. For an interpretation of Milton's *Paradise Lost* against the background of Cecco's commentary on Sacrobosco's *The Sphere*, see Stanley Archer, "Satan and the Colures: *Paradise Lost* IX, 62-66," *ELN* 10 (1972): 115-16.

¹⁰For the association of the eagle with Saint John, see Bennett 49-51; for the eagle symbolism in Dante and the relation of Chaucer's poem to the Advent season, see Koonce 68, 80-81, 133-34. R. J. Schoeck, "A Legal Reading of Chaucer's *Hous of Fame*" suggests that Chaucer wrote *The House of Fame* for "one of the ritualistic functions of the Inner Temple"—possibly "the Christmas Revels, which by the end of the fifteenth century were the most elaborate of the revels at the Inns."

¹¹Koonce observes (149n) that "the concept of good (glad) tidings or news is conveyed in the Vulgate by *evangelium* (*evangelizare*) or, as in Prov. 25:25, *nun[n]tius bonus*."

¹²In the Sarum Missal the Mass at Cock-crow includes a gospel reading from Luke 2:1-14, "*ecce enim evangelizo vobis gaudium magnum*"; the Third Mass includes John 1:1-14 as the gospel lesson. See *Missale ad usum insignis et præclaræ ecclesiæ Sarum*, ed. F. H. Dickinson, part 1 (Burntisland and London: C. J. Stewart, 1861) 54, 62; *The Sarum Missal in English*, trans. Frederick E. Warren, part 1 (London and Milwaukee: A. R. Mowbray & Co., 1913) 99, 105. In *Chaucer and the Tradition of Fame: Symbolism in The House of Fame* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1966) 265-65, 265n, 274, 274n, B. G. Koonce relates the date of Chaucer's dream to the liturgy for Advent in the Sarum Missal.

¹³On the identification of St. John the Evangelist with John the Divine, author of Revelation, see Koonce, *passim*.

¹⁴On the Scriptural connotations of 'tydynges' see Koonce 149.

A Collection of Toothpicks from *The Winter's Tale* to *Leviathan*¹

ROBERT G. COLLMER

In *The Winter's Tale* (4.4), Autolycus offers his services to assist the shepherd and the bumpkin-clown, who are carrying a bundle with the mantle, the jewel, and the letters to King Leontes that will prove Perdita to be, not a shepherdess by birth, but the lost daughter of the King and Hermione. Authenticating his familiarity with court circles, Autolycus calls attention—in a sort of resume—to his clothes (he has recently exchanged his rags for Florizel's garments), manner of walking ("my gait . . . the measure of the court"), perfume ("court-odour"), and, finally, superciliousness ("reflect I not on thy . . . court-contempt?"). When the shepherd remarks that, though his clothes are rich, Autolycus does not wear them well, his companion, the country bumpkin, explains away the problem of the clothes by saying that their fantastical appearance reveals the nobility of the wearer. Finally, the clown offers the telling proof that indeed Autolycus is "a great man," by the statement: "I know by the picking on's teeth" (4.4.753-54).²

In three other Shakespeare plays references to a toothpick appear and in all instances a connotation beyond mere hygienic usefulness adheres. In *King John* Philip the Bastard ridicules a traveler who has "his toothpick at my worship's mess" (1.1.190). Though the Bastard, after the meal, lacking a toothpick, must suck his teeth and make small talk, the foppish "picked man of countries" can expatiate upon his familiarity with the world beyond. Obviously to possess a toothpick implied that a person had traveled outside England. In *Much Ado about Nothing*, Benedick, to escape the vituperative language of Beatrice—"my Lady Tongue"—offers to go anywhere in the world, even to secure for his master, Don Pedro, "a toothpicker . . . from the furthest inch of Asia" (2.1.250-51). A toothpick came from an exotic place. Parolles, in *All's Well That Ends*

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Well, tries to convince Helena to abandon her commitment to preserve her virginity, which he claims is out of date in contemporary society: "Virginity, like an old courtier, wears her cap out of fashion, richly suited but unsuitable, just like the brooch and the toothpick, which wear not now" (1.1.151-54). The toothpick, along with virginity and the brooch, according to Parolles, was going out of style. As we shall see, Parolles was a bit premature in announcing the demise of the toothpick, and he was incorrect about the vanishing of the brooch. The issue of the disappearance of virginity was more hoped for than assured by Parolles. And in the same play, the Countess of Rossillion and her servant, the clown, are discussing the Countess' son, Bertram, who, according to the clown, is a melancholy lord since "he will look upon his boot and sing; mend the ruff and sing; ask questions and sing; pick his teeth and sing" (3.2.6-8). Aristocrats owned toothpicks.

Andrew Gurr in his *Playgoing in Shakespeare's London* (1987) draws many generalizations about conduct in Elizabethan and Jacobean theaters from an obscure pamphlet published in 1642 in which the following story appears:

A tradesman's wife of the Exchange, one day when her husband was following some business in the city, desired him he would give her leave to go see a play; which she had not done in seven years. He bade her take his apprentice along with her, and go; but especially to have a care of her purse; which she warranted him she would. Sitting in a box, among some gallants and gallant wenches, and returning when the play was done, returned to her husband and told him she had lost her purse. 'Wife, (quoth he,) did I not give you warning of it? How much money was there in it?' Quoth she, 'Truly, four pieces, six shillings and a silver tooth-picker.' Quoth her husband, 'Where did you put it?' 'Under my petticoat, between that and my smock.' 'What, (quoth he,) did you feel no body's hand there?' 'Yes, (quoth she,) I felt one's hand there, but I did not think he had come for that.'³

Gurr could have noted that the wife's aspiration for gentility was reflected in her owning a silver toothpick.

This object is one of the tools employed by persons like Autolycus, who stand among archetypal rogues, confidence men, and *picaros*. Arthur F. Kinney has assembled examples of such characters from Tudor and Stuart times leaving open, however, the question of toothpicks.⁴ So has

Richard Bjornson in *The Picaresque Hero in European Fiction*,⁵ however, Bjornson finds what he calls "clothes as image" in various novels, such as *Lazarillo de Tormes*, *Guzman de Alfarache*, *Alonso*, *Gil Blas*, and *Roderick Random*. In recent years due to de Saussure's theories in semiology, the tension between the signified and the signifier has been exploited and Roland Barthes, for example, has applied semiotics to clothing in *The Fashion System*.⁶ A semiological survey recently (1990) cited symbolic references to dress in some of Shakespeare's plays.⁷ The meanings for apparel in general, as well as, in particular, for buckle, cap, codpiece, crown, doublet, farthingale, garter, glove, gown, handkerchief, hat, hose, jerkin, livery, petticoat, placket, plume, purse, robe, scarf, sleeve, stocking, and suit were listed. The toothpick was not mentioned. Furthermore, in such a list as the one above, mere brief explanations for objects do not reveal the frequently dynamic alterations of meaning over a period of time. One has to place what is signified within the contemporaneous, evolving milieu.

Shakespeare's references to this accoutrement presuppose a cultural background which to a modern person is at best curious, at worst strange. The tracing of this object leads to recognizing its wide frequent employment in the dramas and writings by Shakespeare's contemporaries. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to reveal the intricacies of this object and the cultural and dramatic uses of it. The symbolism of the toothpick relates to the culture of the period; it does not obtrude a phallic interpretation, as proposed by one critic several years ago.⁸ No broad semiological diagram will be painted on the toothpick in my study.

The *OED* gives the first entry for "toothpick" in 1488 in the accounts of the Lord High Treasurer of Scotland: "Twa tuthpikis of gold with a change." The toothpicks probably hung from a chain. The alternative form, "picktooth," according to the *OED*, appeared in 1542 from the same records of a payment "For ane Pennare of silver to keip Pyke-teithe in, to the Kingis grace." A pennare is a toothpick-case.

But the toothpick had existed long before these dates.⁹ A team of anthropologists recently claimed that their researches among Neanderthal teeth in what was Yugoslavia revealed that tooth picking may represent "one of the oldest and most persistent forms of tool use in the human

fossil record.”¹⁰ Objects made of wood or metal to clean teeth have been identified in excavations of antiquities throughout the Middle East and Mediterranean areas. A specific reference to a feather-quill toothpick is given by Diodorus of Sicily (c. 40 B.C.), who tells the story about a Syracusan king, Agathocles, murdered in 289 B.C. as follows:

Now it was the king's habit after dinner always to clean his teeth with a quill. Having finished his wine, therefore, he asked Menon for the quill, and Menon gave him one that he had smeared with a putrefactive drug. The king, unaware of this, applied it rather vigorously and so brought it into contact with the gums all about his teeth. The first effect was a continuous pain, which grew daily more excruciating, and this was followed by an incurable gangrene everywhere near the teeth.¹¹

In the times of the Roman emperors, the toothpick was part of the boudoir of upper-class women and an object available in banquets among the elite.¹² For some persons in classical times, it came to connote excessive attentiveness to one's toilet to the neglect of important moral and intellectual matters.¹³

Its use persisted in some cultures; for instance, tradition will have it that, as Muhammad lay dying, he saw a toothpick in another person's hand, and, according to a witness, “the apostle looked at it in such a way that I knew that he wanted it, and when I asked him if he wanted me to give it him he said Yes; so I took it and chewed it for him to soften it and gave it to him. He rubbed his teeth with it more energetically than I had ever seen him rub before.”¹⁴

According to Leo Kanner, in *Folklore of the Teeth*, Omar Khayyam (died c. 1123) used to clean his teeth as he read the writings of Avicenna. Coming to a chapter entitled “On the One and the Many,” and realizing that he was approaching the end of his life, he laid his gold toothpick on a page as a marker, called for an official to record his will, ate and drank no more, stood up, and died. He had no more need for his toothpick.¹⁵

The employment of the toothpick vanished in much of Europe during the Middle Ages, but with the emergence of the Renaissance, possibly through contact with Muslim or Jewish influences or mimicking ancient manners, the toothpick returned.¹⁶

As in classical times, it was associated with high social rank. Sir Thomas Elyot in his *Dictionary* (1538) seems to have this connotation in mind (see *OED* citation under "toothpick"), for in defining a type of stiff reed, "nitella," as "a toothe pike," he adds "sometyme it signifiyeth elegancy in speche."¹⁷ The Lady Lisle in 1539 wrote to her husband:

My lord, I send unto you my toothpicker; I thought to have given it to the Palsgrave whilst he was here, but it was not then at my hand. I beseech you present it to him if it be your pleasure. I send it to him because, when he was here, I did see him wear a pen [feather] or call [reed, from Greek κάλαμος] to pick his teeth with. And I pray you shew him it have been mine this seven years.¹⁸

The palsgrave may have worn the instrument around his neck on a chain, as other wealthy persons wore the toothpick as a pendant. Erasmus implied objection to the excessive attention a person might pay to his or her toilet by including in his adages the cautionary proverb *Lentiscum mandere* ("Munching mastic").¹⁹

Having a toothpick seemed identified with certain nationalities. John Lyly in the prologue to his play *Mydas* (1592) lists items for dining with different groups: "Enquire at ordinaries, there must be sallads for the Italian: picktooths for the Spaniard: pots for the *Germane*: pottage for the *Englishman*."²⁰ When in 1968 divers found the wreckage of the Spanish galleon *Girona*, which had formed one of the great ships of the Spanish Armada but which had foundered on the Irish coast in 1588 (with the loss of almost all of its 1,300 men), an object retrieved was an elegant gold toothpick that probably belonged to one of the noblemen.²¹ In John Fletcher's comedy *The Wild-Goose Chase* (1622), Mirabel, described in the *dramatis personae* as a "travelled monsieur," despises the stay-at-home Englishman ("There's nothing good or handsome bred amongst us: / Till we are travelled, and live abroad, we are coxcombs") but praises the Italians:

Their very pick-teeth speak more man than we do,
And season of more salt!²²

Thomas Overbury, in his character of "An Affectate Traveller," asserted that "his pick-tooth is a maine part of his behaviour."²³

Often in Cervantes' *Don Quixote* (1605; 1615) toothpicks are mentioned—sometimes in sybaritic circumstances. Thus, in Book IV Don Quixote enjoys an imaginary rhapsody: "And after that dinner is ended, and the tables taken away, the knight to remain leaning on a chair, and perhaps picking of his teeth, as the custom is, and on a sudden to enter at the hall door another much more beautiful damsel than any of the former."²⁴ Frequently, however, the toothpick belies the impecuniousness of its owner. So the Moor Cide Hamete Benengeli comments on the hunger of the fallen well-born, "making his toothpicker an hypocrite, with which he comes to the street-door picking his teeth, though he have nothing eat that should require such cleanliness."²⁵

Of course, it was not exclusively a Spanish or Italian object. Rabelais described Gargantua's dinner, "[a]fter which Gargantua picked his teeth with a fragment of mastic, washed his hands and daubed his eyes with cool clear water, and, instead of saying grace, sang the glory of God in noble hymns, composed in praise of divine bounty and munificence."²⁶

Mastic, that is, the wood of the mastic or lentisk tree, was particularly valued for its aromatic resin; as far back as Roman times toothpicks had been formed from it. Exudation from it was used by Turks and other Middle Easterners as chewing gum. Its name derives from the Latin word for "chew," giving the English "masticate."²⁷ This is the paradox of Agamemnon's reference to "rank Thersites" who, when he "opes his mastic jaws / We shall hear music, wit, and oracle" (*Troilus and Cressida*, 1.3.73-74).

But to return to England. Thomas Dekker in *The Gull's Hornbook* (1609) offers instructions for gallants, impoverished or wealthy, primarily the former. In walking around St. Paul's churchyard, the pretender should comport himself in order to create an aura of prosperity in purse and familiarity of person with great ones. The clothes and accoutrements are important:

After dinner you may appear again, having translated yourself out of your English cloth cloak into a light Turkey program, if you have that happiness of shifting; and then be seen, for a turn or two, to correct your teeth with some quill or silver instrument, and to cleanse your gums with a wrought hankercher: it skills not whether you dined, or no—that's best known to your stomach—or

in what place you dined; though it were with cheese of your own mother's making, in your chamber or study.²⁸

Deftly handling the toothpick became parallel with dining with Duke Humphrey.

Satires and comedies particularly featured this object. In Lyly's *Sappho and Phao* (1584) Molus, the servant to a scholar, and Criticus, the servant to a courtier, are discussing Molus' aversion to the spartan fare required during Lent. None of the acceptable food fits Molus' constitution; he likes a fancier diet. Criticus finally recommends that "if your silken throate can swallow no packthred, you must picke your teeth, and play with your trencher."²⁹ Thomas Nashe's only surviving satirical masque, *A Pleasant Comedie, called Summers last will and Testament* (1593), reports Will Summer—a sort of Elizabethan Bart Simpson (a cartoon figure popular in modern America)—decrying schoolwork:

Here, before all this companie, I professe my selfe an open enemy to Inke and paper . . . Syntaxis and Prosodia, you are tormenters of wit, & good for nothing but to get a schoole-master two pence a weeke. Hang copies; flye out, phrase books; let pennies be turnd to picktooths: bowles, cards, & dice, you are the true liberal sciences; Ile ne're be Goosequill, gentlemen, while I liue.³⁰

Writing quills, which lead to philosophy, should be changed into toothpicks, which lead to food.

Dekker's *If It Be Not Good the Diuel is in it* (1612) contains a scene where a friar, Alphege, is instructing a junior novice in a priory about properly setting a table: "So: the Lord Priors napkin here, there the Subpriors: his knife and case of pick-tooths thus: as for the couent [convent], let them licke their fingers in stead of wiping, and suck their teeth in steede of picking."³¹ In the "pecking order" of the priory, there is a "picking order" as well.

Ben Jonson, more than any other contemporary of Shakespeare's, referred to the toothpick and related devices. In *Cynthia's Revels* (1600) Amorphus is described as "a traveller, one so made out of the mixture and shreds of forms that himself is truly deformed. He walks most commonly with a clove, or picktooth in his mouth, he is the very mint of compliment, all his behaviours are printed, his face is another volume

of essays; and his beard an Aristarchus."³² He is like the traveler ridiculed by the Bastard in *King John*. And in the above-named Jonson play, at the beginning, Cupid upbraids Mercury, traditionally a thief, by invoking: "pray Jove the perfumed courtiers keep their casting-bottles, picktooths, and shuttlecocks from you."³³ Like Autolycus, courtiers carried toothpicks.

In *Volpone* (1606) Politique Would-Bee and Peregrine are in Venice discussing events back in England, specifically the death of a spy by the name of Stone. This spy relayed information through secret signals even while sitting in a tavern, as Politique claims:

. . . I haue obseru'd him, at your publike ordinarie,
Take his aduertisement, from a traoueller
(A conceal'd states-man) in a trencher of meat:
And, instantly, before the meale was done,
Conuey an answer in a tooth-pick . . .³⁴

A code lay in how the toothpick was handled. In *The Silent Woman* (1609), a pompous knight, Sir John Daw, swears "By this pick-tooth" to assume the air of a melancholy aristocrat.³⁵ The echo of Bertram in *All's Well That Ends Well* occurs—the picking of the teeth and the cultivating of melancholy as among the manners of a nobleman. In *Every Man out of His Humour* (printed 1616, though supposedly acted in 1599), the courtier Fastidius Brisk is described as follows:

Oh, fine courtier! How comely he bows him in his courtesy! How full he hits a woman between the lips when he kisses! How upright he sits at the table! How daintily he carves! How sweetly he talks, and tells news of this lord and of that lady! How cleanly he wipes his spoon, at every spoonful of any white meat he eats, and what a neat case of picktooths he carries about him still!³⁶

In *The Diuell Is an Asse* (acted in 1616) Jonson attacked "undertakers," the courtiers who secured special rights to control the distribution of commodities, an abuse particularly prevalent during the reign of James I. In such a project described by Merecraft to Lady Tailbush and Mistress Eitherside, the following exchange appears:

Tai. Ha' you a business about toothpicks?
Mer. Yes, madam.

Did I ne'er tell 't you? I meant to have offered it
 Your ladyship, on the perfecting the patent.
Tai. How is't!
Mer. For serving the whole state with toothpicks;
 (Somewhat an intricate business to discourse) but—
 I show how much the subject is abused,
 First, in that one commodity? Then what diseases,
 And putrefactions in the gums are bred
 By those are made of adulterate and false wood?
 My plot for reformation of these follows.
 To have all toothpicks brought unto an office,
 There sealed; and such as counterfeit 'em mulcted.
 And last, for venting 'em to have a book
 Printed to teach their use, which every child
 Shall have throughout the kingdom that can read,
 And learn to pick his teeth by. Which beginning
 Early to practise, with some rules,
 Of never sleeping with the mouth open, chewing
 Some grains of mastic, will preserve the breath
 Pure, and so free from taint.³⁷

The toothpick by the time of this play had become an article so familiar as to evoke humor for a projector to hope to gain the monopoly for producing it and to publish a book about handling it as a means of increasing sales.

A curious object related to the toothpick sometimes was mentioned, namely, an earpick or earpicker or earscoop. As far back as the Roman era, an earpick was a hygienic device used with the toothpick. Sometimes an instrument was shaped on one end as a toothpick and the other end as an earpick. In the Epigrams of Martial (Book XIV, 22, 23), a saying about *dentiscalpium* (toothpick) is followed by one on *auriscalpium* (earpick).³⁸ In Gervase Markham and William Sampson's *The True Tragedy of Herod and Antipater* (printed 1622) Herod's barber, Tryphon, enamored of a married woman, Salumith, extols:

Tooth-pick, deare tooth-picke; eare-pick, both of you
 Have beene her sweet companions; with the one
 I've seene her pick her white teeth; with the other
 Wriggle so finely worme-like in her eare;
 That I have wisht, with envy, (pardon me)

it until its near-banishment in Hobbes' work reveals the fluidity of signified and signifier. As semiologists remind us, all objects, whether in nature or from human creation, are constantly being transformed in meaning.

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NOTES

¹A shorter version of this study was presented on November 1, 1991, at the annual meeting of the South Central Modern Language Association in Fort Worth, Texas.

²Shakespeare is quoted from the Arden Edition.

³(Cambridge: CUP, 1987) 6-8.

⁴*Rogues, Vagabonds, and Sturdy Beggars* (Barre, Massachusetts: Imprint Society, 1973) *passim*.

⁵(Madison: U of Wisconsin P, 1977) index, 288.

⁶(New York: Hill and Wang, 1983), published originally (1967) as *Système de la Mode*, *passim*.

⁷Alan C. Harris and Nancy J. Owens, "Doth Apparel the Symbol Make? A Semiotic Investigation of Symbolic References to Dress in Selected Plays of William Shakespeare," *The American Journal of Semiotics* 7.4 (1990): 109-130.

⁸Edward W. L. Smith, "The Fascinating Toothpick: A Study in Phallic Symbolism," *International Journal of Symbolology* 1.3 (1970): 21-25.

⁹Several histories of dentistry and studies of objects connected with dentistry contain references to toothpicks. Most helpful, in order of utility, are the following: Bernhard Wolf Weinberger, *An Introduction to the History of Dentistry*, vol. 1 (St. Louis: C. V. Mosby, 1948); Malvin E. Ring, *Dentistry: An Illustrated History* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1985); Gardner P. H. Foley, *Foley's Footnotes: A Treasury of Dentistry* (Wallingford, Pennsylvania: Washington Square, East, n.d.); Leo Kanner, *Folklore of the Teeth* (New York: Macmillan, 1928); J. Menzies Campbell, "Toothpicks and Toothbrushes," *Dental Items of Interest* 74 (1952): 295-305; Claire Baer and Paul N. Baer, "A Story of the Toothpick," *Journal of Periodontology* 37.2 (1966): 158-61; M. J. Kimery and R. E. Stallard, "The Evolutionary Development and Contemporary Utilization of Various Oral Hygiene Procedures," *Periodontal Abstracts* 16.3 (1968): 90-97; James Lowe, "A Very, Very Interesting Story about a Toothpick?" *Journal of the Oklahoma State Dental Association* 59.4 (1969): 4-6; Malvin E. Ring, "Oddments in Dental History: The Toothpick in Literature," *Bulletin of the History of Dentistry* 30.1 (1982): 24-26.

¹⁰"Prehistorical Dental Floss," *Omni* 10.12 (September 1988): 28-29.

¹¹*Diodorus of Sicily*, trans. Francis R. Walton, vol. 2 (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard UP, 1957) 27.

¹²Kanner 78.

¹³See note under *Lentiscum mandere* in *Adages I vi 1 to I x 100* in *Collected Works of Erasmus*, trans. and ed. R. A. B. Mynors, vol. 32 (Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1989) 141-42, 335.

¹⁴Ishaq's *Sirat Rasul Allah, The Life of Muhammad*, introd. and notes by A. Guillaume (London: OUP, 1955) 682.

¹⁵Kanner claims the poet's use of a gold toothpick is the only instance of that metal for the device in the Orient (85).

¹⁶I have discovered no iconographic, literary, or archaeological evidence in Europe of the existence of the toothpick from the Roman period until the fifteenth century. The attribution of influence to Muslim and/or Jewish sources is conjectural.

¹⁷*The Dictionary of sy Thomas Eliot knyght* (London, 1538) sig. [Y8^r].

¹⁸*The Lisle Letters*, ed. Muriel St. Clare Byrne, vol. 5 (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1981) 654-55.

¹⁹Adage 33 of *I viii* in *Adages I vi 1 to I x 100, Collected Works of Erasmus* 32:141. Kimery and Stallard (91) assert that Erasmus somewhere says the following: "From its mere differentiating, it [the toothpick] soon became elevated to companionship with the more educated groups and graces the mouths of gentlemen, kings, ladies of quality, and queens." I have not found this quotation in any of the works of Erasmus examined. In a well-known colloquy, "The Godly Feast," in *The Colloquies of Erasmus*, trans. Craig R. Thompson (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1965) 75, Erasmus refers to tooth powder, which was a derivative of mastic wood. In this context Eusebius, because his guest, Timothy, is not of high social standing, gives him lower-quality going-away gifts. Had Timothy possessed more prestige, Eusebius would have given him more exalted gifts, for example, tooth powder.

²⁰*The Dramatic Works of John Lilly*, ed. F. W. Fairholt, vol. 2 (London: Reeves & Turner, 1892) 3.

²¹"Ireland's Rugged Coast Yields Priceless Relics of the Spanish Armada," *National Geographic* 135.6 (1969): 768.

²²Ed. Rota Herzberg Lister (New York: Garland, 1980) 26. I am indebted to my colleague Maurice A. Hunt for this citation.

²³*A Cabinet of Characters*, ed. Gwendolen Murphy (London: Humphrey Milford, 1925) 93.

²⁴*The History of the Valorous & Witty Knight-Errant Don Quixote of the Mancha*, trans. Thomas Shelton, vol. 2 (London: Macmillan, 1923) 158-59.

²⁵*The History*, vol. 3 (London: Macmillan, 1924) 122. The theme of the impoverished *hidalgo's* using the toothpick as a means of deception is described by Henry N. Bershas, "La Biznaga Honrada," *Romance Notes* 7 (1965): 62-67.

²⁶*The Five Books of Gargantua and Pantagruel*, trans. Jacques Le Clercq (New York: Modern Library, n.d.) 73.

²⁷The *OED* lists the first use of "masticate" (by Jeremy Taylor) as a verb in 1649.

²⁸*The Gull's Hornbook*, ed. R. B. McKerrow (New York: AMS, n.d.) 35.

²⁹*The Dramatic Works of John Lilly*, ed. F. W. Fairholt, vol. 1 (London: Reeves & Turner, 1892) 186.

³⁰*The Works of Thomas Nashe*, ed. Ronald B. McKerrow, vol. 3 (London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 1910) 279-80.

³¹*The Dramatic Works of Thomas Dekker*, ed. Fredson Bowers, vol. 3 (Cambridge: CUP, 1958) 137.

³²*The Complete Plays of Ben Jonson*, ed. G. A. Wilkes from the edition of C. Herford and Percy and Evelyn Simpson, vol. 2 (Oxford: Clarendon P, 1981) 29-30.

³³*The Complete Plays of Ben Jonson* 2:9.

³⁴*Ben Jonson*, eds. C. H. Herford, P. and E. Simpson, vol. 5 (Oxford: Clarendon P, 1937) 48.

³⁵*The Complete Plays of Ben Jonson*, vol. 3 (1982) 153.

³⁶*The Complete Plays of Ben Jonson*, vol. 1 (1981) 360. See the editors' note for "picktooths" as "foreign importation affected by courtiers."

³⁷*The Complete Plays of Ben Jonson*, vol. 4 (1982) 200-01. The editors connect the meaning with the reference in note 36 above.

³⁸*Martial, Epigrams*, trans. Walter C. A. Ker, vol. 2 (London: William Heinemann, 1930) 448.

³⁹Ed. Gordon Nicholas Ross (New York: Garland, 1979) 98.

⁴⁰*The Dramatic Works of Thomas Dekker*, vol. 4 (Cambridge: CUP, 1961) 250.

⁴¹*A Coffin for King Charles* (New York: Macmillan, 1964) 207.

⁴²*Leviathan*, ed. C. B. Macpherson (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985) 160.

Connotations of "Strange Meeting"

KENNETH MUIR

Wilfred Owen's early imitations of the Romantic poets had been a means of learning his "trade" as a poet (to use Yeats' word for a poet's vocation) but without producing poems of permanent value. It was not until his stay in Bordeaux, and still more after his experience of the realities of modern war that Owen's investment in the Romantics began to pay dividends. There are traces of Keats and Shelley in "Strange Meeting" but no one denies that the poem is essentially original: no one else could have written it. Luckily for him, Owen's poems have been edited by a long line of poets—Edith Sitwell, Siegfried Sassoon, Edmund Blunden, Cecil Day Lewis, Jon Stallworthy—and this is a posthumous existence he would have appreciated. He was a poets' poet. Like Keats, Owen wished to be judged by his peers. Just as annotated editions of Keats demonstrate the way in which some of his best poems owe a great deal to deliberate or unconscious echoes of his predecessors, so editors have similarly identified a wealth of echoes in the poems of Wilfred Owen.¹ Many of these were discovered by Stallworthy; others were summarised in his two splendid editions.²

An excellent example is offered by "Anthem for doomed Youth," the poem that made Sassoon realize that Owen was an important poet. It is a useful example because the material is readily available and unambiguous. Moreover we have facsimiles of five manuscripts, reproduced by Day Lewis and in the Stallworthy biography, and we can watch how under Sassoon's tutelage, Owen turned it into a great poem.³ He had been working on two related fragmentary poems,⁴ one of which contained the line—

Bugles that sadden all the evening air,

and the other a variant of it—

Bugles sang, saddening the evening air

It speaks also of the "wailing of . . . shells" and contains another re-usable line—

The monstrous anger of our taciturn guns.

At this point Owen seems to have read the prefatory note to a popular anthology, *Poems of Today*, and he was naturally disgusted by its sentimental and sanctimonious tone. It referred to one poet who had been killed in action as one who had "gone down singing to lay down his life for his country's cause." It went on to extol the uncritical variety of the anthology's contents in phrases Owen might himself have used five years before: "the music of Pan's flute, and of Love's viol, and the bugle-call of Endeavour, and the passing-bells of Death." The bugle-call linked up with the bugles of Owen's unfinished poems. He seized on the passing bells for the first line of his sonnet, even in the version he first showed Sassoon, and finally revised as

What passing-bells for these who die as cattle?

He altered "The monstrous anger of the taciturn guns" to become his second line. The word *taciturn* was hypermetrical and not appropriate to a barrage. He introduced the wailing shells in the seventh line. Stallworthy provides less significant parallels to the sextet of the sonnet. No doubt Owen had read Binyon's "For the Fallen" (which was later to adorn half the war memorials of Britain), but it is by no means certain that Owen echoed it in the final line of his sonnet in the phrase "each slow dusk."

The annotation on this poem throws considerable light on its composition and on its indebtedness to what may have seemed to be a piece of accidental reading. It supports the theory of Lowes in his monumental book on Coleridge, *The Road to Xanadu*⁵ that single words may lead to the fusion of disparate sources. The annotation is so effective, indeed, that it may make us despair, after so many years of devoted

harvesting, of gleaning any more. In order to test this feeling, I propose, in the year of the Owen centenary, to consider one of his most famous poems, the one that has pride of place in more than one edition, the one that best exemplifies Owen's attitude to the war just before he was pronounced fit for active service.

When he returned to France, the war was in its final stages. The last German offensive had failed and the army was retreating as rapidly as possible. The arrival of American forces meant that the end was in sight, and soon the German allies began to treat for peace. Although Owen's friends hoped to arrange for him a less dangerous posting than a return to the front, he decided to go back. He wanted to show his solidarity with the chief victims of the war, the soldiers; he wanted to prove that he could be a good officer in spite of his shell-shock; and he thought it was his duty as a poet—only so could he validate "Strange Meeting."

On the eve of his embarkation, and later, Owen declared that his nerves were in perfect order. Commenting on Shelley's "Stanzas written in Dejection near Naples," he declared:⁶ "Serenity Shelley never dreamed of crowns me. Will it last when I shall have gone into caverns and abysms such as he never reserved for his worst demons?" It did last. He "fought like an angel."⁷ He won the Military Cross for bravery; and, what he valued more, he received the unconscious tributes of the men he led.⁸ In his last letter to his mother, he told her, "You couldn't be visited by a band of friends half as fine as surround me here."⁹ He was probably echoing Henry V's speech on the eve of Agincourt, in which the soldiers are described as a "band of brothers."¹⁰

"Strange Meeting" has been copiously annotated. Stallworthy has traced echoes of two fragments written between November 1917 and the following March. Sven Bäckman devotes twenty pages of his book tracing echoes of the Bible, Barbusse, Cary's Dante, Keats, Shelley, Sir Lewis Morris, Harold Monro and Sassoon.¹¹ It was Dennis Welland¹² who first pointed out the source of the title in Shelley's *The Revolt of Islam*, Canto V. Owen also knew Monro's "Strange Meetings" but although his poem may have reminded him of the Shelley passage, it had no direct influence on Owen's poem.¹³ Shelley describes how the tyrant's soldiers

stab Laon's comrades as they lie asleep. Laon tells them that even slaves are men and should be forgiven:

. . . —and all
Seemed like some brothers on a journey wide
Gone forth, whom now strange meeting did befall
In a strange land

Thus the vast array
Of those fraternal bands were reconciled that day.¹⁴

It should be added that Shelley expressed similar ideas of the necessity of forgiveness with greater artistic control in *The Masque of Anarchy* in which the militia are converted by the non-violent resistance of the demonstrators, thus reaching a happier outcome than the Peterloo Massacre by which Shelley had been outraged and inspired. Even more effectively Shelley put into the mouth of Demogorgon at the end of *Prometheus Unbound* a recipe for the defeat of tyranny:

To suffer woes which Hope thinks infinite;
To forgive wrongs darker than death or night;
To defy Power, which seems omnipotent;
To love, and bear; to hope till Hope creates
From its own wreck the thing it contemplates;
Neither to change, nor falter, nor repent;
This . . . is to be
Good, great and joyous, beautiful and free;
This is alone Life, Joy, Empire, and Victory.

Owen, of course, was familiar with these lines, which are not direct sources, but may perhaps by widening the focus throw some light on Owen's poem. We can first attempt to answer the question posed by Stallworthy whether Owen regarded the poem as completed or unfinished, to show that the facts of Shelley's life may be significant sources, and to prove that there was a native source for Owen's use of par rhyme.

An examination of Keats' *Hyperion* should help us to answer the first of these questions. Owen possessed H. Buxton Forman's edition of Keats' works in five volumes.¹⁵ He would have known that in the 1820 volume, *Hyperion* is called a fragment. He would also have known the

way in which Keats stressed this fact¹⁶ by ending the poem in the middle of a sentence

. . . —and lo! from all his limbs
Celestial—

According to Forman, both the sentence and the line would have been completed:

Celestial glory dawned, he was a god.¹⁷

If one turns to the chaotic manuscript of "Strange Meeting" in Jon Silkin's anthology¹⁸ (not the final manuscript which went to the printer) it is clear that Owen had not made up his mind about the final version, but he had intended at some point to end with the half line "Let us sleep now." He wished to indicate, as Keats had done with *Hyperion*, that the poem was a fragment.

Owen possessed the Cary version of Dante's *Divine Comedy*, the translation that Keats carried with him on his Scottish tour and which he echoes in several of the poems written after he had abandoned *Hyperion*.¹⁹ Critics have pointed out some echoes of Cary in "Strange Meeting," but the general influence of the *Inferno* is more important than the details. It depicts the landscape of hell and the conversation of the newly dead.

The strange meeting described by the narrator is with a German who is a poet like himself. The words he uses are Owen's own. He speaks of "The pity of war, the pity war distilled," as Owen in his fragmentary poem had declared, "The poetry is in the pity." In other words Owen meets his *doppelganger*. Owen had read in *Prometheus Unbound* that

Ere Babylon was dust,
The Magus Zoroaster, my dead child,
Met his own image walking in the garden.²⁰

We know from several accounts of the last months of Shelley's life that *doppelgangers* were not confined to his reading. The events were sparked off by the death of Allegra, the arrival of Claire Clairmont (Allegra's

mother), and on June 16, by Mary's miscarriage. Shelley, who had earlier, as he thought, seen Allegra rising from the sea, now had a number of visions or hallucinations. He met a phantasm, like himself, who demanded: "How long do you mean to be content?" (This may have been suggested by an episode in a Calderón play.) On another occasion the Williamses appeared to him, mangled and battered, and had warned him that the sea had flooded the house and was pounding it to pieces. More terrifying than any of these was the vision of his *doppelgänger* trying to strangle Mary.²¹ If Owen knew any of these stories it might have reinforced his idea of his meeting the enemy who was himself.²²

Another passage in Owen's preface—"All a poet can do to-day is to warn"—links up with another passage in the poem. His spokesman laments that their deaths would prevent them from warning future generations about the reality of war. This is followed by the prophecy, which has attracted surprisingly little comment:

Now men will go content with what we spoiled,
Or, discontent, boil bloody, and be spilled.
They will be swift with swiftness of the tigress,
None will break ranks, though nations trek from progress.

The implication is that the war will be followed by increased militarism. The "swiftness of the tigress" does not have the eulogistic tone of David's lament for Saul and Jonathan (2 Sam 1:17), cited in Stallworthy's edition as a parallel. It is made clear in Fragment 131 ("Earth's wheels run oiled with blood") that the tigress symbolises cruelty, and that it is better to break ranks than "trek away from progress." By the time "Strange Meeting" was finalised, he had decided not to break ranks, but he still adhered to his symbolism. The tigress remained evil.

The prophecy that nations would trek from progress was fulfilled in the history of the next twenty years. In Italy, Germany, Spain, Russia, France, Britain and Japan, the governments under a variety of banners (Patriotism, Justice, Honour, even Progress) trekked from progress. The results may be symbolised by Guernica, the Gulag, the Holocaust, Hiroshima and so on. The history of those years, beginning with the treaty of Versailles, showed the impotence and cowardice of the great powers to halt aggression in Manchuria, Abyssinia, Czecho-Slovakia,

Poland and elsewhere. The dead Owen had indeed warned; but his warnings were ignored.²³

The last points on which I want to put the record straight are to do with the question of parahrhyme. Dennis Welland suggested that Owen was introduced to the device by the French poet, Laurent Tailhade in Bordeaux, who told him of Jules Romains' verse plays in which he tried to alleviate the boredom involved in the continued use of the rhymed alexandrine in tragedy, although it had become progressively less effective than it had been in the hands of Corneille and Racine. Whether this was Romains' motive in experimenting with parahrhyme we need not enquire. Owen does not mention Romains and he himself followed stricter rules than Romains had done in his *accords*. Not only did he have identical consonants at the end of the word, but he often began the words with identical consonants, the consonants sandwiching changing vowels: sipped/supped; leaned/lined; grained/groined; escaped/scooped. There is, moreover, evidence that Owen was interested in the possibilities of parahrhyme before he went to Bordeaux. He called attention to it as early as 1912 when he was reading John Addington Symonds' book on Shelley, as Stallworthy demonstrated.²⁴

There is, I believe, much stronger evidence in support of the view that Owen derived parahrhyme from a native source. It happens that 1993 is not merely the centenary of Wilfred Owen, it is the four-hundredth anniversary of the death of Christopher Marlowe in a quarrel with Ingram Frizer on the payment of the bill—"a great reckoning in a little room"—at Eleanor Bull's tavern at Deptford. As I had to address a conference at Marlowe's *alma mater*, Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, I took the opportunity of re-reading all his works. In one of them, *The Jew of Malta*, the villain-hero, Barabas, gives an account of his alleged career of crime.²⁵ As this conflicts with what the audience knows about his early life as a usurer, it is plain that the narrative is pure fiction. This is how most actors play it. Its purpose is not to confuse the audience, but to encourage Ithamore to confess his own actual crimes. Marlowe himself, as a government spy, used precisely this method of encouraging confessions. He pretended to be a catholic, an atheist, a defector to James VI of Scotland, a maker of counterfeit coins. He appears to have been successful as an *agent provocateur*. Barabas tells Ithamore:

As for myself, I walk abroad a-nights
 And kill sick people groaning under walls;
 Sometimes I go about and poison wells;
 ...
 There I enrich'd the priests with burials,
 ...
 With digging graves and ringing dead men's knells.

Here were several parhymes. In "Strange Meeting" Owen, using parhyme throughout, seems to be echoing some of Marlowe's own parhymes:

And by his smile, I knew that sullen hall,—
 By his dead smile I knew we stood in Hell.
 ...
 . . . I went hunting wild
 After the wildest beauty in the world,
 ...
 To miss the march of this retreating world
 Into vain citadels that are not walled.
 Then, when much blood had clogged their chariot-wheels,
 I would go up, and wash them from sweet wells.

Add to this the echo of Marlowe's "groaning" (II.iii.173) in Owen's "groaned" (4) and of Marlowe's "moan" (II.iii.170) in Owen's "moan" (13) and there can be little doubt that Owen had remembered Marlowe's use of parhyme in this passage, and probably it was the initial inspiration of the whole method.²⁶

My last points relate to John Middleton Murry's review of the *Wheels* selection of Owen's poems.²⁷ It is generally regarded as the most perceptive appreciation of "Strange Meeting." Certainly he recognized Owen as a major poet; but I doubt whether his remarks on parhyme correspond with common experience. He declares that every reader first assumes that the poem is written in blank verse, only later realising that it is not. I can only say that I have yet to meet a reader new to the poem, whether adult or undergraduate, during the last sixty years, who reacts in this way. Some may complain that the rhyming is imperfect and therefore to be deplored, but they still recognize it as a kind of rhyme.

My other disagreement with Murry is with his conviction that pararhyme could not be used for any other purpose than Owen's. This has not proved to be true; and Murray lived long enough to know he was wrong. Owen was a cult figure during the period between the two wars, and many poets, good and bad, used varieties of pararhyme for many different subjects.²⁸

I have attempted in this article to prove that "Strange Meeting" was intended to be a fragment, that the lives of authors, as well as their poems may have influenced Owen's work, and that Christopher Marlowe was an *agent provocateur* of pararhyme.

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NOTES

¹Miriam Allott in her edition of Keats' poems (London: Longman, 1970) records numerous echoes. In the "Ode to a Nightingale," for example, she has quotations from two of Horace's *Epodes*, several from Milton, Shakespeare, Wordsworth and Coleridge, one from Dryden and Hazlitt and from a large number of others.

²Wilfred Owen, *The Complete Poems and Fragments*, ed. Jon Stallworthy, 2 vols. (London: Chatto & Windus, The Hogarth P, and OUP, 1983); *The Poems of Wilfred Owen*, ed. Jon Stallworthy (London: The Hogarth P, 1985).

³Jon Silkin, however, anxious to defend the superiority of Isaac Rosenberg, regarded Owen's poem as so weak that he refused at first to include it in *The Penguin Book of First World War Poetry* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1981) 62-63.

⁴Stallworthy (1985) 178-79; (1983) 485-88.

⁵J. Livingstone Lowes, *The Road to Xanadu* (London: Constable, 1931).

⁶Wilfred Owen, *Collected Letters*, eds. Harold Owen and John Bell (Oxford: OUP, 1967) 571.

⁷Owen, *Letters* 580.

⁸Owen, *Letters* 584.

⁹Owen, *Letters* 591.

¹⁰*Henry V*, IV.iii.60.

¹¹Sven Bäckman, *Tradition Transformed: Studies in the Poetry of Wilfred Owen* (Lund: Gleerup, 1979).

¹²Dennis S. R. Welland, *Wilfred Owen: A Critical Study* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1960, 1978). He shows that there were other echoes of *The Revolt of Islam*.

¹³Owen visited the Poetry Bookshop, run by Monro, and sometimes was given a bed there. Monro read and criticised Owen's poems. Owen possessed two of Monro's books of poems, one presented by the author.

¹⁴V.xiii.1829-36, Shelley, *Poetical Works*, ed. T. Hutchinson (London: OUP, 1905; rpt. 1971).

¹⁵John Keats, *The Complete Works*, ed. H. Buxton Forman, 5 vols. (Glasgow: Gowans and Gray, 1900-01).

¹⁶*The Fall of Hyperion*, as Owen also knew, is broken off abruptly in the middle of a sentence.

¹⁷Jack Stillinger, *The Text of Keats's Poems* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP, 1974) 232, regards the line as an addition by Keats' editor Woodhouse.

¹⁸Cf. n3 above.

¹⁹The poems include the sonnet on Paolo and Francesca, "La Belle Dame sans merci," and "To Sleep."

²⁰*Prometheus Unbound*, I.191. It has often been pointed out that the narrator of "Strange Meeting" meets his *alter ego*. See, e.g., Bäckman 23 and 112. But, as Bäckman says, "Owen's own version is a deeply original and personal one . . . and could hardly be said to be directly foreshadowed in any . . . treatments of the motif." I am tempted to mention that in the last Act of *The Cocktail Party*, Reilly recites the passage containing these lines, presumably because Eliot felt it necessary to rise above the prosaic verse of the rest of the play. In the New York production, however, because of the audience's ignorance of Shelley, the passage was omitted. (It may be added that Eliot made another attempt to break away from the trammels of prosaic verse, when he wrote a magnificent passage of ritual for the Guardians. These would have been the most "poetical" lines in the whole play, but they were omitted because Martin Browne, to whom Eliot owed so much, had objected to them. Browne superbly directed a play entitled *Wings over Europe*, regarded by some as the best play of the inter-war years. Its part author was Robert Nichols, another poet of World War I.)

²¹Newman Ivey White, *Shelley* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1947) vol. 2, 368. There are similar accounts in Walter Edwin Peck, *Shelley: His Life and Work* (London: Benn, 1927) vol. 2, 287, 407. Mary was ill; she hated the Italians of the neighbourhood and the overcrowding of the Casa Magni by the Williams family; she was jealous of Jane, as she had been of Claire and Emilia and, as Shelley confessed, but for Mary's objections, he would have liked to stay there for the rest of his life.

²²Owen possessed the John Addington Symonds book on Shelley, *Shelley* (London: Macmillan, 1909), as he mentioned in a letter (106) and he was delighted with the Bookman Memorial Souvenir devoted to Keats and Shelley in 1912. He possessed three books on Keats, but he may have read books on Shelley from libraries.

²³It may not be accidental that the absurd dismissal of Owen by W. B. Yeats in *The Oxford Book of Modern Verse* and in a letter to Lady Dorothy Wellesley (in which he said that Owen hardly deserved a place in a Parish Magazine) came at a time when that great poet was flirting with fascism.

²⁴Jon Stallworthy's acclaimed biography, *Wilfred Owen* (Oxford: OUP, 1974; rpt. 1993) 70.

²⁵*The Jew of Malta*, II.iii.172 ff. *The Plays of Christopher Marlowe*, ed. Roma Gill (Oxford: OUP, 1971).

²⁶Owen possessed copies of *Doctor Faustus* and *Edward II*, but the evidence that he had read *The Jew of Malta* seems incontrovertible. Bäckman has a valuable discussion of different kinds of imperfect rhyme and the possible sources of

pararhyme in his last chapter. Yeats, for example, in "The Hour before Dawn," *Collected Poems* (London: Macmillan, 1933) 133, rhymes "tub" with "rob" and "out" with "thought."

²⁷*The Athenaeum*, 5 Dec. 1919.

²⁸It is only necessary to mention Auden, Spender, Day Lewis and to suggest that in the thirties they would find Owen a more useful model than Yeats or Eliot. Spender makes a similar point in *The Destructive Element* (1935).

A Reply to Mary Carruthers, "Inventional Mnemonics and the Ornaments of Style"

LINA BOLZONI

I am delighted to have this opportunity to discuss Mary Carruthers's article. Together with the author, I participated in a stimulating workshop on the art of memory organised in October 1991 by New York University and I also had the opportunity to review her work *The Book of Memory*, an important and original contribution to the subject, for *La Rivista dei Libri* (March 1992). It is a pleasure for me to be invited to resume our dialogue in the pages of this journal.

It is, moreover, much appreciated, that *Connotations* has elected to devote considerable space in its first two issues to the role of the art of memory in medieval and Renaissance culture (cf., in addition to the article by M. Carruthers, William E. Engel, "Mnemonic Criticism and Renaissance Literature: A Manifesto," *Connotations* 1.1 [1991]: 12-33). *Ars memoriae*, once relegated to the domains of cultural history and the history of philosophy, should now begin to interest a broader group of scholars, in particular the historians of literature.

We are just beginning to appreciate the true extent and complexity of the concept of *memoria*, which for centuries did not represent a mere adjunct to the classical rhetorical elements of *inventio*, *dispositio* and *elocutio*, but itself profoundly influenced these elements. Thus an entire dimension of the text hitherto ignored by scholars must be recovered, to wit the creative dimension of the memory. In this context I cannot but underline the importance of the thesis linking the two articles; when William Engel speaks of "mnemonic criticism" in Renaissance literature and Mary Carruthers refers to "inventional mnemonics" in medieval

*Reference: Mary Carruthers, "Inventional Mnemonics and the Ornaments of Style: the Case of Etymology," *Connotations* 2.2 (1992): 103-14.

literature, both are focusing on the key role that the techniques of memory played in the formulation of a literary text, in many cases determining its very structure and formal characteristics.

When this dimension is taken into account, whole new vistas open up for exploration. Indeed, as I discovered during the course of my own research on 14th and 15th century Italian religious texts (sermons and mystical writings), and in my studies of Renaissance literature in general, treatises on the art of memory represented only the most obvious expression of a whole series of literary, artistic and devotional practices in which memory played a central role. Studying the art of memory from this perspective, it is possible for the historian to retrace an elaborate network of relationships that was created over the centuries between different types of images, from the verbal images of poets and writers to the visual images created by the artist, and the mental images deposited in the faculty of the soul.

I share Engel's surprise that so few historians of literature have as yet explored any of the literary implications of the art of memory, although it must be said that some work in this area has already been done. I limit myself to just two bibliographical references: the catalogue prepared by myself and Massimiliano Rossi for the exhibition *La fabbrica del pensiero: dall'arte della memoria alle neuroscienze* held in Florence from 23 March to 26 June 1989 (Milan: Electa 1989; and in *The Enchanted Loom*, ed. P. Corsi [Oxford: OUP 1991] 62-65); and "Ars memorativa: Eine Forschungsbibliographie zu den Quellenschriften der Gedächtniskunst von den antiken Anfängen," edited by Sabine Heiman and Barbara Keller (*Frühneuzeit-Info* 3.1 [1992]: 65-87). Certainly, finding information and keeping up with the latest developments in this area is not facilitated by the complex nature of the subject matter, which embraces a variety of literary genres, disciplines, and languages. The creation of an information network accessible to all scholars interested in the subject of memory would be of inestimable value.

Returning to Mary Carruthers, there are a few methodological considerations whose importance I should like to underline. As the author states, a special effort is required—nothing less than a leap of the imagination—to understand a mentality completely different from our own, one with its own precisely defined code and set of rules. If

we do not make this effort, we risk not so much misunderstanding the problem as missing it altogether, letting it slip beyond our critical horizon.

The second point to be made is linked to the first, and concerns displacing our analysis from the abstract theory of *ars memoriae* to the literary and visual forms influenced by mnemonic techniques. A distinction can be made, for example, between the widespread, essentially traditional, use which was made of mnemonic techniques during the Renaissance—relying on ideas and images that had entered common usage thanks in part to the diffusion of printed books—and the re-elaboration and renewal of this tradition that was being carried out at the same time, on the basis of specific philosophical ideas, by intellectuals such as Giulio Camillo and Giordano Bruno. It is useful to distinguish between these two levels and to take both into consideration in any analysis of the art of memory. A modern parallel is provided by the science of psychoanalysis. At least some of its terminology and concepts have entered into common parlance, but this certainly does not signify that a person whom you overhear referring blithely to "archetypes" or the Oedipus complex is an expert on Jung or Freud.

The last point which I would like to make concerns the question through which specific rhetorical processes and formal elements the mnemonic techniques contributed to create the text, and render it memorable. Mary Carruthers focuses in her article on the device of etymology and demonstrates most convincingly how the different etymologies which were applied to a formal name could transform that name into a *locus* ("common place") of invention within a text; a *locus* for memory, and a component serving the internal processes of meditation and imitation.

Since one of the problems of the cultural historian is to follow the interplay of continuity and change over time, it is interesting to examine to what extent the techniques analysed by Carruthers outlasted the medieval period and continued to be used during the Renaissance. In fact, although in the interplay between memory and imitation the mystical, religious dimension was replaced by a classicising one, the canons themselves remained unchanged, based as always on the imitation of exemplary texts. Thus, a 16th century writer seeking to imitate

Petrarch or Cicero had to follow the same procedure utilised by his medieval predecessors, that of impressing his model in his memory, internalising it in such a way that its component elements could be drawn forth again and manipulated and transformed with ease. To mention a case in point, it is often forgotten that Guilio Camillo's theatre was intended in part to function as a classical theatre of the memory on a grand scale, designed to help one to remember the words and rhetorical devices necessary to reconstruct almost any text.

I would like to conclude with an example of "inventional mnemonics" very similar to those presented by Mary Carruthers. In *Artificiosae memoriae libellus* by Johann Spangenberg (Wittenberg: Seitz, 1570) we can find indications regarding how to translate into images even those terms most resistant to visualisation, such as adverbs and prepositions. For the adverb "cras" ("tomorrow") he asks the reader to evoke in his memory the picture of a "corvum crocitantem [a croaking crow]" (c. B4v). This image, based on the onomatopoeic re-creation of the cry of the crow (cra, cra, *cras*) can be traced back at least 150 years. One of the most famous preachers of the 15th century, the Franciscan monk Saint Bernardino of Siena, utilised this image to refer to those persons who continually put off until tomorrow the moment of penitence and moral redemption. In a sermon delivered in 1425, Saint Bernardino exhorted his listeners to change their lives, to repent and to confess their sins: "Cavatevi el corbo di gola che dice Cra, cra! domane domane! [Rid yourselves of the crow in your throats that always cries Cra, cra! tomorrow, tomorrow!]" (Saint Bernardino of Siena, *Le prediche volgari: Quaresimale del 1425*, ed. C. Cannarozzi, vol. 1 [Pistoia: Libreria Editrice Fiorentina, 1940] 78).

Thus we find the pseudo-etymology which linked *cras* to the call of the crow giving rise to a felicitous metaphorical invention (we can imagine Saint Bernardino accompanying his admonition with some effective vocal mimicry), as well as to a mnemonic image. At the same time it provided a vivid visual image, one which we in fact later find depicted in an illustration from *Stultifera navis* by Sebastian Brant (Paris: Marnef, 1498; plate 1, p. 42; reproduced in *Sapienza figurata: 234 engravings from 1457 to 1718*, S. Brant, P. Maccio, G. M. Mitelli [Bergamo: Istituto Italiano d'Arti Grafiche, 1967] plate 32). The plate shows the

traditional figure of the fool, with three crows—one perched on his fool's cap and one in each hand. Next to each bird appears the word *cras*, a reminder of how foolish it is to put off repentance to a tomorrow which may never arrive.

However, the story of our image does not end here. In a well-known book of games published in Siena in 1572 by Girolamo Bargagli we find in a game of comparisons the following example: the maiden who always seems to be on the point of ceding to her suitor, but who continually puts off her decision until tomorrow is compared to the crow with its eternal cry "*cra, cra*" (*cras, cras*) (Girolamo Bargagli, *Dialogo de' giuochi che nelle vegghie sanesi si usano di fare*, ed. P. D'Incalci Ermini [Siena: Accademia degli Intronati, 1982] 155). An unflattering comparison, certainly, but it illustrates the ease with which certain associations could move between word and image, memory and invention, sermon and wordplay, remaining the same and yet modulating across the centuries.

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(Translated by Lisa Chien)

Some Notes on William Harmon, "Paronomastics"*

A. R. AMMONS

Our intellectual orders tend to be luminously, sometimes too luminously, coherent at their centers but then at their peripheries trail off waywardly into disalliance and irrelevance; and this latter is good, sparing us the harsh clashings of unyielding orders by becoming fuzzy at the edges, able to mesh with the contiguous edges of other orders.

Professor Harmon's brilliant making here of a central drift from peripheral gleanings fills me, as all his work does, with admiration, nay, astonishment. I can argue no exception to this article, but I offer the caution of an addition. It may be, as some psychologists propose, that there is nothing coincidental in the makings of human mind, and I have no doubt that Professor Harmon employs a highly refined filter to separate the coincidental from the intended. Some complexes *outside* intention, though, exemplify occasions when it is very hard to notice the difference.

While reading this morning an article in a literary magazine by a person whose last name is West, I suddenly wondered if I had ever read anything by a person named East. I wondered if more people are named West than East, and, if so, even, why? My recall of names is not what it used to be, so I decided to check the local (Ithaca, NY) phone book. There I found 25 Wests but only one East. An extraordinary preference and imbalance. But looking a little further on, I saw that there are 26 Eastmans. East shines when personified—the glorious birth of the East Man! But then I wondered if there are Westmen? Only one Westman.

*Reference: William Harmon, "Paronomastics: The Name of the Poet from Shakespeare and Donne to Glück and Morgan," *Connotations* 2.2 (1992): 115-25.

I'm sure these divergences and symmetries are to be read in deeply meaningful ways, but I am struck by the mere fact of the symmetry of one East and one Westman in our book. It makes my heart sing. It fills my life with order. It connects the unconnectible, and I have no fear of, but joy in, connection.

Adding a redundant caution to Professor Harmon's great preparedness, I extend my appreciation for his work and my awe of his mind capable beyond the discernment, connection, and order of computers.

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A Response to William Harmon*

W. F. H. NICOLAISEN

While it is tempting for someone, normally keeping his love of puns and his keen interest in the function of names in literature discretely apart, to continue, on this occasion, Harmon's quest for "the name of the poet," this may not be the most felicitous way of doing the author's deftly and amusingly argued article the justice it fully deserves. For that reason, my comments will be restricted, on the one hand, to some of the examples he quotes and, on the other, to a not unrelated phenomenon, i.e. the practice of teasing and mystifying anonymity. Harmon's illustrations draw attention to some of the delicate nuances of which writers bent on infiltrating their own texts onomastically are capable. Never underestimate their ingenuity and secret self-advertising when it comes to making it known to their readers in general and occasionally to targeted readers (lovers, admirers, enemies) in particular that the external creator is also inside the text and, despite a game of hide-and-seek, wishes to be found out at his ludic assertion of creative ownership. In some instances, it is not easy to say with conviction whether the critic's observation reflects reality or coincidence, and Harmon's opening discussion of Shakespeare's potential involvement in the shaping of Psalm 46 for the so-called "King James" translation may well be a case in point. Coincidental placing of the words "shake" and "spear" by whoever among the assorted divines was responsible for rendering Hebrew or Latin (not forgetting Luther's German) psalms into English may be the sceptic's preference in explaining this intriguing state of affairs; this would, however, lose considerably in persuasion if the Bard's

*Reference: William Harmon, "Paronomastics: The Name of the Poet from Shakespeare and Donne to Glück and Morgan," *Connotations* 2.2 (1992): 115-25.

hand could be detected elsewhere in the psalter. Ordinarily, the rigorous scholar would ask for additional proof in order to be convinced but the thought of the Swan of Avon taking up King David's pen (pardon the pun) or harp does have its special piquancy and allure.

Let us not question, however, Harmon's other selected examples from, among others, Shakespeare, Wordsworth, Hardy, Frost, Mann, Glück, Pound and Poe. As his illustrations indicate, the temptation to pun on one's own name or on those of others must be particularly great when audibly and/or visually these names have obvious lexical meaning or can be, without too much sinuous effort, secondarily reinterpreted as being semantically transparent. In my own personal experience, both my most commonly used first name, *Bill*, and my surname when understood to mean "Son of Santa Claus" or, less positively, "Son of (Old) Nick," have given inveterate punsters plenty of room for playing their little games; the opportunity to do so is also never absent in my own involvement with my name as a marker of my own identity. Since not every poet is blessed or cursed with a name that allows or encourages paronomasia, but as wordplay is an essential part of a creative writer's craftiness, one wonders whether the punning instinct may find other satisfying outlets as, for example, in the naming of characters, or in such devices as the acronym or the titular use of initials. Essentially, then, the playful literary usage of a writer's own name(s) not only occupies a specially reserved niche in the function of names in literature but also permits shyly concealed and yet blatantly trumpeted insights into the author's own self-understanding. Needless to add, this onomastically self-indulgent smuggling of the invisible writer into a literary presence always runs the risk of deteriorating into inappropriate, or at least questionable, trivialisation because puns do not good poetry make.

Whether as *double entendre* or *rebus* (to use two of Harmon's concepts of authorial wordplay), the ludic insertion of writers' names ultimately aims at display, at solution, at discovery. Disclosure, however thinly disguised, cunningly hidden, or apparently denied, is its goal if it has any right to be present at all. Otherwise it becomes a sham and a trickster's cheap sleight of hand. This coy or brash (coily brash?) placing of one's own name where it legitimately has no locus or at least makes

a surprise appearance, has a seemingly unconnected but nevertheless closely related counterpart in an author's deliberate withholding of his identity through the fronting of a pseudonym. *Ellis, Currer* and *Acton Bell*, the names of the auctorial personae of the three Brontë sisters, build paradoxical bridges by retaining their true initials, thus not totally abandoning the connection between their private and public lives, between the familiar intimacy of Haworth and the threatening harshness of the world, thus leaving the door open just a crack for potential, maybe even desired, recognition.

The situation is quite different in the case of Sir Walter Scott. Here the planned concealment of true authorship, however temporary (from 1814 to 1827), is genuine even in its creation of puzzlement and behind-the-hand whispers of knowledgeable hunches. Innuendo has it that the concealment of the eminent lawyer, poet, critic and public figure behind the bland label of "The Author of Waverley" (after the first novel) was nothing but a tremendously successful publicity stunt but such acerbic comment underestimates both the ludic and the serious facets of Scott's self-imposed pseudonymity. Scott's disappearance behind single, double and sometimes triple onomastic screens—Jedediah Cleishbotham, schoolmaster of the parish of Gandercleugh, and Peter Pattison in the novels grouped under *Tales of my Landlord*, Mr. Chrystal Croftangry of the *Chronicles of the Canongate*, Captain Clutterbuck (*The Monastery*, *The Abbot*, etc.) and the Rev. Dr. Dryasdust of York (*Peveril of the Peak*) or Dr. J. A. Rochecliff, eminent antiquarian (*Woodstock*)—permits him not only the doubtful privilege of reviewing his own books but also the introduction or assumption of personae of proto-Dickensian names and scurrilous habits. Ever intent on preserving his standing in society, he carries the inherited desire for authenticity and obtainable verification to new lengths. Such is his self-confessed fear of failure in the new genre of the historical novel, that he consistently refuses to be recognised as the front man for his tales. Success and literary fame make such an attitude difficult to maintain but it takes Scott well over a decade to give the author "a local habitation and a name."

Arguably, then, the wish for potentially penetrable disguise and the desire for total concealment are only different perspectives of an author's intention to be present but not revealed, whether through the ludic

exercise of paronomasia or the equally playful device of onymic misguidance and fudging of identity. Yet, whether pun or protestation, intrepid intrusion or discreet deception, the name game is more than a masquerade of manipulated illusions because authors of fiction cannot help knowing (or if they are not aware of it paronomasticians will poke their noses into it) that they are also fictitious authors, continually reinventing themselves, and that the ultimate achievement does not lie in telling the truth but in sounding believable.

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Words, Weapons, and Role-players: A Reply to Stanley Hussey*

ROBERT CROSMAN

I read Stanley Hussey's "Comment" on my Shakespeare's prose article with pleasure, nodding frequently in agreement with his qualifications and refinements of my argument. We disagree in details, but I thoroughly approve of the way he goes about raising interpretive questions and then scrutinizing the text for answers. Still, no text reads itself: the reader brings his own assumptions, his own "interpretive strategies," to the text, and it seems to me that Professor Hussey sees a somewhat different text because he brings somewhat different assumptions to it.

Assumption no. 1: words are weapons. When Professor Hussey looks at Henry he sees someone who uses words to abuse power. His key metaphor for Hal's stylistic inventiveness is "a weapon" (257), which to my mind is not flat wrong but reductive, rather. Eloquent speech is certainly capable, sometimes, of defeating an adversary, and thus it can be likened to a weapon, but I don't think that Hussey or any professor of literature can really believe that language is always war by other means, that conversation is always a power-struggle, never a communication or an attempt at a meeting of minds. Even when Hal spars with Falstaff it is usually a game; when it gets more serious, it is usually a struggle for dominance. Hal wins his share of games, but he never does really dominate Falstaff: not when he fails to get his sword from him at the battle of Shrewsbury (1 *Henry V* 5.3), not even when he denies knowing Falstaff at the end of 2 *Henry IV*. "I know thee not, old man"

*Reference: Robert Crosman, "The Pivotal Position of *Henry V* in the Rise and Fall of Shakespeare's Prose," *Connotations* 2.1 (1992): 1-15; Stanley Hussey, "A Comment on Robert Crosman, 'The Pivotal Position . . .,'" *Connotations* 2.3 (1992): 257-62.

(5.5.47) is more of a shield than it is a sword, and merely protects the King from an improper complicity in Falstaff's amusing crimes.

Words *can* be weapons, and Henry's sometimes are; my point is that it is reductive to think of them as *always* being so, even in a play like *Henry V* that is about a king waging war. Nor is a weapon always a contemptible thing, either: ask any people who need to defend themselves. True, Henry is not defending anything when he invades France beyond his own shaky claim to the English throne. Still, a country that had itself narrowly escaped invasion only a decade earlier may be forgiven for dreaming of turning the tables. When Shakespeare wrote this play England was not what she later, briefly became—the strongest country in the world. Shakespeare's England was weak in comparison to her neighbors, France and Spain, and was dreading the old queen's approaching death. As power slipped from the grasp of the last native dynasty into the hands of the Scottish Stuarts, it is small wonder if Shakespeare's audience thrilled to the image of an idealized English king who could cause England's foes to tremble.

Henry deploys the power of words once again in the "wooing scene" (5.2), and again Professor Hussey wants to see this as an abuse of power:

The scene is amusing, certainly, often touching, but it is hardly Henry being "only a man," or, if it is, the assumption of soldierly bluntness is one more example of the role-playing to achieve the desired end, albeit for the good of England, too. After all, Henry once more holds all the cards and, whether Katherine knows it or not, her hand in marriage is part of an already agreed treaty. (261)

Here, at least, Hussey portrays life as a game, not a war, but the implication of the trope, "hold[ing] all the cards," is that Henry is not inclined to share power, or acknowledge the rights of others. Now there is no doubt that Katherine is expected to marry whomever her father chooses—she says as much—but are *her* rights thereby infringed? On the contrary, the marriage to Henry looks highly advantageous to Katherine, and it is her vain and foolish brother, the Dauphin, who is the principle loser in this transaction. If Henry includes her in the decision-making process, it may be because he expects an easy acceptance, and is surprised he has to work so hard at persuading

Katherine to do what is clearly to her advantage—becoming Queen of England now, and Queen of France as well when her father dies.

I suppose Katherine's minimal acceptance of Henry—"Den it shall also content me" (247)—can be read as a sorrowful yielding to the inevitable, rather than (as I read it) the way a decorous French princess says "yes," but that reading conflicts with Katherine's earlier, rather spontaneous and even illicit interest in the invader's language. Why is she learning English if she has no interest in Henry—not in the man himself, whom she has apparently never met, but in the opportunity he represents? On the whole I think Katherine, too, is role-playing when she makes a show of reluctance in yielding to so desirable a suitor.

And so we come to a second interpretive assumption where I differ from Professor Hussey. Is Henry's "role-playing" really so bad? As I read Shakespeare's plays, they really *do* show that "All the world's a stage," and that we *all* are actors. So what matters is not the choice between being "sincere" and being a role-player, but the ability to act, appropriateness in the choice of roles, and above all the motivation behind that choice. If in wooing Katherine Henry compasses good ends—the acquisition of a loving wife and the peaceful union of their two realms—then the fact that he puts on a succession of roles to gain these ends is no condemnation of him.

Reading Shakespeare teaches many lessons, of course, but the greatest lesson I have learned from him is that we live in a universe of discourse. "To a great extent," I should add, since there is a divinity (not necessarily a kind one, either) that shapes our ends. But still, in Shakespeare whatever power human beings possess they wield largely by their command of language and other forms of communication, like gesture and facial expression. Therefore, a versatility with language and with roles is Shakespeare's way of conferring power on his characters to do good *or* ill.

So when Henry plays roles with Katherine he is not necessarily deploying "weapons" in the sense of trying to injure or defeat her. If she is property then he has already conquered her, and may marry her will-she nil-she. By wooing her Henry shows he knows that souls are not owned, and knows what is due to the free moral agent he wishes not merely to wed, but to love and be loved by. And Katherine ably

fends him off until he speaks the right words, which are not weapons but promises—holy oaths, in fact—and Henry, we know, keeps his promises. If Henry disarms Katherine, he does so by making treaties with her, not by wounding or enslaving her.

Henry V is of course not Shakespeare's last word on heads of state. *Hamlet*, *Lear*, *Macbeth*, *Measure for Measure*, *The Tempest*—virtually every play he subsequently wrote, in fact, portrays a ruler or rulers wrestling with the burden of power, which for Shakespeare is neither a secure nor an enviable possession. The notion he seems to have played with in *Henry V* is that if a man could be a good enough actor, if he could speak enough different languages and play enough different roles, then (God willing) he could pacify the realm and rule justly. To foist all this onto the historical Henry, whose death two years after his marriage threw England into the prolonged civil war known as the Wars of the Roses, is of course pure sleight of hand, but Henry was the most recent military hero to sit upon England's throne, and Shakespeare made do with what came to hand.

The real problem with Henry is that he couldn't exist. No one can think fast enough or well enough to switch roles with as much ease and effectiveness as Henry does. He is *too* verbally skillful to be a credible picture of a flesh-and-blood human being, and (even worse) his apparently effortless mastery of every situation drastically reduces his dramatic interest. All of Shakespeare's subsequent royal protagonists are more flawed, and many as a result are more deeply interesting to us in the flawed audience.

But I do not expect Professor Hussey to share my interpretation of Henry any more than I am converted to his, though he has helped me with one or two points, and perhaps I have similarly helped him. For the most part, however, I have teased out differences hidden in his choice of tropes. Fortunately this is no real battle but critical debate, and thus Professor Hussey and I are just performing parts in a *débat*—which, after all, was one of the dramatic forms anticipating Elizabethan comedy.

Generalization Must Be, but Woe unto the Generalizer: A Reply to Jonas Barish*

ROBERT CROSMAN

Jonas Barish is a Shakespeare scholar whose opinion I value most highly and I feel honored that he has taken the trouble both to correct and to praise aspects of my article on Shakespeare's prose. Especially convincing is his pronouncement that "Shakespeare . . . deals with each local situation on its own terms, as it arises, for whatever dramatic values it proves to contain or imply" (265).

Any generalization will prove inadequate to describe Shakespeare's practice with complete accuracy—this is the force of Professor Barish's advice to look at "each local situation." I couldn't agree more ardently. And I also agree that each scene, often each *part* of a scene, must be thought about in *dramatic* terms: what effect is Shakespeare trying to achieve *here*, and how did he achieve it?

Yet generalizations, however gross and approximate, are a necessary aspect of thinking about anything, as Professor Barish himself illustrates when he formulates what he calls his "local option," and I would call the Rule of Local Situations:

Shakespeare remains less bound to any formula than to his own freedom at every moment to pursue the destinies of his characters and to extract the optimum theatrical excitement afforded by a given situation. (268)

After having admired this dictum for some time, it occurs to me that although I can scarcely think of a truer generalization, it *is* still a generalization, and hence fatally subject to falsification by specific

*Reference: Robert Crosman, "The Pivotal Position of *Henry V* in the Rise and Fall of Shakespeare's Prose," *Connotations* 2.1 (1992): 1-15; Jonas Barish, "Hal, Falstaff, *Henry V*, and Prose," *Connotations* 2.3 (1992): 263-68.

instances. In other words, Professor Barish has himself announced a "formula," and like any other such formula, I fear, it will not prove entirely adequate to describe Shakespeare's practice.

For example, take the lecture on the Salic Law with which the Archbishop of Canterbury favours Henry, and us, in *Henry V* 1.2. This is, I believe, the longest and dullest monologue in all of Shakespeare, and when I ask myself why it is there I am forced to conclude that Shakespeare found the legal justification of Henry's invasion of France an interesting topic—and expected his audience to find it so too, however flatly and baldly he wrote it. Now it is admittedly possible that Shakespeare's contemporary audiences—at least the one at court—found this speech interesting, but modern audiences are put to sleep by it, and I don't think there is any use in pretending that Shakespeare handled the Salic Law with any particular dramatic adroitness. No: unless "dramatic value" is merely whatever a particular audience happens to find interesting, for once we have caught Shakespeare being "ideological" at the expense of "dramatic values."

The generalization derived from this example is: when we generalize about Shakespeare we can be sure that exceptions to our rules will sooner or later be found; yet analysis cannot be done without generalizing, and so we go on doing it. Which is a roundabout way of pleading that even if Professor Barish has found an exception to my claim that King Henry is "equal to *every* rhetorical task that a King must deal with" ("The Pivotal Position . . ." 10), still the rule is true often enough to be worth formulating.

But let's see if I can make a case for my "formula" even in 4.1, where Professor Barish finds it particularly inadequate. In the sub-scene where the disguised King encounters the three common soldiers, his rhetoric is directed at arguing that each of them is a free moral agent, and thus each is responsible for his own salvation or damnation if he should die in battle; two of the three soldiers immediately concur, and the third, the taciturn Court, does not *disagree*. If we assume that it is Henry's rhetorical purpose to make the three soldiers also ask forgiveness for their sins so that, falling in battle, they would die in a state of grace, then he appears to accomplish it.

Therefore it does not seem to me correct to say, as Professor Barish does, that this sub-scene shows that Henry's rhetoric is unequal to the task in hand. Henry meets the three by chance; it is *they* who engage *him* in conversation, not vice-versa, and in disguise he speaks brutal honesty to them about the morale of the troops, and of the King himself. Whereas Professor Barish assumes that it is Henry's aim to win friends for the King among the troops, it looks to me as though he is seeking accusers, so that he may look as deeply as possible into his own soul.

Shakespeare needs a note of discord at the point where the soldiers exit so that Henry can soliloquize on the troubles of kingship, so Professor Barish's Rule of Local Situations helps explain why Henry fails to convince Williams that he was not lying about the ransom. This failure may constitute a small exception to my generalization that Henry is "equal to every rhetorical task that a king must deal with," but if this is the worst charge that can be leveled at it, then mine is a fairly suitable "formula."

To summarize then: The Law of Local Situations, certainly one of the most reliable guides for understanding a Shakespeare play, must nonetheless be acknowledged as sometimes overridden by other concerns—in this case by Shakespeare's privileging of matters of doctrine, or what has come to be called "ideology." Certainly if we look at the play as a whole the Archbishop's lecture on the Salic Law has a dramatic purpose, but only in the overall design and impact of the play: locally it is a disaster, dramatically speaking, and one wonders if not even Shakespeare may have cut it from performance, or at least shortened it drastically. Ideology and drama are not at odds, however, in 4.1, as Henry's theorizing on the individual Christian's responsibility for his own salvation is effortlessly woven into the clash of temperaments and world-views between him and the three soldiers. Professor Barish's "formula" is thoroughly convincing and nearly always will pan out. And yet, if we require of a generalization that it admit of *no* exception, then it is *never* safe to generalize about Shakespeare's practice, and yet we must. So let us not hold ourselves to quite so high a standard.

I am uncomfortably aware that in all this I have left any consideration of Shakespeare's *prose* far behind. Professor Barish's conclusion, already quoted in part, is that

Despite the rough guidelines provided by rank, realism, and (shall we say?) risibility, as criteria for prose, Shakespeare remains less bound to any formula than to his own freedom at every moment to pursue the destinies of his characters and to extract the optimum theatrical excitement afforded by a given situation. (268)

And yet for some reason Shakespeare's plays broke out in a rash of prose from about 1595 to 1601. If Falstaff is the reason for this outbreak, still it spread to such un-Falstaffian characters as Rosalind, Henry, and Hamlet—among the most charming and “noble” (in every sense of the word) characters Shakespeare ever created. Doubtless he enjoyed the new possibilities that writing prose dialogue for noble characters created. But why did he then walk away from this resource? Perhaps he lost faith in the ability of kings and commoners to talk the same language, or perhaps he merely lost interest in the idea. Probably there are many plausible answers, none definitive. Still, this is a question that it is rewarding to think about, and I am grateful to Professor Barish for helping me to think a little harder about it.

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Hamlet and After*

HOLGER KLEIN

Coming late in a debate that has gone on for some time one risks appearing censorious; yet the issues concerning *Hamlet* broached in *Connotations* over much of 1992 are important and do invite further discussion. It is with a consciousness of the difficulties attending comment on the pronouncements of such eminent scholars as John Russell Brown, Dieter Mehl, and Maurice Charney that I ask boldness to be my friend. I shall need it.

Brown's original essay sets out (somewhat surprisingly without mentioning scholars such as Sister Miriam Joseph,¹ M. M. Mahood,² and Brian Vickers³) from the fact that Hamlet is fond of wordplay and then argues that this fondness also colours Hamlet's last words: "the rest is silence" (5.2.350).⁴ There are several details inviting queries,⁵ but my principle objection is that Brown constantly tends to decontextualise. Not all puns are equal, indeed any play on words must surely be seen as part of a dramatic character in a specific situation. The example of Mercutio's dying pun, which Brown adduces in his second contribution (276) illustrates the point: "Ask for me tomorrow, and you shall find me a grave man" (RJ 3.1.94). The contrast to Hamlet's last words is striking indeed. It also illustrates a second main point: that there exists a vital difference between utterances of dramatic characters intentionally ambiguous or playful and utterances that are not. (Borderline cases will, of course, occur, but do not impair the argument.) A critic is free to consult the *OED* (in fact, I have been blamed for doing it too often) and find any number of possible meanings for words. Brown

*Reference: Anthony Brian Taylor, "Arthur Golding and the Elizabethan Progress of Actaeon's Dogs," *Connotations* 1.3 (1991): 207-223.

does and comes up with five readings of Hamlet's last sentence. There is no harm in that, though the first "All that remains for me to say must be unspoken" surely hits it in one, or nearly.

The impression, eloquently created by Brown, that Hamlet is constantly holding back, at the last moment as in many others, has, I think, been ably refuted by Charney (186-87), who also quarrels, albeit against his will, with Brown on five readings (187-88). Thirdly, Charney takes up the question, touched on by Brown in his first contribution (28-29), of the four O's found in the Folio version of *Hamlet* after "silence." While Charney mildly considers them as possibly part of Shakespeare's revision, Mehl wholeheartedly asserts they "have as much right to stand in the text of *Hamlet* . . . as any other addition in this version of the play" (183). In other words, he accepts the argumentation of Wells and Taylor which led to the *Hamlet* text in the new Oxford collected edition,⁶ equally enthusiastically adopted and executed (now there's a word with multiple meanings indeed!) by Hibbard in his separate edition of this play.⁷ Mehl cannot believe that Hamlet should have died with a conscious pun on his lips (183), but generally stresses that what matters is not so much multiplicity of meanings as "the ultimate failure of language" (ibid.). The first view chimes in with Charney's and my own feeling, the second strikes me as something of an anachronism. There were at the time plenty of formulaic expressions, dear to rhetoric, that language is insufficient. At bottom, however, the concept is alien to the period, it is implicitly refuted, just like Othello's modest personal disclaimer regarding skills of oratory (*OTH* 1.3.81 ff.) or Antony's, for that matter (*JC* 3.2.216 ff.), by the very language employed.

In his rejoinder, Brown goes mainly for the "'O, o, o, o.' *Dyes*" issue, extending it to an all-out attack on the Taylor-Wells view of the F text (280 ff.). I am very much in sympathy with the line he takes, particularly with the notion that each change in the Folio "should be examined individually" (282); the trouble is that a short discursive essay can hardly do more than begin to embark on that particular debate, which is bound to continue for some time to come. From *paronomasia* (a conference paper on which formed the basis of Brown's first contribution) the argument has—already in the very first contribution itself, as duly observed by Charney (186)—at first insensibly, then quite strongly shifted (resembling

Hamlet with his bewildered companions in 1.5) to quite different ground. And each reply, Charney's as well as Mehl's, perhaps inevitably, brought into play yet other issues meriting comment. There is no reason why it should stop at this, I in my turn will have furnished scope for further comment when I say that the issue of what is commonly called cuts in F—not just the last great soliloquy in 4.4, but also the cuts in 3.4 that are generally deemed quite astute—still call for fresh, systematic consideration. If indeed Jenkins' notion of "Playhouse Interpolations"⁸ (of which the disputed O's form a prime instance) is to be finally ditched, if one is ready seriously to consider adopting the hypothesis that F represents Shakespeare's second thoughts, then not just additions but also excisions, indeed all substantive variations between F and Q2 need to be pondered in every respect. That would be worth doing, but would exceed a brief note. It must be left to a separate study.

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NOTES

¹Sister Miriam Joseph, *Shakespeare and the Arts of Language* (New York: Columbia UP, 1947).

²M. M. Mahood, *Shakespeare's Wordplay* (1957; rpt. London: Methuen, 1968).

³Brian Vickers, *The Artistry of Shakespeare's Prose* (London: Methuen, 1968) esp. 248-71.

⁴Quotations and line count follow Peter Alexander's edition: Shakespeare, *The Complete Works* (London and Glasgow: Collins, 1951; rpt. 1960)—not simply because I have it to hand, but because it represents a convenient traditional middle ground.

⁵Hamlet's mother/father remark to Claudius in 4.3.51-53 is surely no "conscious withdrawal" (Brown 22) but a deft parting shot drawing blood; one should not express, as Brown does (24) surprise at Hamlet describing his madness to Laertes in 5.2.223-31, "as if it had been entirely real"; there is no basis in the text to place the final duel in 5.2 "at the midnight hour" (24): these problematic points are just examples, there are still others.

⁶Shakespeare, *The Complete Works*, gen. eds. Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor (Oxford: Clarendon P, 1986) 737-77. Taylor furnished the concrete arguments in favour of the hypothesis that *Hamlet* in F was set by compositor E from Shakespeare's manuscript. See "The Folio Copy for *Hamlet*, *King Lear*, and *Othello*," *ShQ* 34 (1983): 44-61.

⁷The Oxford Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, ed. G. R. Hibbard (Oxford: Clarendon P, 1987). Cf. my review of Hibbard alone in *N&Q* ns 35 (1988): 365-68, and of his edition together with Harold Jenkins' New Arden Edition (1984) and Philip Edwards' New Cambridge edition (1985) in *Anglia* 108 (1990): 233-42.

⁸Harold Jenkins, "Playhouse Interpolations in the Folio Text of *Hamlet*," *Studies in Bibliography* 13 (1960): 31-47.

"Double Nature's Single Name": A Response to Christiane Gillham*

PETER MILWARD

In her otherwise interesting article on the endlessly puzzling *Phoenix and Turtle*, Christiane Gillham mistakenly quotes Shakespeare's words, "Single natures double name." The words are correct enough, but they are mistakenly applied to the "phoenix." In the original Greek, the single name—as she interestingly points out—has reference to two different beings or natures, on the one hand to the "Arabian bird" or phoenix, and on the other to the "sole Arabian tree" or palm-tree. It would therefore have been more logical on her part to have altered Shakespeare's wording (with due apology to the poet) in the manner I have ventured to use in my title.

Here indeed we find but one name for two different natures, the one animal and the other plant. But it may be questioned what light this fact, however interesting in itself, may have to shed on this most mysterious of poems, or even if the poet himself was aware of the fact. After all, we have it on Ben Jonson's word that he had even "less Greek" than Latin; and he may not have been aware of the double nature of "phoenix." He may even have identified the "phoenix' nest," as did some of his contemporaries, with the cedar rather than the palm-tree.¹ And so much of Christiane Gillham's argument, for all its intrinsic interest, falls to the ground for lack of relevance to Shakespeare's poem.

Greater relevance, however, I find in her mention of the Song of Solomon as a possible source. Not that Shakespeare with his "less Greek" would have recognized—as she seems to imagine—the bird implicit in the palm-tree of Cant. 7:7; nor would he necessarily have seen the dove

*Reference: Christiane Gillham, "'Single Natures Double Name': Some Comments on *The Phoenix and Turtle*," *Connotations* 2.2 (1992): 126-36.

of Cant. 2:14 as male, seeing that most commentators see that dove as rather the bride than the bridegroom. But the Song is at least a love song, and not just one among many but the paragon of love songs in the Christian West—celebrating, as it came to be commonly interpreted, the love between God and Israel, Christ and the Church. Not only do both the turtle and the dove feature more than once in the Song, but we may also find a source of Shakespeare's "Either was the other's mine" in Cant. 2:16 (shortly after a mention of the "turtle" in 12 and the "dove" in 14), "My beloved is mine, and I am his." Also in Cant. 6:3 we read, "I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine," followed by another mention of "my dove" in 9; and again, in 7:10, "I am my beloved's, and his desire is toward me."

Needless to say, Shakespeare makes use of this manner of speech in his Sonnets, where he says both "thou being mine" (36) and "all mine was thine" (40). Here, too, he speaks of "our undivided loves" as "one," since "In our two loves there is but one respect" (36); and in "our dear love" he looks to the ideal of the "name of single one"—though that one has to become twain by separation (39).² From this standpoint, indeed, it looks as if the young man of the Sonnets may well be the phoenix of the poem, with the poet himself as the true turtle. Only I would hesitate to attach myself to any one of the many identifications or biographical interpretations of the poem.

Rather, I would prefer to return to our mutual title in Shakespeare's original version of it, "Single natures double name"—with reference not to the phoenix and the palm-tree, which are (as I have pointed out) two natures in one name, but to the two birds united as it were in one nature of love. For it is as if this "love in twain / Had the essence but in one," so that the one is the other and the other is the one: "Either was the other's mine." So we come back to the Song of Solomon, with its traditional application to the love of Christ and the Church, as Christ is shown praying for his disciples at the Last Supper, "All mine are thine, and thine are mine" (John 17:10), and "That they all may be one; as thou, father, art in me, and I in thee . . . I in them and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one" (21, 23).

Here we find our minds being raised from the love of Christ and the Church to that of the Father and the Son in the divine Trinity. And such

is precisely the language Shakespeare is using in this poem: the most rarefied theological language, as developed by St. Augustine and St. Thomas Aquinas in their explanation of how the "double name" of Father and Son are united in a "single nature," the nature of God who is Love.³ It is supremely of them that we may say, "love in twain / Had the essence but in one," and that while the two are distinct as persons there is no division of nature between them. Such an explanation may well bewilder the reason, which deals in division for discourse, but it appeals to the heart as the seat of love and, as Pascal remarks, "The heart has its reasons that the reason knows not."

Not that I would say that Shakespeare's poem is precisely about the divine Trinity; but that in speaking of an ideal love between two human beings, possibly that between himself and the young man as recorded in the Sonnets, he can't help raising his eyes—as Donne also does in "The Canonization," with similar reference to "the Phoenix riddle"—from earth to heaven, and from man to God.⁴ After all, for the Christian the source of all human love is divine, and it is not blasphemous (as a Puritan might have maintained) to compare an ideal love between human beings to the divine love of Father and Son in the Trinity. This is precisely what makes this poem so mysterious, not as a mere puzzle of identification, which may never be resolved, but as a mystery in the theological sense of the word—as when Donne goes on to say that he and his beloved "prove / Mysterious by this love."

This movement from two to three, or from the "double name" of Father and Son to the divine Trinity, I see implied in the somewhat odd transition from the introduction and anthem (with abba) to the "threnos" (with aaa). For the effect of the preceding stanzas is at once a breathing out (from a to b) and in (from b to a), as theologians say of the procession outwards from Father to Son and inwards again; and this procession may be seen as the breathing (or Spirit) of love. And the effect of the following stanzas is an emphatic repeating of three similar sounds, as it were passing from what is "so well compounded" to "Grace in all simplicity"—with a special emphasis in the penultimate stanza on "be," and thus an implication of the divine name.

It is therefore appropriate that this mysterious, and mysteriously theological, poem should end with a "prayer," just as Shakespeare

himself says his farewell to the stage at the end of *The Tempest* with an appeal for "prayer."

All I would add is that his strange, funereal poem comes significantly at the end of Shakespeare's comic period, after the first performance of *Twelfth Night*, and at the beginning of his tragic period, ushered in by the composition of *Hamlet*, with "the rest is silence."

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NOTES

¹In *The Phoenix' Nest* (1593), by M. Roydon and others, we find an "Elegy for Sir Philip Sidney" with the description: "The Phoenix left sweet Araby / And on a cedar in this coast / Built up her tomb of spicery." The anthology has been edited by Hyder Edward Rollins (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP, 1931).

²Shakespeare is quoted from the Arden Edition of *The Poems*, ed. F. T. Prince (London: Methuen, 1960) and from *Shakespeare's Sonnets*, ed. Stephen Booth (New Haven: Yale UP, 1977).

³The various meanings of "form" and "nature" and "essence," "name" and "person," not to mention "one" and "two" and "three," in connection with the divine nature and the trinity of persons, are explored at length by St. Augustine in his *De Trinitate*, in which he develops his "psychological interpretation," and more precisely by St. Thomas Aquinas in his *Summa Theologiae* Part I, qq. 26-43, in his discussion of the Trinity.

⁴John Donne, *The Elegies and The Songs and Sonnets*, ed. Helen Gardner (Oxford: Clarendon P, 1965) 73-75.

Shakespeare's "The Phoenix and the Turtle": A Reconsideration of "Single Natures Double Name"

JAMES H. SIMS

Christiane Gillham follows up effectively on Alexander Grosart's note, in his 1878 edition of Robert Chester's *Love's Martyr*, concerning the homonymy of Greek *phoinix* in the words phoenix and palm tree ("sole Arabian tree") in Shakespeare's "The Phoenix and the Turtle."¹ Among the most valuable findings of Gillham's study is her suggestion, an original one I believe, that the Song of Songs is a source of *P&T*. The Song is indeed a source of the image of the bride as "palm tree [*phoinix*]" (7:6-8) and of the groom as "dove" (2:14). But the fact that some interpreters see the dove as a metaphor not only for the groom but also for the bride,² leads her to remark that "the ambiguous allocation of sexes in the Song of Solomon . . . may provide a background setting off some of the seeming inconsistencies of *P&T*, [helping us] interpret . . . the neutralization of opposites between male and female" in Shakespeare's poem (132-33). However, since the fusing of two, male and female, into one—"Number there in love was slain" (*P&T* 28) is the "wonder" Shakespeare's poem celebrates, to name this metamorphosis "the neutralization of opposites" is to miss the mark. The poem's mystical union of love-partners in death results in such a greater unified whole that its excellent oneness appalls Property (peculiarity, appropriateness) and confounds Reason out of all reason (logical thought and choice); Reason, given the last word in the "Threnos," seems to fall back on rather literal commonplaces, but in the light of the whole poem, even Reason's lines, implying the opposite of what they say, celebrate a transcendent and eternal union.³ The "enclosde" are actually enlarged,

¹Reference: Christiane Gillham, "'Single Natures Double Name': Some Comments on *The Phoenix and Turtle*," *Connotations* 2.2 (1992): 126-36.

"no posteritie" is self-perpetuation, burial in the urn is new life germinating in the womb, and the "dead Birds" are so alive as to inspire prayer in new generations of lovers "true or faire" (*P&T* 55, 59, 67, 66). I return to the threnos below.

Gillham's contributions to our understanding of Shakespeare's poem are significant. Another example of helpful insights she provides is the etymological clarification of "cinders" (*P&T* 55)⁴ both as fertile ashes connected to the seed-dust of the palm and as "seed of fire" (cited from Chapman's *Homer*, 134n11), Homer's metaphor for apparently dead ashes that may spring into flame. She might have added that since Reason's threnos portrays these "cinders" lying enclosed in "this vrn" to which "either true or faire" lovers are invited to "repaire . . . [and] For these dead Birds, sigh a prayer" (*P&T* 55, 65-67), the continuance of such miraculous unions depends on the potential of those very cinders to kindle "mutuall flame" (*P&T* 24). And that the lovers are to "sigh a prayer" recalls the "treble dated Crow" whose offspring depend on the "breath" it gives and takes (*P&T* 17-19).⁵ Thus the birth from death of the phoenix and the dove not only confirms their own immortality; it also assures a perpetual succession of loves like theirs inspired by their example. The phoenix is reborn through its death in its palm tree nest; therefore, the dove in sharing the essence of the phoenix is also eternal, co-supreme (*P&T* 25, 41). The two "leau[e] no posteritie," because they are, miraculously, their own progeny.

Death is now the *Phoenix* nest,
And the *Turtles* loyal brest,
To eternitie doth rest [remain],

Leauing no posteritie,
Twas not their infirmitie,
It was married Chastitie.
(*P&T* 56-61)

"Truth and Beautie [as dead birds] buried be" (*P&T* 64), but they lie in cinders which will rekindle into new life. How else could "the bird of lowdest lay, / On the sole *Arabian* tree, / Herauld sad and trumpet be" (*P&T* 1-3) at its own funeral rites?

Another clue beyond those Gillham explores to support her argument for the Song of Songs as a source lies in the "mutuall flame" in which phoenix and turtle "fled . . . from hence" and as the shining light of love "Flaming in the *Phoenix* sight" (*P&T* 23-24, 35) by which the turtledove sees clearly the total identification of himself and his queen: "Either was the others mine" (most editors indicate either "source of wealth" or mutual possessive pronoun, but perhaps the best reading is "mien.")⁶ Furthermore, the divine flame of love celebrated in the Song of Songs is much like the "mutuall flame" of *P&T* which, instead of destroying, miraculously fuses two "distincts" into a "concordant one," making the two birds "Co-supremes" (27, 46, 51).

For love is strong as death;
jealousy is cruel as the grave;
the coals thereof *are* coals of fire,
which hath a most vehement flame [of Yahweh himself].
Many waters cannot quench love,
neither can the floods drown it.
(Song 8:6b-7a)⁷

Gillham cites *The Tempest* 3.3.22-24 as an example in Shakespeare of a "relationship between bird and tree" similar to that explored in her article (133n2). Although the tree which serves as the phoenix' throne is not identified as a palm in the reference, its uniqueness is stressed as it is in "the sole *Arabian* tree" of *P&T* 2. However, in *The Tempest*, when the conspiratorial brothers and their henchmen, accompanied by Gonzalo, have been entertained by the island's spirits with a banquet and dance, Sebastian exclaims that, having seen such "living drollery," he will now believe

That there are unicorns, that in Arabia
There is one tree, the phoenix' throne, one phoenix
At this hour reigning there.⁸

Thus the dramatic emphasis in the play is on the conspirators' conviction of the spirit world's reality, not on a semantic relationship between bird and tree; even these hardened skeptics are now ready to credit all of the fantastic tales of other travelers, since they must believe the equally

incredible sights and sounds they have witnessed. Probably written some nine or ten years after *P&T*, these lines do give evidence that the rarity, even the unique nature of both the phoenix and her tree is still an important feature of the myth in Shakespeare's mind.⁹

A few allusions in Shakespeare that relate to the regeneration of the phoenix from her ashes may add support to Gillham's argument that bird and tree are vitally connected through the ashes/seed-dust imagery. In *The Rape of Lucrece* Lucrece alludes to the phoenix' birth out of death when she convinces herself that only by killing her own dishonored body can she make her honor live again.

So of shame's ashes shall my fame be bred,
For in my death I murder shameful scorn;
My shame so dead, mine honor is new born.
(1188-90)

In the first and third of the *Henry VI* play-cycle, characters find encouragement in prophecies of revengers rising, phoenix-like, from the ashes of dead heroes. In *1 Henry VI* 4.7.92-93, Sir William Lucy predicts of the bodies of Talbot and others taken from the battlefield near Bordeaux: "from their ashes shall be rear'd / A phoenix that shall make all France afear'd"; and in *3 Henry VI* 1.4.35-36, Richard, Duke of York, declares to his killers:

My ashes, as the phoenix, may bring forth
A bird that will revenge upon you all.

Later, in *Richard III* 4.4.423-25, this foreseen "bird" (earlier insulted by Queen Margaret to his prophetic father as "that valiant crook-back prodigy, / Dicky your boy," *1 Henry VI* 1.4.75-76) says to Queen Elizabeth of her slaughtered children:

But in your daughter's womb I bury them,
Where in that nest of spicery they will breed
Selves of themselves.

Since some scholars see Shakespeare's phoenix in *P&T* as Elizabeth I and the dove as Essex,¹⁰ Cranmer's prophecy in *Henry VIII* 5.5.40-43,

46-48 of Elizabeth's phoenix-like death and rebirth as James I is interesting.

When

The bird of wonder dies, the maiden phoenix,
 Her ashes new create another heir
 As great in admiration as herself, . . .
 Who from the sacred ashes of her honor
 Shall star-like rise, as great in fame as she was,
 And so stand fix'd.

In this instance the new phoenix, as in Chester's *Love's Martyr*, is Elizabeth's male successor James I. Thus the conflation of male and female (or the transmutation of female to male) in the figure of the phoenix finds expression in courtly compliment to James in the later Shakespeare as it did not in his early contribution to Chester's publication. In *P&T*, despite the political bent of *Love's Martyr*, Shakespeare's focus was on idealized love—"married Chastitie"—not on anticipated monarchical succession.

Gillham chose as her title "Single Natures Double Name." The line's immediate context is stanza five of the anthem (stanza 10 of the poem).

Propertie was thus appalled,
 That the selfe was not the same:
 Single Natures double name,
 Neither two nor one was called.

In juxtaposition with the last line of the stanza, "Single Natures double name" is the subject of the passive verb "was called." In printing the line as it appears above, Gillham implies that she reads "Single Natures" as I do, not as a possessive but as an oxymoron (parallel with "concordant one," 46). The natures (plural) each had appropriate names (double name), but now that the two are single (the two natures unified), neither of the pair of names (double name) "phoenix" or "dove" nor even the names of the numbers "two" nor "one" is any longer appropriate; this confusion of the whole concept of selfhood and proper nouns is that which has given rise to Property's appalled state. Yet the thrust of Gillham's discussion, centering primarily not on the two birds,

but on the bird and the tree, seems to have presupposed instead a formulation like the following: "Single Natures Double Name"; i.e., the tree and the bird, since both share a single *res*, are appropriately identified by the same *verbum* (126), *phoenix*. Therefore, the line implies the now-discovered connection between the life-bringing properties of the bird's ashes and the tree's pollen, since the similarity between the two natural objects lies hidden in the fact that the name of each is the duplicate (double name) of the other.

But clearly the line in its context refers not to the bird and the tree but to the two birds, the phoenix and the dove, and what appalled Property was not what either "was called" (40) but was that the two selves so completely disappeared into one that the new entity could not, according to Property's rules of propriety, appropriately be a self or even be numbered or named. The situation is so far beyond all normal rules that even Reason is "in it selfe confounded" (41) to see the selfhood of the two birds vanish into a "Simple," an elementary element, "so well compounded" of two in contradiction of all logical reason (44).¹¹ Simples combine into a compound; compounded elements cannot create a simple. Yet, Reason cries, this impossibility seems to have happened:

how true a twaine
Seemeth this concordant one,
Loue hath Reason, Reason none,
If what parts, can so remaine.
(P&T 44-48)

The apparent occurrence of the impossible provokes Reason to compose a threnos, or funeral song, which on the surface grants the supernatural quality of the pair's love and union, while it laments the final state of dissolution of the "dead Birds," who, though they embodied Platonic Truth and Beauty, leave no posterity. As suggested earlier, however, by implication Reason's own words provide assurance of the lovers' posterity to rise from their cinders through the generative power of pilgrim lovers, "true or faire," as they sigh their prayers.

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NOTES

¹Robert Chester, *Love's Martyr, or, Rosalins Complaint* (1601). With its Supplement, *Diverse Poeticall Essays on the Turtle and Phoenix by Shakspeare, Ben Jonson, George Chapman, John Marston, etc.*, ed. with introd., notes and illus. by Alexander B. Grosart (London: Trübner for the New Shakspeare Society, 1878) 241. Greek *phoenix* comes, of course, from the Septuagint; in biblical Hebrew the palm tree is *tamar*.

My quotations from Shakespeare's "The Phoenix and the Turtle" correspond with the spelling and punctuation of the poem's original text in Chester.

²Gillham cites Franciscus Sbordone and Cyrill Alexandrinus (135n32). Some modern editions of the Bible also identify the dove as the bride; e. g., *The New English Bible Oxford Study Edition*, ed. Samuel Sandmel et al. (New York: Oxford UP, 1976) and *The New Oxford Annotated Bible*, ed. Bruce M. Metzger et al. (New York: Oxford UP, 1991). See also *The Jerome Bible Commentary* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1968) 508 item 11. The "My dove" of Song 6:9 is the bride.

³I agree with Marjorie Garber, "Two Birds with One Stone: Lapidary Re-Inscription in *The Phoenix and the Turtle*," *The Upstart Crow* 5 (Fall 1984): 5-19, that there is "evidence for a speaking persona of Reason as distinct from the authorial voice" (15) and that "Reason, the pseudo-elegist of phoenix and turtle reduces the immortal phoenix to a 'dead bird,' setting the stage for the reader's own 'prayer,' which [recognizes] the immortal quality of both the birds and the poem which enshrines them" (16). This view is opposed to that of William H. Matchett, *The Phoenix and the Turtle: Shakespeare's Poem and Chester's Loues Martyr* (London and The Hague: Mouton, 1965), whose new critical reading, followed by careful study of the historical and literary context, finds "Reason triumphant [in] introducing an ultimately negative rational evaluation" (202-03). As Peter Bilton observes, "Graves on Lovers, and Shakespeare at a Lovers' Funeral," *ShS* 36 (1983): 39-42, "Matchett interprets [P&T] as ultimately a defence of reason rather than an exaltation of the transcendent" (41).

⁴In *Antony and Cleopatra* 5.2.171-73, Cleopatra rails at Seleucus, her treasurer, for contradicting her word before Caesar that she has truthfully declared all her wealth:

Prithee, go hence,

Or I shall show the cinders of my spirits

Through the ashes of my chance.

The outcry shows clearly that ashes and cinders may together suggest at once despair in dissolution and rekindled hope for life.

⁵Robert F. Fleissner, "Shakespeare's Epitaph and the Threnos," *N&Q* ns 35 (1988): 53-54, argues that Shakespeare's surname at the end of the threnos, printed "Shakespeare," forms a "metathetic variation" of the last three words, "sigh a prayer," when pronounced "Sha[gi] [S]pea[y]re" (54). The rhymes of the final stanza, then, would be *repaire/faire/prayer/speare*. He points out that Shakespeare's epitaph has similar slant rhyme: *forbeare/heare/spare*. These perhaps coincidental similarities make intriguing Garber's suggestion that the threnos of P&T is intended as an inscription for a burial urn ("Two Birds with One Stone," n3 above).

⁶On "mine" as a variant spelling of "mien" (*OED*), see John Constable, "The Phoenix and the Turtle: 'Either Was the Other's Mine'—A New Reading," *N&Q* 36 (1989): 327. Constable cites *OED* references to, among others, J. Eliot (1593) and Sir John Suckling (1641) using "mine" to mean "air or bearing" and "appearance (of anything)." The usage is a "particularly apt forerunner of the 'Single nature's

double name" (327). "Mine" as a possessive with the sense applying equally to both lovers occurs in Song 2:16 and 6:3.

⁷Quotation taken from the King James Version, *The Holy Bible, Containing the Old and New Testaments, etc.*: A Reference Edition with Concordance (New York: American Bible Society, 1967). The bracketed phrase in 8:6, "of Yahweh himself," appears in *The Old Testament of the Jerusalem Bible* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1966); in *The Holy Scriptures According to the Masoretic Text: A New Translation* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1952) Song of Songs 8:6b reads "For love is strong as death, / Jealousy is cruel as the grave; / The flashes thereof are flashes of fire, / A very flame of the LORD." Marcia Falk, *The Song of Songs: A New Translation and Interpretation* (San Francisco: Harper, 1990), in order to reflect the suffix *-yah*, yet not include the name of God, translates "flame of the LORD" as "holy blaze" (193).

⁸Quotations from Shakespeare's works other than *P&T* correspond to the texts in David Bevington, ed., *The Complete Works of Shakespeare*, 3rd ed. (Glenview, IL: Scott, Foresman & Co., 1980).

⁹"Phoenix" as a metaphor for rare excellence in a person, usually based on achievement, occurs several times in Shakespeare's works. See, e.g., *As You Like It* 4.3.18; *All's Well That Ends Well* 1.1.132, 168; *Antony and Cleopatra* 3.2.12; *Cymbeline* 1.5.17.

¹⁰See, e.g., Matchett, cited in note 3 above; also Anthea Hume, "Love's Martyr, 'The Phoenix and the Turtle,' and the Aftermath of the Essex Rebellion," *RES* ns 40 (1989): 48-71. In Hume's reading the phoenix is Elizabeth I and the turtledove represents the Queen's loyal subjects: "Shakespeare [in *P&T*] wrote exclusively on the subject of the relationship between the Queen and the people, so exclusively, indeed, that he seemed to have no interest in the theme of succession by the New Phoenix [as celebrated in the volume by Chester and the other poets]" (66). Shakespeare's prophecy, put in Cranmer's mouth in *Henry VIII*, of the "new phoenix," James I, is quoted above in the text. Roy T. Eriksen, "Un certo amoroso martire: Shakespeare's 'The Phoenix and the Turtle' and Giordano Bruno's *De gli eroici furori*," *Spenser Studies* 2 (1981): 193-215, argues at length, and persuasively, that "the relationship between Shakespeare's birds in 'The Phoenix and the Turtle' resembles that of the phoenix and the *furioso* in the *Eroici furori*" (194) and that the interrelationship of form and meaning in Shakespeare's poem "depends on Bruno's allegory of divine love to a very high degree" (210). His further contention that the image of the turtledove of Shakespeare's poem, consumed in the "mutuall flame" of his and the phoenix' love and death, represents a "passionate reaction to . . . the death of [Bruno] at the stake in Rome" in 1600 (210), however, is not convincing. Gwyn Williams, "Shakespeare's Phoenix," *National Library of Wales Journal* 22.3 (Summer 1982): 277-81, identifies the turtledove as Sir John Salusbury and his phoenix as Dorothy Halsall, his sister-in-law, on the basis of acrostic poems in *MS Christ Church 184*.

¹¹See the discussion by Patricia Parker, "Anagogic Metaphor: Breaking Down the Wall of Partition," *Centre and Labyrinth: Essays in Honour of Northrop Frye*, ed. Eleanor Cook et al. (Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1983) 38-58. Parker relates the "mysterious joining" of *P&T* to Ephesians and to two Shakespearean comedies.

"Mind the Gap": a Comment on Lothar Černý*

BREAN S. HAMMOND

In his article, Lothar Černý takes issue with Wolfgang Iser's reading of Fielding, which, as Černý rightly argues, is not merely illustrative but actually constitutive of the hermeneutic approach known as "reader-reception-theory," at least in its early phase. In the palimpsestic way of contemporary criticism, I wish to engage with Černý's reading of Iser's reading of Fielding, but in order to make absolutely clear the grounds for discussion with Černý, I must begin with Iser himself.

In chapter three of *The Implied Reader* (1974), Iser gives a succinct account of his entire project:

Although a novel addresses itself to a reader, literary criticism has been mainly concerned with the author's point of view, paying little attention to how the reader might be affected. If one changed this predominant perspective a text would have to be studied according to the influence it exercises over the reader. Such an approach would concern itself less with the actual subjects portrayed than with the means of communication by which the reader is brought into contact with the reality represented by the author.¹

At the time of writing, Iser was surely justified in arguing that the *reader* was the neglected factor in the author-text-reader line of transmission. In subsequent elaborations of such a methodology as is being proposed here, Iser goes on to argue that *reading any text whatsoever* involves the reader in "concretizing" meanings that the text does not specify; filling in gaps, responding to cues, interpreting indeterminacies, recapitulating and anticipating—engaging, in short, in acts of reading.² In chapter two of *The Implied Reader*, Iser demonstrates some of these reading skills in

*Reference: Lothar Černý, "Reader Participation and Rationalism in Fielding's *Tom Jones*," *Connotations* 2.2 (1992): 137-62.

action on *Joseph Andrews* and *Tom Jones*, but here, he seems to believe that it is *not* any and every text that offers itself up to such acts of reading. On the contrary, he distinguishes between Richardson's writing and Fielding's precisely on the grounds that the latter offers the opportunity for active reader-participation whereas the former does not:

Historically speaking, perhaps one of the most important differences between Richardson and Fielding lies in the fact that with *Pamela* the meaning is clearly formulated; in *Joseph Andrews* the meaning is clearly waiting to be formulated. (46)

For Iser, therefore, it becomes part of Fielding's *conscious intention* to write novels containing gaps to be filled and silences to be made audible by the reader—and part of Richardson's conscious intention *not* to do so.

Iser's reading of the episode in *Joseph Andrews* I.viii, in which Joseph resists the sexual advances of Lady Booby, will serve as a concrete example of the reader-centred approach that this book is piloting (I apologise for the necessity to quote at some length).

Lady Booby leads on her footman, whom she has got to sit on her bed, with all kinds of enticements, until the innocent Joseph finally recoils, calling loudly upon his virtue. Instead of describing the horror of his Potiphar, Fielding, at the height of this crisis, continues:

You have heard, reader, poets talk of the statue of Surprise; you have heard likewise, or else you have heard very little, how Surprise made one of the sons of Croesus speak, though he was dumb. You have seen the faces, in the eighteen-penny gallery, when, through the trap-door, to soft or no music, Mr. Bridgewater, Mr. William Mills, or some other of ghostly appearance, hath ascended, with a face all pale with powder, and a shirt all bloody with ribbons;—but from none of these, nor from Phidias or Praxiteles, if they should return to life—no, not from the inimitable pencil of my friend Hogarth, could you receive such an idea of surprise as would have entered in at your eyes had they beheld the Lady Booby when those last words issued out from the lips of Joseph. "Your virtue!" said the lady, recovering after a silence of two minutes; "I shall never survive it!"

As the narrative does not offer a description of Lady Booby's reaction, the reader is left to provide the description, using the directions offered him. Thus the reader must, so to speak, enter Lady Booby's bedroom and visualize her surprise for himself. (37-38)

Iser goes on to discuss how the passage differentiates between groups of readers on social grounds, and how its refusal to describe Lady Booby's surprise leaves a gap in which the reader's imagination plays freely, creating an animated impression of the scene. This, I submit, is an almost touchingly naive reading of the entire episode. Leaving aside Iser's error in likening Lady Booby to Potiphar (she is, of course, Potiphar's *wife*), it is bordering on the absurd to argue that Fielding has left, here, any kind of gap at all and actually absurd to argue that the reader's imagination necessarily fills it with a pop-up cartoon version of the scene. Is it not very clear that Fielding's triumph is a rhetorical one, and that the reader need not stray beyond the pale of words to get the full effect? The passage first offers the reader one of the general knowledge tests that Augustans seemed so much to enjoy. The "statue of Surprise" mentioned by the poets, the Wesleyan editor Martin Battestin suggests, might allude to Ovid or to Shakespeare's *Richard III* or to Theobald's *The Persian Princess* or perhaps to a play by Edward Young: although it is tempting to conjecture that Fielding had seen prior to publication the celebrated passage in the 1744 text of James Thomson's *Summer*, where the poet refers to Musidora having received the intelligence that Damon has been spying on her bathing in terms that compare her to the Venus de Medici:

With wild surprise,
As if to marble struck, devoid of sense,
A stupid moment motionless she stood:
So stands the statue that enchants the world;
(1344-47)³

The reference to Croesus' son that follows is a story told by Herodotus. There is then an abrupt shift of register to the crowd-pleasing tricks of the contemporary stage, and the reader who has been able to pick up the previous allusions can be confidently addressed as one who can see the pallor created from powder and the blood from ribbons for the shams they are. More "ancients versus moderns" games are played in the climax that works *up* from Phidias and Praxiteles, the great masters of Greek sculpture, to the contemporary popular artist Hogarth. However much Fielding admired Hogarth, he knew that in the structuring of *this*

crescendo, he was likely to outrage some readers. The ironic effect of this passage is contained in its structure. It surely does depend on certain operations being performed by the reader, but not at all on the operations posited by Iser.

Having followed Iser's reading of this passage with mounting scepticism, one is not altogether confident about the general theory of reading it is supposed to illustrate. Fielding is offered to us as a writer who gives the reader considerable freedom to participate. It soon turns out that the participation being offered is rather like the kind of "audience participation" theatre I recollect being popular in the 1960s. This was participation entirely on the theatre company's terms. The glorious freedom to participate spontaneously in a theatrical happening turns out to be the freedom to be a pawn in a game already planned by the actors. Such freedom resembled coercion far more than did paying your money and sitting down quietly to watch a pre-rehearsed show! Thus, according to Iser, although Fielding does not at every point tell us what conclusions to draw from the narrative events he represents ("the gaps . . . are those very points at which the reader can enter into the text, forming his own connections and conceptions and so creating the configurative meaning of what he is reading" [40]), he "pre-structures" the text, disposes the cues, rigs the case, in such a way that he will "elicit the correct response" from the reader:

If this intention [that of making the reader conscious of his own conduct, customs and prejudices] is to be realized, the process of change cannot be left entirely to the subjective discretion of the reader—he must, rather, be gently guided by the indications in the text, though he must never have the feeling that the author wants to lead him by the nose. If he responds as the author wants him to, then he will play the part assigned to him, and in order to elicit the correct response, the author has certain stratagems at his disposal. (36-37)

Surely this account of the way Fielding (ab)uses reader freedom entirely justifies the critique of the edifice of reader-reception theory that Terry Eagleton has made in his *Literary Theory: An Introduction*, where he argues that in this model, the only freedom the reader has is to play the part of exactly the kind of liberal reader that the text itself always posits and requires.⁴ A genuinely radical reader of Fielding would be about as

welcome as the man I once saw at an audience-participation show in London who, when ordered to stop one of the actors from reaching the back of the auditorium, knocked the hapless thespian unconscious with a single punch.

At which point, enter Professor Černý. Lothar Černý argues, I think convincingly, that Fielding is every bit as coercive with respect to the true meaning of his text as is Richardson. If he does sometimes *appear* to leave gaps and vacant spaces in which the readers may step in, he very often ironises in advance the efforts that they are likely to produce. Černý is absolutely right, I think, to stress that Iser often underestimates Fielding's ironising of the reader whom he is simultaneously creating. There is much in the early part of Professor Černý's article that I want to cheer to the echo:

In Iser's description of the reading process the terms "gap," "vacant spaces," and "missing links" are not ironical as they are in Fielding's (or in Sterne's) dialogue with the reader and their literal meaning is taken to be stronger than their function as metaphors. For Iser they seem to signal a deficiency. The reader is supposed to fill in what the author left out—on purpose and by necessity (the text cannot spell out its own meaning). But an author like Fielding does not leave out anything essential. The metaphors of space, if not used ironically, are rather unsuitable in a theory of reading as they suggest the author left out parts, almost in the way of a puzzle. (140)

With all of the above, one might readily concur—though one might point out that Sterne actually *does* use gaps in the material way that Iser seems to construe the term, and that this becomes a recognisable technique in the discourses of sentiment. But what license is there for Černý's next move, through which he argues that Fielding's overriding purpose in *Tom Jones* is to "expose the rationalist school of thought" (143)? Černý argues that when Fielding attributes "sagacity" to his readers, he is usually being ironic; whereas Iser takes this predicated "sagacity" to be a mark of genuine respect—more evidence that the reader is expected to be actively involved in the constitution of meaning. To Černý, Fielding's harping upon "sagacity" is actually a parodic allusion to John Locke, in whose *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, sagacity is defined as a paradigm of deductive reasoning—a tool of rationalism.⁵ Extrapolating from that, Černý presents Locke throughout his article

as an apologist for rationalist dogma. I find it surprising that John Locke should be presented as a textbook rationalist. There *are* rationalist elements to Locke's epistemology, particularly strongly present in the fourth book of the *Essay*, but in most standard accounts of the history of philosophy, Locke is regarded as a transitional figure between rationalism and empiricism in virtue of his denial of innate ideas and his attempt to secure the foundations of knowledge on ideas derived from sense perception. Černý simply does not do enough to establish that Locke played the part of rationalist bogeyman for Fielding.

This area of contention is more a matter of nuance, however, than of real substance. I think Černý is broadly correct to argue that there is an anti-rationalist bias in Fielding's work. The stress he lays on Fielding's advocacy of feeling, of empathy, of good-nature, of active Christian charity, of the heart rather than the head, of emotional response rather than rational instruction, of action rather than profession, is difficult to gainsay. Much of this is more or less explicitly stated in the *Essay on the Knowledge of the Characters of Men* published in Fielding's 1743 *Miscellanies*. This does not strike me as an especially unfamiliar or contentious perspective on Fielding. What is contentious is the argument that Fielding arrives at this set of positions primarily through a critique of philosophical rationalism. He might equally have arrived at this set of positions primarily through the Latitudinarian attempt to forge a religion that was free of doctrinaire and theological adherence to particular creeds and forms: a genuinely broad church acceptable to very many practising Christians precisely because it emphasised Christian practice. But one might well ask why it is necessary to derive Fielding's anti-rationalism from *any* single source, and indeed why his anti-rationalism should be advanced as a key that unlocks the overriding intention of a work as complex and multi-faceted as *Tom Jones*? It seems to me that Černý's reading is not, finally, very different from Iser's. Whereas Iser thinks that Fielding has contrived it such that the reader will actively collaborate in the construction of the proper way to be human, Černý thinks that "the author always guides the reader in a process of communication which achieves a fusion of irony and satire with empathy and charity" (157). Černý's Fielding is more directive, to be sure, or at least more up-front about being directive, but otherwise,

where is the vast difference? For Iser, the "aim of the novel" is "to induce the reader to make balanced judgements" (55); for Černý, it is to promote the "unity of reason and feeling in wisdom" (157). Both are intentionalist accounts, both are liberal humanist accounts, both are thematisations: from the point of view of the radical reader, the difference is between a flea and a louse. Neither is a very powerful transformation of the knowledge already contained, on some level, within the text itself. Neither is, to use Fredric Jameson's term, a true "metacommentary."⁶

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NOTES

¹Wolfgang Iser, *The Implied Reader: Patterns of Communication in Prose Fiction from Bunyan to Beckett* (1972; Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1974) 57.

²This view is elaborated in *The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978).

³Henry Fielding, *Joseph Andrews*, ed. Martin C. Battestin (Oxford: Clarendon P, 1967) 40; James Thomson, *The Seasons, Poetical Works*, ed. J. Logie Robertson (1908; rpt. London: OUP, 1965) 103. Even in the 1730 version of the text, Musidora is directly compared to Venus de Medici (*Summer, The Seasons* [rpt. Menston: The Scholar P, 1970] 1018-20 [p. 111-12]):

*So stands the statue that enchants the world,
Her full proportions such, and bashful so
Bends ineffectual from the roving eye.

*The VENUS of MEDICIS.

Whether or not Fielding had seen the more pointed passage in the 1744 text, he is likely to have Thomson in mind. They shared a publisher (Andrew Millar); and Thomson was famous for his statuesque passages in *The Seasons* as well as for the passage on the rise of classical sculpture in *Liberty* IV.134-214 (*Poetical Works* 361-63).

⁴For Eagleton's critique of Iser see *Literary Theory: An Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1983) 78-80.

⁵The word "sagacity" seems to me to be neutrally defined by Samuel Johnson in the *Dictionary* as "acuteness of discovery," with two contextual citations deriving from Locke's *Essay*. "Acuteness of discovery" might have the rational-deductive meaning given to it by Černý, but it might have a more humane usage—an acuteness of discovery with respect to human character and motive.

⁶The term is defined in Fredric Jameson, "Metacommentary" (1971), rpt. in Fredric Jameson, *Situations of Theory*, vol. 1 of his *The Ideologies of Theory: Essays 1971-1986* (Minneapolis: U of Minneapolis P, 1988) 3-16.

Fielding and the "Sagacious Reader": A Response to Lothar Černý*

NICHOLAS HUDSON

Few novels seem so well adapted to the strategies of reception theory as *Tom Jones*, which has elicited a rich and varied range of responses from that modern variety of the "sagacious Reader," the literary scholar. Lothar Černý's subtle and intelligent encounter with this novel is particularly valuable for its isolation of what has clearly become the central issue in reader-response criticism of *Tom Jones*. Does this novel address the reader's head or heart? Are we meant to learn how to exercise our faculty of discernment or "Sagacity," both as readers and as actors in the real world, or should we learn instead to listen to the dictates of the "good Heart"—to feel more and to think less? Placing these faculties in the balance, Černý finds the scale tipped in the direction of feeling, though he agrees that Fielding does emblemise the beauties of wisdom in the person of Sophia. In my scale, and despite Černý's interesting argument, the balance is still tipped towards judgment. I fully agree that Fielding set an extremely high value on the "good Heart" as a moral theorist. As a moral teacher, however—as a *rhetorician*—he realised the inefficacy of counting on the sentimental responses of a hard and cynical world.

The scholar who perhaps most embodies the "judgment" extreme in interpretations of Fielding is among the most insightful readers of eighteenth-century fiction, Wolfgang Iser. Černý's opening critique of Iser nonetheless reveals the naivety of trusting too implicitly, as Iser sometimes does, in Fielding's compliments to the reader's "Sagacity" or in his apparent anxiety that we exercise independent judgment. Iser

*Reference: Lothar Černý, "Reader Participation and Rationalism in Fielding's *Tom Jones*," *Connotations* 2.2 (1992): 137-62.

discounts the extent to which the reader—particularly the first-time reader—will inevitably *misjudge*. The reader becomes, indeed, a demonstration of the failure of the very “Sagacity” that the narrator seems to applaud so warmly. In book 1, chapter 5, for instance, Fielding makes one of his “appearances on Stage” to inform the reader of the “real” reasons for Bridget Blifil’s apparently unaccountable kindness towards the infant Tom. The narrator insists that we must not expect such assistance in most cases. “This is a Favour rarely to be expected in the Course of my Work,” for we must learn to think and judge for ourselves (47).¹ In this case only, therefore, the narrator favours us with the supposed revelation that Bridget wished merely to heighten Allworthy’s feeling of obligation to her. As the second-time reader will see, however, Fielding has completely misled the reader in this episode. Tom is really Bridget’s child. Even in urging the need to judge, in short, Fielding seems to be enjoying a private joke at the expense of his “sagacious” reader.

But do we conclude from this episode and others, as Eric Rothstein has, that our attempts to judge are therefore of “no importance,” and that we are even wrong to regard *Tom Jones* as having a serious and consistent moral purpose?² This view, at the opposite extreme from Iser’s, ignores the tremendous consistency with which Fielding focuses on failures of discernment as the primary source of danger in the world. Most of Fielding’s meritorious characters—Adams, Wilson, Heartfree, Allworthy, Tom, Booth, Amelia—suffer because they fail to understand the wickedness and cunning of those around them. This suffering is, admittedly, more serious in some cases than in others: Adams merely looks silly as the result of his misjudgments, whereas Wilson, Heartfree, Booth and Amelia endure the genuine hardships and cruelties of the real world. It should be noted that the characters who suffer most in Fielding’s novels are those who live in the *city*. Every time Fielding approaches the city, a tone of urgency enters his fiction, for here the normal consequences of misjudging are not merely a bump on the head, but financial ruin, moral depravity and the gallows.

In my view, therefore, it is quite wrong to conclude that Fielding became fully convinced of the need for strict morality and circumspection only in his last years, after he became a real-life judge deciding on

people's lives and deaths. By 1748, when he was elevated to the bench, Fielding had very little left to learn about the troubles of real life: he had been a Londoner since 1730, and a lawyer since 1740. The "serious" world of *Amelia* is clearly prefigured in *Jonathan Wild*, and in the interpolated stories of Mr. Wilson and the Man of the Hill. These stories are like windows, through which the reader glimpses a grimy and decidedly uncomic world that Fielding always *knows* is there, but which he has chosen, for artistic reasons, not to confront in all its chaos and ugliness. Even in the comic, idealised, pastoral worlds of *Joseph Andrews* and *Tom Jones*, however, Fielding did not merely jettison his concern with the problems of judgment. In *Tom Jones*, especially, Fielding constructed a mode of narrative that constantly reminds the reader of both the need and the great difficulty of judging correctly. We see the consequences of bad judgment in the novel, and we to some extent discover our own failures of judgment as readers.

Lothar Černý does see that *Tom Jones* has a serious moral purpose. He is not among that numerous class of modern readers that prefers to see this novel as a facile comic romp, full of lewd jokes and jolly inns. I differ from Černý, however, in believing that the word "Sagacity" (like the associated word "Prudence") is not *simply* meant in a negative sense in every place in the novel. Unlike run-of-the-mill ironists, Fielding does not merely reverse meanings, so that words signify the opposite of what he says: his ironies have double, even triple layers. Moreover, the reader has plenty of opportunity in *Tom Jones* to make morally sound and factually correct judgments of a rational kind. One example will have to suffice. In a climactic incident in book 5, chapter 10, Blifil spies Tom sinking into the grass with Molly Seagrim, but does not tell Thwackum: "As to the Name of *Jones* he thought proper to conceal it, and why he did so must be left to the Judgment of the sagacious Reader: For we never chuse to assign Motives to the Actions of Men, when there is any possibility of our being mistaken" (258). The irony of this passage is complicated. As Fielding has established his role as an omniscient narrator, it is of course absurd that he should suddenly pretend to have less than certain knowledge of a character's motives. It is also absurd, surely, to suggest that we should "never" judge the motives of others unless we are absolutely certain—for there is *always* some possibility

of being mistaken. Indeed, the first-time reader will inevitably misjudge Blifil's motives to some extent: the neophyte reader cannot know that Blifil has now discovered Tom's true parentage, and is determined to get rid of him. Nevertheless, even the first-time reader will have a pretty good idea that his motives are unsavoury. As my more sagacious students usually determine, Blifil aims to divert the suspicion that he wants to incriminate Tom. Partly for this reason, he lets Thwackum make the fatal discovery of Tom and Molly.

Here is one of many places, therefore, where Fielding does count on the reader's judgment—even if, quite admittedly, the epithet "sagacious Reader" never *entirely* loses its teasing intonation. Fielding's irony, it should be noted, always counts on our capacity to look past what is said to some unstated meaning. In one major respect, I agree with Lothar Černý's critique of Iser. Our insights rarely involve merely a "filling in the gap," in the sense of inserting our own undirected imaginings. We are able to reach partially accurate conclusions about Blifil's motives, even when Fielding does not explicitly state them, because we are carefully schooled from book 3, chapter 2 onwards concerning Blifil's consistently selfish and devious character. Although Fielding goes to some lengths to *disguise* his manipulation of our judgments, he ensures through innumerable subtle tactics that we reach the appropriate moral conclusions.

This observation leads finally to my disagreement with Černý concerning the role of "feeling" in *Tom Jones*. Like many previous commentators, Černý points to Fielding's famous discussion of "Love" in book 6, chapter 1, as evidence that he counted on the reader's sentimental responses to make sense of the novel. "Examine your Heart, my good Reader," the narrator commands, and goes on to declare that if we do not find the impulses of generosity and compassion in our breasts, we might as well stop reading (271). But does Fielding seriously expect that a large portion of his readership will actually put the novel down at this point? Of course not. If we have read through five complete books, it is likely that we *already* "agree" with Fielding, and will keep reading. And in doing so, we confirm that we, too, are "good hearted" readers, members of the author's elite club of benevolent souls who know that "love" means more than "lust." This passage in book 6, chapter

1, is not merely a *déclaration de foi*—it is a bold rhetorical manoeuvre to confirm the reader in the opinions that Fielding wants us to hold.

I am not claiming that Fielding questioned the existence or the importance of the "good Heart." But he understood the world too well (even at the time that he wrote *Tom Jones*) to believe that the majority of his readers would melt with sympathy and love merely by being shown morally attractive characters in sentimental situations. Fielding was a much less sentimental novelist than Richardson, who was more inclined to depend on the sheer force of moral feeling and virtuous example. On the evidence of Fielding's fictional worlds, he believed that the majority of people are certainly capable of sympathy, but generally consult self-interest first, and are strongly influenced by class prejudices and sexual appetite. I have argued elsewhere that Fielding's benevolent characters, such as Allworthy and Tom, usually get nowhere when they try to appeal to the spontaneous goodness of their auditors.³ In one episode, in book 17, chapter 3, Allworthy even asks Blifil to "Examine your Heart . . . thoroughly, my good Boy" (887), dramatising the naivety of those who assume that their own warm sentiments will always be duplicated in the breasts of others. Fielding, who was far from such naivety, realised that people like Blifil were dangerous precisely because, unlike many good people, they were efficient at controlling the opinions and emotions of others. This ability stemmed not from shared sentiments, but from their covert utilization of self-interest and all the strategies of rhetorical manipulation.

Fielding's own recourse to these strategies reveals, of course, a major paradox in his moral outlook. In setting out to convince his readership of the existence of real, disinterested virtue, Fielding deployed persuasive arts comparable to those of his villains. He appeals more often to our vanity than to our benevolence and, while giving us the impression that we are feeling and judging on our own, is usually manipulating our reactions. *Tom Jones* is, in this way, a highly "rational," "prudent" and "sagacious" book: it is the novel crafted for a cynical world by a deeply committed idealist. It is the work of a man who still believed that the capacity for love existed in the hearts of most people, and who thought that laughter can be a route to moral knowledge. But Fielding was also

convinced that, in a fallen world, even saints must learn the wisdom of the snake.

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NOTES

¹All quotations refer to the Wesleyan edition of Henry Fielding's *The History of Tom Jones, A Foundling*, ed. Fredson Bowers, introd. and commentary Martin C. Battestin, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon P, 1974).

²Cf. Eric Rothstein, "Virtues of Authority in *Tom Jones*," *The Eighteenth Century: Theory and Interpretation* 28 (1987): 112.

³Cf. my "Fielding's Hierarchy of Dialogue: 'Meta-Response' and the Reader of *Tom Jones*," *PQ* 68 (1990): 177-94.

Fielding, Reception Theory and Rationalism: A Reply to Brean Hammond and Nicholas Hudson*

LOTHAR ČERNÝ

Brean Hammond and Nicholas Hudson have provided most interesting comments on my "Reader Participation and Rationalism in Fielding's *Tom Jones*," and I am happy to join them in critical debate. Their arguments, whether concerning Iser or Fielding and whether in accordance or at variance with my own, provide a welcome opportunity to review the situation, which I will now do beginning with the points of agreement in Hammond's response.

The first concerns the opposition of Fielding and Richardson in Iser. Surely Fielding, far from giving the reins to the reader, keeps directing him fully as much as Richardson does, in spite of (or rather by way of) those mysterious "gaps." The theoretical fallacy of such empty spaces left for active, artistic reader participation, as well as Iser's failure to meet Fielding's irony is discussed by Hammond not in theoretical terms but by way of a fine interpretation of the "statue of surprise"-passage in *Joseph Andrews*. Making Fielding's text speak for itself, Hammond shows how Fielding achieves the characteristic structural irony of his style and how far the intended effect does, indeed, depend upon the reader. The argument is rounded off by taking Iser, too, at his word in order to demonstrate that the freedom claimed for the participating reader is only freedom with a vengeance, not unlike the "audience-participation" in the theatre of the 1960s, which also proved fallacious if taken over-confidently.

*Reference: Lothar Černý, "Reader Participation and Rationalism in Fielding's *Tom Jones*," *Connotations* 2.2 (1992): 137-162; Brean Hammond, "'Mind the Gap': A Comment on Lothar Černý," *Connotations* 3.1 (1993): 72-78; Nicholas Hudson, "Fielding and the 'Sagacious Reader': A Response to Lothar Černý," *Connotations* 3.1 (1993): 79-84.

At this point enter Terry Eagleton and disagreement. To my mind the crude dichotomies of social realism (and related aesthetic ideologies) are even less reliable than the "gaps" of reader-response theory when it comes to meeting an author about to say "Call me Ishmael." Having gone so far in the way of making confessions, I may as well add that I also find I cannot agree with Brean Hammond's theoretical position defined at the end of his reply. I believe, indeed, that the knowledge which is the end of reading is "already contained, on some level, within the text itself." It is precisely because the ideas are in the text that we can engage in the process of understanding, bridging the gap between a text of the past and the presence of reading.

I feel particularly grateful to Brean Hammond for his challenge to consider once more the question of rationalism in Locke as a hermeneutic principle which helps elucidate Fielding's "Sagacity." Hammond asks whether Locke, whom he rightly sees as a representative of the school of British empiricism, can be regarded as the goal of Fielding's opposition to rationalism. Of course, strictly speaking Locke cannot be identified with Cartesian rationalism. I would argue, however, that by Fielding's time, the difference between these schools had become fairly indistinguishable.

Locke recognized that apart from "sensation," "reflection" was an irreducible form of experience; but though he grounds knowledge in sense perception Locke is far from being a radical empiricist. The sharp distinction between rationalism and empiricism does not do justice to Locke's psychology of knowledge. For Descartes all empirical reality was included in the notions of the mind; Locke, however, by looking at the creation of ideas, wants to explain the working of the mind. He is not so much interested in the metaphysics as in the psychology of knowledge. The importance he attributes to intuitive knowledge, e.g. in *Essay* Bk. IV, would be hard to explain otherwise. In "Of Reason" he moves beyond pure empiricism in order to establish certainty of knowledge without presupposing innate ideas. It is also obvious that Locke tries to ascertain the validity of rational knowledge in spite of the fact that ideas have a root in experience.

As Brean Hammond sees my argument contrary to most accounts in the history of philosophy I would ask permission to quote from Ernst

Cassirer, *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment*, well knowing that this means carrying "owls to Athens." Cassirer states that "Even Locke's empiricism reveals a deliberately 'critical' tendency."¹ This applies, in my view, not only to Locke's empiricism but to eighteenth century empiricism in general, which survived, more or less, as a mere guise of rationalism. In view of the status the *Essay* enjoyed, Fielding could have a point, therefore, against Locke as a representative of the rationalist thinking he objected to. When Fielding makes Mr. Square argue from first principles this does not sound very different from Locke starting with simple ideas. And considering the semantic context of Fielding's *leitmotif*, "Sagacity," which in *Joseph Andrews* includes "doubt" (I.xi.40), "Understanding" (I.x.37), and the frequent use of "judicious," "curious" etc. the link between Fielding and Locke does not appear arbitrary.²

The interesting point raised by Brean Hammond is indeed: What kind of reader of Locke was Fielding? Equally interesting might be the question what kind of reader Fielding was in the first place and how *he* regarded the process of reading, a question I will be dealing with in a forthcoming article.

* * *

While Brean Hammond questions rationalism as the object of Fielding's attack, Nicholas Hudson's criticism is concerned with the conflict of 'reason vs. feeling.' This gives me a welcome opportunity to go into that subject once more, stressing the fact that I did not want to replace "reason" by "sentiment." In other words, I do not think that the question is "head or heart" or the alternative "to feel more and to think less." What, actually, I wanted to show is that Fielding objects to an unqualified belief in reason. Sagacity which has no ironical connotations in Locke's *Essay* is now seen in the light of comic epic, i.e. of affectation arising from vanity or hypocrisy.

It does not seem contradictory to me that this persiflage of sagacity is presented, in Fielding's novels, in essentially "sagacious" or reasonable terms (Hudson rightly points to the highly rhetorical character of Fielding's style). The underlying pattern very much resembles the old humanist ideal of *nosce te ipsum*, reason holding the mirror up to

"reason," showing "virtue her own feature, scorn her own image," and all this without overdoing it, within the bounds of comic epic.

The passage from *Hamlet* just quoted might perhaps help to clear up a difference of opinion concerning "the great difficulty of judging correctly." I wonder if Hudson really sees judgment in Fielding in a merely rational light. To me it seems not so important whether from our contemporary perspective characters like Adams, Allworthy or Heartfree can be seen to lack proper judgment; the salient point is that Fielding (alias the narrator) never makes us feel superior to Squire Allworthy even though his judgment is shown to be anything but flawless. The only judgment really called in question in the novel is that of the reader. He is made to be wary of his own judgment, if the use of the word "Sagacity" is anything to go by.

To sum up: Iser interprets Fielding in the literal manner, and overdoes it: the reader really is supposed to be sagacious. To Hudson, Fielding reminds the reader "of both the need and the great difficulty of judging correctly." It seems to me, however, that we are not invited to judge whether Fielding is for or against rational judgment but to see how he tries to make his aim of moral teaching efficacious. This actually was Iser's criterion in comparing Fielding and Richardson but, unfortunately, without appreciating the irony which allows Fielding to evade Richardson's didacticism. Fielding adheres to this strategy even when advocating the innate wisdom of the heart. The sentence Hudson quotes, "Examine your Heart . . . thoroughly, my good Boy" (887) gently pokes fun at Mr. Allworthy's preaching habit, but does not discredit the role the heart has to play in judgment. For Fielding, who is indeed an accomplished rhetorician, teaching goodness of heart is inefficient, but not the having it. Therefore he can be ironic even about his most treasured value.

Fielding, like Richardson, wanted to teach. But while Richardson drifted towards tragedy, Fielding used the (gently) distorting mirror of comic epic. Comedy being all-inclusive in its method, necessarily includes the reader. What Fielding wants him to see in the *speculum consuetudinis* is an *imago veritatis*. Therefore, rather than condemning reason Fielding makes use of it—and encourages the reader to do so—in the interests

of the more comprehensive virtues summed up in the master-word 'heart'.

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NOTES

¹Ernst Cassirer, *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1951) 93; see also 99.

²The ironical use of "Sagacity" from *Joseph Andrews* to *Tom Jones* seems to me a rather strong indication that Dr. Johnson's "neutral" definition (to which Brean Hammond refers) hardly does justice to Fielding's irony.

Palm Reading (A Response to Eleanor Cook)*

TIMOTHY BAHTI

Paronomasia "as a general synonym for punning and word-play" (36), and etymology as one of its resources are the topics of Eleanor Cook's searching and widely learned article. As words are drawn through their usages, borrowings, splices and grafts, so are their etymologies drawn through the words. What Ms. Cook says of Elizabeth Bishop's work—"words tremble with the energy of their own histories, and the potential for paronomasia is always there" (46)—may be said more broadly of poetry, and of literature *tout court*. What she says of Wallace Stevens' practice—

His play with neologisms . . . makes us listen for the paronomastic force of any unknown words as a way of defining them. . . . Such paronomastic testing of the unknown, together with the paronomastic history of the known, works to make us aware of the possible paronomasia in all our words—for all that, in our syllables, letters, and punctuation marks as well. (45)

—extends its force to language altogether.

With letters and punctuation marks, we are rapidly at the limits of what we hear and see of language. (Do we ever hear a letter, or rather only phonemes and morphemes? If we believe we hear a question mark intoned, how do we hear an ellipsis?) How clearly can we see paronomasia, or can it only be read? After quoting the sixth stanza of Stevens' early "Six Significant Landscapes," including the lines

If they tried rhomboids,
Cones, waving lines, ellipses—

*Reference: Eleanor Cook, "From Etymology to Paronomasia: Wallace Stevens, Elizabeth Bishop, and Others," *Connotations* 2.1 (1992): 34-51.

As, for example, the ellipse of the half-moon—
Rationalists would bear sombreros.

Ms. Cook remarks: "If you look at Stevens' stanza [10 lines in full], you will see that he has curved the unjustified margin so that it is itself a half-moon ellipse or, it may be, a sombrero" (39-40). This is visual paronomasia, but we may not only see the unjustified margin as the half-moon ellipse (as the plane indicated by a rhomboid, cutting through a cone, yields precisely, geometrically, an ellipse), we may also read the semi-ellipsis of the word *eclipse* in "the ellipse of the half-moon," which in this case would indicate half of a lunar eclipse, or simply the half of the moon eclipsed in and by "the ellipse of the half-moon." The letter "c"—this comedian's favorite—is not seen nor heard except as read in its ellipsis. The sombrero that shades a head from the sun is the visual disguise obscuring and occulting the trope—the ellipsis—of *eclipse* written paronomastically within a reading of *ellipse*.

Like the moon, paronomasia is liminal, a threshold of mutabilities. There is more—"something evermore about to be"—to be read than meets the eye and its light of sense. Indeed, paronomasia may scarcely, sometimes never, meet the eye. Upon the lines from Bishop's poem, "Brazil, January 1, 1502,"

the big symbolic birds keep quiet,
each showing only half his puffed and padded,
pure-colored or spotted breast.
Still in the foreground there is Sin . . .

Ms. Cook impeccably comments that this "language of ornithological fieldguides" gives another sense as well: "it is, or should be, impossible to miss that history of 'immaculate' and 'maculate,' which enables us to read the symbolism of the big symbolic birds" (41). It is her litotes ("impossible to miss") which enables her exacting reading of the paronomasia that is everywhere to be missed. Segueing to Stevens' "The Man with the Blue Guitar," she links etymology (*immaculate* as "unspotted") with paronomasia (a moon called "immaculate" can be "imbecile," lunatic, moony and loony) such that "word-play here enters an entire field of association" (42). But the enabling entry into the field

of metonymic association is the trope of denegation, the litotes that denies the denial—impossible to miss—of paronomastic troping. What if one can only read what others can scarcely see, “debili sì, che perla in bianca fronte / non vien men tosto alle nostre pupille” (*Paradiso* III.14-15)?

Stevens, it seems to me, is readable at just this limit of visibility, including the visibility of his letters. His sublimity is often readable in, or rather through, what he does not write. In his “The Snow Man,” for example, its first line requires “a mind of winter” that is then *not* to indulge in Shelleyan pathos: “not to think / Of any misery in the sound of the wind.” The sound of the wind, the poem concludes, blows

For the listener, who listens in the snow,
And, nothing himself, beholds
Nothing that is not there and the nothing that is.

Although I have argued elsewhere that the last line’s *the* (pursued in the last line of “The Man on the Dump”) is the point of this poem,¹ my point here is to observe that the negations of double negations are, after all, still readable as written: we read what we are *not* to think or see. The real threshold of the poem emerges as the last line refers to the first words that are the poem’s title. It is a small paronomasia to have “The Snow Man”—this “mind of winter,” “nothing himself”—be “This No Man.” But is it any smaller or larger a paronomastic troping to have “The Snow Man” be “This Know Man”? Unlike the elliptical *c* of the eclipse in the ellipse, which can be heard in its invisibility, the silent *k* of “this know man” is unheard, sweeter, and thus more veiled, obscure in its viewlessness: as if “Darkling I listen . . .” were echoed darkly, muffled, in this unseeing but knowing listening to the snow.

The threshold of readability upon that of the unseen and unheard is Stevens’ paronomastic power of silent and invisible speech. Ms. Cook notes that “The paradox of *fans atque infans* is listed in Lewis and Short, a dictionary in which Stevens said he delighted” (42). She adds that “he adapted the double pun in the paronomasia of a fan and an infans in the poem ‘Infanta Marina’.” In this poem, of the same year as “The Snow Man,” the first and second stanzas are:

Her terrace was the sand
And the palms and the twilight.

She made of the motions of her wrist
The grandiose gestures
Of her thought.

Triply liminal—terrace, sand, twilight—"this creature of the evening" signals the language-as-gesture of her fanning. The poem concludes:

And thus she roamed
In the roamings of her fan,

Partaking of the sea,
And of the evening,
As they flowed around
And uttered their subsiding sound.

If the uncertain etymology of "roam" permits its association with "room," this poem stanzas (Ms. Cook also notes what she calls "the standard pun on *stanza*, meaning 'room,'" [38] which goes back at least to Petrarch) its fantastic speech across its thresholds—into the sea and the evening—or, in the two-way motion of its fanning, draws sea and evening across the threshold of utterance even as their audibility descends.

The reading of a palm's fans as the writing of silent speech may unfold over thirty-four years to Stevens' "Of Mere Being." In this poem beyond last limits,

The palm at the end of the mind,
Beyond the last thought, rises
In the bronze decor,

A gold-feathered bird
Sings in the palm, without human meaning,
Without human feeling, a foreign song.

I say nothing of the Yeatsian bird. Rather, the palm's rising responds to the "Infanta Marina"'s subsiding sound uttered by the sea and evening as the fan partook of them. This rising of the poem's palm in turn subsides at its decline; the last stanza reads:

The palm stands on the edge of space.
 The wind moves slowly in the branches.
 The bird's fire-fangled feathers dangle down.

The feathers—recalling “the plumes” of the “Infanta Marina”’s third stanza (not quoted above)—dangle, which word itself recalls “fangled.” Perhaps foppish or foolish, also fastened or fixed, “fangled” says as well “fan”: it speaks the speech of the fan, its feathers, its palm, its poem.

If, in Eleanor Cook’s implicit argument, “the possible paronomasia in all our words” informs our poetic tradition, then paronomasia is to poetry, with its regulated reinvention of its own rules, as—following Lévi-Strauss—bricolage is to culture: each makes and remakes, from the smallest pieces lying around (syllables, letters, punctuation marks), the stuff and senses of the larger fabric, as poetry and culture in turn make and remake *their* stuffs, which are language and human being. That such tropaic poiesis involves what she calls “paronomastic undoing” (recalling Stevens’ “decreation”) is only another sign that deconstruction was never such a bad tool for reading poetry after all. A palm says a poem, a fan says speech. Each faintly, feignedly, fingering the palm, fabricating the fictions of our tongue.

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NOTE

¹“End and Ending: On the Lyric Technique of Some Wallace Stevens Poems,” *MLN* 105 (1990): 1046-62; here 1053.

A Note on Eleanor Cook, "From Etymology to Paronomasia"*

JOHN HOLLANDER

Professor Cook's brilliant paper prompts so much in the way of delighted response that I could go on almost endlessly. But I will only make a few observations here, hoping that there will be another occasion to do proper homage to the power and elegance of the way she opens up the vast seriousness of her subject.

1) Underlying this discussion there may be a general matter of one of the governing tropes of poetry, namely that word-play is world-play: that by an intellectual sympathetic magic (a) submorphemic syllables become momentarily significant and then (b) what is done to and with words momentarily gets done to what the words designate and thereby to nature.

2) Word-play is an antidote to word-labor, the way in which we all need most of the time to use words as reliable utensils that will not bend ("strain, crack or sometimes break") or capriciously point somewhere else. But when we play with them, they come alive. They are most alive in true wit and, beyond that, in more-than-witty poetry. In bad punning the words come alive only as lower beasts; in imaginative, pointed and resonant punning, they almost become persons. The difference is the rhetorical context of presentation.

The irrelevant pun that impedes discourse is annoying and crazy—those of the wretched, unfunny obsessive, or those tabled with an inane flourish, like those at which in childhood we are trained appropriately to groan. Often these seduce, we know, even the rebuke (I remember the outrage of my children when, in response to a bad pun

*Reference: Eleanor Cook, "From Etymology to Paronomasia: Wallace Stevens, Elizabeth Bishop, and Others," *Connotations* 2.1 (1992): 34-51.

made at the symposium of the dinner-table, I said that it deserved punishment). The most anti-poetical way of framing a pun is to present the two homophones in one sentence in sequence—Richard III is made in his celebrated opening lines to push this matter to its limit ("Now is the winter of our discontent / Made glorious summer by this son of York," where the homophone *sun* almost lurks in *summer*). Also dreadful—more annoying but not quite so anti-poetical—is the horrible deformation of a syllable into a homophone to provide a pun. I say less anti-poetical because—as with the *sun* / *summer* just mentioned, the insinuation of the family resemblance, rather than the insistence that the fraternal twins are identical, can be most effective.

3) Query: is bad punning ever redeemed slightly when it enters a rebus-like (we might call it an iconolexic) domain—medieval and renaissance devices, etc.? Or in dream-work?

4) A dimension of punning I have been observing involves an implicit framework of grammatical description. For example, the possibility that "I sigh the lack of many a thing I sought" (Shakespeare, Sonnet 30) is given more power by an overtone of "*sought* is preterite of *sigh*"; or, again given the resonance of *sigh*, Keats' "the sigh that silence heaves"), where the imputation of morphemic kinship might also be considered diachronic (*sighlence* is derived from *sigh*). (Ben Jonson's "To Fool, or Knave," "Thy praise, or dispraise, are to me alike: / One cannot stroke me, nor the other strike," however, chooses not to exploit a possible *stroke-as-preterite-of-stroke* possibility.) Perhaps likewise (as I have mentioned elsewhere) with Geoffrey Hill's unflinching acknowledgment of grammar as a trope of the relation of moral concepts, not merely through the pun on declines here, but on lexical morphology as the (here) fictional source of the particular hetero-homophonic of two words which we would certainly ordinarily pass over even less easily than if they rhymed: "The patience hardens to a pittance, courage / unflinchingly declines into sour rage."

5) What about sequences, in which the order of presentation of the homophones is itself significant (e.g. Christopher Fry's "Te Deum / tedium / tiddy-um, tiddy-um, tiddy-um")? Or is this so rare as not to be really interesting?

6) Does punning include ambiguity of syntax? Consider the rhetorical scheme usually called *zeugma*, for example: in Alexander Pope's "Or stain her honour, or her new brocade" critics have traditionally talked about the pun on the literal and figurative sense of "stain," with the latter so reinforced by a traditional Christian trope that it almost qualifies for another "literal," or extended sense. But what about Dickens' "She arrived in a flood of tears and a sedan chair": would we want to speak here of two senses of "in"? One of these generates phrases expressing literal containment; another is more generally used for "in a state of, condition of . . ." This last one in fact reverses containment: the state of despair, or whatever, the reservoir of tears—these are within the subject, not he or she "in" them. (I have discussed some of this matter, with respect to another preposition in English, elsewhere.¹) What, too, of verbs used both intransitively and transitively, as frequently deployed across enjambments by Milton? And what of phrases which could be syntactically connected either to a literal proposition or a figure? "Bare ruined choirs where late the sweet birds sang" of Shakespeare's sonnet 73 is a familiar example: the last clause can depend as used literally on the "boughs," or, figuratively, to the appositive trope of those boughs as "bare ruined choirs," in which case they seem to invoke—as I think Empson first suggested—choir-boys. A similar case is one in *Twelfth Night*, Viola's "She sat like Patience on a monument, / Smiling at Grief." Does this mean: "she sat like a figure of Patience on a tomb, smiling at the actuality or prospect of her own or someone else's grief, etc." or, rather, "she sat like a figure of Patience on a tomb smiling across at the inevitably complementary figure of Grief"? The syntactical choices here would determine whether "grief" is a personification or not, and whether "Smiling" is literal or perhaps figurative also. In any event, there is no punning morpheme or word here. Alternative or simultaneous meanings are established not through homophony or some allusive partial homophony, but by an open clausal relation. Is this part of the agenda of punning?

7) A final note: the punning styles of English and French may differ interestingly not only because of the confusedly rich diachronic sources and channels (not just Germanic/Romance but so many Latin/French,

OE/Dutch or Norse doublets, etc.) and graphological anomalies. But I feel also that the lack of wordstress in French privileges longer strings of syllables, and more punning across word-boundaries (even as trisyllabic rhymes call attention to themselves so much in English that they're funny until proved solemn), so that "Je me délivre de l'amour mourant des livres," or the ludicrous strings of some of the rhétoriciens, seem so un-English (and in this matter, un-German as well).

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NOTE

¹"Of 'of': The Romance of a Preposition," *Addressing Frank Kermode*, ed. Margaret Tudeau-Clayton and Martin Warner (London: Macmillan, 1991) 189-204.

Paronomasia Once More*

ELEANOR COOK

I am most grateful to Anthony Hecht for his generosity in taking time to comment on my essay and for his superb amplifying of the matter of paronomasia. He offers so many memorable examples of punning that the reader wishes him to go on and on. The suggestion about Hood and about Empson's *Seven Types of Ambiguity* struck me especially. And I do wish I had remembered the fine double dactyl on "paronomasias." (Is it worth saying that I intended some irony in the remark on the nineteenth century and punning? Only *sotto voce*. I had in mind the parody of Browning entitled "Riddle Redundant," and the like.)

I am also grateful to Jacqueline Vaught Brogan for her generous response to my thoughts on poetics. She is quite right about Bishop's wit. The line of vision is hardly without wit, and if this is not clear in my early remarks, it should be.

I appreciate Brogan's interest in the relations of poetry and politics, and of poetry and history. This is to introduce another subject than poetics (the study of the formal causes of art), and a very large subject indeed. A brief comment only. For myself, aesthetics is never "neutral," "apparently" or otherwise. (I should use a word like "isolated" rather than "neutral.") To quote Northrop Frye: "No discussion of beauty can

*Reference: Eleanor Cook, "From Etymology to Paronomasia: Wallace Stevens, Elizabeth Bishop, and Others," *Connotations* 2.1 (1992): 34-51; Anthony Hecht, "In Reply to Eleanor Cook, 'From Etymology to Paronomasia,'" *Connotations* 2.2 (1992): 201-04; Jacqueline Vaught Brogan, "From Paronomasia to Politics in the Poetry of Stevens and Bishop: A Response to Eleanor Cook," *Connotations* 2.3 (1992): 295-304; Anca Rosu, "In the Line of Wit: A Response to Eleanor Cook," *Connotations* 2.3 (1992): 305-12; Timothy Bahti, "Palm Reading (A Response to Eleanor Cook)," *Connotations* 3.1 (1993): 90-94; John Hollander, "A Note on Eleanor Cook, 'From Etymology to Paronomasia,'" *Connotations* 3.1 (1993): 95-98.

confine itself to the formal relations of the isolated work of art; it must consider, too, the participation of the work of art in the vision of the goal of social effort" (*Anatomy of Criticism* 348). But equally (Frye again): "All dominant ideologies are structures of authority, and, unless they are merely tyrannies enforced by terror, they are aesthetic structures as well" (*Times Literary Supplement*, 17 Jan. 1986). This means that good poetry and poetics have something to say to history that history cannot say for itself (either history as event or history as writing). One example may be found in Bishop's act of juxtaposing two contrary fables in "Roosters," one of war and one of forgiveness. Bishop's scruple challenges and chastens us all.

Anca Rosu offers an indispensable reminder to historicism: history includes the history of words, nor can the craft of history be well practised in ignorance of the life of words. Rosu's remarks should be blazoned across all historicist studies. As for the line of wit and the line of vision, a third crow means a summons, and I think I'm being summoned to a little tinkering with my opening generalizations. (This one, a seventeenth-century division, was made to an audience knowledgeable in the period as a starting-point for comparison.) On "mimesis": the two meanings of *mimēsthai* (mimic and depict) are loosely parallel to the twofold nature of poetry, its sound and its sense. So they have to do with all poetry, not just some. Nor is the poetry of vision confined to the conceptual. That said, we might develop further Rosu's comments on the functions of sight and sound, and of repetition, in *re paronomasia*—especially striking in the suggestive reading of "The Snow Man."

I cannot but think that Stevens would have delighted in Timothy Bahti's hearing of the "semi-ellipsis of the word *eclipse* in 'the ellipse of the half-moon.'" I'd enjoy hearing what he has to say about the odor of the pineapple in that "It is that which is distilled / In the prolific ellipses that we know . . ." ("Someone Puts a Pineapple Together"). Bahti's remarks on limits and thresholds seem to me very well taken, and his own word-play a true pleasure. The hearing of a "fan" in "fire-fangled," given the context, is very acute. My one question would be where to place this echo. Somewhere, I think, after we have worked out Stevens' crossing of "new-fangled" and "fire-fang," of "inclined to

take fire" and "singed, scorched," of one derisory word and one obsolete word in a new word that sounds neither. A phoenix word.

John Hollander's comments advance this whole discussion wonderfully, both grounding it and extending its categories. To take up his points in order:

(1) Word-play as world-play approaches the heart of the matter, I think. Such a "governing trope of poetry" would govern both tropes and schemes, including punning. The pun would feel less an outsider, less a fatal Cleopatra in the empire of signs. What happens when the magic is inferior? That's the point of point 2, I guess.

(2) "Word-play is an antidote to word-labor." Yes, yes, and yes, plus a category of forced labor, plus a note that true work and true play at their best become indistinguishable. (Watch Roberto Alomar playing baseball.) It looks as if the "bad" of bad punning may indeed vary according to the rhetorical context of presentation. When I said that punning developed very early in children, I had in mind my daughter, who, age two, said of a neighbor, "Mrs. Wright write-y," then collapsed with laughter and delight at her own discovery. The rhetorical presentation from a twelve-year-old would perforce be quite different.

(3) On bad punning in a rebus-like or other domain. Does punning in an iconolexic domain approach allegory, and do we tolerate simpler puns in allegory? I think we may. Do we even care about the badness of bad puns in dream-work any more than in the detective story? Here again, the rhetorical context of presentation may govern. In allegory, dream-work or detective story, the pun may be less intent on its own play than on its work as a signpost in a quest narrative.

(4) On punning that involves an implicit framework of grammatical description. Yes, indeed. The examples would share the "as if" class of false etymology. Are explicit examples, as against implicit ones, usually comic or crude? There's the well-known rude pun on Boston scrod.

(5) On the sequence of homophones, and (7) on the punning differences inherent in the French and English languages. I hadn't thought of either of these, the second being of special interest. It would be fun to compare Beckett's French and English versions of his own puns.

(6) On the large question of punning and ambiguity of syntax. I see that I slipped in a pun involving some awkward syntax as an ambiguity (p. 41, on "got up"). Hm. And I note that all my examples of single words were nouns or verbs or their modifiers. How exactly do we pun on prepositions other than by syntactical ambiguity? This suggests an overlap of categories. Yet Empson includes puns within the wider categories of ambiguity, moving them up and down the scales of his various types. That's my instinct too, though so far it's no more than an instinct. Empson works chiefly with "the degree of logical or grammatical disorder My seven types . . . are intended as stages of advancing logical disorder" (ch. 2, opening paragraph). Ambiguity of grammar, he notes, cannot be brought to the pitch of ambiguity of single words, so that he judges the effect to be different. Empson is certainly the place to start, in mapping the relation of punning and ambiguity. And Empson's name, first introduced by Anthony Hecht, is a most fitting one on which to close.

But not without some sapphics:

One of those dark butterflies called a Mourning
 Cloak clung to a trumpet of morning glory,
 Draping it with something of afternoon, a
 Palpable shadow

. . . .

It was far too late in the day to think that
 Some sharp arbitrator of settlements had
 Known the name of butterfly and of flower
 And, for an hour,

Played with them and planted the somber insect's
 Name in blue—a dawning of darkness—just as
 If there were a species of creature labeled
 Paronomasia.

(John Hollander, "A Thing So Small," *Harp Lake*)

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